

# public art and sustainability initiative

Learnings & Research Document

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Initiative conceived of and stewarded by:

**the bentway**

This report was prepared by:

**Bespoke**  
CULTURAL COLLECTIVE

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Canada Council for the Arts  
Conseil des arts du Canada

# land acknowledgement

Much of the conversations, research and editing of this document, as well as the 2023 Convening and 2024 Symposium took place online and on the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples. Tkaranto/Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit.

Tkaronto, “the place in the water where the trees are standing,” is now home to many diverse Indigenous people. We recognize them as the past, present and future caretakers of this land. We would like to pay our respects to all who have gathered and will continue to gather in this place.

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# A PUBLIC ART NOTICES

Image 1: Synthetic Collective and Centre for Sustainable Curating, *How can public art be made more sustainable: A Public Art Notice*, 2023. Developed in partnership with Evergreen Brickworks (Institute for Public Art and Sustainability) and The Bentway, 2023.

## forward

**OVER THE LAST** several years, The Bentway has been working to better understand our role as public space developers and operators, as well as art professionals working in the midst of a climate emergency. As commissioners, producers and strong advocates for temporary public art we are keenly aware of the ecological impact of our work, and we have been taking steps to develop more responsive and responsible modes of practice.

We also know that we were not alone in making these changes. As the nature of public art practice necessarily shifts towards new sustainable goals, peer-to-peer collaboration and knowledge sharing is even more important. Change will require new approaches to resourcing, supporting artists and staff, and the creation of mandates to guide the next generation of public art development. It is also the acknowledgement that sustainability is not just an end or goal, it's an ongoing practice and way of being and working.

“

**This will be remembered as a turning point in the Canadian public art sector...**

”

2024 Symposium Participant

The Public Art and Sustainability Initiative marks the beginning of this critical exchange. The project has enabled the formation of a new national network and opportunities for knowledge-exchange for the future, which will no doubt lead to discoveries and efficiencies across the sector and make all of our work stronger as a result. Most importantly we are creating the necessary forums to ensure that this shift is not simply framed as a problem-solving exercise, but instead, a creative opportunity in its own right.

We look forward to continuing this important work alongside a growing art community across Canada and beyond who share a desire to collaborate and learn from one another.

Warmly,



**Ilana Altman**  
Co-Executive Director



**Anna Gallagher-Ross**  
Senior Manager of Programming

Image 2: Muhannad Shono, *A Forgotten Place*, 2024. Alserkal Avenue in Dubai, UAE. Photo by Hyku Desesto. Image courtesy of Muhannad Shono and Alserkal Advisory.

# introduction



“

Public art has always embraced the role of instigating critical conversations...

”

Art and sustainability expert interview

**IN OUR PRESENT** time, the urgency of the climate crisis has revealed the complex challenges facing the art sector when adopting social, economic and environmental objectives in a meaningful and measurable way. In order to address the specific environmental challenges in public areas, and in particular the presentation of temporary and durational works, The Bentway seeded the Public Art and Sustainability Initiative – a collaborative partnership between a national network of fellow public art curators, organizations and public space operators:

- The Bentway Conservancy (**Project Lead**) (Toronto/Ontario)
- The City of Toronto, Nuit Blanche (Toronto/Ontario)
- Evergreen Brickworks (Toronto/Ontario)
- EXMURO (Quebec City/Quebec)
- The Forks Foundation (Winnipeg/Manitoba)
- Nocturne Festival (Halifax/Nova Scotia)
- The Vancouver Biennials (Vancouver/British Columbia)
- The Toronto Biennial of Art (Toronto/Ontario)

The goal of the Initiative is to develop new processes, systems, and support for reducing the carbon footprint and ecological impact of public art practice, with an emphasis on the commissioning and presentation of temporary public art.



Image 3: Muhannad Shono, *A Forgotten Place*, 2024. Alserkal Avenue in Dubai, UAE. Photo by Hyku Desesto. Image courtesy of Muhannad Shono and Alserkal Advisory.



Image 4: Megan Samms, *a (gentle) reminder*, 2023. Linen, Icelandic fleece, hand-made laser cut felt, natural dyes, organic cotton, bone, lumber. Installation view, 2023 Bonavista Biennale: Host. Photo by Brian Ricks. Courtesy of Bonavista Biennale.



Image 5: Richard Groom, *Floating Head*. Restored and relocated by Sculpture Placement Group, 2021. Photo by Colin Hattersley.

The project was anchored by a series of national meetings, led by The Bentway, and facilitated by external consultants Bespoke Collective who supported the planning, facilitation, and synthesis of this initiative. Key project milestones included:

<b>Appointment of Project Steering Committee</b>	July 2023
<b>2023 Virtual Convening with National Project Partners</b>	November 2023
<b>Partner Sustainability Self-Evaluation Case Study</b>	November 2023 – May 2024
<b>2024 National Symposium at the Bentway (Toronto, Ontario)</b>	March 2024
<b>Production of Initial Learnings and Resources Document</b>	May 2024
<b>Sustainability Action Plans Created by Project Partners</b>	July 2024

The dialogues between project partners focused on understanding the specific sustainability challenges and opportunities in public art programming and production. This information was used to establish alignments between partners, as well as develop evaluation and programming for the Initiative.

**7% of arts organizations in Canada have a written environmental policy**

**72% of Canadian arts, heritage, and entertainment organizations and businesses have engaged in some type of environmental practice or policy.**

**This percentage is higher than the average for all Canadian organizations and businesses (68%) but lower than that for all not-for-profit organizations (80%).**

Hill Strategies, Kelly Hill, 2023 Analysis of Statistics Canada. Table 33- 10-0548-01.



