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BC Arts Council Indigenous Arts Program Pilot

Frequently Asked Questions

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What is the BC Arts Council Indigenous Arts Program Pilot?

The BC Arts Council (BCAC) Indigenous Arts Program Pilot provides funding to Indigenous artists, Indigenous groups, Indigenous collectives, Indigenous-led organizations, and First Nations governing bodies throughout British Columbia. The program is designed to improve access to funding, reduce barriers for Indigenous applicants to BCAC programs, and support Indigenous artistic and cultural practices throughout the province.

Developed by the Joint Indigenous Arts Advisory Circle (JIAAC) - who advise BCAC on Indigenous arts strategy and programmatic responses aligned with Indigenous priorities, perspectives, and cultural practices- the program responds to priorities identified by Indigenous artists, Indigenous-led organizations, Indigenous service organizations, and the broader arts and culture sector. As a pilot initiative, it is intended not only to support Indigenous artists and communities, but also to generate insights that will help shape future BCAC Indigenous arts programs, services, and applicant supports.

The program is intended to support a broad range of Indigenous artistic and cultural practices, including traditional, contemporary, customary, and interdisciplinary work. Funding may be used for activities such as artistic creation, research, mentorship, cultural transmission, knowledge sharing, and community engagement. Through these activities, the program seeks to strengthen connections to culture, language, land, and community while contributing to vibrant and sustainable Indigenous arts and cultural landscapes across British Columbia.

What are the principles behind the BCAC Indigenous Arts Program Pilot?

- Indigenous-led decision-making
- Support for Indigenous arts (not cultural appropriation)
- Emphasis on relationships, trust, and accountability
- Commitment to reconciliation, equity, and self-determination
- Ongoing learning and adaptation through the pilot process

Why is this program offered as a pilot?

Offering this program pilot allows BCAC to:

- Build relationships and trust with participants and communities while developing future programs and supports across BCAC programs
- Explore approaches that reflect Indigenous leadership, values, and ways of working
- Ensure program is effective, accessible, and responsive to participants' needs
- Gather feedback from applicants, grant recipients, and communities
- Identify and address improvements before expanding the program
- Make sure funding is reaching its intended recipients

- Assess demand and better understand specific needs related to supporting Indigenous arts and culture
- Test program design and related processes like application, assessment, and reporting requirements

How does this program fit with other BCAC programs?

The Indigenous Arts Program Pilot is designed to complement existing BC Arts Council funding programs. It does not replace current project or operating assistance opportunities.

If I apply to this program, can I also apply to other BCAC programs?

Yes. Eligible applicants may apply to other BC Arts Council programs within the same fiscal year, provided that proposed projects are distinct (do not overlap) and all required final reports for previous BCAC funding have been submitted. Each program has specific eligibility criteria for both applicant and project/activity. Read program guidelines and reach out to Program Advisor to confirm eligibility before you apply.

What funding amounts are available?

You may request funding at one of the following levels:

- Micro Grants: up to \$5,000
- Mid-Scale Grants: \$5,001 to \$15,000
- Large-Scale Grants: \$15,001 to \$25,000

How do I determine what level of funding to apply for?

Requested amounts should:

- Be realistic and reflect only what is needed to effectively deliver the proposed project
- Reflect your capacity to successfully manage and deliver the project at the proposed scale
- Clearly align with the proposed budget, activities, and intended outcomes

How often will this program be offered?

The Indigenous Arts Program Pilot will have one intake per year. This may be reviewed after this pilot intake as we better understand specific needs related to supporting Indigenous arts and culture.

When can I submit an application?

The program will start accepting applications on September 16, 2026. Applications can be submitted until the intake closes on November 12, 2026.

How do I submit my application?

You can submit your application through the online grants management system. As part of this pilot, BCAC is exploring alternative ways to submit applications if the online system presents a barrier. Contact the Program Advisor to discuss these options if you are unable to apply online.

When will I find out if I will receive funding?

For mid- and large-scale grants, you will receive an email in early March letting you know whether your application will be funded or not.

Micro Grants will be processed more quickly, allowing you to find out soon after the application deadline.

