

<b>Topic</b>	What aspects of the Innovation in Evidence convening and <i>Committing to Action: Next Steps for Canada's Evidence Ecosystem</i> report were most relevant for you, your organization, for the arts sector as a whole? What aspects of the What Works Centres model apply to the arts?		
<b>Date</b>	Tuesday, April 9, 2019	<b>Location</b>	OTF - 800 Bay Street, 5th Floor
<b>Host(s)</b>	Ontario Trillium Foundation & Mass Culture		
<b>Participants</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Adam Jog, Mowat Centre</li> <li>● Christina Loewen, Opera.ca</li> <li>● Hallie K Siegel, Artist</li> <li>● Helen Yung, Centre for Social Innovation</li> <li>● Kathryn Townshend, Ontario Arts Council</li> <li>● Kelly Wilhelm, Banff Centre</li> <li>● Kristian Clarke, Dancer Transition Resource Centre &amp; Mass Culture</li> <li>● Lisa Lalande, Mowat Centre</li> <li>● Liz Forsberg, Ontario Trillium Foundation</li> <li>● Margo Charlton, Toronto Arts Council</li> <li>● Michelle Yeung, School of Toronto Dance Theatre</li> <li>● Narendra Pachkhédé, Artist, Curator, Critic</li> <li>● Robin Sokoloski, Playwrights Guild of Canada &amp; Mass Culture</li> <li>● Rosslyn Jacob Edwards, Dance Ontario</li> <li>● Stacey McDonald, Ontario Trillium Foundation</li> <li>● Zainub Verjee, Ontario Association of Art Galleries</li> </ul>		
<b>Notetaker(s)</b>	Kathryn Geertsema, Mass Culture & Stacey McDonald, Ontario Trillium Foundation		
<b>Facilitator(s)</b>	Liz Forsberg & Robin Sokoloski		
<b>Invitation</b>	Robin and I are very excited for our conversation next Tuesday. You'll find our agenda below. Mowat just released the report with findings from the convening and the Innovation in Evidence conference they held back in the fall. If you have time, it is well worth the read. If you are short on time, have a look at the key takeaways they've put together on their website. Links to both are below. We're really pleased that Lisa Lalande and Adam Jog from Mowat will be joining us for the conversation.		
<b>Perspectives and thoughts</b>	<p><b><i>What aspects of the innovation &amp; evidence convening and paper produced by Mowat were most relevant for you &amp; your organisation / the arts sector as a whole?</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Struck particularly, as a result of working in the culture sector, by how more and more arts are being pushed into a social agenda: social good being is being differentiated from the public one, which it was never meant to be. Municipal governments are giving most of their funding to local and regional galleries. In turn, these galleries have to contribute to the wellbeing of the public and if they don't, they risk losing funding. There was a lot of work done in the 1990s pushing against the social accountability of the arts. This is a very significant issue for many galleries' memberships at the moment.</li> <li>● Arts are part of the social contract, and part of the charitable contract the arts and ASOs agree to function under is to work to benefit society. The problem comes when ASOs are forced to seek to justify their existence through data, thereby defending that we're good for society. The work artists produce should be seen as the end, as opposed to the product through which to justify funding. The impact of the arts is not numbers-based: it's about the stories, and how the arts affect values. On the one hand, the arts have the potential to be a purely aesthetic experience: there's what happens</li> </ul>		