Image 6: Mary Mattingly, Swale, 2017. Brooklyn Bridge Park. Photo by Kat Kiefert.



Image 7: Public Art and Sustainability Symposium, Toronto, 2023. HZD/Hannah Davison. Courtesy of The Bentway.

## Mandates, Policies, Initiatives

- **3 organizations** have developed mandates, policies or public facing initiatives focused on sustainability
- **5 organizations** have no direct mandates or policies, but sustainability thinking has influenced programming and organizational practices

## Staff Roles Dedicated to Sustainability

- **2 organizations** have a staff role dedicated to sustainability
- **1 organization** includes sustainability as part of the role of an existing staff/support person
- **5 organizations** do not have a staff person or board role for sustainability

## Staff Involved in this Initiative

- On average, partner organizations have **2 people** dedicated to this initiative
- **1 organization** has involved a board member
- **1 organization** has up to 4 individuals supporting this initiative

## Motivations for Participation

In addition, each project partner shared their motivations that encouraged them to participate in the sustainability Initiative:

- Creating relationships with like-minded organizations and individuals working on sustainability initiatives
- Understanding and discussing barriers to environmental practices in the arts
- Learning more about current policies, best practices and emerging research around the arts and sustainability
- Creating environmentally responsible programs
- Understanding and/or measuring the environmental impact of our operations

# phase 1: november 2023 convening



Image 8: Io Makandal, *Ophidian's Promise*, 2024. A public artwork for Victoria Yards, Johannesburg, South Africa. Photo by Brett Rubin. Courtesy of the artist.

“

We define sustainability through an intersectional lens, wherein reducing our carbon footprint and reusing materials is connected to improving the financial viability of public art projects with limited budgets.

”

Partner Organization from 2023 Convening

**THE FIRST SIGNIFICANT** collective activity programmed for the Public Art and Sustainability Initiative was a digital convening of partners in November 2023. The event was an opportunity for dialogue, arriving at moments of consensus around future activities, including the 2024 Symposium. A key activity for the November convening was also the launch of the partner self-evaluation case study exercise that was led by Dr. Ian Garrett, Associate Professor of Ecological Design for Performance at York University and Director of the Centre for Sustainable Practice in the Arts. With regards to alignment and consensus, partner organizations expressed:

- The desire for a **full-spectrum and intersectional understanding** of sustainability;
- **Seeking support and resources** to ensure environmental and economic sustainability, and financial viability of their public art programming;
- The need to **ensure staff wellbeing** was correlated to organizational sustainability
- A commitment to **learning from Indigenous knowledge and incorporating anti-colonial methods** into this work
- The desire to **reduce/neutralize the carbon footprint** and material impact of public art

**Only 6% of Canadian arts, heritage, and entertainment organizations measure their environmental footprint. When asked about potential barriers to adopting more green practices, they answered:**



Hill Strategies, Kelly Hill, 2023 Analysis of Statistics Canada. Table 33-10-0548-01.

Partner organizations also expressed the following goals for the 2024 symposium:

- **Networking, exploring potential collaborations and partnerships;**
- **Expansive discussions, knowledge sharing, and learning;**
- **Inspiration and new models and methods for sustainable processes in public art, especially temporary installations;**
- **Support awareness and model accountability**



Image 9: Camille Chedda installing her public artwork *Chain of Love, Rice and Peas Bush* in Lower South Camp, 2024. Kingston, Jamaica. Image courtesy of Kingston Creative and Camille Chedda.

## phase 2: partner self-evaluation case studies

**Sustainability practices are increasingly incorporated across various projects, albeit with varying degrees of depth and effectiveness, driven by specific project needs, resource constraints, and external factors.**

Partner organizations are at different places in integrating sustainable principles into their work. This ranges from highly organized actions and elements of the organizations' core identity to a desired internal ethos and relationships with partners like city governments, which requires specific activities. Organizations are perhaps doing more than they give themselves credit for, and also recognizing areas where they could approach their work more sustainably.

**The engagement with Indigenous protocols and community involvement also shows mixed levels of engagement across organizations.**

Some have taken significant steps to integrate the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action by collaborating with Indigenous advisors and artists, while others show less engagement. To enhance these engagements, organizations can establish sustained partnerships with Indigenous leaders, co-create collaborative agreements, and maintain active relationships with local treaty holders. Additionally, providing clear and accessible opportunities for Indigenous artists and businesses within projects can support and promote Indigenous culture and entrepreneurship.

**IN JANUARY 2024**, partners began work on self-evaluation cases studies which were collected through a Sustainable Public Art Self-Assessment Workbook. This workbook was developed by reviewing responses from the partner survey to identify six common areas of focus/interest of the partners. The workbook provided an introductory guide for public art producers and presenters to understand and assess their sustainability efforts through a variety of frameworks for evaluating environmental impacts, fostering Indigenous engagement, and promoting staff and audience well-being. It linked the areas of focus to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, and provided artistic and practical examples of sustainable solutions to art making and presentation.

The findings in this section highlighted the challenges faced by Canadian public arts presenters in integrating sustainability into their practices. This summary reflects on the current state of sustainability practices engaged by the partners, revealing a range of engagement levels, variability in tracking and managing environmental impacts, and opportunities for improvement through common approaches and increased training.

Image 11: *Reclaimed: The Second Life of Sculpture*, 2014. Organized by Sculpture Placement Group. Photo by Dapple



### **Current practices for tracking and managing environmental impacts during projects show significant variability.**

A limited number of organizations have structured systems in place, including material tracking spreadsheets and carbon calculating tools, to actively monitor sustainable approaches to materials and waste. However, many aren't engaged with these measures, often due to resource constraints or the absence of established policies and tools. Efforts like using solar power and recycled materials are noted, but there is no uniform approach to metric environmental tracking and impact assessment.