Add NoReply@BCArtsCouncil.ca to your safe senders list to make sure you receive these notifications.

How will BCAC review and improve the program after running the pilot?

After the pilot intake closes, BCAC will collect and compile feedback from applicants, and those who chose not to apply. This input will be considered alongside insights gained through early engagement activities on the program.

BCAC will share these findings with the Joint Indigenous Arts Advisory Circle to help inform development of future Indigenous arts funding programs and enhance supports for Indigenous applicants across BCAC programs.

Who is eligible to apply?

Individuals

- Eligible Individuals are First Nations (status or non-status), Inuit, or Métis individuals who are 18+ and have lived in BC for at least the 12 months leading up to the application deadline, with no overdue BC Arts Council final reports.
- Demonstrate relevant experience and commitment; able to lead and complete the project.
- Examples: Artists at any career stage (emerging to established) working in any discipline, including Knowledge Keepers/Holders and Culture Carriers/Practitioners.

Ad hoc Organizations, Groups, and Collectives

- Groups/Collectives: Two or more eligible Indigenous artists based in BC; not incorporated; formed to collaborate on a project (groups) or have an established working relationship (collectives).
- An individual submits an application on behalf of a group, collaboration, or collective

Organizations:

- Indigenous non-profit arts and culture organizations (including those who receive Operating Assistance from BCAC), Indigenous museums and cultural centres, Indigenous community organizations (including friendship centres, Métis, and Inuit organizations), Indigenous-owned book publishers, and First Nations governments, band councils, or tribal councils.
- For-profit organizations are not eligible to apply to this program (except book publishers)

I usually live in B.C. but I've been away at school outside of B.C., am I still eligible?

Yes. Temporary absences to attend school outside of B.C. are acceptable. You may be asked to provide documentation, such as a StudentAid BC loan or Canada tax return filed as a B.C. resident, to support your residency status.

What types of projects or activities are eligible?

Eligible projects: Must be rooted in arts and culture (traditional, contemporary, experimental, or interdisciplinary), led by the person submitting the application (or by the organization), begin after the application deadline, and include a clear timeline and end date.

Activities (examples): Research; creation and development of new work; mentorship, knowledge transfer, and professional development; community-engaged projects; presentations and touring; repatriation-related work; and development or delivery of arts and culture programs.

Can I use this grant to grow my arts-based business?

BC Arts Council funding supports artistic development, the creation of original artistic work, and the sharing of arts and culture in community, rather than business development or commercial production activities.

BCAC understands that there is overlap between artistic practice and business practice or entrepreneurial work, therefore some business-related activities may be eligible. For example:

- BCAC funding will support the creation of new music for a new album (subsistence during the time it takes to write and arrange songs, expenses related to recording the songs), but not the cost of making CDs/pressing records or other related merchandise.
- Funding could support the creation of a new piece of visual art, but not the production costs associated with putting that art on T-shirts or mass-producing digital prints for sale.

What are subsistence costs?

Subsistence costs are general living expenses such as housing (rent or mortgage payment), food, and local transportation. You can apply for subsistence costs to help offset these general living expenses while you are doing your project or working on your activity. You can think about it like paying yourself to focus on your creative work.

What is the difference between travel costs and subsistence costs?

Accommodation and other costs that support out-of-town travel related to your project are not considered subsistence. You should account for these travel costs in the appropriate section of your budget or expense form. Only local travel – for example, transit or taxi – is included in subsistence.

Is application assistance available for people who identify as D/deaf or as having a disability?

Yes. If you self-identify as D/deaf or as having a disability, you may access existing BC Arts Council

Accessibility Programs:

- **Application Assistance** pays for support services for registering in the online grants management system, creating and submitting grant applications, and completing final reports.
- **Access Support** provides funding to support access costs associated with a project funded by a BC Arts Council Grant.

These supports are confidential, do not require medical documentation, and are not considered in the assessment of an application. They do not cover audience accessibility or ongoing, non-project-related access costs.

You can find more information on BCAC's **Accessibility Programs** on our website at www.bcartscouncil.ca/accessibility.

Is application assistance available to address other barriers?