	<p>during the experience, which is very much “art for arts sake”. But then there’s the instrumental value, which allows the arts to be a tool for social change, through which one can influence values, and work towards making the world a better place. We have to look at it both ways. They don’t have to be purely instrumental. The value of the arts lies in its ability to be both.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Art has a social good. “Social good” is not dismissing the terms on which that subsidy is taken. The sector doesn’t have a say on what is put into contracts. Seen as “solution”. Not about solution because we’re not even confirmed about own problem.</li> <li>● When we say “measurement” and “evidence” – for whom is this information being produced? These terms seem to be headline-grabbing, which doesn’t seem to really work towards anything.</li> <li>● At “What Works”, they are dealing with something as huge and specific as child poverty. It’s cleaner than it is in the arts. Every arts person would have a different answer to the question we’re discussing now, determined by if they’re looking at it from an instrumental viewpoint, or a community-based one, etc. The key question has to do with goals: to understand what you need to do, you need to first have a good sense of where you need to get to. Once there, we can start to think about what areas need further research.</li> <li>● The connecting thread of this discussion is an increasing push towards outcome. Terminology and language we use are very important. What Works was formed out of the recognition that there’s a lot of research, but no access to it. People need guidance on how to spend the money they receive for this kind of work. What Works went to the UK for learning tour. Part of what we got out of going there was people telling us that if they could do one thing over again for these evidence centres, they would not call them “What Works” centres because people think they’re going to get final results. They’re actually meant to be research centres, which offer insights rather than just research/evidence. They don’t just produce, but make sense of information in order to help the sector, practitioners and the government alike make sense of the information.</li> <li>● This language is so alien to artists, who don’t know and shouldn’t have to know about these things, but rather should have the freedom to return to the artistic impulse. The outcome will only be known when we get to the end. Working towards a specific end goal is not how artists work, and they don’t want to work this way. A lot of money from the TAC went towards strategic plans, which made artists nervous, because they feel that the art they produce then becomes disingenuous.</li> <li>● There were actually no What Works centre in UK. When they started to incubate, it was a disaster when they asked about gaps in research. They hired intermediaries to go talk to artists and the government about this. They suggested a strategy for moving forward. Creation of new resources from moving forward, needs to come from this kind of dialogue.</li> <li>● Are they artists? Artists are at the centre of this. The Occupy movement doesn’t require institutionalized funding, rather, the funding emerges in other ways, as an analogy. If artists are at the centre, then that what is the ecosystem is, rather than telling artists what to deliver. That’s how all these funders function.</li> <li>● Pragmatically, MC is interested in whether the What Works model is something that’s useful for MC to mimic. There are two versions of the What Works centre: 1) clearing side on business side of arts, drawing younger people out, being inclusive, work for gender equity...and I think learning from incubators about what works for startups, so that artists and arts organization can make use of this information. 2) What works, but specific to artists, embed social outcomes that they could be held accountable for – but</li> </ul>
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that should be distributed across What Works, and thereby showing that “this is what works when you bring arts into x”

**What can you take from the arts that can be applied to what works centres to create an even more robust what works centre?**

- If you consider the inclusive design of the Ontario Nonprofit Network, working for the fringes, it makes it better for everyone involved. If broaden it, what do arts need help with?
- The potential model, outlined in the paper, highlights certain things that are key. Whatever is done, you have to start with the user and the impacted populations. Mass Culture has had conversations with as many people as possible to determine priorities and needs, and that’s the driving force moving forward. We need to work on building a bridge between those who make versus those who benefit from policy. And that’s what the What Works model provides. We need to know ourselves better, by taking the time to do the deep digging, in order to turn the research into action. What Works centres focus on academics, researches etc, which is something that we can apply to MC.
- Assigning greater value for the arts is essential. Social finance is a huge fund from the government, but it’s difficult for arts to access, unless we manage to find a way of getting significantly better at displaying how significant the arts are.
- These centres are set up to construct a method, to make research digestible, not to actually create evaluative methods.
- We need to continually be brought to the table to wrestle with the language – a tonne of us are working on stuff but we’re not aware of what everyone else is working on. This is so important, to allow us to discuss the impact of our work. Right now, we’re working in isolation.
- We’re looking at becoming a larger community, not the arts as a niche, but looking right across the sectors. Looking at innovation, and information research. But right now, individual artists don’t have the appropriate language, and probably wouldn’t be able to say what their needs are.
- We need to work on identifying research priorities, to try to impact government policy development. How do we get ourselves into framing social frameworks? In the States, money has been given to a number of arts organizations for this work. We need to have MC work at identifying the research priorities, rather than the government or funders.
- Mass Culture is identifying the priorities, but getting those priorities from the community.
- There’s some academia-bashing happening, having to do with issues surrounding research methodologies being very hegemonic, imperial etc. However, there’s a long tradition of researchers working against that. That’s something MC could have a hand in, drawing out and presenting those other methodologies. But the issues within those is that they don’t become democratic just because it’s the arts. There’s a lot that is known, so it’s a question of knowledge translation.
- A degree of simplification is the point – you don’t really care how creative a bank thinks you are. The artist who really wants to innovate, will. If you show an artist how others have done filled out grant applications or bank loans, they will know how to react.
- In terms of language, it’s important we recognize that whatever we come up with is a framework, not *the* framework.

**How do you choose what research to focus on?**

- Every 3 years, you produce a research agenda. Then in six months, conduct 100 interviews. Those that surface at the top, are what we focus on.

- “Chance favours the prepared mind”. One can’t always predict the relationships that will emerge. Heritage has lost a lot of staff too. We haven’t spoken about heritage/other cultural sectors. Potential allies around understanding dynamics within the arts sector.
- At the policy level, that link isn’t well-identified..
- There’s no one funding this stuff. Most incubation models are created with a relatively short end in sight: that we’re going to create a framework and find more funding later, and work on figuring out how we’re going to move forward in a few years. But often they don’t get that funding.

