

The state of diversity among leadership roles within Canada's largest arts and cultural institutions

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to answer the following research questions: Does the Canadian Arts Summit's membership (i.e. Canada's largest cultural institutions) reflect Canada's diversity? What is the state of diversity among leadership roles within Canada's largest cultural institutions when viewed through a geographical, gender and racial diversity, and intersectional lens?

Design/methodology/approach – Employing a geographic, gender, racial diversity and intersectional lens, the authors investigated the largest and most influential arts and cultural organizations in Canada ($n = 125$) to examine their leadership diversity. The authors found that there is a disconnect between the diversity of Canada and the leadership representation among the largest arts organizations. The authors rationalize the management implications of a lack of diversity leading Canada's cultural sector.

Findings – The leadership of major arts organizations in Canada does not reflect the diversity of Canada's population. For example, among 125 Canadian Arts Summit organizations, only 5.7% of CEOs are racialized compared to 94.3% who are White. The findings show similar results for lack of diversity in the Artistic Director and Chair of the Board roles.

Originality/value – There is limited research using this methodology to investigate leadership diversity, especially in the arts and culture sector. This research can create a benchmark for the sector to improve the status quo. The value of this research aims to encourage policy actors and arts leaders to address diversity and inclusion within their organizations and the communities they aim to serve. This research provides the foundation for future studies exploring leadership diversity and representation in the Canadian arts sector.

Keywords Diversity, Leadership, Arts organizations, Arts management, Ceremonial compliance, Canada, Public policy

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Arts and culture can positively impact society in a broad number of ways including economic growth, civic engagement, social inclusion, and better health and well-being (Crossick and

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Kaszynska, 2016). The sector added \$53.1 billion to our gross domestic product (GDP) and accounted for 666,500 jobs in 2017 (Statistics Canada, 2017b). In 2019, the cultural labour force accounted for 851,456 jobs (The Conference Board of Canada, 2019). Arts and culture play a significant role in improving the quality of life of individuals as well as their communities (Ontario Arts Council, 2017).

Given the importance of diversity and the roles arts play in promoting pluralism, arts organizations should be positioned to champion diversity (Mitchell, 2006). This obligation is especially true because these organizations benefit from public resources, in the form of government grants, contributions, and income tax credits for donations to charitable non-profit organizations. In recent times, there has been increased attention to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) efforts in many sectors including the arts and cultural sector (Arts Consulting Group, 2021). For example, the 2016–2021 strategic plan for Canadian Council of the Arts states: “Canada’s major arts organizations will be models of diversity and innovation . . . Their programming and institutional decisions will reflect Canada’s diversity – including its cultural diversity, Deaf and disability communities, and official language minority communities (Canada Council for the Arts, 2016).

Diversity and inclusion are also linked to organizational performance. Companies with greater diversity have better performance (Turban *et al.*, 2019; Chrobot-Mason and Aramovich, 2013). Studies show that organizations with more gender diverse leaders are 15% more likely to have greater financial returns (Hunt *et al.*, 2015) and experience greater innovation and growth for the organization (Dawson *et al.*, 2016; Post *et al.*, 2021; Glass and Cook, 2017). Board member diversity can lead to higher levels of social performance and fundraising results (Siciliano, 1996). Organizations that commit to increasing ethno-racial diversity realized improved board performance when it came to fiduciary performance, stakeholder engagement, and organizational responsiveness (Fredette and Bernstein, 2019). Most of all, having diverse representation can help organizations be more relevant to the audiences they aspire to reach, which results in sustainable audience development (Simon, 2016).

Organizations that commit to more diversity and inclusion also report better employee job performance and commitment (Cho and Mor Barak, 2008), a benefit that can make a significant impact in an industry where non-profit salaries are generally far lower than their private sector counterparts. The effects of diversity in the workplace are also deepened over time, with teams building more meaningful relationships over longer periods (Harrison *et al.*, 1998). Even the perceptions of diversity can significantly improve organizational performance (Kundu and Mor, 2017), and leadership roles are crucial for influencing internal and external perceptions of an organization.

Shaping the future of arts in Canada requires more diverse voices at the table (van Ostaijen and Jhagroe, 2015). Increasingly, there is evidence that the expectations of audiences and funders are placing more emphasis on diversity and inclusion in art. As community demographics are changing, so are tastes and preferences—but racialized artists, voices, and art forms have often been excluded in Canada’s arts and cultural sector because of systemic discrimination. Despite the growing diversity of communities and attempts to reach new and diverse arts audiences, major organizations continue to represent mostly White, educated, middle-class people (Glow *et al.*, 2019). In fact, many people cannot afford to attend arts events due to the high cost of admission prices (Moss, 2015).

