A CASE FOR UTOPIAN DREAMING:
FEMINISMS WITHIN CANADIAN ARTIST-RUN CENTRES

by

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Abstract

This dissertation is motivated by a set of questions elaborated from a central query: What is a flourishing future? When applied to the state of artist-run centre culture, and specifically feminist identified artist-run centres, in Canada, questions that follow include, who gets to represent futurity? Whose futures count? How are artist-run centres and art communities transformed by the inclusions of Indigenous and Black futures and futurism? How and by whom is feminism defined in these spaces? How does white feminism get out of the way of a flourishing future, or how doesn't it? Throughout, I return to the concept of *utopia as method,* as proposed by Ruth Levitas. At its core, Levitas's method comprises three simple steps: state the problem, attempt an archaeological dig of the past to shed insight into how we reached the problem, and then—and this is the key part—we are asked to *educate our desires.*

This grounding in utopian methodology leads me to specifically ask: how can artist-run centres benefit most from incorporating intersectional feminism and anti-oppression work into their daily operations? To think through this question, I consider a selection of historically feminist artist-run centres, active during the second wave of feminism to the present, to understand how they advanced specific feminist agendas, and to evaluate what kind of impact state policy and state funding priorities had on these artist-run centres. These include Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA) in Winnipeg, Manitoba; Women in Focus Collective (WIF) in Vancouver, British Columbia; The Women's Art Resource Centre (WARC) and the Feminist Art Gallery (FAG) in Toronto, Ontario; Womanspirit in London, Ontario; and La Centrale and articule in Montréal, Québec.

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Abbreviations:

ACTRA	Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists
AGM	Annual General Meeting
AGO	Art Gallery of Ontario
ANNPAC	Association of National Non-Profit Artists Centres
ARC	Artist-run centres
ARCA	The Artist-Run Centres and Collectives Conference
AWAM	Aboriginal Women's Art Mentorship
BAAWA	Bay Area Artists for Women's Art
BIPOC	Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour
CALQ	Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec
CAR	Canadian Artists' Representation
CARFAC	Canadian Artists' Representation/Le Front des artistes canadiens
CBC	Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
CRUM	Centre de recherche urbaine de Montréal
CWAHI	Canadian Woman Artists History Initiative
DIY	Do-it-yourself
FAG	Feminist Art Gallery
FLQ	Front de libération du Québec
GIV	Groupe Intervention Vidéo
HR	Human resources
ICA	Institute for Contemporary Art
IVC	In Visible Colours
LGBT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender
LIP	Local Initiatives Program
MAC	Manitoba Art Council
MACM	Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal
MACQ	Ministère des Affaires culturelles du Québec
MAI	Montréal, arts interculturels
MAN	Manitoba Arts Network
MAWA	Mentoring Artists for Women's Art
MSVU	Mount Saint Vincent University
NAWA	National Association of Women Artists
N.D.G	Notre-Dame-de-Grace
NGC	National Gallery of Canada
NFB	National Film Board
NHS	National Household Survey
NSCAD	Nova Scotia College of Art and Design
NSWAN	Nova Scotia Women Artists Network
OCAD	Ontario College of Art and Design
OFY	Opportunities for Youth
ON	Ontario
OQLF	Office Québécois de la langue française
PMCC	Pauline McKibben Cultural Centre
QTBIPOC	Queer, Trans, Black, Indigenous, Person of Colour

RCAAQ	Régroupement des centres d'artistes autogérées de Québéc
RCCAQ	Régroupement des centres d'artistes autogérés du Québec
SAVAC	South Asian Visual Arts Centre
SBC	SBC (originally Saide Bronfman Centre)
SWAA	Saskatchewan Women in the Arts Association
TPW	Gallery TPW (originally Toronto Photographers Workshop)
UAAC	Universities Art Association of Canada
UBC	University of British Columbia
UQAM	Université du Québec à Montréal
US	United States of America
VIVA	VIVA! Art Action
VIVO	VIVO Media Arts Centre
WAAC	Women's Art Association of Canada
WARC	Women's Art Resource Centre
WCB	Women's Cultural Building
WIF	Women in Focus
WMA	Women's Media Alliance
WOC	Women-of-Colour

Chapter One

Introduction: Imagining a Future for Artist-Run Centres

Without our own history we are unable to imagine a future because we are deprived of the precious resource of knowing where we come from.

– Adrienne Rich, *Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose*

1.1 What is a Flourishing Future?

This dissertation is motivated by a set of questions elaborated from a central query: What is a flourishing future? When applied to the state of artist-run centre culture, and specifically feminist identified artist-run centres, in Canada, questions that follow include, who gets to represent futurity? Whose futures count? How are artist-run centres and art communities transformed by the inclusions of Indigenous and Black futures and futurism? How and by whom is feminism defined in the spaces? How does white feminism get out of the way of a flourishing future, or how doesn't it? Black-British scholar Hazel Carby argues in "White Women Listen!" that "Black women do not want to be grafted onto 'feminism' in a tokenistic manner as colorful diversions to 'real' problems. Feminism has to be transformed if it is to address us."[1] To what degree is the question of transformation an impasse for feminist arts organizations? Throughout, I return to the concept of *utopia as method,* as proposed by white-British scholar Ruth Levitas.[2]

[1] Hazel Carby, "White Women Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood," (1982) in *Black British Feminism,* ed. Heidi Safia Mirza, (London: Routledge, 1997), 52.

[2] In this dissertation, when I spell the word *utopia* with an uppercase letter U (Utopia) I am referring to what I later describe as blueprint Utopianism, or Utopia as destination. When I employ a lowercase U (utopia) I am referring to utopia as methodology. I go into greater detail on both these modes in this chapter.

The goal of this method is to understand how we arrived where we are by understanding the past. Utopian methodology helps us to imagine a better future. At its core, Levitas's method comprises three simple steps: state the problem, attempt an archaeological dig of the past to shed insight into how we reached the problem, and then—and this is the key part—we are asked to *educate our desires.* This simply means to work to understand what we truly want beyond what we have been conditioned to believe we want. It is vital to read Levitas' work within the larger context of utopian and Marxist thought. For example, while German Marxist philosopher and utopian theorist Ernst Bloch used the concept of "educated hope" to connect "Marxism and the function of concrete utopia," Levitas and others "have used the term 'the education of desire' to describe the Utopian function."[3] This education of desire beyond hope assigns a degree of power to utopian methodology that might otherwise be rejected from Utopian projects and connects utopianism to a desire for a flourishing future.

This grounding in utopian methodology leads me to specifically ask: how can artist-run centres benefit most from incorporating intersectional feminism and anti-oppression work into their daily operations? To think through this question, I consider a selection of historically feminist centres, active during the second wave of feminism to the present, to understand how they advanced feminist agendas, and to evaluate what kind of impact state policy and state funding priorities had on these artist-run centres. Some of these centres specifically attempted to integrate intersectional feminism into their operations and their interactions with the broader communities they served. In many cases, however, the feminist models they invested in were rooted in white supremacy, and thus unsuitable to anti-oppression goals. When organizations did achieve their feminist objectives, they did so only when they saw the work of dismantling white

[3] Ruth Levitas. "Educated Hope: Ernst Bloch on Abstract and Concrete Utopia." *Utopian Studies* 1, no. 2 (1990): 20.

supremacy as an ongoing project requiring a diverse team at every level of the organization—not just at a token level through individual hires or isolated exhibitions. As Canadian settler scholar Lynda Jessup writes, "to locate representation solely in collection and display is to practice an 'imaginary' politics of representation."[4] Further, citing Mohawk writer and curator Lee-Ann Martin's 1991 report for the Canada Council, Jessup writes that the

> continuing absence of curators of Aboriginal descent would not be rectified until institutions moved beyond the "soft inclusion" of temporary exhibitions to "hard" collection and display. Since the completion of Martin's report, the Canada Council has initiated the First People's Curatorial Residency Program, which is designed to encourage the development of long-term employment opportunities for Aboriginal curators in Canadian cultural institutions.[5]

As Martin notes in her interview with settler-Métis scholar Rachelle Dickenson following the release of Martin's 1991 report, "the Canada Council did a number of things," including starting "an incentive to purchase contemporary Native art through their acquisitions money."[6] However, as she also notes in the interview, "largely what's happening now is [driven by] white guilt. It goes back to what I said I found with that report, that there are individuals who get it, who are our allies, who may not know that history but want to learn about the history and do." Without the work to dismantle white supremacy, cultural gestures of inclusion will always be, while not exactly meaningless, devoid of the power to produce real change. For meaningful change to become possible, institutions must acknowledge their complicity in racism and in other forms of bias.

Intersectional feminism describes the points at which gender, race, class, and other factors intersect. Anti-oppression work is about combating systemic and structural

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[4] Lynda Jessup and Shannon Bagg. *On Aboriginal Representation in the Gallery* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2002), xxi, muse.jhu.edu/book/65609.
[5] Jessup and Bagg, *On Aboriginal Representation*, xxi-xxii.
[6] Rachelle Dickenson and Lee-Ann Martin, "Turning the Page on the Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion, 30 Years On," *C Magazine*, no.144 (Winter 2020), https://cmagazine.com/issues/144/turning-the-page-on-the-politics-of-inclusion#header.

discrimination. Like intersectional feminism, it questions and challenges power and privilege in society, while simultaneously working to redress these inequalities. Oppression can be lived and/or historical, meaning that past oppression still has an effect on the present, and anti-oppression work recognizes the ways in which patterns of oppression build up. Those centres that managed to acknowledge such nuances of intersectional feminism and anti-oppression work saw their aims result in tangible and lasting outcomes.[7]

Concrete results from ongoing feminist and anti-oppression-oriented programs may not have been immediate, but some include: several recent permanent staffing positions for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour) administrators; the regular programming of BIPOC artwork in centres' exhibition seasons; and the inclusion of BIPOC artwork in collections deemed contemporary art rather than anthropological objects.[8] In April 2021, the Montréal Museum of Fine Arts announced the hiring of eunice bélidor as Curator of Québec and Canadian Contemporary Art. bélidor is the "first full-time Black curator since [the museum] was founded

[7] The word intersectional is commonly used at this time to though it is not the term most centres discussed in this dissertation used themselves to describe intersectional activity in their spaces. This term has been coopted and misused in a myriad of ways, but it is none the less the term I choose to use here as it captures accurately the idea of overlapping and intersectional identity formation that feminism needs to consider. Further, in the future, I believe we will have better more interesting language for this, and other terms used in this dissertation and that that language can be mapped onto these discussions.

[8] In a June 17, 2020, New York Times article, Sandra E. Garcia wrote that the earliest reference "The New York Times could find on social media was a 2013 tweet. As a phrase, "people of color" dates back centuries — it was first cited in The Oxford English Dictionary, with the British spelling "colour," in 1796 — and is often abbreviated as POC. The other two letters, for black and Indigenous, were included in the acronym to account for the erasure of black people with darker skin and Native American people, according to Cynthia Frisby, a professor of strategic communication at the Missouri School of Journalism." In the Canadian art context, I believe the term entered the common vocabulary as early as 2015, though this fact is almost impossible to corroborate. I see the term appear in my own writing as early as 2017. The term is not neutral however, with activists more recently pushing back against its use and how it has and can be used as a tool in anti-subordination efforts and to silence and stifle equity measures. Alice Ming Wai Jim, the Concordia University Research Chair in Ethnocultural Art Histories proposes ethnocultural as an alternative, especially in consideration of the inability to translate the term into other linguistic and cultural contexts, including French, where we are more likely to see BIPOC people referred to as representative of the "diversité ethnoculturelle." See Sandra E. Garcia, "Where Did BIPOC Come From?" *The New York Times,* June 17, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/article/what-is-bipoc.html and Meera E. Deo, "Why BIPOC Fails," Virginia Law Review, Vol. 107, June 2021, 117-118.

161 years ago."[9] In 2020, Tarah Hogue (Métis, Dutch, and French Canadian) was appointed the inaugural Curator (Indigenous Art) at the Remai Modern in Saskatoon while she also held a post as Indigenous Advisor at Vancouver Art Gallery.[10] Other recent examples include the appointments of John G. Hampton (Chickasaw Nation) as Permanent Executive Director and CEO of the MacKenzie Art Gallery in Regina (2021); Wanda Nanibush (Anishinaabe) as Curator, Indigenous Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO), in Toronto (2016); and Jaimie Isaac (Sagkeeng First Nation) as new Chief Curator at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria (2021).[11] In one example of an institutional gesture towards the decolonization of programming, and an observable result of the First People's Curatorial Residency Program, in 2017, Montréal-based SBC Gallery gave its space and budget to the Wood Land School.[12] This project was led by artists Duane Linklater (Omaskêko Cree), Tanya Lukin Linklater (Alutiiq), and Walter Scott (Mohawk), as well as by curator cheyanne turions, who from 2013 to 2014 was funded by the Canada Council to participate in a First People's Curatorial Residency Program at SBC.[13]

[9] "Montreal Museum of Fine Arts Appoints Eunice Bélidor as Curator,"*Artforum International Magazine*, April 13, 2021, https://www.artforum.com/news/montreal-museum-of-fine-arts-appoints-eunice-belidor-as-curator-85458.
[10] "Tarah Hogue to Be Inaugural Curator (Indigenous Art) at Remai Modern and Indigenous Advisor at Vancouver Art Gallery," *Canadian Art*, July 29, 2020, https://canadianart.ca/news/tarah-hogue-to-be-curator-indigenous-art-at-remai-modern-and-indigenous-advisor-at-vancouver-art-gallery/.
[11] "MacKenzie Art Gallery Announces Appointment of John G. Hampton as Permanent Executive Director and CEO," Media Room, MacKenzie Art Gallery, January 11, 2021, https://mackenzie.art/mackenzie-art-gallery-announces-appointment-of-john-g-hampton-as-permanent-executive-director-and-ceo/; "Wanda Nanibush," People, AGO, accessed October, 2021, https://ago.ca/people/wanda-nanibush; Pedro Arrais, "Jaimie Isaac new chief curator at the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria," *Times Colonist*, August 26, 2021, https://www.timescolonist.com/entertainment/jaimie-isaac-new-chief-curator-at-the-art-gallery-of-greater-victoria-1.24353764.
[12] See Sean J. Patrick Carney, "Taking up Space: An Interview with the Wood Land School," *Art in America*, December 14, 2017, https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/interviews/taking-up-space-an-interview-with-the-wood-land-school-56444/; and John Hampton and the Wood Land School, "Inside a Year-Long Experiment in Indigenous Institutional Critique," *Canadian Art*, May 2, 2017, https://canadianart.ca/features/indigenous-institutional-critique-case-study-wood-land-school/.
[13] turions long claimed Indigenous ancestry based on family stories, but in 2021, removed those claims from her biography. The accountability process is ongoing, as turions herself benefitted from the First People's Curatorial Residency Program, as well as other significant funding meant to benefit Indigenous arts producers. According to her blog (https://cheyanneturions.wordpress.com/), she is in the process of investigating repayment or financial reparations and working with a transformative justice facilitator to address the hard of her misrepresentation.

Decades of work went into changing the way the Canada Council and other funders would come to uplift and support non-white artists and communities, especially Black and Indigenous communities, as well as other historically underrepresented groups like Deaf, Mad, and disabled-identified artists. However, for such initiatives to stick, we know that it is not enough for the councils to shift their funding models in favour of equity- and diversity-supporting initiatives. It cannot be a top-down response; the change must come from within the arts community itself.

When I use the term *equity*, I am referring to the ongoing reflection and progressive action to redistribute resources; especially in a way that makes survival within our current social and economic systems more possible for historically oppressed groups of people. Practicing equity means focusing on the experiences, needs, and narratives of these groups.[14] When I speak about *diversity* and *inclusion* initiatives, I refer to policies actions meant to create opportunities for non-white individuals to participate in Canadian culture and society, often in the form of employment or education opportunities. The Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion defines diversity as something that speaks to a variety of unique dimensions, qualities, and characteristics we all possess, and it defines inclusion as the creation of a culture that strives for equity, and embraces, respects, accepts, and values difference. A key problem with these definitions is that they, in my opinion, continue to assert that individuals are responsible for what is in fact collective culture, and therefore, they fail to recognize the root of the problem. Notably, in April 2021, the Canadian government added the concept of anti-racism alongside the concepts of diversity and inclusion, thereby opening the possibility of disrupting the patterns of white supremacy that continue to negatively impact these well-meaning policies.

[14] I am adapting this definition of equity from the one I helped to draft in Fall 2022 as part of my work at Art+Feminism.

Also important to the discussion of anti-oppression work in Canada is a commitment to decolonization and reconciliation that some centres rightly recognize is integral to meaningful anti-racist work. Decolonization involves undoing colonial patterns or legacies and making a significant shift towards reconciling and establishing meaningful respect between Indigenous and settler and/or non-Indigenous cultures and practices. For the specifically feminist artist-run centres I use as case studies, I argue that, to meet their own social objectives, they must recommit to their feminist engagements and recognize the intersections between feminism and anti-oppression work. This would necessarily include a commitment to decolonization.

My main argument in this dissertation is that for artist-run centres to flourish, they must be less responsive to the needs of their funders and more to the needs of their communities. This is a difficult task because funding practices exert tremendous control over centres and their members. My research shows that when feminist administrative practices in artist-run centres—including but not limited to mentorship models, transparent HR practices like salary equity, and consensus or shared decision making—broke down, they did so as a direct result of changes in funding schemes. Therefore, I argue that artist-run centres' ability or inability to survive and thrive is directly linked to their access to funding. Historically, feminist administrative practices have been self-determined—a model at risk as changes to funding schemes pull artist-run centres toward other forms of administration—in particular, hierarchical managerial models. The cleaving of artist-run centres to their funding poses the impossible challenge of finding ways of working together that can address a history of white supremacy as a guiding work model. For artist-run centres and their funders, the question is this: how can organizations overcome the pressures that current administrative models impose on them and still do feminist and decolonial work?

If Canadian artist-run centres were born out of a need to create a space for art in critical dialogue with the social and political reality of their time, how can they continue to serve this function today? It is not a figment of my generation's imagination that life might have been somewhat easier for artists in Canada in past moments. Without mythologizing the past, in imagining a better future, we can take inspiration from Chinese-Canadian artist Ken Lum's account of how Canadian artists in the 1970s and '80s were able to participate in a notably self-sufficient (and self-determined) system. Individuals were able to play the role of artist, curator, critic, and collector, often simultaneously, with significant creative leeway when it came to appeasing their funders. In 1980, according to Lum, a Canadian artist could

> receive a financial grant from the government to produce work, which could then be shown in an artist-run space from which the artist would receive an exhibition fee and perhaps a residency stipend. The artist could get to the place of exhibition with assistance from a travel grant. Afterwards, the artist could make a submission to the Canada Council Art Bank to purchase the exhibited art. A jury comprised of other artists, each representative of a region in Canada, would make a decision about the purchase.…In the name of a non-hierarchical system of artistic measurement, Canadian artists would be evaluated first and foremost by Canadian artists, peer groups in effect, without the need to rely on expert opinions from non-artists.[15]

However partial Lum's reprise of the past may be, especially with respect to who could or couldn't receive these grants, the autonomy he describes is key. My research began as an exercise in imagining a future with such autonomy for Canadian artist-run centres, which, because of increasing economic austerity, is at risk. Lum's description is Utopian, in that it describes a (probably imaginary) pathway for artists that is at once fabulous and dated. It's not necessarily important that the anecdote be true because it serves more as fodder for the imagination. When I use utopia in this dissertation, I am not equating Canadian artist-run culture of the past with Utopia but instead suggesting that much of the original ethos stemmed from an

[15] Ken Lum, referenced in Vincent Bonin and Michèle Thériault, eds., *Documentary Protocols/Protocoles Documentaires (1967-1975)* (Montréal: Galerie Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, 2010), 55.

interest in building Utopian projects and that any future for artist-run centres requires an engagement with utopian methodology.

Throughout this study, I take up Ruth Levitas's call to *educate our desire* and look to ways artist-run centres might move beyond statements of solidarity and towards becoming more responsive to and reflective of the needs and desires of arts communities in Canada.[16] I believe that utopian methodology can be used to envision this future, and I argue that intersectional feminist theories can strengthen the claims artist-run centres make about being forward-thinking spaces.

My dissertation demonstrates how feminist administrative (best) practices have changed alongside changes in feminist theory—from first- to third-wave feminisms, for example—and suggests ways in which artist-run centres can reinsert themselves into these discussions.[17] I explore the ways in which Canadian artist-run centres have developed over their nearly fifty-year history, from the 1970s to the present. I am particularly concerned with the history of centres that have engaged with feminist, anti-racist, and racial equity policies and methodologies, and the impact those policies and practices have had on specific centres within the larger artist-run centre milieu and funding context. I investigate the relationship between programming and feminist practice in artist-run centres in order to understand how this history may influence the current and future feminist engagements of these spaces**.** Overall, my research strongly suggests that feminist methods employed within artist-run centres, at their inception and continuing over time, have had a profound impact on the Canadian art community, including its international

[16] Throughout this dissertation, I attempt to identify the people I include by profession and by cultural background. My goal is to upend the pattern of identifying BIPOC people but not white people. However, not everyone publicly identifies their background and heritage, and therefore I cannot identify everyone in this way. A lack of identification does not mean that the person is by default white. I also want to underline that I do not consider cultural background nor profession to be the only, or even most important, identifiers.

[17] The term third-wave feminism is credited to Rebecca Walker. See Rebecca Walker, "Becoming the Third Wave" *Ms.* (January 1992): 39-41.

recognition.

I argue that a consideration of specifically feminist practices in artist-run centres is key to understanding any broader history of artist-run centres. These practices emerged from feminist (and sometimes utopian) social movements and imaginaries and included collective self-governance, self-determination, (child) care practices, (pay) equity, and anti-racist practices, and were carried out by cultural producers such as artists, curators, programmers, and policy advocates. The few official histories that exist about Canadian artist-run centres (reviewed here in section 1.6) tend to mythologize these spaces as if they accomplished their Utopian dreams, as artists have historically been paid to exhibit (thanks to CARFAC, the Canadian artists representation organization).[18] At the February 2021 panel *Riddim an' Resistance: Lillian Allen, Clive Robertson, respondents Britta Badour and Klive Walker*, settler scholar and archivist Felicity Tayler explicitly described how artist-run centres and networks in Canada were "conceived of as a utopian form for non-hierarchical ways of living, practicing and producing art."[19] Such perspectives emphasize all the positive aspects of artist-run culture in Canada—that it provides opportunities to exhibit across a wide network, it supports production, and it creates a pipeline towards international recognition. They imagine Canada as, at once, an international

[18] This may be apocryphal, but I've often heard about how artists felt they could mail a fish to the national Art Bank (a Canada Council of the Arts division which purchases and loans works by Canadian artists) and call it art and get a cheque in return. This story has always been related to me as a funny thing that an artist may have actually done, and because of my own conditioning under an art history that upholds white supremacy, I've always assumed that the artist in question was a white man, testing the limits of this so-called perfect support system for artists. What changes, however, when you consider that it may have been a non-white artist mailing in the work? Would that be less funny? Would it be more appropriate? Is this an impossible fantasy because of the ways funding for artists separated Indigenous artists from the main funding streams into niche programs, and the ways artist-run centres almost exclusively supported white artists?

[19] "Riddim an' Resistance: Lillian Allen, Clive Robertson, respondents Britta Badour and Klive Walker," Panel Discussion, Desire Lines: The Series, organized by Felicity Tayler, February 26, 2021, http://agyu.art/project/riddim-an-resistance/. Lillian Allen is a Black-Canadian poet and musician. Clive Robertson is a British-Canadian artist, cultural worker and art historian. Britta Badour is a Black Canadian poet. Klive Walker is a Black-Canadian cultural critic involved in the reggae music scene.

player in the art world and a regional backwater that artists must graduate out of to become so-called "real artists."

Existing histories often simultaneously downplay the ways artist-run centres have been at the financial mercy of governmental funding agencies, granting councils, and NGOs, and the ways artist-run centres consequently made decisions contributing to the marginalization of women and BIPOC communities. Despite their best interests, feminist artist-run centres often struggled with forming explicit anti-racist practices and failed to recognize pervasive racism and white supremacy in their policies and culture. Canadian art historian Anne Bénichou writes in *Documentary Protocols* that the Canada Council for the Arts froze funding for new artist-run centres from 1975 to 1976 because of an increase in demand.[20] What we cannot find in the history books (though we could possibly find in the Canada Council archives, which I was unable to access due to the COVID-19 global pandemic) is whether the potential centres frozen out in that period could have possibly changed the whitewashed arts landscape. This information is unavailable because most written histories focus only on the art spaces that have succeeded in receiving funding. Additionally, because the majority of the literature on artist-run centres in Canada has been published by the centres themselves or in Canadian art magazines, there are few secondary sources that discuss the spaces that did not enter into the public discourse.

Feminism means many things for many people. For me, and for the purpose of this dissertation, contemporary feminism means a way of thinking that uses collective power to challenge oppressive structures—especially power structures based on a perceived but false hierarchy of race, gender, sexuality, class, or anything else—and to create new, flourishing pathways. I define feminism as a system of care that forefronts equitable processes and is all-around anti-oppressive. Certainly, this is not how feminism has always been defined, nor is it

[20] Bonin and Thériault, eds., *Documentary Protocols*, 280.

defined as such for everyone (I go into this in greater detail later in this chapter). I recognize that there has never been a singular definition that has worked for everyone. I also recognize that this contentious term can be seen as exclusive and exclusionary. It is important to remember that harms have been done to BIPOC women and men in the name of feminism. Yet, I believe that, in the context of artist-run culture, feminism rooted in a decolonial and critical recognition of white supremacy opens the possibility for radical and utopian transformation and holds space for a flourishing future.[21]

1.2 Where I Stand

I began working in artist-run centres in 2007, first as a volunteer, then as a member. In 2009, I was hired at Centre de production et d'exposition Eastern Bloc as an administrative assistant, and eventually moved on to become Development Coordinator, a position I held until late 2013. From 2011 to 2014, I was on the Board of Directors at articule. My understanding of artist-run centres, always in flux like any good experience, is deeply influenced by my involvement in them. While I took a break from working *at* artist-run centres from late 2013 to mid-2018 (to start my doctoral work, to have two babies, and to work at a museum and in the digital humanities), I continued to see my work as being *in* artist-run centres. By this I mean that I continued to curate projects in artist-run centres, I continued to publish about them academically and otherwise, and I continued to be involved in other ways too, such as by sitting on committees. I was a member of articule, which meant I could vote in elections and sit on the programming committee. At articule, I abstained from certain types of committee work for the

[21] I borrow the term *flourishing future* from Marxist sociologist Erik Olin Wright (USA) who used it in his 2010 book *Envisioning Real Utopias* to present an active alternative to capitalism.

duration of this thesis to avoid conflicts of interest. Until November 2021, I worked as Programming Coordinator at articule, a post I held since the summer of 2019.

I am committed to decolonial and anti-racist practices and to racial equity in Canada because we should all be interested in these topics if we care about a healthy, flourishing society. I am a white, straight, cis-gendered woman whose family came to Montréal and Winnipeg nearly one hundred years ago as Jewish refugees from Europe and as migrants from Scotland. My whiteness and my English-French bilingualism (Canada's two official languages) has opened doors for my career in government-funded artist-run centres.

I want to acknowledge the ways in which this dissertation actively builds on the labour of my artist, arts administrator, and art historian peers who are Indigenous and/or Black, as well as those from other historically marginalized groups. Their work has been pivotal in radically changing the Canadian art ecology. Moreover, they have been doing work on equity and the politics of race in arts institutions for decades. Throughout this dissertation, I come back to their work and their words. While I don't think a project such as mine exists elsewhere—one that collates the work of feminist artist-run centres over time—it is only because of their diligent and relentless activism, their own production of literature, and their tending to archives that my dissertation can exist at all.

1.3 Methodology

I place my findings in critical dialogue with theoretical models derived from the interdisciplinary work of art historians, cultural theorists, and policy analysts who investigate feminism, power, community development, utopianism, and art's potential for social change. I

analyse administrative practices throughout in-depth case studies of several feminist artist-run centres. My case studies include the following institutions (in order of analysis):

1. Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA) in Winnipeg, Manitoba
2. Women in Focus Collective (WIF) in Vancouver, British Columbia
3. The Women's Art Resource Centre (WARC) and the Feminist Art Gallery (FAG) in Toronto, Ontario
4. Womanspirit in London, Ontario
5. La Centrale and articule in Montréal, Québec

I selected these organizations for my case studies because, apart from articule, which I discuss below, they were all founded as explicitly feminist. This allows me to investigate the self-proclaimed feminist frameworks in place at the inception of these centres (which might now be looked back on as Utopian), and trace the ways in which centres have maintained, adapted, and sometimes surrendered certain feminist methodologies as they became more formalized and institutionalized. As an insider with privileged access to staff and archives, I use an auto-ethnographic approach to work with La Centrale and articule. I am or have been a member of both centres, so I know the spaces, archives, programming, and governing structures.

This thesis is further organized around the principles of utopian methodology, as developed by Ruth Levitas. In this way, each chapter in this thesis is organized to include sections that reflect the steps in Levitas's method: identifying the problem, conducting an archaeological dig of the past, and determining possible solutions.

I ask the following questions:

1. What is the context from which the centre emerged and/or that it operated in?
2. Who was part of the community and where did the centre situate itself within the larger Canadian and international arts ecology?
3. In what ways did the centre engage with contemporary feminism, whether

consciously or not?

4. How did funding or lack thereof impact the centre?

In asking these questions to each centre, I unveil the centre's current and historical relationship to feminist praxis; its engagement with the larger arts ecology, including funding priorities; and the ways in which the collective histories of feminist artist-run centres have shaped the current situation of artist-run centres in Canada. Finally, in upending the dominant ways utopia has been invoked in relationship to artist-run centres (as a dead-end, a blueprint, or a fallacy), I reclaim the possibility of (feminist) utopianism to imagine a flourishing future.

This research received initial clearance from Queen's University's General Research Ethics Board in October 2016. Beginning in November 2016, I conducted interviews and oral histories with subjects across Canada. I selected the subjects to include based on their current or historical relationships with the centres that make up my case studies, as well as with Association of National Non-Profit Artists Centres (ANNPAC), with the Minquon Panchayat, with The Artist-Run Centres and Collectives Conference (ARCA) and its regional divisions, and more generally with the artist-run centre community.[22] I used semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions so that participants had the opportunity to determine the direction of the conversation. My intention was to co-create dialogue as opposed to determining the discussion. In addition to the formal interviews, I employed the participant observation method at all case study locations, which is defined by an interaction with people in everyday life while collecting information.[23]

[22] ANNPAC was the Association of National Non-Profit Artists Centres, which was active in Canada from 1976 to 1994. The Minquon Panchayat was a working group formed of BIPOC ANNPAC members and non-members. ARCA is The Artist-Run Centres and Collectives Conference. Operational since 2005, ARCA effectively replaced ANNPAC. These organizations and projects are discussed in fuller detail later in this dissertation.

[23] Danny L. Jorgensen, *Participant observation: A methodology for human studies.* Newbury Park, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1989, 8. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412985376

I recruited potential participants by personal invitation over email. As I mentioned, I identified and solicited participants based on their involvement in the Canadian artist-run centre community (as members, board members, and staff), or at the suggestion of previously contacted participants. Participants were able to withdraw at any point prior to publication and could choose to have their data destroyed. In order to minimize social risks, I offered participants the possibility of complete confidentiality as well as the opportunity to, within a three-month window, revoke their participation. To help encourage free consent, I provided a full debriefing on the reach and scope of my project as well as the potential risks. They were also offered full agency over their identifying information. If they decided not to be identified, I used pseudonyms to encode their data. I directly name the centres in my case studies, and in so doing, I recognize that identities could be inferred since there are only a few potential participants at each centre, and my ongoing research and work are known in the artist-run centre community at a national level as I have been actively involved for almost a decade. Nevertheless, the social risk to the participant is minimal as my project does not seek out gossip or salacious information about the past, but rather looks towards potential futures.

In this dissertation, I employ archival and ethnographic methods. I was lucky enough to be able to speak directly with many of the people who played a part in these histories. I was invited into archives and trusted with the stories I found there. I conducted my research at sites across Canada. My primary research site was Artexte in Montréal, Québec. Artexte is a community-built library and research centre focused on Canadian contemporary art, with holdings of over 27,000 documents covering the visual arts from 1965 to the present. Artexte has holdings related to every centre I studied for this dissertation, and I worked closely with its dedicated staff, especially Jessica Hébert and Hélène Brousseau. While researching Women in

Focus (WIF), I visited the archives at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. I also consulted the WIF archives at VIVO Media Arts in Vancouver under the supervision of archivist Karen Knights, whose deep knowledge of Canadian artist-run culture was hugely helpful. In Manitoba, I visited the extensive on-site archival holdings at MAWA, as well as those held at the Archives of Manitoba in Winnipeg. In Toronto, I visited the WARC archives hosted at the AGO under the supervision of Amy Furness. I also visited the on-site holdings of the FAG gallery in the home of founders Allyson Mitchell and Deirdre Logue. While briefly active, BAWA was based in Hamilton, though its archives are dispersed elsewhere, primarily in the dossiers of the aforementioned sites. In Montréal, I consulted the on-site archives, as well as the La Centrale archives, housed at Concordia University, thanks to the very generous help of Alexandra Mills and Ellen Gressling. Finally, in Halifax, I visited the archives of the Feminist Collective at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD), as well as those of Inventions Gallery, which are housed at EyeLevel Gallery and at Dalhousie University.[24]

In March 2020, most of the world was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and, naturally, academic research ground to a halt. For me, this resulted in reduced or a total lack of access to many of the archives I wished to visit (or revisit). While many of my site visits were completed at that point, there was still a lot of work I wanted to do. At first, I felt panicked by this new reality, which continues to be our reality at the writing of this thesis. I was limited to archives that had already been digitized, and to conversations with people that were comfortable with online communications. I personally felt exhausted from excessive screen time and the pressures of trying to navigate myself, my family, and an artist-run centre through a global pandemic. I know that there is no single dissertation that ever feels complete to the student, but

[24] "Eyelevel Gallery fonds," Dalhousie University, accessed December 10, 2021, https://memoryns.ca/eyelevel-gallery-fonds

these circumstances have very much underlined this for me and leave me excited for what the next stage of this research could look like.

1.4 Literature Review

Canadian artist-run centres were set up as alternatives to museums and private galleries.[25] They are run by and for artists and people invested in the arts. Today, artist-run centres are part of Canada's national cultural apparatus and are vibrant community spaces that produce and display some of the most important artistic output in Canada. Much of the work that eventually comes to represent the nation on an international level, such as the work of artists Rebecca Belmore and Stan Douglas, for example, develops out of artist-run centres. Artist-run centres support artists in the early stages of their career *before* they receive attention at a national or international level. Of course, artist-run centres also show work by recognized, mid-career artists, but it is their role as cultural incubators and the impact they have on burgeoning careers that I want to emphasize here. Artist-run centres, as spaces for exhibiting art and culture, are not unique to Canada. Sweden, for example, has a thriving community of similar spaces, perhaps because it, too, has a national financial support system for artists. Canadian artist-run centres, however, occupy a more significant cultural position—and are more numerous—here than anywhere else in the world.[26] This is largely due to the long-standing system of financial support, and the policies that have been in place since the Canada Council for the Arts was established in 1957.

[25] Felicity Tayler, "Perpetuating the 'Eternal Network': Bibliographies of Five Canadian Artist-run Centres," *Art Documentation: Journal of the Art Libraries Society of North America* 26, no. 2 (2007): 4.
[26] Tayler, "Perpetuating the 'Eternal Network,'" 4.

Artist-run centres were, and many continue to be, fertile ground for the development of feminist outlooks, particularly as they have shaped administrative and institutional practice. My thesis demonstrates how, over time, certain artist-run centre founders lost their early utopian dreams and fell short of maintaining their anticipated goals, such as offering childcare and fair pay. Throughout this dissertation, I provide concrete examples of certain feminist practices that fell to the wayside. For example, in its early years, as I discuss in Chapter Five, La Centrale offered childcare, a practice it later discontinued when the larger cultural context for childcare in Québec had changed, rendering it irrelevant to the centre's immediate community.

The history of artist-run culture in Canada is synchronic with the political history of (multiple) women's movements, and with the legacy of second-wave feminism in Canada, a legacy that ultimately played out in the administration of these spaces. Moreover, the current so-called crisis in feminist thought—namely the rise of right-wing feminisms and neoliberal feminism—and the criticism of predominantly Western feminism brought forward by Indigenous, Black, Muslim, and transnational feminism/women of colour, are at once concurrent with and a response to the rise of neoliberal funding policies. Of course, Black feminists and others have mounted critiques against Western feminism since the '70s.[27] I draw on their work to conduct my own critique of '70s and '80s feminism in Chapter Two. With respect to my case studies, I look at artist-run centres that emerged during the second wave of feminism and explore the ways in which those that are still active engage with contemporary feminisms.

Thomas More (British) first coined the word *utopia* when he wrote a fictional book of the same name in 1516. He derived the word from the Greek words, οὐ, "not," and τόπος, "place." It

[27] See Gaby Hinsliff, "Tory feminists: the true blue sisterhood," *The Guardian*, January 8, 2012, https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2012/jan/08/tory-women-mps-new-feminism; Renée Martin, "I'm not a feminist (and there is no but)," *The Guardian*, April 10 2010, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/apr/10/white-feminism-black-woman-womanism.

is most commonly translated as "no-place."[28] Politicians, writers, and cultural thinkers have taken up utopianism as a means of imagining—and sometimes dictating—an ideal, improved future. Political science scholar and utopian theorist Lucy Sargisson (British) argues that, contrary to the popular assumption that there is no room for utopianism in something as material as politics, politics and utopianism are, in fact, symbiotic.[29] A desire for something better is what drives politics, at least progressive politics, and anything that attempts to cling to a failed system is conservative, or rather, Conservative, according to Sargisson.[30] Sargisson's argument is meant to demonstrate how utopia can operate as something other than a clear, if unattainable, destination or blueprint. Following this, utopia with a lowercase "u" is something more akin to desire, passion, and anticipation.

Ruth Levitas—a founder of utopian studies as a discipline alongside contemporary thinkers such as Krishnan Kumar, Tom Moylan, Fredric Jameson, Erik Olin Wright, and Lucy Sargisson—is one of the first thinkers to devote scholarship to the definition of utopia. Her work aims to shift the usage of the word away from its sometimes negative connotation and towards a more positive one. Specifically, her work shifts the term utopia to a goal-oriented definition, and eventually towards a methodology. Levitas defines two principal variants of utopian theory: *blueprint utopianism* and *critical utopianism*. I will briefly explain both streams and clarify the concept of utopian methodology, which is essentially critical utopianism put into action.

Many early utopian writers and scholars envisioned utopia, in contrast to what the word implies, as a real, conceivable place—a plausible destination. As a result, these thinkers planned,

[28] Lyman Tower Sargent, "The Necessity of Utopian Thinking: A Cross-National Perspective," in *Thinking Utopia: Steps into Other Worlds*," eds. Jörn Rüsen, Michael Fehr and Thomas Rieger (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), 1.
[29] Lucy Sargisson, "The Curious Relationship Between Politics and Utopia," in *Utopia Method Vision: The Use Value of Social Dreaming*, eds. Tom Moylan and Raffaella Baccolini (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007), 25.
[30] Sargisson, "The Curious Relationship," 27.

down to the last detail, their visions for the improved societies of the future. This is what Levitas calls blueprint utopianism, which she associates with failed utopian projects like applied communism.[31] While she does argue that blueprint Utopianism retains some use in creating emancipatory, flourishing futures, she ultimately concludes that static forms can never effectively function as true utopias. In contrast, she argues for what she calls *utopia as method*, which she sees as having manoeuvrability. Utopia as method is an adaptable concept and can therefore be open to multiple interpretations.

Utopia is a complex term, and it is important to recognize the ways it can be problematic. For many, calling something *utopian* is a quick way to say it is impossible—never going to happen—to dismiss an idea. There is also the perception that no good can come of Utopianism, since it has been used to justify totalitarian regimes, including fascism.[32] If we read these cautions alongside Levitas and Sargisson, the dangers of uncritical Utopian thinking and the renewed need for utopia as method become clear. What's more, in order to move past our current situation, we must *educate our desires*, which is utopian exploration according to Levitas.[33]

Levitas and Sargisson are utopian theorists working at the intersection of Marxism, anti-capitalism, critical ecology, and feminism. Levitas points out that Marxism and socialism themselves have a utopian heritage; they are both based on the idea that in order to create a better world, we must begin by giving people the tools to imagine and anticipate a better world. Describing Marxist utopianism, she writes that utopia is

[31] Of course, Communism has been put into practice in very diverse ways, so not every iteration has been a) an example of blueprint utopianism, and/or b) a failure.

[32] My intention here is not to discredit communism specifically, nor to personally equate communism with fascism. Many socialist scholars argue that the term "totalitarian" itself is a Cold War invention intended specifically to discredit communism by equating it with fascism. For more on this see: Despina Lalaki, "Against "Totalitarianism": A Conversation with Enzo Traverso," *Verso Blog,* 27 February 2018, https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/3644-against-totalitarianism-a-conversation-with-enzo-traverso

[33] See Ruth Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 106-130.

> the desire for a better future, rather than simply a description of an alternative. The problems Marx confronted are still with us: how to comprehend the simultaneous simplicity (in principle) and complexity (in practice) of global capitalism as a gigantic, dynamic and intrinsically expansionist system of exploitation of most of the world's population by a small minority; how to hope for or predict from the actual forces on the ground a radical change that will harness these huge productive forces to the general good, with the now added complication of environmental sustainability; and how to imagine the outlines of a better world beyond capitalism, in a context where we are repeatedly told that there is no alternative.[34]

Following this logic, utopia is an expression of a flourishing future (though not a conflation of Communism and Utopia. While Marx was not *specifically* a utopian, his work follows the same desire principle. As she points out,

> Marx was very wary of speculation about the character of future society, declining to write recipes for the cookbooks of the future (surely directed at Fourier, who did indeed specify the menus for the inhabitants of his imagined utopia). There are essentially two reasons for this. The first is the serious theoretical objection, that all subsequent Marxists (and others) sympathetic to utopian envisioning must address, that it is impossible to imagine the needs, wants and available satisfactions of a future and radically different society. The second is the claim about the nature of social change. Marx and Engels largely endorsed the critiques of emerging industrial capitalism by those they termed "utopian socialists." They rejected the politics, however, of trying to change the world through schemes that prematurely resolved (or failed to understand) the conflict of interests between social classes.[35]

The antithesis of blueprint utopianism is, then, critical utopianism, which focuses on questions rather than answers in imagining a better future.

Building on Levitas' notion of educating our desires, Lucy Sargisson describes critical utopianism—which she calls *transgressive utopianism*—as a process that can be used to identify our desires and determine how to achieve them. Transgressive utopianism is subversive; "it challenges from within the aims and assumptions of the ground whence it comes," and it

[34] Ruth Levitas, "Beyond Bourgeois Right: Freedom, Equality and Utopia in Marx and Morris," *The European Legacy* 9, no.5 (2004): 605, https://doi.org/10.1080/1084877042000306370.
[35] Levitas, "Beyond Bourgeois Right," 606.

destabilizes the framework within which it operates.[36] It refuses utopia as a blueprint and acknowledges that there is no perfect, attainable Utopia. Sargisson argues that blueprint utopianism is out of sync with contemporary feminisms that operate with a plural vision. She suggests, citing Tom Moylan, that critical utopias, in opposition to blueprint utopias, are rooted in discontent and allow for "simultaneous political critique and the creation of something new."[37]

Stemming from critical utopianism is Levitas' notion of *utopia as method*. As discussed above, her incredibly simple utopian methodology follows a three-part process: identify a contemporary problem; engage in what she calls archaeological and archival research to understand the root of the problem; and move to educate our desires in order to find a solution to the problem, a solution that takes contemporary circumstances into consideration and does not simply advocate a return to the past. What's more, both critical and methodological utopianism anticipate that desire will need room to adapt and grow. This is the crux of Sargisson's argument that one utopia, as proposed by the projects of blueprint utopianism, can never work for everyone; our desires are different. Utopias should see multiple ways forward and acknowledge difference. Utopias tell us what is wrong with the present. Utopias are born of discontent with the now, and without a working knowledge of a utopia's author and her or his contemporary readers, we cannot understand their dreams of a better future.

In the following chapter, I explain in greater detail my engagement with feminist administrative theory, as well as feminist analyses of the art world. I also examine the writing of Canadian cultural race politics scholars, to borrow the term from Kin Gagnon, such as Richard Fung (Trinidadian-Canadian), Andrea Fatona (Black-Canadian), Lee-Ann Martin (Mohawk),

[36] Lucy Sargisson, *Utopian Bodies and the Politics of Transgression* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 2.
[37] Sargisson, *Utopian Bodies*, 10.

Charmaine Nelson (Black-Canadian), Skye Maule O'Brien (white settler Canadian), and Zainub Verjee (Indo-Kenyan Canadian by way of England).

1.5 New Ways of Thinking Through Old Topics

This dissertation challenges the utopian idealism that serves white and male privilege. I hope it not only challenges and expands upon existing histories but also makes room for subsequent questioning of the canon. Artist-run centres are not only places for experimental art but are equally platforms for experimental administration.[38] Based on this understanding, my research asks the following: In what ways have neoliberal austerity measures affected these experimental administrative platforms? Which feminist utopian practices of the 1970s have been sustained, and which have been modified or forgotten? What influence did these practices have on feminist artist-run centres, and what is their legacy for Canadian art? What factors contributed to the transformation of feminist artist-run centres from potential utopian structures into formalized institutions? How have changes in arts policy in Canada affected women cultural workers and women's spaces specifically?[39] And, how have second-wave feminist legacies imposed limitations on *and* created possibilities for different communities of women cultural producers? More importantly, how have conversations about gender equity upheld white supremacist models of cultural production? I contextualize these paths of inquiry in two ways: one, by interrogating the framework for policy and funding changes in Canadian cultural institutions, particularly those pertaining to artist-run centres and museums; and two, by tracing

[38] Tayler, "Perpetuating the 'Eternal Network,'" 4.
[39] When I use the term *women* in this dissertation, I refer to both cis and trans women unless otherwise noted.

the history of feminism's complex cultural politics from the 1970s forward, with particular attention to the contestations of identity politics in Canada.

My research articulates how artist-run centres in Canada, through their community-building, have provided relief and alternative models for arts and culture in Canada while attending to the precarious labour conditions of artists and cultural workers. These precarious labour conditions have disproportionately impacted women.[40] My research generates a sub-archive of feminist utopian thinking in artist-run centres, preserves important histories of feminist Canadian art institutions, and contributes to considerations of the future of artist-run centres at this moment. It also provides a view from below of how neoliberal state policy and administrative structures become hegemonic.[41]

My project links the history of artist-run culture, state-driven cultural policy, and feminist history in Canada. The theoretical basis for my project integrates utopian theory and feminist praxis, with Ruth Levitas and Kimberlé Crenshaw (African-American) as keystones in this body of theory. Through this integrated theoretical lens, I investigate the following: the way both North American and European feminist theory from the 1970s onwards has informed administrative models in Canadian artist-run spaces; the link between the decline of feminism as a guiding administrative model and the rise of a corporate model of fiscal and administrative control brought about by increasingly conservative funders; and the effect that changes in the language of grants and cultural policy has had on the language of the centres themselves.

The tone and rhetoric of this thesis is purposefully aligned with the language of the communities it originates from and returns the research to. By this, I mean I am writing first and

[40] Giorgio Tavano Blessi, Pier Luigi Sacco, and Thomas Pilati, "Independent artist-run centres: an empirical analysis of the Montréal non-profit visual arts field" *Cultural Trends* 20, no.2 (2011): 142.
[41] Ian McKay, "Introduction: All that is Solid Melts into Air," in *The Challenge of Modernity: A Reader on Post-Confederation Canada*, ed. Ian McKay (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1992), xxiv.

foremost for the artist-run centre community, and I hope that this is an accessible tool with which we can address our histories. Given the significant deficit of academic material related to this subject, I hope this project contributes to that small body of literature. I hope that my tone throughout is understood to be part of a lineage of publications that challenges the conformity of a white, male-dominated academic model. Challenging this academic model does not, in my view, diminish the rigour of the research and argument.

1.6 Chapter Breakdowns

In this dissertation, I switch back and forth between history and the future. In Chapter Two, I consider a history of artist-run culture in Canada, with a focus on feminist organizational models. I provide an overview of feminist history in Canada, with an emphasis on decolonial and Indigenous feminisms. I also define feminist administrative principles and theory. In Chapter Three, I introduce two case studies—Women in Focus (WIF) and Mentoring Artists for Women's Arts (MAWA)—and demonstrate that, in the case of feminist artist-run centres, access to funding has been complicated both by the centres' ethics and by government imperatives vis-à-vis funding priorities. In Chapter Four, I look more closely at the history of funding in Canada, especially equity-focused funding initiatives, and I explore case studies based in Ontario, including The Pauline McKibben Cultural Centre, The Women's Cultural Building, Gallery 940, Sparkes Gallery, Women's Art Resource Centre, and Womanspirit. Additionally, I revisit Maura Broadhurst's 1997 Master's thesis, *Strategic Spaces: Towards a Genealogy of Women Artists' Groups in Canada,* in which she argues, "the lack of documentation of the activities of the

groups has resulted in a widespread ignorance among Canadians of women artists' histories, and in a case of amnesia causing a repetition of history."[42] In Chapter Five, I explore what I think artist-run centres can achieve in the future if given the opportunity, and use La Centrale Galerie Powerhouse and articule as case studies. Finally, in Chapter Six, I move fully from history to futurisms, and with the use of one final case study—the Saskatchewan Women in the Arts Association (SWAA)—I mine the past to imagine a future for feminist artist-run centres.

I dig into the history of artist-run centres and their relationships with various funding structures to understand their current situations and their slippery relationships with feminist praxis. In moving forward towards a feminist (utopian) future, as Levitas suggests, we must *educate our desire,* and develop a future for these spaces in line with contemporary intersectional feminist praxis.[43]

[42] Maura Lesley Broadhurst, "Strategic Spaces: Towards a Genealogy of Women Artists' Groups in Canada," (Master's thesis, Concordia University, 1997), iii.
[43] Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia,* 106-130.

Chapter Two

A History of the Present Situation

2.1 A History of Artist-Run Culture, with an Emphasis on Feminist Models

In this chapter, I chronicle the history of artist-run culture in order to parse out what a Canadian artist-run centre is and isn't. In doing so, I map some of the established histories of artist-run centres in Canada to make space for the feminist and anti-racist histories within this milieu that are generally left out of dominant and existing narratives. From there, I offer a condensed timeline of Anglo-Canadian and Québec cultural history, explore the history of state-driven funding, and offer a partial and condensed timeline of Canadian feminist history. I investigate what I believe are the major issues that dominate the discourse in contemporary artist-run centres: money, power, and relevancy—in each case, who has it and how much do they have? In this chapter, I begin weaving the thread of utopian methodology through the history and potentiality of artist-run centres. In expanding Canadian feminist history beyond white feminism, and with a specific focus on Indigenous feminism, I hope to demonstrate that the problems within feminist artist-run centres and their funding bodies mirror those of any institution operating under a colonial mandate. To be utopian in a settler-colonial state requires a profound engagement with the politics of decolonization, which would rattle the very roots of artist-run culture. The widespread avoidance of meaningful decolonization practices in artist-run organizations is one of the main reasons why we have cultural amnesia around questions of

racism and equity in the arts, and it is why artist-run centres have struggled—and continue to struggle—with questions of relevancy.

Before I expand on the relationship between artist-run centres and policies of diversity and inclusion by way of funding practices, I'd like to define what I mean by an artist-run centre. The origins of the term is contested; British-Canadian art historian, *FUSE* magazine founder, and artist Clive Robertson identifies himself as having coined the term "artist-run centre" in 1977, while another author, quoting artist and Western Front co-founder Glenn Lewis in *Parallélogramme*, claims that "the term artist-run centres or 'parallel galleries' was first coined by the Visual Arts Section of the Canada Council in the 1970s in describing funding initiatives for alternative or artist-run spaces."[44] Today we still think of artist-run centres as alternatives, but how can an artist-run centre be an alternative if it is obliged to operate without autonomy? I argue that the original impulse to name artist-run centres as *parallel* more accurately captures its relationship to the dominant paradigm of arts governance and state control in Canada.

It is not only the origin of the term but also the originator that is contested. French-Canadian writer and curator Vincent Bonin writes that the first Canadian artist-run centre was Intermedia Society, founded in 1967, "which was the first multidisciplinary cooperative to receive funding from the Canada Council for the Arts."[45] AA Bronson (white settler-Canadian), however, recognizes A Space, founded in 1971, as the first artist-run centre.[46] There is no definitive history available; the study of artist-run centres is an important but still underdeveloped area within Canadian art history. Most of the literature, such as *Whispered Art*

[44] Modern Fuel, *Then & Then Again: Practices Within an Artist-Run Culture, 1969-2006: A Clive Robertson Retrospective* (Kingston: Modern Fuel, 2007): 4; L. Valmestad, "Surfing artist-run centres in Winnipeg, Manitoba," *Art Libraries Journal* 24 no.3 (January 1999): 31.
[45] Vincent Bonin and Michèle Thériault, eds., *Documentary Protocols/Protocoles Documentaires (1967-1975)* (Montréal: Galerie Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, 2010), 18.
[46] AA Bronson and Peggy Gale, eds., *Museums by Artists* (Toronto, Art Metropole, 1983), 32.

History: Twenty Years at the Western Front (Wallace 1993); *Decentre: Concerning Artist-Run Culture / À propos de centres d'artistes* (Elaine Chang et al. 2008); and *Institutions by Artists: Volume One* (Khonsary and Podevsa 2012) focuses on the centres that, incidentally, have not had feminist leadership or explicitly feminist agendas.[47] We know that many centres have employed feminist administrative practices; therefore, it is important to look at the impact of feminist administration over an extended period of time.

This investigation will consider how shifts in funding models nationally have affected production and administration. There are a handful of now incomplete and outdated histories of artist-run centres in Canada (Bonin and Thériault 2010; Bronson and Gale 1983; Bronson 1987; Foss, Paikowsky and Whitelaw 2011; Khonsary and Podesva 2012; Labossière 2008; Douglas 1991; and Nemiroff 1985). There are also several texts that analyse artist-run culture outside of Canada (Hebert and Karlsen; Rosati & Staniszewski). In *Traffic* (2012), Bonin, for example, teases out a history of conceptual art in Canada between 1965 and 1980, discussing the cross-country connections and differences of East and West Coast arts communities. This book mentions very early artist-run centres but does not go into much detail on them (as they are not the central focus), and it does not address many spaces beyond the most well-known. As well, AA Bronson writes heavily about early artist-run culture, both in his own books on the subject and in publications such as *Institutions by Artists* (Khonsary and Podesva 2012), claiming that artist-run centres were becoming museums by artists (as early as the 1980s). These texts are important additions to the discourse on Canadian art history, but do not speak to the feminist and activist countercultures present in the membership of artist-run centres. On that subject there is

[47] Importantly, La Centrale has published its own history (Leila Pourtavaf, ed. *Féminismes Électriques. Montreal: La Centrale Galerie Powerhouse,* Montreal: Éditions Remue-ménage, 2012) which I discuss in Chapter Five, and MAWA has published a history of Canadian feminist art (*Desire Change,* 2017), which I discuss in Chapter Four. See Heather Davis, ed., *Desire Change: Contemporary Feminist Art in Canada* (Montréal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017).

only Maura Lesley Broadhurst Master's thesis *Strategic Spaces: Towards a Genealogy of Women Artists' Groups in Canada*. Finally, a handful of texts exist on the subject of race and gender in artist-run centres (Gagnon & Fung 2002; O'Brian 2007; Robertson 2006). Nothing exists that traces the genealogy of feminist administrative practices and their impact throughout artist-run centres in Canada—not even in publications put out by artist-run centres like Montréal's La Centrale, which has had a feminist mandate since its inception in 1973.[48] Across these different accounts of origins and terminology, the common understanding is that artist-run centres were set up as alternatives to museums and private galleries.