**Language around racial (in)equality**

- The fight of people of colour has been diluted into language of “inclusion” and “diversity”
- Those in power are making an assumption, when actually, “inclusion” and “diversity” are not the same as affirmative action. The racial equality movement has been shifted to “diversity”.
- The question is, what direction are we going to go in? The future of policy in this country needs a change from the current system determined by is how do you take white males that were born c. 1957. There need to be certain companies that need to let go of power.
- The Massey report erased community arts, and the same report is used to now push expectations onto those community arts
- Everyone is responding to different issues. Anarchist in me is all for the revolution: resist the colonization of our souls and minds. That definitely has to come back in.

**Art for arts sake versus for commercial purposes**

- Practicing artists want to create art when they can, but they can’t do it full time. Some are able to keep their income practice more closely in the arts world. Most of us have diverse revenue streams, but there’s an unsaid tension, you feel like you’re not allowed to function in the public art galleries vs private gallery.
- There’s been a significant shift. There was an organization whose mandate was to produce non market-driven work.
- It’s like you’re tainted if you’re in the “other” market in the art world, so you try to negotiate the realities. If you’re producing market-driven work, then you’re “too commercial”. But then, when you do non-commercial projects, that’s not “real art” because you can’t earn anything from it.
- You have to be a commercial artist, because otherwise you can’t eat. Language acts as a trap. How do we break out of the system? Maybe Simone should be here. There were times when the CCA came to have these discussions with the artists.
- Purpose here to find out what artists might need.
- There’s a missing voice around the table, but we’re trying to diversify this conversations. Making research more relevant to artists, finding out from artists what research is needed.

**Decolonizing Research Practices**

- Struck by how we need to think differently about research so that we’re not taking such a colonial stance. As the scientist, you’re untouchable, impermeable. That’s the model we’ve been working under. “How do we not change ourselves” is a way of working to keep power. How do we become researchers as well as subjects, thus making the process more permeable? ArtsPond, someone from Culture Counts, they had a 360 pull, gathering evidence from beneficiary, from themselves and from artists to see what everyone got out of this shared experience? This is a great way of decolonizing research framework.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with Howard Jang at the Banff Centre on the Banff Research Initiative, they are really working to ensure they are responding to the arts community as well as the leadership community. It's been an internal reflection for the Banff centre, and attempting to avoid this colonial idea of research. Banff is a place where artistic research happens, with a long history. How can we pay more attention to this and look at how this work operates? Are there things that happen in Banff that could be really helpful for others in the sector, without objectifying it, without imposing on them? Primary Colours is a project that talks about different cultural histories, breaking open the text-based, academic bias. How can Banff do better in delivering information, but also advance the conversation with the rest of the sector while making it more accessible? Working with MC, we're looking at history. There's not currently a lot of research capacity at Banff, or capacity to digitize, because they get funding from the Alberta Educational Council as a training institution.</li> </ul> <p><b>What is the relationship between research, policy-making and advocacy?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>These are the conversations MC has been having over the past year. MC shouldn't be a policy builder or working for advocacy. We have learnt quite a bit from the Canadian Conference for the Arts.</li> <li>The relationship between advocacy and knowledge synthesis is complicated – if you're focusing on influencing policy, it's good to not work with advocacy. Sometimes, it's better to partner with organizations that can influence, so that we're seen as neutral.</li> <li>It's a fallacy to create a dichotomy of advocacy and research – they inform each other, and we shouldn't get too caught up in distinguishing.</li> <li>This idea of neutrality: the very act of creating policy is a political act. Even more, the way you act and creating data are political acts that we shouldn't shy away from. We have to be wary of homogenisation as a mode of accessing information or a model of regurgitation. One stands to lose credibility.</li> <li>It's important to distinguish between research and advocacy rather than policy and advocacy.</li> </ul>
<p><b>What research would be useful?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decolonizing research practices</li> <li>Effective models of knowledge transition and monolization</li> </ul>
<p><b>Whose voices are missing around the table?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More practicing artists</li> <li>Inclusive of more BIPOC individuals</li> <li>People of different abilities</li> </ul>
<p><b>Resources &amp; links (mentioned during discussion or shared afterwards)</b></p>	<p>Long on time (aka the full report): <a href="#">Innovation in Evidence: Committing to Action: Next Steps for Canada's Evidence Ecosystem</a></p> <p>Short on time (aka the synopsis): <a href="#">Committing to Action: Key Takeaways</a></p> <p><a href="#">Primary Colours</a></p> <p><a href="#">Ontario Nonprofit Network</a></p>
<p><b>What next steps were mentioned as a result of the Gathering?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Addressing language: The fight of people of colour has been diluted into the language of "inclusion" and "diversity"</li> <li>Less colonial approach to research</li> <li>Non-culture days – culture strike</li> </ul>