Dominant artistic practices are rooted in cultural traditions that favour European ideals of artistic excellence and are, by their nature, exclusive of other cultural practices. For example, South Asian Canadians represent the single largest visible minority group in Canada, yet none of the Summit member arts organizations are mandated to represent Indian classical dance or music—with both art forms having a tradition spanning several thousand years. Even with greater encouragement to increase EDI representation through funding policies, the diversity of Canadian arts organizations may be fundamentally limited by the narrow

range of artistic practices within major institutions. The Eurocentric mandates of these institutions are also reflected in the make-up of the training curriculum at educational institutions, creating a pipeline of Shakespearean actors, ballet dancers, and Western classical musicians to play on the “Canadian” stage. Dance forms such as “ballet” or “contemporary/modern dance” are seen as legitimate art forms that receive arts funding in comparison to dance forms such as bharatnatyam which get labelled as “multicultural” and are not given the same status. For example, “contemporary dance” by its definition excludes “non-western” forms of dance (Bakht, 2012). Cultural appropriation have also been rampant. For example, the Ex Machina Theatre company cancelled its performance of “Kanata” after stakeholders withdrew financial support; the production examined relations between white settlers and Indigenous peoples but had no Indigenous cast members (Hamilton, 2018). The Montreal International Jazz Festival also cancelled a controversial stage production, “SLAV,” which featured African-American slave songs performed by a largely white cast dressed as cotton pickers and field workers (Vlessing, 2018).

On a macro level, Diversity and Inclusion strategies are required to initiate change amongst the meso and micro levels of organizations. Organizations cannot exist without undue influence from a wide number of social and cultural factors (Cukier *et al.*, 2014). These include, but are not limited to legislation, the media, or social change through values and beliefs. Multi-level strategies implemented from the top-down (Macro-Micro) allow for sectors to respond to and make active change in regards to identified issues of Diversity and Inclusion.

The Meso level, also known as the organizational level in the ecological model, consists of “organizational practices which can impede or advance underrepresented groups within organizations” (Cukier *et al.*, 2014). Some of the practices that the organizational level deals with directly include Human Resources (HR), representation in leadership, and workplace culture. As the organizational level is responsible for the employment of individuals, it is therefore one of the determining factors in the socioeconomic success of equity-seeking groups. One prominent example of how organization practices can make or break EDI initiatives can be found in the HR department. According to one study of work-integrated learning programs, HR workers act as gatekeepers to essential programs and opportunities (Itano-Boase *et al.*, 2021). Without the proper EDI principles in place to ensure HR practices provide equitable opportunities to these groups, it becomes impossible to change the socio-economic status of these individuals, maintain an inclusive workplace culture, and create representation in positions of power. As it currently stands, many organizations utilize ineffective principles to govern their collaborative work and decision-making processes. Identity-blind practices in the workplace represent a minimal and ineffective approach to increasing equity in the workplace (Roberson, 2006). As identity blindness ignores race, gender, sexual orientation, and ability, it can increase inclusion on a superficial level by providing equity groups with equal opportunities. However, identity-blind practices ignore the historical exclusion of these equity-seeking groups and are ineffective when it comes to promoting their needs and interests (Roberson, 2006). Instead, organizations should be looking towards identity-conscious approaches that can be integrated into multiple organizational processes. The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat recommends organizations focus on four key areas for improvement: people management, leadership and accountability, education and awareness, and the diversity and inclusion lens (2017). Organizations like Google and PepsiCo are taking these recommendations and creating actionable strategies to address EDI in these areas. Google has launched two projects on its platform that aim to spread education and awareness of LGBTQ2S + rights known as the Legalize Love Campaign and the Same Sex Valentine’s Day Campaign (Cukier *et al.*, 2014). As a high traffic website, these initiatives presented by Google are an opportunity to spread awareness and representation—even in areas of the world where LGBTQ2S + relationships

are still illegal. PepsiCo, on the other hand, has taken broad steps in the research department by developing actionable strategies to create and monitor change in EDI in the workplace (Valerio, 2020). Though both of these organizations are flawed, they provide a good example of how sustainable and actionable change can occur at the organizational level.

