

# **ARTS FOR MENTAL HEALTH CONFERENCE (A4MH) REPORT**

**OCTOBER 2021**



**PREPARED BY: MISSISSAUGA ARTS COUNCIL  
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH MASS CULTURE**

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# MESSAGE FROM MISSISSAUGA ARTS COUNCIL

Mississauga Arts Council (MAC)'s pursuit of an Arts for Mental Health Conference and ArtsCare began in 2017. Inspired by reports on mental health and creative experiences in Denmark and Britain, while citing popular support for the arts in Ontario and Canada, prompted MAC to act and build on this research, to showcase their positive outcomes. The Arts for Mental Health Conference on October 6, 2021, brought these discussion-topics to light. Health practitioners, academics, artists, politicians, and leaders in the arts sector came together; helping to uncover the design and rationale for ArtsCare (pilot program, delivering and expanding arts programs to people living with mental health issues in Peel Region).

The conference was made possible through a Seed Grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, and sponsored by the City of Mississauga, Bell Canada, and Alectra Utilities. Conference presenters and participants included Mayor Bonnie Crombie (City of Mississauga), Hon. Michael Tibollo (Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions, MPP Vaughan-Woodbridge), and Natalia Kusendova (MPP Mississauga Centre).

Susan Ksiezopolski received the 2021 Arts for Mental Health Award, sponsored by Bell; recognizing individuals and organizations that contribute to the improvement of the mental health through arts programs and activities.

As Mississauga Arts Council looks into building ArtsCare, vital discussions will influence our next steps. The time to deliver for mental health is now...and the arts are ready to respond. You can get involved at [artscare.ca](https://artscare.ca).

Sincerely,  
Mike Douglas  
Executive Director, Mississauga Arts Council

Mississauga Arts Council  
[www.mississaugaartscouncil.com](https://www.mississaugaartscouncil.com)  
FB: @missartscouncil  
TW: @MissArtsCouncil  
IG: @mississauga.arts

# MISSISSAUGA ARTS COUNCIL

The Mississauga Arts Council is a registered charity, dedicated to accelerating progress toward the attainment of our Vision of Mississauga, as a vibrant cultural community where arts and culture thrive! Our mission is to empower the Arts Economy by Creating more opportunities & capacity; Connecting artists to audiences and each other; and Celebrating artists' achievements.

Learn more: [www.mississaugaartscouncil.com](http://www.mississaugaartscouncil.com)



## MASS CULTURE

Mass Culture is a collaborative support organization that takes a community based approach to providing diverse parties with the context and connections needed to enhance the equitable mobilization of arts and culture research. By convening cultural workers and academics, Mass Culture provides a platform for knowledge to be explored, widely understood, and mobilized.

Learn more: [massculture.ca](http://massculture.ca)



### THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS AND SPONSORS



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Mississauga Arts Council's Arts for Mental Health Conference, co-produced by Mass Culture took place online on October 6, 2021. The event was hosted in Toronto / Tkaronto and Mississauga on the traditional lands of the Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee Confederacy, Anishinabek, Métis and Mississaugas of the Credit nation.

