

# ANNUAL REPORT 2020



# A Year in Review

## Board Chair

Inspirit's Board of Directors last met in person at the end of January 2020 and, after a year of transition and change, we were looking forward to working with our new Program Manager and other staff on new programming initiatives. We planned a learning session for a board meeting in Saskatoon for June, in conjunction with National Indigenous Peoples Day. As several board member terms were also expiring in June, we had discussions on criteria and process for recruitment. No one could foresee that on March 13, the WHO would declare that COVID-19 was a global pandemic and major change across society was required overnight.

Inspirit was lucky to have incredible leadership from Sadia Zaman, our CEO, who with our talented, hardworking staff transformed the organization into one that operated virtually with an effective, cohesive team. The Board also stepped up and made quick, flexible decisions to support staff and our grantees.

At the same time, as the pandemic was creating uncertainty and confusion throughout Canada, the US election campaign gave license to overt expression of hate and racist violence which spilled across the border. In both countries, recorded incidents of police brutality against and murder of Black and Indigenous people had to be confronted by all of us.

I am proud of how our team, both board and staff, intuitively understood that the cumulative impact on the communities we work with was enormous and required both an increased granting budget and significant changes, including unrestricted granting. I believe that the Board will encourage further examination of "how things have always been done" and ensure that priority communities determine their needs and how to address them.

When I was first elected Chair of the Inspirit Board, I said that my goal was to be replaced by a board member who was both closer in age to the young changemakers to whom we grant to, and someone whose lived experience had more in common with the communities we work with.

In December 2020, I was delighted to recommend that Mitchell Anderson, who initially joined as a youth member, become Board Chair effective January 2021. That motion was approved unanimously.



Barbara Hall  
Board Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Barbara Hall'.



[See our 2020 audited financial statements](#)

# A Year in Review

## CEO

We had barely introduced our new Programming Manager to the team when the first pandemic lockdown hit in spring of 2020. Our part-time Communications Coordinator had only started in January. The challenges of creating a team when people are not in the same space was a new one for many organizations, including Inspirit. We had to find our way through virtual onboarding, and virtual team-building. Every member of the team showed up in big and small ways to help create the cohesive team that makes Inspirit what it is.

Then, as we were in the depths of the uncertainty about COVID-19, came the terrible summer. "I can't breathe," the words and images of George Floyd as he died, captured by a teenager, would ignite a global protest against police brutality against Black people. It was a reckoning for all of us.

As an organization, our work became more important than ever. We moved further towards unrestricted granting, sought more collaboration, and adapted our application and reporting requirements to become more responsive and flexible in the face of enormous challenges.

Inspirit grantees are often smaller community-led organizations, often racialized, and often face multiple other barriers. Indigenous and Muslim communities were hit hard not only by the virus, but also through ongoing discrimination. On top of that, the media and arts sectors were decimated by the pandemic.

Despite this, Inspirit's grantee partners rose to the multiple challenges with grace and grit, all the while showing us that a more just and inclusive world is possible. The [cover image](#) of this annual report from the Woodland Cultural Center is a good reminder. You can check out the work of Inspirit grantees throughout the report.

In 2020, we also continued on our path towards 100% impact. We launched a search to find a new manager for the Canadian equities portion of our portfolio and eventually chose PCJ of Connor, Clark & Lunn Private Capital (CC&L) to become the first investor in a new mandate of theirs. This mandate invests in publicly-traded Canadian companies, both big and small, that satisfy our financial, carbon footprint, and positive impact goals. By the end of 2020, 98% of our holdings had transitioned to full impact.