The Micro Level in the ecological model addresses the issue of individual knowledge, skills, and aspirations. As the individual self is tied to lived experiences and identity, the Micro level also directly deals with issues of prejudice, stereotypes, and bias (Cukier *et al.*, 2014). As mentioned earlier, the Meso and Macro levels are areas where strategic initiatives can make a sizable impact on the organization's EDI practices/commitments. However, despite the great change that organizations and societal policies can create through initiatives at their level, those changes must also be recognized, accepted, and followed by all the employees at the organization. In order to achieve foundational change to support growth in the other levels of the ecological model, organizations and communities can offer workshops, trainings, or other ad-hoc social events to encourage interactions between people of different backgrounds (Stephans, N.D). These social events create open lines of communication between people of different races, genders, orientations, and abilities—thereby empowering equity groups to share their experiences, and encouraging learning amongst all members. Creating space for individuals to share their lived experiences also enables employers and communities to identify common barriers that equity-seeking groups face.

Researchers and consultants have defined playbooks (Black North, 2021), indicators and measures (50–30 Challenge), and strategies for advancing diversity and inclusion (E&Y, etc.). These playbooks address strategy, metrics, human resources policies, culture, value chain, and outreach dimensions as well as benchmarks—but few arts organizations appear to have targets, strategies, and accountability frameworks in place.

While most arts and culture organizations have made public proclamations in support of Black Lives Matter, for example, there is limited information on how organizations have actually changed to better serve their communities (Arts Accountability, 2020). Vague statements and commitments to EDI from arts and culture organizations have been criticized by many as being performative in their commitments to fostering diversity (McNamara, 2020; Parris, 2020; CBC Radio, 2020). Often times, organizations engage in “Ceremonial Compliance” focusing on impression management to create the appearance of change while avoiding actual meaningful change and continuing to behave in a “business as usual” fashion (Pizarro Milian *et al.*, 2016). CBC Radio (2020), in their critique of the statements from arts organizations and institutions in support of Black Lives Matter, discuss the importance of examining “who is making the decisions in these places, who is holding the power and how such power is being shared”.

At the same time, research has long identified the deep social inequities entrenched in the arts and culture sector at all levels—from artists to leaders (Blau *et al.*, 1985; Moore, 1998; Wilhelm, 2019). For example, the Ontario Arts Council found gender-based disadvantages for women in arts and cultural industries (Coles *et al.*, 2018). These included the underrepresentation of women in artistic leadership roles in particular sectors such as theatre, music, and media arts/screens. The same report also found that women's artistic work also received less public exposure when compared to men. There are also gender and racial disparities in terms of the artists supported in the arts and culture sector. A study examining institutional solo exhibitions at major art institutions in Canada found that while women made up 63% of artists, they constituted 36% of solo exhibitions (Cooley *et al.*, 2015).

The most visible roles in any organization are the leadership roles, and the optics of representation in leadership roles in any sector are strong indicators of structural inequities. The commitment to foster and model diversity in organizations and their leadership teams has been proven to enhance organizational effectiveness (Cox and Blake, 1991) and its competitive advantage (Herriot and Pemberton, 1995). Leaders are also drivers of change who

can manage creativity and innovation within organizations (Amabile and Khaire, 2008). In fact, “it is at the senior executive and board level where policies are written, strategies determined, budgets set, conflicts judged, programs approved and key decisions ultimately made” (O’Neill, 2020). Leaders within Canada’s arts and cultural sector are critical in influencing government agencies, including the Canada Council for the Arts and Canadian Heritage, to develop policies and processes for accessing funding and fostering Canadian culture through the arts. The Canadian arts and cultural sector is generally dependent on public funding (e.g. grants and subsidies) to sustain its operations (Wall-Andrews *et al.*, 2021). Studying representation in leadership is important to understand “who sits at decision-making tables, [and] are a baseline for assessing which groups are represented, overrepresented, underrepresented, and even excluded” (Smith, 2019). Currently, there is no systematic data available on the state of diversity in leadership for arts and culture organizations in Canada, although different dimensions have been examined. For example, an analysis of four major art galleries in Canada (O’Neill, 2020) found that 100% of the directors and board presidents were White and 23 of the 24 senior executives were White. Maranda (2017) examined diversity in leadership in art galleries ($n = 80$) that received core funding from the Canada Council. Examining those who make up full curators and directors, Maranda found that 92% of those positions were occupied by individuals who were White. While women were well represented (even overrepresented) in art galleries in Maranda’s study, women were less likely to be found in the upper echelons of the organization. Additionally, there was a drop in the percentage of women in leadership positions in art galleries that received funding of \$120k or more. A study of Toronto’s Big Six arts organizations showed that the board membership was overwhelmingly White and male. For example, all 25 of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra’s board members were White and 23 of the 36 board members at the Canadian Opera Company were men. Two years later (Ramsay, 2014, 2017), the progress has been “glacial” with only two organizations improving their gender and racial composition. With nearly two-thirds of artistic directors being men, this increases the risk of conscious or unconscious bias in artistic programming decisions (Fan *et al.*, 2019). While all of these studies taken as a whole paint a grim picture of the state of diversity among art galleries in Canada, there is no systematic data looking at the larger arts and culture sector.

