

The Recombining - Reflections

Yukon Cultural Presenter's Summit – February 26-28, 2026 – Yukon Arts Centre



Foundations

Yukon presenter organizations gathered from February 26-28, 2026 at the Yukon Arts Centre to catch-up, to play, to create, to re-imagine and then to recombine. National sector leaders Owais Lightwala and Sarah Garton Stanley facilitated the summit and built on an extensive engagement and planning process that took place in 2025. The Yukon Arts Centre initiated the gathering and offered space, staff support and funding leverage to make the summit happen.

Dreamers, realists, critics

The Summit's learning moments included sharing of best practices, sobering realities and inspiring stories. Both downers and uppers. Participants dove into a creative process to think beyond to what might be possible. They were challenged to think differently from their regular day-to-day roles moving through a process of being dreamers, realists and then critics.





Culture is Community

In an effort to work in new ways with the sector, Yukon government Minister Jen Gehmair and Deputy Minister Sierra van der Meer were excited to participate in the gathering. They shared a desire to “meet in the middle” with the arts and cultural community. To find ways forward to balance art with metrics, and program needs with fiscal realities. They signaled a willingness to listen and to partner.

What could emerge?

- An Arts Services Organization (ASO) - a common entity / voice / hub to represent and support the sector.
- New performance spaces / optimizing use of existing spaces.
- Shared calendars
- More trust in each other
- Different understandings and applications of volunteerism
- Evolution rather than “the solution”.
“The valuable energy loss that automatically says WE NEED TO CHANGE instead of investigating what is changing and how do we need to respond” – Sarah Garton Stanley





Three provocations

Audiences at the Centre. Finding the balance of presenting meaningful art and creation with matching what the audiences need and want

Not for profit arts entities have never been fully funded by government. The reality is that the sector has never been fully funded, going back to the 1960s. So how do we make it work? How do we create within that reality?

Love is not a business model. Love of what you do isn't always enough to make it viable. So how do you make it viable and love it too?

Thinking differently

Thinking beyond your own role – what does a funder need? What does a board member need? What does a creator need? Founder? When we put ourselves in the shoes of others it helps us see the landscape differently, think differently, find other evolutions...





The dignity of risk

Luanne Baker-Johnson of Lumel Studios shared with participants the concept of “dignity of risk” the call to action to do what is needed, to take the risk, because only you or your organization can.



Community

The Summit offered opportunities to connect, share, discuss, create and spend time in community together.

Moving forward from here...

- For those that participated we hope you will share your summit experiences with other members of the community. What did you experience? What learnings can you share? What are you inspired to do next?
- What is the structural challenge in your own organization — or in the sector around you — that you have never named out loud? Why haven't you named it? What would happen if you did?
- Is the ratio flip needed in your work — the moment where the skills that made you successful are not the skills the next phase requires? What would it take to develop those skills, or to find the person who has them?
- What might a successful cultural sector in Yukon look like fifty years from now?
- What do Yukon cultural presenters truly need? What are they each willing to contribute? What does realistic partnership look like?
- What happens when you force yourself to think as a different role than the one you have? What if you think like a funder? An audience member? A board member? A potential partner? A political leader? A community member? How might this prompt you or your organization to act / plan differently?
- How does an Arts Services Organization (ASO) become a reality in the Yukon if you truly want to make it happen? The summit included representation from Canada Council, Canadian Heritage and Yukon government. Summit participants organizations expressed a willingness to contribute financially to make it happen. Who jumps in and takes the lead? This isn't the first time this idea has surfaced in the Yukon and yet it has not gained enough traction to get started. Why?

The Raconteur's reflections...

Recombining - by Ben Schott

What if we can't yet see what will take shape?

Even if we know it isn't meant to be exactly
what it is

Or what it was.

We can choose to embrace the journey

Together.

To trust our community, creator, even when we
don't always know what is meant to happen.

But never blindly.

Fragile cooperation can

Become solid foundation

If we choose to embrace it.

Dignity expressed

By risking together, dreaming together

Scheming together

Can make visions into real

Not just thought bubbles that float away

Nurturing founders, leaders, performers,
organizations

Places, ideas, journeys,

Creations, mandates, metrics

All can evolve and exist in some form.

Some to be offered, shared, revered

Some to be rebuilt,

Some to be pursued, evolved

Some to be left far behind

As ash to fertilize the next.