Given the absence of documentation, it is important to highlight the feminist histories in artist-run centres. Art production in Canada has been heavily subsidized by the government of Canada as a means of nation-building since the 1951 Massey Commission (which I describe later in this chapter). One of the earliest goals of the Massey Commission was to make "available to the people of foreign countries adequate information concerning Canada," via cultural output.[49] The goal for arts funders, in this context, was to support work that they believed spoke to a specific Canadian imaginary. The work they believed supported this agenda did not include work by feminist artists coming out of feminist institutions, and so the colonial and racist history of Canada remained unchallenged. Bonin writes about the popping of the utopian bubble when feminists suddenly saw themselves sidelined and their feminist work serving men before women. Bonin is here referring to the 1980s, but this process has been continual.[50] Clive Robertson has criticized scholarship around failed utopias in artist-run centres for its role in creating narratives

[48] I have not found this genealogy in any text in any field. The mapping of feminist administrative practices is lacking across disciplines.
[49] Robert Sirman, "The Mandate of the Massey Commission," speaking notes for the Canada Council for the Arts Walter Gordon Symposium, Massey College, University of Toronto, last modified March 13, 2017, https://canadacouncil.ca/spotlight/2014/03/what-would-massey-see-today.
[50] Vincent Bonin and Michèle Thériault, eds., *Documentary Protocols/Protocoles Documentaires (1967-1975)* (Montréal: Galerie Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, 2010), 49.

that simplify the histories of artist-run culture.[51] Even with all the difficulty surrounding the word, I still feel utopia—or, rather, the concept of utopia—is relevant to the task of imagining a better future for artist-run centres. Self-determination is relevant for future thinking about artist-run culture, and self-determination is a utopian idea. It presupposes that we are all capable of self-governance or autonomy. (Indigenous and BIPOC self-determination is a separate but related topic I write more about later in this chapter.) As I use utopian methodology to imagine a better future for artist-run centres by examining their past problems, I can't help but notice that the funders' persistent reluctance to allow for self-determination within these spaces, especially for non-white participants, has continued to impede the process of both imagining and creating a better future in the artist-run centre milieu.

2.2 A Canadian Feminist History

To understand racial equity policies, it is necessary to unpack the government's interest in women's issues, as these are intersected.[52] In 1971, the government of Canada established a Minister responsible for the Status of Women following a recommendation in the 1970 report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women. The ministry was, and is, funded directly by the government of Canada, and since 1976, its mandate has been "to coordinate policy with respect to the status of women and administer related programs."[53] These programs have had indirect

[51] Clive Robertson, *Policy Matters: Administrations of Art and Culture* (Toronto: YYZ Books, 2006), 17.
[52] See the preface in Pauline, Rankin, and Jill Vickers, *Women's Movements and State Feminism: Integrating Diversity into Public Policy* (Ottawa: Status of Women Canada, 2001).
[53] Government of Canada, "Department for Women and Gender Equality Act (S.C. 2018, c. 27, s. 661)", Justice Laws Website, https://laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/W-11.3/page-1.html?wbdisable=true accessed February 21, 2018.

influence on the priorities of funding agencies at the national and provincial levels and have long affected policy.

The history of women's movements in Canada has been widely covered elsewhere, such as in Beryl Fox et al's *The Visible Woman: a History of Women and Women's Rights in Canada* (1950), or more recently Angela Rose Miles and Geraldine Finn's *Feminism in Canada: from Pressure to Politics* (1989); Jennifer Henderson's *Settler Feminism and Race Making in Canada* (2003); and Margaret Hobbs and Carla Rice's *Gender and Women's Studies: Critical Terrain* (Second edition, 2018). These studies are wide-ranging in scope. My focus when drawing on these sources is on how certain facets of feminism were uplifted or ignored by artist-run centres in a move toward diversity and decolonization.

It is important to note how much of the work by artist-run centres consisted of creating and maintaining spaces for white women's participation in the art world. Considering that artist-run centres were primarily established during the period of second-wave feminism in the 1970s and '80s, a time when feminism's historical progression was moving toward intersectionality, this emphasis should have shifted to include other marginalized groups. Surprisingly, this shift hasn't happened in any meaningful way. While some spaces, like La Centrale and articule (both in Montréal), altered their mandates, policies, and/or by-laws to become more inclusive, many artist-run centres only initiated changes towards greater diversity and accessibility if prompted by funders or pressured by governing bodies such as ANNPAC. For example, in 1993, as the keynote speaker at the Association of National Non-Profit Artists Centres (ANNPAC) Annual General Meeting while working with the Equity Office of the Canada Council, Lillian Allen

> challenged the audience to acknowledge the low level of First Nations artists and artists of colour in attendance. The challenge generated the creation of a seven-member group of artists of colour and First Nations artists who presented ANNPAC with an antiracist strategy which was adopted by the AGM plenary.

> The strategy called for a commitment from ANNPAC to direct resources towards addressing systemic racism in the organization itself and in the structures and practices of its member artist-run centres.[54]

This prompted some direct action by individuals in attendance towards inclusion in artist-run centres but was not enough to affect widespread change.

First-wave, prominently white feminists in North America and Europe fought for women's suffrage—for the right to be recognized as legal persons, for the right to own property, for the right to vote, and so on. First-wave feminists also advocated for white women's right to self-determination, such as control over their own bodies, a struggle still being fought in many places, including in Canada.[55] The history of the suffrage movement can be read against the larger social history of its time, which led "*nominally free* women [to use Angelina Grimke's words] to recognize and protest their own kind of enslavement."[56] Suffragists were arguably aware that their fight for freedom continued to marginalize and oppress others through its failure to demand universal suffrage. This legacy of white privilege remains a central conflict in feminism.

While second-wave feminism advanced the struggle against women's economic and political oppression during the 1960s and 1970s, it too failed to recognize the limitations of a leadership composed of primarily white, upper- and upper-middle-class women. While we know that these women were not the only people historically active in the women's movement during that period (see, for example, women in the Black Panthers and in Red Power or Women of All Red Nations), the bulk of second-wave feminist discourse failed to acknowledge that women do

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[54] Andrea Monike Fatona, "'Where Outreach Meets Outrage': Racial Equity at The Canada Council for the Arts (1989–1999)" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2011), 117.

[55] For a complete history, see Marlene LeGates, *In Their Time: A History of Feminism in Western Society* (New York: Routledge, 2001); Susan Bassnett, *Feminist Experiences (RLE Feminist Theory): The Women's Movement in Four Cultures*, 11th ed. (London: Routledge, 1986); Barbara Ryan, *Feminism and the Women's Movement: Dynamics of Change in Social Movement Ideology and Activism* (New York: Routledge, 1992); and Sarah Gamble, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Postfeminism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001).

[56] Ellen Carol DuBois, *Woman Suffrage and Women's Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 8.

not all share the same experience. It failed to see that erasing difference—levelling all women into one category—can recreate the very systems of oppression that feminism is supposed to challenge.[57] As co-founder of the Aboriginal Women's Action Network Fay Blaney (Xwemalhkwu of the Coast Salish Nation) writes, "present day systemic and institutionalized patriarchy ensures that the privileged male status in mainstream Canadian society is mirrored in Indigenous communities."[58] Intersectional experiences of course existed during the period of second-wave feminism but they were not part of the dominant discourse (and indeed the term intersectionality was not put into use until the period of third-wave feminism)

Second-wave feminism is often referred to critically as *essentialist* feminism. Essentialist feminism sees innate differences between men and women. While responsible for many advances for women, essentialist feminism is also a mode of feminism that presumes gender is binary. It assumes that gender arises from innate biological factors and fails to recognize that gender is constructed through social relations and cultural signifiers. In an effort to unify the female experience, the assumption that gender is innate erases the experiences of people from diverse class and racial backgrounds or with varying sexual orientations.[59]

The second wave of feminism was arguably more radicalized than the first, in part because of the concurrent social struggles happening in other arenas. While these areas occasionally overlapped and informed one another, they didn't result in cohesive or aligned partnerships aimed towards the abolition of systemic oppressions. This is partially because many prominent second-wave white feminist advocates and theorists like Hélène Cixous, Simone de

[57] DuBois, *Woman Suffrage*, 8. See Kathleen Neal Cleaver, "Women, Power, and Revolution," *New Political Science* 21, no.2 (1999): 231-236 DOI: 10.1080/07393149908429865;
"Women of All Red Nations," Equality Archive. Accessed November 5, 2021. https://equalityarchive.com/issues/women-of-all-red-nations.
[58] Bonita Lawrence and Kim Anderson, *Strong Women Stories: Native Vision and Community Survival* (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2003), 162.
[59] See Margaret Walters, *Feminism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); and Judith L. Evans, *Feminist Theory Today: An Introduction to Second-Wave Feminism* (London: Sage, 1995).

Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, and Gloria Steinem were still working to strengthen the gains of early feminists.

Within second-wave feminism, there were still attempts to address positionality; Standpoint theory emerged in the 1970s and was most widely used through the 1980s. It is a critical feminist theory and methodology that focuses on the relationship "between the production of knowledge and practices of power."[60] Sandra Harding, a white American feminist and decolonial philosopher is often credited as one of the major contributors to the advancement of this theory. Standpoint theory affirms that the positionality of the subject is important in understanding both power and knowledge and analyses inter-subject discourses. As a feminist theory, it is often employed to study the relationship between individuals, especially with respect to analysing power dynamics, for example, between women and men. Whereas it is now understood that standpoint theory is insufficient in that it stops short of the back-and-forth of reciprocal relationships that current intersectional analysis focuses on, its aim to challenge "white supremacist, androcentric, heteronormative culture" is sound.[61] Its theoretical framework makes room for the critiquing of knowledge gaps, pain points, and growth areas for maximum flourishing. I believe that it is a helpful tool of analysis for understanding how artist-run centres engaged with contemporary activism.

I am drawing on intersectional feminist theory, or intersectionality, a term coined in 1991 by Black civil rights advocate, lawyer and scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, a leader in critical race theory.[62] It refers to the idea that oppression, power, and privilege are intersectional. Intersectionality doesn't arrange a hierarchy of oppression, though it does consider privilege, and

[60] Sandra, Harding, ed., *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 1.
[61] Harding, *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader*, 5.
[62] Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1242-1243, https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039.

shows how race, class, and gender can't be disentangled. Intersectionality is both a "rallying cry for more expansive progressive movements and a chastisement for their limitations."[63] As such, it is important to consider how intersectionality is not a terminal feminist critique but is instead, following Ruth Levitas' utopia as method, a stepping-stone towards an emancipatory future. While standpoint theory has strategic uses in locating the fault lines in artist-run centre administration and culture, I argue intersectionality is a more appropriate term for analysing the current situation. Standpoint theory is part of a tail end of second wave feminism whereas intersectionality is part of a new phase in the history of feminist theory brought about by anti-racism scholarship.

Intersectional feminism posits that all oppression is linked, and that social and systemic injustice must be addressed holistically. Crenshaw writes:

> This process of recognizing as social and systemic what was formerly perceived as isolated and individual has also characterized the identity politics of African Americans, other people of color, and gays and lesbians, among others. For all these groups, identity-based politics has been a source of strength, community, and intellectual development.[64]

Further to this, Danish-Swedish gender studies scholar Nina Lykke suggests that intersectional theory is, at its root, an opportunity to see how power structures and imbalances affect people.[65] Lykke links intersectional theory to the concept of situated knowledge, as defined by American feminist theorist Donna Haraway. Situated knowledge is a form of objectivity developed in response to American feminist theorist Sandra Harding's particular view of standpoint theory. Situated knowledge rejects simplistic, traditional views of objectivity and acknowledges the

[63] Christine Emba, "Opinion: Intersectionality, September 30, 2015," Washington Post, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/in-theory/wp/2015/09/21/intersectionality-a-primer/, accessed June 10, 2016.
[64] Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins," 1241-1242.
[65] Nina Lykke, *Feminist Studies: Guide to Intersectional Theory, Methodology and Writing* (New York: Routledge), 50-51.

complex, intersecting realities of existence. This re-shifting of knowledge itself shifts power relationships and accounts for simultaneity of subject positions. Situated knowledge, unlike standpoint theory, attempts to write a new mode of consideration outside of current means of expression, instead of simply creating space for the oppressed to use the tools of the oppressor. Lykke reads Haraway, alongside American feminist theorist Karen Barad's ideas around intra-relations, as a means of pushing forward from standpoint theory—which does recognize multiple voices but is still rooted in essentialist ideals—towards intersectional feminism.[66]

Intersectional theory considers the impossibility of attempting to separate the inseparable.[67] While recognizing that all oppression is intra-related, intersectional theory paves the way for interdisciplinarity—for working alongside postcolonial and de-colonial scholarship. For example, Indian feminist theorist Chandra Talpade Mohanty, a postcolonial feminist theorist, can be read alongside intersectional theory, even if she doesn't explicitly name her work as such. Mohanty points to the power of working together and developing a shared history. She writes:

> Education was a key strategy of decolonization, rather than merely a path toward mainstream credentials and upward mobility. In other words, for us, education was always linked to the political practice of service to community and nation, and critiques of nationalism often coexist with a desire to belong. Collective media work represented, even in its implicit critique of the state, a longing for a nation, however utopian, that could include communality in its notion of citizenship. However, nationalism at this stage had done little to transform the practices of colonial education.[68]

This collective action draws from networks of solidarity in opposition to systems of hierarchical oppression and control. Mohanty writes that working in solidarity across cultures and races is important but won't be truly intersectional without decolonization. Her writing also pushes past

[66] Lykke, *Feminist Studies*, 51.
[67] Lena Gunnarsson, "Why We Keep Separating the 'Inseparable': Dialecticizing Intersectionality." *European Journal of Women's Studies* 24, no. 2 (May 2017): 115.
[68] Chandra Talpade Mohanty and M. Jacqui Alexander, eds., *Feminist Genealogies* (New York: Routledge, 1997), xiii.

Harding's standpoint theory towards something that recognizes that any kind of work that involves a hierarchy of workers will always have problems. While Mohanty makes use of some aspects of standpoint theory, she finds it is missing a consideration of critical race theory and anti-colonial rhetoric. Mohanty argues that decolonization through education is necessary to attain true intersectional feminism, because internalized self-hate is especially prominent amongst people of colour (internally and to other marginalized groups) and that this manifests itself in institutions, even well-meaning ones. As such, decolonization through education is necessary to attain true intersectional feminism. Mohanty's anti-capitalist feminism ties her research to that of American political theorist Jodi Dean's work on reflective solidarity, following Haraway and Barad, which suggests feminist coalition is a means to fulfil mutual expectation. Mohanty's anti-capitalism feminism also ties her research to French West Indian psychiatrist and political philosopher Frantz Fanon's work on stages of emancipation. Mohanty's goal is to decolonize feminism and to demystify capitalism. She refuses the idea of negative power: that we—women—don't have power or didn't have it historically and ergo can't have it now. She especially refutes the idea of negative power as neo-colonial rhetoric.

2.3 Decolonization and Indigenous Feminism

Ultimately, feminism's goal has generally been to disrupt and reorient society away from the dominant paradigm of capitalist patriarchy. When we consider the question of who feminism serves in the micro context of feminist-aligned artist-run centres, we can see how the integration of feminist administrative models builds on the larger artist-run centre movements' desires to upend the dominant financial structures of the art world by opting for autonomy from these

models while failing to see their complacency in problematic systems. Conversely, we should not overlook the unique ways in which feminist-aligned artist-run centres paved the way for feminist and/or decolonial discourse through their administrative practices while also acting as pseudo-utopian models for the milieu.

Aligning white feminism and Indigenous feminism can, according to settler scholar Gaile S. Cannella and Diné scholar Kathryn D. Manuelito, "provide a radical rethinking of the purposes, methods, and interpretations of research applicable to the construction of social justice in contemporary hyper capitalist patriarchy."[69] While all feminisms share the "analytical approach to social concepts about power relations,"[70] not all Indigenous women see themselves as feminist, nor do all Indigenous feminists feel comfortable with white/dominant feminism, or with the institutional apparatuses of these paradigms.[71] Indigenous feminist critiques of (predominately) white feminisms claim that, amongst other injustices, the very concept of feminism was co-opted by white women from Indigenous worldviews, leading to a distrust of feminism in theory and praxis. Canella and Manuelito write that:

> We recognize that "native" perspectives, the various feminisms, and activist, womanist forms of thought have been at odds with each other. These conflicts are understandable as people are embedded within different histories and various intersecting survival locations within patriarchy and colonialism.[72]

While a body of research around Indigenous feminism certainly exists, Diné scholar and activist Jihan Gearon points to the discomfort around the term for many Indigenous people. She writes,

> The words "Indigenous feminism" can be triggering in Indigenous communities.…I imagined strong Diné matriarchs like…my own grandmother transforming into powerless, basic "Karens," like "before and after" photos at

[69] Cannella and Manuelito in Norman K. Denzin, Yvonna S. Lincoln, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith, eds., *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2008), 47.
[70] Joyce A. Green, *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, 2nd ed. (Black Point, N.S: Fernwood Pub., 2017), 8-9.
[71] See Joanne Barker, *Critically Sovereign: Indigenous Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).
[72] Cannella and Manuelito in Denzin, Lincoln, and Smith, *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*, 47.

> Carlisle Indian School. We tend to associate it with mainstream feminism, an out-of-touch white worldview that devalues reproductive work—"women's work"—and reinforces white supremacy and capitalism. But those of us Indigenous women who are privileged to be raised by our grandmothers and matriarchs know that the creation and caretaking of home is of the utmost sacred importance. And how could we be a part of a movement that does not value or even understand this?[73]

Many Indigenous feminist scholars, however, are comfortable with a feminist label if it names the relationship to Indigeneity. They argue that feminism is in fact analogous to Indigenous worldviews. Since feminism has been co-opted by white feminists, to find new paths forward, ultimately, white feminism would have to undergo a decentering. Gearon states that

> Indigenous feminism can change our world, if given the chance. The particular words aren't the important thing, and if others would rather call themselves "matriarch" or "matriarch-in-training," or a word in their Indigenous language that means more to them, I say go for it. My goal is not to debate words or force everyone to use the same ones, but to insist that Indigenous feminism, like all solutions to problems in Indian Country, is about decolonizing. It's about recognizing, naming, and discarding the worldview forced, reinforced, and enforced by this colonial experiment called the United States of America, and picking up the teachings and practices of our ancestors.[74]

Indigenous feminism in Canada has a long history, but its relationship to artist-run centres is relatively recent. While many Indigenous women have exhibited in artist-run centres, few have held positions of power in these organizations, especially outside the handful that are focused on Indigenous programming. To my knowledge, until the opening of Ociciwan in Edmonton in March 2020, no centre has come forward to specifically address Indigenous feminisms. Even in the case of Ociciwan, its Indigenous feminist focus is only explicitly stated in the biographical information of the executive director, Becca Taylor (Cree, Scottish and Irish Canadian).

[73] Jihan Gearon, "Indigenous Feminism Is Our Culture, February 11, 2021" Stanford Social Innovation Review, https://ssir.org/articles/entry/indigenous_feminism_is_our_culture, accessed January 8, 2022.
[74] Gearon "Indigenous Feminism Is Our Culture, February 11, 2021."

In the broader Canadian context, the type of feminism that artist-run centres have taken up as a political framework or as an administrative tool is generally one geared to contemporary women's rights issues. Many of the case study institutions in this dissertation have a strong history of fighting for equal pay and reproductive rights. They were engaged in what we now call the so-called porn wars of the 1980s, and they were invested in creating frameworks for what we now call care work (childcare, eldercare, and healthcare). These were important issues for Indigenous women as well, but in addition to organizing around these issues, they simultaneously organized around issues that were specific to their communities. For example, from the 1960s to the 1980s, Indigenous women fought "to retain or regain their lands…to keep their children," and to keep their status as Indigenous peoples.[75] Under the Indian Act, Indigenous women who married non-Indigenous men (same-sex marriage was still illegal) lost their status and could no longer own land. Their children would never have Indigenous status. As legal counsel Mary Eberts notes, the origin of the Indian Act was based on Victorian values, denying women access to land or property once they married, and therefore denying these same women the legal rights and responsibilities of a citizen: "This legal non-entity was the model for the Indian Act's treatment of Indian women."[76] This law was only repealed in 1985. As Mi'kmaq scholar Bonita Lawrence writes,

> in Canada a history of gender discrimination in the Indian Act has created an ongoing conflict within Native organizations and reserve communities around notions of individual and collective rights, organized along lines of gender. It is crucially important, then, to understand the central role that the subordination of Native women has played in the colonization process, in order to begin to see the

[75] "Indigenous Women's Rights," Rise Up! A Digital Archive of Feminist Activism, accessed November 5, 2021, https://riseupfeministarchive.ca/activism/issues-actions/indigenous-womens-rights/.
[76] Mary Eberts, "Being an Indigenous Woman is a "High-Risk Lifestyle," in *Making Space for Indigenous Feminism*, 2nd ed., edited by Joyce A. Green (Black Point, N.S: Fernwood Publishing, 2017), 79.

> violation of Native women's rights through loss of Indian status, not as the problems faced by individuals, but as a collective sovereignty issue.[77]

The ramifications of this historical and contemporary discrimination can be felt today. Until only recently, Indigenous women living on reserves were fighting to keep their children out of the Residential School system (the last school closed in 1996), out of forced adoption, and out of the child welfare system (as in the case of the 60's Scoop children).[78] As scholars Cheryl Suzack (Batchewana First Nation) and Shari Huhndorf (white settler) write, "the need to address the urgent social, economic, and political problems confronting Indigenous women remains critical, however. These problems stem from ongoing colonial practices of the dominant culture and, at times, from the internal dynamics of Indigenous communities."[79]

Simply put, while some Indigenous women joined with other women's groups—both white women's groups and those of other marginalized groups—around specific issues, the reality was that the issues affecting white and Indigenous women did not, in most instances, overlap, nor were they equal. Indigenous women fought for the right to vote long after the rest of the nation. Indigenous men were granted the right to vote federally under the Indian Act in 1876, but only if they rescinded their status, a ruling only repealed in 1960. White women got the federal vote in 1918. Inuit peoples gained the right to vote federally in 1950, but not before being especially written out of the right to vote in 1934. Indigenous women were granted the federal vote, regardless of status, in 1960.[80] For many, this right to participate is linked to a right to be perceived as an individual. For Indigenous women, it is also tied to notions of sovereignty at odds with the act of voting in a colonial system. To quote Sharon McIvor, Indigenous women

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[77] Bonita Lawrence, *"Real" Indians and Others: Mixed-Blood Urban Native Peoples and Indigenous Nationhood* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 46.
[78] Erin Hanson, "Sixties Scoop," Indigenous Foundations. First Nations and Indigenous Studies, University of British Columbia, accessed November 5, 2021, https://electionsanddemocracy.ca/voting-rights-through-time-0/brief-history-federal-voting-rights-canada.
[79] Cheryl Suzack, *Indigenous Women and Feminism: Politics, Activism, Culture* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 2.
[80] Hanson, "Sixties Scoop."

activists were advocating for the "most basic incidents of citizenship: equal status and membership within Aboriginal communities, equal entitlement to share in matrimonial property, and equal participation in Aboriginal governance."[81] However, in 1969, the Pierre Elliott Trudeau government issued a White Paper intending to put an end to the "special legal relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the Canadian state and dismantling the Indian Act."[82] Indigenous peoples recognized this move as an erasure of their separate identity and a further effort to colonize them and fold them into the larger Canadian context. For Indigenous women, this did not amount to sovereignty and status; rather, this furthered the erasure of their selfhood.

Against this backdrop of gaining and contesting voting rights and autonomy for Indigenous women during the 1960s, Indigenous art came to represent Canada on the international stage. While the Canadian federal government banned Indigenous peoples from cultural production and participating in their own ceremonies from 1885 to 1951, it ironically still encouraged them to produce crafts for market sale.[83] Indigenous art and artists were being marketed as assimilated into a pan-Canadian vision of culture. Cultural production, a form of soft power (the influencing of international relations via cultural power narrative building), was increasingly being deployed by the Canadian government, using Indigenous cultural materials to embody Canadian values.[84]

Only some of the centres that I use as case studies took Indigenous issues into consideration before funding agencies required them to engage with Indigenous artists. Even the

[81] Sharon McIvor, "Aboriginal Women Unmasked: Using Equality Litigation to Advance Women's Rights," *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* 16, no.1 (2004): 108.
[82] Indigenous Foundations, "The White Paper 1969," First Nations and Indigenous Studies, University of British Columbia, accessed November 5, 2021, https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/the_white_paper_1969/.
[83] Indian Education, Volumes 1-65 Front Cover Education Division, U.S. Office of Indian Affairs, 1936, 4.
[84] Joseph S. Nye Jr, "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, March 2008, Vol. 616, p. 94.

ones that did take on Indigenous issues of their own accord often lacked the vocabulary, awareness, and training to do so in a meaningful way. As a result, most centres engaged with issues relating to Indigenous peoples only at the level of programming. This mode of engagement in fact mirrored the ways in which the Indian Act itself sanctioned or prohibited the creation of Indigenous cultural material. It is not until very recently—the 1990s at the earliest—that we see a move towards a more sophisticated understanding of Indigenous self-determination in the arts, and galleries seriously grappling with the notion of decolonization. This is a direct result of the lobbying of Indigenous artists, curators, administrators, and activists like Mohawk curator Lee-Ann Martin, who set up the First People's Curatorial Residency Program and was involved with the First Peoples Equity Coordinator at the Canada Council for the Arts from 1994 to 1998.[8586]

Indigenous feminism and the feminist administrative practices that most of the centres in my case study employed in their operations share many concerns and many practices. It is important to make clear, though, that unless I specifically state otherwise, the centres I engage with in this dissertation did not consciously borrow from Indigenous feminist praxis, nor did they engage in decolonial methodologies.

2.4 Feminist Administration

In this section, I describe the main facets of feminist administrative theory and praxis. Much of the literature wrongly assumes that feminism is for all women. It overshadows issues of race and class with those of gender. My criticism is not meant to equate gender inequality with

[85] Rachelle Dickenson and Lee-Ann Martin, "Turning the Page on the Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion, 30 Years On," *C Magazine*, no.144 (Winter 2020), https://cmagazine.com/issues/144/turning-the-page-on-the-politics-of-inclusion.
[86] "About Lee-Ann Martin," 49th Shelf, accessed November 5, 2021, https://49thshelf.com/Contributors/M/Martin-Lee-Ann.

all the other means of identity oppression, especially racism, as if they are all equal and manifest in the same ways. Further, I recognize that these issues and oppressions are interconnected and cannot be tackled as distinct problems. The type of feminist administration I find holds value is one that is intersectional and explicitly anti-racist. Racism and white supremacy are colonial ideologies that impact the art world, and I argue, as long as it is not inspired only by white feminism, feminist administrative theory can be a useful tool towards achieving equity.

In *Partial Visions* (1991), German-American scholar Angelika Bammer makes an excellent case for feminism as a utopian principle. In short, she argues that utopia is a search for a radically better world, and so is feminism. Both are demands for change and action and urge us forward towards something better for everyone. Of course, one person's idea of good might be different from another's. There is always work to be done. Overall, feminist utopia as a methodology is meant to be emancipatory—from a patriarchal, colonial, and white-dominant paradigm—not just for some, but for everyone. In a feminist utopia, self-determination would allow individuals and collectives to define their engagement and relieve them from worrying that an external need to control power would interfere with their autonomy. Bammer writes,

> A feminist utopia begins with the premise that patriarchy is an unnatural state…and is defined by the nature of its vision, namely a vision of a world that is better—utopia—for women….To this end, power is radically redistributed and reconceptualised, both within the institutional spaces of the public sphere and the private sphere of home and relationships. Based on the model of power shared versus power over, feminist utopias…are based on a network of connections versus a hierarchy.[87]

This network of connections, which can be seen as the dispersed but intra-connected web of friendships that propelled feminist organizing during all waves is the direct opposite of the patriarchal system which is concerned with power hierarchies.

[87] Angelika Bammer, *Partial Visions: Feminism and Utopia in the 1970's* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 24.

Feminist theory and administrative practices have intersected since at least the first wave of feminism. The demand for women's right to work, the 8-hour workday, and the abolition of child labour have all been developments inflected by feminist discourse, overlapping with anti-capitalist, communist, and Marxist points of view. As a discipline, feminist administration has been an active field of scholarship and activity since the 1970s, starting with Public Administration scholars like Camilla Stivers.[88] Overall, feminist administrative practices share "a vision of a humane work environment."[89] In the 1990s, a significant body of research was devoted to the discipline, resulting in clear definitions and guidelines for feminist administrative practices that were primarily based in contemporary understandings of feminist theory. This research identifies why the use of feminist administrative practices has declined, noting that "with the increase in bureaucratization and the changes in technology, processes of deprofessionalization and deskilling have been taking place.…This disempowers the worker and leaves both client and worker disconnected and frequently isolated."[90] This is true for the artist-run centre model, where we can link the decline of feminist administrative practices to the demands placed on the centres directly by funding agents, and indirectly by various government administrations.

For American sociologist Joan Arches and social work researcher Paula Schneider, successful feminist administrative models are based on an egalitarian notion of power: "Feminists view power as infinite, thereby rejecting zero-sum assumptions of who should have it. They rely on the belief that power can be shared."[91] Feminist administrative practices also

[88] Camilla Stivers, "Dreaming the World: Feminisms in Public Administration," *Administrative Theory & Praxis* 27, no. 2 (June 2005), 364.
[89] Joan L.Arches and Paula Schneider, "Analyzing Administrative Experiences: Feminist, Labor, and Organizational Culture Perspectives" *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare* 21, no.4 (December 1994): 147.
[90] Arches and Schneider, "Analyzing Administrative Experiences," 149.
[91] Arches and Schneider, "Analyzing Administrative Experiences," 152.

include sharing resources for mutual benefit, working cooperatively, facilitating, and collaborating (as opposed to prescribing and treating), working democratically and in a non-hierarchical way, and developing empowerment tools. Empowerment, as Janice Ristock and Joan Pennell write, changes the "nature and distribution of power in our society."[92] Consultation and collaboration, as well as shared ownership of knowledge and data, are key factors in supporting empowerment. Ristock and Pennell are clear that empowerment has limitations; for example, empowerment to use the tools of patriarchy is a narrow empowerment. As such, they argue that efforts should be made to ensure that mutual satisfaction and growth are possible in each specific context. Ristock and Pennell also point to the importance of situated knowledge in their work, acknowledging the difficulty in researching and voicing communities to which they do not belong. They argue for a postmodernist approach, which they see as not inconsistent with feminist analysis: "Where conventional feminism might lead us to examine the social conditions of women's lives, a postmodern feminism enables us to see the many ways in which discursive conditions affect women's lives."[93] Citing Indian literary and feminist critical theorist Gayatri C. Spivak, they argue that postmodernism and feminism should consistently interrupt one another. Ultimately, this argument foreshadows contemporary intersectional feminist thinking. In their conception of inclusive communities, we cannot speak for others and our struggles are not universal, but nevertheless, we can still work together to create both links and interruptions.[94]

American scholar Laura Gray-Rosendale writes that feminist administrative practices include, "care and empowerment over command and control methodologies; participatory or self-managing configurations such as teams and task forces over traditionally structured, rigid,

[92] Janice L. Ristock and Joan Pennell, *Community Research as Empowerment: Feminist Links, Post-Modern Interruptions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 2.
[93] Ristock and Pennell, *Community Research as Empowerment*, 5.
[94] Ristock and Pennell, *Community Research as Empowerment*, 97.

hierarchical frameworks," as well as a redress of pay-scales.[95] Gray-Rosedale's argument is that good intentions to engage in a feminist manner are not always easy to translate into practice. For feminist artist-run centres, the very funding model that allows the organization to exist might prevent the organization from acting on its feminist principles. Gray-Rosedale argues that any kind of feminist administrative practice needs to look at all levels of power imbalance, including intra-feminist power imbalances.[96] More specifically, in a feminist conception of power relations, "the praxis of the commission as body reveals the need to distinguish how power relations operate among and between individuals, within particular contexts and situations…[and] this can entail an examination of subject positions, social practices, and structures."[97] For intra-action to occur, there must, therefore, be dialogue.

Feminist administrative practices have begun to adapt to become more inclusive to everyone. While the essays in *Don't Leave Your Friends Behind: Concrete Ways to Support Families in Social Justice Movements and Communities* (2012) by Victoria Law and China Marten focus on the inclusion of families in social justice movements and give tips on how to engage parents who might otherwise not be able to participate, the essays open to broader concerns by considering the inclusion of parents and families as an *accessibility* issue. The authors write: "We have heard, time and again, about the many ways that race, gender, class, geography, custody agreements, and health, among other factors, impact families and children."[98] The authors' recommendations around accessibility in this arena open doors to better support for and participation by everyone, regardless of parental status. Many of the ideas in the

[95] Laura Gray-Rosendale and Gil Harootunian, eds., *Fractured Feminisms: Rhetoric, Context, and Contestation* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003), 66.
[96] Gray-Rosendale and Harootunian *Fractured Feminisms*, 78.
[97] Gray-Rosendale and Harootunian *Fractured Feminisms*, 80.
[98] Victoria Law and China Marten, eds., *Don't Leave Your Friends Behind: Concrete Ways to Support Families in Social Justice Movements and Communities* (Oakland: PM Press, 2012), 2.

book are translatable to other scenarios and contexts in straightforward ways, and they remind us how easy it is to create more culturally inclusive and open spaces.

Feminist administration, as American scholars Krista Ratcliffe and Rebecca Rickly write, is tricky business, made more so when attempted in particularly white patriarchal environments. Mapping power, along with the redistribution and (hopefully) equalization of power, is a central theme within feminist administration. The authors question how power differentials affect our performance as feminist administrators. In my research and work as an administrator, I can recognize moments when a system prevents me from acting like a feminist. And yet, I argue, it is still possible and necessary to try. For Ratcliffe and Rickly, care is important, as is mentorship. Care work allows us to make space for and devote energy to ourselves as administrators, while also caring for those we work with. Acting as a feminist, even when it is difficult, means mentoring those we work with in the hopes that they, too, will act with feminist and anti-racist guiding principles.

Canadian public arts institutions were—and continue to be—statistically behind artist-run centres when it comes to staff gender parity.[99] According to a 2018 Canada Arts Coalition study, "women, especially marginalized women, are much more likely to have precarious contract positions and less likely to be in full-time stable positions of leadership; this inequity is further compounded for women who are also Indigenous, racialized, seniors, disabled, and so on."[100] Men still occupy more directorial positions compared to women, who take up more administrative roles; men have more solo shows, whereas women present more in group shows, which pay less; and work by men tends to bring in higher sales in commercial contexts and at

[99] See Anne Dymond, *Diversity Counts: Gender, Race, and Representation in Canadian Art Galleries* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019).
[100] Canadian Arts Coalition, "Gender Parity in the Canadian Arts Sector and the Barriers to Women's Leadership," submitted brief to the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, May 2018, 1.

auction. According to the 2014 Hill Strategies study, *A Statistical Profile of Artists and Cultural Workers in Canada*, "Female artists earn much less than their male counterparts, but the difference in earnings is equal to the difference among the overall labour force.…For cultural workers, women earn an average of $34,100, 23% less than men ($44,000)."[101] As Canadian Art Historian Anne Dymond notes in her research on Canadian art museums, "many Canadian institutions are doing well with respect to gender equity," and "some are doing quite poorly," and those "least equitable are our most important and influential institutions."[102] Following Dymond's observations, artist-run centres are the institutions that generally do the best with gender parity and have the least influence in the broader art world. So, the longer women artists stay involved in artist-run centres, the more marginalization and invisibility they endure. Therefore, ironically, the success they experience in artist-run centres is directly correlated to the extent to which their careers stall.

There is also jarring racial inequality in the Canadian art world. Visible minority, Indigenous, and immigrant artists earn even less than their white peers.[103] The 3,700 First Nations and Inuit artists surveyed by Hill Strategies represent a mere 2.7% of all artists, which is a similar percentage to that of Indigenous people in cultural occupations (2.4%) but slightly lower than the percentage in the overall labour force (3.3%). The 17,400 visible minority artists represent 13% of all artists, which is lower than the percentage of visible minority Canadians in cultural occupations (15%) and the overall labour market (18%). According to the 2015 National Household Survey Indigenous people make up 4.3% of the total Canadian population (Aboriginal Peoples in Canada are First Nations People, Métis, and Inuit). Statistics Canada

[101] Hill Strategies, "A Statistical Profile of Artists and Cultural Workers in Canada," Accessed April 2, 2015, http://www.hillstrategies.com/content/statistical-profile-artists-and-cultural-workers-canada.
[102] Dymond, *Diversity Counts*, 22.
[103] Hill Strategies 2014, 32

reports that in 2011, "nearly 6,264,800 people identified themselves as a member of a visible minority group. They represented 19.1% of the total population."[104] In short, the Canadian cultural community is not representative of the statistical diversity of Canada.

Black-Canadian poet, scholar, and activist El Jones's poem, *Canada is so polite* is apt here: "Because Canada's not like that, Canada's white as a lamb; And those other people, they're just so angry; But Canada just doesn't understand."[105] If you identify as BIPOC, these statistics will come as no surprise. As Canadian communications scholar and curator Monika Kin Gagnon writes that "the Montréal based video artist Julian Samuel did some accounting of 'visible minorities' in key positions in Québec cultural institutions in 2000, and his numbers were dismal. He identified 14 people of colour out of 512 directors and managers at Radio Canada, for instance; one person at Téléfilm in Montréal; and there were none at the Québec Conseil des arts et des lettres, the cultural funding agency which has five key positions and 50 employees."[106] These numbers are meaningful with regard to issues of leadership and representation in the arts. The numbers don't annotate, however, the extra emotional labour assigned to BIPOC cultural workers.

In *13 Conversations about Art and Cultural Race Politics,* Trinidadian-Canadian video artist Richard Fung reports that it was only in the mid-1980s that women were consistently invited to be part of the peer-assessment jury process at the Canada Council.[107] As a result of their inclusion, more women applied for grants than in previous years, and more women received

[104] Government of Canada, Statistics Canada, "Immigration and Ethnocultural Diversity Statistics," Government of Canada, Statistics Canada, accessed August 17, 2020, https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/subjects-start/immigration_and_ethnocultural_diversity.
[105] El Jones, "Canada is So Polite," Tumbler, accessed March 3, 2021, https://brassmanticore.tumblr.com/post/131289813749/canada-is-so-polite-its-like-someone-bumps-into.
[106] Monika Kin Gagnon, Cameron Bailey, and Richard Fung, *Thirteen Conversations About Art and Cultural Race Politics* (Montréal: Artextes Editions, 2002), 79.
[107] Gagnon, Bailey, and Fung, *13 Conversations*, 64.

funding.[108] Until then, women occasionally sat on juries, but there was no mandate to include them. Artist Jane Martin wrote a paper in 1979 calculating that, "from 1972 to 1978, women jurors represented from zero to thirty-three percent of Canada Council juries and selection committees."[109] Writing to Louis Applebaum, who at the time was preparing the Applebaum-Hébert Report (the report of the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee report on culture in Canada), Martin connected "the small number of women's art works that had been acquired by the Canada Council's Art Bank," to the "statistical evidence that connected the number of women on any Canada Council jury to the chances of women artists receiving grants from that particular jury."[110] This in turn influenced the 1982 Federal Cultural Policy Review report, and as a result, "the Council substantially increased the number of women on juries, and by 1982–83 the percentage had increased to 44%. 92 In 1994–95, the situation remained more or less constant; 44.9% of Council jurors, advisors and assessors were women."[111] The same was true when people of colour were included in the jury process: "Non-white artists started seeing these agencies as a possible source of support rather than scary, patriarchal institutions."[112] The reality is that visible presence encourages participation at all levels.

Most artist-run centres were formed by groups of young individuals who were looking to operate in a non-hierarchical system: "Often unable to find room for themselves in the established system, many women artists recognized in alternative galleries what they perceived

[108] Gagnon, Bailey, and Fung, *13 Conversations*, 64.
[109] Joyce Zemans, "A Tale of Three Women: The Visual Arts In Canada / A Current Account/Ing." *RACAR: Revue d'art Canadienne / Canadian Art Review* 25, no. 1/2 (1998): 103–22. http://www.jstor.org/stable/42630597.
[110] Jane Martin in Walter G. Pitman, *Louis Applebaum: A Passion For Culture* (Toronto: Dundurn Group, 2000), 332-333.
[111] Joyce Zemans, "A Tale of Three Women: The Visual Arts in Canada" *RACAR: Canadian Art Review* 25, no. 1/2 (1998): 112.
[112] Gagnon, Bailey, and Fung, *13 Conversations*, 64.

to be an unprecedented crack in the system and opportunities for inclusion."[113] Often, artist-run centres were formed with no directorship and no boards. These positions were formed later as a means of professionalization, in part to qualify for funding, and as a means of validating the role of core members whose hard work was invaluable to the growth of the centres. These galleries therefore provided opportunities for young artists to find work in the cultural sector, putting to use their education and validating their role as cultural mediators. The choice to self-govern provided centre members the opportunity to take control of their careers and resources and allowed the gallery to experiment in ways most artists were never afforded in commercial galleries or public museums. Most spaces, sadly, have abandoned self-governance and alternative models of governance in favour of following a more traditional, and corporate-inspired, model. This is partially because of requirements imposed on them by funders, such as following traditional not-for-profit business models. Such requirements range from ensuring a certain percentage of the board is made up of artists to meeting a minimum of fundraising revenue raised autonomously. The former sounds enticing but can actually put strain on centres who rely on boards to provide a certain amount of paid labour, and the latter, while it would actually lead to more autonomy, is difficult because of the legacy of government arts funding already established in Canada.

The self-determined, emancipatory model that most artist-run centres started out operating with, and which has eroded significantly over the course of the last forty years, can be described as a feminist administration model, and what could be defined as "a vision of a humane work environment."[114]

[113] Maura Lesley Broadhurst, "Strategic Spaces: Towards a Genealogy of Women Artists' Groups in Canada," (Master's thesis, Concordia University, 1997), 11.
[114] Arches and Schneider, "Analyzing Administrative Experiences," 147.

> It is an irony that the centres may be very open-minded and forward thinking when it comes to artistic experimentation, but at the same time very conservative as to issues of managerial and organizational styles. The issue is that the centres have traditionally focused upon catering of fresh, daring cultural contents, and considering the management issues as purely instrumental and devoid of intrinsic interest, and therefore, in a condition of scarcity of resources, they have simply lived on with the familiar models without asking themselves whether there was any room (or any need) for change and improvement.[115]

As art historian Maura Lesley Broadhurst writes,

> Throughout North America in the 1960s and 1970s, coops, collectives and communes were common tools used by minority and marginalized groups. This counter-institutional ideology was the motivating force behind many forms of grass-roots organizations in such fields as education, day care, the environment, and law. A fundamental objective of these groups was to give power and autonomy back to individuals. For artists, this translated into a gain of control over their own careers.[116]

Feminist organizational structures include flexible teams with multi-headed leadership based on expertise to address various issues; mutual planning; regular check-ins between team members; consensual decision-making and processes whenever possible; non-hierarchical staff relations and decision-making; and a focus on empowerment at all levels of the organization. Perhaps these ideas do not read as clearly feminist, but that is the point. Feminist administrative models do not necessarily call for radical shifts in how things are done; rather, they create an empowering and non-oppressive environment for everyone through micro-changes.

The field of feminist administrative practices has existed as a formal field of study since at least the 1980s. Ratcliffe and Rickly define feminist administration as "the performance of an ideology that foregrounds gender as a lens for interpreting and acting justly within the world, while recognizing that gender always exists in the presence of other lenses, such as race, class,

[115] Giorgio Tavano Blessi, Pier Luigi Sacco, and Thomas Pilati, "Independent artist-run centres: an empirical analysis of the Montréal non-profit visual arts field" *Cultural Trends* 20, no.2 (2011): 160.
[116] Broadhurst, "Strategic Spaces," 63.

nationality, age, and region."[117] Feminist administrative models are community based. They are popular because they reflect and respond to the needs of communities to the point that they may not even be recognized as belonging to a set of defined administrative models, but rather seem as though they are just the way things need to be to get things done. For example, childcare is an administrative model, but it's taken up as a simple necessity so that caregivers can work. In the 2021 panel *Riddim an' Resistance,* dub poet and cultural activist Lillian Allen closed with an anecdote about her child playing "meeting" with a friend, the children deciding who would be chair and who would take notes.[118] Beyond being a cute story, Allen's anecdote was about children modelling healthy collective decision-making, a sound model for building trust.[119] Moreover, it was about intergenerational knowledge transfer for future administrators, as the children learned this behaviour by witnessing meetings themselves, as children of communities engaging with feminist administrative models.

Over the course of 2018 and 2019, the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery in Vancouver mounted a series of exhibitions and a book project collectively titled, *Beginning with the Seventies.* This series of exhibitions (*Beginning with the Seventies: Collective Acts*; *Beginning with the Seventies: GLUT*; *Beginning with the Seventies: Radial Change*; and *Hexsa'ɣm: To Be Here Always*) investigated the "relationship between art, archives and activism," with a lens on the 1970s, "an era when social movements—feminism, environmentalism, LGBTQ2SIA+ rights, Indigenous rights, access to health services and housing—began to coalesce into models of self-

[117] Krista Ratcliffe and Rebecca Rickly, "Introduction. Actions Un/Becoming a Feminist Administrator: Troubled Intersections of Feminist Principles and Administrative Practices," in *Performing Feminism and Administration in Rhetoric and Composition Studies,* eds. Krista Ratcliffe and Rebecca Rickly (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2010), 231.
[118] "Riddim an' Resistance: Lillian Allen, Clive Robertson, respondents Britta Badour and Klive Walker," Panel Discussion, Desire Lines: The Series, organized by Felicity Tayler, February 26, 2021, http://agyu.art/project/riddim-an-resistance/.
[119] I will add that my own children have played these games, having attended committee meetings since birth, and now, living in a Coop. What they have learned from these meetings can teach them to be better team players and give them the agency to speak for themselves.

organization that overlapped with the production of art and culture."[120] Like this exhibition, most of the literature on Canadian artist-run centres, and indeed art from the 1970s, makes a connection between art practices and organizational models (collective, volunteer driven) that we now recognize as intrinsic to the artist-run centre model. I would push further to suggest that at their outset, most artist-run centres, even those that were not explicitly feminist, operated using administrative practices that might today be understood as feminist. However, over time, the decline of feminist models in use at artist-run centres was directly linked to changes in funding practices (discussed in detail below), which unfortunately exerted, and continue to exert, tremendous control on centres and their members. At the same time, and perhaps not coincidently, centres that persisted in upholding feminist praxis despite pressure from funding agencies saw their funding cut, sometimes completely. When funding is denied to artist-run centres with feminist mandates, it follows that art produced by women will receive less support. This has obvious implications for art representing Canada on an international stage.

Historically, feminist administrative models, although far from uniform and always in flux, have been self-determined. Such self-determined approaches are currently at risk as austerity-driven economic policies on funding models—such as those implemented under the Conservative Government of Stephen Harper (2006–2015)—have had an increasing impact on the institutions they are meant to support. I agree with Ukrainian-Canadian artist, academic and cultural worker Marusya Bociurkiw, who writes that "a decade of right-wing regulation in Canada has intensified the need to remember activist histories. Affectively reconstituting this

[120] Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, "Beginning with the Seventies," Publication listing, accessed November 8, 2021, https://belkin.ubc.ca/publications/beginning-with-the-seventies/.

archive is also a way to pass on strategies to communities that are just beginning their political journeys."[121]

We can call artist-run centres failed utopias in their inability to live up to the imaginations of their creators, or we can recognize the work they have done and acknowledge where they need to grow in order to better envision a space for a flourishing future.[122] The latter is the process Ruth Levitas calls *educating our desire.* This is my desire: to return artist-run centres to a form of self-governance that relies on feminist administrative models—though not one that draws on essentialist or exclusionary principles that eradicate difference and attempt to challenge oppression using a hierarchical model. Rather, I propose that the future of artist-run centres is one in which artists self-govern via intersectional feminist practices *and* artists-run centres act as alternatives to mainstream art spaces by presenting work by and for a diverse public.

2.5 A Condensed History of State-Driven Federal Cultural Policy and its Relationship to Artist-Run Centres

Throughout this dissertation, I argue that funding impacted the programming and administration of artist-run centres. Very often, choices around where to focus institutional energy in artist-run centres were made in response to changes to funding priorities. In this

[121] Marusya Bociurkiw, "Big Affect: The Ephemeral Archive of Second-Wave Feminist Video Collectives in Canada," *Camera Obscura* 31, no.3 (2016): 9.

[122] For example, in *Cultural Economies: Histories from the Alternative Arts Movement,* Julie Ault discusses how members of the Art Workers Coalition (1969–1971) worked to make the Whitney Biennial more open to showing the work of women and people of colour. Marcia Tucker, who at that time was that institution's Curator of Painting and Sculpture, refused to cooperate. Based on Tucker's openness to working with these communities in her later career as the founder of the New Museum, we can ask if it was Tucker who was hostile to diversity, or the Whitney. However, if these official or unofficial policies are not challenged internally, how will change come about? See Julie Ault, *Cultural Economies: Histories from the Alternative Arts Movement* (NYC. New York: Drawing Center, 1996), 17; Erik Olin Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias* (London: Verso, 2010.) 1-416

section, I analyse the Canada Council's history of funding to artist-run centres, especially with regards to centres that operate with a cultural diversity mandate. I lay out the history of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, the Massey Report, and the Canadian Multicultural Policy, and their relationship with cultural funding. I also analyse the effects that colonization in Canada, along with Indigenous resistance to it, had on cultural funding, such as dedicated funding to Indigenous artists. Finally, I explain the impact these funding and policy shifts had on artist-run centres, especially those with constituencies most affected by challenges to hegemony.

In June 2015, the Canada Council partially unveiled a new funding model. Behind its new program, New Funding Model, is a commitment to cultural diversity that forms the "basis for funding decisions" alongside "the quality of…artistic work, and the impact of that work in relation to program objectives."[123] Framed as a priority, the Council pledged "a commitment to respect and promote Canada's official languages, and artistic practices reflecting cultural, ethnic and regional diversity and deaf and disability art."[124] While most artist-run centre budgets are too small to be included in this category, artistic institutions with a budget greater than $2 million must demonstrate a commitment to representing and reflecting geographic and regional diversity at the programming and organizational level, and they must demonstrate inclusion and engagement of "Aboriginal Peoples, culturally diverse groups, people who are Deaf or have disabilities and official language minority communities."[125] Additionally, the funding normally reserved for artist-run centres now also supports artist collectives and initiatives—more informal groupings of arts organizations. This funding budget increased to accommodate more applicants.

[123] "New Funding Model," Canada Council for the Arts, accessed June 4, 2016, https://canadacouncil.ca/spotlight/2016/01/eligibility-and-the-new-funding-model.
[124] "New Funding Model," Canada Council for the Arts, accessed June 4, 2016, https://canadacouncil.ca/spotlight/2016/01/eligibility-and-the-new-funding-model.
[125] "New Funding Model," Canada Council for the Arts, accessed June 4, 2016, https://canadacouncil.ca/spotlight/2016/01/eligibility-and-the-new-funding-model.

In a further effort to increase diversity, in 2021, the Canada Council announced a cluster hire of BIPOC candidates.

These developments build on the creation of the Canada Council for the Arts Equity Office, created in the 1990s and strengthened in each subsequent strategic plan. According to its website, the current responsibilities of the Equity Office include:

> Maintaining a strategic focus on supporting Canadian artists of African, Asian, Middle Eastern, Latin American or mixed racial heritage, and their artistic practices; Working closely with the Aboriginal Arts Office to integrate the distinct history, experience and contributions of Aboriginal artists into a wider equity framework; Promoting integration and access for artists who are Deaf or who have disabilities into the Council's processes and programs; and Contributing to policy development for official language minority communities.[126]

The office is additionally responsible for helping to develop Council-wide policies and developing best practices.[127] The Equity Office follows the creation of the Advisory Committee to the Canada Council for Racial Equality in the Arts. The Advisory Committee, founded in 1990 and made up of 5–7 professional artists, was put into place to advise and make "recommendations on policies, programs and issues to advance cultural diversity and racial equity in the arts."[128] The Advisory Committee was created in response to several factors, including grassroots lobbying and the inclusion, as of 1986, of the Canada Council in the Canadian Government's Employment Equity Act.[129] The first action of the Advisory Committee following the 1991 report compiled by Chris Creighton-Kelly, was to attempt to change the Council's then-current focus on *multiculturalism*, itself the result of the Canadian Multicultural Act, which was made official policy in 1971 under the Pierre Elliot Trudeau government and

[126] About the Equity Office 2016
[127] About the Equity Office 2016
[128] Chris Creighton-Kelly, Report on Racial Equality in the Arts at the Canada Council (Ottawa: Canada Council, 1991), 1.
[129] Robertson, *Policy Matters*, 56-59.

formally adopted in 1988 under the Brian Mulroney (Progressive Conservative) administration.[130]

Key people working within the Canada Council for the Arts drove many of the changes forward. Of note is Edythe Goodridge, who was the director of the Visual Arts Department at the Canada Council during the 1980s and into the 1990s.[131] According to former Head of the Media Arts Section at the Canada Council Su Ditta, who worked with Goodridge during this period, Goodridge "opened doors to Canadian artists in areas previously dominated by British and American artists," and she pushed for greater cultural diversity.[132] Amongst her many achievements at the Canada Council was the creation of a program to encourage Indigenous curators. Curator Gerald McMaster has called Goodridge a guide.[133] Goodridge was a life-long champion of artist-run culture and she "fiercely defended…arms-length funding, anti-censorship, peer assessment and artistic autonomy. She emphasized the complex, necessary place of artists in society—and that art came from artists, not administrators or those who provided funding."[134]

Of course, we cannot speak about multiculturalism or equity without mentioning national identity, which in Canada is tied to the dual nature of the country's colonizers. Whereas in the majority of Canada the creation of a national cultural identity represents an attempt to define Canada as distinct from the United States of America, in Québec, the concern historically has been to carve out a sovereign Francophone identity for the sake of combatting Anglo-Canadian

[130] Fatona, "'Where Outreach Meets Outrage,'" 4; Ken Lum, "Canadian Cultural Policy: A Metaphysical Problem" (paper presented in Wroclaw, Poland, June 1999) http://www.apexart.org/conference/lum.html.
[131] Joan Sullivan, "Art curator Edythe Goodridge was called 'mother' of Newfoundland," *The Globe and Mail*, July 6, 2014, https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/curator-edythe-goodridge-was-called-mother-of-newfoundland/article19482353/.
[132] News, "Edythe Goodridge (1937–2014)," Artforum, https://www.artforum.com/news/-47423, accessed January 8, 2022.
[133] "Obituary: Edythe Goodridge (1937–2014)," *Art Forum*. July 9, 2014, https://www.artforum.com/news/edythe-goodridge-1937-2014-47423.
[134] Sullivan, "Art curator Edythe Goodridge."

cultural dominance. From sea to shining sea, Canadian cultural funding and policy have been connected to nationalistic desires.