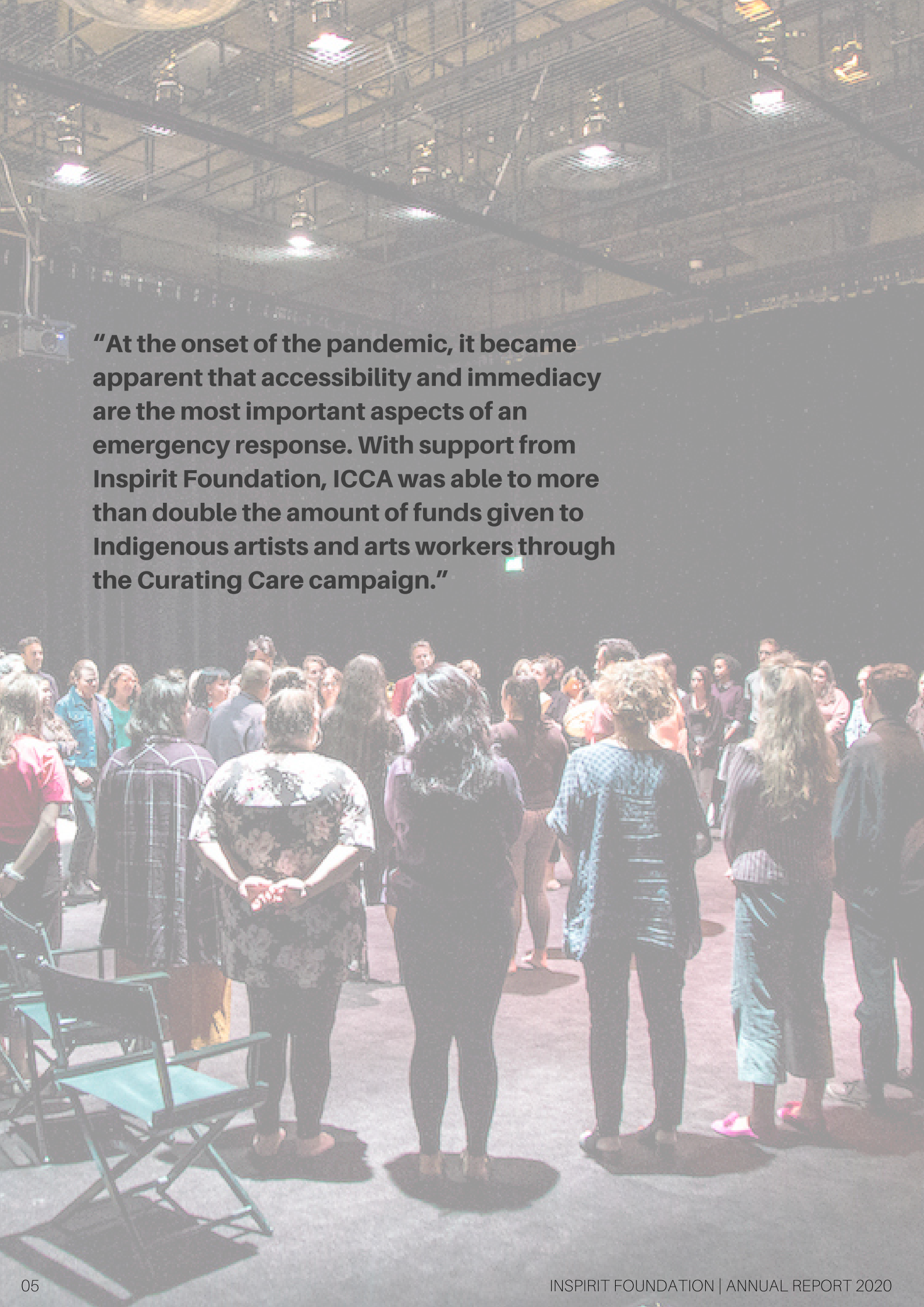
As vaccinations became a reality in 2021, we are looking forward to a normal where the pandemic fades into the background. But a normal where the equity issues remain solidly front and centre.



