

ANNUAL REPORT 2019



A Year in Review

Twenty-nineteen was a year of significant change at the Foundation, and at the time we took for granted that we had control over the pace and rhythm of the change. The reaffirmation of our mandate, significant evolution of our programming and granting, staff turnover, and deep questions about equity were all part of that change. Little did we know that 2020 would usher in a world that would significantly alter our perceptions of 'normal' work, and strip away any veneer of control.

The core of our work is our granting. We paused all of that work for three months at the start of 2019, and emerged with a clear commitment to social change through media and arts. The focus on our sectors led to further evolution as our programming continued to morph from several granting streams into two granting areas; supporting narrative change and forging new pathways for equity within the sectors. This [programming framework](#) continues to be further refined well into 2020.

However, our priority areas of fostering reconciliation and challenging Islamophobia remained the same. As did the commitment to also engage those between the ages 18-34 who are creating social change through media and arts. Our programming highlights for 2019 include the support of an impact campaign for the film that opened at the Hot Docs Festival: *nīpawistamāšowin: We Will Stand Up*.

We were also thrilled to see the next iteration of Silk Road Institute's work; a second theatre production as well as the ongoing development of LUMINOUS, the Black Muslim arts festival. We also made two programming related investments, one in *The Mosque, A Community's Struggle*, a film that would eventually screen at Cineplex theatres in Quebec, and SHARE/NATOA an initiative that invests, literally, in reconciliation. You can read more about all these projects in this annual report., and also take a look at our audited financial statements.

In 2019 we also made two impact investments: we became the first investors in a unique impact fund that supports the [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#). This is a public impact investment investment, and a significant one for the Foundation. A private investment in the Restoring the Sacred Bond Initiative pairs Indigenous birth helpers with Indigenous mothers at risk of having their babies apprehended into the child welfare system in Manitoba.

During the summer of 2019, the board also approved Inspirit's [equity statement](#); the result of hard work by both Board and staff to ensure that everyone had a shared definition of equity as it relates to our work. The need for a shared definition was highlighted through a 2018 equity audit that also made a number of recommendations for programming and operations. The Board also reaffirmed pluralism as the ultimate goal of our work, with equity as a central building block.

The Board of Directors met in person three times during 2019, twice in Toronto and once in Vancouver. In Vancouver we visited the Skwachays Lodge and Residence and earned how this social enterprise successfully provides live/work studios for 24 Indigenous artists, a fair trade art gallery and an Indigenous art hotel.

The various social purpose enterprise developments interrelate, support and nourish each other and promote community economic development and self-reliance. We also participated in a tour of Black Strathcona developed by Black Art Gastown, one of our 2018 grantees. Together with Hogan's Alley Society, they are working to highlight the presence of Black settlement history and its rich contribution to Vancouver, the Pacific Northwest and to Canada. The richness of these experiences underlined the importance of holding our meetings in different parts of the country to learn about local issues and work. Our goal is to meet outside of Toronto twice a year.

Our July meetings were full of emotion as [Larry Ginsberg and Peter Lyman](#), the two remaining founding members completed their terms and stepped down. Two other founding directors and former chairs, Dale Godsoe and Susan Millican joined us over dinner and a spirited discussion about Inspirit's origins and evolution.

In 2019 we were also delighted to welcome two new board members: [Cheryl McKenzie](#) from Winnipeg and the Aboriginal People Television Network, and [Deborah Irvine](#), from Vancouver Island, newly retired from the Vancouver Foundation.



Barbara Hall,
Board Chair



Sadia Zaman,
CEO



[See our 2019 audited
financial statements](#)

A white handwritten signature, likely belonging to Barbara Hall.

A white handwritten signature, likely belonging to Sadia Zaman.

"Through the generous support of the Inspirit Foundation, we have been able to expand festival activities, and create LUMINOUS Futures - a multi-disciplinary arts workshop series connecting emerging and established Black Muslim artists."