Tracing a history of racial equity arts policies at the Canada Council for the Arts starting with the Massey Commission and the Liberal-initiated Multicultural Policy, through the Advisory Committee for Racial Equality in the Arts and what Andrea Fatona calls the *diversity years* of the 1980s and 1990s, to today's renewed interest in equity and diversity, we can see that funding has always played a role in the relationship artist-run centres have had with cultural race politics, to use Monika Kin Gagnon's term.[135] Self-determination "denotes the legal right of people to decide their own destiny in the international order.…Internal self-determination may refer to various political and social rights; by contrast, external self-determination refers to full legal independence/secession for the given 'people' from the larger politico-legal state."[136] Self-determination is our right to make decisions for ourselves.[137]

While the topic of my dissertation is not specifically about self-determination in an Indigenous context, it is important to mention the ways in which this concept is employed in that context. Canada is a colonial country founded on stolen land and broken treaties. Indigenous people "define themselves by their own traditions, languages, genealogies, band memberships, ties to the land, and community practices," but because of ongoing colonial structures, they are also subject to being defined and governed by the state, especially via the Indian Act.[138] The Indian Act was first adopted in 1876. It governed areas such as artistic production, education,

[135] Fatona, "'Where Outreach Meets Outrage,'" 106. For more on the Massey Commission, see Zainub Vergee's excellent article, "The Great Canadian Amnesia," *Canadian Art*, June 20, 2018, https://canadianart.ca/essays/massey-report-the-great-canadian-amnesia/.
[136] Cornell Law. "Self Determination (International Law)." Legal Information Institute. Accessed February 5, 2021. https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/self_determination_(international_law).
[137] There is a danger that the term self-determination could be misused within an individualistic, neoliberal *best man forward* type of context. This is the opposite of what I mean, and I align my use of it with definitions grounded in anarchist thought, which presumes society to be capable of care, respect, and empathy.
[138] "Indigenous Women's Rights."

and legal status. Many aspects of the Indian Act are still in play in 2021 or were only repealed recently. For example, the clause responsible for the creation and maintenance of the Residential School system was only repealed in 2014. The Indian Act demonstrates the many ways Canada fails to respect Indigenous sovereignty and right to self-determination.

The Canadian government only officially recognized its role as colonizer in 2019. It has, historically and continually, negatively impacted Indigenous peoples across North America through a campaign of land theft and (both literal and cultural) genocide. As the *National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* 2019 supplementary report titled "A Legal Analysis of Genocide" states, "colonial structures and policies are persistent in Canada," and these enable the ongoing project of Indigenous genocide.[139] Further, it advises, "ending the Canadian genocide of Indigenous Peoples requires an honest and active process of decolonization and indigenization of structures, institutions, legislation and policies."[140] Since the 2015 release of the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, more Canadians have become aware of the realities of contemporary Indigenous peoples and are able to connect the legacy of colonization to the current reality. However, as curator Gerald McMaster asks in 1992,

> Will they know any more about our mutually unfortunate and often difficult histories? Will they be more cognizant of the complexity of such issues as colonization, Native rights, determination, land claims? Will Canadians (or others) know more about the one-sided views of history (the Master Narrative) they have been taught, and will they try to change perpetually negative values and beliefs about one another?[141]

This prompts the question: what role do artists, institutions and funders play in shifting the dialogue and perceptions around Indigenous peoples in so-called Canada?

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[139] "A Legal Analysis of Genocide: Supplementary Report of the Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls," (National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2019), 1.
[140] "A Legal Analysis of Genocide," 27.
[141] Gerald R. McMaster, "INDIGENA: A Native Curator's Perspective," *Art Journal* 51, no. 3 (1992): 73, https://doi.org/10.2307/777350.

Indigenous peoples under colonialism have been perceived as wards of the state, but simply recognizing them as equal citizens is not enough. As Jolene Rickard (Tuscarora nation, Turtle clan) writes, "as part of an ongoing strategy for survival, the work of indigenous artists needs to be understood through the clarifying lens of sovereignty and self-determination, not just in terms of assimilation, colonization, and identity."[142] In 2011, Rickard furthers her case for the need for self-determination for Indigenous nations, writing, "Any colonial-settler nation can define the terms of Indigenous sovereignty within its own legal system, but that does not mean that Indigenous nations must accept those interpretations."[143] To summarize, the basic acknowledgement that colonization exists is not enough to move reconciliation forward. For reconciliation to occur in the context of Indigenous settler relationships, policy makers and funding bodies need to allow Indigenous peoples as free to practice self-determination. As Glen Coulthard (Yellowknives Dene) writes,

> I suggest…we begin to collectively redirect our struggles *away* from a politics that seeks to attain a conciliatory form of settler-state recognition for Indigenous nations toward a *resurgent politics of recognition* premised on self-actualization, direct action, and the resurgence of cultural practices that are attentive to the subjective and structural composition of settler-colonial power.[144]

Indeed, artist-run centres have begun to recognize Indigenous self-determination, but the trend is new; for instance, artist-run centres only recently started acknowledging in statements that they are situated on Indigenous lands. The term *self-determination* in the context of artist-run centres refers to the collective or group need for self-determination vis-à-vis programming, use of funds,

[142] Jolene Rickard, "Sovereignty: A Line in the Sand," *Aperture* 139 (Summer 1995), http://www.jstor.org/stable/24474915.
[143] Jolene Rickard, "Visualizing Sovereignty in the Time of Biometric Sensors," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 110, no.2 (2011): 467, https://doi.org/10.1215/00382876-1162543.
[144] Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 24, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctt9qh3cv.

and administrative practices. Self-determination is also a feminist principle, as feminism links self-determination to empowerment, which is a key value of feminist administrative practice.

Funding for arts in Canada has waxed and waned over the years, generally depending on whether the Conservatives or Liberals were in power, and it sometimes varied through the course of a party's time in office. Notably, the 1990s saw the collapse of many feminist-led projects in the arts while the federal government was predominantly Liberal. Jean Chrétien was Prime Minister from 1993–2003, and under his governance, there was an expectation that cuts to the Canada Council made under the previous Conservative Government would be restored, but this was not the case. In fact, according to scholar Mary M. Johnson, members of the Canadian "arts community began to wonder whether the Chrétien Liberals were Tories in sheep's clothing."[145] In the meantime, the Council was undergoing a radical rethinking following the appointment of Director Roch Carrier and Chair Donna Scott, during which time terms like "'investment' in the arts, developing new 'partnerships' in the arts, 'improving program delivery,' and 'cutting administrative costs'" were introduced.[146] Almost immediately, significant cuts were made to the Council's budget, at the behest of the Liberal government:

> In March of 1994, prompted by the relatively high cost of the Council's administrative costs, the Treasury Board ordered the Council to cut its administrative budget by $2.4 million over the next three years. The Council had one of the highest overheads in the country with 18 per cent of its budget going to administration. The Council announced that the cuts would affect the Council staff but not artists' grant programs or the peer evaluation process. The Council began speaking in terms of "fiscal pressures, priorities, and spending envelopes" instead of more traditional concepts such as creativity, excellence and artistic integrity."[147]

[145] Mary M. Johnson, "The Federal Government and the Politicization of the Canada Council: Exploring the Fine Line Between Accountability and Interference" (Master's thesis, Carleton University, 2000), 99, https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/obj/s4/f2/dsk2/ftp03/MQ52354.pdf.
[146] Johnson, "The Federal Government and the Politicization of the Canada Council," 102.
[147] Johnson, "The Federal Government and the Politicization of the Canada Council," 101-102.

After this shift in priorities from questions of artistic integrity to fiscal concerns, "public funders began to expand their support to a broader and more diverse group of artists and arts organizations. Some created measures to support previously under-represented groups, including Indigenous and culturally diverse artists and art forms with little or no increase in the size of their budgets."[148] The result was that the Council's funding was spread across a larger quantity of applicants and artists and organizations, and those "receiving public funding for the first time received smaller grants than those that had a history of public support."[149] Organizations that had long been funded, which were for the most part run by white men, maintained their funding levels.

Further, while it is widely understood that since the beginning of Harper's Conservative Government in 2006 there have been widespread funding cuts to arts and culture in Canada, including a drastic $45 million cut in 2008, these cuts are not always appreciable because they are sometimes hidden within the overall annual budget of arts funding bodies such as the Canada Council for the Arts.[150] For example, in the 2008–2009 fiscal year, the total Council funding was $158 million, composed of $145.6 million in grants, $9.9 million paid to authors, and $2.4 million in special funds (such as the Killam Research Fellowship). In 2012–2013, total Council funding was $153.5 million, with only $141.7 million earmarked for grants. This decrease of $4.5 million is revealed to be even more significant when population size is factored in; in the 2008–2009 budget year, the total population of Canada (according to Statistics Canada) was 33.3

[148] Kelly Wilhelm, "A Balancing Act: Supporting the Arts in Canada," *The Philanthropist Journal*, May 27, 2019, https://thephilanthropist.ca/2019/05/a-balancing-act-supporting-the-arts-in-canada/.
[149] Kelly Wilhelm, "A Balancing Act: Supporting the Arts in Canada," *The Philanthropist Journal*, May 27, 2019, https://thephilanthropist.ca/2019/05/a-balancing-act-supporting-the-arts-in-canada/.
[150] Stephen Harper's Conservative party had been in power in Canada, either as a minority government or a slim majority since 2006. In 2008, Harper also ended the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade's (DFAIT) program PromArt, which had a $4.7 million fund to send Canadian artists abroad to present their work, as well as ending Trade Routes, a $9 million program through Heritage Canada also promoting Canadian art outside of Canada.

million, but by 2012–2013, it had reached 34.9 million. This 4.8% increase of population should reflect a 4.8% increase in funding, as the budget for arts and culture is derived directly from public taxation. Factoring in the population increase, the 2.8% decrease in funding the Canada Council received between 2008–2009 and 2012–2013 can actually be measured as a 7.3% decrease over 5 years.[151] More recently, in the 2016–2017 budget year, the Canada Council received an increase to its budget as "part of the Government of Canada's major reinvestment in the arts and culture."[152] The current budget is $360 million with $310 million as a "direct annual investments in the arts," compared to $150 million in 2015.[153] This is an example of a proper increase, in contrast to the Harper Conservative's veiled decrease in funding.

Additionally, under the Harper administration, funding became increasingly streamlined to focus on projects that interacted with science communities (such as the Killam fellowship), projects that had organizations and artists working with communities in order to provide art therapy and education-focused programming (like the now defunct Artist and Community Collaboration Program), and short-term rather than long-term projects.[154] As well, funding to publications specifically decreased. What's more, over time, the number of artists and organizations applying to the Canada Council for the Arts swelled enormously. Between 1972 and 1975, three artist-run centres received funding from the Council. From 1984 to 1987 that

[151] These statistics do not account for inflation (2.5%). For more information, see the Mouvement pour les arts et les lettres' January 16th, 2014 open letter, "500 Jours Depuis L'élection Du Gouvernement Du Parti Québécois - Le Temps Presse De Redresser Le Budget Du Calq!" www.mal.qc.ca/nouvelle.php?n=80.
[152] Simon Brault, "Annual Public Meeting Speech," Canada Council for the Arts, January 15, 2019, https://canadacouncil.ca/spotlight/2019/01/the-canada-councils-journey#:~:text=As%20Pierre%20mentioned%2C%20in%20the,have%20doubled%20to%20%24360%20million.
[153] Simon Brault, "New Investments," Canada Council for the Arts, accessed November 8, 2021, https://canadacouncil.ca/spotlight/2016/11/new-investments-the-future-of-canada-s-arts-sector#:~:text=By%202021%2C%20we%20will%20have,to%20%24310%20million%20(2021).
[154] The New Model is more open and unspecific but there are still many opportunities that meld the public and private sector interests and push beyond what has traditionally represented the not-for-profit art world (like the Digital Strategy Fund).

number was forty-six.[155] Comparatively, in the 2005–2006 budget year, 4,068 grants were awarded to organizations; in 2014–2015 only 2,255 arts organizations received a Council grant. It is not that there are fewer arts organizations today than in the past. On the contrary, between 1968 and 1973, there were six artist-run centres in Canada, all receiving some level of financial support from the Canada Council. The 2012, Canada Council for the Arts commissioned study "The Distinct Role of Artist-Run Centres in Visual Arts Ecology," led by Marilyn Burgess and Maria de Rosa (commonly referred to as the Burgess Report,) notes that, today, over 100 visual arts organizations receive support from the Assistance to Artist-Run Centres Program of the Canada Council for the Arts.[156] The difficulty was that for many year, accessing operating funds at a level that made an organization viable was next to impossible for new organizations. Stagnant funding and/or clear funding cuts meant that even previously funded organizations often felt the tightening of budgets.

Arts funding was set up by Liberal governments, starting with Louis St-Laurent's government, which commissioned the Massey Report (1951) and created the Canada Council for the Arts Act in 1957.[157] Government commitment to the arts has ebbed and flowed; generally, support came through Liberal governments and cuts came through Conservative ones.[158] The most funded organizations have generally been older, established ones, usually with non-equity-seeking mandates, such as the Western Front in Vancouver and Oboro in Montréal.[159]

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[155] AA Bronson, ed., *From Sea to Shining Sea: Chronology of Artist-Initiated Activities in Canada 1939–1987* (Toronto: Power Plant, 1987), 162-163.
[156] Marilyn Burgess and Maria De Rosa, *The Distinct Role of Artist-Run Centres in the Canadian Visual Arts Ecology* (Montréal: MDR Burgess Consultants, 2011), 13.
[157] Johnson, "The Federal Government and the Politicization of the Canada Council," 1.
[158] Canada Council Annual Reports
[159] This is not always the case. In 1990, La Centrale received a three-year grant—$45000 for the first year and $55000 for each of the next two years—making Galerie Powerhouse the highest funded parallel gallery in Quebec and the third highest in Canada (La Centrale Fonds, Fonds P128, Concordia University Library, Montréal, Québec, Canada.)

The history of artist-run centres has always been cleaved to that of funding programs in Canada. Anne Bertrand, the former director of The Artist-Run Centres and Collectives Conference (ARCA) and long-time steward of artist-run centres, writes that "the economic reality of artist-run centres" is impacted by the "dependence on external funding, chronic underfunding, a predominantly female work force, precarious employee status, and squandering of experience and expertise."[160] Therefore, we must question how, as Clive Robertson writes, "the social and cultural interventions and ambitions of artist-run centres are re-designated by funding agency policy, and by artists themselves, to fit a narrower or more specific visual arts discourse."[161]

Artist-run centres proliferated in the 1970s, a time of extreme social and political change internationally, manifesting locally through specific national policies and social movements in Canada. Their creation is indivisible from the social and political realities of that era, and their subsequent histories tend to follow, and often react against, the social and political histories of their geo-political locations. Their history and their position in Canada have been cleaved to that of the Canada Council for the Arts, and the provincial and municipal funding councils that further administer the funding of artists and art spaces in this country. At present, artist-run centres, and consequently many artists, are dependent on the councils for their continued existence. I noticed through my archival research that over time and following changes in administrative policy at a national level, the language employed by funding bodies has shifted radically. This is a complex situation made more so by the continuously changing landscape of Canadian art, the growth of artistic mediums and practices, the proliferation of artist-run centres

[160] Anne Bertrand, "Managing Non-Profit and Artist-Run Centres," *Atlantis* 30 (2006): 136.
[161] Robertson, *Policy Matters*, 1.

nationally, the influence from private galleries and museums, and public and member-driven demands.

Of course, shifts in funding language do not necessarily come at the direction of the funding bodies themselves; these changes are more likely the result of governmental pressures. For example, changes under Harper's Conservative Government, along with a climate of austerity, persist in putting strain on the arts (and all publicly funded sectors) and continue to impact the Canadian cultural sector. This defunding of arts and culture in Canada and the move away from culture as soft power dates back to the beginning of neoliberalism and decline of social democracy in Canada since the Mulroney era (Brian Mulroney's Progressive Conservatives were in office from 1984–1993).

Further, funding offers, and external governmental directions have long had a direct effect on aesthetics. According to media artist and scholar Marusya Bociurkiw, "the aesthetic economy had also changed by the end of the 1980s. To get funding for video, you had to justify it as a work of art, so many activist video makers (including myself) moved out of documentary—at the time, an increasingly delegitimized genre—into drama or experimental work."[162] Egyptian-Canadian arts writer Merray Gerges, jokingly but accurately writes,

> The first time I saw a large-scale exhibition that set Canadian artists side by side with international artists on Canadian soil, I played a game where I would intuit whether the work was made in Canada, and I scored nine times out of ten. I noticed that the works by Canadians were *about* something: a historic event, national identity, Expo 67, a document that altered the agency of a group of marginalized people. It felt didactic, like it was trying to teach a history lesson, to moralize its audience. Then, in my head, I'd draft the grant proposal that I imagined the artist wrote to fund the production of work. I imagined what buzzwords they would've used to appeal to a jury of their peers. "Social practice"? "Archival research"?[163]

[162] Bociurkiw, "Big Affect," 19.
[163] Merray Gerges, "Towards a Theory of Grant Aesthetics," *Visual Arts News Critical Writer in Residence Essay Series*, vol.1, May 9, 2016, https://visualartsnews.ca/2016/05/towards-a-theory-of-grant-aesthetics/.

The Canada Council's own research confirms the tie-in between aesthetics and funding priorities. In a 2019 report titled "Canada Council for the Arts Qualitative Impact Framework," the Canada Council for the Arts reported that funding impact is in part measured by what Canadian's value about the arts. This can include "what arts organizations themselves believe they are offering the public in terms of meaning and worth," and "to what extent do Canada Council-funded works represent cultural touch points or create lasting impacts on cultural awareness and inform collective memories of distinct communities in Canada?"[164] Of course, these are not unimportant considerations. The last point, about whether Canadian funded artwork is successful in representing Canada, especially, has merit in that it paves the way for questions of equity in arts funding.

In Québec, artist-run centres became known as *les centres d'artistes autogérées* in 1986, when the Régroupement des centres d'artistes autogérées de Québéc (RCAAQ) decided to rename what was then still referred to as parallel galleries. Since the RCAAQ claimed that these spaces were no longer parallel but rather in line with other contemporary art spaces, a new name was chosen:

> The adoption of this new name originated with the term artist-run centres circulating in English Canada and in the United-States: the term is still used today. Strictly translated, it would really be *centres gérées par des artistes*. The founders of the RCAAQ decided that since these centres were directed and managed by artists, we could say *autogérés* in French. This is how the concept of self-determination became intertwined with the language of these relatively new institutions.[165]

[164] Alan Brown, John Carnwath, and James Doeser, "Canada Council for the Arts Qualitative Impact Framework," Canada Council for the Arts Report, November 2019, 30-36, https://canadacouncil.ca/-/media/Files/CCA/Research/2019/12/QualitativeImpactFrameworkCanadaCouncil-Report.pdf.
[165] Gilbert Bastien, "Trente ans d'autogestion artistique en art contemporain: un exemple québécois." *Montréal: Autogestions, Espace de liberté* 29, no. 2 (2005): 66, my translation. Gilbert was one of the founders of the RCAAQ and was the organization's first director, a position he held until 2020.

Québec therefore accidentally aligned itself with an anarchist historical model by using the word *autogérés* (self-management, from the term autogestion) as opposed to *gérées par des artistes* meaning run by artists. Whether this was an intentional choice or a matter of poor translation, the reality remains that the Québec network saw itself as separate from and more autonomous than the network in the rest of Canada. It still does. The councils support this as well. While the French are themselves colonizers of Canada, there is a precedent of including them as minorities in the Canadian context.[166] As an example, the Canada Council solicits both Indigenous-led and Québec and Franco-Canadian perspectives when measuring DEI impacts.

In the 1970s, artist-run centres were also spaces in which conceptual art in Canada was most likely to be shown. Conceptual art of the period could be said to be typified by its utilization of new information technologies—often in the context of documenting an action—as well as by a desire not merely to add new things to an already saturated world, but rather to add ideas and concepts open to interpretation, allowing audiences to build upon them.[167] Moreover, to quote art historian Jayne Wark, "Conceptual artists considered themselves cultural critics—of the prevailing modes of art production on the one hand, and of its larger system of display, reception, and commodification on the other."[168] Directly informed by the political period which birthed it, conceptual art was a reaction to bourgeois arts practices and art markets. It was a direct reaction to the Vietnam war and the anti-war movement, and it acted as a rejection of

[166] Not to mention there is a troubling precedent for them to see themselves as marginalized and oppressed. See: Pierre Vallières, *Le Nègre blanc d'amerique.* (Montreal: Les Éditions Parti pris, 1968.)
[167] See for example: Paul Wood, *Conceptual Art* (New York: Delano Greenidge, 2002).
[168] Jayne Wark, "Conceptual Art and Feminism: Martha Rosler, Adrian Piper, Eleanor Antin, and Martha Wilson," *Woman's Art Journal* 22, no. 1 (2001): 44.

modernism, and modernism's apolitical aesthetics.[169] Conceptual art was a reflection on the power of expression, specifically concerned with language, body, place and geography.

Feminist art emerged in the 1970s, overlapping with conceptual art. Feminist art—and here I am referring to art made by women primarily during the second wave of feminism—extended and troubled this form of critique, aligning itself with more engaged discussions around civil rights and feminist struggles on a broader scale. It, too, embraced new technologies, with a heavy interest in video within feminist art communities. As Bociurkiw notes, "the 1989 exhibit *Rebel Girls: A Survey of Canadian Feminist Videotapes 1974–1988*, curated by Su Ditta at the National Gallery of Canada, bookmarks this era. This show placed feminist video on a seemingly level playing field with the canon of Canadian art."[170] Of course, new technologies are expensive, so the need for institutional support increased. Bociurkiw goes on to note that in spite of the importance of *Rebel Girls,* "this exhibit also signalled the institutionalization and hierarchal organization that were becoming part of the feminist project."[171] Many of the works were created in or for circulation in artist-run centres before making it to the National Gallery, by artists who were prominent in feminist artist-run centres, such as Sara Diamond, Tanya Mars, Diane Poitras, and Lisa Steele.

As some of the first spaces to adopt conceptual art, artist-run centres were among the first spaces to be explicitly devoted to *contemporary* art as something distinct from the established canon of *modern* art. While many feminist artists rejected conceptual art—which in the 1970s, the same period feminist art emerged, was, according to art historian Jayne Wark "the prevailing art world practice"—many embraced conceptualism, as both conceptual art and feminism "drew

[169] See Lucy Lippard, "Six Years by Lucy R. Lippard - Paperback - University of California Press." Accessed March 6, 2021. https://www.ucpress.edu/book/9780520210134/six-years, and Julia Bryan-Wilson *Art Workers*. Accessed March 6, 2021. https://www.ucpress.edu/book/9780520269750/art-workers.
[170] Bociurkiw, "Big Affect," 21.
[171] Bociurkiw, "Big Affect," 22.

upon and engaged in a critical reassessment of its concepts."[172] The relationship between feminist and conceptual art represents "a crucial shift in the notion of how art could have a critical social and political resonance."[173] That is, artist-run centres emerged in the '60s and '70s as conceptualism, video, and performance ushered in the contemporary period. Artist-run centres were key to this transition in Canada as they offered artists the ability to experiment, free from the burden of producing work for sale. They attempted to pay artists for their exhibitions and allowed artists to network nationally at a time when conceptual performance art was dominating.

Today, funding models still encourage experimentation, but they do not demand it. To be eligible for funding, artist-run centres must follow a not-for-profit arts organization model; they must not charge admission fees, must be non-commercial, and must de-emphasize the selling of work. But with the decrease in government funding to the arts over the past two decades, many artist-run centres now charge admission fees for event-based programming, and occasionally sell artwork, thereby undermining that sense of experimentation that artist-run centred enjoyed in their beginnings. The Canada Council for the Arts has always played an important role in the development of artist-run culture. When funding was available thanks to generous government support for the arts, there was a proliferation of artist-run spaces and platforms.[174]

> In 1970, the youth unemployment rate reached an unprecedented level and [Pierre Elliott] Trudeau feared that popular unrest would skyrocket. Thus, the Secretary of State launched its Opportunities for Youth (OFY) program designed to offer job-creating opportunities to unemployed citizens by means of community-based projects.…However, such groups did not yet perceive the control mechanism looming under the guise of this utopia of emancipation. Some artists collectives

[172] Wark, "Conceptual Art and Feminism," 44.
[173] Wark, "Conceptual Art and Feminism," 44.
[174] In the last few years, we have seen a sharp rise in alternative models; artist-run centres that are self- or privately funded have flourished. Because they are not beholden to the major funding bodies such as the Canada Council, these spaces are truly able to present what they want, when they want to. Many of these collectives and galleries do receive project funding—a more flexible and permissive form of funding. Many of them also have sprung up to address gaps in more traditional artist-run centre programming (such as Angry Asian Feminist Gang in Toronto or Nigra Iueventa in Montréal).

> submitted projects, but the Local Initiatives Programme (LIP) would be the real impetus behind the artist-run centres as they are known today.[175]

The Canada Council and the Local Initiatives Programme (LIP) worked to support Canadian artists at a moment when art as soft-power was increasingly critical. Arts funders are therefore connected to the socio-political landscape as much as artist-run centres are. As white settler Canadian curator cheyanne turions[176] writes:

> As I understand it, the impetus behind the formation of artist-run centres (ARCs) was artistic self-determination.…Emerging in the late 1960s, arguments for self-determination were taken seriously and the support of ARCs can be read alongside other social phenomena of the time, such as the civil rights movement, second-wave feminism and anti-establishment counterculture. At this time, the infrastructure of the Canada Council already existed and the Council's expansion to support artist-run initiatives reflects its adoption of the zeitgeist.[177]

As funders adapted (and continue to adapt) to the changing arts landscape it can be difficult to parse who leads the way with regards to large structural changes. Some artist-run centres have paved the way for the policy changes that have later informed other centres. Historically, as we will see later in this dissertation, it has been the better funded spaces that have let the funders lead with regards to change. Although most artist-run spaces took advantage of available funding, it would be unfair to say that they opened solely as a result of government programs. Artist-run centres began for a variety of reasons and to serve a myriad of needs. What they seem to have in common is a mandate to act as an alternative to other exhibition and production platforms, specifically

[175] Bonin 2010, 45

[176] turions long claimed Indigenous ancestry based on family stories, but in 2021 removed those claims from her biography. The accountability process is ongoing, as turions herself benefited from the First People's Curatorial Residency Program, as well as other significant funding meant to benefit Indigenous arts producers. According to her blog (https://cheyanneturions.wordpress.com/) she is in the process of investigating repayment or financial reparations and working with a transformative justice facilitator.

[177] cheyanne turions, "Thinking Again about Artist-run Culture," cheyanne turions, accessed March 31, 2015, https://cheyanneturions.wordpress.com/2014/10/14/thinking-again-about-artist-runculture/.

museums and commercial galleries. In many cases, however, artist-run centres opened less as an alternative to existing institutions than as compensation for the lack of existing infrastructure for contemporary art—a utopian impulse, building new institutions from scratch. What's more, "from the beginning, artist-run centres, in varying degrees and ways, saw themselves as sites of radical possibility, as sites of resistance—even if such resistance was limited to critiques of existing categories of art and arts funding or debate over which type of institution could be run more effectively by artists."[178] However, within Canadian arts organizations, even those founded or operating with the utopian principles of feminism or anti-racism, by and for Indigenous or BIPOC artists, there has been a continued forgetting. Artist-run centres have forgotten many of the foundational principles that made them sites of resistance. Utopian methodology proposes a "two steps forward, one step back" approach as a way of constantly reassessing, but these memory losses are less a part of that process of imagining a flourishing future than they are a tool of suppression. As Monika Kin Gagnon notes in her 2002 book with Richard Fung, "the paucity of historical memory and critical voice…are at the base of both an apparent amnesia and backlash."[179]

2.6 Umbrella Organizations and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Openings

Vincent Bonin characterises the formation of the Association of National Non-Profit Artists Centres (ANNPAC) as a pivotal moment in the history of Canadian art:

> The founding of ANNPAC facilitated the equitable distribution of grants and afforded artists access to lobbying tools to reach government agencies more

[178] Robertson, *Policy Matters*, 16-17.
[179] Gagnon, Bailey, and Fung, *13 Conversations*, 14.

> efficiently. However, it fused the decentralized network that artists imagined in the early 1970s to the bureaucratic machine they were attempting to bypass.[180]

ANNPAC was formed, according to AA Bronson, through the support of the Canada Council, and Council support continues to sustain national service organizations today (such as the Artist-Run Centres and Collectives Conference or ARCA and the RCAAQ).[181] ANNPAC held a national assembly in 1986, at which many member organizations found that the national service organization was not giving Québécois priorities sufficient attention. After that, several artist-run centres from Québec left ANNPAC and formed the Régroupment des centres d'artistes autogérés du Québec (RCCAQ). The following year, concerned that conversations around cultural diversity were seriously lacking, thirteen racialized members of ANNPAC formed a breakout group named the Minquon Panchayat:

> Minquon Panchayat is an amalgamation of two words: a Maliseet word (present also in other native languages) meaning rainbow, followed by a Sanskrit word (present also in other South Asian languages) meaning council. The goals of the caucus were, broadly speaking, to make ANNPAC more inclusive through the inclusion of artists' groups of colour and First Nations, to network those who already had membership, and to educate and transform the mandates of artist-run centres with low numbers of First Nations and people of colour.[182]

It's difficult to determine exactly who were members of the Minquon Panchayat. It is widely understood that the collective assembled to address systemic racism in the arts and in artist-run culture. As artist Paul Wong explains, ANNPAC, "the national body that said who was and who was not an artist-run centre in this country," held an AGM in 1992 where "they decided to put together a steering committee to deal with diversity and inclusion. The committee of artists-of-colour was given a mandate to address those issues, expand membership and make

[180] Vincent Bonin and Michèle Thériault, eds., *Documentary Protocols/Protocoles Documentaires (1967-1975),*19.
[181] Bronson and Gale, *Museums by Artists*, 34.
[182] J. Keri Cronin, and Kirsty Robertson, eds., *Imagining Resistance: Visual Culture and Activism in Canada* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2011), 142-44**.**

ANNPAC *relevant*."[183] These members renamed that committee the Minquon Panchayat, and a year later, they attempted to invite as many as forty-four new artists groups to present themselves as possible members for ANNPAC. The response to their proposal, from the otherwise mostly white ANNPAC participants, was incendiary. To quote Wong again,

> They questioned the validity of the artists and the groups; they were threatened by who we had invited. They wanted to show change by maybe adding on two new member groups—certainly not the twenty-five or so we were putting forward. This would have represented a huge expansion and new direction. They insulted us, all our guests, they humiliated the Minquon Panchayat, and we walked. From there, we went about dismantling ANNPAC.[184]

The dissolution of ANNPAC did not mark the end of the Minquon Panchayat, whose members were in part responsible for such important moments in Canadian art history as the international film and video conference/symposium *In Visible Colours* (1989), the film and video conference/workshop *About Face, About Frame* (1992), the conference *It's a Cultural Thing* (1993), and the conference *Writing Thru Race* (1994). Like most diversity and inclusion initiatives, these activities were not met without resistance. Many Canadians accused the organizers of "reverse racism"—of excluding white voices from the caucus—which was a protectionist reaction. Art historians Keri Cronin and Kirsty Robertson describe the extra scrutiny that caucus-supported artist-run centres received from ANNPAC before ANNPAC collapsed:

> Although ANNPAC originally supported the caucus, rifts grew, ostensibly over bureaucratic violations and whether new centres introduced fit the criteria of ANNPAC membership (itself a question that had rarely come up previously). As Kin Gagnon notes, "Questions of artistic legitimacy and concerns about artistic quality seemed prompted by the racializing context of the Minquon Panchayat. In both instances, and there were many, many more, supposedly procedural language and bureaucratic formality were used to reinforce the (white) status quo of

[183] Laiwan, Archer Pechawis, and Paul Wong, "Art and Identity Politics: Vancouver in the 1990s," interview by Christine Stoddard, (Queer) Intersections: Vancouver Performance in the 1990s, accessed November 8, 2021, https://performance.gruntarchives.org/essay-art-and-identity.html, emphasis my own.
[184] Laiwan, Pechawis, and Wong, "Art and Identity Politics."

> ANNPAC, enabling interrogations and exclusions in a barely-veiled language of discrimination." At the ANNPAC Annual General meeting in Calgary in 1993, differences were irreconcilable, and Minquon Panchayat left the table, taking with them numerous artist-run-centres that stood in solidarity. ANNPAC collapsed. So too did the publication *Parallélogramme* (published by ANNPAC and resurrected as Mix Magazine), when its editor, Lynne Fernie, resigned in solidarity with Minquon Panchayat.[185]

While the Minquon Panchayat members were given a mandate to diversify, the conditions were determined by the white people already in positions of power; there was no possibility for self-determination within the terms of the agreement.

Artist-run centres have often sought to explore issues of diversity, many of them directly addressing this in their mandates. Burgess and Rosa write:

> Although the Artist-Run Centre movement had confronted feminism and demands for gender inclusiveness early on, pressure from other marginalized groups intensified throughout the 1980s and 90s as contestations around a politics of identity—articulated around race, class, gender and sexual politics, swept through the ARC culture.[186]

The contestations around a politics of identity that Burgess and Rosa write about translated into programming and administrative developments in organizations. Also impacting discussions and developments around identity in artist-run centres was the Multiculturalism Act, passed in 1988 which had a goal to preserve and enhance cultural diversity in Canada. Following the passing of this policy at the national legislature, the Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship was created, but, as Canada-based emerging scholar Marina Gomá notes, "the presence of a strong multiculturalism policy in a country comprised largely of immigrants from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds may lead one to assume that high levels of acceptance across most aspects of Canadian society for such immigrants exists; however, this may not always be the case."[187] In

[185] Cronin and Robertson, *Imagining Resistance*, 142-144.
[186] Burgess and De Rosa, *The Distinct Role of Artist-Run Centres*, 16.
[187] Marina Gomá, "Challenging the Narrative of Canadian Multicultural Benevolence: A Feminist Anti-Racist Critique," *OMNES : The Journal of Multicultural Society*, (2020, Vol. 10, No. 1): 82

reality, multiculturalism polices in Canada are ultimately that which "regulates the following triangulation: Canadian settler society (English and French), Indigenous populations, and racialized immigrants."[188]

While Québec does not follow a multiculturalism model at a provincial level, favouring intercultural integration, it is still important to note that in the context of a national narrative, Québec benefits from the multicultural policy through increased funding for Québécois culture.[189] This iteration of multiculturalism "originates from an unproblematized national narrative of benevolence that has never fully accounted for the state's foundation on settler colonialism and racialized hierarchies of citizenship."[190] Or as Himani Bannerji writes in her work on multiculturalism in Canada, "this mosaic approach has not been compensated with an integrative politics of antiracism or of class struggle which is sensitive to the racialization involved in Canadian class formation."[191] In short, the Multiculturalism Act flattens the discourse on diversity and erases Indigenous sovereignty as well as other worldviews in the spirit of celebrating an acceptable, depoliticized, state-sanctioned level of difference.[192]

The 1988 Multiculturalism Act triggered a wave of funding from the Canada Council and other state funding bodies, specifically meant to address diversity in the art world. The work of the Minquon Panchayat members, however, should also be credited for shifts toward a concern for diversity at ANNPAC before its dissolution and going forwards, among ANNPAC member. Because all Québec's ANNPAC members had left to form the RCAAQ a year prior to the

[188] Marina Gomá, "Challenging the Narrative of Canadian Multicultural Benevolence: A Feminist Anti-Racist Critique," 82.
[189] See: Gérard Bouchard, "Quebec Interculturalism and Canadian Multiculturalism," In *Multiculturalism and Interculturalism: Debating the Dividing Lines*, ed. Nasar Meer, Ricard Zapata-Barrero, Tariq Modood (Edinburgh, England: Edinburgh University Press, 2016).
[190] Marina Gomá 2020 82
[191] Himani Bannerji, *The Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism, Nationalism and Gender* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2000), 8.
[192] See: Himani Bannerji, *Demography and Democracy: Essays on Nationalism, Gender and Ideology* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press. Inc., 2011); as well as Bannerji, *The Dark Side of the Nation*.

formation of the Minquon Panchayat, many of the questions posed by Québec-based centres and artists about inclusion under the Multiculturalism Act did not address race and diversity; they instead focused on linguistic inclusion. According to the Burgess Report, as of 2013, 16% of the artist-run centres interviewed served a "particular identity-based community," which could include Indigenous communities and women artists, or Franco-Canadian artists outside of Québec.[193] Currently in Québec, there are no artist-run centres that represent a specific cultural community outside of feminist artists, and "this may in part be attributed to the different nature of identity politics in Quebec, which are centred on language rather than ethnicity."[194]

Despite the Canadian art world's general impulse towards for inclusion, it has historically excluded women, Indigenous people, and people of colour. Artist Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun has accused artist-run spaces of implicit racism towards artists of colour and Indigenous artists—a problem as old as the existence of the spaces themselves. As Canadian curator and art historian of white settler descent, Melanie O'Brian notes, accusations such as this, about "the intrinsic racism within artist-run spaces points to a question that continues to haunt contemporary artist-run culture: whether or not and to what degree artist-run culture is complicit in systems it once set out to critique and dismantle."[195] Artist-run centres have always benefited from the ways multiculturalism policies can and do inform funding imperatives while holding up colonial policies. Their founders were almost exclusively white settlers, and their financial support for staff (both part-time and full-time) prioritized and continues to prioritize the hiring of white staff with university educations. Artist-run centres equally uphold the priorities of the Multiculturalism Act when they show a higher percentage of white settler artists of European descent and when they minimize the inclusion of BIPOC artists. As much as artist-run centres

[193] Burgess and De Rosa, *The Distinct Role of Artist-Run Centres*, 21.
[194] Burgess and De Rosa, *The Distinct Role of Artist-Run Centres*, 41.
[195] Melanie O'Brian, *Vancouver Art & Economies* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2007), 193.

hope to disrupt this paradigm, the reality is that there is still work to be done. As Lynne Fernie writes,

> During its seventeen-year lifespan, the artist run network has initially resisted, yet been altered by, specific social and political critiques. In the early 1980s, feminist artists forced the network to deal with its inherent sexism. At that time, many artists, despite their "alternative" approach, could not discern how sexist attitudes worked against women artists, and statements like "good art is good art, we're open to women artists if their art is good enough" were common.[196]

Feminism (mostly second-wave) has been an important part of the development of artist-run centre culture for two reasons. First, artist-run centres' historical timeline aligns with that of second-wave feminism. Second, at the same time, the financial precarity of most artist-run centres meant that women took on most of the labour in these spaces as they tolerated the low pay and poor conditions. Their resourcefulness allowed centres to thrive overall and the legacy of their fight for better working conditions is felt today. However, second-wave feminism was predominantly white women's feminism.[197] The dominant discourse, unaware of the ways in which it reproduced a rhetoric of white supremacy, reckoned with sexuality and gender but not with race and the intersections of these identities. As white-Settler scholar Winifred Brienes notes about her research on the self-described "uneasy" history of white and Black women in the feminist movement, "Whites like myself, of my generation, were (and are) sentimental about racial integration. They saw a harmonious, color-blind society as desirable and assumed it would come about if they were consciously anti-racist. Race would be irrelevant; integration would

[196] Lynne Fernie, "Editorial," *Parallélogramme* 19, no. 3 (1993): 10.
[197] Winifred Breines, *The Trouble Between Us: An Uneasy History of White and Black Women in the Feminist Movement* (Oxford University Press, 2006); Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979); Benita Roth, *Separate Roads to Feminism: Black, Chicana, and White Feminist Movements in America's Second Wave* (Cambridge University Press, 2004); Kimberly, Springer, *Living for the Revolution: Black Feminist Organizations, 1968–1980* (Duke University Press, 2005).

prevail."[198] In short, the movement saw itself as striving towards racial harmony through feminism, but the movement's failure to address difference only hindered it and perpetuated a white imaginary of harmonization.

There has been an intra-relationship between funding bodies and artist-run centres with regards to women's issues and feminism. One of the primary reasons artist-run centres multiplied so quickly in Canada is that, unlike other types of art venues, they both showed work by women artists and employed female staff. As I show in the following chapters, some centres pushed the councils for change, and some changed because of the councils. Some centres didn't change at all. Racial equity, while similar to gender equity, is a distinct issue. Because of the systemic oppression of BIPOC communities, the conditions that allowed for gender equity are not the same as the ones that will shift and end white supremacy in arts organizations. The councils can mandate women getting paid but the very money the councils redistributes is only possible because it upholds a culture of white supremacy. Racial equity work is slow. Like gender equity work, which is also slow, racial equity work requires dismantling worldviews. This is difficult and delicate work and can cause people concern about losing their places in the arts ecology.

2.7 What Can an Artist-Run Centre Be?

At the turn of the century, artist-run centres experienced a crisis of relevance.[199] At the 2012 PAARC (The Pacific Association of Artist Run Centres), Filip (an arts publisher based out of Vancouver), and ARCA organized a conference called *Institutions by Artists.* Conference

[198] Winifred Breines, "Struggling to Connect: White and Black Feminism in the Movement Years," *Contexts* 6, no. 1 (2007): 18.
[199] See Nicholas, Brown and Jaclyn Bruneau, "Are Artist-Run Centres Still Relevant? Part One," *Canadian Art*, September 16, 2015, https://canadianart.ca/features/are-artist-run-centres-still-relevant/.

attendees and presenters took up this question of relevance, debating whether artists should professionalize and whether there was space for art outside of the market and the state. *Institutions by Artists* was a three-day, international event that aimed to "evaluate and activate the performance and promise of contemporary artist-run centres and initiatives."[200] In fact, while there was much discussion around these types of centres, very little time or energy was spent directly envisioning a future for them. Instead, the conference organizers built a program around highlighting unfunded and underfunded spaces, showing how they survived without state support. This culminated in the blowout AA Bronson keynote address in which he declared defiantly, "Fuck the Canada Council," something only someone who has so deeply benefited from state support can afford to do.[201]

I would agree that artist-run centres have teetered on irrelevancy because of stagnant fiduciary support and administrative growth in the sector but disagree with Bronson that we should "fuck" government support. Many cultural workers of the founding generation of artist-run centres don't seem to see a problem with today's lack of funding *or* lack of funding diversity and appear uncomfortable engaging in the conversation. The solution might very well be tied to updating elements of the original model, which was significantly more self-directed than our current funding models allow for. As Vincent Bonin notes,

> By creating organizations according to a model of self-determination, Canadian artists attempted to undermine widespread beliefs concerning their abilities to administer institutions—thereby labouring in terrain that was reserved for the cultural elite. The period in which this paradigm of self-determination was initially tested set the stage for the infrastructure in which they would later work during the following decades; however, such a striving for autonomy implied an

[200] ArcPost, "Institutions by Artists The Convention," Arcpost, http://arcpost.ca/conference, accessed January 8, 2022.
[201] This text was also a reminder to reread Bronsons's "The Humiliation of the Bureaucrat: Artist-Run Centres as Museums by Artists," in *Museums by Artists* edited by AA Bronson and Peggy Gale, 29-37 (Toronto: Art Metropole, 1983).

> increasing dependence on granting agencies. Paradoxically, a gift economy still prevails as the mode of compensation for the scarcity of financial resources.[202]

Artist-run centres are no longer described as parallel or alternative spaces as they were initially defined, because they largely show the same type and quality of work as museums. Because of larger spaces and budgets, museums are often able to do it more easily. Despite having smaller budgets than public museums, artist-run centres remain a valuable part of the Canadian arts ecology. Artist-run centres allow artists to experiment, primarily because sales are not a factor in the survival of the space and artists are paid exhibition fees. As Blessi et al. report in their analysis of artist-run centres in Montréal, "non-profit art centres can be considered as an R+D platform open to scouting by museum curators and gallery directors."[203] Increasingly, however, museums themselves are competing with artist-run spaces in presenting experimental artworks and platforms in an effort to remain relevant and engaged with contemporary practices.[204]

Blessi et al. report that, in order to thrive, artist-run centres need access to physical space for production and exhibition purposes, a network of art spaces of varying scale to act as gateways between local and international scenes, a community, and a good level of varied economic development.[205] The very terms of feminist and anti-racist work in Canada have shifted and changed tremendously, which calls for the deployment of renewed methodologies in activist organizations as well as in progressive artist-run centres. Furthermore, the articulation of those renewed methodologies necessitates the invention of adequate vocabulary and processes, a topic I discuss in Chapter Four. In short, to imagine a future for artist-run centres, we must dig into institutional memory, not only to demystify narratives sustaining a long-lost ideal, but also

[202] Bonin, 2010, 55
[203] Blessi, Sacco, and Pilati "Independent artist-run centres," 142.
[204] Blessi, Sacco, and Pilati "Independent artist-run centres," 142.
[205] Blessi, Sacco, and Pilati "Independent artist-run centres," 145-146.

to assemble a diagnosis and determine how administrative practices inform the life of these centres. Clive Robertson writes:

> Artist-run centres as a movement in Canada arise from two concerns: the first, from a transnational generational critique of contemporary social and economic forms of art (museums, art magazines, art educational programs, forms of patronage, etc.); and the second from self-governance aspirations stimulated through new federal opportunities such as community-defined project employment programs and new arts funding.[206]

To resume, artist-run centres are the product of and dependent on their funders, even while their espoused priorities are to act as critiques of the dominant art world. In this way, the original term of parallel galleries might be more apt.

2.8 Conclusion

Utopian methodology presupposes a certain type of openness to the unknown. The nature of early Canadian artist-run culture was that of a dispersed network, built around personal relationships that facilitated new modes of working. As artist-run centres institutionalized, in part to meet funding requirements, the relationship between the artist-run centre network and its funders went from intra- to inter-relational.[207] An early strength of the artist-run centre network was its commitment to inclusion in its support for female artists and cultural workers, but this has been a continuous pain point when it comes to equity beyond sexuality and gender. The very existence of artist-run centres relies on a complicity with colonial logics due to the relationship

[206] Robertson, Policy Matters, 1.
[207] Karen Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28, no. 3 (2003): 814-816.

between funding practices and arts organizations. This leads to ongoing exclusions, and epistemic and systematic violence levelled at BIPOC people.

The shift from equity between women and men towards equitable access for all regardless of race, class, gender, ability, and so on is at the core of both intersectional feminist ideology *and* contemporary feminist administrative practices. Moreover, feminist scholars rightly understand this shift as merely a step forward, not a final destination. Following utopian methodology means recognizing that the work will never be over, and the current situation can always be improved upon.

Chapter Three

What the Problem Reveals about the Solutions: Adaptability, Feminist Administrative Models, and Access to Funding at Women in Focus and Mentoring Artists for Women's Arts

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I introduce two case studies: Women in Focus (WIF) in Vancouver, B.C., and Mentoring Artists for Women's Arts (MAWA) in Winnipeg, Manitoba, both examples of non-centralized feminist organizing. I demonstrate that, in the case of feminist artist-run centres, access to funding can be complicated both by the centre's ethics and by government imperatives vis-à-vis funding priorities. Simply put, even artist-run centres with similar mandates and programming may differ in their access to funding depending on whether a given project happens to align with a sitting government's timeline and priorities. Even though current (and earlier) funding bodies like the Canada Council for the Arts operate at arm's length from governments, their budgets are directly impacted by government priorities, and as such, we see certain political concerns reflected in the programs they offer at any given moment. In including these two centres in the same chapter, my goal is not to put them into competition with each other. There is no one best centre in this dissertation. My goal is to show how and why certain centres were better equipped to adapt to changing funding models and why some struggled to do so. I also show how each centre's feminist engagement complicates the situation

In addition to tracking access to funding, I also look at what, if any, diversity initiatives WIF and MAWA engaged in, and attempt to parse when and why each space chose to engage with questions of racial and cultural diversity. WIF and MAWA were both operating during a period of changing discourse around diversity, inclusion, and equity at the Canada Council.

Guided by the research questions I present in Chapter One, this chapter lays out the history of these two centres, tracks their funding, and discusses the ways in which they claimed their feminism.[208] I conclude each case study with a present-day questioning of how each centre's feminism did or did not engage with intersectional feminism and with the larger question of diversity and inclusion initiatives. As I mention in Chapters One and Two and discuss further in Chapter Four, I believe that, in general, some centres pushed anti-racist and equity policies into being, while others only took on this work when access to funding obliged them to. The case studies in this chapter exemplify this distinction. Finally, I highlight in this chapter how certain aspects of the feminist administrative practices I discuss in Chapter Two impacted both centres' trajectories—whether unintentionally or in opposition to the more common and popular administrative models encouraged by the funding councils—and ultimately informed their likelihood of accessing the funding they needed to remain operational.

3.2 The Canadian Arts Ecology: CARFAC, Funding, Networks, Friendships

This chapter looks at funding and equity-seeking initiatives at WIF (1974–1994) and MAWA (1984 to the present)—two artist-run centres that have claimed to be feminist.[209] Like gender equity, racial equity work requires dismantling established and dominant worldviews, which is uncomfortable work and can make people worried that they will lose their place in the arts ecology. The differing and sometimes opposing ways in which these two historical feminist

[208] To reiterate those questions, what is the context from which the centre emerged and/or operates in? Who was part of the community and where did the centre situate itself within the larger Canadian and international arts ecology? In what ways was the centre engaging with contemporary feminism, whether consciously or not? How did funding or lack thereof impact the centre?

[209] In this chapter, I primarily discuss gender equity work at MAWA and WIF. In the 1980s and '90s, what Richard Fung and Monika Kin Gagnon term Cultural Race Politics tended to group together people of colour and Indigenous people. When I discuss racial equity in the context of funding, I similarly group together POC and Indigenous groups in order to reflect the discourse of the period. When I discuss groups individually, I note it specifically.

centres advanced their feminist agendas—while also grappling with state policy and funding priorities—offers insight into how centres can best benefit from intersectional feminism and racial justice work. I demonstrate how this work was less successful when the centre engaged with models rooted in white supremacy and settler colonialism, and more successful when the centre saw the work of dismantling white supremacy as ongoing. In the current moment, the subject of white privilege is salient. As I discuss in Chapter Six, most organizations at least make a nod towards the fact that a culture of white supremacy is present in the art world (even when these same centres benefit from that culture and have no interest in meaningful institutional change).

As far as my research shows, the first time the term "white privilege" appears in reference to the Canadian art world is in Monika Kin Gagnon's (Japanese-French Canadian) letters to Jamelie Hassan (Lebanese-Canadian) from 1993, published as part of her book, *Other Conundrums.* She writes:

> The vocabulary that addresses systemic exclusions—a polite lexicon of "access," "equity," "anti-racism workshops," and "multiculturalism"—reveals on what terms white privilege most often allows itself to be challenged and transformed. … I am ambivalent about introducing complexity into what is allegedly the "angry rhetoric" that charges racist practises, systemic exclusions, and white supremacy; complicating these concepts risk diluting them to perilous abstraction. Yet these terms—racism, systemic exclusion, and white supremacy—are so useful in fundamentally insisting on the dimensions of power and its necessary shifting central to debates on systemic exclusion, at the same time as they need to be elaborated and dismantled.[210]

I believe that Kin Gagnon's introduction of the terms *white supremacy* and/or *privilege* opened up space in arts discourses in Canada for a deepened and more nuanced discussion around privilege, exclusion and inclusion, and marginalization and power than was possible when the conversation was mediated solely by terms like *equity seeking*. Equity seeking suggests that a

[210] Monika Kin Gagnon, *Other Conundrums: Race, Culture, and Canadian Art* (Vancouver: Aresenal Pulp Press, 2000), 74.

group is looking to get on the same level as a dominant power. Challenging white supremacy/privilege, on the other hand, allows a group to redetermine who has power and why.

BIPOC Canadian art historians have rightly noted a correlation between white privilege and power in the Canadian art world—including in the supposedly anti-racist artist-run milieu. As I mention in my introductory chapter, many years of work went into changing the way the Canada Council and other funders uplift and support non-white artists and communities (especially Black and Indigenous communities), as well as other historically underrepresented groups like Deaf, Mad, and disabled-identified artists. However, access to funding that supports equity is not enough for organizations to be equitable. As Kin Gagnon notes, the Canadian artist-run centre milieu (and wider artistic sphere) still tends to erase differences of experience, culture, race, gender and son on, and default towards a pan-Canadian-ness. This erasure

> concedes to dominant niceties, a "we are all human and need to talk to each other," which evacuates the public dimension. Too frequently, individual accountability for collusion with exclusionary structures and practises disintegrates into confessions of guilt and absolution, as testimonies on interruptions into racist instances are defiantly uttered.[211]

This pandering to politeness flattens discourse and erases personal experience. Further, this erasing of differences returns to a model of white supremacy that continues to marginalize rather than centre non-dominant experiences and voices.

I don't see successful feminism as stationary but rather as a constantly shifting viewpoint, and one that today, should be intersectional. We know that a centre's ability to adapt to new realities and modes of thinking can determine its survival or failure, and this has serious implications when funders develop interest in equity. In the case of MAWA, the gallery made the decision to decentre whiteness and to specifically engage in practices of decolonization beginning in the early 2000s. WIF, which closed in 1994, does not have a record of engaging

[211] Kin Gagnon, *Other Conundrums*, 74.

with intersectional and decolonial theory and praxis. At MAWA, directors changed hands multiple times since its founding, whereas with WIF, its direction remained relatively constant. MAWA's engagement with issues of intersectionality was likely the result of a combination of personal interests of staff and membership, changing feminist discourse, and changing funding possibilities. For WIF, the leadership did not change hands and, therefore, one strain of feminism—in this case one that didn't acknowledge racial differences—remained prevalent during the course of its operation. Feminism during the period when these centres had their start erased difference in the hopes that women working together would be strong enough to defeat patriarchy. To quote white American scholar and activist Winifred Breines on the subject of feminism in the 1970s and early '80s, "The chance to engage personally with one another in a common endeavour, the heartfelt 'we shall overcome' moment, held out the promise of interracial relationships that disappeared with the development of identity politics."[212] We know now, however, that there is no single feminism, no one way to be a woman, and no way that cultural experience can (or should) be erased from politics.

MAWA and WIF operated from widely divergent mandates, platforms, and feminist vantage points. Their commitment to feminism is what I consider to be the single greatest factor in each centre's different struggles and crises. Feminist aligned artist-run centres were part of a larger feminist context. As I outline in Chapter Two, the history of the women's movement in Canada began in the late 19th century and continues into the present day. Early, or first-wave, feminist activists rallied against the church in order to create missionary opportunities for women, while simultaneously organizing towards women's suffrage. This feminism was mostly white and mostly Anglophone, moving quickly through Protestant communities across Canada.

[212] Winifred Breines, "Struggling to Connect: White and Black Feminism in the Movement Years," *Contexts* 6, no. 1 (2007): 24.