In this paper, we examine the state of diversity within the most significant cultural institutions in Canada by exploring all major art institutions that are part of the Canadian Arts Summit, a forum where arts leaders engage with government officials to influence policies that affect the cultural sector.

This paper aims to answer the following research questions:

- RQ1. How are Canadian Arts organizations addressing diversity and inclusion in their strategies?
- RQ2. Does the Canadian Arts Summit’s membership (i.e. Canada’s largest cultural institutions) reflect Canada’s diversity?
- RQ3. What is the state of diversity among leadership roles within Canada’s largest cultural institutions when viewed a geographical, gender and diversity, and intersectional lens?

Methodology

Data for this paper was obtained from an environmental scan of all 125 member organizations of the Canadian Arts Summit. The organizations chosen were arts organizations operating in Canada with an annual budget of at least \$3 million, the minimum operating budget required

for membership in the Canadian Arts Summit ([Business Arts, 2021](#)). See [Appendix 1](#) for a list of Canadian Arts Summit organizations examined in this paper.

Three leadership positions were examined for each of the 125 organizations: CEO/Executive Director, Board Chair/President, and Artistic Director. These three leadership roles are chosen by the Canadian Arts Summit as the representatives to attend the gathering on behalf of their respective organizations. Moreover, these three positions hold most of the decision-making power as the executive team of arts organizations. The artistic lead, most commonly titled Artistic Director, is responsible for the artistic direction and vision of the company's activities. This includes making decisions about the choice of an artistic program, selection of participating artists, articulating and communicating an artistic vision to its community, and (in general) serving as the lead brand ambassador for the organization. The CEO oversees the operations (i.e. finance, policy, fundraising, external affairs), and the Board President is the leader of the Board and correspondent between the Board and Management of the organization.

The study relied on content analysis to identify women and racialized people in leadership roles. While surveys rely on self-disclosure of identity, this method assesses dimensions of identity based on observable characteristics (i.e. photographs, biographies, names). Data collection took place in December 2020. Three coders went through each individual photograph to code for gender and racialization. When coders had a difference of opinion or uncertainty regarding an individual's gender or race, a fourth coder was used to make a final decision. This process ensured that inter-coder reliability was high (99% for gender and 95% for race). The coding of race and gender based on pictures is not a new phenomenon (see [Cukier et al., 2021](#); [Cukier et al., 2015](#); [Diversity Institute, 2019, 2020](#); [Dubrow and Adams, 2012](#); [Henry et al., 2012, 2017](#); [Reid, 2010](#); [Smith, 2019](#)). In cases where data are not available from other sources, this methodology has been identified as a best practice by the [Ontario Human Rights Commission \(2009\)](#). At the same time, using photographs to determine someone's race or gender has limitations, as observable gender and race may not align with self identification. Moreover, we acknowledge criticisms of essentializing individuals based on phenotype characteristics as well as the need to further disaggregate race-based data (for example, the category "racialized" includes populations with significant differences). Finally, we understand the importance of intersectionality (e.g. the combination of different dimensions), as noted by [Crenshaw \(1989\)](#).

Organizations have been under growing pressure from stakeholders, communities, and funders to address and make commitments to equity, diversity, and inclusion. Unfortunately, there is often a gap between statements and actions, which signals performative allyship. In addition to the methodology mentioned above, we also completed a scan of all 125 Canadian Arts Summit membership organizations to assess the level of public commitment toward equity, diversity, and inclusion. The statements were researched through a web search, and three researchers triangulated the process. No more than five minutes were allocated to searching on each organization's website for public statements or policies that affirm commitments to ensure equity, diversity, and inclusion statements within the organization. In some cases, we noted adjacent initiatives that are equity-focused. However, it is not a stand-alone statement, policy, or organizational strategy.