Sadia Zaman,  
CEO



[See our 2020  
audited financial  
statements](#)



**“At the onset of the pandemic, it became apparent that accessibility and immediacy are the most important aspects of an emergency response. With support from Inspirit Foundation, ICCA was able to more than double the amount of funds given to Indigenous artists and arts workers through the Curating Care campaign.”**

# Indigenous Curatorial Collective / Collectif des commissaires autochtones (ICCA) - Curating Care campaign

In 2020, the ICCA ran Curating Care, a campaign to highlight the impact Indigenous curators and creatives have in shaping cultural landscapes. Curators and artists from across the country submitted video stories of how they find care through their curatorial and art-making practices. The ICCA is an Indigenous non-profit that engages and advocates for Indigenous curators, critics, artists, writers, academics, and creatives.

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## What is the reason for Curating Care?

"We launched Curating Care in response to galleries and museums closing their doors, cancelling or postponing exhibitions, and laying off employees. Indigenous artists financially impacted by the pandemic were invited to submit a two-minute video outlining who they are, what they do, and how they integrate care throughout their practice. Upon submitting a video, artists received an honorarium from ICCA. Curating Care gained the attention of many individuals and organizations across the country, including Inspirit Foundation."

## What did Inspirit's support enable ICCA to do?

"With Inspirit's support, ICCA was able to provide a total of \$10,000 CAD to Indigenous artists, more than doubling the original amount. Honorariums increased from \$100 to \$250 per applicant. In total, ICCA was able to support 40 individuals at the onset of the pandemic."

## What did you learn through Curating Care?

"Through this initiative, it became apparent that immediate, low-barrier, and accessible support was the most important emergency response. Coupled with a rapid shift into digital workspaces and different ways of gathering, accessibility has become an important aspect of our programming and outreach."

CAMILLE GEORGESON-USHER,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



[Learn more about  
all grantees here](#)



**“As lockdowns took hold, Inspirit responded immediately with a grant to increase our digital capacity. This allowed our team to work safely and continue to deliver community programming during the pandemic.”**



# Toronto Ward Museum

## Block by Block (COVID-19 Edition)

Block by Block is a participatory multimedia program of the Toronto Ward Museum. The program engages youth—particularly from Indigenous and newcomer communities—in the collection and interpretation of oral histories from neighbourhoods. The Toronto Ward Museum is a community-engaged museum that facilitates the preservation and sharing of personal stories of migrants in Toronto's history.

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"By training and empowering young people to interview and tell the stories of residents in their own neighbourhoods, Block by Block preserves and animates stories of migration, settlement, and civic life.

In 2020, the Toronto Ward Museum benefited from capacity building support. We were able to promote a racialized youth program worker into a leadership role. Additionally, with the pandemic dictating a shift to virtual and remote work, Inspirit provided a grant to increase our digital capacity. This allowed the Toronto Ward Museum team to work safely and continue to deliver community programming during the pandemic, including a unique 25-poster exhibition in the windows of 25 sites and stores across the neighbourhoods.

As we plan for the future, the Toronto Ward Museum will continue our collaborative partnership approach to program development. This guiding principle is essential to community-based projects that seek to amplify the voices of underrepresented communities. We are grateful for the support and our relationship with Inspirit Foundation."

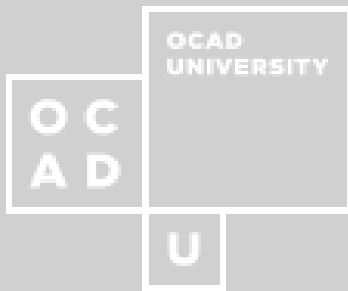
PERRY LUPYRYPA,  
INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