Indigenous women, Women of Colour, and (white) Francophone women (even as colonial settlers) are typically left out of the narrative of early feminism in this country, and yet they, too, were active participants in the fight for equality, working against the double-negative of white male patriarchy *and* white feminism.[213]

Feminist artist-run centres positioned themselves as integral parts of the women's movement at the time; they created equal access opportunities for women working in the arts, and many took up specific feminist causes as part of their programming. By the 1970s, when most artist-run centres were being established, the women's movement had already claimed many important victories. The right to vote was established between 1916 and 1925 for white women in most of Canada. It was won for white women in Québec in 1940, for non-white women across Canada in the late 1940s, and for Indigenous women in federal elections only in 1960. Legal federal access to abortion was established in 1969 (though many provinces created barriers to access that exist into the present day). Women, however, were far from equal citizens—then and now. The key issues that dominated the women's movement during the 1970s and 1980s were equal pay, increased access to the work force, access to day-cares and healthcare on and off campuses, and protections against violence against women, which included the question of pornography. In Canada, some of these issues were taken up by the Royal Commission on the Status of Women (1970), and later by the National Action Committee on the

[213] Artist-run centres are incorporated as not-for-profit organizations and occasionally have charitable status in Canada. Their majority funders are arm's-reach non-governmental organizations like the Canada Council. Part of their legal obligation under their incorporation mandates are to adhere to a specific mission. It is difficult to change mandates, and it is worth noting that doing so could result in the loss of legal status as a charity. There is a historic relationship between the dominant board-of-directors-focused administrative models that artist-run centres have inherited, and the history of missionary culture, funding, and philanthropy. This legacy is especially interesting when read alongside, both, funding for explicitly feminist art spaces, and the relationship of feminism to the church. For more on this, see Mary Kassian's book, *The Feminist Gospel: The Movement to Unite Feminism with the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1992).

Status of Women (1972), the Canadian Human Rights Act (1977), and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1980).

Parallel to the women's movement in Canada during this period, Indigenous women and Canadian WOC were pushing for their own rights and freedoms.[214] While these struggles occasionally aligned with the more mainstream white/Anglo-dominated feminism of the day, many Indigenous women and WOC did not identify with feminism, as its popular discourse consistently left BIPOC women behind.[215] Second-wave feminism was not intersectional.[216] It failed to recognize the ways in which race, class, and colonialism affected a person's experience with feminism and with a larger struggle for representation and autonomy. Indigenous women founded the Native Women's Association of Canada in 1973. The Native Women's Association of Canada was founded in 1973, which went on to challenge status laws under the Indian Act, including the amendment of Bill C-31, a bill that reinstated Indian Status to women and their children who had lost it through marriage to non-status men, native or otherwise, in 1985. Similarly, Black women in Canada organized around the Canadian Negro Women's Association (1951) and later the Congress of Black Women (1980). This work happened in parallel to work around women's equity, but the two causes were not always aligned.[217]

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[214] See: Mary-Ellen Kelm and Lorne Townsend, eds., *In the Days of Our Grandmothers: A Reader in Aboriginal Women's History in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006); Janet Silman, *Enough is Enough: Aboriginal Women Speak Out* (Toronto: Women's Press, 1987); Angela Sterritt, *Racialization of Poverty: Indigenous Women, the Indian Act and Systemic Oppression: Reasons for Resistance*, (Vancouver: Vancouver Status of Women, 2001); Cheryl Suzack, Shari M. Huhndorf, Jeanne Perreault, and Jean Barman, eds., *Indigenous Women and Feminism: Politics, Activism, Culture* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010); Peggy Bristow, ed., *We're Rooted Here and They Can't Pull Us Up: Essays in African Canadian Women's History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994).

[215] See: Vijay Agnew, "Canadian Feminism and women of Color," *Women's Studies International Forum* 16, no. 3 (1993): 217-227; and Lee Maracle, *I am Woman: A Native Perspective on Sociology and Feminism* (Vancouver: Press Gang, 1996).

[216] Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Policies" *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, no. 1 (1989): 139-167.

[217] Akasha, Gloria T. Hull, Patricia Bell-Scott, and Barbara Smith, eds., *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies* (Old Westbury, NY: The Feminist Press, 1982).

The artist-run centres I discuss in this chapter operated within a larger network of feminist organizations ranging from DIY groups to larger, established national organizations. Their work as feminist spaces cannot be decontextualized from the larger geographic and historical specificity of the women's movement of the period. As discussed in Chapter One, artist-run centres are not unique to Canada, but they are different (and more numerous) here than in the rest of the world because of the funding available here through federal, provincial, and municipal agencies. Whereas some artist-run spaces outside of Canada generate funds exclusively through sales and membership fees or through private donors, artist-run centres in Canada are beholden to a much wider public because they are mainly funded through federal, provincial, and municipal grant agencies and are thus shaped by larger agendas, such as governmental priorities. Understanding how funding impacts artist-run centres is an important part of piecing together their histories. Centres can thrive or fail because of their access to money, and similarly, they can shift their orientations to maintain their funding viability. While Canadian artist-run centres may have been initiated for reasons that have nothing to do with funding, their existence is predicated on their relationship to access to monies. Funding and funders have always had a role in the history of artist-run centres.

As I argued in Chapter Two, feminism was similarly an important part of the development of artist-run centre culture. This is due both to the historical timeline of artist-run centres aligning with second-wave feminism and to the financial precarity of most artist-run centres, which meant that women took on most of the labour in these spaces as they would (begrudgingly) accept the low pay and poor conditions. It is their resourcefulness that allowed artist-run centres to thrive overall, and the legacy of their fight for better working conditions is felt today.

There is an important link to be made between gender equity work in the Canadian cultural sector—especially in artist-run centres and CARFAC (Canadian Artists' Representation/le Front des artistes canadiens)—and artist-run centres' fight to pay artists fairly. This history could easily become its own dissertation, so I will limit it to the following points. As CARFAC's own official history notes, in 1968, the Canadian Artists' Representation (CAR) was "founded in London, Ontario when a group of artists, headed by Jack Chambers, Tony Urquhart, and Kim Ondaatje organize[d] themselves collectively to demand the recognition of artists' copyright. They [began] issuing minimum copyright fee schedules and continue to produce them regularly."[218] Most histories of CARFAC unfortunately leave out Kim Ondaatje's name (she is also known as Betty Jane Kimbark). As she was the only female founder, this omission undermines the feminist element of this equity-seeking group.

Cofounder Jack Chambers had a long and fruitful friendship with Avis Lang Rosenberg, who organized the first feminist art history courses in Canada and toured the first explicitly feminist exhibition funded by the Canada Council for the Arts. Lang Rosenberg and Chambers' correspondence documents not only their desire to challenge the National Gallery of Canada's unpaid slide production but also their aim to set up an alternative slide databank for Canadian artists.[219] Lang Rosenberg's landmark show *Pork Roasts*, originally exhibited in 1981, toured across Canada to (feminist) artist-run centres the same year. Many of the centres that Lang Rosenberg's work visited eventually set up documentation centres and slide libraries for women artists, which can perhaps be attributed to Chambers and Lang Rosenberg's (and CAR more generally) challenge to the NGC's slide collection policy. While I have not uncovered a direct connection between these two examples, I expect there is a relationship, and clearly both were

[218] "CARFAC History," CARFAC, accessed November 11, 2021, https://www.carfac.ca/about/carfac-history/.
[219] See: Mark Frutkin and John Atkinson, eds., *The Power of Association: Twenty Years of Canadian Artists' Representation* (Toronto: Canadian Artists' Representation Ontario, 1989).

part of the same artistic ecology in Canada. Finally, more than half of the feminist artist-run centres archives I visited contain meeting minutes for local CARFAC groups, and many members went on to become CARFAC representatives, illustrating how important CARFAC was for women in the arts.[220]

Many artist-run centres were established and run by groups of friends. These employment structures, which were at times nepotistic and insular, thrived because of the level of trust and care these friendships made possible. UK-based artist Céline Condorelli addresses "the practice of friendship, as a specific entry in relation to the large question of how to live and work together towards change."[221] Essentially, Condorelli argues that the backbone of artist-initiated organizations is the friendships and allies we nurture in the process of building the types of spaces we need for our own personal growth. What is more, these partnerships are essential to the ongoing success of the artist-run network as a whole. Another issue Condorelli speaks to is the relative lack of women theorists talking about platonic friendship, the reason being that there is "something inherently patriarchal, perhaps fratriarchal about these constructions of friendships."[222] Condorelli puts forward Hannah Arendt's definition of a productive friendship as a possible model for those looking at self-organizing: "It's not that we think so much alike, but that we do this thinking-business for and with each other."[223] In feminist artist-run centres, friendships are necessary to success and to survival.

[220] For example, La Centrale members met with CAR and hosted CAR meetings as early at 1974, and at least one member went on to become a CAR representative. This is also true at institutions in Regina and at WARC.
[221] Condorelli in Stine Hebert and Anne Szefer Karlsen, *Self Organized* (London: Open Editions, 2013), 63.
[222] Condorelli in Hebert and Karlsen, *Self Organized*, 64.
[223] Arendt, in Condorelli in Hebert and Karlsen, *Self Organized*, 67.

3.3 Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA): A Gender-Equity-Seeking Centre in Manitoba

Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA), founded in 1984, is still active at the time of writing (2021). MAWA is currently made up of a staff of five and is run by a board of thirteen directors. The organization has maintained a steady series of programs but has adapted to the changing arts and culture landscape, partly in response to membership desires and partly due to changes in available funding. While the organization has had its funding challenged, it has maintained many of its original programs while establishing a pattern of growth. Furthermore, the centre actualizes a number of feminist administrative principles such as mentorship, transparency, and accessibility that have allowed it to develop organically.

In November 2016, I visited MAWA and its on-site archives. I also researched the MAWA fonds at the Archives of Manitoba. I conducted interviews with current and former members, board members, and staff as part of my research for this chapter. My visit to MAWA was very productive thanks in no small part to the exceptional archiving skills of long-time member Bev Pike, who personally organized the centre's archives and kept *everything.* MAWA originally stood for Manitoba Artists for Women's Art, starting as a sub-committee at Winnipeg's Plug In Gallery (itself established in 1972 and now known as Plug In ICA or Institute of Contemporary Art). The sub-committee officially changed its name in 1988 to Mentoring Artists for Women's Art. The original focus of the committee was to work on issues pertaining to women in the arts with a Province of Manitoba Career Start grant it received for the project.[224]

[224] Grant Application, 1972, Box P-30-3-6, File 6/59, Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA) archives, at MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. The Province of Manitoba Career Start grant is "a grant to encourage

According to the MAWA archives, "MAWA was initiated after a meeting of forty women and men on April 10, 1984 at Plug In Gallery in response to an expressed need to define the special needs of women artists and facilitate their development."[225] Plug In's Women's Program began as an affirmative action program, meant to combat what the Plug In board described as "low number(s) of women applying to the gallery for shows, and in general participating actively in the community."[226] A research committee of Plug In members, which included Diane Whitehouse, Paula Newman, Harry Symons, and Peter Krowina, was formed in September 1983 to consider how to move forward on this pressing issue. Notably, while MAWA deserves credit for moving forward with building a space for women and for the creation of programs that specifically benefited women across Manitoba, funding was already in place in the early 1980s to prioritize women's issues.

Approximately fifty people attended the first MAWA meeting.[227] According to an article by Scott Ellis published in a 1990 issue of CARFAC's info letter, MAWA "was formed under the auspices of Plug In Inc., because, as an alternative gallery, Plug In was accessible to women artists and had a vested interest in changing the way art was produced and perceived."[228] The original goals of the women's program included providing:

1. A forum for women artists to have a continuing dialogue with others of diverse interests and experience, on issues of concern to them. Further to bring together professional women artists with those of less experience and therefore broaden communication within the community and make visible role models.

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employers to hire new employees by partly funding the position." "Canada-Manitoba Job Grant," Programs and Incentives, Government of Manitoba, accessed November 11, 2021, https://www.gov.mb.ca/jec/busdev/financial/cmjg/index.html.

[225] Presentations, 1984 Box P-30-3-10, File 10/39, MAWA archives, Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA) archives, at MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

[226] Women's program mandate, 1984, Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA) archives, at MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

[227] Women's program mandate, 1984, Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA) archives, at MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

[228] Scott Ellis, "MAWA – A Brief History," *Arterra CARFAC* (October-November 1990): 1-10.

2. To encourage women artists to have confidence in working and showing their work. Further to generate exhibitions of women's art in this community and in other centres, thereby creating a higher profile for women artists.
3. To solicit and compile information on women artists, and the contemporary arts in general, for the purpose of creating a community resource. Selection of material will be made with the intent to fill in gaps of information found in other resource centres in the community.
4. To provide women with the opportunity to develop professional skills through the skills of administering their own organization.[229]

Many original members, like Reva Stone, Bev Pike, and Eleanor Bond, are still involved with the centre. MAWA's interest in building intergenerational relationships and networks, and its commitment to keeping members involved (through programming and other forms of outreach) at various stages of their careers, has contributed to an environment in which friendship and trust flourishes, and in which members maintain positive and active relationships over generations.

The mandate at MAWA, like at most Canadian artist-run centres, expanded and shifted over time, but its main goal was to support the work of women in the arts in Manitoba. The current mandate states that "Mentoring Artists for Women's Art encourages and supports the intellectual and creative development of women in the visual arts by providing an ongoing forum for education and critical dialogue."[230] In 1984, when still a Plug In program, MAWA hired Andrea Philp as program coordinator. With Philp as program coordinator, the group/centre began creating special programs, notably the Advisory Program, which is now the MAWA mentorship program.[231] As an institution, MAWA wanted to be as open and accessible as possible, as well as

[229] MAWA Archive Women's program mandate, Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA) archives, at MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.
[230] Board Meetings, 2005–2006, File 4, Box 1, Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA) archives, at MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.
[231] According to the meeting minutes, the program officially started January 5, 1985 Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA) archives, at MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

informed by contemporary feminist practices. As early as 1985, MAWA described itself publicly as a space "to define the special needs of women artists and facilitate their development."[232]

MAWA began to articulate itself as a separate entity in 1989, and it began to discuss incorporation. One of the reasons for the break from Plug In was to gain more financial independence for both organizations. When MAWA was a sub-committee of Plug In, it did not have a tax number, and "Plug In was increasingly reluctant to continue the practice of MAWA donors giving money to Plug In (for tax receipts) which Plug In would then turn over to MAWA."[233] It officially incorporated as its own legal entity with separate by-laws from those at Plug In on September 21, 1990, with Philp as Director. According to files in the MAWA archives, the centre's mandate was greatly influenced by funding bodies. For example, MAWA was initially a service organization and not an artist-run centre, and as such, could not directly access funding from the Canada Council. Since the Manitoba Arts Council (which had been funding service organizations at that point) "was in the process of radically reducing funding to service organizations," MAWA revised its mandate and reoriented itself slightly to become an artist-run centre. Following this, it secured funding from the Canada Council.[234] Becoming an independent artist-run centre was a strategic move on the part of MAWA: by changing the way it legally defined itself, MAWA was able to maximize its external funding without dramatically changing its operations. As MAWA states on its website, "MAWA's raison d'être has remained constant: to support women artists at all levels."[235]

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[232] Presentations, 1984, MAWA Archives Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA) archives, at MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.
[233]Sigrid Dahle, "Mentoring artists for women's art." In *Questions of Community: Artists, Audiences, Coalitions*, edited by Daina Aigaitis, Banff Centre Press 1995, 167–95..
[234] Sigrid Dahle, "Mentoring artists for women's art." In *Questions of Community: Artists, Audiences, Coalitions*, edited by Daina Aigaitis, Banff Centre Press 1995, 167–95.
[235] MAWA "History," About, MAWA, accessed November 11, 2021, https://mawa.ca/about/history.

Regardless of what formal classification the organization falls under, and this classification has shifted multiple times, the goals of the project have not changed. MAWA's core programs remain in place and its focus on intergenerational support to artists throughout the province of Manitoba (in both urban and rural areas) remains firmly rooted. MAWA has programs that target young artists at the early stages of their careers as well as programs for senior artists. More importantly, MAWA puts artists at various stages in their careers and lives into dialogue with one another.

MAWA's rural outreach programming, whether consciously or not, builds on earlier models of Canadian feminist organizing nationally. For example, it shares inspiration with a satellite project of the Women's Art Association of Canada (WAAC) that Canadian women set up in the late 19th and early 20th centuries primarily in urban centres such as Montréal, Toronto, and Winnipeg. The WAAC promoted women's artistic output, and often created touring exhibitions that featured its members. This sort of outreach fostered dialogue between women in various cities and contributed to a discussion around what defined Canadian art long before the Massey Commission took up the project. Without the convenience of the Internet, the WAAC satellites distributed newsletters that kept women, especially those outside of the major cities, connected with each other. Like the WAAC before them, MAWA works to connect women across the province of Manitoba with each other, and with their peers cross-nationally. MAWA is regionally isolated. The province of Manitoba has very few art centres, and Winnipeg is the only major city. Manitoba is also a large province, so there is a lot of distance between MAWA and centres in other provinces. Despite its relative isolation, the gallery is extensively connected to spaces and artists across Canada, allowing its mandate to resonate significantly farther than its immediate area.

In 2012, MAWA, like many arts organizations across Canada, began developing a strategic plan. Development spanned the years between 2013 and 2016 and was led by Patricia Hardy.[236] The stated goal of the strategic plan was to "continue to govern MAWA using best practices from the non-profit sector."[237] Many funders asked for strategic plans around this time (through organizational development programs such as the now-defunct Flying Squad), and the Manitoba Arts Council, the Arts and Cultural Industries Association of Manitoba, and the terminal round of Canada Council Flying Squad funding supported the creation of MAWA's. MAWA's 2013–2016 strategic plan had four organizational objectives:

1. To provide excellent service and programs to members;
2. To maintain financial stability;
3. To practice excellent governance;
4. To advocate for women in the visual arts.

These values are essentially the same as the ones in the original mandate and incorporation documents of MAWA. Members of MAWA tend to stay engaged for extended periods of time. While I don't have direct evidence to support this claim, I would posit that they stay so long because MAWA cultivates a real sense of community among engaged and long-term members *and* because it rewards volunteer contributions with significant opportunities for paid engagement through programming and employment opportunities. For example, current Co-Executive Director Dana Kletke first became involved in the centre in 2000 as a mentee through

[236] From the early 1990s until 2013, the Canada Council for the Arts ran a program to promote organization development and health. Titled The Flying Squad, it originally supported theatre and dance organizations. It expanded in 2005 to music, visual arts, media arts and Inter-arts, and publishing. The program was replaced in 2013 by the now defunct Leadership for Change program, following an extensive review of the Flying Squad program. Knowing the program would soon end, many arts organizations took advantage of the final rounds of funding to produce strategic plans with support from the Flying Squad program. Strategic Plans, while not mandatory, were encouraged as part of core funding or operational funding applications during this period. See D.B. Scott, "Canada Council's Flying Squad program to no longer be offered, at least in present form," *Canadian Magazines*, Tuesday, February 12, 2013. https://canadianmags.blogspot.com/2013/02/canada-councils-flying-squad-program-to.html; Strategic Plan, 2012, Box 2, File 44 MAWA Archives Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA) archives, at MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

[237] Strategic Plan, MAWA Archives Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA) archives, at MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

the mentorship program. She then joined the board of directors before joining the staff in 2008. Co-Executive Director Shawna Dempsey first became involved with MAWA in 1998 before signing on to her current role in 2008.[238]

I found in MAWA's archives and through my interviews with MAWA members that MAWA is committed to transparency with membership, even when it comes to communicating less than ideal situations, such as failing to secure insurance for an event, or conflict situations.[239] The centre builds trust among its members through this transparency. Additionally, it develops and maintains relationships and builds friendships as part of a larger feminist methodology of solidarity and support.

While the Canadian artscape generally acknowledges that the work MAWA does has been historically important for both women artists in Manitoba and women artists more generally, not everyone celebrates the organization as a model for other feminist art spaces. Some have even questioned its continued relevance. In a November 1991 letter from local artist and then-MAWA member Lisa Graves, Graves mentions a reduction to MAWA's Manitoba Arts Council funding budget, raising the question of whether MAWA's relevance had waned. In an era of post-feminism defined by a period of waning support for the women's movement in the 1980s and '90s, coupled with an anti-feminist sentiment from women left behind by the white-centrism of the movement, and amid a general feeling that the "the success of the movement means it is no longer needed," centres like MAWA found themselves treading water, working to position themselves as still necessary and relevant.[240] In 1997, the Canada Council reduced

[238] Board Meetings, 2004, Box 1, File 3, MAWA Archives Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA) archives, at MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.
[239] Board Meetings, 2004, MAWA Archives Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA) archives, at MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.
[240] Elaine J. Hall and Marnie Salupo Rodriguez, "The Myth of Postfeminism," *Gender and Society* 17, no. 6 (2003): 879, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3594675.

funding to MAWA on this basis. Past and current MAWA staff members jake moore and Shawna Dempsey say the Council reduced funding specifically because some jury members claimed there was a general perception that there was no need for a women-specific centre at that time. Due to a 1997–1998 cut in funding to the Canada Council, MAWA received a 50% phase-out grant, but was eventually reinstated in good standing.[241]

Even earlier, however, the Manitoba Arts Council, following the reception of a 1986 Special Project Operating Grant, asked, if "MAWA is successful in realizing its goals for women visual artists will the organization eventually work itself out of a job? Is there a finite amount of work for MAWA to do or will there always be new goals to achieve in the future?"[242] These are especially relevant questions as we consider MAWA's timeline in relationship to larger questions of feminist stewardship. As former MAWA and La Centrale member Nell Tenhaaf suggests, "without arcs, women artists would be at a 20% level of representation which existed before artist-run centres came along. There is a direct correlation between women artists participating in artist-run centres and their eventual insertion into the mainstream arts systems."[243]

MAWA has a long history of fairly paying staff, and its policies around fair pay and cost of living increases are clearly shared on its website. These policies exist alongside MAWA's fundraising and board policies. According to board meeting minutes from 2002–2003, on February 26, 2001, "due to MAWA's mandate for affirmative action," it required that "each Board member must define her gender as female."[244] Prior to incorporation, board members

[241] CAC operating 1997/8, Box P-30-3-12 File 12/9, MAWA Archives Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA) archives, at MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.
[242] Archive women program mandate; agenda 1985-86, MAWA Archives Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA) archives, at MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.
[243] Bev Pike, *Among the Alternatives: Manitoba Artists for Women's Art,* (Winnipeg: MAWA, 1988), 3.
[244] Board Meetings, 2002–2003, Box 1, File 2, MAWA Archives Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA) archives, at MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

could identify as any gender.[245] In fact, in 2000, male membership at MAWA and access to programming became a hotly debated topic. In 2000, MAWA became a woman-only membership organization, though male-identified parties could join as non-voting, supporting members if desired. As of today, MAWA's membership, board and, most programming is open to "women (cisgender and transgender) and non-binary folks who feel comfortable being included under the umbrella term 'women' (regardless of appearance or gender assignment at birth)." While "many MAWA programs and Committees welcome participants of all genders…MAWA recognizes the gender spectrum and each individual's right to self-identify or refuse to identify."[246]

In 2004, board members and staff at MAWA began searching for a new home and considered the possibility of buying a building. One of their major concerns was accessibility, as many of the current locations of artist-run centres in Winnipeg continued to fail to meet physical accessibility standards. In 2005, MAWA moved to a new building in a developing neighbourhood and signed a ten-year lease with the option to buy. At the time of writing, MAWA is still a tenant in this location.[247] Prior to the move, those at MAWA undertook extensive neighbourhood research, as they were extremely conscious of the possible and likely gentrification resulting from the gallery's move into a new community.

3.4 The Mentorship Model

[245] Other, AGM 1989, MAWA Archives Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA) archives, at MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.
[246] MAWA, "Non-Binary and Trans Inclusion," MAWA Policy, accessed January 10, 2019, PDF, https://mawa.ca/pdf/Non-Binary_and_Trans_Inclusion_Policy.pdf.
[247] Board Meetings, 2005–2006, MAWA Archives Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA) archives, at MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

While MAWA functions as a gallery and offers a residency program, its most well-known model is its Mentorship Program, of which there are now several branches. The Mentorship Program invites community members, mostly (though not exclusively) from Manitoba to act as mentors and/or mentees. It pairs people in similar situations to help emerging artists develop and push their practices towards new and expanding horizons:

> MAWA programs are designed for women visual artists, to impart professional skills, to share information, and to build a supportive community. MAWA recognizes that every artist's path is unique. Where we begin differs, the route we have taken to get us here differs, our goals and aspirations differ, and our personal milestones and achievements differ. MAWA supports visual artists as they pursue their personal artistic goals. We expect artistic excellence and growth based upon an artist's self-defined benchmarks and aspirations.[248]

Participant goals are negotiated in each situation, and there is always a debriefing session following each residency between the mentor, the mentee and, occasionally, a MAWA staff member. The debrief sessions ask participants to reflect on the benefit(s), structure, and length of the program, as well as on personal experiences. The concept of meaningful closure is a built-in process to ensure that participants are satisfied with the overall experience, and, according to program notes, "MAWA mentorships end with organized closure." MAWA directly asks participants: "Do you feel your mentorship concluded with meaningful closure?"[249]

In the early 2000s, MAWA extended the mentorship model to include a Rural and Remote Program. In its 2004–2005 budget year, Julie Nagam (Métis/German/Syrian) was hired to create a report on rural and remote outreach, which resulted in the still-running Rural Arts Mentorship Program. MAWA still regularly partners with the Manitoba Arts Network (MAN), the Portage District Arts Council, the Art Gallery of Southwestern Manitoba, and other arts

[248] Archive Mentor Notes,, 2005, Box 5, MAWA Archives Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA) archives, at MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.
[249] Archive Mentor Notes,, 2005, Box 5, MAWA Archives Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA) archives, at MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

organizations to deliver mentorship programs across rural Manitoba. This helps to strengthen the MAWA network and provides vital opportunities for connections. In the case of Nagam, the mentorship model has continued, as she is now a mentor to students as a Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Arts, Collaboration, and Digital Media at the University of Winnipeg.

Other MAWA programs include a residency and residency exchange. For example, in 2015, MAWA partnered with La Centrale in Montréal to offer a residency exchange. The exchange perhaps builds off of early research that La Centrale board member Gail Bourgeios completed in 1998 towards creating a mentorship program that she strived to model on MAWA's residency program. A La Centrale version of the MAWA model never materialized because Bourgeois was the only member working on it in September and October of that year, and she stepped off the board for personal reasons in the following December.[250]

MAWA mounted many committee-based activities supporting specific communities, demonstrating that members were important driving factors in the way MAWA determined needs and decided on what it would support. One example is the Artist Mothers Group, which MAWA established in 2011. A precursor for this group was a parenting support group. MAWA member Nancy Litchfield-Hutchison organized the parenting support group in 1996, which advocated for opportunities for parent artists to bring their children to the gallery during show installations.[251] There is also the Stitch n' Bitch group (est. 2008), as well as professional development programs such as the Artist Bootcamps offering how-to mentoring on the topics of dealing with dealers, selling your craft, photography, and wills and estates (est. 2009). As well, a mini-mentorship program started up as a "forum for works in progress." Some of these programs, like the mini-mentorship, were and are open to all genders, unlike the majority of

[250] Powerhouse meeting minutes 1998, Fonds 128/A2 Box HA2185, La Centrale Fonds, Concordia University Library, Montréal, Québec, Canada.
[251] Programming at MAWA now always includes childcare support, and meetings always involve food.

MAWA programs that were open exclusively to "women and non-binary visual artists."[252] MAWA also collaborated with programming in other centres.[253] For example, in 2013, it partnered with the Summer Institute at Plug In ICA for a feminist summer school. Deirdre Logue and Allyson Mitchell of the Feminist Art Gallery (FAG) in Toronto led the session.

MAWA, of course, began as the women's program sub-committee at Plug In, an alternative gallery, and changed to become an officially recognized artist-run centre as defined by the Canada Council in 1990, following conversations to separate formally from Plug In and incorporate as its own entity. MAWA, however, always considered itself an alternative space in line with artist-run principles.

3.5 By Whom, for Whom?

In its 2005–2006 operating year, MAWA's board outlined the goal of becoming more proactive towards increasing diversity amongst MAWA's community. One action it took that year was to create an Aboriginal Liaison and Outreach Coordinator position.[254] In 2006–2007, the board renewed this commitment. That's when it created the Aboriginal Women's Art Mentorship program (AWAM) through a Canada Council for the Arts Special Initiatives grant. In the following years, the program was folded into the general mentorship program, most likely as a consequence of that particular grant not being renewed. However, it is important to note that

[252] "Foundation Mentorship Program," MAWA, accessed February 26, 2021, https://mawa.ca/mentorship/foundation-mentorship-program.
[253] MAWA Archive Box P-30-3-6 File 6/58 and Other: AGMs 1984–2016 1996, MAWA Archives Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA) archives, at MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.
[254] This follows directives at the Canada Council for the arts, which in its annual strategic report for 2005–2006 state that "In 2005 the Council signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Canadian Heritage to increase Capacity Building support to culturally diverse arts organizations by an additional $500,000 a year for three years. The program awarded a total of more than $2 million to 71 organizations in 2005-06." CAC Report 2005–2006, 17, Board meetings 2005–2006, Box 1, File 4, MAWA Archives, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

the quantity of Indigenous participants in the mentorship program increased at this point, likely a result of the concerted efforts of the pilot Aboriginal Mentorship program.[255] Activities of the AWAM program were held in line with other programs at MAWA. The AWAM program reprised in 2008 with Cathy Mattes—a Michif curator and critic—as the Cultural Liaison and Outreach Coordinator. According to the promotional text for the program:

> AWAM was developed to fill an existing void at MAWA. Historically very few Aboriginal artists took advantage of MAWA programming. There were attempts by some artists, however, their applications to programs were denied if the programs weren't specific to their needs (for example, no access to Aboriginal mentors, or mentors feeling they had little to offer artists because they weren't Aboriginal). An Aboriginal Advisory Committee was set up in 2004 to discuss the history and come up with recommendations. One main recommendation was that a position for a Cultural Liaison person be made to develop ongoing programming, and bridge existing gaps.[256]

MAWA's AWAM program worked because it was led by Indigenous artists and not a measure that simply guessed at what the community needed. It's not that Indigenous artists were excluded prior to AWAM, it's that there was now a program that create separate budgets to guarantee equity.

While Winnipeg now has other organizations that support Indigenous women, such as the Native Friendship Centre—part of a network of national non-profit community organizations centres serving urban Inuit, Métis, and First Nations (Status and Non-Status) people since the 1951—and Urban Shaman (an Indigenous run artist-run centre that opened in 1996), MAWA's decision to create an Indigenous-focused position is significant. Today it is common for organizations to create this type of position, but MAWA did so over a decade before the norm.

[255] Board meetings 2006–2007, Box 1, File 5, MAWA Archives Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA) archives, at MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada..
[256] Aboriginal Women Artists and Mentors box 4, MAWA Archives Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA) archives, at MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

Moreover, while funding might have played a role in the initial decision, MAWA continues to fund and support Indigenous artists at all levels of the organization (though not under the same title). Current MAWA Co-Executive Director Shawna Dempsey recounts that AWAM staff often reported feeling unheard, and she remembers that they would often quit before finishing their terms. Mattes was in fact the final Cultural Liaison as part of the AWAM program, which ended in 2008. Her departure coincided with the hiring of Dempsey and Dana Kletke in the co-executive director positions. As Dempsey explains, MAWA decided to make the role of Cultural Liaison less tokenistic (even if tokenization was not the original intent) by eliminating the position and hiring Indigenous women in positions at all levels of the organization—a commitment MAWA maintains and actualizes today.[257] Moreover, this decision was taken following consultation with both the MAWA membership and with Indigenous community members in Winnipeg. In 2017, MAWA had Indigenous women working throughout the organization, and in addition to the fifty women MAWA hired as artists through its Resilience project (funded through a Canada 150 grant), it hired twenty-three Indigenous artists through the mentorship program, totalling 27% of the total program participants.[258] Comparatively, approximately 11% of the population of Winnipeg identifies as First Nations or Inuit.

We can contrast MAWA's decision to eliminate an explicitly Indigenous position in favour of Indigenous leadership at all levels of the organization to a seemingly similar decision taken by Open Space in Victoria, B.C. In Spring 2018, Open Space eliminated the position of Aboriginal Curator—a position that had only recently been created as a follow-up to the Aboriginal Curator in Residence grant through the Canada Council. According to *Canadian Art* magazine, France Trépanier—who had held the position—resigned following Open Space's

[257] Shawna Dempsey, phone interview with the author, December 10, 2018.
[258] For more about the Resilience project see: "Resilience," Events, MAWA, accessed November 11, 2021, https://mawa.ca/events/view/resilience-launch-celebration-and-billboard-bus.

decision to remove "Aboriginal" from the title of the "Aboriginal Curator" position. Trépanier had felt that, in addition to reducing clear opportunities for Indigenous staffing, Open Access did not prioritize Indigenous candidates in any aspect of its hiring processes. In an open letter to the board, Trépanier noted that, while Open Space had a rich history of Indigenous engagement with the centre, more recently the centre had suffered from a lack of representation, a lack of leadership, erasure (specifically around the centre's earlier attempts to decolonize), and a de-Indigenization of the centre and its work. In short, the centre had made an attempt at inclusion without first working through what inclusion would or could look like. As Glen Coulthard argues, "the optics of recognition and reconciliation can also have a colonial impact on Indigenous subjects."[259] As a result, the Aboriginal Curator Collective (now called the Indigenous Curatorial Collective) called for a boycott of Open Space. The choice to remove the title of Aboriginal Curator did not come from the Indigenous community specifically, and therefore, regardless of intention, the change in title operated in a way that eroded earlier efforts to decolonize.

I bring up this example to demonstrate the clearly different reasonings behind—and outcomes of—similar situations. Both MAWA and Open Space had, at one point, a staff position clearly designated to an Indigenous individual, and both eventually eliminated this title. The difference is that MAWA did so through a transparent process with community support and with a clear commitment towards Aboriginal inclusion and leadership, and Open Space did not.

[259] Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 156, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctt9qh3cv.

3.6 Supporting Women Means Supporting *All* Women and Non-Binary People

Like other artist-run centres, Plug In felt pressure to include more diverse voices in programming and administration, notably those of women. As early member Aganetha Dyck muses,

> One of the reasons that women were welcomed in the artist-run centres is that women don't have a memory in history, and I don't think artist-run centres have a memory in history, and I think that those two link. They were both searching, and the women were trying to find their history, and the artist-run centres were trying to make a history, so both of them were interested in putting down roots of some kind.[260]

Plug In's choice to financially support women artists was made in part because women were asking for the support, but also because there was money available for Plug In to do so. In February of 1985, the Canada Council for the Arts held a conference titled *The Arts: Women and Politics* under Harry Chartrand, then Research Director of the Council.[261] Subsequently, the Canada Council made funding available to support women in the arts. It is very easy to see why the early MAWA members wanted to act quickly in response to openings for women in the arts, but it is also easy to imagine how Plug In viewed MAWA as a strategic funding generator.[262]

According to a promotional text titled *Why Women*, MAWA imagined itself to redress the historic and contemporary gender inequality affecting artists in Manitoba.[263] It's true that much

[260] Pike, *Among the Alternatives*, 3.
[261] Presentations, MAWA Archives, MAWA Archives Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA) archives, at MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada
[262] Vera Lemecha, eds, *Mawa : Mentoring Artists For Women's Art : Culture Of Community,* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: MAWA, 2004): 11.
[263] MAWA history, 2005, Box 5, File 5, MAWA Archives Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA) archives, at MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

has changed since the 1980s for women artists in Canada, but there is still a significant pay gap for women artists compared to their male peers. MAWA acknowledged in 2014 that

> Women's works still comprise lower numbers than men's in public art gallery collections. Women fill fewer of the top Executive positions within large public galleries nationally. Women hold fewer tenured positions within university art departments, even though there are greater numbers of women students than men. Women receive fewer public commissions nationally. And although women make up a higher percentage of practicing artists (54%), we have a lower income in the sector: the average Canadian male artists earn $24,400/year from all sources whereas the average Canadian female artist earns $13,800/years from all sources […] Sexism and violence against women persist in society.[264]

This gap doubly affected racialized women—a fact that led to MAWA working to grow its programs to better support non-white women, under the leadership of BIPOC artists. As MAWA stated in *Why Women,* "MAWA continues to provide mentorship to women because we have not yet reached equality in the cultural sector or in society."[265]

MAWA has expanded its definition of women to include both cis and trans-identified women and offers "a safe place for women artists to explore issues of sexuality and gender, in an all-women atmosphere." And while MAWA is specifically for women, and its "first priority is providing peer-based education to women visual artists, men are welcome at MAWA as members. Men are welcome at all talks and lectures, workshops and studio visits."[266] MAWA's fluid and ongoing reassessment of who constitutes community versus who can access resources and participate as an exhibiting artist, mentor, or mentee is consistent with other feminist centres still in operation today, such as La Centrale.

[264] Shawna Dempsey, *Why Women,* MAWA website, accessed January 8, 2022, www.mawa.ca/about/why-women. Archived at https://web.archive.org/web/20191109201730/https://mawa.ca/about/why-women.
[265] MAWA history, 2005, Box 5, File 5, MAWA Archives Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA) archives, at MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada
[266] MAWA history, 2005, Box 5, File 5, MAWA Archives Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA) archives, at MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

3.7 Connections Between MAWA and the Wider Feminist Artist-Run Network

In 1987, MAWA began connecting with the Women's Art Resource Centre (WARC) in Toronto around the September 1987 *Feminism and Art* conference and, in 1988, MAWA obtained a copy of the WARC-produced documentary *Rewriting the Script: Art & Feminism in Ontario* (1988) for rescreening.[267] In June 1988, MAWA began to converse with Women in Focus (WIF) in Vancouver around screening opportunities.[268]

In 1990, MAWA applied for and was awarded a $30,000 grant from the McConnell Foundation to explore a national expansion project. The pilot project, originally imagined to provide a mentoring model to two other Canadian centres, was expanded in the grant application to five centres due to demand from the wider community.[269] Members of the national expansion committee were Sheila Butler, Aganetha Dyck, Diane Whitehouse, and Cathy Collins.[270] While this project never actually took shape, it did affect the programming at a number of spaces, notably the short-lived Bay Area Artists for Women's Art (BAAWA) in Hamilton, Ontario. BAAWA began in October 1989 as a community organization in response to the dearth of women artists exhibited at the Art Gallery of Hamilton's seventy-fifth anniversary exhibition in 1989. In 1990, BAAWA hoped to add a formal mentorship program in the spirit of MAWA's to its programming model. When the McConnell program failed, BAAWA applied directly to the Canada Council for the Arts in 1992, but its proposed mentorship program was rejected.

[267] General Correspondence 1987-95, Box P-30-3-7, File 7/5, MAWA Archives Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA) archives, at MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.
[268] General Correspondence 1987-95, Box P-30-3-7, File 7/5, MAWA Archives Mentoring Artists for Women's Art (MAWA) archives, at MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.
[269] McConnell Grant application, 1990, Box P-30-3-3, File 3/13, MAWA Archives, MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba.
[270] McConnell Grant application, 1990, Box P-30-3-3, File 3/13, MAWA Archives, MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Moreover, according to BAAWA founding member Jane Gordon, BAAWA had "been told by an officer of the Ontario Arts Council" in a letter to MAWA that the Council had "no programs of affirmative action for women, and if one was proposed [the officer] would be opposed to it."[271]

Other applicants included the Nova Scotia Women Artists Network (NSWAN), based out of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD), which applied in September 1991. NSWAN was a research-focused organization made up of Rosemary MacAulay, Catherine Phoenix, and Ann Verrall.[272] NSWAN was founded in 1989 and it presumably wound down shortly after its 1991 application.[273] The effects of the proposed expansion campaign rippled out, and in June 1996, MAWA communicated with the National Association of Women Artists (NAWA) and with Leslee Nelson, Professor of Visual Arts, University of Wisconsin-Madison, about setting up a mentorship program stateside.[274] Bev Pike, who worked at Latitude 53 gallery in Edmonton, Alberta, took steps to start an offshoot, which likely became the gallery's women's program. Additionally, The New Gallery in Calgary, Alberta, under Sandra Tivy, submitted a proposal to run a mentorship program there.[275] On September 6, 1991, MAWA sent a letter to the McConnell Foundation announcing its proposal for Phase II of the national expansion program plan. Unfortunately, this never came to pass, as MAWA used the funding for other, more pressing administrative and infrastructure concerns.[276]

MAWA continued to expand its influence by involving itself in national artist-run initiatives and international feminist projects. For example, in 1988, MAWA travelled an

[271] National Expansion Program, 1989, Box P-30-3-10, File 10/4, MAWA Archives, MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba.
[272] National Expansion Program, 1991, Box P-30-3-7, File 7/5, MAWA Archives, MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba.
[273] Marie Koehler-Vandergraff, "Artists Meet to Network", *Pandora (*Volume 5, No 1, 1989): 7.
[274] MAWA correspondence with NAWA, 1996, Box P-30-3-7, File 7/4, MAWA Archives, MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba.
[275] McConnell Foundation Grant Application, 1991, Box P-30-3-10, File 10/4, MAWA Archives, MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba.
[276]McConnell Foundation Grant Application, 1991, Box P-30-3-10, File 10/4, MAWA Archives, MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba..

exhibition to Toronto, where video artist Lisa Steele gave a public lecture to open the project.[277] That same year, MAWA members participated in a panel at the Association of National Non-Profit Artists Centres (ANNPAC) conference titled "Feminist Impact in Contemporary Critical Practice." The panel featured Canadian feminist visual artists Wilma Needham, Lani Maestro, Margot Butler, MAWA cofounder Sheila Butler, as well as Québec-based feminist video artist Martine Sauvageau. In 1991, MAWA approached ANNPAC about becoming a member.[278] In 1991, MAWA began discussions and programming around the theme of racism in the arts, specifically regarding the appropriation of native culture by white artists. Linda Fairfield chaired this project with MAWA members Colleen Cutschall, Ann Smith, Carol Phillips, and Kathy Pettipas. MAWA also led research groups in discussions around the experienced and perceived backlash to feminism, as well as in discussions of ageism and other modalities of intersectionality in feminism.

Artist-run centres have often sought to explore issues of diversity, with many of them directly addressing this in their mandates. As I outline in Chapter Two, their commitment to issues of diversity has been in part due to the Multiculturalism Policy under the Pierre Trudeau Government, the 1988 Multiculturalism Act, changes in priorities at the Canada Council in the 1990s, as well as the work of the Minquon Panchayat. The Multiculturalism Act is a double-edged sword—at once a source of pride for some Canadians and a document of exclusion for others. In her excellent dissertation, "'Where Outreach Meets Outrage': Racial Equity at The Canada Council for the Arts (1989 – 1999)" (2011), Andrea Fatona writes that the Federal Multicultural Act of 1988 lit the fire for many funding initiatives, as did the "Report on Racial

McConnell Foundation Grant Application, 1991, Box P-30-3-10, File 10/4, MAWA Archives, MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba; Steele is a Canadian artist working primarily in video. She is also an educator, curator and co-founder of V-tape in Toronto and a founder of the now-defunct *Fuse* magazine, a socially engaged publication around issues in Canadian art.

[278] National Expansion Program, 1991, Box P-30-3-7, File 7/5, MAWA Archives, MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Equality in the Arts that was submitted to the Board of the Canada Council in 1991 by racial equity consultant Chris Creighton-Kelly."[279] MAWA was responsive to these early initiatives, but also continued them well beyond the time when the funding opportunities fizzled out.

Overall, MAWA was deeply involved in advocacy for women in the arts from a feminist perspective. In a letter from Bev Pike to then Acting Director of the Manitoba Arts Council Sharon Raynard, dated July 3, 1990, Pike critiques the Manitoba Arts Council's gender imbalance:

> I looked at the recent list of jurors on the Manitoba Arts Council's June Communiqué, and noticed that 75% of the jurors were male. It might be good if MAWA could talk to MAC about this, since their mandate for equal representation seems to be slipping dramatically.[280]

A further example of MAWA's advocacy for women in the arts is its advocacy around burnout in artist-run centres, which disproportionately affected women. MAWA's Acting Chair (and Aceartinc. staff member) Jennifer Woodbury co-authored a letter to ANNPAC with Robert Campbell from the Manitoba Arts Council in 1992 on the topic. MAWA's focus on feminist mentorship of underrepresented and underserved artists is what sets it apart from other artist-run centres. While MAWA has had exhibitions, public programs, and member-led initiatives, including fundraisers, its core work has been to uplift *all* women and non-binary artists.

3.8 Women in Focus Society

[279] Andrea Monike Fatona, "'Where Outreach Meets Outrage': Racial Equity at The Canada Council for the Arts (1989–1999)" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2011), 1-2.
[280] Correspondence Bev Pile and Sharon Raynard, 1990, Box P-30-3-2, File 2/1, MAWA archives, MAWA, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

The Vancouver Women in Focus Society (WIF) began in 1974 as a film distribution and production project originally based at the University of British Columbia. According to the biographical description of the fonds housed at the University of British Columbia Library Rare Books and Special Collections, WIF "began when two members of the Women's Office Collective, Jeanette A. Auger and Marion Barling, taught a workshop in video skills and produced a special series of half hour programmes entitled Women in Focus."[281] In 1975, the group expanded from production and education to distribution, and it eventually separated from the university and continued operations in its own space off campus without the institutional support afforded by the university. Marion Barling was the founder and director of WIF from its inception until when she stepped down in 1984. The organization closed permanently in 1993. In its nearly twenty-year history, the organization changed course dramatically several times, but was consistent in being underfunded. In this section, I map these shifts in organizational directives and explore the ways in which lack of funding motivated some of WIF's administrative decisions—including its eventual decision to shut down altogether.

For many of the people I spoke to about WIF, Barling is still considered the voice of WIF. Other notable WIF members and staff who helped to shape the identity of the space include the following people: Julie Warren, who was Community Outreach Coordinator at WIF in 1987; Cornelia Wyngaarden, who was involved with Satellite Video Exchange (now VIVO, a video production and distribution artist-run centre and home to the WIF archives); Deborah McInnes, who was Director in 1989; Margot Butler, who was Director in 1998; Skai Fowler, who acted as Curator/Coordinator during the same period Butler was the director; Janet Lakeman, who was

[281] Fonds Description, RBSC-ARC-1586 Vancouver Women in Focus Society fonds Page 2, WIF archives, UBC, Vancouver, BC.

Curator/Coordinator; and Zainub Verjee, who was Film Distribution Manager and responsible for the *In Visible Colours* festival, both in the 1990s.

WIF started as a production centre that taught women to make films, and then became a distribution centre sharing tapes made by collective members and others. Documentary videotape titles in WIF's early catalogue, often by WIF members, reflected the feminist politics of the 1970s, using language like, *Fashion as Social Control, Tomorrow's Leaders, Rape is a Social Disease,* and *Rape Relief*. WIF screened the tapes in high schools and colleges, campus and community television stations, and quite often in women's centres and rape crisis centres, at international collectives such as Redstockings, and with government bureaus. WIF kept its rental rates reasonable and interested parties could consider purchasing in addition to renting. WIF charged a viewing fee to ship and loan tapes, but this fee was deducted from the cost of purchase. These fees offset the costs of taping and shipping, whereas visitors could view tapes at WIF for free.

As elsewhere, in Vancouver, video art was "developing at the same time as the feminist movement and the beginning of artist-run centres. Within these centres, one had access to equipment and studio space, and found oneself part of a supportive community of artists practicing divergent disciplines."[282] One of WIF's earliest functions was to act as a community library and resource centre. Almost a full half of its archives at VIVO consists of flyers, books, and pamphlets it collected over the years, mostly from feminist publishers.[283] Some titles include the *Hecate Journal* (New South Wales); *Quest* (Washington, DC); *Women in Perspective* from the London Women's Resource Centre (London, ON); *TightWire* from the Women's Prison in

[282] Marina Roy, "Corporeal Returns: Feminism and Phenomenology in Vancouver Video and Performance, 1968-1983," *Canadian Art* 18, iss. 2 (Summer 2001): 58

[283] The WIF archives are located at the University of Vancouver and at VIVO in Vancouver. VIVO was initially incorporated as Satellite Video Exchange Society in 1973 (and became known as Video Inn shortly after). At times the organization has been referred to as Video Inn and Video Out, Video In, and now VIVO Media Arts Centre.

Kingston (ON); *The Women's Artists News* (New York City, NY); pamphlets from Les Éditions d'avant-garde, a short-lived press operating out of Rouge Bookstore by the Ligue ouvrière révolutionnaire from 1977–1980 (Montréal, QC); texts on the overlap of feminism and socialism, feminism and Marxism, sexual politics and Marxism, and on the revolutionary dynamics of women's liberation; as well as the pamphlet *Women and the Subversion of the Community* by Maria Rosa Dalla Costa and Selma James.[284]

WIF's initial projects were limited to feminist film content intended for broadcast on local and North American television networks, as well as films for distribution to national and international feminist collectives. Very little has been written about WIF, and while it did donate its archives, WIF did not produce a historical narrative of the organization. Like MAWA, the WIF archives are not located in a singular location. They are spread between VIVO Media Arts Centre (formerly Video Inn) and the University of British Columbia. In both locations, the archives have been less carefully curated than at MAWA, where founding members continue to tend to the archives and where the centre has produced books to celebrate its own achievements. In the WIF archives, on the other hand, we are left with a redacted and fragmented history leading to a loss of institutional memory, paired with an unwillingness among some former members to rehash the past. WIF's fragmented archive is one example of the kind of "amnesia" Maura Lesley Broadhurst talks about in her 1997 thesis *Strategic Spaces: Towards a Genealogy of Women Artists' Groups in Canada*:

> By the end of the 1960s many women artists felt that discriminatory practices were again becoming overwhelming. Women-only groups were established but with little or no knowledge of their ancestors. Canada's amnesia with regard to its women artists has helped to create a disturbing cycle. The cyclical nature of

[284] An well-circulated feminist-Marxist text by Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James from 1972 whose themes were women, their labour, and their struggles. Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, *Women and the Subversion of the Community* (Montpelier, Bristol: Falling Wall Press, 1972), accessed November 15, 2021, https://libcom.org/library/power-women-subversion-community-della-costa-selma-james.

> women artists' groups in Canada confirms Rosi Braidotti's belief that patriarchy depends on the fragmentation of women's history for its survival.[285]

Outside of Broadhurst's thesis and the occasional article from a contemporary publication (such as in *Camera Obscura*, and very recently, writing by Zainub Verjee about the *In Visible Colours* festival), there exists a 2015 self-published book by Stéphane Bernard titled *Women In and Out of Focus*. This text is a collection of WIF ephemera, not a historical narrative or analysis. Unfortunately, only a handful of copies exist, and because the author failed to secure permission to use archival materials from the UBC collection in advance of publication, distribution has been halted.

Of course, WIF is not the only space or project in Vancouver that has been shut down, and many other spaces' histories (such as Lived Space, Gam Gallery, Project Space, or W2) have also been relatively neglected. The New Era Social Club and the fictional New York Corres-Sponge Dance School collective were active during a similar timeframe, but because of their association with The Western Front, one of the oldest continually running artist-run centres, known for their support for conceptual art, their histories have been better documented. The New Era Social Club currently has a Wikipedia page, and the New York Corres-Sponge Dance School is referenced on the titular Vancouver Art in the Sixties archival website and was commemorated in a 2015 exhibition by founder Glenn Lewis at Kunstverein Toronto. WIF is comparatively absent from history books and encyclopedic entries.[286]

Women and issues related to women are less likely to be included in recorded histories because of that age-old adage that history is written by the victors. For example, the Vancouver Women Interart Society, which operated until 1976 at the Helen Pitt Gallery, does not feature on

[285] Maura Lesley Broadhurst, "Strategic Spaces: Towards a Genealogy of Women Artists' Groups in Canada," (Master's thesis, Concordia University, 1997), 2.
[286] I personally created the Wikipedia entry for WIF, which was twice nominated for deletion due to insufficient secondary sources.

the latter's website. Moreover, writing the history of a collective—like WIF—will always be fraught.

In its time, WIF was incredibly active. As I describe in the chronology below, the centre created links with spaces across the continent and with filmmakers in Europe, and maintained a library of feminist content (zines, books, and tracts). WIF operated in parallel to other Vancouver arts institutions like Western Front and VIVO. These institutions (alongside others, many of which are still operating today) worked to connect Vancouver—once considered an isolated outpost—to the rest of the Canadian art landscape.[287] WIF was the only British Columbia-based organization at the time dedicated to working in an explicitly feminist way, and there has not been another funded feminist artist-run centre in Vancouver since it closed.

Operating from the mid-1970s through the 1990s, second-wave feminism was very much ingrained at WIF. If WIF was an organization trying to be many things for many people, and artist-run centres were and are a series of intra-connected networks, what was WIF's role within this network? Why did WIF choose to diversify its market beyond a film/video production and distribution when it expanded to include a visual art gallery (the Lateral Gallery) that did not specialize in film and video? WIF often applied to the Canada Council for the Artists for project funding on behalf of artists, likely because it did not have operational funding. This predicament likely contributed to its eventual demise, as precarious funding is often cited as a reason for the closing of artist-run centres in Canada.[288]

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[287] For more on the history of artist-run centres in Vancouver, see Melanie O'Brian, *Vancouver Art & Economies* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2007); Stan Douglas and Or Gallery, eds., *Vancouver Anthology: The Institutional Politics of Art* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1991); or Keith Wallace, *Whispered Art Histories: Twenty Years at the Western Front* (Vancouver: Pulp Press, 2002).

[288] The archives suggest that at this point, WIF did have some funding from the Canada Council for the Arts, from the Government of British Columbia through the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Recreation and Culture, as well as from the City of Vancouver. Unfortunately, because of the fragmented and incomplete shape of the archives, it is not possible to know exact programs or amounts.

Like other artist-run centres, WIF was involved in a significant number of advocacy projects. These ranged from local to national initiatives and occasionally related to internal programs at WIF. For example, Toronto-based artist Pamela Harris did a project recording the women's community projects in Canada in the summer of 1988, which included WIF input.[289] Bailey Smith (Faculty of Education at McGill) did a study into gallery associations and services for artists across Canada in 1989, which included WIF. As part of its advocacy work, WIF contributed to many activist projects: it contributed to work against pornography; it contributed input in the Applebaum-Hébert report (described in detail in Chapter Two); and it contributed to projects with the Vancouver Artist League, advocating for health and dental care among other things.[290]

WIF was in contact with several artist-run centres across Canada. For example, Aganetha Dyck, a founding MAWA member, was the first artist to exhibit at WIF's Lateral Gallery from March 21, 1990, to April 29, 1990. WIF was also in correspondence with Patti Mara, who was working at Womanspirit in London, Ontario, in 1980 and with Sparkes Gallery in Toronto. Additionally, many interesting groups approached WIF to collaborate in its early days, such as the Street Suite Black Theatre workshop in 1980.[291] Renate Stendhal and Maj Skadegard of Eyeland Foundation in Paris wrote to WIF in May 1981, to inquire about touring a show on "herstory" called *In the Beginning*, though the project never came to pass. WIF was also in contact with the Women's Interart Center in New York City (and its apparent Vancouver chapter Inter-Art) and FilmWomen in Boston.