## WHY ARTS CARE?

*Arts care, because there is more to managing mental health than medicine.*

*Arts care, because it lights people up.*

*Arts care, because it washes away the dust of everyday life,*

*Picasso knew this.*

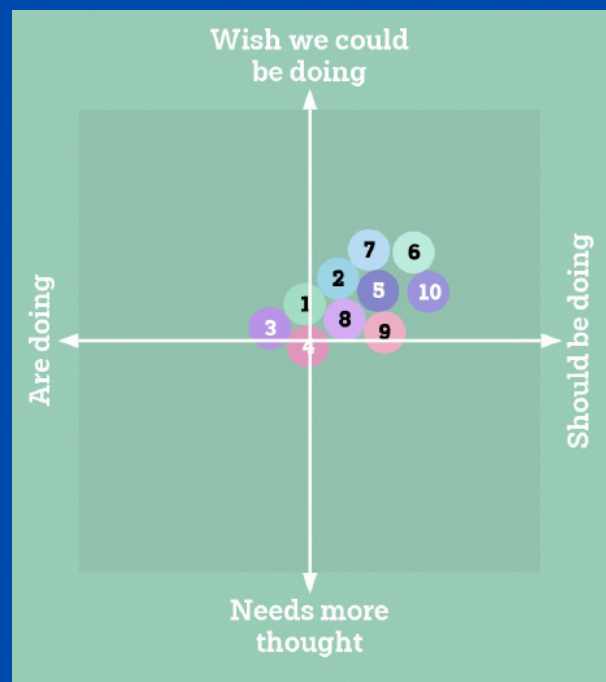
*Arts care, because it feels good. And*

*Arts care is care.*

*– Tanya Neumeyer,  
Poet & Conference Rapporteur*

# WHAT WAS LEARNED

Members of the arts and health sector convened to exchange ideas and share experiences to contribute towards an overarching goal: To co-design an accessible program designed with medical and social service professionals in mind, that prescribes and refers mental health clients to engage in creative experiences appropriate to their needs. Throughout the day, the 70+ participants helped collectively shape the following recommendations. Here are the ten recommendations and some insights gleaned for each.



The following pages outline the ten recommendations and patterns shown on the X and Y Axis chart.

The chart is assembled by responses to these ten recommendations and points at each axis.

# RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON A4MH CONFERENCE PANELS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. Building bridges at the intersection of arts and mental health.
2. Prioritizing the mental health of artists.
3. Showcasing the power of art as a healing mechanism.
4. Sharing knowledge of how the arts can benefit health and well-being.
5. Stimulating progress towards making these benefits a reality across the country.
6. Reducing silos regarding arts and mental health resources.
7. Reducing and eliminating barriers to resources and care.
8. Hosting tutorials to ensure users have access to the technology they need, as well as an understanding of how to use this technology.
9. Reducing barriers to access introduced as a result of the move online.
10. Creating a central repository for patients, healthcare providers, and researchers to access resources.



## **RECOMMENDATION #1**

### **BUILDING BRIDGES AT THE INTERSECTION OF ARTS AND MENTAL HEALTH.**

Refers to creating a sense of community and collaboration between those working in arts and healthcare alike. The two sectors have the potential to develop meaningful, holistic approaches to healing.

*“You and I have a unique opportunity...Here, we can integrate our services together for a common outcome: creating a healthier, more resilient society.”*

*- Dr. Colin Saldanha, Family Physician*

## **RECOMMENDATION #2**

### **PRIORITIZING THE MENTAL HEALTH OF ARTISTS.**

Ensuring that artists' voices are being heard and that their needs are being met. Doing work that is for artists, by artists.

*“One of the things I see happening regularly [in our work] is the removing and replacing of a label...when people have been told “I’m THIS” and put their mental health label on. You know what? You’re an artist. You’re an actor. Your voice matters...it matters so much, that when you tell me how you’re experiencing the world, it holds value. That re-labeling is so powerful.”*

*- Kelly Straughan, Executive Artistic Director Workman Arts*

## **RECOMMENDATION #3**

### **SHOWCASING THE POWER OF ART AS A HEALING MECHANISM.**

Highlighting the capacity for art to aid in one's healing. Demonstrating how art can be used in conjunction with medical interventions.

*"What art therapy does is that it decreases a person's defenses, brings imagery and fantasy to life, provides a certain level of catharsis, improves communication, enhances contact with other people, and builds self-esteem. Art therapy also gives one a sense of purpose and direction that is often taken away by an injury."*

*- Dr. Chanth Seyone, Physician & Clinical Researcher*

## **RECOMMENDATION #4**

### **SHARING KNOWLEDGE OF HOW THE ARTS CAN BENEFIT HEALTH AND WELL-BEING.**

Sharing knowledge of how art can benefit peoples' lives in general. Shining light on both empirical knowledge and lived experiences.

*"I want to end on the principle of entrainment...the word describes merging to or synchronizing with...As we begin to emerge into this world that we are so excited to live. Let's begin to look around for moments where we can entrain with one another. I don't believe there's a better way to do that than through the arts...there is no more efficient nor effective way for us to feel that deep connection waiting for us."*

*- Jennifer Buchanan, Music Therapist*



## **RECOMMENDATION # 5**

### **STIMULATING PROGRESS TOWARDS MAKING THESE BENEFITS A REALITY ACROSS THE COUNTRY.**

Elevating the position of art in the public consciousness. Helping others to recognize the value of art.