To bolster environmental sustainability, organizations could adopt a more standardized approach by utilizing tools like carbon calculators and dedicated software for consistent environmental impact measurement. Emphasizing the importance of environmental tracking through staff training can foster a sense of responsibility related to emissions and measurable material impacts. Integrating sustainability into core project planning and execution ensures consistent engagement from all team members.

### **There is a notable focus on enhancing transportation sustainability, though practices and effectiveness vary widely across organizations.**

Consistently, organizations have implemented comprehensive measures to encourage sustainable commuting, such as providing amenities like bike storage and showers, and sharing information

on sustainable transit options through various communications. However, efforts to monitor and reduce the carbon footprint associated with project transportation are mixed. The impact of project related transportation like shipping and freight is factored into many planning processes. But whereas audience transportation is the most significant source of emissions, no partner is yet working on seeing how this is part of their overall emissions. Integrating audience surveying as a part of project assessment presents an opportunity for the future. Developing a strategic plan that prioritizes low-carbon options and implementing tools to track and analyze the carbon footprint of all transportation aspects related to a project could provide valuable insights and aid in making informed decisions.

### **There is a commitment to ensure the well-being of staff and audiences.**

Most organizations provided a living wage and accessible benefits to their staff, with some exceeding local or recommended rates. Work schedules were generally designed to accommodate personal needs like caregiving, transportation, and rest, promoting a healthy work-life balance. Attention to health and safety

was also prominent, with organizations conducting safety assessments, providing personal protective equipment (PPE), and offering necessary training to handle potential toxins and hazardous materials. Many projects also considered the health and personal satisfaction of their audiences and communities, often using feedback mechanisms to gauge and improve the experience. Some organizations took extra steps to foster a sense of community and well-being through social activities and inclusive event planning.

While several effective strategies support well-being, there is room for enhancement and consistency. Organizations could standardize compensation practices by universally adopting guidelines like those from CARFAC/RAAV to ensure fair pay across all artistic endeavours. More structured programs could be introduced that consistently provide accessible benefits, especially to contract and part-time workers. Organizations may also consider expanding their health and safety protocols to include regular updates and training on new safety equipment and practices. This considers unforeseen health risks like the increasing concerns related to air quality with the increasing number of forest fires in the months that align with many outdoor seasons.



Image 10: Suzanne Carte, Artist Material Fund, 2024. Evergreen Brickworks. Photo by Suzanne Carte

Image 12: Queen Kukoyi, Nico Taylor, Curtia Wright, Never Gallery Ready, Love Letters, 2021-24. Love Park, Toronto.