[289] Gallery written advocacy file, 1988, WIF archives, VIVO, Vancouver, BC.
[290] Vancouver Artist League correspondence, 1989, Box 2, WIF archives, VIVO, Vancouver, BC.
[291] Correspondance, 1989, WIF archives, VIVO, Vancouver, BC.

3.9 Trying to Do It All

WIF was eventually evicted from its university offices in the late 1970s, which forced it to find space elsewhere, and which led to the opening of its first gallery space, the Floating Gallery.[292] Following this, WIF expanded its activities to programming; it began hosting screenings and then opened a gallery that showed the work of women artists working in various mediums. Opening in 1986, the Floating Gallery was an ambitious but difficult project. Gallery staff at WIF/The Floating were often unable to pay artist fees to artists. When they did pay a fee, it was often only a token one meant to cover installation costs. Like most artist-run centres at the time, WIF did not yet align with CARFAC standards, and its low levels of funding prevented a more meaningful financial contribution towards costs incurred by artists. WIF offered little by way of support to exhibiting artists; it could offer neither materials for installation nor staff for technical assistance. WIF/The Floating Gallery considered itself a feminist visual and media arts space, but it struggled both in terms of basic administration and in terms of operating with the feminist principles that it praised. WIF's employment of feminist administrative practices wavered considerably, especially around transparency and open communication, and, perhaps because of a lack of financial resources and consistent funding, correspondence in its archives show that it failed to meet some of its goals around equitable pay. When it was able to pay more equitably, it was because of project specific funding. For example, in January 1990, WIF submitted a project grant application for exhibition assistance to the Canada Council for a show by Joy Zemel Long. While there is no information in the WIF archives on the status of the application, we know that Carole Itter received a letter from WIF in late February, 1990, inviting

[292] WIF Archive eviction letter from UBC to Kingsway

her to be the first researcher in residence at WIF (as part of Zemel Long's exhibition at the WIF-run Lateral Gallery.)[293] It is therefore possible to imagine that the project did go forward with sufficient financial resources to support Itter's work. In 1990, WIF also hosted a writer in residence, to whom it paid a small fee funded through a project grant.

It is easy to imagine how a constant anxiety around funding, a dread of potential closure—and the corresponding knowledge that closure would likely mean an absence of feminist film creation and distribution in BC—and, for Barling, a fear that without her everything would fall apart, all contributed to WIF's lack of healthy administrative practices as well as to an imbalance of power between Barling and other WIF community members. Today we have a name for this problem: founder's syndrome. Stephen R. Block and Steven Rosenberg describe founder's syndrome as the "unhealthy organizational situations in which founders are more heavy-handed and indifferent about the imbalance of their control over organizations."[294]

WIF was inconsistent in its payment to artists, was often behind on correspondence, and did not operate transparently. This lack of clear communication caused unnecessary stress between artists and administrators. For example, on November 5, 1979, artist Barbara L. Newton wrote to WIF to complain about a lack of communication regarding a change of the date for her exhibition.[295] On September 1, 1980, Robin Barnett wrote to WIF to complain about unfair treatment with regards to her show at WIF, mentioning her intention to bring Diana Smith of the Constructive Criticism Collective to a proposed meeting. In the same letter, Barnett also calls out the un-feminist principles WIF operated with when working together. Fees at WIF during this period were uncommonly low. In a letter to Lyla Smith (July 14, 1980), WIF confirms her show

[293] At this time, WIF's gallery was located at 849 Beatty Street in Vancouver.
[294] Stephen R. Block and Steven Rosenberg, "Toward an Understanding of Founder's Syndrome: An Assessment of Power and Privilege Among Founders of Nonprofit Organizations," *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 12, no. 4 (2002): 354, https://doi.org/10.1002/nml.12403.
[295] Letter from Barbara L. Newton to WIF, November 5, 1979, Box 1, WIF Archives, Vancouver, BC, UBC.

and $35 fee. While the gallery had a small budget and operated using a model in which artists personally assumed most expenses, this is still an unusually low fee for the period, corresponding to about $150 in today's rates.

While we can look back and blame low levels of funding for WIF's inability to provide financial support to artists, the language of the letters—which was terse—refrains from offering other types of non-monetary aid.[296] In the case above, WIF's outbound communication was very clear, however, even if it was unsupportive. While WIF consistently vocalized itself as a feminist space, its actual administrative archive suggests that its theory and praxis did not always match up. When WIF opened up the Lateral Gallery in the 1990s, WIF shifted its operations in the right direction, likely in part because the gallery was a permanent space that allowed some breathing room from the grind of constantly reorganizing to fit into niche grant programs.

3.10 Essentialism and What It Means to Be Inclusive

Community members often criticized WIF for its perceived lack of feminist solidarity. For example, in a 1983 letter to WIF, artist and activist Lenore Herb chastises WIF members for not working to support women in the context of ANNPAC. She writes, "and what about you at WIF? You have removed yourselves and allow the most shameful and blatant control of the art economy by a group of chauvinist elitist pigs (aided by token women) who are vicious, elitist and concerned only with maintaining the status quo."[297] During this period, some of ANNPAC's

[296] Metro media file, WIF archives, VIVO, Vancouver, BC.
[297] Correspondence, Lenore Herb and WIF, File 6191-6195, WIF archives, UBC, Vancouver, BC.

members were pushing for ANNPAC to fight for greater inclusion of women, POC, and other marginalized groups. For example, as I discuss in Chapter Two, several former ANNPAC members formed RCAAQ in Québec in because of ANNPACs inattention to Francophone members. The following year was when thirteen members of ANNPAC, concerned that conversations around cultural diversity were missing, formed the breakout group Minquon Panchayat.

WIF's apparent silence with regard to ANNPAC creating more space for equity-seeking organizations in its structure perhaps suggests it was out of touch with the Canadian arts network, but it also suggests WIF's unwillingness to participate in a culture that was already, essentially, excluding its voice. WIF was a staunch supporter of women's art production, and its members were very much invested in second-wave feminist discourse. That WIF avoided engaging with what were essentially patriarchal structures suggests it felt that such a system could never truly have room for its members—a sentiment no doubt bolstered by insufficient support from both ANNPAC and the Canada Council for the Arts. However, WIF's lack of engagement came at the cost of losing the opportunity to deepen its understanding of equity. Its absence meant its representatives didn't participate in important conversations happening at ANNPAC meetings and elsewhere about racial equity within the larger framework of equity in the arts.

While many community members were outraged by WIF's actions and perceived silence, others wrote to the centre praising its work and asking how to become involved. Many sent donations as well. For some, feminism was related to female essentialism, and for others, it was part of a larger struggle for autonomy and related to solidarity with other oppressed groups. The dominant thread at WIF, buoyed by Marion Barling, was the former—which played out in the

networks it engaged with, the tapes it distributed, the work it exhibited, and the advocacy work it took on. WIF's feminism was deeply essentialist, building on popular Western/Anglo feminist beliefs of the 1960s and '70s. For example, WIF turned down an exhibition by Carol Condé and Karl Beveridge because their work on labour in the arts wasn't seen as feminist and, because Beveridge is a man, they didn't meet the women-only mandate of the gallery. During this time, WIF rejected many applications from men, mounting instead projects it viewed as feminist or relating to women's issues and/or to gender and sexual oppression more generally.

WIFs politics were visible outside of gallery programming and film production and distribution. As its UBC Fonds state, "Women in Focus was further involved in multiple projects and groups dealing with violence against women, pornography, child abuse, women's labour laws, lesbian rights, racism, education, women in politics, and women in prison."[298] Debate around pornography became central to WIFs advocacy. The division among members regarding the relationship between feminism and pornography was a source of tension at WIF.[299] Some members were pro-pornography and anti-censorship, while the majority, including the staff, were anti-pornography. Maura Broadhurst writes in her thesis on Canadian feminist artist-run centres from the '70s to the '90s that WIF "members believed that traditional images of women had in fact replaced women with a fabrication, one often created by 'a male-defined society' and tainted with violence."[300] The "violence" that WIF's members referred to was rape and sexual assault. WIF's office on "Kingsway was next door to the office of Vancouver Rape Relief, and there was close community between the two groups, as well as with other local women's groups."[301]

[298] Fonds Description, 2021, RBSC-ARC-1586 Vancouver Women in Focus Society fonds Page 2
[299] Rebecca Whisnant and Christine Stark, eds., *Not for Sale: Feminists Resisting Prostitution and Pornography* (North Melbourne: Spinifex, 2004); Carolyn Bronstein, *Battling Pornography: The American Feminist Anti-Pornography Movement, 1976-1986* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Varda Burstyn, ed., *Women Against Censorship* (Vancouver: Douglas & MacIntyre, 1985).
[300] Broadhurst, "Strategic Spaces," 73.
[301] WIF Biography, Undated, RBSC-ARC-1586 Vancouver Women in Focus Society fonds page 3.

Together, it seems that members of WIF conflated an anti-violence against women stance with an anti-pornography stance, and this anti-pornography stance—while very popular among certain feminists of the period—aligned WIF away from the larger artist-run centre network. As Varda Burstyn, an Israeli-Canadian scholar, notes,

> early in the 1980s, a huge wave of mobilization over pornography swept society. From the "Moral Majority" (the first Regroupement of the "New Right") to the women's movement, many analyses and strategies constituted points of difference for public policy platforms and moral stances. Issues of gender were pivotal, though in different ways, for these different actors.[302]

Burstyn began to address "the complex issues both in understanding and in taking action on sexual imagery" after some films were censored at a festival she directed in 1981.[303] Her anthology *Women Against Censorship* "was the first collection of Canadian and American feminist writers expressing a feminist analysis of pornography while taking a non-censorious strategic stance."[304] In her 1994 book *Blue Politics: Pornography and the Law in the Age of Feminism*, Canadian scholar Dany Lalonde writes that the 1980s saw the "development of a feminist critique of pornography—one that linked pornography with harm to women," and that this spawned "a new anti-pornography movement organized to criminalize violent and degrading sexual representations" that "undermined women's efforts to be treated as equal citizens."[305]

Vancouver was a hub of anti-pornography activity, with many members of feminist communities taking part in direct actions against those they believed perpetrated crimes against women through the production and dissemination of porn. *Kinesis* magazine (formerly the Vancouver Status of Women newsletter) was a Canadian national newspaper published in Vancouver between 1974 and 2001. It focused on women and women's issues. Jillian

[302] "Culture and Politics," Varda Burstyn, accessed November 15, 2021, http://vardaburstyn.com/culture_and_politics/.
[303] "Culture and Politics."
[304] "Culture and Politics."
[305] "Culture and Politics."

Riddington, an activist and anthropologist whose career has focused on Indigenous issues, was a frequent contributor to *Kinesis* as well as to *Herizons* (a Manitoba women's magazine started in 1979). She penned articles about her experiences with the National Action Committee for the Status of Women, a feminist activist organization founded in 1971 as a pressure group to lobby for the implementation of the 167 recommendations of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada's 1970 report, and often spoke publicly about feminism and pornography.[306]

In a review for *Videoguide* (Video Inn's publication) of Martha Gever's anti-porn film *A Crime Against Women* (1979, distributed by Video Out), Riddington writes that "pornography is a means of social control. It is intended to remind women that they are victims in this society, and that women who are not protected (read controlled) by a male owner are fair game and must be 'taught a lesson.'"[307] WIF—which appears in the same issue of Videoguide with notices of its anti-pornography catalogue—took a similar stance.

WIF's Marion Barling was particularly active in this movement and worked tirelessly to rid Vancouver of what she perceived was a negative pornographic influence.[308] In the 1970s, some television channels aired soft-core porn after midnight—which was legal under the Canadian Broadcasting Act, a wide-reaching act that continues to define how much Canadian content must

[306] Riddington wrote extensively on the perils of pornography. Notable titles include "The Great Porn Debate: Can We Talk?" *Herizons* (Winter, 1994): 8-15 "Research Paper on Pornography." Prepared for the Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women, Status of Women Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, 1992; "Confronting Pornography: A Feminist on the Front Lines," in *Feminist Perspectives 15*. (Ottawa: Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, 1989); and "Freedom from Harm, or Freedom of Speech? A Feminist Perspective on Pornography," prepared for the National Association of Women and the Law, Ottawa, 1983.

[307] Video Inn and Video Out were the production and distribution branches of the same organization, which was eventually renamed as VIVO; VIVO, Videoguide 3.10)

[308] WIF's position on pornography was that porn was a form of violence against women and that it needed to be censored. For more on this position, see Catharine A. MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin, eds., *In Harm's Way: The Pornography Civil Rights Hearings* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1997).

be shown and what is suitable content for public broadcast.[309] According to a 1984 MacLean's article:

> Feminists such as Maude Barlow, a former federal Liberal government adviser on women's issues, contend that the deluge of pornography debases women and threatens their safety. Other feminists, including author June Callwood, argue that it is dangerous to give governments more power to control the media. The arts community is also divided. Two months ago, 1,115 furious members of the Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists (ACTRA) cancelled a recent decision by their union executive which could have discouraged union members from participating in productions involving excessive violence and abusive sexual behaviour.[310]

While many of Barling's arts colleagues—especially those who also identified as queer and who were being censored through the anti-porn movement—fought the Canadian Broadcasting Act, Barling and others believed that porn was the enemy of women.

Censorship debates were most intense in Ontario, where, in 1982, the Ontario Board of Censors banned public screenings of a film made by artist Michael Snow, as well as a documentary produced by the National Film Board (NFB). Local artist-run centres and umbrella organizations spoke out against this censorship, arguing for freedom of expression, including the Ontario Film and Video Appreciation Society, which that same *Maclean's* article dubbed "a group of arts organization administrators, film-makers and civil libertarians."[311] At A Space in Toronto, the censors seized two British films about queer realities in advance of their screening in 1984.

The issues were similar in B.C., but there, Barling and WIF, who were aligned with a mostly white, straight, cisgendered group of feminists, imagined their anti-porn work as "an

[309] CAB-ACR, "Anti-violence code" CAB-ACR, accessed January 8, 2022, https://www.cab-acr.ca/english/social/codes/violencecode.shtm.
[310] CAB-ACR, "Anti-violence code" CAB-ACR, accessed January 8, 2022, https://www.cab-acr.ca/english/social/codes/violencecode.shtm.
[311] Mary Janigan, "Confronting Pornography", *Maclean's (*October 29 1984): 54.

attempt to bring its products under the control of the BC Classification Board."[312] As such, they were seen as active government reformers. In B.C., more militant or anarchist groups including the so-called Wimmin's Fire Brigade protested against and were eventually suspected of fire-bombing the local X-rated video outlet that had been accused of selling snuff films, called Red-Hot Video.[313]

Barling actively believed that "female imagery defined by women has not existed in the mainstream; it has traditionally been defined by the male perspective."[314] I suspect that her views on women filmmakers and her views on porn dovetailed, and as a result, she could not conceive of porn made by and for the female gaze. As she says herself in an interview from 1980, "We're still breaking new ground and it's impossible for us to completely know our experience of what it is to be female outside of the patriarchy."[315] It's easy to read Barling's actions as narrow-minded—and indeed many of her peers in the Canadian artist-run centre network felt anti-pornography work amounted to lobbying for censorship, especially of women's and queer voices—but it is necessary to keep in perspective that Barling and WIF were having very different discussions around feminism in Vancouver than were artists and organizers in other parts of Canada. After an increase in dialogue between WIF and other feminist spaces across the country, WIF changed too. Following waves of feminist political agendas, programming at WIF slowly moved away from seeing feminism exclusively as a tool to fund women's projects and to protect them against abuse and rape, etc.

[312] Mary Janigan, "Confronting Pornography", 52.
[313] Allen Antliff, *Only a Beginning: An Anarchist Anthology*, (Vancouver, BC, Arsenal Pulp Press, 2004): 75.
[314] Womanspirit, Spirale, B5711, Womanspirit Archives, Western University, London, Ontario, Canada.
[315] Womanspirit, Spirale, B5711, Womanspirit Archives, Western University, London, Ontario, Canada.

3.10 In Visible Colours

In the late 1980s, Women in Focus hired Zainub Verjee as Film Distribution Manager.[316] Verjee, along with Lorraine Chan of the NFB, organized the film festival *In Visible Colours* (IVC). IVC took place in Vancouver, B.C., in 1989, and was "made for and by women of colour."[317] As founder Zainub Verjee puts it,

> *In Visible Colours* emerged amid contestations on nation building and the making of a global neoliberal order, as much as the social and political upheavals of the late 1970s and '80s that foregrounded race, gender and the politics of cultural difference. IVC was primarily about the contested history of the modernist aesthetic and modernism in the visual arts and the making of the contemporary condition—as a historical marker—for the decolonized world. It asked: Who was defining this marker? To reduce that conversation to diversity and representation can undermine the deeper issues of contested art histories and the politics of aesthetics. The reality today is that embedding oneself into such a discourse is still a massive challenge for people of colour, particularly women.[318]

Verjee was the first and only non-white staff member at WIF. As an organization, WIF had not done any work to decolonize its institution nor to create a welcome and hospitable environment for what may now be described as a token hire. WIF may have co-hosted IVC, but it was not ready for that responsibility. As Elfrieda M. Pantoga writes, "one of [Verjee's] greatest risks as a staff member of Vancouver Women in Focus Arts and Media Centre was her decision to speak out about the organization's relative neglect of promotion of the work of women of color."[319]

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[316] It is significant to note that Verjee was later involved in developing equity policy at the Canada Council for the Arts, the BC Arts Council, and the Ontario Arts Council, and that she led the Artists' Coalition for Local Colour, raising racism charges against the Vancouver Art Gallery.
[317] Rosemary Heather and Verjee, Zainub, "In Visible Colours," *Canadian Art,* September 25, 2017, https://canadianart.ca/interviews/in-visible-colours/.
[318] Heather and Zainub, "In Visible Colours."
[319] Pantoga quoted in Zainub Verjee, "In Visible Colours: The Making and Unmaking of the Women of Colour and Third World Women International Film and Video Festival and Symposium," Other Places, accessed February 26, 2021, https://www.otherplaces.mano-ramo.ca/zainub-verjee-in-visible-colours/.

WIF's catalogue, prior to Verjee's interjection, was devoid of titles about BIPOC women. The *In Visible Colours* festival was described retrospectively by Rosemary Heather in *Canadian Art* as "a groundbreaking film and video festival made for and by women of colour in late 1980s Vancouver." Further, she writes, it "stands as an important precedent for the return of identity politics."[320] Canadian artist and new media scholar Sara Diamond writes that "almost everyone that I interviewed acknowledged that one of the most important provocations that brought the discourse around race and gender into Vancouver's nebula was the November 15–19, 1989 Invisible Colours festival."[321] In addition to the screenings and workshops, *In Visible Colours* hosted a multi-day symposium on race and gender in the arts.[322]

Zainub Verjee came to Canada from the UK, where she had worked with Stuart Hall. In a 2015 oral history taken at the South Asian Visual Arts Centre (SAVAC) in Toronto, Verjee defines WIF as "a feminist artist-run centre," where she "was hired permanently as the distribution manager of the film and video collection" during the period she characterizes as the "the beginning of artist-run centres."[323] WIF benefited from and contributed to the socio-cultural moment in which it was created—a moment Verjee describes as "this kind of social gender race coming together in some ways, Women in Focus. What was also at the same time happening, was sort of this rise of identity politics."[324]

The festival was considered a huge success, and because of Verjee's fundraising efforts, it concluded with a fiscal surplus. *In Visible Colours* didn't receive any federal arts funding. As Verjee states:

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[320] Heather and Zainub, "In Visible Colours."
[321] Diamond, "Action Agenda: Vancouver's Prescient Media Arts," Presented at ISEA Toronto, 2015, 13.
[322] Christian Lammert and Katja Sarkowsky, eds, *Travelling Concepts: Negotiating Diversity in Canada and Europe,* (Berlin, Germany: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2009): 158.
[323] South Asian Visual Arts Centre (SAVAC), "Oral History Interview with Zainab Verjee (2015) ," *The ArQuives Digital Exhibitions*, accessed January 8, 2022, https://digitalexhibitions.arquives.ca/items/show/822.
[324] SAVAC, "Oral History Interview with Zainub Verjee," 2015.

> We raise(d) almost five hundred thousand dollars for a women-of-colour event. And we formed alliances with Aboriginal women and within an international movement. All of our money is coming from development agencies; it's coming from NORAD, CIDA because women's development in the 3rd world is really on the agenda. Those are the people who started funding it, not the Canada Council.[325]

Even though it didn't receive funding from Canadian arts funders, *In Visible Colours* has had a lasting effect on current discussions around Canadian cultural production and funding.[326] *In Visible Colours* brought questions around the intersections of race, class, and gender to the forefront for artist-run centres and other cultural institutions. It was not just arts funders who struggled with how to handle these new questions.

When Verjee began working with WIF, the organization had previously shown work by women of colour only on rare occasions. It had no films in its distribution catalogue made by women of colour (although it did have some titles that told their stories for them). *In Visible Colours* responded to that. As Diamond writes, "like some other attempts to bring race politics to predominantly white organizations in the 1990s, there was not a happy ending, resulting in a rupture between Invisible Colours and Women in Focus, with both organizations dissolving."[327] This "rupture" was tied to how funds were managed between the two organizations. While it was originally connected to WIF via Verjee, *In Visible Colours* incorporated as a separate entity in 1992. Up until that point, WIF managed and held, in its bank account, grants meant for the administration and production of *In Visible Colours*. When WIF began to dissolve amid serious debt, it used $50,000 in grant money that *In Visible Colours* had received for the festival to pay back its own creditors. This resulted in a lengthy court battle that ultimately ruled in favour of *In Visible Colours*. Unfortunately, the damage was done and *In Visible Colours* was also forced to

[325] Sara Diamond, "Action Agenda: Vancouver's Prescient Media Arts," Presented at ISEA Toronto, 2015, 13.
[326] SAVAC, Verjee 2015.
[327] Diamond, "Action Agenda: Vancouver's Prescient Media Arts," 13.

shut down. Some accused WIF's handling of the money to have racist implications. In a June 1991 article for *Kinesis,* Nancy Pollack reported that:

> "During the festival planning, there was an ongoing struggle between IVC and WIF," says Yasmin Jiwani of IVC's original board of directors referring to a range of problems including sharing of space (IVC worked out of WIF's offices) and money—problems which often had racist underpinnings.[328]

The same article quotes Verjee as saying: "The actual act of taking the IVC money wasn't necessarily a racist act—they were desperate. But how they have dealt with us since has been racist."[329]

Money was always a huge concern for WIF. The period in which WIF ceased operation coincides with a sharp decline in funding to arts and culture organizations at the national and provincial level. The work-creation grants that helped start the organization had long since dried up. With increasing competition in Vancouver as well as nationally, and because it worked in the rapidly mutating medium of video, WIF needed funds to keep up with the changing field. Artist-run centres were expected to be free, but the work that WIF was doing—distributing video and presenting artwork—had real costs associated with it. Without an increase in funding, even when the work WIF was doing was vitally important, it couldn't keep up.

In Canada, we've had a long tradition of the government paying for arts and culture. But not everybody shares the wealth equally, and not all spaces, despite the good work they do, receive enough money to operate long term. Ostensibly, Women in Focus closed because it ran out of money. Importantly, however, another reason for its closure was that the people there refused to see a way of running the organization that didn't just move it from cheque-to-cheque; they refused to operate a feminist centre with an open and evolving feminism. *In Visible Colours*

[328] Nancy Pollack, "Women in Focus, In Visible Colours Visibly far out of focus," *Kinesis,* June, 1991, 5.
[329] Pollack, "Women in Focus, In Visible Colours Visibly far out of focus," 5.

and Verjee brought modern feminist considerations to the table at WIF and created a new community base for the struggling centre. When WIF stole from *In Visible Colours*, it acted in a way that protected only itself. Had it left the money in the control of *In Visible Colours*, WIF would have still closed, but an organization that prioritized invisibilized WOC would possibly have survived. As Fumiko Kiyooka is quoted as saying in *Kinesis*, "just keeping WIF alive legally is, in the meantime, killing other parts of it, like its community and ethical considerations."[330]

Today, WIF's archives have mostly been folded into those at VIVO, and, outside of a handful of articles and one artist book consisting almost exclusively of unauthorized photocopies from said archives, they have disappeared. Yet, WIF's legacy has left an important mark in Vancouver in its own way, and more importantly, *In Visible Colours* created a large enough rupture in the Canadian arts community that it set off a series of events that changed Canadian arts programming and funding from then on.

3.11 Conclusion

MAWA and WIF are very different organizations. Whereas MAWA has been concerned with mentorships and with providing services to women-identified artists across the province, WIF was an organization intent on distributing the work of female artists, especially filmmakers. Whereas MAWA has been open to adapting its feminist ideology, the staff at WIF were very much second-wave feminists who were less interested in adapting to evolutions in feminist

[330] Pollack, "Women in Focus, In Visible Colours Visibly far out of focus," 5.

thought. Moreover, WIF ended when many of its long-time staff and members were nearing the age of retirement, and its politics—along with Barling's founder's syndrome (not to mention the *In Visible Colours* financial scandal)—alienated potential new members. Compared to MAWA, where founders are currently working alongside younger, less experienced employees forty years on, WIF did not build mentorship into its operating model. As a result, once the original participants left, the organization fizzled. MAWA has worked with changes in grants and funding, but WIF, perhaps deterred by its lack of success early on, was less affected by funding priorities. There are many reasons for MAWA's ability to remain operational and for WIF's closure, but I believe that the most compelling one is simply this: MAWA has always been a feminist organization whereas WIF was an organization run by feminists. Though subtle, this difference is significant. MAWA runs every aspect of the organization using an adaptable feminist model. WIF, on the other hand, tried to run itself with feminist employees but using conventional means. The organization never took on the work of pushing back against the norm of non-feminist functions.

Chapter Four

An Archaeological Dig of the Past: Feminist Artist-Run Centres in Ontario and the Drive for a More Equitable Artscape

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I used two case studies to analyse how different artist-run centres put their self-described feminist mandates into practice. I showed how changing funding directives influenced these centres' activities. In this chapter I explore case studies based in Ontario, including the Pauline McKibben Cultural Centre, the Women's Cultural Building, Gallery 940, Sparkes Gallery, Women's Art Resource Centre, and Womanspirit, centring on equity-focused funding initiatives. I also consider the role archives play in historicizing feminist artist-run centres, or how, as Maura Broadhurst notes, "the lack of documentation of the activities of the groups has resulted in a widespread ignorance among Canadians of women artists' histories, and in a case of amnesia causing a repetition of history."[331] The idea of amnesia and repetition is central to my analysis of the case studies in this chapter, and their archives. The artist-run centres in this chapter were all run by white women, and for the most part, their programming and hiring practices reflected that. These centres engaged in gender equity work during a period when there was tremendous momentum and funding for such projects in Canada. At the same time, funders paid little attention to supporting equity work on sexuality or race. Despite this, the artist-run centres I discuss in this chapter did manage to engage with sexuality and/or race in their work. I argue that the equity work that these centres did has since

[331] Maura Lesley Broadhurst, "Strategic Spaces: Towards a Genealogy of Women Artists' Groups in Canada," (Master's thesis, Concordia University, 1997), iii.

been lost and is now being repeated by others. Broadhurst's anger at these facts in 1997 is my outrage. The irony that I am pointing out the same narrative more than twenty-five years later, effectively repeating her work, is not lost on me.

In my survey of feminist-run artist-run centres in Ontario, both historical and contemporary, I have found one major consistency: if a space was explicitly feminist, run by women, worked on issues of gender and cultural equity, and applied for public funding, then it struggled financially—and consequently with member retention—and shut down. There are many examples of institutions in Ontario and in the rest of Canada that took on projects of a similar nature that were successfully funded and that still exist today, but these spaces did not program or create feminist content as their primary focus. Organizations at the forefront of challenging the norm with regards to diversity—organizations that lobbied for critical changes in policy for women—were systematically ignored by the funding bodies they hoped to change.

As I discuss in previous chapters, artist-run centres rely on funding for their survival. The arts in Canada benefit from a relatively strong public support system in comparison to other countries, but they receive very little support from the private sector and suffer from an underdeveloped culture of philanthropy. As a result, artist-run centres have developed programming and practices that are responsive to changes in government funding priorities. As arts education scholar Marisol J. D'Andrea notes, "arts councils need to attend to government's priorities and the government may intervene in the decision-making process for arts funding."[332] In other words, shifts in funding language do not necessarily come at the behest of the funding bodies themselves; they often come as a result of government pressure.[333]

[332] D'Andrea 2017, 246.
[333] D'Andrea 2017, 246; Clive Robertson, *Policy Matters: Administrations of Art and Culture* (Toronto: YYZ Books, 2006), 114.

Funding for Canadian cultural initiatives was at its height during the Pierre Elliott Trudeau years (effectively 1968–1984), when "Canada was experienced by activists and artists as a civic-minded mosaic of multiple identities whose expression was subsidized by the state but unencumbered by regulation."[334] Many of the decisions made by Canadian art funders like the Canada Council for the Arts (which are informed by their arms-length relationship with the Canadian government), are clearly linked to actions taken by citizens both at the grassroots level and on the greater political stage.[335] For example, as this chapter demonstrates, there was a direct link between the legacy of Canadian feminists and artists and the 1967 Royal Commission on the Status of Women, which set up the conditions for increased funding for women's organizations. This chapter focuses on the histories and legacies of leading artist-run centres in Ontario such as the Women's Art Resource Centre (WARC) in Toronto, Womanspirit Art Resource Centre in London, and the Feminist Art Gallery (FAG) in Toronto, with references to a handful of other spaces active between 1975 and 2005. These spaces all came into existence in the wake of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women.

The Canada Council for the Arts is not a philanthropic foundation; it is an arm's-length Crown corporation that receives funds from the Canadian government.[336] The government exerts political influence over artists through its control of funding processes. In granting funds to some projects and organizations and not others, it effectively decides what constitutes art and curbs the ability of individual artist-run centres to freely program work that might be radical, anti-institutional, or critical. Of course, the Canada Council for the Arts, like provincial arts councils, has a peer review process. Everyone active in the Canadian art landscape is eligible to be selected for "jury duty" and

[334] Marusya Bociurkiw, "Big Affect: The Ephemeral Archive of Second-Wave Feminist Video Collectives in Canada" *Camera Obscura* 31, no.3 (2016): 9.
[335] A more in-depth analysis of funding and policy can be found in the introduction to this thesis.
[336] "Peer Assessment," Canada Council for the Arts, accessed March 31, 2015, http://canadacouncil.ca/council/grants/how-the-council-makes-its-decisions.

could become directly responsible for dispensing these funds. Yet even though artists' peers are the ones who make the decisions regarding which individuals and bodies receive funding, the councils decide how much funding is available per program, whether to allocate full or partial funding, what types of support are acceptable, and which documents to translate into official languages.

While the current Liberal Justin Trudeau Government has made some small improvements to funding budgets in comparison to the previous Conservative Harper Government, artist-run centres remain underfunded. Unlike museums, which must apply for funding through Heritage Canada, artist-run centres benefit from arts council funding, which is slightly more removed from government involvement. While Harper's 2012 austerity budget spared the Canada Council "from the chopping block, on a per capita basis their funding has declined by 8.3% under Harper's watch, leading the Council to ask many groups receiving funding to plan for reductions between 5 and 10%." Further, Harper's budget cut "10% from the budget of the CBC, the National Film Board and Telefilm Canada; 8.2% from Library and Archives Canada; and 7.4% from the Department of Canadian Heritage."[337] Following the election in 2016, Justin Trudeau injected $40 million of new federal funding into the Canada Council, bringing the "total annual Canada Council funding for the coming year to $220 million—a 20% surge, but $140 million short of the original fall promise of $360 million."[338] The 2020–2021 Canada Council for the Arts budget finally reached the 2016 promise of $360 million.[339]

Regardless, there is often not enough funding for artists' fees, even less for equipment and lease-hold improvements, none for property acquisition, and unreasonable industry standards for salaries. In such an austere climate, why push ahead? Perhaps artist-run centres persist because they

[337] Rob Maguire, "Canada's Federal Election: Who Should Get the Art Vote?" *Canadian Art*, October 15, 2015, https://canadianart.ca/features/who-should-get-the-art-vote/.
[338] Caoimhe Morgan-Feir and Leah Sandals, "Budget 2016: What Artists & Art Orgs Need to Know," *Canadian Art*, March 22, 2016, https://canadianart.ca/news/budget-2016-what-artists-art-orgs-need-to-know/.
[339] Morgan-Feir and Sandals, "Budget 2016."

serve as more than just administrative supports for artists; they are community spaces that attempt to self-determine a (utopian) future. And today, at a time when we see such a proliferation of social movements—dealing with issues of race, gender, and sexuality, as well as anti-austerity—we must remember the histories of artist-run centres as safe spaces for these types of discussions and gatherings; we must remember the work done by previous generations.[340]

Artist-run culture began as a response to the museum system and gallery system's failure to respond to artists' needs—specifically the need and desire to present experimental, non-commercial work. The distinction between artist-run centres and other arts organizations is less relevant today. Artist-run centres also created work for underemployed artists and nurtured community spaces safe for presenting political artworks. Artists worked together to decide on administrative models and programming focuses; *they* determined what to support. Artist-run culture is an artist-directed culture responsible for the following: instituting a minimum fee schedule, pointing out the specific barriers faced by women artists in relation to work and childcare, building experimental exhibition platforms and cross-country networks, fighting for subsidies, and building a myriad of other types of support addressing various needs ranging from affordable housing to healthcare. By developing answers within itself, the artist-run centre community demonstrates its commitment to creating working solutions to social problems. That said, artist-run culture is susceptible to institutionalization, and the micro-utopias that it generates have often proved to be short-lived. The maintenance of some of the

[340] In 2014, *FUSE* Magazine, which for thirty-eight years acted as a venue for timely and politically engaged publishing and programming reflecting the diversity of the contemporary art world, not-so-quietly published its last issue. Prior to closing the magazine, the editors, under the guidance of Gina Badger, published an issue that proudly proclaimed, DO LESS WITH LESS, DO MORE WITH MORE. Refusing to perform is an act of resistance. Known for its wide coverage of the Canadian artist-run culture milieu, *FUSE* had a special interest in publishing with a social justice lens. In the February 2021 panel "Riddim an' Resistance: Lillian Allen, Clive Robertson, respondents Britta Badour and Klive Walker," Felicity Taylor quoted Canadian cultural critic Himani Bannerji: "Fireweed and Fuse have been the most responsive in terms of infusing a race, sexuality, gender analysis through their volumes." In the same panel, Klive Walker described *FUSE* as "one of the few white spaces to engage with reggae culture." However, engaging at the level of content alone doesn't make *FUSE* an anti-racist publication. It remained a white-run publication that on occasion made space for BIPOC, but it was not a BIPOC-focused space.

important strategies developed in the past—such as some feminist and pro-diversity policies—is not guaranteed and can falter over time. The resourcefulness with which artist-run centres have functioned on small budgets has been documented, unjustly celebrated, and mythologized as justification for reducing institutional support. This messaging came first and primarily from funding bodies, but now it's also being adopted by the centres themselves as they internalize the language and politics of the contemporary economic climate.

In her 1997 MA thesis "Towards a Genealogy of Women Artists' Groups in Canada," Maura Broadhurst compares two generations of women-led arts organizing in Canada. Broadhurst's thesis begins with the Women's Art Association of Canada (WAAC)—whose activities corresponded with what is now considered the first wave of feminism in Canada—and moves on to cover second-wave spaces such as Powerhouse Gallery (now La Centrale), Women in Focus (WIF), Womanspirit, and WARC. She notes that her "thesis looks at the histories of women artist spaces in Canada" that are "overlooked by predominant texts addressing Canadian art history."[341] She argues that this ignorance of the past, or historical amnesia, continually forces new generations of feminist and activist artist-run centres and DIY projects to start from scratch. They end up rehashing the same conversations because they have no shared historical memory of earlier work to draw from. New generations can't build on past foundations that have been erased.[342] This problem is exactly what led me to write this dissertation. Outside of Broadhurst's thesis and a handful of small notations in more general texts, nothing significant has been written about feminist art spaces in Canada, outside of Canadian contemporary art magazines like *FUSE*. That is, until settler scholar Heather Davis published *Desire Change*, a history of feminist art in Canada, in 2017, twenty years after Broadhurst wrote her thesis (and Broadhurst is only a bibliographic citation in Davis).

[341] Broadhurst, "Strategic Spaces," III.
[342] Broadhurst, "Strategic Spaces," III.

There has, however, been a significant amount of writing produced about artist-run history and happenings within the very specific context of what I would call community publishing—magazines that cater to an audience already invested in Canadian artist-run culture. This includes writing in the now-defunct *FUSE* (1976–2013), *Parallélogramme* (1976–1995) and then *MIX: The Magazine of Artist Run Culture* (1995–1998), *Parachute* (1975–2007), and *Vanguard* (1972–1984) amongst others, as well as a variety of industry bulletins such as the Canadian Conference of the Arts Bulletin.[343] *FUSE* magazine, a Canadian non-profit arts and culture magazine, was preceded by *Centrefold* magazine. Both were founded by British-Canadian Clive Robertson, with Marcella Bienvenue at *Centrefold* and Lisa Steele and Tom Sherman at *FUSE*. The *FUSE* archive was not accessible to me in its entirety due to the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. As settler scholar Felicity Taylor noted at the February 26, 2021, panel discussion "Riddim an' Resistance: Lillian Allen & Clive Robertson," *FUSE* had not been comprehensively indexed until her current research, and it has not been widely written about.

Further, "there exists almost no secondary record of second-wave feminist media activism in Canada (or, indeed, in the US). These factors represent a significant gap in history."[344] We cannot remember that which has not been recorded; very few publications exist about the feminist contributions to artist-run culture in Canada, and the archival material itself is at risk. As Marusya Bociurkiw of Emma Productions points out in her essay on the legacy of Canadian feminist video collectives, "thirty-five years since the formation of the first women's video collective in Canada, the primary record of this work—the videos themselves—is rapidly disintegrating and, with it, a piece of the intersecting histories of Canadian broadcasting, media art, and the second-wave women's

[343] For more on artist-run publishing in Canada and elsewhere, see Gwen Allen, *Artists' Magazines: An Alternative Space for Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011).
[344] Marusya Bociurkiw, "Big Affect: The Ephemeral Archive of Second-Wave Feminist Video Collectives in Canada," *Camera Obscura* 31, no.3 (2016): 7.

movement."[345] With the knowledge that archival material is rapidly disintegrating, and that individual cultural producers themselves are aging, there is an urgency to record and connect the histories of feminist spaces to the larger discussion of Canadian art history. I take up where Broadhurst leaves off and explore spaces informed by third-wave, intersectional feminism, while employing a contemporary, intersectional lens to review the history of second-wave-spaces.

I also want to draw attention to the overlap between those working in the art world and in social justice circles. For example, the women at the Women's Building in Toronto attended rallies and advocated for a pro-choice abortion vote. Other examples include the anti-nuke messages that pop up in Womanspirit's publications, and what Bociurkiw called "the expansiveness of our coalition work" in relationship to the Eaton labour strike documented in her 1984 film *No Small Change,* or more recently, the *Le 22 on ferme* campaign created by artists and adopted by artist-run centres and eventually supported by the Regroupement des centres d'artistes autogérés du Québec (RCAAQ) in Québec during the 2012 student strikes.[346] Bociurkiw also describes how during the 1980s "solidarity work had begun to preoccupy the women's movement, the Left, and the arts community. Artists and feminists had become seriously involved in the South African antiapartheid movement, and the Left was aligned with movements for liberation in Latin America."[347] While Bociurkiw was writing about the Global South, closer to home during the same period, women-identified artists in Canada were supporting Indigenous women and documenting the occupation of Canada's Department of Indian Affairs by Indigenous women in 1981, as presented in the tape *100 Aboriginal Women*

[345] Bociurkiw, "Big Affect," 6-7.
[346] Bociurkiw, "Big Affect," 5; See "LE 22, ON FERME! Le RCAAQ Appuie Les Étudiants En Grève," Réseau Art Actuel, August 9, 2018, https://reseauartactuel.org/le-22-on-ferme-le-rcaaq-appuie-les-etudiants-en-greve/?lang=en; and "Grève Étudiante Québécoise De 2012," Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, accessed February 10, 2021, https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gr%C3%A8ve_%C3%A9tudiante_qu%C3%A9b%C3%A9coise_de_2012.
[347] Bociurkiw, "Big Affect," 20.

(Amelia Productions, Canada, 1981).[348] Today, we see a similar overlap of social justice concerns within the artist-run centre community across Canada. While it generally takes the form of self-funded, informal activities, artist-activist response is very much part of the vitality of the arts movement today.

The Royal Commission on the Status of Women was formed in 1967 under the leadership of Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson, to provide an overview of the state of gender equality across Canada. The inquiry, meant to cover all women, underrepresented non-white women in Canada, especially Indigenous women. Its first report, chaired by Florence Bird and titled the Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, was released in 1971 (and first , tabled in Parliament on December 7, 1970) under the tenure of Pierre Elliott Trudeau. According to the Canadian government's website, the Commission was given the mandate to "inquire into and report upon the status of women in Canada, and to recommend what steps might be taken by the federal government to ensure for women equal opportunities with men in all aspects of Canadian society."[349] The ground-breaking report included recommendations on updating the legislative system around family law and the Indian Act, and addressed such critical issues for women as poverty and the need for a federal representative for women. The first Minister responsible for the Status of Women was appointed in 1971. Initially established within the Privy Council Office, Status of Women Canada became a departmental agency of the federal government in 1976. The efforts of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women created an effect beyond just gender parity. Through the work of some of the Privy Council members in 1982, as part of the larger Constitution Act, the Canadian government approved the Canadian

[348] Bociurkiw, "Big Affect," 6.
[349] Government of Canada, "Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada," Women Gender Equality Canada, https://women-gender-equality.canada.ca/ accessed January 6, 2022

Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which outlawed discrimination based on a person's sex (as well as on a number of other grounds).

The creation of a platform (and funds) at the level of the federal government for discussions around so-called women's issues meant that various funding agencies now had a new imperative to support the work of organizations devoted to women. New spaces sprouted up or institutionalized in the wake of this new support. It's difficult to measure exactly what financial impact the Royal Commission on the Status of Women had on women's organizations; however, despite new funds and clear statements of support from government agencies and arms-length organizations to back these spaces, I show in this chapter that, as financial statements reveal, the actual financial implications were limited. For women-focused artist-run spaces, which for the most part operated as galleries in addition to supporting other advocacy projects, funding was meagre and, at times, non-existent.

4.2 The Distinction Between Women's Space and Feminist Space: The Pauline McKibben Cultural Centre and The Women's Cultural Building

In 1975, a group of artists led by founder and one-time director Helen Notzl (Czech-Canadian) began the initial planning for a women-focused cultural centre in Toronto.[350] When the Pauline McKibben Cultural Centre (PMCC) opened in 1979, it boasted a gallery, a theatre, and a variety of meeting spaces. Its original mandate was to act as a "showcase for women in the arts, making their skills and resources accessible to the community, and to provide a meeting

[350] According to the Pauline McKibben Cultural Centre's June 30, 1979 financial statements, the centre incorporated on April 25, 1979.

place for the exchange of information and experience."[351] Prominent artists who were involved or exhibited at the centre include Lisa Steele (settler), Joyce Weiland (settler), Kay Armatage (settler), and Vera Frenkel (Czech-Canadian). The PMCC was named for the first woman to hold the post of Lieutenant Governor of Ontario (from 1974–1980), and the centre existed for nearly three years before closing for financial reasons in 1982. The city of Toronto rented out the old Lombard Street morgue to the PMCC for a symbolic $1 annually, but even low rents were not enough to keep the space going. In April 1982, the PMCC tried to rebrand itself as a space for businesswomen to meet. This too collapsed, signalling larger rifts between members of the centre, namely about whether the space was a feminist one or a women's one.

Even before the PMCC drew its last breath, new plans were hatching amongst Toronto's feminists. On December 9, 1981, a few short weeks after the Pauline McKibben Cultural Centre took a temporary hiatus to regroup and rebrand (and then permanently close), a group of women gathered to brainstorm ideas for what they described as a women's cultural centre. In their own words, "there is a need for a building in Toronto to be a centre for feminist cultural activity."[352] Clearly, the founders of what would become the Women's Cultural Building (WCB) did not regard the PMCC as enough of a truly feminist space, even if it was a space that supported women; and indeed, in the WCB's first meeting minutes, they question whether they should even consider the PMCC a space for feminists in future discussions. Like the PMCC, the WCB wanted to provide space for "cultural events to be presented to the public," and to offer "rehearsal, studio or workshop spaces for women artists and cultural workers," and offices for "feminist cultural organizations."[353] A project like this was vitally needed in Toronto, for, as

[351] Manuscript, "Mandate," 1975, Temp 50 Project files 2Women's Cultural Building (WARC) Archive, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, ON.
[352] Manuscript, "Mandate."
[353] Manuscript, "Mandate."

WCB co-founder and performance artist Johanna Householder (American-Canadian settler) notes in *Now Magazine*, "life for women artists is not the same as for men artists. The financial situation, the opportunities, outlets for your work, critical response all favour males. Art is a very tricky thing—it's where our culture exposes itself in terms of whose work is valued."[354]

The WCB initially received a grant (amount unspecified) from the Canada Council's Explorations Program and $2000 from the Ontario Arts Council in 1983 for the *Women Building Culture* festival. In a 1982 statement of purpose, most likely created for this funding application, the WCB lays out its desire to operate using a collective model, and argues for the importance of highlighting the "relationships between community and artist and between cultural producers of different communities."[355] Members hoped that the WCB would develop a "critical framework that functions by placing the work in a social, political and aesthetic context."[356] Membership was only open to women (with no mention of trans-identified or non-binary members), and specifically to those who shared the goals of the WCB.[357] These goals sought to utilize art as a tool for feminist social change. Cynthia Grant, active in women's theatre production in Toronto and co-founder of Nightwood Theatre, Canada's oldest professional women's theatre, said that her understanding of the WCB was that "it is part of a movement for the re-organizing of society and the arts are part of that. Within that it is a group to give support to women in the arts, but one always has to be aware of the higher goal."[358]

While the physical building (with its dreamed-of common room, gallery, conference space, performance venue, daycare, equipment depot, and community laundry) never manifested,

[354] Ellie Kirzner, "Feminist Art Hits the Streets," *Now Magazine*, March 3-9, 1983, 7.
[355] Kirzner, "Feminist Art Hits the Streets," 7.
[356] Manuscript, "Mandate."
[357] Manuscript, "Mandate."
[358] J. Kelly Nestruck "For Women's Theatre such as Toronto's Nightwood, 'The Game has Changed,'" *The Globe and Mail*, December 6, 2017, https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/theatre-and-performance/for-womens-theatre-such-as-torontos-nightwood-the-game-haschanged/article37200842/; Kirzner, "Feminist Art Hits the Streets," 7.

the WCB existed as an organization for several years, hosting events in other venues before the project collapsed in 1984, the same year it received status as a registered charity. During this time, WCB members included Avis Lang Rosenberg, Carole Condé, Renée Baart, Christina Currin, Susan Feldman, Rina Fraticelli, Louise Garfield, Janice Hladki, Johanna Householder, Sandra Janz, Kerri Kwinter, Nancy Nicol, Christina Ritchie, Tanya Rosenberg, Tanya Mars, and Lisa Steele. The members shifted the use of the word "building" from noun to verb, and the project took on a significant women's advocacy component. As Sandy Nairne explains, "the term 'space' replaced the word gallery…and was used precisely because it was supposed to avoid the connotations of an institutional or commercial environment," with a "hierarchical, formal arrangement."[359]

The way artist-run centres took on the issue of pornography—a hot-button topic at the time—exemplifies how different ideas coexisted in a single organization, as well as exemplifies the kind of advocacy work they did.[360] While the WCB's archives contain documentation from the anti-pornography movement in Canada, prominent members like Mars and Steele were decidedly anti-censorship and pro-free speech and spoke out publicly at length on the issue.[361] They argued that since pornographic representation often challenged stereotypes about appropriate behaviours for women or represented queer lust, it should not be censored. Ephemera in the collection also places the WCB members as pro-choice and opposed to US intervention in Guatemala. The fusion of art and politics was at the core of the WCB's activity. According to

[359] Sandy Nairne, "The Institutionalization of Dissent," in *Thinking About Exhibitions*, eds., Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne (London & New York: Routledge, 1996), 396.
[360] For a better understanding of the feminist pornography debate in Canada at the time, see Alison Mary Virginia Hearne, "The Feminist Debate About Pornography in Canada" (Master's thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1987); and Varda Burstyn, ed., *Women Against Censorship* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1985).
[361] The WCB's archive includes material in support of Lisa Steele and the anti-censorship/pro-sex stance as well as correspondence with the San Francisco based organization Women Against Violence in Pornography and Media (WAVPM) and a letter announcing the delivery of anti-pornography posters created to accompany the exhibition "Appropriation/Expropriation" at Mount Saint Vincent University Art Gallery in Halifax in 1983.

Garfield, a dancer, choreographer and WCB member, quoted in a 1983 *NOW* article, "the choice was whether to do what I do or lend my support to some particular issue in the women's movement—like a crisis centre or abortion. I could decide to perform over here and do political things over there: my real concern was to fuse those things together. The separation of politics from art is what I'm talking about, and I've resisted this. They should not be separated."[362]

In 1982, following the Art Gallery of Ontario's (AGO) exhibition of Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party,* the WCB hosted a panel titled "After the Party's Over" to look at issues of women in the arts.[363] As Chicago's work toured Canada, feminist-aligned spaces engaged with programming to celebrate, uplift, and at times challenge Chicago's work and the narrative of its creation.[364] The fact that the WCB participated in these events encodes it into the network of Canadian feminist activity of the period.[365]

In the spring of 1983, the WCB hosted a two-month long (March–April 1983) women's cultural festival titled *Women Building Culture,* which featured a variety of events, and included a coffee and information truck as part of the International Women's Day march, as well as a temporary gallery with headquarters located at 563 Queen Street West, Toronto. The festival also ran a Five-Minute Feminist Cabaret and a film and video festival. The festival hosted theatre performances with prominent local theatre groups, including Nightwood Theatre, Theatre Passe-Muraille, and the Factory Theatre Lab, and the festival hosted a reading of Louky Bersianik's

[362] Kirzner, "Feminist Art Hits the Streets," 7.
[363] Indeed, a lot of feminist organizing was done in response to Chicago's show, which toured Canada in 1982. For more information, see Clive Robertson, "Collective Consciousness as Network, Social Movement as Agent," in *Policy Matters: Administrations of Arts and Culture* (Toronto: YYZ Books, 2006), 34-35.
[364] For a more detailed history of the critical reception of Chicago's work in Canada, especially within the feminist artist-run centre movement, see Clive Robertson's dissertation,
"Movement + Apparatus: A Cultural Policy Study of Artist Run Culture in Canada (1976–1994)," (PhD Diss., Concordia University, 2004), 101-105.
[365] Judy Gerstel, "Feminist Artist on 'The Dinner Party,'" *The Toronto Star*, September 7, 2007, https://www.thestar.com/life/2007/09/07/feminist_artist_on_the_dinner_party.html.

1976 feminist classic *L'Euguélionne.*[366] The festival also included a slide-show series with titles such as "Finding Lesbian History" and "From Ex Role Stereotyping to Sadomasochism."[367] While the *Women Building Culture* festival was an important milestone for the feminist arts and culture community in Toronto (and Canada), it was nonetheless fairly fringe at the time. As historian Dorothy Hadfield writes,

> in the fate typical of fringe dramatic festival work—and in 1983 a women's festival was definitely considered "fringe"—this production left virtually no record "of its own" to mark its history. Instead, hints of it reappear in the historiographic records of subsequent versions, giving it a ghosted presence that is less an origin than the trace of a supplement that happens to temporarily precede the supplements written after it.[368]

While even the most fringe artistic events today create digital traces, which ensure a certain historiographical legacy, this was not the case in the 1980s. The *Women Building Culture* festival left no traces beyond the traces in the WCB archive. It did not keep proper records.

Members of the WCB were in contact with other national and international women-specific programmers and spaces, which demonstrates the WCB's position within the larger women's arts community. For example, undated minutes from the WCB archive mention that Michelle Nickel from WIF in Vancouver visited the WCB early on in its planning to discuss women-only spaces. The minutes also show that WCB members visited the Women's Building in LA and brought back documentation.[369] Given that members of the WCB had a relationship with WIF, it makes sense that the WCB entered into contact with Avis Lang Rosenberg, who is credited with curating the first publicly-funded touring exhibition of feminist art in Canada, *Pork*

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[366] *L'Euguélionne: roman triptyque* (Anjou: La Presse, 1976), a novel by Louky Bersianik (the nom-de-plume of Montréal write Lucile Durand) is considered the first piece of feminist Québécoise literature.
[367] Kirzner, "Feminist Art Hits the Streets," 7.
[368] Dorothy A.L. Hadfield, "Reproducing Women's Dramatic History: The Politics of Playing in Toronto" (PhD diss., University of Western Ontario, 1999), 192.
[369] Manuscript, "Minutes," 1982, Temp 66 Women's Cultural Building 5, WARC archive. For more on the Women's Building, see its website at http://thewomansbuilding.org/.

Roasts (1982). Lang Rosenburg was also the curator of the 1982 exhibition *Mirrorings: Women Artists of the Atlantic Provinces* at the Art Gallery of Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU) in Halifax. Then-director of the gallery Mary Sparling, who "created numerous exhibition opportunities for the region's female artists," invited Lang Rosenburg to do the exhibition.[370] Indeed, MSVU exhibition programming was women-focused from its beginnings, as it was a women's college in Halifax run by nuns. Lang Rosenberg curated a number of other important feminist exhibitions, including *Couples, une exposition d'oeuvres d'artistes de Vancouver* (1981), shown at Optica in Montréal. For many years, Lang Rosenberg was a prolific writer, writing about a variety of relevant topics across Canada, and she is known for her published correspondence and friendship with artist Jack Chambers, a founder of CARFAC. She is also an art historian and academic devoted to feminist art and published a study on women in the arts in Canada.[371]

Artist Janna Kumi writes that "when I was studying at [the University of British Columbia] in the 70s, Avis Lang Rosenberg taught a feminist art history course; that was a major turn."[372] Karen Schoonover, a curator and contemporary of Lang Rosenberg describes her advocacy work as follows: "Avis fed us information that we could use as ammunition, that we could use to harass, shame and cajole the powers that be to create change. And it worked."[373] Today, few people know Lang Rosenberg's name, and indeed, she doesn't even have an entry in Davis's *Desire Change*. As Lang Rosenberg herself wrote, this is what is characterized as "the

[370] Kristina Huneault and Janice Anderson, "A Genealogy of Feminist Art in Canada," in *Desire Change: Contemporary Feminist Art in Canada*, ed. Heather Davis (Montréal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press and Winnipeg: Mentoring Artists for Women's Art, 2017), 37.
[371] See Avis Lang Rosenberg, "Women Artists and the Canadian Art World: A Survey," *Atlantis* 5, no. 1 (Fall 1979): 107-126.
[372] "Interview with Lyse Lemieux," Janna Kumi, May 1, 2015, https://www.jannakumi.com/articledetail/3884.
[373] Karen Schoonover, phone interview with the author, August 21, 2018.

gap between aspiration and legitimation."[374] Lang Rosenberg had a significant influence on the historicization of feminist art in Canada, regardless of whether we know her name. *Pork Roasts* was an epic collection of 250 internationally sourced feminist cartoons. As the curator writes in a 1982 article in *Canadian Women's Studies,* what is roasted in these cartoons are the "habits, expectations, demands and beliefs born of presumptions of male dominance, male privilege and male power."[375] *Pork Roasts* debuted at UBC Fine Arts Gallery and, thanks to funding from the Canada Council, toured Canada (Vancouver, Edmonton, Halifax and Montréal) from April 1981 through the following year, and was reprised as an exhibition in Toronto as part of the WCB'S *Women Building Culture* festival.[376]

The WCB ceased operations in 1984 due to a lack of funding and a shrinking pool of members. The staff refused to continue to operate without sufficient funding to fulfill the project as originally intended: as a meeting space for cultural workers with a daycare, a cafe, and a laundromat—things that would have both brought in money and supported the larger project on a philosophical level. The reality is that it could not operate with the costs of those more radical inclusions; though of course, other reasons like availability of members, competing spaces and projects, and timing surely played a role. In 2000, past members hosted a retrospective show of WCB ephemera at WARC, which included photos, posters, and t-shirts made by various artists. In 1997, the people at WCB donated its archives to WARC as a means of sharing its legacy with a wider audience. Little did they know that, less than two decades later, WARC would close for similar reasons.