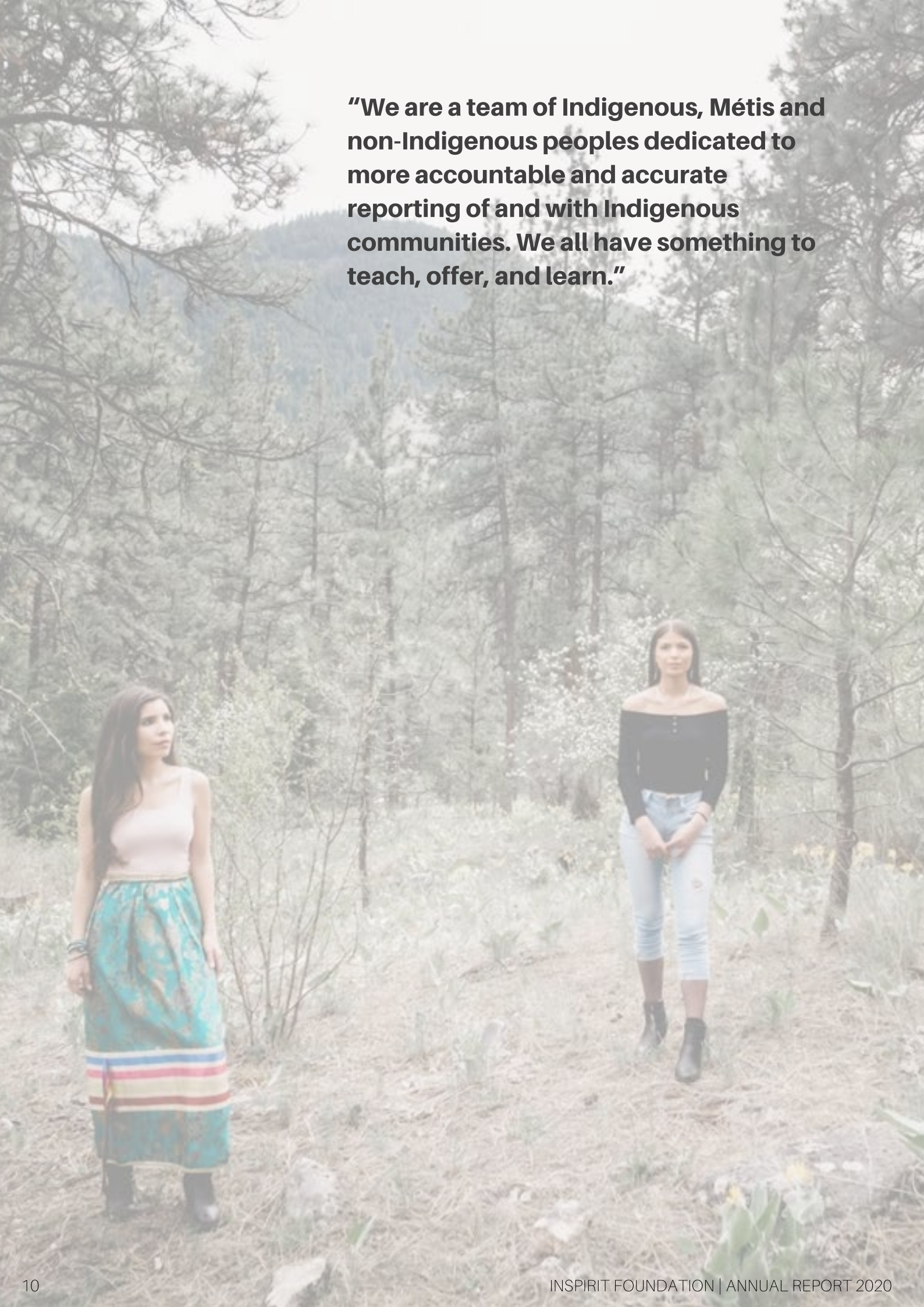


[Learn more about  
all grantees here](#)



Read about all 2020 grantees in arts & media.



A photograph of two women standing in a forest. The woman on the left is wearing a light pink top and a long, patterned skirt with a colorful striped hem. The woman on the right is wearing a black off-the-shoulder top and light blue jeans. The background is a dense forest of tall, thin trees.