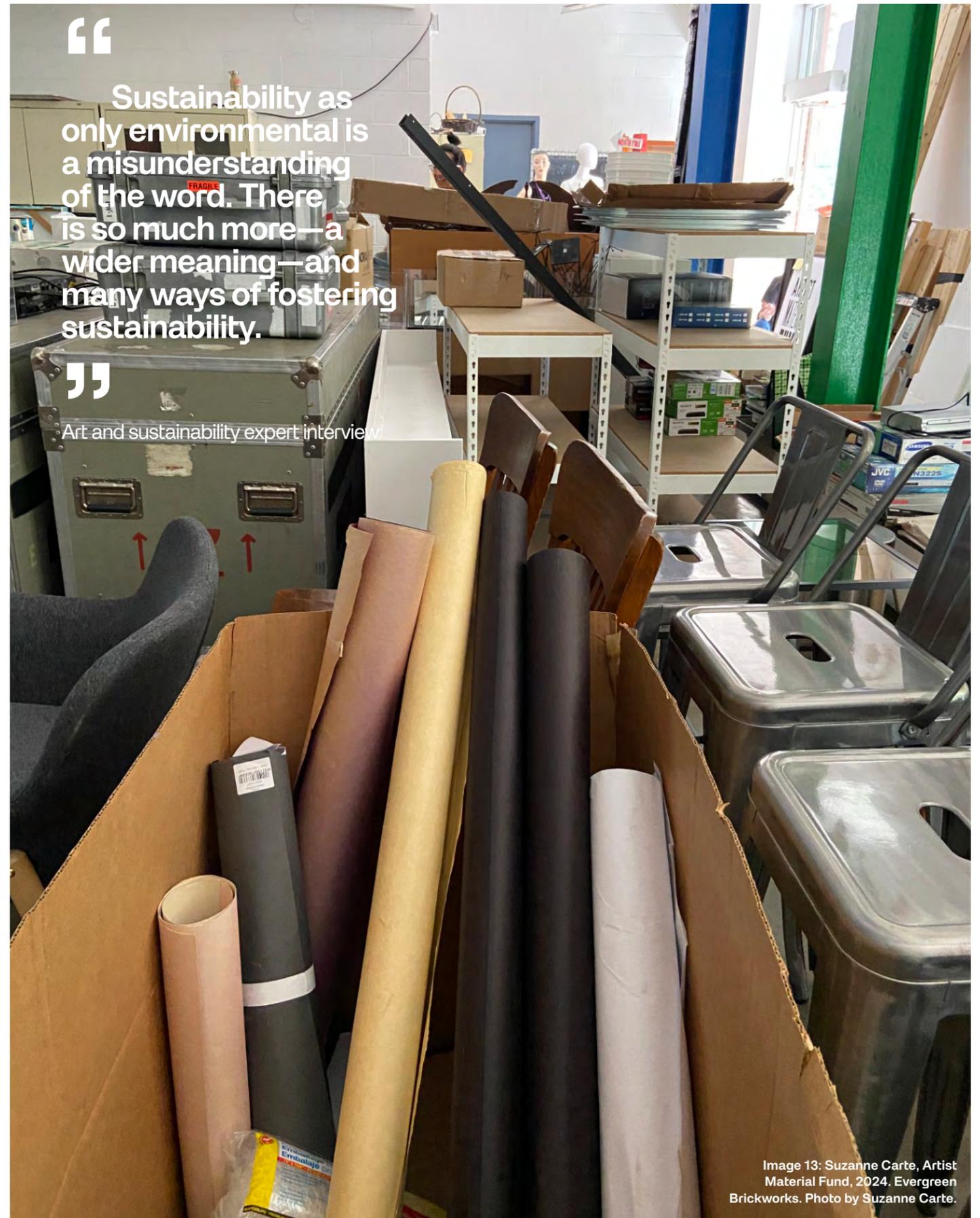


**Documentation and sharing of sustainable practices is undertaken by several entities, with varying degrees of formality and public sharing between peer organizations and their communities.**

Organizations have taken a variety of approaches towards sustainability training and engagement in their projects. While some have engaged in specific sustainability initiatives and partnerships, integrating sustainability into their operational and planning processes, direct training related to sustainability was not uniformly adopted. Research into sustainable options was often project-specific or part of broader operational goals, rather than through dedicated sustainability training programs. Consulting with local and professional community partners was common, aiding in the incorporation of diverse perspectives and expertise in project planning. Feedback mechanisms were also noted, but the extent and effectiveness of these varied significantly, and they are primarily focused on audience experiences with an organization's public programs. Also, many organizations are publicly prioritizing sustainability, yet there's room for improvement when it comes to educating their staff on sustainable practices.

**To enhance sustainability from an emissions and measurable waste perspective, strategic recommendations include new or expanded efforts.**

Developing systems for tracking materials by weight or volume to improve efficiency and minimize waste. Expanding efforts to source materials locally or from certified sustainable sources can lessen environmental impacts and bolster local economies. Incorporating life cycle assessments in planning helps make informed decisions on material selection and end-of-life management. Establishing new and bolstering existing programs for reusing and recycling materials encourages the design of projects with modular components and works towards waste reducing circularity. Adopting practices to reduce carbon footprints, such as utilizing renewable energy and minimizing transportation impacts both from projects and audiences, further aids sustainability. Developing clear plans for the disposal or repurposing of materials post-project ensures responsible management of resources. Regularly monitoring and reporting on the effectiveness of sustainability practices like these are important for enhancing accountability and refining future practices.



“

Sustainability as only environmental is a misunderstanding of the word. There is so much more—a wider meaning—and many ways of fostering sustainability.

”

Art and sustainability expert interview

Image 13: Suzanne Carte, Artist Material Fund, 2024. Evergreen Brickworks. Photo by Suzanne Carte.

# phase 3: march 2024 symposium



“ By working in silos we risk repeating the same work. ”  
2024 Symposium Participant

Image 14: Public Art and Sustainability Symposium, Toronto, 2023. HZD/Hannah Davison. Courtesy of The Bentway.

# symposium program

**ON MARCH 24<sup>TH</sup> AND 25<sup>TH</sup>,** artists, curators, public art presenters and funders gathered from across Canada for a two-day conference addressing environmental sustainability in public art. The many facets of public art were considered including, but not limited to, policy, commissioning, funding, presentation, materiality, transportation and life cycle. Conference activities included invited speakers, panel and case study presentations and hands-on artist workshops. *(For a complete list of attendees and presenters, please see Appendix 1.)*

**The goal of the symposium was to gather arts workers and sustainability experts from across Canada to ignite conversations that link arts-based practice and environmental research within the public art sector towards the development of new sustainable processes, systems, networks and products for the commissioning and presentation of public art.**

The symposium was intentionally designed to move from ideas to actions and then community connections across each day. The mornings started with opening remarks and panels that expanded perspectives around what public art and sustainability can mean. The afternoons were more inwardly focused on participants engaging in hands-on action and collaboration from artist-led making workshops to peer-to-peer sharing circles. Each day wrapped up with an informal community gathering centered around art and food. The symposium design itself thoughtfully embedded sustainable practices, as much as possible, from

catering through to the sharing of resources using minimal or recycled materials.

Faced with the increasingly urgent environmental crisis, the symposium generated candid dialogue that demonstrated both the depth and breadth of public art practice, the history and future of the sector, as well as the opportunities and challenges faced when prioritizing environmental sustainability.

Presenters and attendees addressed climate change, ecological systems, social justice, emerging technologies, as well as data and knowledge sets influencing public art practice. The topics covered reveal not only the relationship of the arts to environmental change but also the changing nature of public art itself. The following section gives an overview of the content of the various panels, workshops and sessions.

For additional information on the content of each session, please view the [Symposium Agenda](#).

# of attendees	# of presenters	# of hours spent in dialogue	# of regional areas represented
55	27	16	15



Image 15: Public Art and Sustainability Symposium, Toronto, 2023. HZD/Hannah Davison. Courtesy of The Bentway.