[374] Avis Lang Rosenberg quoted in Rina Fraticelli, "The Status of Women in the Canadian Theatre," A Report Prepared for the Status of Women Canada. June 1982. 5
[375] Lang Rosenberg, "Pork Roasts," 33.
[376] Beverly J. Rasporich, *Made-in-Canada Humour: Literary, Folk and Popular Culture* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 2015), 227.

4.3 Space Matters: Gallery 940 and Sparkes Gallery

The WCB aspired to be the first feminist gallery in Toronto, and in many ways, it was, as it hosted several exhibitions and projects despite not having a permanent building as its home. The first self-proclaimed feminist gallery in Toronto to have a fixed address and physical space was Gallery 940, located at 940 Queen West. Dedicated to feminist and lesbian art, Gallery 940 was active between 1983 and 1986. It never secured operational funding, which led to the decision to close on March 1, 1986 (the same month as Womanspirit Art Resource Centre in London, Ontario, closed, as I discuss later in this chapter).

Galley 940 promised to be a centre for "cultural, educational and political projects by women."[377] It worked to put on exhibitions, workshops, video screenings, and other cultural events. The gallery was active in the feminist cultural community. It was the host of a launch for *Fireweed: A Feminist Quarterly*, a feminist journal out of Toronto that published from 1979 to 1986, and it was part of the British/Canadian Video Exchange through a partnership with A Space Gallery (an experimental, video-focused artist-run centre, also discussed later in this chapter).[378]

The Royal Commission on the Status of Women especially addressed women in the arts when it recommended that "funding be set aside specifically for women's groups attempting to build a feminist culture in the arts—film, magazine, dance, music, sculpture—and sufficient

[377] Manuscript, "Mandate" [ca. 1982], Temp 74, 7, Gallery 940 Archive in the WARC archives at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, ON.
[378] In the February 2021 panel "Riddim an' Resistance," Felicity Taylor quoted Vijay Agnew as positioning "Fireweed as within the discursive field of second wave feminism in which an emphasis on gender solidarity had the systemic effect of reinforcing racial discrimination." "Riddim an' Resistance: Lillian Allen, Clive Robertson, respondents Britta Badour and Klive Walker," Panel Discussion, Desire Lines: The Series, organized by Felicity Tayler, February 26, 2021, https://agyu.art/project/riddim-an-resistance/; Manuscript, "British/Canadian Video Exchange." 1984, Gallery 940 Archive in the WARC archives at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, ON.

funding be provided for distribution of their works."[379] This recommendation, along with Pierre Elliott Trudeau's Local Initiatives Program (LIP), created new opportunities for film and video production and distribution. Gallery 940 was particularly active in the video art circuit. Indeed, its fonds description at the University of Ottawa archives notes that one of Gallery 940's most important events was *Fem Fest*, a feminist video festival. Further, while the connections between the gallery and the Women's Media Alliance, with whom it shared a physical office, are fuzzy, it is clear that there was considerable overlap between members. In a proposal to A Space for community programming, the Women's Media Alliance (WMA), described itself as a "feminist collective of women artists working principally in film and video production."[380] This relationship between WMA and A Space began when Kay Armatage, Linda Beath, Deanne Taylor, Marien Lewis, and Lisa Steele organized the 1973 LIP-funded *Women in Film* festival at A Space.[381] In the same letter to A Space, the people at WMA mention they formed in 1981 as a way of sending Toronto delegates to the *Feminist Film and Video Festival* in Amsterdam (which members of Women in Focus also attended). Members included Phyllis Waugh and Nancy Nicol, who today continue to work together as part of the Envisioning Global LGBT Human Rights Research Team, an "an international community-academic partnership."[382]

Video production and dissemination was rich ground for feminist activity. In the student-led, University of Toronto research blog *Local Film Cultures: Toronto*, Sahar Fanian describes the way cultural scenes came together around media:

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[379] The National Committee on the Status of Women's report on women in arts and culture

[380] Manuscript, "Women's Media Alliance programming proposal," 1984, Gallery 940 Archive in the WARC archives at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, ON.

[381] Sahar Fanian, "Building Toronto's Feminist Film Scene: A Collaborative Effort," Local Film Cultures. Accessed November 21, 2021, https://localfilmculturestoronto.wordpress.com/building-torontos-feminist-film-scene-a-collaborative-effort/.

[382] OCASI, " Envisioning Global LGBT Human Rights," Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, accessed January 8, 2022, https://ocasi.org/envisioning-global-lgbt-rights#:~:text=Envisioning%20Global%20LGBT%20Human%20Rights%20is%20an%20international%20community%2Dacademic,of%20the%20Canadian%20research%20team.

> I discovered that a rich, local feminist culture emerged in the 70s and 80s.…What I found particularly profound was the amount of overlap between the feminist film scene and the feminist art, video, theatre, and literature scenes—this era was driven, to a great extent, by collaborative endeavours.[383]

WMA's primary goals were to "provide exposure for feminist productions and to serve as an educational resource for women's organizations interested in utilizing film and video media."[384] I speculate that, like WIF (and later WARC), WMA made note of the lack of sustainable funding available for research, documentation, and production spaces, and took a gamble on funding from the Canada Council, which was actively funding artist-run galleries. I believe that this is the origin of Gallery 940 as an artist-run centre. Sadly, this gamble did not pay off, as the gallery was unable to access the budgets its peer organizations were receiving as centres that were not specifically feminist.

Since Gallery 940 wasn't funded, it often charged artists a fee of $100 for a two-week exhibition. It's important to note that Gallery 940 was "especially interested in works by lesbians, women of colour, and working-class women," and that it aimed to "bring their perspectives into focus through their art."[385] The irony that those least likely to be visible in the art world would have to pay to participate was not lost on Gallery 940 members and supporters, and their anxiety around the pay-to-play model is reflected in their decision to close. In a letter to members, Sarah Denison, on behalf of the 940 Collective, wrote at the time,

> The reason for our decisions is that we have been unable to establish a secure base of funding for the gallery. We have survived for three years on a combination of short-term employment programs, much volunteer work by dedicated and hardworking people, numerous individual donations, rental fees from artists, fundraising events, and small grants from Explorations, the Canada Council, the Ontario Arts Council and The Toronto Arts Council.[386]

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[383] Fanian, "Building Toronto's Feminist Film Scene."
[384] Manuscript, "Women's Media Alliance programming proposal."
[385] Manuscript, "Mandate."
[386] Manuscript, "Letter to members" [ca. 1984], Gallery 940 Archive in the WARC archives at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, ON

Without real funding, members did not want to keep the gallery going. The nail in the coffin was a rejection from the Canada Council for core funding. The reason the Canada Council gave for its rejection was that "while the assessors were sympathetic to the amount of energy and effort that Gallery 940 is putting into planning, they felt that the programming was not up to the standard of other submissions they were reviewing at the same time."[387]

In 1986, the gallery published an open letter to Edythe Goodridge, then head of the Visual Arts Section, regarding its Canada Council rejection. Signed by Phyllis Waugh, Sarah Denison, and Michelle Rosano, the letter calls out the Canada Council for what Gallery 940 members perceived to be systemic bias. They write,

> The reason for rejecting our application was that the quality of Gallery 940's programming was not up to the standard of the other applicants. It is the opinion of the Gallery 940 collective that this criticism of our standards is in fact a disguised criticism of our process of selecting work and a rejection of the validity of the mandate of the gallery. The mandate had been to provide a structure within which women could exhibit, discuss, and evaluate our own cultural work. Our underlying assumption is that works of art reflect the particular social context within which they are produced. Therefore, the standards by which artistic quality is judged must come from within that context. The myth that art can be evaluated by universal, objective criteria serves to obscure the fact that what are called objective standards are only the standards of the dominant cultural grouping, whose values are perpetuated through educational and cultural institutions. Sexism within these institutions means that work which addresses women's concerns is often ignored and rejected. For this reason, women need cultural organizations of their own, such as Gallery 940.…In rejecting our application, as well as other applications from similarly-oriented grassroots organizations, the Canada Council has demonstrated its support for a system of privilege, which denies representation to cultural works of high quality on the grounds that they do not speak the language of the elite, or, even worse, that they contain a challenge to that privilege.[388]

[387] Manuscript, "Letter from Canada Council."
[388] Manuscript, "Letter to members" [ca. 1984], Temp 74, 7, Gallery 940 Archive in the WARC archives at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, ON.

The dossier on the gallery's closure included outraged letters from celebrated filmmaker John Greyson and his colleague Don Bouzek on behalf of Ground Zero productions, a Canadian theatre company still operating at the time of writing. Ground Zero urged "the Canada Council to give serious examination to funding decisions which deny representation to cultural works which speak the language of those who have not had a voice in Canadian Society and Culture."[389] Greyson's message to the Council was equally critical:

> 940 was unique in Toronto in that it was the only artists' space committed to the ongoing presentation of women's art. I needn't repeat the oft-cited statistics about the discriminatory practices of both mainstream and alternative art institutions in the country. 940, like Womanspirit, Women in Focus, and Powerhouse in other cities, were/are vital to our culture. Not just because they provide a context for women's art, but because they challenge dominant definitions of what cultural production is about. The Canada Council has a lot of catching up to do—culturally disenfranchised groups (including women, native artists, lesbians and gays, artists of colour) have been actively redefining and challenging dominant cultural status quo which has marginalized them and their voices. It's too late to save 940—but the gap will have to be filled. As long as sexism (and racism and homophobia) continue to thrive in Toronto, artists will continue to organize against these.[390]

In response to these letters, Goodridge countered by pointing out that the Canada Council indeed supported other women-specific art spaces (such as Powerhouse, Women in Focus and Vidéo Femmes) and that women were also free to apply to programs outside of the one meant to provide assistance to artist-run centres. Further, she went on to remind Bouzek that it was peer assessors who made the decision and not the Canada Council itself. The fact that the decision was made by the gallery's peers as opposed to the Council itself was, for Goodridge, an indication that the decision was impartial; rather, this fact demonstratives some of the then-current shortcomings and drawbacks of the council's peer assessment program. There was no

[389] Manuscript, "Letter to Council from Don Bouzek" [ca. 1984], Temp 74, 7 Gallery 940 Archive in the WARC archives at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, ON.
[390] Manuscript, "Letter to Council from Don Bouzek."

diversity mandate at the time, as the Council only began to investigate racial diversity in 1988. And gender inclusion was still limited.[391]

As I mention earlier in this chapter, there was an important relationship between A Space, Gallery 940, and the broader feminist video scene; it is critical to note, however, that A Space has never called itself a feminist space, run using specifically feminist administrative practices. A Space was founded in 1971 and its mandate has always been to exhibit "multi-disciplinary contemporary art that engages social critique." It remains "committed to fostering discourse around politically engaged work, issue-based projects, and technically innovative art practices."[392] A Space mentions on its website that it has been a leader

> in the development of policies such as the payment of standard artist fees (1982), anti-censorship (1984), anti-racism (1985) and access (1993). Since 1982, the gallery has maintained inclusive programming focused on work that is politically engaged, oriented around non-dominant communities, and supportive of innovative curatorial and technical practices.[393]

While Marien Lewis came on as an important member post-founding, A Space began with an all-male board (Robert Bowers, Ian Carr-Harris, Stephen Cruise, Bill Graham, John McEwan, and Chris Youngs) and developed out of Bowers's previous commercial gallery, Nightingale.[394] Diana Nemiroff, in her 1985 MA thesis "A History of Artist-Run Centres in Canada with Particular Reference to Véhicule, A Space and the Western Front," states that A Space flourished

[391] Andrea Monike Fatona, "'Where Outreach Meets Outrage': Racial Equity at The Canada Council for the Arts (1989–1999)" (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2011), 2-3; While it would be easy to criticize Goodridge for her lack of empathy towards feminist issues, I suspect that the opinions she expressed didn't necessarily represent her own, since she was speaking on behalf of the Council. Her later comments at a 1994 panel at WARC support my suspicion, which I will discuss later in this chapter.
[392] "About A Space," A Space Gallery, accessed August 14, 2018, http://www.aspacegallery.org/?m=page&tag=about.
[393] "About A Space."
[394] "TRAFFIC: Conceptual Art in Canada 1965-1980: A Space," CCCA Canadian Art Database, accessed August 16, 2018, http://ccca.concordia.ca/traffic/profiles/a-space_profile.html.

"despite competition from newer artist-run spaces."[395] While galleries like Gallery 940 benefited from partnerships with A Space, their arrangement was mutually beneficial: A Space gallery could present cutting-edge feminist programming without having to apply to the Council as a feminist-led space and Gallery 940 benefited from financial and community support of a more established, funded centre. While Nemiroff mentions women-only spaces in her thesis she does not use them as case studies. A Space is still active today, whereas Gallery 940 and its contemporaries are all closed.

When Gallery 940 closed in 1986, Sarah Denison wrote to members that "I would like to recommend Sparkes Gallery, 693 A Queen St. W, Toronto…as a possible alternative. Sparkes is a women's gallery with emphasis placed on gay concerns and issues of explicit sexual representation."[396] Little is known about the Sparkes Gallery. The gallery sometimes appears as a line on artists' CVs. It is not included in *Desire Change* but it does appear in a footnote in Clive Robertson's *Policy Matters.*[397] It operated in Toronto in the mid-1980s and seems to have focused on lesbian and gay content. With an important interest in photography, it was a generational peer of Gallery TPW, which did not have a feminist mandate and is still in existence today. Sparkes Gallery, though feminist and female-focused, was not closed to contributions by men, and contributors paid to exhibit. Founded by Ruthann Tucker, Anna Maria Smith, and Pam Lind, Sparkes defined itself as "a non-profit, artist-run gallery which was established primarily for the exhibition of fine art by women." It doesn't appear to have ever received funding.[398]

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[395] Diana Nemiroff, *A History of Artist-Run Centres in Canada with Particular Reference to Véhicule, A Space and the Western Front* (Master's thesis, Concordia University, 1985), 20.
[396] Manuscript, "Sparkes info sheet" [ca. 1984], Temp 74, 7, Sparkes Archive in the WARC archives at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, ON.
[397] These inclusions and omissions demonstrate the value and impact of naming, which is why this dissertation includes the names of all known participants.
[398] Despite my best efforts, I was unable to interview anyone involved at Sparkes.

In 1985, past and former members of Gallery 940, the Women's Art Resource Centre, Women's Media Alliance, Women's Cultural Building, Sparkes Gallery, and Emma Productions came together for a screening series titled *Six Days of Resistance Against the Censor Board* (April 21–27, 1985).[399] One of the films screened was by filmmaker and founder of Emma Productions Marusya Bociurkiw, who had studied at what was then the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD) and screened films as part of Gallery 940's *Fem Fest*.[400] Members of the WCB such as Tanya Mars and Joana Householder were also involved with WARC and/or WMA and/or Gallery 940. Mars went on to become part of Powerhouse in Montréal.[401]

4.4 The Legacy of the Women's Art Resource Centre

The Women's Art Resource Centre (WARC) was founded in 1984, two years before Gallery 940 closed, and it ceased operations permanently in 2014. WARC's most well-known member was arguably Linda Abrahams, who acted as director of the institution from 1989 until its sudden closure. According to its founding documents and according to Abrahams, WARC was started by former NSCAD students (including Jude Johnson and Jane Northy), as well as by Toronto artists like Carla Murray—no doubt influenced by the strong feminist presence at the school and in the Halifax art milieu—who all found themselves relocated to Toronto.[402] In

[399] Emma Productions was founded in 1983 in Toronto by Ruth Bishop and Marusya Bociurkiw. Their films continue to be distributed by VTape in Toronto, though the organization folded in 1988. Bociurkiw, "Big Affect."
[400] The lines of friendship and collaboration between feminist arts organizations in Toronto (and more generally, in Canada) were intentional These models of support and subsistence kept feminist art afloat when funders refused to support it and when major media outlets, critics, and historians ignored it.
[401] Taryn Sirove's 2019 book *Ruling Out Art: Media Art Meets Law in Ontario's Censor Wars* gives an excellent account of *Six Days of Resistance*. The ArQuives in Toronto also hosts a significant collection of material in their archives.
[402] Linda Abrahams, interview with the author, July 17, 2018; In the 1970's, NSCAD began developing the Women's Files, a feminist artist-run centre that opened in Halifax. As well, Mary Sparling spearheaded feminist art

Abrahams's words, "some people say that WARC was created by A Space. I don't think that's quite accurate enough. It's possible that they needed A Space, you know to keep getting together and to chat in about stuff, but basically it was NSCAD that put the politics into place for the expectation of something like WARC."[403]

WARC was founded by artists frustrated by the absence of representation of women in art historical texts. Rather than rewrite history, they began to collect files on living female artists, building a curatorial research library. These files are now archived at the AGO. Through this work, WARC aimed to "facilitate the documentation and representation of women within contemporary culture and supported curatorial and artistic experimentation from diverse ideological, cultural and theoretical perspectives."[404] At the time, WARC's curatorial research library was an important "repository of visual and textual documentation of contemporary Canadian women artists working in all genres and representative of diverse ideological, cultural and theoretical perspectives."[405] The library collected files from over 3000 living artists, including email files and hard copy materials such as CVs, documentation of past and new work, artist statements, slides, CDs, DVDs, and dissemination materials like exhibition invitations, catalogues, and newspaper and magazine articles. The database also contained files from OCAD University's former Women's Artist/Slide Library and archives donated by other feminist arts organizations such as the Women's Cultural Building and Gallery 940. It also housed part of the Joyce Wieland archive, including files from the artist's own Alma Gallery, as Linda Abrahams

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activity at Mount St. Vincent, where a slide registry of women artists was also kept. See also: https://nscad.cairnrepo.org/islandora/object/nscad%3Afeminist

[403] Interview with the author.

[404] "Women's Art Resource Centre (WARC)," Artists, VTape, accessed August 8, 2018, http://www.vtape.org/artist?ai=440.

[405] WARC, WARC Website Homepage, access date January 6, 2022, www.warc.net. Archived at https://web.archive.org/web/20210309111936/http://www.warc.net/

was a close friend and executor of Weiland's estate.[406] In many ways, WARC's operations and database were similar to Artexte's today, though, since it was based in Toronto, WARC operated unilingually. Unlike Artexte, WARC's database focused solely on female-identified artists.

In addition to a database and slide library, WARC published *Matriart,* a magazine that ran from Spring 1990 to Winter 1999, when it ceased publication due to budget constraints.[407] *Matriart* was a Canadian magazine of contemporary visual arts featuring work by and about women artists. It was founded to "expand critical discourse and enhance the profile of women's art within the broader public and educational sector."[408] *Matriart* was one tool WARC used to disseminate information nationally and internationally. However, artists included in *Matriart* were not automatically included in WARC's database, perhaps because of scarce funds to facilitate its maintenance.[409]

As part of its outreach and educational mandate, WARC organized regular conferences, workshops, and other professional development opportunities for members. Some of its most publicly recognizable conferences include the *Feminism and Art Conference,* 1987; *Empowerment and Marginalization,* 1990; *The Status of Canadian Women in the Art*s, 1994 (more on this later); *Crossing Borders, Mapping Boundaries,* presented in collaboration with Women's Caucus for Art (USA), 1997; *20/20 Vision: Seeing Our Way Through Change*, 2004; and *Mapping Cultural Time Zones,* presented in collaboration with the Goethe Institut, 2005.

It is my opinion that WARC's 1994 landmark statistical survey "Who Counts and Who's Counting" is, alongside its archive/database, one of the centre's most important contributions to

[406] The WARC archive, including the subsections of WCB, Weiland etc., lives at the AGO. Part of the Weiland archive is also at York University.
[407] For example, WARC lost all Canada Council funding without warning in 1997, leading to a total restructuring. See, Untitled Manuscript, "Letter to Margaret Dryden, Canada Council for the Arts" [ca. April 29, 1997], WARC archives at the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, ON.
[408] "Women's Art Resource Centre (WARC)," Artists, VTape, accessed August 8, 2018, http://www.vtape.org/artist?ai=440.
[409] Penelope Stewart, interview with the author, July 19, 2018.

feminist art history in Canada. Authored by Abrahams and circulated in a special issue of *Matriart* titled The Status of Canadian Women in the Arts, the survey looks at gender representation at the National Gallery of Canada and other public art galleries across Canada. The work undertaken in this study builds on Avis Lang Rosenberg's 1979 study "Women Artists and the Canadian Art World: A Survey."[410] Lang Rosenberg's research highlighted the bleak opportunities for women in the arts in Canada, and was concerned with "the numbers of one-woman shows during the 1970s; women artists in permanent collections in 1960, 1970, 1976; women artists handled by commercial galleries in 1970, 1973, 1976, 1977; women-only group shows; women artists in selected group shows 1975–1977."[411] Lang Rosenberg noted that most Canadian art spaces had dismal representation, though a number of galleries put on a women's group show during International Women's Year, funds and pressure both being more available than usual. In some cases, this decision might be seen, particularly with several years' distance from those events, as greater evidence of "tokenism than of commitment."[412] Lang Rosenberg found that most spaces presented a maximum of thirty percent content by women, with the average being twenty percent.[413]

WARC's 1994 study did not find significant improvement, exposing "inequalities which were shocking and contrary to public perceptions of the current Status of Canadian women in the Arts."[414] Abrahams' study directly references the Federal Museums Act of 1990, which "directs the National Gallery to develop its collection of works of art, both historic and contemporary, with special reference to Canada."[415] The act directed the National Gallery (NGC) to represent

[410] Lang Rosenberg, "Women Artists," 107-126.
[411] Lang Rosenberg, "Women Artists," 108.
[412] Lang Rosenberg, "Women Artists," 113.
[413] Lang Rosenberg, "Women Artists," 126.
[414] Linda Abrahams, "Who Counts and Who's Counting," *Matriart* 5, no. 1 (1994): 6.
[415] Abrahams, "Who Counts," 9.

the Canadian public, and to push beyond the issue of gender to find out why women, POC, and Indigenous artists were not only poorly represented but also underpaid. Abrahams notes that, in the National Gallery's Corporate Plan summary (1990–1998, 1993–94), the NGC did not "indicate any acknowledgement of past and/or present gender or cultural inequities within either its exhibition agenda or its purchasing agenda."[416] Moreover, "it is clear from our survey results, that gender equity has not been achieved…and cultural equity has not begun to be addressed."[417]

Sadly, multiple studies conducted between 2007 and 2019 demonstrate how little progress has been made since Lang Rosenberg and Abrahams' surveys were published.[418] Further, as Cooley, Luo, and Morgan-Feir write in 2015:

> More than one institution failed to present a solo exhibition by a living non-white artist since 2013: The Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, the Rooms and the National Gallery of Canada. As we were sorting through exhibition histories to collate these statistics, it became apparent that Indigenous artists and artists of colour are much more frequently included in group exhibitions, which are, in turn, often focused on the contemporary art production of these demographic groups, an approach that could risk siloing these artists. When placing artists into these categories, it would be remiss not to mention the entirely traditional model we are employing. We have applied a metric that assumes a cisgender binary—this is limiting, but also reflective of the limited representation in our galleries: no trans*-identified artists appear in our survey because no trans*-identified artists had solo exhibitions in any of these Canadian institutions since 2013.[419]

In 2019, Anne Dymond published *Diversity Counts: Gender, Race and Representation in Canadian Art Galleries*, which studies equity in major museums in Canada, almost exclusively in terms of gender. As Dymond notes: "The numbers make clear that at many institutions, we are

[416] Abrahams, "Who Counts," 9.
[417] Abrahams, "Who Counts," 9.
[418] See: Michael Maranda, *Waging Culture: A Report on the Socio-Economic Status of Canadian Visual Artists* (Toronto: Art Gallery of York University, 2009, 2012); Hill Strategies, "A Statistical Profile of Artists and Cultural Workers in Canada: Summary," Department of Canadian Heritage, the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council, 2011, http://hillstrategies.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/artists_cw_canada2011_execsumm_0.pdf; Joyce Zemans and Amy Wallace, "Where are the Women: Updating the Account!" *RACAR* 38, no. 1 (2013): 1-29; Alison Cooley, Amy Luo and Caoimhe Morgan-Feir, "Canada's Galleries Fall Short: The Not So Great White North," *Canadian Art,* April 21, 2015, https://canadianart.ca/features/canadas-galleries-fall-short-the-not-so-great-white-north/.
[419] Cooley, Luo, Morgan-Feir, "Canada's Galleries Fall Short."

not even close to equity; that at some institutions, we are getting further from gender equity than in the past; and that too often our most prestigious institutions tell a story that is far too white and too male."[420] While it's true that "collecting institutions and larger institutions tend to have worse records on diversity than artist-run centres," only thirty-two of the ninety-seven artist-run centres and smaller institutions (including university galleries) Dymond studied had an exhibition record of showing women fifty percent of the time or higher (and nine of the galleries polled fell below the thirty percent mark).[421]

Ten years after its 1994 study was published, WARC released a documentary that included an update of the survey, though I have yet to find a copy. I'm certain the revised results would mirror what more recent researchers have found. As Christine Conley notes, "I am recalling here the issue of tokenism that was raised at the WARC Feminism and Art Conference here in 1987 by some Black women artists such as Buseje Bailey. And it feels like, here we are in 2007, still facing this same kind of blind spot."[422] Bailey is a Canadian artist and curator known for, among other things, initiating with Grace Channer the first exhibition of Black Canadian women in Canada. It toured museums, galleries, and artist-run centres across the country.[423] It is expected to tour again in 2022, with support from Andrea Fatona and with confirmed stops at A Space in Toronto and articule in Montréal.

In addition to the "Who Counts and Who's Counting" survey, the special issue of *Matriart* (1994) was accompanied by a panel discussion, also called "The Status of Women in the Arts." Held at the National Gallery of Canada in the Fall of 1994, it was moderated by Fay Cromwell-Tollenaar

[420] Anne Dymond, *Diversity Counts: Gender, Race, and Representation in Canadian Art Galleries* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019), 171.
[421] Dymond, *Diversity Counts*, 174, 187-190.
[422] Conley 2010, 12.
[423] Alice M. W. Jim, "An Analysis and Documentation of the 1989 Exhibition *Black Wimmin: When and Where We Enter*," *RACAR* 23, no 1-2 (1996): 71, https://doi.org/10.7202/1073294ar.

and featured Edythe Goodridge from the Canada Council for the Arts; Angela Lee, a Toronto-based researcher working in theatre and community arts; then-Equity Officer at the Canada Council Lee-Ann Martin; independent curator Sylvie Fortin; Janice Seline of the National Gallery; artists Jane Ash Poitras and Wilma Needham; and Linda Abrahams of WARC. The panel was perhaps more scathing in its analysis of gender, racial, and cultural inequity than the original study, and it is troubling to observe how relevant the issues raised then remain today. Participants both on the panel and in the audience commented over and over again on how slow change was, and how important affirmative action could be in getting people into the room. They demonstrated a relatively sophisticated understanding of the interrelations between class, race, and gender in their discussions.

For example, in the video documentation of the panel (from which the subsequent quotes have all been drawn), Martin points out that, until she began studying the collections of galleries, very few held work by *contemporary* Indigenous artists. Following her 1991 report, there was an increase in the number of Indigenous curators.[424] Then in the video, Sylvie Fortin notes that "the centres that are well-funded tend to attract more men, the centres that are underfunded, I don't know why [sarcasm] attract more women." Further, she observes that artist-run centres that were underfunded tended to have a larger female membership, indicative of inclusive programming, whereas centres that received higher funding had boards and members that "have always been men, and mostly white Francophone men." Fortin also encourages artists, writers, researchers, and curators to work together for stronger gender and cultural equity in the arts. She says, "gender and cultural equity cannot be looked at separately.…Perhaps if we are able to get together on these issues, we will

[424] See also, Lee-Ann Martin, *The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion: Contemporary Native Art and Public Art Museums in Canada*, A Report Submitted to the Canada Council (Ottawa: Canada Council, 1991); Lee-Ann Martin, "Anger and Reconciliation: A Very Brief History of Exhibiting Contemporary Indigenous Art in Canada," *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry,* 43 (Spring/Summer 2017), 108-115; and Rachelle Dickenson and Lee-Ann Martin, "Turning the Page on the Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion, 30 Years On," *C Magazine Issue* no. 144 (Winter 2020), https://cmagazine.com/issues/144/turning-the-page-on-the-politics-of-inclusion#header.

be able to get a little further than on our own." Meanwhile, Janice Selin makes apologies for the NGC but tows the same value and quality line that the NGC has recently with regards to its collection and exhibition of women and BIPOC artists.[425] For example, when asked why there were so few BIPOC artists in the NGC collection, as part of a segment titled *Diaspora Art* on CBC's "The National" on February 2, 2010, Marc Mayer, then the director of the NGC stated that the gallery is only in collecting "excellence … we are blind to colour and ethnic background." [426]

During the panel, artist Winsom, speaking from the audience, says, "I've never seen Black artists in the NGC, not even a print, a reproduction, and I've asked. We are out there, and we are going to stay out there and one day we are going to own the NGC." It is still true that there has never been a major exhibition of a Black Canadian artist at the NGC, though change is starting to come to smaller institutions like the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto (*Of Africa*, a multi-year multi-platform project which ran from 2013–2018, curated by Julie Crooks, Dominique Fontaine, and Silvia Forni); the Museum of Fine Arts in Montréal (*Here We Are Here: Black Canadian Contemporary Art*, curated by Crooks, Fontaine, and Forni in 2018); and OCAD and the Harbourfront Centre in Toronto (*The State of Blackness: From Production to Presentation* conference organized by Andrea Fatona at in 2014, not to mention her doctoral work).[427] Notably, all of these exhibitions were group shows. To borrow a term from art historian Charmaine Nelson, Black

[425] See Alison Cooley, Amy Luo and Caoimhe Morgan-Feir, "Canada's Galleries Fall Short: The Not So Great White North," *Canadian Art*, April 21, 2015, https://canadianart.ca/features/canadas-galleries-fall-short-the-not-so-great-white-north/. Canadian artist-run centres, public galleries and museums are equally lacking in diversity at the administrative level. See Michael Maranda, "Hard Numbers: A Study on Diversity in Canada's Galleries," *Canadian Art*, April 5, 2017, https://canadianart.ca/features/art-leadership-diversity/.

[426] Negotiations in a Vacant Lot: Studying the Visual in Canada edited by Lynda Jessup, Erin Morton, Kirsty Robertson, p. 71, 87

[427] Dominique Fontaine and Julie Crooks, "History, Art, and Blackness in Canada," Royal Ontario Museum, accessed February 12, 2021, https://www.rom.on.ca/en/collections-research/magazine/history-art-and-blackness-in-canada; Joana Joachim, "Jana Joachim on Two Exhibitions at the MMFA," RACAR, accessed February 13, 2021, https://www.racar-racar.com/r---joachim-432.html.

artists, curators and scholars in Canada are "resisting invisibility."[428] For example, in 2018, the CBC published a list of "5 Black Canadian artists whose names should be known alongside the Group of Seven." They were June Clark, Buseje Bailey, David Woods, Justin Augustine, and Joan Butterfield. Yaniya Lee at *Canadian Art*, in addition to highlighting the work of Black Canadian artists, pays special attention to Black curators in her recent writing.[429] The Fall 2020 issue of *Canadian Art* (titled *Chroma* and edited by Yaniya Lee and Denise Ryner) focuses on "Black artists, curators and writers who have worked against their marginalization to establish their own cultural spaces while continuously engaging with this country's shifting cultural and social imaginaries."[430] Regardless of such gains, inclusion in an art system that is still premised on white supremacy is not the same as equity within that system, nor does it signal the system's dismantling. While Dymond's *Diversity Counts* is billed as a study about gender, race, and representation, noting that "gender never stands alone as an issue; it is always intersectional," it fails to capture any real data about racial equity in Canadian art institutions.[431] As she became aware of the lack of "representation of virtually all visible minorities in Canadian galleries," she notes that "most institutions don't collect or analyse these numbers, and they are often quite unaware of their own records."[432]

Towards the middle of the WARC panel, Jane Ash Poitras further challenges Selin and the NGC to up their diversity, stating:

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[428] Charmaine Nelson, "Resisting Invisibility: Black Faculty in Art and Art History in Canada," Federation of the Humanities and Social Sciences, accessed March 2, 2020, https://www.ideas-idees.ca/blog/resisting-invisibility-black-faculty-art-and-art-history-canada.
[429] Amanda Parris, "5 Black Canadian Artists Whose Names Should be Known Alongside the Group of Seven," *CBC Arts*, January 18, 2018, https://www.cbc.ca/arts/5-black-canadian-artists-whose-names-should-be-known-alongside-the-group-of-seven-1.4493206; Yaniya Lee, "How Canada Forgot Its Black Artists," *The Fader*, August 31, 2016, https://www.thefader.com/2016/08/31/black-artists-in-canada; and Yaniya Lee, "The Women Running the Show," *Canadian Art*, October 2, 2017, https://canadianart.ca/features/women-running-show/.
[430] Reid, Tiana, Nicholas Croggon, Kelsey Adams, Denise Ryner, Cecily Nicholson, Sally Frater, Yaniya Lee, and Denise Ryner, et al., "Chroma," *Canadian Art*, Fall 2020, accessed February 13, 2021, https://canadianart.ca/issues/fall-2020-chroma/.
[431] Dymond, *Diversity Counts*, 22.
[432] Dymond, *Diversity Counts*, 176.

> Feminist and anti-racist work has been amongst the most outstanding work in the last twenty-five years and imagine what would happen if the Gallery decided that their mandate was to collect this work. Imagine the incredible research resource they would be if all of a sudden, they had this huge collection.…That would be the leading-edge curatorial work, not what's being done now.

Even today, NGC's acquisitions favour the work of white, male, European painters. For example, in 2018, it attempted to (controversially) sell Marc Chagall's *La Tour Eiffel* (1929) "to get funds to purchase Jacques-Louis David's painting *Saint Jerome* (1779) from the Notre-Dame de Québec parish," though the Chagall was ultimately kept in the NGC collection.[433] The sale of a European (French) albeit Ashkenazi artist to fund the purchase of another European (French) artist does nothing to diversify the national collection. According to the NGC's own annual report, "between April 1, 2019 and March 31, 2020, the Gallery received 157 works of art from 15 donors, collectively worth $3.1 million, and purchased 173 works of art, collectively worth $4.1 million," which is a significant number of works entering the collection.[434] The NGC annual report for 2019–2020 lists "notable acquisitions" as the following:

Gifts:

1. *Visiting the Sick*, 1552, by Maerten van Heemskerck (Dutch)
2. *Pair of Salt Cellars*, c. 1830, by William Farquhar (Scottish)
3. *Double "O" Profile*, 1965, by Audrey Capel Doray (settler, Canadian)
4. Study of a Female Head for *The Daughters of the Mist*, c. 1908, by Evelyn Pickering De Morgan Bridge (British)
5. *Raven*, 1993, by Alex Colville (settler, Canadian)

Purchases:

1. *Elizabeth Campbell*, 1787, by John Smart (British)
2. *The Assassin*, c. 1957–58, by Jack Chambers (settler Canadian)
3. Template for Michael Montague Quilt, c. 1966, by Joyce Wieland (settler Canadian)
4. *Underwear*, c. 2000–02, by Will Munro (settler Canadian-Australian)

[433] Leah Sandals, What to Know About the National Gallery's Latest Chagall-David Move," *Canadian Art*, April 17, 2018, https://canadianart.ca/news/know-national-gallerys-latest-chagall-david-move/; Peter Hum, "Here's What Chagall's Granddaughter Had to Say About the Near-Sale of La Tour Eiffel," *Ottawa Citizen*, May 1, 2018, https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/marc-chagalls-granddaughter-lauds-decision-to-keep-la-tour-eiffel-in-national-gallerys-collection.

[434] National Gallery of Canada, *2019-20 Annual Report*, accessed November 23, 2021, https://www.gallery.ca/sites/default/files/upload/ngc_ar19-20_en_web_spread.pdf.

5. *Dudhsagar Falls*, 2019, by Monika Correa (Indian)

The NGC received or purchased work from 117 distinct artists (many of whom provided multiple acquisitions) in 2019–2020 but only 39 were not white men.[435] Poitras's comments about lack of representation remain true in 2021.

The WARC panel itself could conceivably be the subject of an entire thesis. In addition to highlighting the deficiencies in collecting, exhibiting, and promoting women and BIPOC folks, audience members called out the failure to support the work of queer contributors in the Canadian art world at large. According to Elaine Carol, there are

> great absences in this country, compared to the United States, of queer art.…I don't see a lot, and I've been collecting statistics for several years now, of lesbian women artists being collected. I see it in the States.…We haven't been in the closet. We have been the backbone of artist-run centres since the inception, we've done a lot of the administrative work and incredible amounts of our own internal curating.

Today, LGBTQ+ issues are represented in programming more consistently, and the legal constraints of being queer in Canada have been greatly reduced; however, there is no great push for the inclusion of queer representation. Dymond's book delineates gender as a binary, and she collects no data highlighting the sexual identity of artists.

Finally, in her closing remarks, Shirley Bear (a WARC board member and Tobique First Nation artist) calls for a radical reformation of the system—from funding models to internal administration models. She says:

> It's really a hard thing to listen to the statistics, the rationale for the continued marginalization of women artists, of Queer, Aboriginal, Black, Asian, whatever. We continue to be marginalized. And it's very evident from what we've heard that we will continue to be marginalized. And I think what happens now is that when we are told that we have to work outside of the system, it's not really very practical because our money is in the system. Systems are complex, and systems are run by people. I think that a lot of times we look at the government of Canada and systems and say I can't do anything to change it. But I have proof we can

[435] National Gallery of Canada, *2019-20 Annual Report.*

> change it and I think that if we stood up and demanded that those systems start changing and looking at our art with a lot of seriousness.…We should take seriously Linda Abrahams' urging to sue the systems, sue the museum.

Of course, neither WARC nor anyone else that I am aware of sued the Canada Council, the NGC, or the Canadian government for lack of (proportional) representation. Change has come slowly to these institutions, and the situation for women, BIPOC, queer, and differently abled artists could still benefit from substantial improvement. Meanwhile, the organizations that pushed for these changes, like WARC, have withered away due to continuous underfunding.

The panel, or more specifically, the documentation of the panel, remains an important document for analysis. It tells us in very clear terms how questions around race, gender, and representation were being framed twenty-five-plus years ago. The panel took place three years after Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality, but unsurprisingly, as the term was not yet in wide circulation, the panellists didn't use it.[436] To return again to Broadhurst, we are stuck in a feedback loop of continually revisiting the same questions. Poor documentation, impossible access to documentation, or little time and resources to properly process documentation causes amnesia that then forces us to spend our time rehashing the past instead of imagining a future.

Its inability to secure reliable funding pushed WARC to adopt a flexible work model. While WARC began as a database—or research centre as similar spaces were called at the time—and established itself early on as a national arts service organization, it eventually opened a gallery. Before it had a dedicated gallery space, Abrahams sought to animate the WARC

[436] Crenshaw's development of the term intersectionality stemmed from her understanding of work happening in the community. Intersectional analysis happened well before Crenshaw named it, and she notes this in her influential 1989 paper "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, no. 1 (1989): 139-167. She specifically cites Akasha Gloria Hull, Patricia Bell-Scott, and Barbara Smith's edited book *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave* (Old Westbury, NY: Feminist Press, 1982).

collection by creating mini-exhibitions in the WARC office. She created a gallery on one of the office walls, dubbed the Walls at WARC. In 1998, anticipating a shift in funding from supporting education to supporting exhibitions, WARC opened a larger-scale gallery in its new location at the 401 Richmond building.[437] In an interview with Abrahams published on the 401 Richmond website, the uncredited author notes that WARC's reinvention as a resource centre and gallery followed "a process of evolution that was not entirely voluntary."[438] Further, WARC had "managed through part strategic development and part adaptation to create a specialized environment that serve[d] women's art and cultural representation on many levels."[439] It is this shift that bought WARC nearly two more decades of funding, when access to funds for service organizations diminished. In the same period, WARC partnered with Kellogg Canada to curate and produce a widely distributed 2001 calendar, "Celebrating Canadian Women Artists."[440] This too was a way of mitigating a possible loss of funding.

While WARC's closure was the direct result of continual, aggressive funding cuts, it is important to note that there was another major challenge to the centre's well-being, namely internal strife between members. Much of the centre's internal conflict was in relation to money and salaries, but there was also a significant disagreement over whether or not WARC was a lesbian space. Especially in the 1990s, many felt that WARC did too little for the under-supported queer Canadian art scene. Historically, WARC had always been tied to a lesbian community, having originally shared "a tiny space with the Lesbian Archives of Canada."[441] At the 1994 Status of Canadian Women in the Arts panel, Elaine Carol accuses WARC of failing to

[437] Linda Abrahams, interview with the author.
[438] "Tenant Profile WARC," *401 Richmond Update* 15, Iss. 3 (Fall 2008), 2.
[439] "Tenant Profile WARC," 2.
[440] "Women's Art Resource Centre (WARC)," Artist, VTape, accessed August 8, 2018, http://www.vtape.org/artist?ai=440.
[441] "Tenant Profile WARC," 2.

support the lesbian community. She says, "The backbone of WARC is lesbian and yet I don't even see a lot of lesbian representation on this panel."

Broadhurst writes in her MA thesis that "WARC differentiates itself…because it fosters a feminist politics…with its national scope and with its acknowledgement of women's differences," yet perhaps this was less true than we might imagine.[442] As a *national* service organization, gallery, and publisher, WARC operated in a distinctly feminist manner—promoting women, consensus-based decision making, and so on—but it couldn't possibly be everything to everyone at all times.[443] WARC was one alternative, working within a system that couldn't support it. Despite WARC being an imperfect solution to an impossible problem, the people at WARC continued operating the organization for as long as they did because they saw a need. It is important to consider what they could have accomplished with a funding structure on par with their male-driven counterparts. As Avis Lang Rosenberg notes in her survey,

> The most striking women-only group situations are of course those with the most complete terms of reference, the feminist work, exhibition, support groups and spaces.…With all the resentment, rigmarole, time-waste and other evils that attend attempts to improve the situation of women within established contexts, it is not surprising that some women artists have chosen to establish alternate and separatist structures. This choice sometimes reflects disenchantment, sometimes hope, ease, and energy, sometimes fear, sometimes fury. It is another article entirely to discuss these feminist frameworks, but it could at least be safely said that their conception was probably due to need rather than an excess of available funds.[444]

Closing the gallery in 2014 was a difficult decision for WARC's director, Linda Abrahams, and its board to make. The gallery and resource centre closed without any formal announcement, less than two months after they came to the decision collectively. This was carried out quietly by Abrahams, in part to be able to close without any debt to board members, by not extending the lease

[442] Broadhurst, "Strategic Spaces," 83.
[443] Broadhurst, "Strategic Spaces," 83.
[444] Lang Rosenberg, "Women Artists," 114.

or having to pay additional expenses. The loss of WARC has been significant to the Canadian feminist arts community. As Abrahams herself puts it,

> To have a gallery that shows over a long-term trajectory art that represents women's consciousness is still needed. A lot of the issues that existed twenty years ago still exist. It would be really terrible to lose a venue that has the experience that we have to offer a serious history of women's struggles and accomplishments.[445]

4.5 Proving Maura Broadhurst Right: Womanspirit

Most women-only groups, as Broadhurst points out, had "not had the financial luxury to produce histories of their organizations."[446] This was as true for women artists as it was for the organizations that supported their work. That is one of the reasons why the Womanspirit Art Resource Centre was founded in 1977 in London, Ontario. Like WARC, Womanspirit began as a resource centre and database, created a magazine, in this case *Spirale,* and opened a gallery. It closed on International Women's Day, 1986, in the same month that the WCB shut down.

Womanspirit's original focus as a research centre was to collect files of women artists active prior to 1930.[447] Originally, Womanspirit was housed in the studio space of founder Sasha McInnes-Hayman, a textile artist. McInnes-Hayman wrote about the history of the organization in a March 1992 letter to Nancy Warren (a potter and an academic librarian at Western University where the Womanspirit Fonds are located). After McInnes-Hayman had educated herself on why there were, to borrow the phrase from Linda Nochlin, "no great women artists," she began searching for information on Canadian women artists and returned empty handed.

[445] "Tenant Profile WARC," 2.
[446] Broadhurst, "Strategic Spaces," 12.
[447] Unknown, *Spirale Uncoils,* 14.

Undeterred, McInnes-Hayman convinced friends to start Womanspirit to correct the omissions she found, and, primarily through small employment grants, Womanspirit became operational. Womanspirit eventually received a series of project grants for the gallery that opened in 1981, Spectrum Art Gallery, as well as for its magazine, *Spirale*. Additionally, the organizers received funding for their research into women artists in Canada. This grant-driven programming allowed for near continuous activity between 1977 and 1986, but without the stability of regular operating grants, it also resulted in precarity and scarce resources. It meant that projects often went unfinished, with staff stretched thin. Womanspirit experienced a number of short-term closures when grants ran out in 1982 and again in 1983. When it closed for good in 1986, it cited a lack of volunteers available to run the organization.

McInnes-Hayman's biggest goal with Womanspirit was to complete a database of Canadian women artists. Womanspirit received nearly $20,000 in funding from the Secretary of State for research into women artists in Canada working prior to 1930, and it created files for approximately 600 women—which are currently housed in a database at the archives at Western University. Its intention was to produce a 400-page catalogue, but it did not receive publication funding for the project and so its findings were never published.[448] An unpublished short paper titled "Canadian Women Artists Before 1930—A Socio-Economic Review," presumably authored by McInnes-Hayward, can be found in the Womanspirit archives at Western University. Perhaps as a consequence of the book never being published, an exhibition building on Womanspirit's research—planned for the London Regional Art Gallery in 1983 of Canadian

[448] Ephemera, "Ottawa Grants London Groups $223,865," 1980, Womanspirit Archives, Western University, London, Ontario, Canada.

women artists from 1900 to 1945 by Canadian art historian Kathleen Nix—never materialized.[449] Today the archive and this entire Womanspirit-led project are virtually unknown.

In 2008, The Canadian Women Artists History Initiative (CWAHI) formally opened at Concordia University in Montréal. Building upon the work of Dr. Janice Anderson and Melinda Reinhart's "bio-bibliographic database of historical Canadian women artists," CWAHI partnered with art historian Kristina Huneault—a Concordia research chair with a focus on Canadian women artists— to create a significant database and documentation centre of paper files of biographies and ephemera belonging to over 1200 Canadian women artists and architects born before 1925. CWAHI produces publications and organizes regular conferences. In 2017, Huneault and Anderson contributed a chapter to Davis' book Desire Change. Titled "A Past as Rich as Our Futures Allow: A Genealogy of Feminist Art in Canada," the chapter discusses the network of women-led art spaces and feminist art in Canada and its importance to the history Canadian art. Huneault and Anderson mention Womanspirit briefly, noting the centre's closure in 1986. I was curious as to why Huneault and Anderson did not mention Womanspirit's important work of documenting historically active Canadian women artists, especially considering that their own database of the same subject matter, CWAHI, was so similar to what Womanspirit set out to do. The answer is simply that they had no knowledge of its files on historical Canadian women artists. Womanspirit's files have been archived at Western, but no publicly available research acknowledges its presence. Likewise, McInnes-Hayward's 1981 study Contemporary Canadian Women Artists: A Survey, published by Womanspirit, went unrecognized by WARC and not included in their documentation centre, despite the fact that the two centres were in communication one another.

[449] Broadhurst, "Strategic Spaces," 77.

The absence of Womanspirit's work from the record is an example of the dangerous amnesia that Broadhurst cautions against, and absences like this explain why feminist and equity-seeking groups always seem to be taking two steps forward and one step backward. Centres like Womanspirit struggled at the time of their operation with low funding and inadequate resources, and they continue to struggle, this time to be remembered, in the absence of the resources needed to properly historicize or support their archives. In spaces like Womanspirit, we see a pattern where founders involve themselves for long periods of time because it is so difficult to find external people willing to take on the work of sustaining an organization with little compensation. For example, McInnes-Hayman was the director of Womanspirit until 1983, though she remained involved as a board member and consultant afterwards. In her own words, she had only "been called the director since we needed a director for purposes of grant writing, etc."[450] During and after her time as Womanspirit's director, McInnes-Hayward was incredibly politically active. She created "a study on the status of women artists within the Ontario Arts Council," for example, a study with a continuing legacy—the most recent issue being published in 2018. She also created studies on women's representation in art history textbooks, and she lobbied the Canada Council to fund women artists proportionally to the number of female art school graduates.[451]

Her work pushing for equity for women in the arts as part of Canada's larger cultural development plan following the Applebaum-Hébert (1981–82) report on culture in Canada was enormously influential. In correspondence with Robert W. Macaulay, chairman of the Special Committee for the Arts with the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture, on July 14, 1983, Womanspirit board members Brenda A. Ingratta and Gillian Chase note that the Applebaum-

[450] Correspondence from Sasha McInnes-Hayman to Nancy Warren, March 23, 1992, Series A, 6, Womanspirit archives.
[451] Correspondence from Sasha McInnes-Hayman to Nancy Warren.

Hébert report made "no recommendations in regard to the issue of women in the arts…thus relegating the issue of women in culture to the realm of inconsequential for arts policy development in the 1980s."[452] Further, the authors accuse the government of systematic bias against women-led organizations. They quote McInnes-Hayman's advocacy work and list recommendations for improvement on these issues.

Spirale: A Women's Art and Culture Quarterly's first issue was released in summer 1981, thanks to a grant from the Secretary of State Women's program. In the introduction to the issue, the editors write that the magazine was meant to act as a tool for "mutual-support, for sharing and disseminating information, for pooling research resources and findings, for the development of political action strategies and for celebrating our work and the work of those women before us who have been forgotten and neglected."[453] As if to demonstrate the friendship network present between early feminist art spaces in Canada, the first issue features an interview with WIF director Marion Barling, focused on the importance of giving women the tools to create their own images. Barling and WIF were inspirations for Womanspirit, and they were very much on the same page when it came to allowing women to define themselves through their art while challenging male-driven definitions of their imagery.[454] Barling refused to define feminist art, especially for a male audience, but she did go so far as to hint at it like this: We are just beginning to "know our experience of what it is to be female outside of the patriarchy," and we are starting to give women the tools and space to do so.[455]

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[452] Correspondence from Brenda A. Ingratta and Gillian Chase to Robert W. Macaulay, July 1983, Series A, 6, Womanspirit archives.
[453] Unknown, *Spirale Uncoils*, 2
[454] Likewise, WIF and Womanspirit were both very much aligned with one another with respect to the feminist argument against pornography; both agreed that pornography endangered women and was anti-feminist.
[455] Unknown, *Spirale Uncoils*, 12; In my research, I came across the names of several other galleries, projects, and organizations with a feminist focus, including the Saskatchewan Women in the Arts organization, Gallery 96 in Stratford, Ontario; Partisan Gallery and Chromazone in Toronto; and BAAWA (Barrie Area Association of Women Artists) in Barrie, Ontario. For example, an early *Spirale* issue includes a note of a developing women's network in

4.6 Conclusion

Maura Broadhurst was correct in her assertion in 1997 that history was in danger of repeating itself, and that stories were in danger of being forgotten over time. WARC and Womanspirit have long closed despite a vital need for their work to continue; their predecessors are also gone. WARC is the direct descendent of the feminist currents at NSCAD, the WCB, and Gallery 940, though few people currently involved in artist-run culture remember most of these spaces and the important work they did. These spaces have, in some cases, been replaced with new artist-run centres and research centres (like CWAHI), but for the most part—perhaps partly because of the long legacy of underfunding feminist organizations—new artist-run centres that operate using feminist and especially intersectional feminist models—such as FAG (Allyson Mitchell and Deirdre Logue), Younger Than Beyoncé (Genevieve Wallen, Marjan Verstappen, Marsya Maharani, and Michael "Humboldt" Magnussen), and Angry Asian Feminist Gang (AAFG, an amorphous group, founded by Amy Wong and including Serena Lee, Pamila Matharu, and Henry Heng Lu.)—operate outside of public funding structures.[456]

As I state in the introduction to this chapter, virtually all artist-run centres that were explicitly feminist, run by women, and worked on issues of gender and cultural equity have struggled with finances and member retention, and shut down. Sara Ahmed, writing about the

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Saskatchewan, organized through Karen Schoonover at the Rosemont Art Gallery (now the Art Gallery of Regina) in Regina. The Rosemont Fonds are now listed on the Saskatchewan Archival Information Network. Unknown, *Spirale Uncoils*, 8.

[456] It's not just feminist centres choosing this path; many new arts spaces are reclaiming the DIY approach. See Saelan Twerdy, "Recognition and Reckoning: Montréal 's Alternative Art Spaces at the Crossroads," *Momus*, July 27, 2018, https://momus.ca/recognition-and-reckoning-montreals-alternative-art-spaces-at-the-crossroads/.

path of diversity and equality policy, recounts an anecdote illustrating what happens to the life and power of hard work when the work's commissioner tables it or ignores it.

> I began to appreciate the importance of focusing not so much on what documents say but what they do: how they circulate and move around. Indeed, when I began the research, one of my questions was about a diversity and equality policy published in Australia in 1996. I asked the first practitioner I interviewed about it. She described it as "an amazing document." But she then said, with an intonation that gave the impression of qualifying the value statement: "We changed government and it got buried; it's virtually never been dealt with that I know of in any arena I know." The document thus acquires no force. It ceases to have an official existence, even if it still exists in electronic and paper form.[457]

The work of these feminist artist-run centres is too often ignored, buried, repeated. As Ahmed acknowledges, it is often true that no matter how good the work is, if it's not being circulated and used, it has no longevity. Additionally, the work often gets appropriated by non-feminist centres and used in ways that are not necessarily devoid of the works' original politics, but that don't give credit towards the people and communities who long fought for change. This is simultaneously a form of cultural appropriation and a method of denying access to equity-seeking groups. To quote Andrea Fatona,

> The issue of cultural appropriation served to politicize and incite activism around issues of access and representation across the country in the 1980s and early 1990s. Cultural appropriation was discussed, rallied against and challenged at all levels of cultural production and presentation. Who was being represented in the cultural sphere and by whom were questions fervently debated and contested by artists of colour and First Nations artists.[458]

It is true that the Canada Council has changed its tune with regard to funding marginalized communities. In 2016, it signalled a new funding model that committed specific funding to new organizations, especially those the agency typically ignored. As Leah Sandals writes, "in many funding situations, getting a foot in the door has long been a challenge for

[457] Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 6.
[458] Fatona, "'Where Outreach Meets Outrage,'" 132.

previously unfunded organizations and artists—particularly those which have long been affected by systemic racism and oppression," and the New Model promised that a minimum of twenty-five percent of funding would target new spaces. More money would be earmarked for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis artists and organizations, following recommendations made by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada in its 2015 final report.[459] It is too early to tell if the Canada Council will more successful in supporting marginalized artists under the New Model, but current reporting shows that "the program continues to fail to reach equity targets."[460] For many spaces, it's too little, too late.