**“We are a team of Indigenous, Métis and non-Indigenous peoples dedicated to more accountable and accurate reporting of and with Indigenous communities. We all have something to teach, offer, and learn.”**

# IndigiNews

Created through a partnership between *The Discourse* and Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN), IndigiNews debunks stereotypes about Indigenous communities perpetuated by media through journalism that serves and is driven by local communities. In April 2020, the first IndigiNews team was hired to tell stories from the Okanagan Valley in British Columbia. Since then, the team has expanded to Vancouver Island.

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"Working as Managing Editor of *IndigiNews*, supporting a team of emerging Indigenous journalists, carving out a space in the Canadian media landscape for more ethical, accountable, and accurate reporting ... this was all made possible by the support from Inspirit Foundation.

*IndigiNews* looks to continue to develop and evolve as an organization, eventually training and hiring more reporters, using the model we've established to serve other Indigenous communities. We are grateful for the support from Inspirit, as we have embarked on something new, and necessary. "

EMILEE GILPIN,  
MANAGING EDITOR



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all grantees here](#)



**“Changing narratives in media requires empowering people from marginalized communities and providing opportunities for their leadership. A media outlet must be grounded in the experiences of the communities it serves.”**

# La Converse

La Converse is a digital media outlet serving underrepresented communities in Québec. Launched as a month-long pop-up newsletter to fill an urgent need for reporting during the COVID-19 pandemic, it quickly engaged audiences and had made measurable impact across underserved communities.

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"For true impact and narrative change in the media, more leadership and business management skills must be passed on to people from vulnerable communities, fostering local growth and sustainable development.

*La Converse* has been able to continue to grow from a pop-up to a permanent non-profit media organization. With a grant from Inspirit Foundation, we were able to secure a salary for our Managing Editor in the Fall, increase and ensure wages for freelancers who continue to write impactful stories, launch a website, and define a sustainable business model.

We plan to have a fully operational newsroom in Québec that democratizes journalism through its team, reporting, and programs. *La Converse* acts in the public interest; our journalists are on the ground, in the heart of the communities, listening and engaging in dialogue."

LELA SAVIĆ,  
FOUNDING EDITOR



[Learn more about  
all grantees here](#)



**“From this project, we have built relationships with broadcasters, shared stories from Indigenous role models in media, and developed a broadcasting certificate program that will be delivered by an Indigenous university. Without support from Inspirit, none of this would have happened.”**

# First Nations University

## Intergenerational Learning for Indigenous Language Broadcasting Project

Intergenerational Learning for Indigenous Language Broadcasting is a multi-year project that will offer the first journalism education program delivered in Indigenous languages. The Indigenous Communications Arts (INCA) program at [First Nations University of Canada](#) is partnering with fifteen broadcasters from the Missinipi Broadcasting Corporation to develop a Cree-language radio workshop curriculum for youth. Read more [here](#).

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### How did this project happen?

"Support from Inspirit kick-started the project, even in a pandemic. Our plan to convene Indigenous language radio broadcasters was delayed, so we consulted with broadcasters individually. We hired an Indigenous journalism graduate to complete interviews. Then our regional Indigenous publication, *Eagle Feather News*, heard about the project and agreed to publish profiles of the broadcasters."

### Why was promoting broadcasters important?

"Our goal was to promote these Indigenous broadcasters as role models for younger language speakers to help them realize broadcasting as a viable career path, as well as an opportunity to share their language and serve their communities."

### What impact will this project have on future educational opportunities for Indigenous youth?

"The project garnered the attention of First Nations University leaders, who authorized the development of a new certificate program: Indigenous Journalism and Communication. The program will be delivered remotely and will provide training and networking for individuals already working in Indigenous media, including regional and local radio broadcasting."