## Day 1: Coming Together, Starting Conversations:

Anishinaabe Traditional Grandmother <b>Kim Wheatley</b>	Blessing, Smudging ceremony for cleansing negative thoughts/ actions and introduction sharing Indigenous knowledge and history that reflects balance with the natural world.
<b>Paolo Granata</b> (moderator) <b>Rose Bouthillier</b> <b>Rebecca Carbin</b> <b>Cameron Cartiere</b> <b>Vigdís Jakobsdóttir</b>	Keynote Panel: “What do we mean when we say sustainability?”
<b>Serve2 Nourish:</b> Romina Bakari O'mar Bakari	Sustainable Lunch / Reduce Food Waste Experience
<b>Tairone Bastien</b> <b>Mary Mattingly</b>	In Conversation: <i>Art and/as Environmental Activism</i>
<b>Oddside Arts:</b> Nicole ‘Nico’ Taylor Queen Kukoyi	Artist Workshop: <i>Healing through Public Art</i>
<b>Bespoke:</b> Christina Bagatavicius Sabrina Richard	Facilitated Discussion Activities: <i>Mapping Sustainable Moments (Individual) and Identify Barriers to Sustainability (Group)</i>
<b>Aisha Lesley Bentham</b>	Fermentation Workshop: <i>Fermata, of Earth</i>

## Day 2: Digging Deeper, Planning for Action

<b>Isaac Crosby</b>	Indigenous Gardens and Horticultural Knowledge: <i>Field Trip and Case Study Presentation of ‘Staging Grounds at the Bentway’</i>
<b>Melany Nugent-Noble</b> (moderator) <b>Anna Gallagher-Ross</b> <b>Leeroy New</b> <b>Michelle Drapeau</b> <b>Robert Hengeveld</b> <b>Mia Feurer</b> <b>Kate V. Robertson</b> <b>Michelle Emery-Barker</b> <b>Kelly Jazvac</b> <b>Charlene K. Lau</b> <b>Suzanne Carte</b> <b>Kirsty Robertson</b>	Case Study Presentations: “New and emerging ideas in sustainable public art practice”
<b>Serve2 Nourish:</b> Romina Bakari O'mar Bakari	Sustainable Lunch / Reduce Food Waste Experience
<b>Bespoke:</b> Christina Bagatavicius Sabrina Richard	Facilitated Discussion Activities: <i>Mapping Sustainable Moments (Individual) and Identify Barriers to Sustainability (Group)</i>
<b>Alex Nathanson</b>	Artist Talk & Workshop: <i>Solar Power and Protocols in the Arts</i>
<b>Aisha Lesley Bentham</b>	Fermentation Workshop: <i>Fermata, of Water</i>



Image 16: Public Art and Sustainability Symposium, Toronto, 2023. HZD/Hannah Davison. Courtesy of The Bentway.

# common themes

**THE FOLLOWING SECTION** gathers common themes that emerged from the Symposium discussion, in no particular order. These overlapping and reoccurring themes serve to support further discussion and will inform future programming for the participants and partner organizations.

**The Public Art sector needs to develop a ‘community of practice’ focused on advancing sustainability in order to effectively share our collective knowledge, resources and strategies.**

“

**The arts needs more collaboration and conversation, but it’s hard when there is so much competition within the arts ecosystem.**

”

Art and sustainability expert interview

A general sentiment throughout the Symposium was the lack of a national network of public art practitioners, and the resulting isolation of knowledge and strategies. This was noted as conflicting with the immense potential for the arts to share environmental knowledge across or between contexts. While individual artist projects, as well as organizations such as The Synthetic Collective and Evergreen’s Institute of Public Art and Sustainability (IPAS) were acknowledged for their work creating sharing networks that support knowledge generation, it was also suggested that environmental concerns require a collective, scalable and systems-based approach to finding transformational and long-lasting solutions.

Some suggestions include developing an ongoing interactive forum for public arts practitioners, administrators, funders and presenting organizations to collaborate on the development of ‘best practices’ in sustainability that encompass not only environmental concerns, but intersections with economic, social and equity needs. Participants urged the sector to acknowledge that collective information sharing, idea generation, knowledge mobilization and action planning, is particularly important when addressing the sector-wide, intersectional issues of sustainability.

Image 17: Public Art and Sustainability Symposium, Toronto, 2023. HZD/Hannah Davison. Courtesy of The Bentway.



“

Similar to the way we acknowledge the necessity to include community input and engagement in public art, we need to create environmental sustainability requirements for all publicly funded Canadian art works.

”

2024 Symposium Participant

**Sustainable practices are not optional; environmental impact needs to be an integral part of evaluation and decision making during planning, funding, transportation, fabrication and installation of public art.**

The Symposium sparked poignant conversations around the role of public art funders to evaluate the environmental impact of arts proposals and support the creation of works that are sustainable. Participants engaged in dialogue with representatives from the Canada Council for the Arts regarding their role as a leader in sustainable practice. Participants noted that currently, environmental impacts are not formally included in the evaluation of public art funding proposals. This puts the impetus on artists to embed sustainability within their practice without sector support or incentives. It was also noted that completion

timelines for funded projects limit the ability of artists to investigate and implement more sustainable strategies such as longer, but more carbon neutral shipping options and experimenting with more ecological fabrication materials.

It was also pointed out in discussion that currently the cost of environmentally friendly materials is not comparable with traditional options and could decrease the economic viability of proposed projects. Without additional funds, the use of more costly, but ecologically sound options are de-incentivized. In addition to monetary incentives for projects that tackle increasing their sustainability, participants advocated for longer and more flexible project timelines, cross-disciplinary expertise on juries and within projects, and a broader definition of what constitutes an ‘art project,’ including process-based interventions, as ways to promote more sustainability in the sector.