Findings

Commitments to diversity and inclusion

The review of arts organizations strategies (see [Appendix 1](#) for detailed table) confirmed that many of the arts organizations we examined have explicit commitments to diversity and inclusion. Of the 125 organizations considered, 49 had equity and diversity statements that were public, easily accessible, and published online. 29 made mention of messages or initiatives

that were adjacent to equity and diversity, and 47 had no statement or adjacent equity and diversity statements or messages that were publicly available. Some of the statements made general reference to human rights such as the Banff Centre (Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, 2021), Royal B.C. Museum (Royal British Columbia Museum, 2021), and National Ballet of Canada (National Ballet of Canada, 2021), whereas others specifically identified groups (i.e. sex, race, creed, religion, national origin, colour, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, and gender variance such as Jazz FM (Jaxx 91.9 WCLK, 2021), Canada Council for the Arts (Canada Council for the Arts, 2021), Artscape (Artscape, 2021). Some of the organizations identified specific actions—e.g. gender neutral bathrooms, training, and practices (including roles and as representatives of the museum and archives in public engagement). But most had general statements without specific strategies e.g. Alberta Theatre Projects (Saini, 2021).

Figure 1 presents the geographic distribution for the 125 organizations represented at the most recent Summit (April 2020).

As seen in the figure, organizations from Ontario and Quebec dominated at the Summit, followed by British Columbia and Alberta. This distribution may reflect the fact that arts organizations that are members of the Canadian Arts Summit are required to have a \$3 million operating budget to attend. As a result, less-populous provinces and territories may be excluded. There is no representation from Yukon, Northwest Territories, or Nunavut, and the Maritime provinces are vastly underrepresented.

State of diversity in leadership

In Table 1, the data collected for each leadership position is shown. While there were 125 organizations in total, it is important to note that not all the organizations reviewed had all three roles within their organization; for example, a performing arts centre may not have an Artistic Director or a CEO. Sometimes the positions may be combined into one, which we frequently see among art galleries.

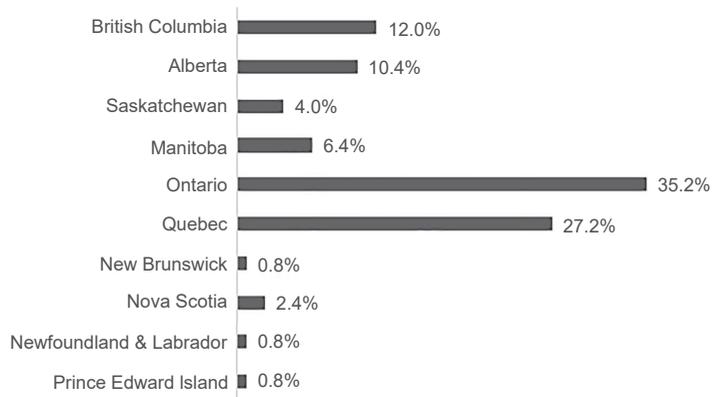


Figure 1.
Geographic
distribution of
organizations (*n* = 125)

Leadership position	<i>n</i>
CEO/Executive Director	106
Artistic Director	55
Board Chair/President	120

Table 1.
Data available for each
leadership position

Figure 2 examines the gender representation of those in leadership positions from organizations attending the most recent Canadian Arts Summit. The results reveal that men dominate the sector in terms of leadership. While at the CEO/Executive Director level, there is some gender parity, with women comprising 48% and men 52%, this is not the case for other positions. For Artistic Director and Board Chair/President, it is clear that women are grossly underrepresented. The use of photographs to determine gender meant that we could not determine those individuals who identified as non-binary.

Figure 3 examines the racial representation of those in leadership positions from organizations attending the most recent Canadian Arts Summit. It is evident that the leadership make-up in the sector is dominated by non-racialized persons. While racialized individuals accounted for 22.3% of the Canadian population in 2016 (Grenier, 2017), they account for only 5.7% of CEO/Executive Directors, 7.3% of Artistic Directors, and 7.5% of Board Chair/Presidents. It is clear that non-racialized persons are disproportionately guiding the Canadian arts and cultural programming.