SHANNON AVISON,  
PROGRAM COORDINATOR



[Learn more about  
all grantees here](#)





[Read about all 2020 grantees in journalism.](#)





**“We are appreciative of Inspirit’s flexibility with funding. First, the Foundation provided seed money. Then funding for events and stakeholder engagement. This positioned our project to host a virtual screening and talking circle that brought over 100 stakeholders to the table.”**

# HIV: Healing Inner Voices

## Impact Campaign

Hello.Cool.World Media and Drawing Wisdom developed a social impact campaign using the film HIV: Healing Inner Voices to provide stakeholders with tools and teachings to support Indigenous peoples and communities affected by HIV. The documentary addresses the issue of stigma and discrimination through the voices and experiences of eight Indigenous people living with HIV. Watch the trailer [here](#).

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"Created and produced by Martin Morberg, a 2 Spirit Northern Tutchone/Tlingit man, HIV: Healing Inner Voices is not your typical health documentary. Made by and for Indigenous people living with HIV, Martin's goal for the film is to empower the voices of 2 Spirit and Indigenous people and those affected by HIV.

The film really speaks to people.

Our long-term plans are to get the film into as many rural first nations communities as possible. First through Western Canada, then Saskatchewan, then Ontario. Though it takes time to build the relationships that will keep this project peer-led and grassroots, we have learned to trust our deep-listening process, to guide us in taking the project forward. "

KAT DODDS,  
HELLO.COOL.WORLD, FOUNDER



[Learn more about  
all grantees here](#)



**“Inspirit’s support came at a pivotal time in our growth as an organization. Despite the pandemic, we were able to develop our leadership program and offer a range of programming options that responded directly to the needs of our community.”**

# Black Women Film! Canada

Black Women Film! Canada is both a leadership program and new collective dedicated to building the careers, networks and skills of filmmakers and media artists who are Black female identified and from the Canadian African diaspora.

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## **How did Inspirit's support help Black Women Film! Canada?**

"We were able to deliver various forms of programming, including a national online leadership program held during the Toronto International Film Festival, an industry conference, and an advanced cinematography workshop. In addition, we launched an online platform for members to share resources, promote opportunities, and engage in dialogue. Inspirit funding also allowed us to increase organizational capacity by hiring operational staff and program facilitators."

## **What does growth look like for the organization?**

"As of this year, Black Women Film! Canada is an officially recognized non-profit organization. As we continue to grow, we hope to invest in organizational development, build sustainability and continuity, and position our work and organization within the film industry."

## **How has the community you support reacted to the organization's work?**

"As we enter our fifth year, the community has made one thing clear: we are a catalyst for positive change, new collaborations, and greater diversity and equity in this field. Our transformational mentorship supports Black women industry professionals at all leadership stages of their careers. We are proud to continually build our community and develop longstanding relationships while being a place for collaboration between all Black women in film."

ELLA COOPER,  
FOUNDER



[Learn more about  
all grantees here](#)



**“We needed the time and space to think deeply and critically about the needs that the REMC can address. Inspirit’s support gave us the opportunity to focus our vision and collaborate with external consultants.”**

# Racial Equity Media Collective (REMC)

Established in 2019 by a volunteer group of working creators, the Racial Equity Media Collective (REMC) advocates for creators in Canada's film, television, and digital media industries who identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC).

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"Time has been a crucial resource to our organization's development. Taking the time to strategize about governance, to clarify vision, to identify the interests of our community. Inspirit's development funding has provided us with the ample time and resources to be thoughtful and deliberate about laying the foundations for our organization's success.

Our long-term goals are very much rooted in our three core areas of focus: data and research, community consultation, and policy change. REMC's growth is, ultimately, in support of our mission: to remove barriers to access and to increase the production, export, and sustainability of BIPOC creatives helmed content in Canada's screen sector."