**The conception of public art should expand from an object or event, to a process that encompasses the ‘before-life,’ ongoing evolution, and ‘after-life’ of the work.**

Multiple presenters and participants highlighted the need for arts organizations, funders and municipalities to adapt public art policies to account for the ‘after-life’ and long-term conservation of public artworks. This is particularly relevant for artworks that have processes and systems that are constantly evolving, rather than a static artifact or even a tangible form. In particular, artist gardens, orchards, community spaces and material recycling initiatives were highlighted as emergent and expanded forms of public art practice.



Image 18: Billy Gauthier, *The Earth, Our Mother*. Fin whale skull bone. Commissioned by Bonavista Biennale. Installation view, 2023 Bonavista Biennale: Host. Photo by Brian Ricks. Courtesy of Bonavista Biennial.

**The entire arts ecosystem, including artists, curators, presenters and funders, need to reevaluate the cycles and timelines of production.**

Multiple symposium presenters and attendees advocated for, and gave examples of, new value systems in public art. Specifically, public art valuing, not only the pursuit of newness and innovation, but also contextual sensitivity, environmental impact and the benefit of longer term, evolving and emergent projects. It was generally agreed that for this value shift to influence the entire sector, it would require participation across the arts ecosystem. One example that was discussed is how public art project timelines are linked to arts funders and the cycles of financial support. Participants discussed the need for further advocacy around longer and more flexible deadlines from granting agencies to allow for the complete life cycle of a public art work to be considered. Artists and curators at the Symposium expressed the need to consider a work from conception and fabrication to presentation but also ongoing care, evolution, potential devolution and transplant/or removal in order to embed sustainability across the life cycle of a public art project.

**Much of the knowledge and technology that is needed to make public art more sustainable already exists - it lies in Indigenous knowledge, multi-disciplinary technologies and within the realm of environmental ethics.**

The research, development, and funding of sustainable strategies for public art needs to take place across sectors and draw on not only the resources within the arts, but also the expertise and support of multiple world-views, disciplines and processes. Presenters referenced Indigenous world-views about leaving 'no trace' on the landscape, the role of environmental science in material innovation, and existing green technologies as possible resources that public art can draw on to reduce our environmental impact. Participants expressed appreciation for the discussion of 'Etuaptmuk' or two-eyed seeing, which was shared at the symposium by Anishinaabe Grandmother, Kim Wheatley, as a way to embrace different types of 'knowing' when it comes to addressing sustainability.



Image 19: Public Art and Sustainability Symposium, Toronto, 2023. HZD/Hannah Davison. Courtesy of The Bentway.

**Two-Eyed Seeing refers to learning to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous ways of knowing and from the other eye with the strengths of Western ways of knowing and to using both of these eyes together.**

”  
Albert Marshall, Mi'kmaq Elder, 2012



Image 20: Public Art and Sustainability Symposium, Toronto, 2023. HZD/Hannah Davison. Courtesy of The Bentway.

Image 21: Public Art and Sustainability Symposium, Toronto, 2023. HZD/Hannah Davison. Courtesy of The Bentway.



## key takeaways

“

**An artist garden or orchard is a challenge as it doesn't fit into our current municipal systems... our parks department has the resources to take care of living plants but these projects fall outside their responsibility and it is left to the arts and culture departments to maintain and conserve living works...**

”

Art and sustainability expert interview

**A SERIES OF** key takeaways emerged from the symposium that were generated through discussion and the case study evaluation exercise. The following open-ended questions can inform the next steps in supporting sustainability in public art practise:

- **What value systems and ethical paradigms drive the production of public art in Canada? Are they supportive of the pursuit of sustainability?**
- **How can public art confront the paradox of infinite growth in a finite world?**
- **What can be learned from Indigenous land stewardship and the directive to ensure a sustainable world seven generations into the future?**
- **What is the nature of art systems that are hybrid, collaborative and continuously changing in response to climate change and human impact on the environment?**
- **What systems and sharing models can we generate to address the dual crises of environmental and economic sustainability?**
- **How do we build momentum and lasting support for a networked 'community of practice' that operates at a national level?**

Image 22: Public Art and Sustainability Symposium, Toronto, 2023. HZD/Hannah Davison. Courtesy of The Bentway.



# next steps

**THIS INITIATIVE HAS** confirmed the importance of collaboration, industry dialogue, and shared learning for sustainable practices in public art. Acknowledging that this work is an ongoing practice and learning process, here are some tangible next steps that were offered throughout this process for consideration:

- **Impact analysis:** considerations to evaluate environmental impact of artist-led projects, including impact of audience and staff travel
- **Materiality:** commitment to selecting sustainable project materials
- **Project life cycle:** commitment to repurpose, redistribute, or recycle project materials following project close
- **Sustainable preferred vendor list:** exploration and prioritization of sustainable practitioners
- **Sourcing:** local sourcing of materials and production, acknowledging and planning for budgetary and timeline implications
- **Sustainable relationships:** slowing down the pace of work and cultivating kindness and care in how we relate to each other
- **Community of Practice:** support a system for knowledge generation, sharing and dissemination around sustainable practices for public art



Image 23: Public Art and Sustainability Symposium, Toronto, 2023. HZD/Hannah Davison. Courtesy of The Bentway.



Image 24: Public Art and Sustainability Symposium, Toronto, 2023. HZD/Hannah Davison. Courtesy of The Bentway.



# appendices

Image 25: Public Art and Sustainability Symposium, Toronto, 2023. HZD/Hannah Davison. Courtesy of The Bentway.

# list of participants



Image 26: Public Art and Sustainability Symposium, Toronto, 2023. HZD/Hannah Davison. Courtesy of The Bentway.