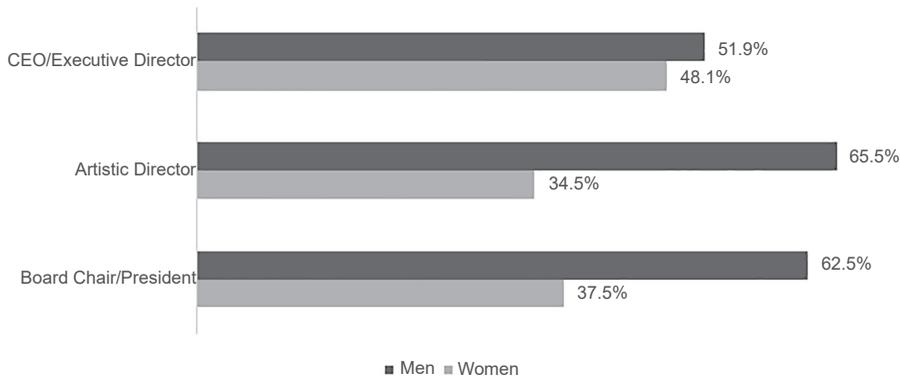


Figure 2.
Gender representation
in leadership positions

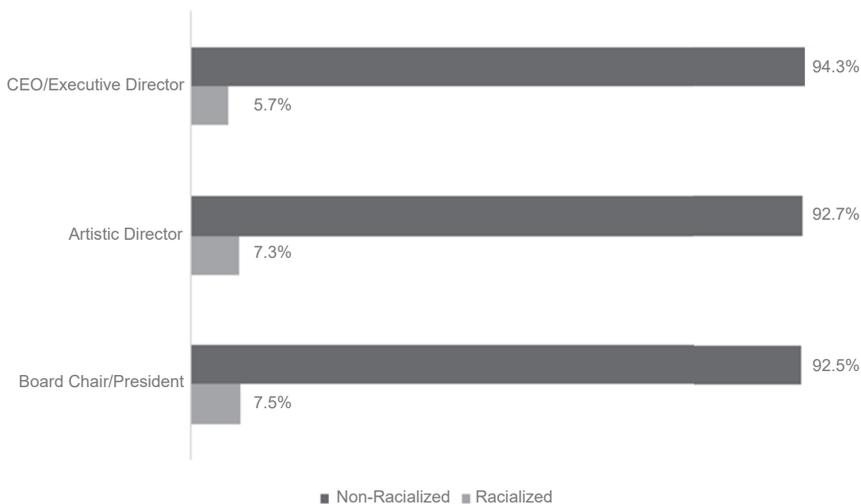


Figure 3.
Racial representation
in leadership positions

In [Table 2](#), we examine the racial representation of leadership by the province where the organization is located. We compare the racial composition in leadership to the racial composition of the population using the latest available Census data from Statistics Canada. Here, it is evident that no province is at par in terms of the racial composition of its leadership to the racial composition of the population. Alberta seems to be the closest at achieving parity.

Using an intersectional lens, we examine the representation of gender and race in leadership positions in [Figure 4](#). Racialized women are grossly underrepresented in all three leadership roles compared to non-racialized women. Similarly, racialized men are highly underrepresented in leadership roles when compared to non-racialized men. There seems to be little difference between racialized men and women in terms representation in positions of leadership.

The findings show that racialized persons are severely underrepresented in leadership positions. These results are even more troubling when we consider that 99 of the 125 organizations listed as Summit Members are based in one of the seven most significant urban centres in Canada (i.e. Toronto, Montreal, Calgary, Ottawa, Edmonton, Winnipeg, and Vancouver) ([Statistics Canada, 2020](#)). These cities have an average racialized population of 38% ([Statistics Canada, 2017a](#)). Moreover, Toronto has recently earned the “majority-minority” status, with 52% of the population identifying as racialized ([Statistics Canada, 2017a](#)), and is home to 32 of the 125 Summit members (26%).

	Racialized Population (%) ¹	CEO/Executive Director (%)	Artistic Director (%)	Board Chair/President (%)
British Columbia	30	8	10	13
Alberta	24	17	17	21
Saskatchewan	11	0	0	0
Manitoba	18	13	0	0
Ontario	29	3	11	8
Québec	13	4	0	3
New Brunswick	3	0	0	0
Nova Scotia	7	0	0	0
Newfoundland and Labrador	2	0	0	0
Prince Edward Island	5	0	0	0

¹ **Source(s):** Statistics Canada Census (2017a)

