

“What are your strategies to strengthen, leverage and initiate change? How can the Canadian Network for Arts & Learning help move the agenda forward?”

The following observations arose from delegate discussions during roundtable sessions at the Canadian Network for Arts & Learning Founders’ Conference, held at Queen’s University in Kingston, October 24-25, 2013

- What is change? What do we want? Do we need to change the way arts and learning is being taught now?
- Change needs to come through collaboration – academic, arts organizations and arts education sectors
- The big idea: we want every child to have access to arts education
- We need to develop collaborative models to further the agenda of arts education and bring together people from across the country
- We don’t need to spend our time convincing people that what we do is right – we need to accept that the arts are a part of all of us
- We need to discover what our barriers are, and systematically work at them
- We need to look at venues and performances, for example “Night of the Living Dead” that are succeeding in engaging those who do not traditionally go to the theatre or engage in the arts. How do we create opportunities for arts education that engage in a similar way? We need to start advocating with the general public – the audience members
- INFORMATION SHARING! What is going on with other venues and organizations? There are many professional companies that have many offerings. Have conversations with, and give access to communications and communities
- Collaboration is key. We need to be better at communicating
- Meeting and coming together is also part of what will initiate change. An annual conference is very important, as to are other meetings within communities or regions
- We also need to be able to apply research, and evaluate programs and outreach initiatives
- We need to encourage children to have confidence in their ability to create! To see art as play
- Teachers are not asked to teach in a creative way
- Scotland was discussed as an example of “Creativity and Play” – Starcatchers Scotland and the Scottish National Play Strategy. <http://www.starcatchers.org.uk/> an innovative initiative that works in partnership with parents, artists, day centres etc. to inspire creative experiences and performances that nurture cognitive and creative development in children
- How do we reach the parents
- It’s very important that we create a central repository of information, whether it’s research, studies, best practices, media etc. A place where not only stakeholders can get information, but parents and others can access it too
- We need to work toward a model that shows how we are indispensable – that incorporating the arts accrues to the bottom line of business, that it will save the government money, that the arts enhances Canada’s ability to generate a “creative economy”
- It’s important to create a repository, as well as hubs and centres of knowledge sharing
- Don’t let physical space or building confine your programming. Go outside, engage the community through outreach, teaching in and out of the classroom
- Encourage seniors to present and talk – share their knowledge with other students

- Ask the community what it wants and find a way to collaborate
- Engage with the community to discover what they want to change and help them achieve it
- This is an “authentic” style of collaboration
- Create a real, structured and productive dialogue
- Find ways of supporting collaborative dialogues in different communities
- Host teleconferences when physical space is not an option. Provide innovative styles of media to engage communities and stakeholders – the internet, online resources, forums for posting questions and receiving feedback
- Begin to engage business executives and management in the creative processes – a proactive method for engaging the community
- CNAL/RCAA could provide a repository of best practices, as well as a directory of artists and arts education services that can serve different areas – like businesses, community settings, schools etc
- It’s important for artists to feel that they have training for the audience they are addressing – e.g. artists that go into business settings need to be aware of what the business does and what they need
- CNAL/RCAA can provide the central repository for existing resources, and organize them for ease of access. This repository should include events, research, articles of interest etc
- CNAL/RCAA could provide a way for artists and organizations to list their services and connect with each other
- CNAL/RCAA should look into developing criteria to assess artists and organizations
- CNAL/RCAA can provide a bridge for arts organizations to connect with stakeholders that don’t traditionally support the arts (e.g. Ontario Chamber of Commerce get connected with the London Arts Council). This would require CNAL/RCAA helping to facilitate a change in the way businesses and corporations think about the arts and arts education
- CNAL/RCAA could take a few different approaches to partnerships with business including:
 - o Strategic collaboration within the arts community to obtain funding
 - o Arts community convinces stakeholders that the arts and arts education will help generate empathy
- A major question in terms of partnership is how to convince large institutions that have a very formal, structured and pragmatic process for selection. There is a cynicism in the arts and learning community that we don’t have a lot of empirical data. We need to have a repository of data, and a methodology for evaluation that will allow the arts community to speak their case with strength
- CNAL/RCAA needs to set up a blog where individuals can post their examples/cases/statistics that show evidence of how arts organizations have impact in different communities. CNAL/RCAA members can access this evidence when approaching new stakeholders/partners
- CNAL/RCAA can set up a list-serv that will include interesting ideas that each member can learn from, and implement in their own organizations or practice
- CNAL/RCAA portal for research (literacy, quality of life, cultural communities and their contribution to the local economy)
- Executive summaries of major research that allows members and the general public to “flip” through – accessible
- Academic research portal shouldn’t have a very formal process to be put up