## Presenters

**Aisha Lesley Bentham** - Artist  
**Alex Nathanson** - Artist  
**Anna Gallagher-Ross** - Senior Manager of Programming, The Bentway Conservancy  
**Cameron Cartiere** - Artist & Professor, Emily Carr University of Art & Design  
**Charlene K. Lau** - Curator of Public Art, Evergreen  
**Isaac Crosby** - Agricultural Expert  
**Kate V. Robertson** - Co-director, Sculpture Placement Group  
**Kelly Jazvac** - Artist & Associate Professor, Concordia University  
**Kim Wheatley** - Anishinaabe Traditional Grandmother  
**Kirsty Robertson** - Professor, Western University  
**Leeroy New** - Artist  
**Mary Mattingly** - Artist  
**Melany Nugent-Noble** - Artist & Arts Administrator, Nocturne Festival  
**Mia Feuer** - Artist & Associate Professor, California College of the Arts  
**Michelle Drapeau** - Assistant Artistic Director, EXMURO  
**Michelle Emery-Barker** - Co-director, Sculpture Placement Group  
**Nico Taylor** - Artist & Co-founder, Oddside Arts  
**Paolo Granata** - Associate Professor, University of Toronto  
**Queen Kukoyi** - Artist & Co-founder, Oddside Arts  
**Rebecca Carbin** - Public Art Curator and Founder, Art+Public Unltd.  
**Robert Hengeveld** - Artist  
**Rose Bouthillier** - Artistic Director, Bonavista Biennale  
**Suzanne Carte** - Curator & Artistic Director, Art Gallery of Burlington  
**Tairone Bastien** - Artist & Professor, OCADU  
**Vigdís Jakobsdóttir** - Artistic Director & CEO, Reykjavik Arts Festival

## Attendees

**Alana Mercury-Conter** - Director, Programming & Placemaking, Northcrest Developments  
**Alexis Nanibush Pamajewong** - Coordinator, Public Arts, Evergreen Brick Works  
**Allie Sutton** - Manager, Social Impact, Generation Capital  
**Ammar Mahimwalla** - Founder & Artistic Director, Vancouver Biennale  
**Andrew Eastman** - Co-Director, Synonym Art Consultation  
**Annalise Prodor** - Artist & Cultural Facilitator  
**Asha Deborah-Hotrum** - Associate Producer, Northcrest Developments  
**Chloe Catan** - Executive Director, Lasonde Art Trail Foundation  
**Chloe Chafe** - Co-Director, Synonym Art Consultation  
**David Panceo** - Manager, Placemaking and Sustainability, The Forks Renewal Corporation  
**Deborah Wang** - Artistic Director, DesignTO  
**Eddie Ayoub** - Artistic Director, Art City  
**Gregory Burbridge** - Public Art Director/Research Manager, Calgary Arts Development  
**Ian Garrett** - Director, Centre for Sustainable Practice in the Arts  
**Ilana Altman** - Co-Executive Director, The Bentway Conservancy  
**Ilana Shamoon** - Deputy Director & Director of Programs, Toronto Biennial of Art  
**Jay Wall** - Principal Creative Director, Briteweb  
**Jennifer Goodwin** - Curator, Public Programs, Toronto Biennial of Art  
**Kari Cwynar** - Independent Curator  
**Katriina Campitelli** - Public Art Officer, City of Toronto  
**Laetitia Delemarre** - Program Officer, Canada Council for the Arts  
**Laura Nanni** - Artistic Director, Nuit Blanche Toronto  
**Logan Macdonald** - Professor, University of Waterloo  
**Lys-Ange Leblanc** - Artist  
**Maddie Alexander** - Public Art Manager, IOTA Studios

## Attendees

**Manon Côté** - Culture Attaché, Bureau du Québec à Toronto  
**Marc Fournel** - Program Officer, Canada Council for the Arts  
**Marc Losier** - Artist/Associate Professor, Photography and Visual Arts, Memorial University  
**Phil Rose** - Manager of Cultural Services, Town of Aurora  
**Rachel Fender** - Independent Producer  
**Rachel Pennington** - Public Art Curator, City of Mississauga  
**Renee Castonguay** - Programming Associate, The Bentway Conservancy  
**Robert McKaye** - Senior Manager, Planning & Design, The Bentway Conservancy  
**Sanaz Mazinani** - Artist  
**Stefan Lenzi** - Production Supervisor, Special Events, City of Toronto  
**Sue Balint** - Executive Director, Bonavista Biennale  
**Vincent Roy** - Co-Director, EXMURO  
**Yvonne Monestier** - Public Art Program Manager, Waterfront Toronto

## Steering Committee

**Anna Gallagher-Ross** - Senior Manager of Programming, The Bentway Conservancy  
**David Pancoe** - Manager, Placemaking and Sustainability, The Forks Foundation  
**Melany Nugent-Noble** - Arts Administrator, Nocturne Festival  
**Michelle Drapeau** - Assistant Artistic Director, EXMURO

## Bespoke Collective

**Alex Brodovsky** - Project Coordinator  
**Christina Bagatavicius** - Lead Facilitator  
**Kate Barss** - Event Producer  
**Sabrina Richard** - Lead Facilitator

## SME Interviewees

**Camille Georgeson-Usher** - Curator  
**Chloe Catan** - Executive Director, Lassonde Art Trail Foundation  
**Kelly Jazvac** - Artist & Professor Studio Arts, Concordia University  
**Kirsty Robertson** - Professor Visual Arts, Western University  
**Liz Barron** - Curator & Founder, Urban Shaman Gallery  
**Marianne Lefever** - Co-founder, Healthy City Global  
**Melanie Kloetzel** - Choreographer, Performer, Scholar, and Educator  
**Michelle Emery Barker & Kate V Robertson** - Co-directors, Sculpture Placement Group  
**Nico Taylor & Queen Kukoyi** - Co-founders, Oddside Arts  
**Paolo Granata** - Professor Media Studies, University of Toronto  
**Rebecca Carbin** - Principal, Art+Public UnLtd  
**Ryan Rice** - Curator, OCADU



Image 27: Public Art and Sustainability Symposium, Toronto, 2023. HZD/Hannah Davison. Courtesy of The Bentway.