Table 2.
Racial representation in leadership positions by province

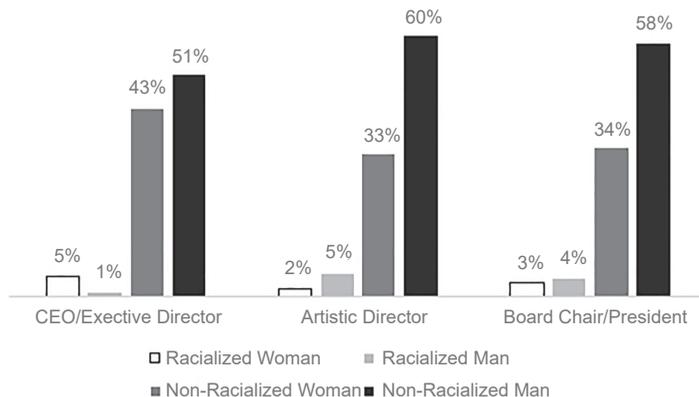


Figure 4.
Leadership representation by gender and race

When looking at gender diversity, we found that while women have almost reached parity as CEO/Executive Directors, they are underrepresented as Board Chair/Presidents or Artistic Directors. It should be noted that there is little difference in terms of leadership representation between racialized men and women.

Implications and recommendations

Building on research regarding change strategies, we offer strategic recommendations for the arts sector to challenge the status quo of leadership and to ensure diverse representation at the societal (Macro), organizational (Meso), and individual (Micro) levels. The critical ecology model will be used to understand of the impact of leadership at the societal, organizational, and individual levels. Grounded in a systems-level approach, the critical ecological model aims to find solutions—designed to offer the largest Canadian arts and cultural institutions a multi-level understanding of the systemic barriers that exist (Cukier *et al.*, 2021). This model emphasizes that “institutional environments of organizations are shaped by cultural carriers which act as important enablers and constraints of strategic action” (Cukier *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, actions must be taken at all levels of the ecological model to drive change through practice.

Societal (Macro level)

At the Macro level, for example, we understand that cultural values and stereotypes, legislation, infrastructure, and broad socio-economic trends play a role. For example, granting councils can harness procurement and funding to require organizations receiving funding to set diversity targets and strategies. Heritage Canada has done this for sports organizations in Canada (Canadian Heritage, 2021). Furthermore, targeted funding for specific populations could create new opportunities for equity-seeking communities in the performing arts (Stein, 2000). For example, establishing a national policy on Black arts, heritage, and culture (Morgan, 2020).

Voluntary codes such as the 50–30 Challenge or Black North Initiative also encourage organizations to make commitments, set targets, and to be accountable. The 50–30 Challenge is an initiative co-created by the Government of Canada, civil society, and the private sector that aims to attain gender parity (50% women and non-binary people) and significant representation (30%) of other equity-deserving groups (i.e. Black and racialized people, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, members of the 2SLGBTQ + community) in order to build a more diverse, inclusive, and vibrant economic future for Canadians (Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, 2022).

Organizational (Meso level)

Individual organizations need integrated diversity and inclusion strategies to embed diversity and inclusion into their mission, goals, strategies, plans, and action steps. It helps them decide where they want to go with the available resources and identify the best way to get there (Crossan *et al.*, 2004). The diversity and inclusion strategy needs to start at the top with leadership and with clear statements of commitments. Target setting is also critical as “what gets measured gets done”. It goes without saying that human resource strategies that focus on creating more equitable processes for recruitment, selection, and advancement of employees, volunteers, and leaders are critical. Reinforcing a culture of inclusion, by establishing appropriate policies to address harassment, accommodation, etc., as well as thinking about how values are expressed, is critical. Applying a diversity and inclusion lens to all stages of the organization’s strategy and processes, from procuring talent and services, designing and producing programming, marketing, and audience development are all critical. Outreach is also important to ensure that organizations engage more broadly with the diverse communities they serve, especially when they receive public funding.

The strategic planning process should engage a plurality of voices and perspectives from community members and stakeholders internal and external to the organization (van Ostaïjen and Jhagroe, 2015; Tempel *et al.*, 2016). For example, the Summit allows the largest cultural institutions in Canada to gather and discuss similar challenges, but the threshold (i.e. organizations with operating budgets of \$3,000,000) is elitist and excludes grassroots organizations that are more likely to represent diverse voices (Bain and McLean, 2013).

Organizations involved in training also need to consider their processes—from recruitment and selection to barriers that may exist in terms of financial and social capital needed to navigate admissions and auditions. The largest arts organizations by operating budget are also the oldest and represent Eurocentric art forms such as symphonies, orchestras, operas, and ballets. Also, while individual organizational leadership structures vary, in the majority of artistic institutions, the artistic leadership role has exclusive power over all artistic programming. This means they are ultimately responsible for all decisions of artistic content (such as the selection of plays or operas in a season or the selection of artists for exhibition).