New spaces continue to open, many on their own terms, regardless of available funding. For example, in 2010, Allyson Mitchell and Deirdre Logue founded the Feminist Art Gallery (FAG) in the garage of their home in the Parkdale neighbourhood of Toronto. Both are artists and long-time members of Toronto's artist-run centre communities. Mitchell is also an Assistant Professor in the School of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies at York University, and Logue is Development Director at VTape. The gallery employs an alternative model of funding that it dubs "matronage." Mitchell and Logue invite the community to effectively crowd-source projects, with "matrons" (the feminization of patrons) giving as much as they can to keep the gallery going. They do not and will not apply for public funding, though they welcome their artists and curators to do so independently. In this way, "FAG does not depend on formal funding sources nor will it ever be tied to one government or corporate controlling purse string."[461] At the 1994 WARC-run "Status of Canadian Women in the Arts" panel at the NGC, presenters and audience members questioned whether new systems were needed for women in

[459] Leah Sandals, "Canada Council Head Promises 'New Era' in Arts Funding," *Canadian Art*, November 12, 2016, https://canadianart.ca/news/canada-council-head-promises-new-era-arts-funding; Canada: Calls to Action," TRCC (Winnipeg), 2015, https://ehprnh2mwo3.exactdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf.
[460] Dymond, *Diversity Counts*, 179.
[461] Access Gallery, "FAG Satellite," accessed October 18, 2015, http://accessgallery.ca/archive/fag-satellite/.

the arts and whether it was better to stop working with the larger funding bodies like the Canada Council altogether. One audience member asked whether "we have the will and the courage to work outside the white, patriarchal system." FAG is one example of what that alternative could look like.

Andrea Fatona writes, "racial equity policies at the Canada Council emerged out of a confluence of transformational activities simultaneously taking place at the state/institutional and grassroots levels."[462] That is to say that arts institutions had a part to play in affecting funding priorities through their lobbying, programming and administrative effort, albeit slowly and not without the closure of many projects along the way. It is easy and convenient to say that individual jurors must be to blame for the Canada Council's slowness in taking up equity concerns; similarly, it's easy to say that poor education in Canada around gender, racial, and cultural inequity is to blame for sustained overfunding of some centres and artists and underfunding of others, notably equity-seeking centres and women and BIPOC artists.

These justifications erase the labour of the groups who have been advocating for change. Institutions that have been historically driven by white men have thrived in the conditions created by funding bodies, and they are the same ones that are currently benefiting from increased funding as they adapt their exhibitions to meet new funding priorities. For example, some arts institutions have chosen to partner with new arts groups, acting as curatorial incubators for younger projects that specialize in the work of women, BIPOC, and queer artists. That said, there are examples, like the Younger Than Beyoncé residency at FAG and the Black Artist Union takeover of the Whippersnapper Gallery, in which non-funded or underfunded community

[462] Fatona, "'Where Outreach Meets Outrage,'" ii.

driven art spaces share their spaces, too.[463] While these partnerships provide opportunities for these communities of young artists (financial and otherwise), they nonetheless financially privilege the same institutions that maintain the old model, without necessarily changing the way they operate on a permanent basis.

In this chapter, following Levitas' utopia as method model, I conducted an archaeological dig of the past. I presented case histories of a series of centres that were forced to close due to persistent underfunding. These spaces were advocates for gender (and/or racial) equity in the Canadian arts scene. I argue that, today, it is important to identify and bolster organizations like the ones in this chapter, organizations that are challenging current ways of making and doing and are pushing the boundaries with regards to equity and diversity. Rather than unduly limiting organization outcomes through complicated funding with strings attached, we must not only recognize and support such institutions, but we must also fund these spaces and projects in a manner that will allow them the room to self-identify their priorities. To conclude, Levitas asks us the look to the past to understand our present-day problems and invites us to educate our desires for the future. Grants to new organizations should come with the freedom to use the funds with self-determination. Perhaps then, we will break free of the cycle of building and forgetting, and we can begin to imagine new possibilities.

[463] See: Anique Jordan, "Black Artist Union: June 1st, 2018 – February 29th, 2020," Whippersnapper Gallery, accessed March 5, 2021, https://whippersnapper.ca/exhibitions/black-artist-union-takeover and https://whippersnapper.ca/exhibitions/black-artist-union-takeover.

Chapter 5

Educating our desires: articule and La Centrale Galerie Powerhouse

5.1 Introduction

In this study, I have followed Ruth Levitas's three stages for utopian methodology. In previous chapters, I tackled the first two stages in her model: I identified the current situation and its problems, and I reflected on how the past affects the present. In Chapter Three, I identified the current problem by reviewing two centres, Women in Focus and MAWA. I wrote that centres were in danger of closing due to lack of funds for being too feminist at a time when long-term funding for feminist projects was limited; while simultaneously being in peril for seeing feminism as something that leads with care for a larger community. In Chapter Four, I explored the past in an attempt to understand how we arrived at our current situation. I expanded on the history of artist-run centres in Canada, and demonstrated the way history is in danger of repeating itself. Without proper documentation and archiving practices, centres responsible for important activity within the milieu become effectively erased from the record. Consequently, when new generations take up the work again, they approach it without the knowledge of past efforts and often end up facing the same difficulties and rehashing the same debates. Here in Chapter Five, I take on the third stage in Levitas's model, which is to educate our desire; I explore what I think artist-run centres can achieve in the future, if given the opportunity.

In this chapter I look at what I consider to be the central issues affecting artist-run centres today. With many centres in existence across Canada for upwards of thirty years, it is a ripe moment to consider what works and what doesn't anymore. In my opinion, and from what I've seen in the public discourse around Canadian artist-run centres, there are three current problems affecting artist-

run centres: one, their relevance is waning within the larger field, as perceived by internal and external stakeholders; two, they have a misplaced priority to appease funders rather than their public; and three, they continue to uphold a culture of white supremacy. I choose to focus on examples based in Québec for this section as I believe that, here, questions of language diversity have long eclipsed wider-reaching issues of diversity and inclusion. This added layer of challenge to matters of equity creates fertile ground for reflection on what it means to engage in feminist theory and praxis in the arts in this province.

In order to understand the ways in which centres have grown and developed in Québec generally and in Montréal specifically, it's necessary to understand the context that shaped them. When Powerhouse was founded in 1973, Québecers had already experienced the so-called Quiet Revolution, the October Crisis (October 1970) and the rise and fall of the FLQ (Front de libération du Québec)—a militant, separatist organization that, at least according to the Anglophone media, "called for 'total independence for Québecers," and railed against "Anglo-Saxon capitalists."[464] In 1976, Réné Lévesque's Parti Québécois came to power, further encouraging Anglophone flight from the province. Those that stayed were not necessarily fully aware of how these now-historic events would shape Montréal's cultural landscape. The Office Québécois de la langue française (OQLF) was established in 1961, and in 1977, the Charter of the French Language was initiated. Both bodies assigned French as the official and only language of Québec and prioritized support for French culture as a form of soft power. articule was initiated in 1979.

For many Anglophones and Anglophone-driven organizations, it would take several years to understand the effect of these new language laws. The artist-run centres funded by the Canada Council for the Arts were majoritarily Anglophone in the case of Montréal (this included

[464] "October crisis: Still haunts us 40 years later," *Toronto Star,* October 9, 2010, https://www.thestar.com/opinion/editorials/2010/10/09/october_crisis_still_haunts_us_40_years_later.html.

Powerhouse). As Abenaki art historian Guy Sioui-Durand writes, "in the sixties and seventies, although in Montréal Anglophones accounted for only 25% of the artistic community, their artists statutorily received 50% of the amount granted by the Canada Council for the Arts for all of Québec."[465] As a result, Francophone arts networks pushed for cultural policy that celebrated Francophone culture and recalibrated the balance between Anglo and Francophone Québec. The Regroupement des Centres d'Artistes Autogérés du Québec (RCAAQ), set up as an entity separate from the national artist-run centre organization ANNPAC (as discussed in Chapter Two), was part of this push. As well, the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec (CALQ), set up in 1994, provided access to new funding. Its predecessor, the Ministère des Affaires culturelles du Québec (MACQ) released a study in 1978 titled *Pour les Québécoises: égalité et indépendance, Gouvernement du Québec.* One of its recommendations stated that the MACQ and the organizations that shared responsibility for funding culture should establish and respect an equitable representation of gender in the awarding of grants.[466] The MACQ was set up in 1961, the same year as the Office de la langue française.

Referendums on Québec independence in 1980 and 1995 only strengthened the Anglo-Franco divide and calls for sovereignty continue to dominate Québec politics. Sovereigntists are still very much caught up in the French legacy and future of Québec. To quote Cree-Métis-Saulteaux art historian Jas M. Morgan:

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[465] Guy Sioui-Durand, *L'art comme alternative – Réseaux et pratiques d'art parallèle au Québec – 1976-1996* (Québec: Université Laval, 1997), 102. Original text: "In the sixties and seventies, although in Montréal Anglophones accounted for only 25% of the artistic community, their artists statutorily received 50% of the amount granted by the Canada Council for the Arts for all of Québec." Translation my own.

[466] For Québec Women: Equality and Independence, Government of Québec, 1978, recommendation 5-14: "That the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and the organizations responsible for creative assistance programs...establish and respect a fair proportion between the number of grants awarded by gender and the number of applications by gender." Quoted in Rose-Marie Arbour, "Les arts ont-ils un sexe?: Les québécoises dans le champ artistique," *Intervention* 12 (1981): 10-12. Translation my own. Original text: Pour les Québécoises: égalité et indépendance, Gouvernement du Québec, 1978, recommandation 5-14: "Que le Ministère des Affaires culturelles et des organismes responsables des programmes d'aide à la création...établissent et respectent une juste proportion entre le nombre de subventions accordées par sexe et le nombre de candidatures par sexe."

> Québec sovereignty is a set of values, beliefs, morals, and principles held by French Québecers, wherein they position themselves as oppressed under the English regime in Canada—going so far as to appropriate racial slurs used against Black people to describe their condition. Québécois campaigns for sovereignty range from interventions in public discourse to governmental policy, and can manifest as pressure to use the French language in Québec, proposals around Québec separatism (the desire for the province of Québec to separate from the rest of Canada), and immigration policies that seek the unification and integration of all cultures under a French Québec regime (ironic considering French Québec's concerns about being marginalized within the Canadian state). However, Québec sovereignty inherently undermines the sovereignty of the Indigenous peoples whose land French Québecers have settled on, one group of Inuit and 10 First Nations comprising 55 communities in total (without counting Indigenous peoples who live in urban centres) and perpetuates anti-Black, xenophobic, and Islamophobic attitudes throughout Québec.[467]

So, while it's true that, starting in the 1980s, there was a sharp rise in exhibitions by Francophone artists, this did not correlate to any shift away from the white, cis-women-focused paradigm that dominated second-wave feminist discourse. Québec's struggle with overt racism demonstrates its continued resistance to the very idea of non-white, non-Francophone Québecers. Whereas the rest of Canada appeared to invest in a multicultural identity (as discussed in Chapter Two), Quebecois identity was tied to the notion that the province was in fact a separate nation-state founded by white French settlers in collaboration with local Indigenous groups. According to this established mythology, Québec settlers and Indigenous peoples were collectively colonized by the English settlers, and as such, the perception was that Quebecois identity in Canada was at risk of being diluted were it to include anyone other than a white Francophone of French heritage. The consequences of this kind of thinking manifested in several incidences: the 1990 Oka Crisis/Kanesatake Resistance, in which the Mohawk community resisted the developer's illegal use of their land, and the Canadian army retaliated by calling in the army; the Bouchard-Taylor commission, where the Québec government sponsored a year-long public commission and report into

[467] Lindsay Nixon (now Jas M. Morgan), "Born Under the Tobacco Flower, and Raised Under the Lis," *The New Inquiry*, Jan. 12, 2018, thenewinquiry.com/born-under-the-tobacco-flower-and-raised-under-the-lis.

what "reasonable accommodation" would allow because of cultural or religious differences in Québec; and more recently, Bill-21, which bans government employees, including teachers and hospital workers, from wearing overt religious symbols like the hijab or kippah, and bans religious symbols being displayed in public buildings with the exception of the cross, which is considered part of Québec's "heritage."[468] In this context, it is extraordinary that funding exists at all for artists and centres that challenge these conditions from both a feminist and anti-racist perspective.

5.2 La Centrale Galerie Powerhouse

La Centrale Galerie Powerhouse is a feminist artist-run centre based in Montréal. Its current mandate, adopted in 2016, states that La Centrale Galerie Powerhouse is "dedicated to the dissemination and development of multidisciplinary feminist practices," that the centre is committed to "supporting practices and artists that are not very visible in the dominant cultural institutions," and that its "programming dialogues with feminisms and supports intersectionality and social justice."[469] To understand what La Centrale represents today, it's important to understand its history, or as La Centrale would say, its herstory. This includes the reasoning behind the centre's name change in 2007, the multiple shifts in its mandate, and the centre's most recent repositioning following the abrupt departure of most of its board and staff in 2018.

[468] While much has been written on this event, I recommend Alanis Obomsawin's 2000 NFB film *Rocks At Whisky Trench*, available at https://www.nfb.ca/film/rocks_at_whiskey_trench/; Gérard Bouchard and Charles Taylor, *Building the Future: A Time for Reconciliation, Report* (Quebec: Commission de Consultation Sur Les Pratiques D'Accommodement Reliée aux Différences Culturelles, 2008), https://numerique.banq.qc.ca/patrimoine/details/52327/1565995; "Bill 21: Our Fight to Protect Religious Freedom in Quebec," Canadian Civil Liberties Association, accessed November 25, 2021, https://ccla.org/major-cases-and-reports/bill-21/.

[469] "Mandate and Herstory," La Centrale Galerie Powerhouse, accessed November 18, 2020, https://www.lacentrale.org/en/a-propos/historique-et-mandat/.

La Centrale began as Powerhouse Gallery in 1973 (incorporated in 1974), when eight women—Clara Gutsche, Pat Walsh-Hopkins, Isobel Dower-Gow, Margaret Griffm, Stansje Plantenga, Leslie Busch, Elizabeth Bertholdi, and Billie Joe Mericle—leased the second-floor half of a four-room apartment at 1210 Greene Avenue (now a nail salon). Three of the women (all white, all cis-gendered, all Anglophone) had placed a billboard ad earlier in the year at The Flaming Apron. The Flaming Apron was a not-for-profit "women's craft store on Sherbrooke St. in the N.D.G"—Notre-Dame de Grace, commonly referred to as N.D.G, was at the time, a predominantly Anglophone neighbourhood, situated on the border of the wealthier Westmount—where the original members were part of a consciousness-raising group.[470] It was also a gallery with a membership of more than 150 female artists.[471] Consciousness-raising groups were popularized in the 1960s. Originating in American feminism, the practice of sitting together and sharing unedited information and stories, free from the patriarchal gaze, took hold in Canada as well. Located near the recently opened Dawson College (Selby Location) and to Sir George Williams University (which merged with Loyola College to become Concordia University in 1974), Powerhouse was immediately steeped in both the Anglophone and feminist communities of Montréal. Following the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, Sir George Williams was one of the first schools in Canada to offer classes in Women's Studies, though it didn't have a full program until 1978.[472] Both this Women's Studies program and the one at Dawson College were set up by Greta Hoffman

[470] Henry Lehmann, "Powerhouse going strong: Show features works of feminist group's founders," *The Gazette* (Montréal), December 15, 2001: I2.
[471] Kim Rondeau, "Où en sommes-nous avec l'art féministe?: analyse de la programmation de la Centrale Galerie Powerhouse (1973-1978 et 2007-2010)" (Master's thesis, Université du Québec à Montréal, 2013), 21.
[472] It would be remiss of me not to mention the very activist nature of both Sir George Williams University at Concordia, starting with the 1969 The Sir George Williams Affair, more often referred to as the Computer Riots, the largest student protest in Canada to date, which fought back against racist and anti-Black actions at the university. Two important references are the first-person history by Dennis Forsythe, *Let the Niggers Burn: The Sir George Williams University Affair and Its Caribbean Aftermath* (Montréal: Our Generation Press, 1971); and the 2015 NFB produced film, *The Ninth Floor* by director Mina Shum, available at https://www.nfb.ca/film/ninth_floor/.

Nemiroff.[473] According to Nemiroff, "before then, Women's Studies were taught mainly under the aegis of English and Humanities."[474] The Simone de Beauvoir institute (at Concordia University) was established in 1978 as "a site for action and the production of knowledge about women's lives" and claims to be "the oldest Women's Studies program in Canada."[475]

According to Nemiroff,

> Because Women's Studies has not only developed from the women's movement but grown inextricably with it, the emphasis on praxis and its role in transformational social and intellectual change has charged it with a mission far beyond traditional intellectual preoccupations.…Women's Studies has always had to address the affective and to confirm the personal experiences and insights of women.[476]

Many of the founding members of Powerhouse Gallery had attended either Dawson College or Sir George Williams University, and likely came into contact with feminist teaching. What's more, "women's issues were in the air at the time," following the commission on The Status of Women, which was the first to be televised.[477]

Powerhouse Gallery was set up to push back against barriers for women artists. As Henry Lehmann writes in a 2001 Montréal Gazette article,

> Back in the early part of the '70s when Powerhouse was born, there was a sense of mission. The Montréal art scene was divided into insiders and outsiders, with a clear-cut geography to match. Gallery Row on Sherbrooke St. and the museums were for "established" artists, others remained passionately on the outside, knocking on doors.[478]

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[473] "50 Years of Women's/Gender Studies in Canada," Newsroom, Dawson College, accessed November 19, 2020, https://www.dawsoncollege.qc.ca/news/uncategorized/50-years-of-womens-gender-studies-in-canada/.
[474] "50 Years of Women's/Gender Studies in Canada," Dawson College.
[475] "About SdBI," Simone de Beauvoir Institute, Concordia University, accessed November 19, 2020, https://www.concordia.ca/artsci/sdbi/about.html.
[476] Greta Hoffman Nemiroff, *Critical Humanism in Action: Ideology and Pedagogy at the New School of Dawson College* (Report for The New School, Dawson College, Montréal, 1990), accessed November 20, 2020, https://cdc.qc.ca/parea/705441-nemiroff-critical-humanism-action-dawson-PAREA-1990.pdf.
[477] "50 Years of Women's/Gender Studies in Canada," Dawson College.
[478] Lehmann, "Powerhouse going strong," I2.

As original member Gail Bourgeouis states, Powerhouse was "founded as an emotional reaction to oppression."[479] At the time and on a national level, women were systematically and shamelessly rejected from exhibitions, commercial gallery representation, and even educational opportunities based on gender. This was true in the Québec context as much as it was elsewhere.

Today, La Centrale hopes to work in much the same way, challenging who gets access to the art world and on what terms. The situation for women artists has improved with regards to opportunities to exhibit, but recent studies show that women remain underrepresented in major museum shows, commercial galleries, and even in artist-run centres. While there are many who argue that there is no longer a need for a space like La Centrale, the research indicates otherwise.[480] For example, "a 1994 survey on the status of Canadian women in the arts, covering the National Gallery of Canada for a 23-year period indicates that as recently as 1993, the gender gap was vast. In that year, the number of living women artists represented in the Canadian collection was 880 compared with 2,641 works by living men."[481] Citing the 1978 study by feminist art historian Avis Lang Rosenburg discussed in Chapter Three, Rose-Marie Arbour notes that women's participation in exhibitions "in 1976 was 29.8% but that comparatively, 50% of graduates from Canadian art schools, and as many as 61% at UQAM (Université du Québec à Montréal) identified as female."[482] This means that in the nearly twenty-year period between Lang Rosenberg's study and Joyce Zeman's 1994 study, very little had improved.[483] Moreover, very little has changed between 1994 and today, as Anne Dymond demonstrates in her 2019 book, *Diversity Counts*. More than 50% of working

[479] Lehmann, "Powerhouse going strong," I2.
[480] In a study titled *List of Institutions in data set and their solo contemporary exhibitions by gender*, Anne Dymond polled 97 Canadian contemporary art institutions, including many artist-run centres. Only 38 of the galleries reported 48% or higher solo exhibitions by female-identified artists. Conversely, 29 of the galleries reported between 5% (the lowest probability) and 39% of solo exhibitions by female-identified artists.
[481] Lehmann, "Powerhouse going strong," I2.
[482] Avis Lang Rosenberg, "Women Artists and the Canadian Art World: A Survey," *Criteria* 4, no. 2 (Fall 1978): 16.
[483] Arbour, "Les arts ont-ils un sexe?," 10-12.

artists in Canada are female, though the rates are higher in Québec (the national numbers are 53–56.9% compared to 58% in Québec).[484] However, according to Dymond's research, Québec-based institutions are no more or less likely to show women artists based on whether they're museums, regional galleries, or artist-run centres.[485] This makes Powerhouse's mandate from the 80s onward to exclusively show work by women artists all the more powerful.[486]

5.3 Reaching Across the Two Solitudes

Following a thirtieth anniversary exhibition of La Centrale's founding members, one of its exhibiting artists, Cherry Holmes, asserted that contemporary artist-run centres, including La Centrale, were "more restricted in what they can show because they receive public funding."[487] Notably, this anniversary exhibition did not take place at La Centrale's own space (then in the Belgo building on Sainte Catherine Street West). It was mounted instead at Galerie McClure in Westmount's Visual Arts Centre because La Centrale could not accommodate the timeline of the artists while working with granters' deadlines.[488] When Powerhouse began, it had access to job-creation funding programs but not to funding for paying fees to artists or technicians. Motivation to participate came in the form of gaining professional exhibition experience and selling work. To offset

[484] Michael Maranda, "Waging Culture: The Sex Gap (!)," Art Gallery of York University, 2009, accessed November 24, 2021, https://agyu.art/project/waging-culture-the-sex-gap/; and Guy Bellevance, *The Visual Arts in Canada: A Synthesis and Critical Analysis of Recent Research* (Montréal: Institut nationale de la recherche scientifique, 2011), 85.
[485] Anne Dymond, *Diversity Counts: Gender, Race and Representation in Canadian Art Galleries* (Montréal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019), 8.
[486] Powerhouse included men in group shows until the mid-80s and then voted to exclusively exhibit work by women. When the mandate shifted in the early 2000s to being feminist as opposed to for women, gender was reassessed as a factor for inclusion in exhibitions.
[487] Lehmann, "Powerhouse going strong," I2.
[488] The Visual Arts Centre has a longstanding relationship with La Centrale, with many early Powerhouse members having taught at the Centre, including Pat Walsh.

costs, the gallery organized fundraising shows. Remembering the gallery's rejected requests for funding to the Canada Council for the Arts, Pat Walsh recalls that the Council "wrote to tell us we represented too small a minority of the population."[489]

This type of institutional messaging only emboldened the Powerhouse community and its peers. Yet even early on in its history, members started to notice that not all women were invited to participate or welcomed. Thus began the first major shift for the centre, from Anglophone to bilingual, which included a name change in 1989 from Powerhouse Gallery to La Centrale électrique.[490] A 1992 job posting listed in the Montréal Gazette indicates that candidates were to possess "a deep understanding of the Montréal art scene, be able to mount shows and speak French well. A knowledge of spoken English would also be helpful."[491] The emphasis on French before English speaks to the gallery's desire to meet members of the larger Montréal arts community where they were, and it also hints at changes in the messaging around language at the provincial level.

5.4 For Women? Or for Feminists?

Whereas access based on language marked the first big identity shift at the centre, in the early 2000s La Centrale began to consider another big shift—this time over the question of what, and who, defined a feminist space. Powerhouse/La Centrale was and is a feminist art centre in that, both, it has declared itself to be one, and it has employed feminist practices in its decision making and power

[489] Lehmann, "Powerhouse going strong," I2.
[490] In January 1990, Powerhouse board member Rénée Lavaillante proposed the change at a general assembly. This was following dialogue between members in smaller meetings and informally for more than two years. Her following proposition was accepted nineteen to two (with one abstention): "in order for Francophone artists to understand that the gallery is Francophone and that they participate in a more representative number, I propose that the gallery project an appropriate image by adapting a French name." Translation my own. The original proposition reads: "Afin que les artistes francophones comprennent que la galerie est francophone et qu'elles y participent en un nombre plus représentatif, je propose que la galerie projette un image appropriée en adaptont un nom français." The other proposed name was Haute tension (two votes). La Centrale électrique received eighteen votes.
[491] Ann Duncan, "Ex-Curator's Return is News to Museum Boss; Musée d'Art Contemporain Flap," *The Gazette* (Montréal), November 14, 1992. J5.

relationships since the beginning. Interestingly, its early mandate and policies never explicitly state that the centre must be run by or for women.[492] Men were occasionally shown as part of group shows. As noted by a former staff member, "one would think that it should be more radical in the beginning, and then a little less so over time, but in reality, the opposite has happened."[493] In the 1980s, members voted to become a centre that exclusively presented and accepted women as members.[494] This choice was adopted by members using a democratic process. The process included a day of reflection, collecting member feedback, and circulating surveys. The centre followed a similar process when members in the early 2000s wanted to shift the centre's priorities yet again.

The centre questioned more than just gender, however. And as much as discussions around gender were motivated by currents in contemporary feminist thinking, namely ideas put forward by theorists like Judith Butler, La Centrale was also motivated by a crisis at the centre that had been brewing for several years prior. According to Roxanne Arsenault, who was the programming coordinator at La Centrale at the time, "At one time, a form of division took place with the founding members."[495] Catherine Bodmer was programming and communications coordinator for La Centrale for several years in the early 2000s. She had visited Québec from Lucerne, Switzerland, a few weeks prior to the 1995 provincial referendum, and then returned a year later to study. It was then that she was introduced to the centre by then-board member Laura Jeanne Lefave (now at the Canada Council for the Arts). When Bodmer was eventually offered a job, she "wanted to bring in a rigor that felt a bit lacking."[496] As she puts it, La Centrale was in crisis at the time. There was longstanding board and

[492] Sylvie Parent, "La Centrale, pour un féminisme inclusif: entrevue avec Roxanne Arsenault," *ETC* 84 (2008): 15–19
[493] Parent, "La Centrale, pour un féminisme inclusif," 19. Translation my own. Original text: "on serait porté à croire que ce devait être plus radical au commencement, puis un peu moins avec le temps mais, en réalité, c'est le contraire qui s'est passé."
[494] Parent, "La Centrale, pour un féminisme inclusif," 15-19.
[495] Parent, "La Centrale, pour un féminisme inclusif," 18. Translation my own. Original text: "À une époque, une forme de scission s'est installée avec les membres fondatrices."
[496] Catherine Bodmer, interview with the author, August 14, 2019.

employee conflict, and three of the coordinators had left withing months of each other, leaving the board to run the centre (most of whom almost immediately left La Centrale as well.) The employees had been there for many years, and La Centrale, in its own way, had become institutionalized. Bodmer told me that when she started at La Centrale, one of the old staff warned her "this is a sinking boat, good luck."

Working with the members, Bodmer ushered in many changes, but mostly she listened to the members that had stuck around. While she wanted to work in a collective decision-making environment, Bodmer was quick to point out that La Centrale, at this point, was very much informed by "a tradition of respect, of knowledge and hierarchy." To gain a better understanding of what led to the current rifts at La Centrale, Bodmer went back to the beginning. Following Gail Bourgeois' proposal to connect with the founding members of La Centrale, she organized organized programming and publications that showcased the work of early members and employees, including the book *Les Centrelles.*[497] In the introduction to *Les Centrelles*, Bodmer writes,

> The exhibition From the Past to the Present, bringing together works by current and founding members, served as a pretext. During an evening of exchange organized on this occasion, we learned how feminism was already defined at the time as a movement and not as a fixed ideology; as a profusion of experiences and multiple points of view ranging from militancy to more fundamentalist positions. We learned how the beginnings were marked by a spirit of "do it yourself" and improvisation, driven as much by rage as by pleasure, generating as much debate as by parties and artistic events.[498]

A storytelling evening took place where current and early members could share and learn from each other. She wanted to understand the founding energy so that she could continue building "on

[497] Fuglem, Karilee and Bourgeois, Gail and Nelson, Lou, *Les Centrelles*. Montréal, Qc: La Centrale, 2004.
[498] In Fuglem et al, *Les Centrelles*, 1. Translation my own. Original text: "L'exposition Du passé au présent – From the Past to the Present, réunissant des œuvres des membres actuelles et des membres fondatrices, nous a servi de prétexte. Lors d'une soirée d'échange organisée à cette occasion, nous avons appris comment déjà à l'époque le féminisme se définissait comme un mouvement et non pas comme une idéologie fixe; comme un foisonnement d'expériences et de points de vue multiples allant du militantisme jusqu'aux positions plus intégristes. Nous avons appris à quel point les débuts ont été marqués par un esprit de 'do it yourself' et d'improvisation, animés autant par la rage que par le plaisir, générant autant de débats que de fêtes et de manifestations artistiques."

something they fought for."[499] Several years later, following the mandate shift, Arsenault looked back on the moment:

> In the late 1990s and early 2000s, an effort was made to renew ties with the founding members, in order to take into account, the entire history of La Centrale. Thus, the idea of bringing together the voices of women who have diverse opinions on the history of the gallery, but also on feminism and on contemporary art in general, motivates us a lot today. It is important to solicit them to have a debate of ideas. It is essential to recognize the contribution they have made to La Centrale.[500]

For Arsenault it was imperative to extend a hand to past members in order to move forward. She understood that erasing or covering the past of the centre was not what La Centrale needed to succeed.

In the same period that La Centrale exhibited *Du passé au présent – From the Past to the Present,* founding members hosted their own show—the anniversary exhibition mentioned earlier, *Powerhouse: Who We Are Now*. Again, this exhibition was shown at the McClure Gallery in the Visual Arts Centre as opposed to at La Centrale, in part because La Centrale already programmed a full calendar of planned exhibitions and did not have room for this show. Since the founding members were mostly white, straight, cis-gendered artists, another possible reason for mounting the exhibition elsewhere was to bypass La Centrale's programming committee, which at that moment, might not have chosen to program such an exhibition. Bodmer notes that the proposed art itself (rooted in second-wave aesthetics) didn't correspond to what current members wanted to see in the

[499] Bodmer, interview with author.
[500] Parent, "La Centrale, pour un féminisme inclusif," 19. Translation my own. Original text: "Vers la fin des années 90 et les débuts 2000, un effort a été mis en place pour renouer les liens avec les membres fondatrices, afin de tenir compte de toute l'histoire de La Centrale. Donc, l'idée de réunir ces voix de femmes qui ont des opinions diverses sur l'histoire de la galerie mais, aussi, sur le féminisme et sur l'art actuel en général nous motive beaucoup aujourd'hui. Il est important de les solliciter pour avoir un débat d'idées. Il est essentiel de reconnaître l'apport qu'elles ont eu à La Centrale."

gallery at that point.[501] In a 2001 review in the Montréal Gazette, Henry Lehmann describes the exhibition as follows:

> It's a multimedia group show, but it's also a celebration, a "class" reunion, a time to consider how much things have changed and how, perhaps, some things have hardly changed at all. This is *Powerhouse: Who We Are Now*, featuring recent works by 14 artists who were founding members of Montréal's only feminist gallery, which is almost 30 years old and is now called La Centrale – Gallery Powerhouse. It represents several lifetimes in the "here-today-gone-tomorrow" world of art galleries.[502]

The founder's show was still very much rooted in a second-wave tradition of feminist art. As Lehmann put it, "installation art, often dealing with issues such as motherhood and sexual identity, has remained a staple."[503] While La Centrale made efforts to reconnect with early members, feminism's third wave had also taken hold at the centre and this meant a review of who and what was programmed. Michelle Lacombe, who was brought in by Lefave and Hashmi as a board member for several years and who was then involved with La Centrale's programming committee, reminds us that crisis is normal, especially in a feminist space. In Lacombe's words, "crisis is how a centre grows and evolves."[504]

In a 2012 blog post about the launch of the book *Féminismes Électriques* (a retrospective of La Centrale's activities published in 2012 by Montréal-based feminist academic press, Les Éditions du rémue-menage), librarian Heather Saunders writes about La Centrale's solo exhibition of the recently deceased Will Munro, a queer figurehead in the Canadian arts scene. This marked the first time the gallery had shown a solo exhibition of anyone not identified as female, and "this shift is the outcome of the gallery spending six years reworking its mandate through consultation with members

[501] Bodmer, interview with author.
[502] Lehmann, "Powerhouse going strong," I2.
[503] Lehmann, "Powerhouse going strong," I2.
[504] Michelle Lacombe, interview with author, July 31, 2019.

and colleagues."[505] La Centrale decided to formally change its mandate in 2007. Its previous mandate aimed to address the under-representation of women in institutions devoted to contemporary art by creating a space that stimulated and supported their work while making it accessible to a wider audience. Holding space for women artists had been a priority for so many years and for good reason.[506] In a 1993 Montréal Gazette article Ann Duncan writes,

> According to Edythe Goodridge, head of the visual arts section at the Canada Council, women began constituting the majority of many university art classes across the country somewhere in the late 1970s. By the mid-1980s, women also had started swarming into Master of Fine Arts programs, she said. Around the same time, women began holding positions of power in the art world in record numbers as critics, curators, editors of art journals and members of selection juries, Goodridge continued. Since Goodridge began working at the council in 1983, she said, "there has been a marked increase in both the number of grant applications from woman artists as well as the number of grants awarded (to them). And those are two very different things." Many artists and other experts agree that the Canada Council had played a crucial role in helping to break down the barriers of sexism that held woman artists back for so long in this country. The Canada Council was—and still is—a major source of funding for the non-profit, artist-run galleries that began to spring up around the country during the early 1970s, including La Centrale (formerly known as Powerhouse), Montréal's only feminist gallery.[507]

Early programming at Powerhouse mirrored currents in feminist art more generally. There was no hierarchy of materials, and work tended to explore topics such as the biological and social experiences of women, including menstruation, pregnancy and labour, rape and sexual harassment, and "women's work," sometimes referred to as care work. As art historian Rose-Marie Arbour writes, "This visual exploration of the female experience can serve two purposes: the celebration of

[505] Heather Saunders, "Féminismes Électriques," Artist in Transit (blog), September 28, 2012, https://artistintransit.blogspot.com/2012_09_23_archive.html.
[506] While this implicitly meant white women, I do not believe it was ever explicit or even conscious. Rather, this reality was a result of the conditions in the arts and the white washing of feminism prevalent at that time.
[507] Ann Duncan, "Bringing their art into the light; Québec woman artists are a growing presence on world scene," *The Gazette* (Montréal), January 25, 1993: C1/BREAK.

her beauty or the denouncement of the oppressions that are connected to her."[508] Previously the mandate supported women artists whether they were feminist or not, but as of 2007, La Centrale focused support on feminist artists whether or not they identified as women. Much of the change stemmed from a desire to move away from second-wave feminist theory and praxis. As Saunders asks, "if feminism in its initial iteration focused on the needs of traditional women, how can its contemporary counterpart advocate for those labelled as Other?"[509] The 2007 mandate was worded as follows:

> Founded and emerged from the feminist movements in 1973, La Centrale Galerie Powerhouse is one of the oldest artist-run centres in Québec. The centre's mandate is dedicated to the development of the history of feminist artistic practices and to support the visibility of artists and initiatives that are less or not well represented in established cultural institutions. The centre's objective is to provide a platform for languages in contemporary art that are driven by feminist discourses, gender theories, cultural diversity and transdisciplinarity. This implies the importance of the development of professional networks at the local, national and international levels. In order to enable intergenerational exchanges, the centre encourages artists at all stages of their careers. The programming and events organized by the gallery reflect the interests and commitments of the centre's members.[510]

The inclusion of the phrases "feminist discourses," "gender theories," and "cultural diversity" are powerful but empty without policies and procedures in place that shift the centre forward. The move towards this modified mandate was meant to address longstanding issues in the centre. Early members had an ambiguous relationship to feminism. While it was called a feminist centre on paper, in practice, "Powerhouse members maintained an ambiguous position on feminism. Indeed, the

[508] Rose- Marie Arbour, "Introduction,", in *Art et féminisme,* edited by Rose-Marie Arbour, Québec: Ministère des Affaires culturelles, 1982, p. 5. « Cette exploration plastique de l'expérience féminine peut servir à deux fins : la célébration de sa beauté ou la dénonciation des oppressions qui lui sont reliées. » Translation my own.
[509] Saunders, "Féminismes Électriques."
[510] "Historique et mandat," La Centrale Galerie Powerhouse, accessed Sept. 18, 2019, http://www.lacentrale.org/qui-est.

mandate was not explicitly intended to be feminist and the gallery did not take an official position on feminism."[511] Artist Joanna Nash affirms this, stating,

> the founders were basically conservative but were tempted by the idea of a radical statement. What they lacked, however, was the awareness that if one creates a true alternative to the establishment one must also operate by different rules and premises. At its inception, Powerhouse did not go far enough as an alternative.[512]

This ambiguous positionality was maintained throughout its first thirty years, until the new 2007 mandate ushered in a more concrete stance, informed by more contemporary currents in feminist thought. Catherine Bodmer posits that the shift from second to third-wave feminist thinking at La Centrale began sometime between 1999 and 2000.[513]

La Centrale's new approach to gender as something outside of the binary was an excellent step forward, but it stopped short of seeing feminism as intersectional; it failed to recognize that the needs of communities could differ. In 2008, La Centrale programmed *GENDER ALARM! Nouveaux féminismes en art actuel* to celebrate the first anniversary of its new mandate. The overall theme was a celebration of new reflections on feminist and gender theories. According to a press release about *GENDER ALARM!*, La Centrale's 2007 mandate took into account a "definition of feminism that questions the power relations present in our society and is concerned with a broader range of social issues including gender, sexuality, class, race and imperialism."[514] It goes on to state that "as a result, the centre now aims to intervene more actively in Third World and postcolonial feminist discourses, as well as in emerging fields such as transfeminism studies."[515] Again, a top down approach to

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[511] Rondeau, "Où en sommes-nous avec l'art féministe?," 24. Translation my own. Original text: "les membres de Powerhouse maintenaient une position ambiguë face au féminisme. Effectivement, le mandat ne se voulait pas explicitement féministe et la galerie ne se prononça pas de façon officielle sur le féminisme."
[512] Joanne Nash, "Montréal's Powerhouse Gallery," in Marie Fraser and Lesley Johnstone, eds., *Instabili: The Question of the Subject* (Montréal: La Centrale/Galerie Powerhouse, Éditions Artexte, 1990), 85.
[513] Bodmer, interview with the author.
[514] "Gender alarm! Nouveaux féminismes en art actuel, du 17 au 28 septembre à La Centrale," La Centrale, Réseau Art Actuel, September 17, 2008, https://reseauartactuel.org/gender-alarm-nouveaux-feminismes-en-art-actuel-du-17-au-28-septembre-a-la-centrale/?lang=en.
[515] "Gender alarm!"

inclusion fails actively engage with these issues. It is intersectional to consider race and class, but still problematic if that consideration only stems from class-privileged white people.

It was time to usher in a new generation of feminists to La Centrale. As Roxanne Arsenault, programming coordinator at La Centrale from 2004 to 2012, is quoted saying in a 2008 interview with Sylvie Parent,

> There have been several feminist waves, some more radical than others. As is often the case, the more radical waves of a movement can obscure the perceptions we may have about it. Yet this radicalism has often been necessary in order to make a real statement and move things forward.[516]

Arsenault continues, noting that being a feminist means working for equality between "women and men, for the equality of people in general."[517] Many of these new ideas around gender were encouraged by way of projects with Groupe Intervention Vidéo (GIV), which is a production and distribution focused artist-run centre.[518] Founded in 1975 in Montreal, the GIV "is one of the rare artist-run centres across the world dedicated to the promotion of works made by women (in its most inclusive definition) by distributing and presenting them, as well as by actively supporting their production."[519] The GIV was (and is) very much a queer space, and according to Bodmer, these partnerships helped form an introduction to queer community at La Centrale.[520]

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[516] Parent, "La Centrale, pour un féminisme inclusif," 15. Translation my own. Original text: "Il y a eu plusieurs vagues féministes, certaines plus radicales que d'autres. Comme cela arrive souvent, les vagues plus radicales d'un mouvement peuvent obscurcir les perceptions que nous pouvons en avoir. Pourtant, cette radicalité s'est souvent révélée nécessaire pour se prononcer véritablement et faire avancer les choses."

[517] Parent, "La Centrale, pour un féminisme inclusif," 15. Translation my own. Original text: "des femmes et des hommes, pour l'égalité des personnes en général."

[518] I don't use the GIV as a case study as it does not have an exhibition space.

[519] "Groupe Intervention Vidéo (GIV)," Groupe Intervention Vidéo, accessed November 21, 2020, https://givideo.org/.

[520] Discussing GIV would require a dissertation in itself to do it justice, so I would like to uplift the following research: The GIV Case Study as part of the Archive/Counter-Archive Research project led by Janine Marchessault, Groupe Intervention Vidéo, "Through Feminist Lenses: Women and Video Works at Groupe Intervention Vidéo," Archive/Counter-Archive, accessed December 8, 2021, https://counterarchive.ca/case-studies/through-feminist-lenses-women-and-video-works-groupe-intervention-video; and Anne Golden's (former GIV director) fictionalized history, *From the Archives of Vidéo Populaire* (St. John's, NL: Pedlar Press, 2016).

5.5 A Third Crisis

The 2007 mandate addressed new ideas and openness around gender, sexuality, and age. It also, to a degree, addressed race. In 2008, the majority of artist-run centres were not very culturally diverse, even if they claimed to be. As Roxanne Arseanaut put it:

> The last point is cultural diversity. It's always a bit difficult, because it's an expression that's very overused. But, in spite of everything, in the majority of our centres, we cannot deny that the representation of artists is very North American, Western, from the G8 countries, in short that it is very "white" as a vision. La Centrale wants to make an effort to break this habit and to program voices and practices that are less or not diffused. After all, La Centrale was founded for these same reasons (diffusion of voices not represented in contemporary art).[521]

As much as La Centrale tried to become more culturally diverse, this desire didn't translate into any policy or by-law changes. It didn't inform hiring practices or juries for exhibitions. Arsenault's replacements were a series of white programming coordinators. Ten years after Arsenault's comments about La Centrale's aim to program unheard voices, in 2018, diversity, representation, and equity became real points of issue at La Centrale. While the centre had employed people of colour in the past, notably Aneessa Hashmi as a programming assistant (and eventual programming coordinator) the centre did not tangibly consider race as a separate but intersecting identity.[522] However, this quote by former board member Felicity Taylor and staff Aneessa Hashmi demonstrates this point:

> At La Centrale, there has been constant movement of women artists and cultural workers throughout the development of the gallery. These women and their various backgrounds and approaches to feminisms have driven the membership and orientation of the gallery over time. Every show and active participant in the

[521] Parent, "La Centrale, pour un féminisme inclusif," 18. Translation my own. Original text: "Le dernier point est la diversité culturelle. C'est toujours un peu difficile, parce que c'est une expression qui est très galvaudée. Mais, malgré tout, dans la majorité de nos centres, nous ne pouvons nier que la représentation d'artistes est très nord-américaine, occidentale, issue des pays du G8, bref qu'elle est très « blanche » comme vision. La Centrale veut faire un effort pour briser cette habitude et programmer des voix et des pratiques moins ou pas diffusées. Après tout, La Centrale fut fondée pour ces mêmes raisons (diffusion de voix non représentées en art actuel)."
[522] Bodmer, interview with the author.

> life of the gallery impacts its evolution, thanks to a non-hierarchical organizational structure that encourages participatory leadership. *La Centrale remains open to a plurality of feminisms across age, culture, class, and sexuality because of values based in inclusiveness and participation*.[523]

The above quote is missing the inclusion of race as a value of La Centrale. As much as it brought diversity to the fore, the centre did not consider race as both separate and different from other elements of someone's identity. That said, following the implementation of the new mandate, La Centrale did attempt to program more culturally diverse artists. As art historian Kim Rondeau writes in her 2013 Master's thesis on La Centrale,

> Indeed, one of the major contributions of this new paradigm is the establishment of a reflection on the oppression experienced by non-white and Third World women. Feminist art also recovers the postcolonial discourse by highlighting, through artistic approaches, the injustices suffered by people from non-western continents or non-white cultures. Several artists of La Centrale will go in this direction with their practices.[524]

The problem was that cultural diversity was couched in language that reflected dominant white ideology. The jury committee and staff remained mostly white, and the culture of the centre had not changed.

In a 2019 interview, Bodmer notes that La Centrale was open to ideas about queerness but overlooked questions of race.[525] In her opinion, some of this lack of discussion around race might have been attributed to preoccupations with Québec identity. Whereas Anglo-Canadian identity politics had been foregrounding race and culture for decades, identity politics in Québec had continued to revolve around language. Given that conversations around gender and sexuality, which

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[523] Aneessa Hashmi and Felicity Tayler, "Performative Gender," *Women & Environments International Magazine* 72/73 (Fall/Winter 2006): 24 (emphasis my own).

[524] Rondeau, "Où en sommes-nous avec l'art féministe?," 65-66. Translation my own. Original text: "Effectivement, un des grands apports de ce nouveau paradigme est la mise en place d'une réflexion portant sur l'oppression vécue par les femmes non blanches ou provenant du tiers-monde. L'art féministe récupère également le discours postcolonialiste en soulignant, par des démarches artistiques, les injustices que subissent les personnes provenant des continents non occidentaux ou de cultures non blanches. Plusieurs artistes de La Centrale iront dans ce sens avec leurs pratiques."

[525] Bodmer, interview with the author.

really took form in the 1980s at La Centrale, were synchronous to questions about Anglo vs. Franco identity playing out in Québec, Bodmer's theory seems plausible. It also plays into a larger conversation around identity in Québec arts. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, the RCAAQ was formed when it split from ANNPAC in 1986 out of a concern that its Francophone members' needs were not being met. A year later, some ANNPAC members formed the breakout group Minquon Panchayat. As I mention in earlier chapters, this group worked to make ANNPAC member organizations more inclusive and aware of the needs of non-white participants. Because all Québec's ANNPAC members had left to form the RCAAQ a year prior to the formation of the Minquon Panchayat, many Québec-based centres and artists missed out on these discussion and developments around race and diversity. For the first thirty years of its existence, the RCAAQ had one director: Bastien Gilbert.[526] When Gilbert retired in 2020, Catherine Bodmer replaced him, and under her tenure the RCAAQ considered a merger with two other Québec-based advocacy groups, though that proposal is indefinitely on hold.[527]

Over the course of the RCAAQ's history, it did little to address systemic racism in Québec artist-run centres. For example, the RCAAQ invited me, a white, cisgendered, straight woman, to speak at its 2016 annual general meeting about the absence of diversity in Québec artist-run centres. Perhaps the RCAAQ felt an Anglophone would best speak to these issues, which seemed foreign to a Québec audience. I, in turn, invited articule employees (at the time), curator and art historian eunice bélidor (Haitian Canadian) and artist-curator-cultural worker Sophie Le-Phat Ho (Asian Canadian) to join me. In what might have been seen as a move forward, the RCAAQ invited Mauritius-born Black-Canadian artist, poet and cultural worker Kama La Mackerel to give an anti-oppression workshop at the organization's annual general meeting (AGM) in June 2018. La Mackerel is a

[526] Marie Lambert-Chan, "Après 2006 – Un regroupement en évolution," *Le Devoir*, Sept. 9, 2006, https://www.ledevoir.com/culture/arts-visuels/117504/apres-2006-un-regroupement-en-evolution.
[527] Bastien Gilbert, email to the author, November 20, 2020.

Montréal-based, Mauritian-born performance artist, writer, and facilitator. I've known them primarily through my work at articule, where they had been facilitating anti-oppression trainings as early as 2013. bélidor, who was present, described the day as follows:

> We sensed significant tension throughout the day, as well as hostility toward the subject matter of the workshop. (I was included in the group of Black cultural workers invited to the workshop, which was held in Trois-Rivières, so I felt this hostility and tension first-hand). Having collaborated with me during my time at the artist-run centre articule for four years, Kama candidly confided to me on the drive back to Montréal that she felt exhausted, and completely drained.[528] When I got back to my office the next day, I checked in on her and some of the other participants. Kama told me she had difficulty leaving her house; she did not anticipate the workshop would have made so much of an impact on her. It was to the point of preventing her from accomplishing simple tasks: getting orange juice, doing her usual professional activities, or even resting properly. The RCAAQ forum had brought back memories of transphobic moments and events she had lived through during her time as a member at La Centrale, memories she had suppressed for her own survival, because the person responsible for transphobic actions against her was present.[529]

This, perhaps, begins to illuminate how La Centrale arrived at the situation it found itself in in 2018, when most of its staff and all of its board quit (much like in the early 2000s) following accusations of sustained racism and transphobia.

On November 4, 2018, the remaining staff and board members La Centrale circulated a message to the La Centrale community. In it, they address a public post from September 21, 2018 (since taken down), by a group of anonymous Black artists and curators, "denouncing La Centrale for racism, especially anti-Black racism, as well as oppression towards other marginalized people."[530] The anonymous collective write:

> On a structural level, the internal dynamics of La Centrale Galerie Powerhouse proved oppressive towards racialized people, despite the centre's intention to support intersectionality. A major representation problem remains; the board of directors, the staff

[528] La Mackerel uses both she and they pronouns.
[529] eunice bélidor, "Honesty Is Dangerous Policy," *Canadian Art*, July 11, 2019, https://canadianart.ca/features/honesty-is-dangerous-policy/.
[530] "La Centrale Letter – Board of Directors," La Centrale Galerie Powerhouse, accessed January 6, 2022, https://www.lacentrale.org/en/stories/lettre-ouverte-du-conseil-dadministration-de-la-centrale.

> team, and all committees and working groups are composed almost entirely of people who are white/cis-gender and have close personal ties. This leads to conflicts of interest, causing a great deal of friction and inequality. The result of these ethical breaches creates dynamics of maintenance, protection, and prioritization of white/cis-gender people in addition to minimizing their discriminatory acts. It is an unbearable situation for racialized people, who over time, exhaust themselves to be at the heart of all micro-aggressions and/or aggressions.[531]

The letter is open, honest, and caring. This is a group of people who are angry, and for good reason.

They go on to publicly denounce that

> Black people have notably been victims of racist, transphobic and putophobic[532] behaviours and remarks, sexual harassment and touching, racial fetishization, tokenization, discrimination including in the selection of programming, appropriation and misappropriation of black aesthetics and empowerment tools, at La Centrale Galerie Powerhouse. For all these situations that have occurred in the past, in front of several witnesses or even having already been denounced, the response of the centre's administration has been inaction, denial, indifference, silence, minimization or even guilt of the victims.[533]

The collective letter notes the real-world impacts on racialized members of what had transpired at La Centrale, including resignations from the board of directors and committees, loss of work, anxiety, emotional distress and trauma, and exclusion from their social sphere and workplace. As La Mackerel notes in their performance, one never fully gets over a traumatic experience; there is no P in PTSD.

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[531] Open letter, shared by former staff. Translation my own. Original text: "Au niveau structurel, la dynamique interne La Centrale Galerie Powerhouse s'est avérée oppressante envers les personnes racisées et ce, malgré l'intention du centre de vouloir soutenir l'intersectionnalité. Un problème de représentation important demeure; le conseil d'administration, l'équipe d'employées et l'ensemble des comités et groupe de travail sont composés en quasi-totalité de personnes blanches/cisgenre et très proches personnellement. Cela amène des conflits d'intérêts causant de nombreuses frictions et inégalités. Le résultat de ces manquements éthiques crée des dynamiques de maintien, de protection, de priorisation des personnes blanches/cis-genre en plus de minimiser leurs actes discriminants. C'est une situation insoutenable pour les personnes racisées, qui au fil du temps, s'épuisent à être au coeur de toutes micro-agressions et/ou agressions."

[532] Here the author inserts the French expression for slut-shaming. The French word for whore is *pute.*

[533] Open letter, shared by former staff. Translation my own. Original text: "des personnes noires ont notamment été victimes de comportements et propos racistes, transphobes et putophobes, de harcèlement et d'attouchements sexuels, de fétichisation raciale, de tokenisation, de discrimination y compris dans la sélection de la programmation, d'appropriation et de détournement des esthétiques et des outils d'empowerment noirs, à La Centrale Galerie Powerhouse. Pour toutes ces situations s'étant produites dans le passé et ce, devant plusieurs témoins ou ayant même déjà été dénoncées, la réponse de l'administration du centre a été l'inaction, le déni, l'indifférence, la silenciation, la minimisation ou même la culpabilisation des victimes."

Several months later, La Centrale staff and board circulated a public response, stating that they

> believe what was outlined in that document, and other stories that have been shared with us prior to its release. We acknowledge that the dominance of whiteness in the organization is a problem that dates back many years, has caused significant harm, and that La Centrale has not protected those we are mandated to serve. We are unified in a sincere apology to the people who have been failed, who have suffered at the hands of that failure. We also know that an apology is meaningless without concrete actions and radical shifts in the knowledge, values, and perspectives that shape the organizational culture. We strongly hope and believe that La Centrale can be a site where those important and radical transformations can take place. We want to host public discussions on these issues. We want to listen, act, and change, and hope that this response and other actions will facilitate ongoing dialogue and the slow building of trust.[534]

The centre committed to making changes, including creating and revising policies "that facilitate swift and concrete responses to testimonies of violence of any kind. Specifically, we will write a clear procedure for dealing with discrimination, harassment, and microaggressions."[535] The staff and board planned to engage in continued anti-oppression training, and "self-education for white staff and board members on non-violent communication, white privilege and fragility, tokenization, unconscious prejudice, microaggressions, intention versus impact, and power dynamics in non-hierarchical structures." They vowed to make their board, committee, and staff recruitment processes more equitable, committing that all board, committee, and staff recruitment efforts going forward would work towards achieving and maintaining a majority representation of equity-seeking groups. And they vowed to make their work public by publishing it online, a goal they have since achieved. As well, they achieved their goal of creating a specific equity committee. Four years after this crisis, it is not yet possible to assess how La Centrale has and will be impacted by these changes. As in the

[534] "La Centrale Letter – Board of Directors," La Centrale Galerie Powerhouse, accessed January 6, 2022, https://www.lacentrale.org/en/stories/lettre-ouverte-du-conseil-dadministration-de-la-centrale.
[535] "La Centrale Letter – Board of Directors."

early 2000s when staff, board and members left due to changing attitudes around gender and sexuality, La Centrale is faced with quietly rebuilding itself with a young and energetic team.