Image 28: Public Art and Sustainability Symposium, Toronto, 2023. HZD/Hannah Davison. Courtesy of The Bentway.

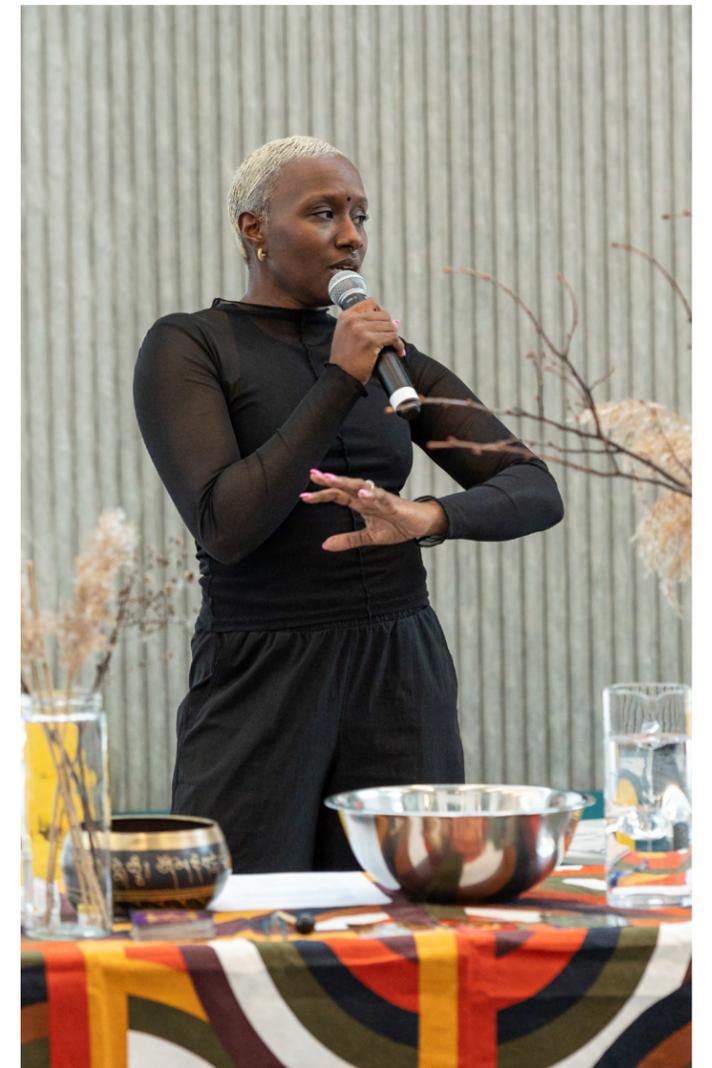


Image 29: Public Art and Sustainability Symposium, Toronto, 2023. HZD/Hannah Davison. Courtesy of The Bentway.

# overview of conference sessions

## **Symposium Agenda**

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jqKfCKmOsDS2lQuBTRIEP2SX9ZruVylH/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jqKfCKmOsDS2lQuBTRIEP2SX9ZruVylH/view?usp=drive_link)

# resources & toolkits

## **Culture For SDGs Toolkit (UNESCO & Paolo Granata Project)**

<https://secureservercdn.net/198.71.190.156/7b3.786.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/CultureForSDGs-Toolkit-CCUnesco-2022.pdf>

## **Decolonial Toolkit For Climate Artists**

<https://bd8f185c-ed05-41f1-88d0-0ff3fca60078.filesusr.com/ugd/945d80ff9b73f3176046deafbc6d7de5bd9bb3.pdf>

## **PLASTIC HEART: DIY Field Guide for Reducing the Environmental Impact of Art exhibitions**

[https://syntheticcollective.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/PlasticHeart\\_DIY\\_Fieldguide-2.pdf](https://syntheticcollective.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/PlasticHeart_DIY_Fieldguide-2.pdf)

## **A Public Art Notice Poster - Environmentally Conscious Ways to Curate, Create and Produce Public Art**

<https://futurecitiescanada.ca/portal/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2023/10/public-notice.pdf>

## **Using the Resources At Hand: Sustainable Exhibition Design (Centre for Sustainable Curating, Western University)**

<https://www.uwo.ca/visarts/resources/Resources-at-Hand.pdf>

## **Creative Green Tools Canada**

<https://www.cgtoolscanada.org/>

## **CSPA Tools Catalogue**

<https://www.sustainablepractice.org/programs/tools/>

## **Centre for Sustainable Curation Resource Guide**

<https://sustainablecurating.ca/using-the-resources-at-hand-sustainable-exhibition-design/>

## **Creative Carbon Scotland Carbon Management Tools**

<https://www.creativecarbonscotland.com/carbon-management/tools-and-resources/>

## **Galleries Commit**

<https://www.galleriescommit.com/calculate>

## **Ki Culture**

<https://www.kiculture.org/>

## **Sustainability Tools in Cultural Heritage (STiCH)**

<https://stich.culturalheritage.org/carbon-calculator/>