Yes. **Indigenous Arts Program Pilot Supports** is available for Indigenous applicants experiencing barriers related to literacy, technology, geography, language, or other circumstances not related to disability.

You can apply for additional funding to pay a support person to help you with things like:

- Writing or editing support
- Translation, interpretation, or transcription
- Technical assistance with the application system
- Coaching or mentorship

This is not a complete list. BCAC is working to better understand the access needs of Indigenous applicants and to offer flexible, responsive supports.

Important guidance:

- You may apply to one or both types of support as applicable (**Accessibility Programs** and **Indigenous Arts Program Pilot Supports**)

- These funds will be sent directly to your service provider/helper
- BCAC staff cannot recommend specific service providers, but you may choose someone you trust to work with
- Support is meant to help you apply for the grant. You need to be actively involved in creating the application and cannot hire someone to write the grant on your behalf without your input

If you would like to apply for Indigenous Arts Program Pilot Supports, contact Erin Macklem Erin.Macklem@gov.bc.ca or 778-698-1416.

How will applications be assessed?

Assessment criteria are currently in development and will be refined based on engagement feedback.

The three broad areas of assessment will be:

- The project's feasibility: does the project have a realistic plan, timeline, and budget that indicates the project can be completed in the way it is proposed
- The project's artistic and cultural contribution and significance
- The expected impact on the artist, collective, organization, and/or community

How are funding decisions made?

- Mid- and large-scale applications will be reviewed through Indigenous-led peer assessment processes. Indigenous assessors with relevant artistic, cultural, and community experience will review applications and make recommendations for funding.
- Micro grants will use a streamlined review process with Indigenous oversight.
- Final funding decisions will align with established BC Arts Council approval processes.
- See guidelines for details.

If I don't receive funding, can I find out why?

Yes. If you call or email the Program Advisors, they can offer general feedback about the assessment process and specific feedback about your application. You can also request feedback if you did receive funding, but priority will be given to those who did not.

How does BC Arts Council approach Indigenous identity and Community Connection?

BCAC works to ensure that funding reaches the Indigenous individuals, groups, and organizations it is intended to support.

- Individual applicants, groups and collectives will be asked to share their Indigenous identity – First Nations (status or non-status), Inuit, Métis – and describe their connection to their Indigenous community or communities. You can describe this in a way that reflects your own lived experience, which may include displacement and/or reconnection. Please only share what you feel comfortable sharing.
- Organizations will be asked whether their governance and leadership are majority Indigenous-led, if decision-making rests with Indigenous people, and if the majority of their financial resources support Indigenous peoples.

Assessment processes are grounded in Indigenous-led approaches. Indigenous assessors consider identity and community connection as part of the overall context of an application, alongside artistic and cultural factors.

BCAC recognizes that identity and community connection are complex and diverse. Rather than relying on rigid definitions or documentation requirements, this Program Pilot approach prioritizes respect, accountability, and cultural integrity, while allowing space for applicants to speak to their own relationships to community.

What happens if eligibility questions arise?

Complex or sensitive eligibility questions will be reviewed through established processes, including Indigenous-led peer assessment, the Joint Indigenous Arts Advisory Circle, and internal BC Arts Council staff review.

What kind of reporting is required?

Final reporting requirements are still being developed. They will be flexible and based on the size of the grant—smaller grants will have lighter reporting, while larger grants will require more detail.

Reporting may include questions such as:

- How the grant funds were used
- The impact of the project on you and your community (if applicable)
- What you learned
- Any challenges you faced and how you adapted

BCAC understands that projects sometimes do not go as planned. It is okay if your project changes or does not meet your original expectations. Reporting should reflect your actual experience, including what worked, what did not, and how you responded.

Reports will be submitted through the online grant system. If this presents a barrier you can contact the Program Advisor to discuss support options.

As this is a pilot, BCAC may also invite you to share feedback on your experience applying for the grant. Program Advisors may check in at the project mid-point to make sure you have the support you need to complete your project.

How can I learn more or connect?

Indigenous artists, collectives, organizations, partners, and community members are welcome to connect with BC Arts Council staff for more information or to ask questions.

BC Arts Council

Phone: 250-356-1718

Email: BCArtsCouncil@gov.bc.ca