LUMINOUS Fest

LUMINOUS Fest is Canada's first Black Muslim multi-disciplinary arts festival, attracting over 500 community members. This family-friendly event features music, spoken word performances, arts-based workshops, live painting, vendors, and more. The Festival also includes a 12-part futurism-based, arts, leadership and mentorship workshop series—LUMINOUS Futures that connects emerging and established artists in Toronto to explore identity and capacity as Black Muslim creatives. Read more [here](#).

"It was born out of the necessity to address ongoing erasure of Black Muslim identities due to anti-Black Islamophobic racism and provide a space to amplify our voices, celebrate our contributions to the creative landscape of the city, and build community. Through the generous support of the Inspirit Foundation, we have been able to expand festival activities, and create LUMINOUS Futures—a multi-disciplinary arts workshop series connecting emerging and established Black Muslim artists."

TIMAJ GARAD, FOUNDER,
LUMINOUS FEST



[Learn more about
our grantees here](#)

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Reconciliation and Responsible Investment Initiative (RRII)

The Reconciliation and Responsible Investment Initiative (RRII) is a partnership between the National Aboriginal Trust Officers Association (NATOA), Shareholder Association for Research & Education (SHARE), and the Columbia Institute. The initiative creates a framework for Indigenous and non-Indigenous investors to work together to steward financial assets so they contribute to the building of Indigenous economies. The RRII is also a response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's call for corporate Canada to adopt policies that honour Indigenous peoples' land and resources. Read more [here](#).

"RRII has cultivated crucial spaces for Indigenous investors to come together and exchange perspectives and experiences on key issues related to Indigenous approaches to trust governance and investment. With support from the Inspirit Foundation, RRII is mobilizing both Indigenous and non-Indigenous investors to help foster corporate practices that respect Indigenous rights and values, grow the Indigenous economy, and advance the broader goals of reconciliation."

KATHERINE WHEATLEY, PROJECT
LEAD, RRII



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"Our member Agencies have embraced this practice. We have already seen the positive impacts of Indigenous Birth Helper supports to expectant Mothers, including the prevention of infant apprehension and early reunification of infants. We extend our gratitude to our Investors for their ongoing commitment and support. Miigwetch!"



Restoring the Sacred Bond Initiative

A two-year pilot project, Restoring the Sacred Bond Initiative matches Indigenous Birth Helpers with Indigenous mothers who face potential risk of having their infants apprehended into the child welfare system. The initiative aims to improve maternal and child health, build cultural identity, and improve social outcomes in Manitoba's First Nations communities. Read more [here](#).

“The Southern First Nations Network of Care is honoured to be selected for the Restoring the Sacred Bond Initiative as the landmark social impact bond in Manitoba. Our First Nations leadership has made a Chiefs’ Resolution calling for a shift in service delivery for our communities, which honours the sacred ways of traditional child rearing. This initiative supports shifting child welfare services to preventative care for Indigenous expectant mothers through a culturally appropriate lens as called for by the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action and National Inquiry into Missing, and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Calls for Justice*. Our member agencies have embraced this practice. We have already seen the positive impacts of Indigenous Birth Helper supports to expectant mothers, including the prevention of infant apprehension and early reunification of infants. We extend our gratitude to our investors for their ongoing commitment and support. Miigwetch!”

THERESA STEVENS, CEO,
SOUTHERN FIRST NATIONS
NETWORK OF CARE



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"We are grateful to the Inspirit Foundation for their essential support in bringing our production to the stage, and in doing so, amplifying the voices of those underrepresented in Canada's artistic and cultural sector."

Spun: A Silk Road Institute Production

The Silk Road Institute highlights Muslim-Canadian stories by taking multi-faceted narratives from individual communities and connecting them to the broader Canadian experience. *Spun*, a production of Silk Road Institute, is the story of Safa and Aisha, best friends from working-class British Pakistani families in East London. Against the backdrop of a terrorist attack, political and social identities are challenged, and the friendship strained, as the women struggle to define what it means to be Muslim in a post-9/11 world. Read more [here](#).