- CNAL/RCAA should be certain that they don't duplicate any efforts of other organizations (Federation of Arts Councils & Arts Organizations)
- CNAL/RCAA needs to reach out to members and ask for them to share resources they know of or have access to
- A robust website needs to be prioritized. The current website is very "lean" and lacks resources
- CNAL/RCAA needs to take on a similar role to Americans for the Arts, which has a lot of resources
- We need to talk at the more grassroots level. We need to be sure that the conversations we're having at events like the National Conference are not too high level and difficult to relate to. The online blog can also provide a forum for individual stories
- CNAL/RCAA needs to act as the "connector" facilitating relationships with organizations, who generally don't have the time to connect with each other
- CNAL/RCAA can facilitate connections with the business community, what their needs are and how we can collaborate. Their needs can be matched to resources within the Network
- CNAL/RCAA needs to target their website to the correct audience:
 - o CNAL/RCAA members
 - o Businesses – it needs to be attractive to businesses
 - o Artists – to help them share opportunities and access new areas of practice
 - o Allow businesses to access credible arts organizations via the website, and understand where their interests align
 - o CNAL/RCAA can work with organizations like Business for the Arts
 - o CNAL/RCAA needs to create an inventory of what's out there before creating the website
- CNAL/RCAA needs to talk to Business for the Arts and the Ontario Chamber of Commerce to create national partnerships that will have an impact at the provincial and municipal level
- Categories of data
 - o Visual arts/dance/drama
 - o Arts and learning
 - o Arts and economy
 - o Arts and community development
- Cross-cutting themes
 - o Best practices
 - o Qualitative and quantitative
 - o Empirical
- Strategy for Future CNAL/RCAA Conferences:
 - o Bring more artists and practitioners as well as provincial and federal funders
 - o Choose a location outside of Kingston
 - o Be sensitive to work in Quebec
- We need to start tracking the impact of research and this doesn't need to be just quantitative.
- Qualitative data can speak to the systemic need for the arts and arts education. Qualitative data evokes the power of storytelling
- Why do corporations give to the arts? Inspiration, the power of storytelling

- We need to learn to tell the stories that evoke change, e.g. what kind of employee does the president of Hewlett Packard want and how can we help them develop that person? WHY should they write us a cheque?
- We need to take students into art galleries, and start helping them to ask questions and employ critical thinking
- We have to recognize ourselves as experts
- What research is out there? How could CNAL/RCAA gather this research, synthesize it and translate it into language for all to understand?
- It's important to influence a wider group of people, so then advocates from other disciplines and sectors can become spokespeople for arts education
- Look to others for examples – the Growing Greatness campaign by the Royal Conservatory, for example
- We need to build collaborative relationships, and help each other – bring all disciplines together and share opportunities
- How do we bring anecdotal transformational power to systemic, political changes
- The Royal Conservatory's Learning Through the Arts – work being done in communities in Fort McMurray, AB. The arts are being integrated into curriculum. All students have showed an average increase in grades of 11%. FNMI (First Nations, Metis and Inuit) students have seen a 20% increase
- We need to unapologetically ask for more money – value ourselves more. Leverage organizations like Business for the Arts
- We need to gather evidence into compelling stories and put these stories into the right hands – we need to tell a national story
- There are many stories to be told, and we need to shift our perception – all people can tell their own stories as artists – take the elite out of the art
- The reality in education is that there are not enough specialists, even in high school. Instrumental music was removed from elementary schools many years ago
- Schools are now focused on literacy and math
- In Saskatchewan recent shifts in the ministry to incorporate standardized testing have created complications for the arts
- The arts aren't needed for teacher certification
- Teachers feel unprepared, and there's always the question as to whether or not the arts will be totally removed from the curriculum
- In K-12 innovation is an important focus – a study looking at “what are the characteristics of an innovative person”
- In Manitoba – Alliance for Arts Education in Manitoba - an excellent resource started 13 years ago.
- In Nova Scotia every school has a music specialist and it's hard to find enough qualified teachers
- In the Maritimes there is a view that culture is the only industry remaining
- Students complain that it takes too long to get arts education qualifications (6 years) so there's not enough student teachers in the programs
- What programs can CNAL/RCAA collaborate on to meet the shifting needs- or how can CNAL/RCAA gather resources together in a central repository to meet these shifting needs
- Ideally, all the provinces would gather together and speak as one voice

- Standardized testing is limiting given the varying challenges facing each province. Provisions should be made so that proper preparation is compulsory, or just get rid of them and move toward a specific arts testing model
- We need to approach everything one step at a time – house to house, neighbourhood to neighbourhood, school districts etc. We need to start formulating a grass roots plan to have this impact
- Awareness is key. We need the messages crafted and the people to deliver them
- Do we need to assemble parental boards? Saskatchewan has these and the parents make things happen
- There are also challenges of program availability, for example grade 7 & 8 arts program LEAP – Limestone Education Through the Arts program. 500 children apply but only 50 are taken
- How do we communicate with school boards to start making changes
- Change can be achieved through
 - o Networking
 - o Arts specialists
 - o More time in classrooms
 - o Communicating and increasing awareness
 - o Access for all children
 - o More symposiums and events
- CNAL/RCAA can contribute by:
 - o Marketing and communicating
 - o Becoming the united voice
 - o Work directly with and unite the provinces
 - o Invite stakeholders and community members to meetings, including arts groups, politicians, school officials, funders
 - o Create networks between arts groups, provinces
 - o Use technology to connect people
 - o Launch national research initiatives
 - o Post and share policy papers
 - o Connect with the Council of Ministers of Education – be persistent – get on their agenda
 - o Gather together policy makers to discuss mutual issues
 - o Lobby deputy ministers, and become involved as consultants, and be part of the discussion of a new vision for the arts
 - o [National Roundtable for Teacher Education in the Arts](#) – document the roundtables and get more people involved
 - o CNAL/RCAA needs to be the mobilizer and the glue