*“Get artists out to medical community conferences, get doctors showing up to arts community conferences, creating a bigger network than what we currently have.” - An Idea Discussed During the Round Table Discussion on Building Useful Connections Between Arts & Health Practitioners, Susan Durnin, Mississauga Arts Council Administration Lead*

## **RECOMMENDATION #6**

### **REDUCING SILOS REGARDING ARTS AND MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES.**

Developing resources that are applicable to those in a variety of disciplines, communities and contexts. Arts Service Organizations have a role to play in breaking down barriers.

*Ideas from the round table discussion on an art's council's role in building an arts & health program:*

- *“We must frame our programs as stories that allow people to participate.”*
- *“Arts service organizations should put art-health initiatives into their budgets.”*
- *“Advocating to the government and health minister.”*

## **RECOMMENDATION #7**

### **REDUCING AND ELIMINATING BARRIERS TO RESOURCES AND CARE.**

Ensuring that resources are widely known and easily accessible. People should know what is available to them and how to access it.

*"Consider the equity lens. How are you reducing barriers to participation?...Is it appropriate for the person?...Think about how to make it safe and welcoming to the person participating."*

*- Sonia Hsiung, Alliance for Healthier Communities*

## **RECOMMENDATION #8**

### **HOSTING TUTORIALS FOR USERS TO HAVE ACCESS TO AND LEARN HOW TO USE THE TECHNOLOGY THEY NEED.**

Assisting people in adapting to the ever-changing technological landscape.

*"We also talked about making sure we guide our technology users. If a platform's new to them or there's a type of technology they're not familiar with...how can we make that happen?"*

*- Round Table Discussion on Making Art & Health programs Marketable and Salesworthy*

## **RECOMMENDATION #9**

### **KEEPING PACE WITH MOVING ARTISTIC CONTENT ONLINE BY REDUCING BARRIERS TO ACCESS.**

Mitigating the number of obstacles that have emerged in our current digital context. Facilitating ease of access.

*“I struggled with getting my program into the community during the pandemic. Thanks to online options, transformation and healing through the arts was brought to those who needed it the most. New immigrants, isolated seniors and marginalized community members.”*

*- Anna Silgado, Artists in Momentum*

## **RECOMMENDATION #10**

### **CREATING A CENTRAL REPOSITORY FOR PATIENTS, HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS, AND RESEARCHERS TO ACCESS RESOURCES.**

Creating a “resource hub” that gathers useful tools, programs, etc. for people to consult. Keeping people informed.

*“[...] resources & education, that is what is going to build these partnerships. We talked about a central repository with easy access; health-care practitioners can access it, artists can access it, even patients maybe. [...] strategic partnerships. Bringing together, not just the medical community and artists, but sponsors and universities & researchers can make these partnerships even stronger.” - An Idea Discussed During the Round Table Discussion on Building Useful Connections Between Arts & Health Practitioners, Susan Durnin, Mississauga Arts Council Administration Lead*

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

## A4MH RESOURCE & BRAINSTORMING MIRO BOARD:

[HTTPS://MIRO.COM/APP/BOARD/O9J\\_L5J0RUY=](https://miro.com/app/board/o9j_l5j0rUY=/)

## ALL RESOURCES COLLECTED DURING A4MH DATATHON SEPT 7-9TH, 2021:

[HTTPS://CRITICALDIGITALMETHODS.CA/ARTIFEX/RESEARCHER/](https://criticaldigitalmethods.ca/artifex/researcher/)

## ART OF WELLNESS DOCUMENTARY

[HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/OFY3OO2\\_RNA](https://youtu.be/ofy3oo2_rna)

## BRITISH INQUIRY REPORT:

[HTTPS://RB.GY/JZJ5FJ](https://rb.gy/jzj5fj)

## FULL SUMMARY OF THE CONFERENCE:

[HTTPS://RB.GY/EDWCR6](https://rb.gy/edwcr6)

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM CREATIVE INQUIRY REPORT: WHY NOT ARTS CARE?

[HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=VW5XGYDJQWY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VW5XGYDJQWY)

## NANOS FOR ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL:

[HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=QCKJ0TMRDLO](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QCKJ0TMRDLO)



**TO STAY UP TO DATE, PLEASE VISIT:**  
**[WWW.ARTSCARE.CA](http://WWW.ARTSCARE.CA)**

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**VIEW THE FULL REPORT:**  
**[HTTPS://BIT.LY/3KHRPNX](https://bit.ly/3KHRPNX)**



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**[www.massculture.ca](http://www.massculture.ca)**  
**[info@massculture.ca](mailto:info@massculture.ca)**  
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