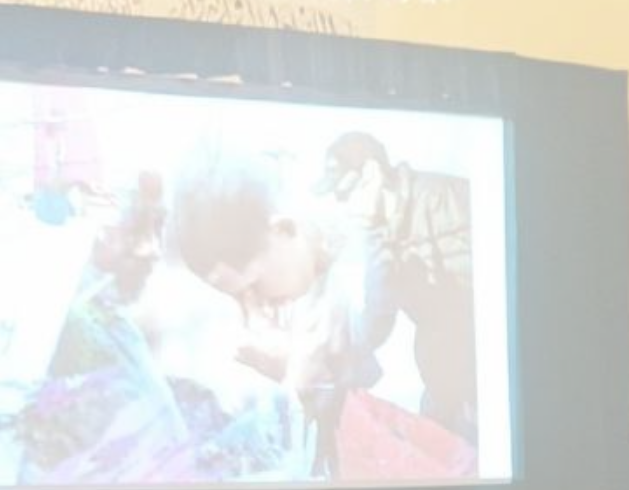
“The Silk Road Institute chose to bring *Spun* to the stage at Centaur Theatre because its characters are seldom recognized in our everyday storytelling. Focusing on two second-generation, Muslim-born women who choose divergent paths, it explores the complexities and nuances of their characters, transcending the usual one-dimensional representations of Muslims in media and in the arts. Sharing these stories in Québec furthers cross-cultural understanding and dialogue at a time when issues around Muslim identity have been contentious. We are grateful to the Inspirit Foundation for their essential support in bringing our production of *Spun* to the stage, and in doing so, amplifying the voices of those underrepresented in Canada’s artistic and cultural sector.”

MOHAMED SHAHEEN, BOARD CHAIR



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our grantees here](#)

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The Mosque: A Community's Struggle

The Mosque: A Community's Struggle is a documentary based on the aftermath of the 2017 mosque shooting in Québec City. It follows survivors as they navigate their place in Québec society and struggle to shift the narrative around what it means to be Muslim in Canada, one year after the devastating attack that took the lives of six of its members. Inspirit supported a social impact campaign to generate awareness and dialogue around Islamophobia within Québec by hosting community and theatrical screenings of the documentary and developing discussion guides. Stream the documentary [here](#).

"The generous support of Inspirit Foundation was a crucial part of the release of our film, enabling us to engage audiences throughout Québec around the difficult issue of Islamophobia. This support came at a crucial time, as the struggle against Islamophobia in Québec has never been more crucial. Bill 21, a discriminatory law that bans women who practice hijab (among others) from working in the public sector, was passed in Québec in 2019, creating yet another threat to Muslim women in Québec. It was especially powerful to screen in Québec City and in Gatineau, where the Muslim community has been struggling against hate crime and hate speech for many years, and welcomed an opportunity to raise these issues in a fresh way with politicians, the media and community at large."

ARIEL NASR, DIRECTOR



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"Inspirit's support has given two Indigenous women experience in impact producing, and we've been able to build a team to support me and Jade Tootoosis, who is now a nationally recognized advocate for justice for Indigenous people. This would not have been possible without Inspirit, and we are deeply grateful."



nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up

nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up follows the family of the late Colten Boushie, a young Cree man fatally shot in a Saskatchewan farmyard and highlights their fight for justice. Inspirit's grant helped fund the development of a social impact campaign for the award-winning film and helped Boushie's family members attend the world premiere at the 2019 Hot Docs Film Festival. Stream the film [here](#) and read more about the film [here](#).

"Our film has had an overwhelming response since its release at Hot Docs in April of 2019, screening at festivals across the country, winning several awards, and garnering high press coverage. Beyond the festival and broadcast sphere, Inspirit's support has given us the opportunity to extend the reach of the film into the following: rural and Indigenous communities, targeted organizations, and all levels of political circles, where we are able to advocate for social justice, form partnerships, and work against anti-Indigenous racism. Being able to develop a website has meant we can now share resources for Indigenous people facing racism and provide a screening guide for the film. Inspirit's support has given two Indigenous women experience in impact producing, and we've been able to build a team to support me and Jade Tootoosis, who is now a nationally recognized advocate for justice for Indigenous people. This would not have been possible without Inspirit, and we are deeply grateful."

TASHA HUBBARD, DIRECTOR



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