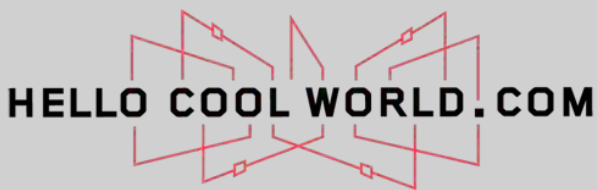
SHERIEN BARSOUM & TAMARA MARIAM DAWIT,  
CO-FOUNDERS



[Learn more about  
all grantees here](#)



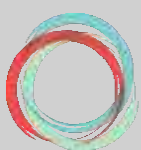
[Read about all 2020 grantees in film and television.](#)



INNERVISIONS  
PRODUCTIONS



INDIGENOUS  
SCREEN  
OFFICE



Story Money Impact





**“The information we present is unique in terms of mainstream public discourse on Islamophobia. Inspirit helped us realize this project. By presenting it in a way that is professional, beautiful, and compelling, the content is properly honoured.”**

**[islamophobia-is].com**



Noor Cultural Centre



**facebook.com/noorculturalcentre**

# Noor Cultural Centre, 'Islamophobia is'

Produced by the [Noor Cultural Centre](#), the 'Islamophobia is' video series addresses anti-Muslim hate crimes within the broader context of Islamophobia. Using short, engaging, and accessible animated videos, this five-part series brings academic knowledge and analysis about Islamophobia to mainstream audiences. Watch the videos [here](#).

## How did Inspirit Foundation's support help this project?

"This initiative was a significant endeavour in terms of intellectual, creative, technical, and technological output, as well as in finances. The financial contributions of Inspirit were essential in embarking on this journey."

## What has been the response to the videos?

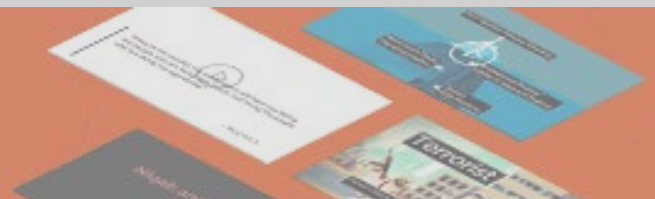
"The 'Islamophobia is' project has been well-received by both Muslim and non-Muslim audiences, across communities, activists, and academic circles. The entire array of resources within the 'Islamophobia is' project—videos, reading lists, an educator guide—contribute to public discourse."

## Why is the project important?

"Islamophobia is one of the more poorly understood forms of racism. The content presented within the 'Islamophobia is' series is meant to address this. These videos help mainstream audiences recognize this phenomenon beyond hate crimes, and in the broader Canadian context."

KHADIJAH KANJI,  
SOCIAL JUSTICE PROGRAMMING COORDINATOR

[\[islamophobia-is\].com](http://islamophobia-is.com)



[Learn more about  
all grantees here](#)



[Read about the rest of 2020 grantees.](#)



**“With a fearless commitment to investing in social change, Inspirit Foundation is at the helm of a reimagined philanthropic sector. The support provided by Inspirit was instrumental to the success of Project Home, SKETCH’s capital campaign to purchase its very own studios.”**



# SKETCH

SKETCH is a community arts enterprise based in Toronto that engages diverse young people who are navigating poverty, living homeless, or otherwise on the margins. Through the transformative power of the arts, youth build leadership and self-sufficiency while cultivating social and environmental change. Inspirit's investment allowed SKETCH to become owners of their studio.

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"The launch of Project Home, SKETCH's capital campaign to purchase studios in Toronto, coincided with the global outbreak of COVID-19. During a period of heightened investor uncertainty, Inspirit's lead investment in SKETCH inspired other investors to get involved. The unwavering support shown by Inspirit was instrumental to the success of Project Home.

SKETCH envisions itself as a platform and partner for diverse arts leaders navigating marginalization. In past 25 years, we have provided over 18,000 youth with safe spaces to explore the arts. The studios purchased through Project Home will provide young people living on the margins with access to a safe space where they can explore their creativity.

Project Home has shown the power of investments. By investing in strong relationships, individuals, foundations, and organizations can come together and create social change."

RUDY RUTTIMANN,  
FOUNDING DIRECTOR



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all grantees here](#)



[Read about new impact investments in 2020.](#)



[Read about all active impact investments in 2020.](#)