Some still to be discovered.

Because they aren't yet ready to emerge.

Be germinated. Be born.

Weeds and flowers grow in the same fields

Yet nothing grows at the same speed

Or lasts forever

All can be honoured in our tapestry

Art, performance, community

And all need care and nurturing

We came together to

Co-create, converse, imagine

Laugh, share, move

Lament, grieve, cleanse

Commune.

And now what remains

Is what to do with it all

As we put the pieces together anew

On our own, In partnership, as a community

In for it all, in for some, or in for none

Re-emerged. Re-imagined. Recombined.

Links referenced at the summit:

The Iron Triangle: <https://notes.artsmanaged.org/p/vision-capacity-and-capital>

David Maggs on arts and social finance: <https://metcalfoundation.com/metcalf-story/arts-and-social-finance-risk-reward-and-revenue-diversification/>

Theaster Gates: Chicago Southside: <https://tv.apple.com/us/episode/chicago-southside/umc.cmc.6k66e1r0lk9qa5inu3z3sf8gl?showId=umc.cmc.5xjrgoblR5l5i1ypamtayuhe9>

Can AI Already Do Your Job?: (podcast): <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/can-a-i-already-do-your-job/id1200361736?i=1000750300296>

PHOTOS from the Summit can be accessed through the Yukon Arts Centre.

Community Membership Organizations referenced at the summit:

GVPTA: <https://www.gvpta.ca/>

Theatre Alberta: <https://www.theatrealberta.com/>

TAPA <https://tapa.ca/> (covers a broader group of performing arts)

VVAF: <https://www.vanvaf.com/>

Facilitators:

Sarah Garton Stanley (SGS)
www.sarahgartonstanley.com -
www.birchdalelake.com

Owais Lightwala –www.owais.ca
<https://owaislightwala.substack.com/>



Raconteur:

Ben Schott
www.summit2sky.com www.benschott.ca



Thank you to all of the participants, to the funders that made the summit possible, to the facilitators, and to the Yukon Arts Centre team.

Participants:

Andrea Simpson-Fowler - Heart of Riverdale

Andrew Connors - Yukon Film Society

Andy Cunningham - Dawson City Music Festival

Angela Drainville - Yukon Theatre for Young People

Anne Smith - Northern Expression Cultural Society

Ben Schott - Summit2Sky

Beth Dart - Music Yukon

Brian Walker - Northern Expression Cultural Society

Brian Fidler - Yukon Arts Guild

C.D. Saint - Yukon Community Choir

Casey Prescott - Yukon Arts Centre

Claire Ness - Yukon Circus Society

Dan Moore - Arts Underground

Dan Paleczny – Yukon Arts Centre Board Member

Dani Fecko - Canadian Heritage

Duncan Sinclair - Jazz Yukon

Elizabeth Logue - Canada Council for the Arts

Erin Symington - Yukon First Nations Tourism and Culture

Geneviève Doyon - Open Pit Theatre

Hayden Grace - Dawson City Music Festival

Jacob Zimmer - Pivot Theatre

Jennifer Meurer - Yukon Government - Tourism and Culture

Joan Stanton - Yukon Arts Foundation

Judy Greenhill - Longest Night Society

Problematic Orchestra

Julie Jai - Yukon Arts Prize

Katherine McCallum - Larrikin Entertainment

Katherine Avery - Whitehorse Concerts

Line Gagnon – Yukon Arts Centre Board Chair

Lisa Nahanni - Northern Culture Expression Society

Lise Ann Johnson - Canada Council for the Arts

Marie Gallagher - All-City Band Society

Mary Bradshaw - Yukon Arts Centre

Matthew Sarty - Klondike Institute of Arts and Culture

Melissa Larsen - Klondike Institute of Arts and Culture

Michele Emslie - Yukon Arts Centre

Michelle Fisher - Heart of Riverdale

MJ Warshawski - Yukon Arts Foundation

Moira Sauer - Heart of Riverdale

Norah Paton - Pivot Theatre

Owais Lightwala - Facilitator

**Pearl Callaghan - Northern Expression
Cultural Society**

Sarah Garton Stanley (SGS) - Facilitator

Sebastian Lapres - Yukon Film Society

Suki Wellman - Yukon Culture

Virginie Hamel - Yukon Culture