The allegations mounted against La Centrale were two-fold: sexual harassment and racism. Members and staff accused certain member(s) of sexual harassment, both verbal and physical. The victims reported these actions to the board at La Centrale, which did nothing to stop the situation. What's more, the board and staff failed to put tools in place to address harassment complaints. Importantly, the complaints came from some of the centre's few BIPOC staff and members, who levelled the complaints against a white person. These issues built up and boiled over in 2018. I spoke with several former members and staff in the months following the fallout, who spoke of token hires and representation amidst an extremely hostile work environment for BIPOC members. An equity audit was commissioned through the Montréal-based Centre for Community Organizations (COCo). La Centrale had already voted to become a non-hierarchical organization, but those I spoke to assured me that this was on paper only. One person observed that "there was hierarchy, but it was around friendship and opportunity."[536]

The letter to La Centrale, titled "Dear White Feminists," was published on the morning of September 21, 2018. That evening, as part of Jas M. Morgan's exhibition *The Ethical Etherealness of Fuck and Love* at La Centrale, La Mackerel performed their work *Truth and Punishment.* On their website, curator Morgan writes,

> After La Mackerel performed at the opening for *The Ethical Etherealness of Fuck and Love* at La Centrale Galerie Powerhouse, she removed the dress she had been wearing and posed it on a mannequin already in the gallery. The dress, which had written on it La Mackerel's account of being sexually assaulted at the gallery, remained in the gallery for the duration of the show. On the day of the opening, a collective of anonymous Black feminist artists in Montréal released a letter

[536] Anonymous artist, interview with the author, Summer, 2019.

> entitled "Dear White Feminists," confronting the gallery's history of institutional racism.[537]

Morgan faced pushback from certain staff members about La Mackerel's inclusion in the exhibition, but Morgan had insisted. At the performance, the gallery was, quite unusually, full of BIPOC people. Many of them were there in solidarity with La Mackerel and the anonymous letter writers. At this point, the environment at La Centrale was strained. According to a former staff member, the staff came to the show but stayed in the back of the room. Some of the BIPOC members who had made the initial accusations didn't feel comfortable entering into the centre at all, instead choosing to view the work from outside.

Writing in *Canadian Art* magazine about the performance nearly a year later, bélidor highlights the original letter to La Centrale's board. She writes, "the letter closes with this: 'We think especially of the only Black worker at La Centrale Galerie Powerhouse, who must face this abusive environment each day, and we hope to help her access better working conditions as soon as possible.'"[538] La Mackerel credits the then-administrative coordinator, Pauline Lomani—the only Black staff member at the time—for encouraging them "to use her upcoming performance to explore the notion of being silenced."[539] For La Mackerel, who felt betrayed by their community for not having been protected, it was important to "speak the truth to prevent others from getting hurt."[540]

Once the letter and the performance had been made public, most of La Centrale's members left, opting to abandon the space rather than put in the work to make it stronger. At the October AGM, the centre formally dissolved its board and elected all new members. La Centrale hired an equity officer (Yen Chao Lin (Taiwanese Canadian), also a board member at articule 2017–2021)

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[537] Jas M. Morgan, "Curatorial: Truth and Punishment, Kama La Mackerel," aabitagiizhig.com, accessed November 21, 2020, https://aabitagiizhig.com/2018/09/21/curatorial-truth-and-punishment-kama-la-mack/.
[538] bélidor, "Honesty Is Dangerous Policy."
[539] bélidor, "Honesty Is Dangerous Policy."
[540] Kama La Mackerel, interview with author September 17, 2019.

and began a process of decentring whiteness. In February 2019, La Centrale launched what it called the Laboratory Series. The first, which ran from June to July 2019, was titled *LABORATORY #1: First Steps Towards a Decolonial Feminism.*[541] The promotional image used for the series was a pile of lemons, one embossed with the La Centrale logo, perhaps in a nod to how sour the situation at the centre had become. Those that remained were ready to turn lemons into lemonade.

5.6 articule

A few blocks from La Centrale's current home in the Plateau, a very similar conversation about diversity and equity was playing out at articule, albeit in a different way. La Centrale's changes were mainly the result of conflict-fuelled institutional implosions, whereas articule made changes to pre-empt conflict. I interviewed founding members Stephen Schofield, Lynn Hughes, and Tony de Melo. All three are quite active in the Montréal arts community to this day, and cite articule as a jumping off point for their careers in art. My interviews focused on how articule positioned itself as a new centre in the field. Art historian, librarian, and artist Felicity Tayler states that within the milieu of artist-run centres and projects,

> there is a tendency…to identify with entities that share a similar organizational structure, and likewise, to differentiate themselves from museums, commercial galleries, and cultural organizations operating beyond visual and media arts. This tendency is in part due to the important presence of lobbying groups such as the Regroupement des centres d'artistes autogérés du Québec (RCAAQ) and the Artist-Run Centres and Collectives Conference (ARCA). However…one would have to understand the field as an interconnected web of individuals who move in and out of different roles in diverse institutional structures. The field is expansive, rather than reductive….To consider this field critically, one needs to acknowledge

[541] "LABORATORY #1: First Steps Towards a Decolonial Feminism," La Centrale Galerie Powerhouse, accessed December 8, 2021, https://www.lacentrale.org/en/programmation/laboratoire-1/.

> that all institutional forms, including artist-run centres, operate through politics and are subject to forces that determine status and power.[542]

As an agent with multiple levels of engagement in the project, my reading is informed by my position and, of course, takes on an authorial role as I commit my reflections to the page. I am not capable of writing or reading the archive with any level of neutrality or objectivity, though perhaps no one is. articule is a near-mythical centre, defined by forty years of programming that is socially engaged and that questions the authority of artist-run discourse.

I was introduced to articule—and artist-run centres more generally—by Michelle Lacombe, Programming Assistant/Outreach Coordinator and Special Project Coordinator at articule from 2006 to 2010 (today she is the director of VIVA! Art Action, an artist-run live art festival). We met at an informal information session held at Concordia University's Art History department in 2006. I was impressed by articule's mandate and programming. When I became involved as a volunteer and member, I was amazed at the level of member involvement and agency within the organization. For example, members met (and continue to meet) regularly to make decisions on articule's programming and governance. Members make up the board and the programming committee and *anyone* can become a member. Compared to La Centrale's (and other artist-run centres') rather opaque application process and nomination to the board procedures, barriers to participation at articule are practically non-existent. The current guidelines to become a member are as follows:

> articule's membership is fluid and open to anyone who supports our mandate and activities. You do not have to be an artist to become a member. We aim to maintain a non-hierarchical, transparent and democratic structure to foster cultural and generational diversity within the centre. There are two ways to become a member, and remain an active member. Each programming year (August–June): complete four hours of volunteer work and attend one general assembly, or attend two general assemblies. The annual membership fee is $1.[543]

[542] Felicity Tayler, "No Closure From Julie Ault," Skol, 2011, 4, accessed March 29, 2012, https://skol.ca/en/publications/felicity-tayler-no-closure-from-julie-ault/.
[543] "Become a Member," articule, accessed March 7, 2021, https://www.articule.org/en/members.

Membership, governance, and operations at articule remind me very much of my time working in the early aughts with Uprising, an anarchist book collective in Toronto, which is why articule appealed to me. I was already acclimated to the consensus decision-making format that articule favours, and I was prepared for how long it can take to make decisions in such a large group (and how long meetings can run!). Thus began my more than decade-long relationship with articule.

5.7 From "Not So Radical Roots" to a Basis of Unity

In a 2011 discussion between myself and Felicity Tayler, whose work was shown at the gallery in 2008, the idea came up that articule had always considered itself to be a ground-breaking space. Taylor suggested that perhaps articule had never truly been as cutting-edge as it positioned itself.[544] It is true that articule programmed socially-engaged art, and that it had been an early supporter of performance art, but what does it actually mean to be an avant-garde gallery? When Tayler suggested that articule was not "radical," I initially assumed she was speaking to its artistic programming.[545] In hindsight, I understand that her remark was in reference to the way in which articule administered the centre. articule didn't start off as a feminist space but, I argue here, it became one.[546] Today, articule's mandate is to operate as

> an open-access artist-run centre dedicated to the presentation of a broad range of contemporary art practices. Through our various programming channels, we strive for artistic excellence, interdisciplinarity and social engagement. While special

[544] Felicity Taylor, "Felicity Tayler," last modified January 8, 2011, http://www.compulsivebrowse.net/felicity-tayler.
[545] I agree with Tayler that articule has not historically followed the avant-garde and did not work in a particularly conceptual stream in comparison to other spaces in Montréal. With respect to Tayler's argument that articule did not view itself as radical, however, I would counter that articule's perceived sense of radicalism has been centered not around the medium but rather around radical exhibition strategies.
[546] Though, according to articule's archives, it did co-host a lecture on feminism by Avis Lang Rosenberg, with Optica and FASA Concordia, in November 1982.

> consideration is given to emerging artists, we also respect those who have already established important precedents, who continue to test the limits of aesthetic gesture, and who commit themselves to the ideals of experimentation and risk-taking. Articule supports discursive and alternative activities that promote dialogue and build networks with local, national and international artists, collectives and organizations. Our open structure encourages the direct participation of an active and diverse membership on both programming and organizational levels.[547]

While not formerly feminist, articule's mandate of direct participation, coupled with its policies, demonstrate the praxis of feminist administration.

Beyond mandate, articule also uses a document called the Basis of Unity to guide decision-making in the centre. Effectively, the mission statement of articule, the Basis of Unity, lists a series of strategies meant to fulfil the art centre's anti-oppressive goals. These include (as of March 2022) recognition that "prioritizing the knowledge and safety of individuals with intimate, lived experience of a particular oppression in order to collaboratively arrive at ways to address its effects. articule acknowledges its location on the unceded territory of Indigenous peoples." Further the centre commits to "decolonizing our space through our practices, language, and politics."[548] To arrive at such a list first requires identifying the ways in which oppression occurs. Importantly, articule sees the document not as a blueprint for its staff and board (and external collaborators) but as a work in progress that is "ongoing, as we build a framework and gather a collection of tools to tackle oppressive systemic disparities in our own, other art spaces, and beyond."[549] The Basis of Unity informs all levels of articule's activities, from policies like human resources to anti-harassment, to communications, to how the centre words its programming calls and contracts. It informs hiring and board elections. It goes beyond the mandate in that it informs members and visitors of what to expect

[547] "About," articule, accessed March 6, 2021, https://www.articule.org/en/about.
[548] "About," articule.
[549] "About," articule.

from articule, and it guides participation. It is not a contract, but in some ways, it acts like one. The Basis of Unity was adopted by the members in 2018, but it didn't emerge out of thin air. It is the product of years, if not decades, of work at the centre, and it came about because the centre pushed beyond what it was being asked to do by funders, keeping community needs at the forefront of decision making.

I want to underscore that the transition to a feminist and anti-racist space was not without considerable difficulty and pushback. It took many years and many members left articule as a result. The work of writing the Basis of Unity and forming the Fabulous Committee was done in the spirt of creating more space for more people and not with the intention of excluding older and already established (mostly white) members. Unlike La Centrale, articule's difficult moments were handled privately, sometimes with external mediation and never made Canadian Art news headlines. Much of the conversation is not publicly archived but one incident that stands out and is on the record is a racialized board member being harassed and pushed out because a white member was adamant it was a conflict of interest for him to be on the board of a centre where he had friendship relationships with (also racialized) staff members. Given that this was a practice not challenged in the past with white board members, and not defined as conflict of interest in articule's policies, it was obvious (to me) that this white member felt threatened that the balance of power in the organization was in the hands of non-white people. This member eventually left articule as did the staff members in question and the board member.

Founded in 1979, articule was incorporated as a not-for-profit organization in 1980. Its mandate was to present the work of artist members in a bilingual context, while engaging in a wider socio-political discourse that transcended the context of Montréal. The founders were young artists who wanted to create a space for professional exhibition and experimentation. Most of the founders

and original members were involved with Concordia University in some capacity, either as faculty or as recent alumni. This influenced their choice early on of locating the gallery on de la Montagne Street in downtown Montréal as it was near Concordia, east of La Centrale (then Powerhouse) and the more residential Westmount area, and west of Véhicule, Montréal's first artist-run centre. Véhicule opened in 1972 and is considered to be one of the three first artist-run centres in Canada, located in what is now known as the Place-des-arts area, now home to the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (MACM), the RCAAQ, Vox, Artexte, Arprim, Skol, Optica, B-312, SBC and many private/commercial galleries. The connection to the Concordia community remains today. articule regularly collaborates with Concordia to co-produce talks, for example, or to host exhibitions as part of the annual, student-driven Art Matters, a month-long festival. Both articule and Concordia are bilingual—though in the (legally) exclusively French Montréal context this translates to being open to Anglophones, which can sometimes make Francophones feel excluded.

In 1979, when articule opened its doors on de la Montagne Street below what was then known as Dorchester Avenue (now René-Lévesque Blvd.), there were a handful of other parallel galleries in operation in Montréal.[550] Parallel galleries—the term employed in Canada to refer to early artist-run centres—were created as alternatives to commercial galleries and dotted the city at the time. They were set up by collectives of individuals, many of which were coming out of the academic sector as a means of resisting the dominant artistic stream, which pushed artists to create work to sell. Instead, artist-run centres acted as spaces for experimentation. They provided opportunities to exhibit—often the first—to emerging artists, and they provided meaningful and somewhat stable work for those seeking employment as artists. Writing about the early development of artist-run centres, artist and historian Clive Robertson explains,

[550] Today the RCAAQ (Regroupement des centres des artistes autogérées du Québec), founded in 1986, which supports and acts on behalf of artist-run centres province wide, counts approximately seventy member-organizations.

> Artist-run centres as a movement in Canada arise from two concerns: the first, from a transnational generational critique of contemporary social and economic forms of art (museums, art magazines, art educational programs, forms of patronage, etc.); and the second from self-governance aspirations stimulated through new federal opportunities such as community-defined project employment programs and new arts funding. [551]

articule, founded during the flurry of artist-run centre start-ups in the 1970s and hot on the heels of the establishment of ANNPAC (1976), was formed by a group of young individuals deeply concerned with fulfilling Robertson's described objectives. The thirty or so original members all paid initial member's fees of $150 each, far above the current norm but sufficient to rent a first gallery space and to cover the supplies required to bring the space up to gallery standards (paint, lighting, etc.). While articule's first space on de la Montagne was not close the core of artist-initiated activities in Montréal at the time, it was deeply connected to its immediate community.[552] articule has moved five times (from de la Montagne to St. Laurent, then Mont-Royal, then Berri, Fairmount and now to the St-Hubert Plaza) but works hard to build connections in its local communities.

It often chooses to work outside the main areas of culture in the city, as, according to Blessi, Sacco, and Pilati, many do:

> most independent arts centres have voluntarily settled outside of the official "visual arts district"—an area located along Saint-Catherine West and Rue Sherbrooke in which the main local visual art institutions are gathered—with the objective of creating a new cultural pole for contemporary visual arts, and thus of bringing fresh blood to the city's cultural life.[553]

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[551] Clive Robertson, "Movement + Apparatus: A cultural policy study of artist-run culture in Canada (1976-1994)" (PhD diss., Concordia University, 2004), 1. Robertson is an "artist, curator, critic, publisher and policy advocate," who served as the "Managing Director and Spokesperson at the beginning of ANNPAC/RACA (Association of National Non-Profit Artists Centres [ANNPAC] / Regroupement D'artistes Des Centres Alternatifs [RACA]) in 1976 and again in 1989-1990." Robertson, "Movement + Apparatus," 17. Robertson has been involved in the initial phases of several Canadian Artist-Run Centres and his 2004 thesis "Movement + Apparatus" has been invaluable in writing this paper.

[552] Véhicule was located at Ste. Catherine and St. Laurent, Oboro on St. Laurent, Optica was still cohabitating the Centaur Theatre, Vidéographe was on the Plateau, and La Centrale, then Powerhouse, considered an apartment on Greene Avenue its home

[553] Giorgio Tavano Blessi, Pier Luigi Sacco, and Thomas Pilati, "Independent artist-run centres: an empirical analysis of the Montréal non-profit visual arts field," *Cultural Trends* 20, no. 2 (2011): 152.

However, throughout its history, articule has always situated itself at arm's-length from the city's major hubs of art activity, and this continues to be the case. This is in stark contrast to the trend in Montreal to create cultural hubs like the 2-22 building (housing Artexte, the RCAAQ and VOX), the Belgo (home to a collection of commercial galleries; museums like SBC, and artist-run centres including SKOL and Circa; and Pied-Carré which is home to Clark, Optica, Dazibao and many others.) For articule "a change of attitude would probably also mean a change of location, and of spatial relationship with the public. At the moment, the majority of the centres are situated inside buildings that are not recognizable from the outside as art centres, and therefore create a strong psychological barrier against the involvement and participation of non-connoisseurs."[554] articule has always valued being integrated in community. Even when located in the 4001 Berri building on a residential street, in the space that now houses the GIV (as well as OBORO and Ada X) articule was on the main floor and its primary impetus to move was to have greater public visibility.

The founding members—most of which were Concordia students, alumni, and staff—operated bilingually and in a non-hierarchical way. Initially, the centre had neither a board of directors nor a gallery director. These positions were formed later when funding bodies made it necessary to professionalize, and as a way to validate the roles of core members whose hard work was integral to the growth of the centre. None had any administrative experience; Hughes was considered an expert simply because she had a part-time teaching position at Concordia. None were versed in board actions, grant writing, or other administrative dealings, and there were very few resources available at the time to access this information. Today, in comparison, organizations like the RCAAQ, the Conseil Québécois des arts médiatiques, the Centre for Community Organizations, and the Independent Media Arts Alliance among others offer trainings and resource guides either for free or at a low cost to the community.

[554] Blessi, Sacco, and Pilati, "Independent artist-run centres," 161.

The gallery therefore provided opportunities for young artists to find work in the cultural sector. The gallery put to use their education and validated their roles as cultural mediators. articule did not initially take advantage of community-defined project employment programs, but it was aided by new arts funding projects from the Canada Council (1982), the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec (since 1994) and its predecessor via the Ministre de la culture, and the Conseil des arts du Montréal. This initial batch of funding fuelled projects, and helped the centre establish a firm programming base. articule's founding members had very little experience as professional artists and cultural workers at first. Few were engaged with other spaces; fewer still were represented by commercial galleries; and, while a handful were employed by arts education institutions, most had no experience working in administration. The choice to self-govern provided articule members the opportunity to take control of their careers and resources and allowed the gallery to experiment in ways not usually afforded to commercial galleries or museums. What's more, it provided a platform for learning and teaching and for transnational, generational critique of contemporary social and economic forms of art administration (museums, art magazines, art educational programs, forms of patronage, and so on).

articule's initial impetus, beyond providing early support to young artists, was to create a neutral and bilingual space that transcended the "two solitudes" of contemporary Québec society. *The Two Solitudes* is the title of a 1945 novel by Anglophone Canadian author Hugh MacLennan. Its subject is the tension between English and French culture in Canada. Today, the term is often used as short-hand to describe the (lack of) relation between these two communities. In the broader social context of Québec in the late 70s and 80s, any move to unite the Anglophone and Francophone communities was somewhat exceptional. The arts specifically were being utilized to create a distinct Franco-Quebecois cultural identity. As Blessi, Sacco, and Pilati write,

> The so-called "quiet revolution" and the growing political decentralization of the Canadian Federation boosted the political independence movement of the Québec Province. It is no coincidence that the provincial government, during and after this decade, started developing a strategy about the promotion of local identity, and pursued it in various ways, one of the most notable being the promotion of endogenous/idiosyncratic art expressions and organizations….During the 1970s, the Québec Province developed specific strategies to encourage the blooming of a highly distinctive cultural identity for the Province, relying upon a new generation of Québécois artists, going beyond the scene expressed by academic circles. To make significant steps in this direction, the provincial government started looking at independent art spaces, which were attended by local artists trying to explore new contemporary art languages.[555]

Beyond the Quiet Revolution, Montréal in the 1970s and 1980s underwent a financial crisis, which transformed the city's economic urban landscape. Artists snatched up factories and other cheap properties for artist lofts and music studios, and artistic production flourished. Montréal became known in Canada as a cultural capital. Hughes and Schofield were two Anglo-Canadian artists who migrated to Montréal during this period of flux to engage with the vibrant community. But where others moved to Montréal to participate in what Geoff Stahl describes as an "Anglo-bohemia" in his article "Tracing out an Anglo-Bohemia: Music Making and Myth in Montréal," articule's community worked extremely hard to create a fluidly bilingual space.[556] This meant producing content in two languages and conducting meetings with translation at a time when laws did not yet completely dictate language use in the city, and when there was deep schism between the two poles of Montréal. articule was a radical space of bilingualism. Its commitment to transcending the two solitudes is echoed in its current mandate to act as a laboratory not just for bilingualism but also for multilingualism, encouraging members discover other means of dialogue and additional language resources.

[555] Blessi, Sacco, and Pilati, "Independent artist-run centres," 150.
[556] Geoff Stahl, "Tracing Out an Anglo-Bohemia: Music Making and Myth in Montréal," *Public* 22/23 (2001): 99-121.

From a perspective of values, not much has changed at articule in over forty years. On the eve of its twentieth anniversary, articule's president wrote, "As a centre committed to the artist-run mandate, articule is in its entirety, run by artists. From Main Gallery programming to off-site (Special Projects) activities, from curatorial exhibitions to the Media Room, right down to filling out grant applications."[557] From 2006-2021 articule was located in the Mile-End neighbourhood in Montréal, in a residential area with a bright storefront location (it moved to the Plaza St Hubert in October 2021). Between the time it was located on de la Montagne and now, articule made its home on Ste Catherine street, moving closer to other centres; in the Burman building on St. Laurent and Duluth, until gentrification pushed it and several other centres out, creating the Société de 5 Avril and creating discussion about the role of artist-run centres in the Montréal arts ecology; and in the 4001 Berri building in the current GIV space, where its neighbours included Studio XX (now ADA X) and Oboro.[558] In October 2021 articule moved to a more physically accessible location in order to better care for its publics.

Considering that today articule considers itself a contemporary and inclusive gallery, does its current programming and structure correspond with its original mandate? How did the centre differ from other types of counter-cultural organizations prevalent in the late 1970s and early 1980s? What was specific to Montréal and the political and cultural climate of the city that made an organization like articule possible? articule's programming has always been focused on research and experimentation, but it has never been medium-specific. From very early on, articule included discursive activities as part of its programming. This included producing the artist-run magazine

[557] Articule, *Bulletin: 20 ans, 1979–1999* (Montréal: Articule, 1999), 20.
[558] The Société de 5 Avril was an organization created by the artist-run centres being evicted from the Burman building in 1990. The organization undertook a feasibility study to determine if the evicted centres could collectively move to the space now occupied by the Darling Foundry in Montréal. These organizations were articule, DARE-dare, Dazibao, La Centrale, Main Film, Skol and Vox Populi. The Société de 5 Avril operated from April 5, 1990 through February 28, 1997. Its archival fonds are at Concordia University Library.

Discussion, which was published from 1981 to 1989. Today, articule continues to produce regular thematic conferences like Montréal Monochrome (happening biannually since 2012), artists talks, and workshops. articule has also very much been involved in the performance art community. As a co-founding centre of VIVA! Art Actuel (since 2006), "articule supports practices associated with performance art in its broadest terms and has made a significant contribution to the development of this discipline in the Montréal region."[559] In its early years, the centre also had a relationship with the dance community, presenting the site-specific choreography of Dena Davida (1979) and others. It is only because of articule's inhospitable concrete floors that Davida, an original member, went on to form Tangente, today a leader in the Canadian dance and choreography community.[560]

Programming today at articule is varied and diverse and, like many centres, multi-faceted. Because of its desire to do more with fewer resources and its recognition that teamwork yields positive results, articule has always been interested in collaboration with other centres and communities. Granting agencies have been known to capitalize on articule's collaborative activity, as budget cuts have forced them to offer programs that foster collaboration (with varying results). In their extensive interviewing of artist-run centres activities in Montréal in 2011, Blessi, Sacco and Pilati point to the ways in which partnerships are formed and to what end:

> Partnerships are focused on joint projects, typically under the form of exchanges of exhibitions and artist residencies. The most internationally oriented cultural centres in Montréal are also trying to expand the external network through more and more structured and ambitious partnerships in order to countervail the auto-referential tendencies of the local cultural scene, and the relative isolation of the Québec province in the international visual arts scenario.[561]

While Blessi, Sacco and Pilati are speaking to a contemporary situation, this has in fact been the reality at articule since its inception; articule has always formed ambitious partnerships to mount

[559] "History," articule.
[560] Dena Davida, conversation with the author, September 9, 2020.
[561] Blessi, Sacco, and Pilati, "Independent artist-run centres," 157.

projects meant to increase its relevance on a broader stage. All three of my interviewees cited *Au Lieu De* as being one such pivotal moment in the programming history of the centre. *Au Lieu De,* an exhibition created by members, ran from April 29 to May 22, 1981, outside of the gallery and in the studios of its members (including board and staff). The public was given instructions to visit the artists in their studios and to see the work in situ, in lieu of a more traditional exhibition. The catalogue and promotional material featured a map to aid the viewer in touring the studios and making their way back to the gallery (which featured complimentary work). Another highlight for the interviewees was a 1980s collaboration with local businesses Ogilvy, Le Château, and Simons. Each store lent articule their downtown storefront windows, and articule hired the store's window dressers to install contemporary artwork in the store's vitrines in a very public way.

The gallery often collaborated with outside centres and communities. At one point in the early 1980s, articule brought in artists from Japan and the USSR (primarily through personal contacts of the membership). In 1983, the gallery hosted the show *Trois artistes de Toronto = Three Toronto artists: Alan Glicksman, Brian Scott, Robert Youds* (under the direction of curator Lynn Hughes), which was an opportunity for exchange within a wider Canadian context. These early programs first and foremost reflected the interests of the membership. In choosing to reflect the needs of its specific community (and I am by no means arguing that other centres did not do the same), articule created a solid community that endures today—in fact, many early members maintain an active interest in the centre, attending events, participating in auctions and participating in committees.

All three of my interviewees (Schofield, Hughs, and de Melo) spoke to what Julie Ault has described as, in the beginnings of artist-run culture, "the treadmill of 'programming mania' endemic to many cultural organizations at this time." [562] The early years at articule saw a gallery with several distinct spaces able to present up to four separate exhibitions at once. For two weekends out of the

[562] Felicity Tayler, "No Closure From Julie Ault."

month, the gallery was at least in part dedicated to presenting performance, including dance. This level of activity and constant turnover placed a heavy burden on its employees and volunteers; all three of the interview subjects spoke to the burnout this caused. However, each was quick to point out that this level of activity is what signals to grant agencies that your centre is serious and committed. And, in fact, this remains true today, to the point of making it nearly impossible to take a step back and focus on doing any one thing exceptionally well.

articule's current location boasts a large street-facing storefront vitrine. In the summers, there is traditionally a window-only exhibition, to allow staff to take a summer holiday. The tradition of the window exhibition comes from articule's long history of trying to take work out of the gallery:

> An agreement established with Montréal retailers has given artists the opportunity to exhibit in storefronts since the early 1980s. This practice continues today with subsequent exhibitions and events being held in apartment buildings, hospitals, retirement homes, theatres, cinemas, parks, and a Salvation Army, to name but a few venues. In tandem with its exhibition program, articule has developed different avenues of activity in response to the needs and trends of the milieu. Examples of note would be the multimedia programming of the 1990s, comprising, for example, the work of Trinh T. Minh-ha, Steve Reinke and Pipilotti Rist; Special Projects, allowing for more site-specific works (1994 onwards); the conservation projects (2000 onwards), such as *Hôpital* (2001) and Carolee Schneeman's 2005 exhibition, and the in-house window projects initiated in 2007.[563]

The vitrine was such an important keystone for articule, that founding member Stephen Schofield, who is no longer involved at articule, continues to run a storefront gallery attached to his studio space in Montréal. Called La Vitrine, it has programmed many articule alumni. Today, articule's interest in non-gallery focused projects continues beyond the vitrine with collaborations with other centres, such as the MAI (Montréal, arts interculturels) and the ongoing programming of Mile-End s'articule, a street festival that takes up space in a neighbouring alley.

[563] "History," articule.

As Tayler writes, "'artist-run' is not always artist-centred. As an exhibition venue, the 'artist-run' space does not necessarily produce culture differently."[564] We can see this in the case of artist-run centres that participate in a sophisticated international, critical, and aesthetic discourse that engages the staff and board members of the centre, but that may be alienating to its public and even its own membership. Today, artist-run centres rarely program their own member-artists in exhibition contexts, and they generally consider this type of activity to be a conflict of interest. However, Schofield, Hughes, and de Melo's testimony, as well as the exhibition catalogues, I consulted from the early years of articule, all point to a deliberate aim to program member-artists as well as members of the staff and board of directors. This aim was, in fact, precisely the impetus for creating articule (and other artist-run initiatives); there were limited or no exhibition spaces for emerging, experimental artists and practices. and articule acted as a venue for artists to present their work, often for the first time, in a professional context at little or no cost to themselves. By programming member-artists, articule was able to present work that was relevant and engaging to the community, thereby ensuring an audience.

The programming at articule reflected the wishes of those in its membership, who, according to my interviewees, were actively involved in all levels of decision-making. This remains an important value of the centre to this day. At a recent general assembly, various committees (such as long- and short-term programming, writing, fundraising, web, and outreach), which are individually made up of members, board members, and staff, presented their reports to the larger membership. The membership voted priorities to present to the board of directors, who tasked staff with a collectively-made game plan for the coming year. This type of decision-making is time- and energy-consuming yet rewarding. In my extensive experience within artist-run and activist communities, I

[564] Felicity Tayler, "No Closure From Julie Ault."

have never seen anything that so deeply adopts a democratic and non-hierarchical model of governance.

5.8 Beyond Lip Service: Anti-Oppression Work at articule

While Québec—and Montréal more specifically—is a culturally diverse place, the Quebecois art world remains dominated by visibly white people, with women occupying the majority of the administrative positions and men occupying a large part of the directorial roles. This is not unique to the local situation but is a rather widespread problem in the art world across Canada. In 2011 articule began a process towards becoming an actively anti-racist centre and towards decolonizing itself. It began this process in response to staff and member initiatives such as the Fabulous Committee, which is a member-formed sub-group within articule whose mandate was and is to "develop anti-oppression strategies to make the centre more inclusive and culturally diverse, this includes the artists we present through our programming as well as our internal structure (members, board, staff)."[565] Starting in the summer of 2012, the committee, chaired by Salvadorean-Canadian artist and cultural worker Samuel Garigo Meza, implemented a series of changes in the centre that have since resulted in a radical shift in the organization.[566] Beyond the committee, another result of article's tool towards implementing anti-racist policies and practices is Montréal Monochrome, "a conference aimed toward addressing the mis-and under-representation and systemic oppression of marginalized groups in Montréal's contemporary art milieu. It grew into a multi-day interdisciplinary gathering and has become the

[565] articule Committees

[566] The members of the Fabulous Committee change often as there are no terms. Some past members include Kaeten Bonli, Dominique Fontaine (Black-Canadian) Raphaële Frigon (French-Canadian, white), Jenny Lin (Taiwanese Canadian), Kevin Yuen Kit Lo (Chinese-Canadian), and Jamie Ross (mixed-European settler Canadian). There are many more members not named here but the centre does not publicly name members of specific committees and does not have complete public records of meetings due to confidentiality issues.

centre's annual flagship event."[567] It also initiated the Basis of Unity, which grew out of consistent training with COCo (The Centre for Community Organizations) and especially with the help of Kama La Mackerel, who led the centre through many anti-oppression training sessions and workshops.

Years of reflection are behind the creation of the Fabulous Committee. The committee came out of articule's regular check-ins about who they were and who they wanted to be. articule's questioning of its positioning in the field sometimes went beyond what was expected by funders and the larger artist-run centre community. While other centres and the RCAAQ were considering language identity, articule had already made bilingualism (and beyond) a focal point of their mandate. However, when artist-run centres in Canada as well as the Canada Council for the Arts began thinking through diversity and equity models in the 1990s, articule was still very much focused on Québec-specific language identity issues. Things started to change with the arrival of new staff in the late 2000s, especially Coco Guzman, who joined as outreach coordinator in 2011. Guzman, who was specifically brought on as an equity hire, opened up new discussions around queerness and identity at articule. Through their connections, articule's membership shifted slightly, and the centre began working in 2011 with Qouleur, a QTBIPOC arts festival in Montréal founded by Asian Canadian artists and cultural workers Wai-Yant Li and Alan Wong.[568]

articule's changes were gradual, but they have substantially contributed to bringing in new publics and members as well as renewing the ways of relating and the terms of togetherness. Other factors contributed to the formation of the Fabulous Committee, including the 2012–2016 strategic plan commissioned by the board and created with the membership and staff (including Guzman), and a research project-cum-thesis titled *Exploring Community Outreach Initiatives for Artist-Run Centres: A Case Study Using Anti-Racist Feminist Pedagogies to Create Inclusive Spaces for*

[567] "History," articule.
[568] QTBIPOC stands for Queer, Trans, Black, Indigenous, People of Colour.

Knowledge Exchange, conducted between 2010 and 2011 by former articule board member Skye Maule O'Brien.[569] Maule O'Brien's research helped shape the suggestions in the strategic plan, which in turn impacted the mandate of the Fabulous Committee.

In order to help articule transition into a more culturally diverse place, Maule O'Brien developed a series of workshops meant to help address privilege and gaps in knowledge, without creating an environment clouded by guilt and shame. She did so with the centre's end goal in mind, which was to create space for more people, as opposed to replacing white members with people of colour. Maule O'Brien challenged participants to think about how artist-run centres could be more inclusive and consider what changes they could make to carry this out. She also asked participants to think about how "notions of access and privilege" were being addressed by the institution and its representatives, either through a shift in current administrative models to "encourage and promote greater diversity through anti-oppression approaches," or through "curatorial, programming, and display practices."[570] Maule O'Brien's work paid off: today articule is a diverse space at all levels. While articule still has its challenges, the space is one of the only artist-run centres in Canada that has taken meaningful steps to address what diversity means and what it could be. Of the three staff members, two are people of colour, all three identify as women, and there is diversity with respect to sexual orientation. The same is true of the board, the membership, and the programming. In the 2015–2016 programming year, four of five exhibitions featured artists from diverse cultural backgrounds. Comparatively, two centres nearby, Centre Clark and Skol, respectively presented work by culturally diverse artists in zero of ten and two of eight exhibitions.

[569] Skye Maule O'Brien, "Exploring Community Outreach Initiatives for Artist-Run Centers: A Case Study Using Anti-Racist Feminist Pedagogies to Create Inclusive Spaces for Knowledge Exchange" (Master's Thesis, Concordia, 2011), 1-112.
[570] Maule O'Brien, "Exploring Community Outreach Initiatives for Artist-Run Centres," 70.

A major turning point in articule's shift towards its current form, one that provided the impetus for O'Brien's research, was the year-long 2009-2010 archival project and exhibition *Conjuring the not-now to confirm our fragile presence in time & space,* mounted at articule by the Centre de recherche urbaine de Montréal (CRUM). Undertaken as part of articule's 30th anniversary celebrations, article invited CRUM to mine its archives with the intention of drawing out some kind of narrative that painted articule as the revolutionary, history-making centre it hoped to be. Not finding this history, and not wanting to invent it, CRUM's contribution was to metaphorically perform the burning of the archives. In "setting them on fire," CRUM created a tabula rasa for articule to name its new goals and direction and laid the groundwork for articule's strategic plan. It is my opinion that the combination of CRUM's intervention, the creation of the Fabulous Committee (which in part was thanks to the hiring of a BIPOC staff member), and the trainings organized by the board (specifically Skye Maule O'Brien) collectively created the conditions for transformation.

To better appreciate how articule positions itself today, it's important to understand how it got there. The Fabulous Committee created a change in the *who* of the centre, and the Basis of Unity shifted the *why*. In the summer of 2020, during the height of the George Floyd protests, my peers at articule and I co-wrote a letter in response to the prolific but empty-handed anti-racism statements circulating in the Canadian arts communities. articule expected the letter to circulate in our immediate community, but it went far beyond that. The letter acted as a call to action. It was informed by articule's work with La Mackerel and with COCo, and it invited "artist-run centres and arts organizations in Montréal to move beyond statements of solidarity against anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism, police brutality, and systemic oppression present in our local and national government and society."[571]

[571] "Open letter to artist-run centres in Quebec: moving Beyond Statements of Solidarity," articule, June 12, 2020, https://www.articule.org/en/open-letter-to-artist-centres-moving-beyond-solidarity-statements.

The letter included suggestions and evaluations, and asked of artist-run centres, who is on the board? What do hiring processes look like? Who has a leadership position in the organization? How do policies support dismantling white-supremacist culture? What policies are in place to protect and keep safe racialized staff, artists, and members from aggression and micro-aggression? It underlined the importance of doing this work, while working at the speed of trust; it is impossible to become an anti-racist organization otherwise.[572] The letter cautioned against making changes only to select or isolated aspects of organizations, since "if artist-run centres are solely programming Black and Indigenous artists without confronting white supremacy actively in our organizations and consistently using our platforms to support Black and Indigenous lives, we are exploiting the artists' social capital and failing to meaningfully confront systemic racism."[573] articule doesn't have all the answers—but it knows how to ask good questions.

5.9 Conclusion

Thanks to years of work, articule's board is seventy percent BIPOC, the staff is eighty percent BIPOC, and they use a non-hierarchical work model. Membership is equally diverse, as is programming. The commitment to BIPOC communities has not come at the expense of supporting women or queer artists or language groups. articule's commitment to diversity has meant a greater commitment to meeting accessibility needs, too. In essence, articule is not, nor does it claim to be, a utopian blueprint, but it is using a self-taught utopian methodology to inform choices going forward. As discussed in Chapter Two, this means that to move forward you must examine the past to educate your desire to move forward. As highlighted in their 2020 letter, change at articule comes "from a

[572] Adrienne M. Brown, *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* (Chico, CA: AK Press, 2017), 27.
[573] "Open letter to artist-run centres in Quebec."

position of humility, listening, seeking consent, and consistent willingness to change and be changed."[574]

La Centrale currently has four staff, only one who identifies as BIPOC. That said, its membership and committees (including the board) have diversified significantly. articule's actions have been public facing and continual. La Centrale has been more private about its equity process, and driven by crisis, as opposed to proactive. This does not mean that they aren't now learning from the past to move forward but it does suggest that they have not always seen the past as a productive space from which one could learn. If utopia as method is the act of two steps forward, one step back, then forgetting to look back to figure out your way forward seems like a major misstep.

In educating my desires for what a contemporary, intersectional feminist, anti-oppressive artist-run centre could look like, I chose to study articule and La Centrale because these are the spaces, I am most intimately familiar with. This is not to say that the real hard work is not happening elsewhere — it is, though it is not always happening in such public ways. As an audience member at a recent panel on organizational change brought up, sometimes these conversations need to happen more discreetly for a whole host of reasons, including protecting the individuals involved.[575] And as the panellists so brilliantly reminded us, there is a time and place for closed conversation but only when they are to protect the people most likely to be negatively impacted by the ongoing legacy of colonialism, racism, and sexism (and all the isms) of the (art) world.

[574] "Open letter to artist-run centres in Quebec."

[575] The panel, organized by Burcu Emeç (Turkish-Canadian) and the members' development committee at articule, was titled "Rethinking The Structures: a Discussion on Organizational Change" and featured Emil Briones of The Centre for Community Organizations (COCo), Max Ferguson of Tangled Art and Disability, and Alexander Dirksen of Community Knowledge Exchange (CKX). The panel was moderated by me, as part of my work at articule, on Wednesday, February 24, 2021.

Chapter 6

Going Forward and Wrapping Up

6.1 What This Is and What It Could Be

In this dissertation, I have been inspired by Ruth Levitas's transformative utopian methodology as well as Kimberlé Crenshaw's definition and historicization of intersectionality. Levitas invites us to imagine a way forward towards utopia by educating our desire. In feminism I see that same utopian yearning, and as collective fumbling towards our desires. I combine Levitas' utopian method with Crenshaw's definition of intersectionality (itself language assigned belatedly to theorize common praxis) because I feel that in order to educate our desire, we need to understand how we arrived at intersectionality. In educating my desire for a more inclusive historicization of Canadian artist-run centres, I hoped to create a hopeful and honest account of the work that has been done around equity in the history of artist-run centres in Canada, as well as an audit of the work that still needs to be done. Artist-run centres are not Utopian, and their culture has at times caused harm. They are also utopian and not static.

Because I am a passionate advocate for the roles, responsibilities, and power of artist-run centres, I believe that something has to change. The first order of business is to acknowledge the work that women, the Queer community, and BIPOC communities have done up to now. Next, we must be explicit about recognizing the role of funding agents in the history of changes to artist-run centres. To paraphrase Emil Briones paraphrasing Audre Lorde, it is sometimes possible to find ways

to repurpose and reclaim the tools we've inherited to lovingly construct new ways of working.[576] Finally, for transformation to occur, a redistribution of power must favour the people and communities who have been most often left out of artist-run histories, and rebuilding ought to be in their service and image.

In my wildest dreams I imagine this as the beginning of my research. I picture a pan-Canadian, open-source, web-based project that combines an archive, an oral history database, and a mapping tool to trace these histories—and, yes, *histories* in the plural, as there is no one definitive story. History is dominated by the stories of the winners. In researching this dissertation, I spoke with the people responsible for the background noise of artist-run culture; it was my aim to document the histories of the important feminist centres that didn't "make it" in the traditional sense. This is a project that recognizes the gender equity work accomplished by feminist artist-run centres, and nods to their contributions towards racial equity as well as their limitations in this arena. This dissertation does not tell the stories of all the specifically racial-equity-seeking organizations that existed both formally and informally across Canada. If I could start this project again, I'd visit even more archives, include more names, and do a deeper dive into community publications (and of course, I wouldn't be interrupted by a global pandemic).

I want to see our friendship networks activated to tell the stories of the spaces that lived just in our imaginations (like BAWA in Hamilton), the spaces whose archives were so tiny and inaccessible that they merged into the archives of larger projects, and of course, all the ones that I can't even imagine. Artist-run centres began decades before I was born. For every project that came to my attention, I expect a dozen or so will have remained obscured by history. I want to revive some of this

[576] The panel was titled "Rethinking The Structures: A Discussion on Organizational Change" and featured Emil Briones of The Centre for Community Organizations (COCo), Max Ferguson of Tangled Art and Disability, and Alexander Dirksen of Community Knowledge Exchange (CKX). The panel was moderated by me, as part of my work at articule, on Wednesday, February 24, 2021.

lost history to understand the intimate relationships—the friendships—that made up this network. My future research will map these friendship networks, look for ghosted archives, and illuminate stories of imagined projects.

When I set out to write this dissertation, I decided to apply a utopian methodology to my research, a methodology inspired by Ruth Levitas. Again, this model is not meant to generate a blueprint; it is meant to be a guide in the formation of questions, to push ourselves further so that we can learn from the mistakes of the past and move towards somewhere new, better, and more inclusive. As Toni Morrison notes, "all paradises, all utopias, are designed by who is not there, by the people who are not allowed in."[577] My argument is not that artist-run centres are utopias—they are not. However, understanding the history and the legacy of artist-run centres, especially feminist ones, will allow us to better imagine what to do with these spaces going forward.

6.2 One Last Example of the Stories Left Behind

Compared to some of the rich histories I was able to include in this dissertation, the following discussion on Saskatchewan Women in the Arts Association (SWAA) will seem brief. What I set out to do with this thesis was to cover the histories of explicitly feminist artist-run centres in Canada and my methodology was to start with the ones I knew, like the still-existent MAWA. I then asked people involved in the community to tell me about others I may not have been familiar with. This is how I came to find out about WIF. I also conducted literature reviews and came across spaces my contacts hadn't mentioned. The problem with my methodology was that, as I've said, history is written by the winners, and very often, spaces that don't survive do not get documented. Worse, when a collapsing

[577] Conversation with Elizabeth Farnsworth, *PBS NewsHour*, March 9, 1998.

artist-run centre does have the presence of mind and the means to archive its history, it's not always able to fund the digitization of its collection—resulting in histories languishing in archives unread, and often unlisted in databases.

While researching Womanspirit, the name Karen Schoonover surfaced repeatedly. Schoonover is a Regina-based curator, who was the former director of the Art Gallery of Regina. The Art Gallery of Regina used to have a small offshoot located in a strip mall in Regina called the Rosedale Art Gallery. The Rosedale Art Gallery was known for being a forerunner in the region for showing art by women and members of the Indigenous community. Schoonover was listed as a contact in Womanspirit's publication *Spirale* in an ad for the Saskatchewan Women Artists Association. Schoonover had been contacted by Womanspirit in 1980 to help organize Saskatchewan participants in an event called *Festival,* which was meant to be an annual celebration of Canadian women in the arts, for which Womanspirit had received funding from the federal Department of Status of Women.[578] Schoonover notes that she "had been active in the feminist art community in western Canada (in Calgary and Vancouver) prior to moving to Saskatchewan so someone had put forward my name as a regional contact."[579]

The Saskatchewan Women Artists Association, a regional offshoot of the national organization, had, at its peak, about 150 members, and it operated for "six to seven years."[580] It published a quarterly newsletter, sponsored a number of events, advocated provincially for women artists, and managed to get funding to hold a festival of women's art in the summer of 1982.[581] The Saskatchewan Women Artists Association also collaborated with the Shoestring Gallery to bring

[578] *Festival '82* was a pan-discipline, cross-country gathering of women in London, Ontario. Files related to *Festival* appear in each archive I visited, yet none contain a full description of who was there, or if in fact the festival actually took place. I have not found a single history of this event, possibly because it is difficult to search something simply called *Festival*.
[579] Karen Schoonover, email to the author, August 20, 2018.
[580] Schoonover, email to the author.
[581] Schoonover, email to the author.

Judy Chicago's *The Dinner Party* to Saskatoon as part of its national tour. As mentioned in Chapter Three presentation of this exhibition reflected thriving feminist activity as a centre and in a city. Schoonover says that the association disbanded "to focus our energies through CARFAC Saskatchewan."[582] At that point, all the Saskatchewan Women Artists Association files were donated to the Saskatchewan Archives. When I contacted the archives to access the files, the archivist in charge was unaware of their existence.

Schoonover notes that "in the 70s and 80s, some regions like Ontario, BC, and Saskatchewan were more politically active than others," and that "very little was happening in Alberta at that time. Besides our organization, there was a feminist artist collective in Toronto, one in London, ON, and a couple of them in Vancouver at that time."[583] These regional nodes of feminist arts activity, which played out in artist-run centres and collectives, allowed women artists to "communicate with each other and their target audiences without being filtered by the establishment or anyone else."[584] This is still true today, often facilitated by a move online: some brick and mortar galleries are being replaced by digital platforms, and physical newsletters and magazines like *Kinesis, Spirale,* and *Gallerie* are increasingly replaced by e-newsletters and websites (if indeed they are replaced at all).[585] As Schoonover notes, "the internet is now doing this [labour] for all marginalized groups and fringe activity—providing direct access to one another."[586]

6.3 A Teaching Moment / A Learning Opportunity

[582] Schoonover, email to the author.
[583] Schoonover, email to the author.
[584] Schoonover, email to the author.
[585] *Gallerie: Women Artists Magazine* was a privately produced Canadian publication focused on women artists.
[586] Schoonover, email to the author.

I often wondered why I hadn't been taught about any of these spaces in my art history classes—not just projects like Womanspirit or the Saskatchewan Women Artists Association, but the still surviving artist-run centres like MAWA and La Centrale. As an art history student, I was sometimes presented with information about the past and current exhibitions at artist-run centres, or a visiting artist spoke about their experience within a specific centre. When more marginalized spaces were mentioned, most of us listening didn't have the context to know what this meant. In the absence of art historical interpretation to draw from, my brilliant feminist and BIPOC teachers (almost exclusively from my time in the art history department at Concordia, and including Alice Ming Wai Jim – Chinese Canadian, Sherry Farrell Racette - Métis, and Heather Igloliorte - Inuk) would have had to personally do the primary work of interpreting hearsay or shared memory, seeking out and vetting self-published or graduate work, and contextualizing past and current exhibitions and personal accounts from said visiting artists. I now understand how difficult it is to teach these histories without academic resources.

In taking on this subject in my thesis, I bear the responsibility of producing a document for my community. The artist-run centres I study are extremely precious to me. While we see artist-run culture celebrated now in panels at the Universities Art Association of Canada (UAAC/AAUC) annual conference and with prizes given out by the National Gallery of Canada, significant scholarship devoted to artist-run centre histories is still wanting.[587] I do hope, in the same collaborative spirit of artist-run culture, that this document becomes a resource for those eager to talk about what is working or not working in their communities and how we can learn from these spaces going forward.

[587] The National Gallery of Canada's Lacey Prize was launched in 2018 to recognize small arts organizations and artist-run centres across Canada through a cash prize of $50,000 to the winner and $20,000 to two runners-up. Shannon Moore, "The Lacey Prize: Recognizing Artist-Run Centres in Canada," *National Gallery Magazine*, July 19, 2019, https://www.gallery.ca/magazine/in-the-spotlight/the-lacey-prize-recognizing-artist-run-centres-in-canada.

The work I've done here has been possible because I have been lucky to learn from so many BIPOC, Queer, Trans and other marginalized teachers—and because I have been open to listening. This dissertation is written in the context of an art history, but I hope it can point us in the direction of possible futures. It is not a blueprint but rather a series of observations of things we as a community could consider. I understand the messiness and difficulty of writing about marginalized communities as someone who benefits from the dominant culture and from white supremacy. I am a white, straight, cisgendered woman who has worked within and benefited from the current artist-run centre model my entire career. My choice to uplift these histories is to recognize the responsibilities white settlers like myself have in redistributing the wealth and power we have long held in the art world.

As described in Chapter Five in May 2020, Black American civilian George Perry Floyd Jr. was murdered by Derek Chauvin, a white (former) police officer in Minneapolis, Minnesota. In the days and months that followed, many organizations internationally—including many Canadian arts organizations—issued statements in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement. The majority of the statements coming out of Canadian institutions did not communicate any clear action to address racism, especially anti-Black racism, at an organizational level or within the larger Canadian arts context. This is a pattern formed across generations of artist-run culture in Canada. Lillian Allen, who helped form the Minquon Panchayat and who sat on the Canada Council for the Arts Racial Equity Advisory Committee, notes that tokenism has always been part of artist-run culture. Speaking to her inclusion in artist-run culture generally and in *FUSE* especially, she says, "We were political folks and art was a dimension to the work. The work would not have existed if we didn't have this political mission and this activist impulse....Some people came and felt like the work was important

and that they wanted *us* [emphasis my own] to join the work they were doing."[588] I assert that this is the kind of engagement with BIPOC communities that artist-run centres have mostly upheld until now—one in which the act of inclusion uplifts the centre or project by providing it with visibility, and one that gives BIPOC participants superficial representation and visibility. However, because these tools promote diversity and inclusion without engaging with anti-oppression practices, they result in tokenism that doesn't allow for BIPOC participants to hold power or determine power relationships. Rather, the system of white supremacy is upheld. That said, without those cursory gestures towards openness, those early cracks, it's possible that artist-run culture in Canada might not have begun to challenge some of its own biases around including BIPOC voices. As Lillian Allen says,

> It was all part of this thing that was bubbling up. We were made visible. Before that we were not. That lack of access is what makes us invisible and erases the work. So that we became visible we were able to make that connection and that we were there, our very presence challenged the normativeness, the very notion of what Canadian culture is. We didn't have to say anything. But we were political like hell. We were just political, we were radical, we were rabble rousers. We were calling things into account, we were ready to roll up our sleeves to be in committees, to lead organizations, and so forth.[589]

6.4 How to Move On

There is no Utopian blueprint for how to do this work, but personally, I have been very inspired by restorative justice practices—processes that focus on the reconciliation of power imbalances—as a possible guide. As Angela Davis asks, "How do we imagine justice in a very different context? Justice that's not based on vengeance but justice that's made on repairing the

[588] "Riddim an' Resistance: Lillian Allen, Clive Robertson, respondents Britta Badour and Klive Walker," Panel Discussion, Desire Lines: The Series, organized by Felicity Tayler, February 26, 2021, http://agyu.art/project/riddim-an-resistance/.
[589] "Riddim an' Resistance."

relationships that are damaged through harm."[590] In the context of artist-run centres, equity means redistributing the wealth, the space, and the power. Again, it's not enough to engage in diversity and inclusion practices while upholding a culture of white supremacy. As critic Merray Gerges has said, you can "pull the mic away at any time if you are the one still holding the mic. It's not enough to just amplify voices."[591]

Artist-run centres are often described as laboratories or incubators for artists. They are meant to be pit-stops in an artist's career. I agree this is fine and good, but I want to highlight how these conversations often fail to account for the people who actually work at the artist-run centres. There are so few opportunities for career advancement in Canadian arts institutions, and there is so much (at least perceived) competition that it is understandable when people hold on to their positions in artist-run centres for as long as they often do. However, the staff that do end up staying in their positions for long periods often do so to the detriment of the very spaces they want to support. They act in their own best interests and in the preservation of their own livelihoods. Artist-run centres need the regeneration of new staff and new membership on a regular basis to advance their political mandates and equity goals. Until we see regeneration reflected in both policy and programming, and without the treatment of artist-run centre jobs as transitory, nothing will change, and artist-run centres will continue to uphold the (white supremacist) models they were built on. The same is true for those who are employed by the funding bodies and umbrella organizations that support artist-run centres.

In looking back at the past to try to understand why some artist-run centres shuttered, how funding structures upheld a certain dominant culture, and why it is so hard to find these narratives, it is imperative that I acknowledge the limitations of the methodological frameworks I work with.

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[590] Angela Davis, "George Tonight: Angela Davis on abolishing prisons," George Stroumboulopoulos Tonight, CBC, February 16, 2011, 3:29, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T0Pm44zcn8o.
[591] Centre for Art Tapes, "We Regret to Inform You…: A Virtual Discussion Series," accessed March 9, 2021, https://www.cfat.ca/news/discussion.

Intersectional feminist principles can teach us to be aware of difference, but since the majority of the discourse has been co-opted by white women eager to feel less guilty about their privilege, it would be beneficial to avoid leaning too heavily on one term to imagine the future. Using intersectionality as a lens to understand the past has been helpful, but I'm not sure it will be the sole tool for the future, nor do I think I am in a position to guess at what new tools will emerge. I will say that in *educating my desire*, I believe that the redistribution of wealth and power is necessary for the continued flourishing of artist-run centres. I would also argue that unrestricted funding would greatly benefit arts institutions moving forward.

When I was a member of articule involved in the early meetings of the Fabulous committee (responsible for anti-oppression training), we always highlighted how we were interested in greater inclusion, not further exclusion. The same holds true now but with a caveat: if you are a person in artist-run centres that benefits from the legacy of white supremacy, it is your role to "widen the cracks for more people to participate."[592] It is our responsibility to co-build organizations that recognize our value and respects that you should not be there forever, for this regeneration is what allows for organizational growth and development. In the short history of artist-run centres much has been written about the Utopian aspects and all the blood, sweat and tears that went into building this movement. In historicizing the past of feminist artist-run centres I am creating our jumping off point for a utopian future.

[592] Emil Briones as part of "Rethinking The Structures: A Discussion on Organizational Change."

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