There is a need to include more non-binary individuals in both leadership and at the policymaking table, especially since gender diversity can lead to greater innovation and enhance organizational performance outcomes (Xie *et al.*, 2020; Gillard and Okonjo-Iweala, 2021; Elias, 2018; Chen *et al.*, 2019).

Actors in the Canadian arts scene argue that a holistic approach is necessary to change an inequitable arts sector (Wong, 2017). The organization Cultural Pluralism in the Arts Movement Ontario (CPAMO) has been advocating for greater inclusion and equity in the arts dating back to the 2000s, concluding their June 2020 report with the bold challenge that “now is the time for concerted action to address this and involve artists and arts organizations across Canada to push for the full commitment of funders to truly set out to rigorously implement their Indigenous and equity policies and programs in a manner that is transparent, engages the very artists and arts organizations prioritized, and is consistent with the goals of equity to achieve equality of outcomes within a prescribed timeframe” (Cultural Pluralism in the Arts Movement Ontario, 2020). Others advocate for more meaningful measures, such as a universal basic income, as one way to counter the history of colonial and racist legacies in Canadian arts (Lim, 2021).

Individual (Micro) level

At the end of the day, individuals need the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours to drive change. This could result in mandating diversity training for arts organizations (Buttner *et al.*, 2006), especially to boards and leadership teams where diversity is lacking in representation and creative production teams (Ricotta *et al.*, 2019), and staff to be trained to ethically engage in and curate culturally diverse art. Additionally, thinking about current processes designed to engage and support artists—and where the barriers may occur and how to address them—with training, mentoring, and sponsorship—would draw on best practices from other sectors.

Conclusion

Our research allowed for an environmental scan, which provided a snapshot of the characteristics of the 125 largest arts organizations in Canada. Overall, the Canadian Arts Summit, which influences policies affecting culture in Canada on a national level, is not sufficiently diverse in terms of its membership. As a result, it is not leveraging its potential to inform policies that can challenge social inequities. Most recently, the Canadian Arts Summit has started to explore ways to diversify the talent pipeline; for instance, by launching an executive mentorship program. However, it is limited in its ability to mandate its membership to diversify. Regardless, the Canadian Arts Summit could encourage a collective strategy,

especially with the funders and policy stakeholders that engage in this exclusive community. One way to address this might be to ensure that the government takes more accountability to engage with community arts organizations that are not included in the Summit—possibly through Public Funders or Canadian Heritage.

Overall, this analysis serves as a call for the Canadian Arts Summit to promote greater diversity in the sector. New practices are needed to make space for more diversity, and the government needs to take more action based on new voices and new perspectives. The Canadian government must be accountable to the entire sector, not just the largest organizations. Arts and culture can change the world, but this sector's leadership needs to be diverse to engage new voices in policymaking to reach their full potential. Diversity in the arts and cultural sector is critical so that organizations can maximize their impact, be sustainable, and ensure relevance when engaging with the public. Future research should systematically examine the state of diversity within grassroots or smaller arts organizations in Canada that are not members of the Canadian Arts Summit. We hypothesize that such organizations may more so reflect the diversity of Canada and their respective communities. Therefore, studies conducting a comparative analysis may provide key findings that could encourage policy discussions that impact the public arts sector to occur beyond the Canadian Arts Summit—and to be more inclusive to a more diverse body of artistic leaders. Lastly, we encourage that the same methodology be applied to the membership of the Canadian Arts Summit in 2023/2024 to observe changes in the diversity represented in leadership positions of Canada's largest cultural organizations; thus, we hope our findings will also serve as a benchmark for monitoring the managerial implications identified in this paper, and a longitudinal analysis of the diversity among leadership positions in the sector.

Overall, the leaders of large arts organizations have access to the Canadian Arts Summit to shape the future of Canada's arts sector. They advise and influence the funding agencies, government, and policies that affect Canada's arts and ultimately protect their institutions. The exclusion of women, racialized, and Indigenous peoples from leadership roles in Canada's largest cultural organizations means that they have reduced opportunities to influence public and cultural policies. The Canadian Arts Summit needs to radically change its structure to ensure the conversation is geared to better serve and advocate for the entire Canadian arts sector—not just the largest and most inaccessible cultural institutions. Even more concerning is that the rapidly changing demographics of Canada will require arts organizations to embrace diversity to ensure they are relevant to the communities they aim to serve. Otherwise, they will be irrelevant to the interests of the mass population and eventually become unsustainable—and arguably not worthy of public arts funding.

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Appendix

The Appendix files are available online for this article.

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