



ARTS COUNCIL
WOOD BUFFALO



WOOD BUFFALO
EXCELLENCE IN ARTS
AWARDS

ARTIST HANDBOOK

Updated for Buffys 2025

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About the Buffys

The Wood Buffalo Excellence in Arts Awards, affectionately known as the Buffys, is an annual celebration honouring the outstanding contributions of artists and arts organisations in the region.

Since its launch in 2016, the Buffys have spotlighted the diverse talent shaping Wood Buffalo's creative ecology. The program not only recognises artistic excellence but also elevates artists' profiles, strengthens their portfolios, and fosters opportunities to thrive locally and beyond.

At the heart of the Buffys is a vibrant gala that celebrates local talent through dynamic showcases and provides paid opportunities for artists to perform, create, and share their work. This event highlights the vital role of the arts in enriching our quality of life and supporting a thriving community.

The Wood Buffalo Excellence in Arts Awards is a signature program of Arts Council Wood Buffalo.



Program Goals

The Wood Buffalo Excellence in Arts Awards program focuses on four core goals.

CAPACITY-BUILDING	Supporting artists with the resources and tools needed to thrive through a nomination process. The nomination process is designed to equip artists with the assets needed to apply for future grants, recognition programs, and other opportunities.
PEER-REVIEW	Creating an opportunity for local artists to have their work reviewed by professionals in various artistic disciplines through the adjudication process.
NETWORKING	Providing artists with a space to engage with one another, fostering new opportunities for collaboration.
BUILDING AWARENESS	Raising the profile of local artists and engaging Wood Buffalo residents with the arts in our region.

Nomination Process

1

STEP 01

NOMINATE AN ARTIST

ACWB will then contact the nominee to complete their nomination.

OR SELF-APPLY AT:

artscouncilwb.ca/buffys

2

STEP 02

ADJUDICATION

Entries in all categories are scored by adjudicators representing the diverse artistic disciplines that make up the Buffys.

3

STEP 03

SHORTLISTING

The top three scores (by average) in each category will make up the shortlist.

The top scoring entry in each category will receive the Buffy.

4

STEP 04

AWARDS SHOWCASE

Award recipients are announced live at the Wood Buffalo Excellence in Arts Awards

"Winning a Buffy was amazing. We were enthusiastic and overjoyed that anyone would even think of us as artists in that way.

It gave us a platform to show what spoken word is and how amazing it can be to listen to something that's out of the norm."

Meghan Whitmore & Xach Edward
Media Arts Award Recipients



Dates & Deadlines

NOMINATE AN ARTIST BY: _____ **June 16, 2025 at noon (MST)**

SELF-APPLY BY: _____ **July 2, 2025 at noon (MST)**

SUBMIT ENTRY MATERIALS BY: _____ **July 2, 2025 at noon (MST)**

Your completed entry and all required support materials must be submitted by the deadlines listed above. Arts Council Wood Buffalo will not accept incomplete entries or entries submitted after their submission deadline.

Notifications will be made by Arts Council on or by the following dates:

SHORTLIST NOTIFIED: _____ **August 6, 2025**

AWARD RECIPIENTS ANNOUNCED: _____ **October 18, 2025**

Award Prize

Each Award Recipient is presented with:

- ▶ a handcrafted award, created by a local artist
- ▶ a \$250 cheque
- ▶ an award certificate



Discipline-Specific Awards & Eligibility Criteria

All award eligibilities are measured from the submission deadline (For example, is 18 years of age on July 2, 2025).

AWARD	DESCRIPTION	ELIGIBILITY
Arts Administration Award	Recognizes an administrator or group of administrators working in arts-related production, marketing, project or organizational management, development, research/curatorship, operations, or facility management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Has lived in Wood Buffalo for at least one full year on July 2, 2025• Is over 18 years of age• Has not received an award in this category in the last five years
Arts Education Award	Recognizes a program, arts organization, artist, or teacher working in schools or the community that uses the arts to provide a meaningful learning experience (for any age).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Has lived in Wood Buffalo for at least one full year on July 2, 2025• Is over 18 years of age• Has not received an award in this category in the last five years
Craft Award	Recognizes an individual or group creating functional and non-functional craft-based work including, but not limited to: beadwork, book arts, ceramics, textiles, fashion and wearable art, costuming, furniture, glass, jewelry, metals, or wood.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Has lived in Wood Buffalo for at least one full year on July 2, 2025• Is over 18 years of age• Has not received an award in this category in the last five years

AWARD	DESCRIPTION	ELIGIBILITY
Creative Collaboration Award	Recognizes a project that was part of an innovative partnership and used the arts to contribute to a balanced community by highlighting or focusing on a community need or social issue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collaboration took place in Wood Buffalo after July 2, 2024• At least one primary artist within the partnership lived in Wood Buffalo for at least one full year on July 2, 2025• At least one primary artist within the partnership is over 18 years of age• Project has not received an award in this category in the last five years
Dance Award	Recognizes an individual or group for performing or choreographing dance of any style, including cultural dance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Has lived in Wood Buffalo for at least one full year on July 2, 2025• Is over 16 years of age• Has not received an award in this category in the last five years
Indigenous Artist Award	Recognizes an individual or group who uses traditional and/or contemporary skills and materials to create art within any artistic discipline.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-identifies as Indigenous• Has lived in Wood Buffalo for at least one full year on July 2, 2025• Has not received an award in this category in the last five years



AWARD	DESCRIPTION	ELIGIBILITY
Literary Arts Award	Recognizes an individual or group active in literary arts including, but not limited to: poetry, short story, written journalism, fiction, non-fiction, blogging, or publishing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has lived in Wood Buffalo for at least one full year on July 2, 2025 • Is over 18 years of age • Has not received an award in this category in the last five years
Media Arts Award	Recognizes an individual or group working in film, video, podcasting, graphic design, animation, digital art, web-based art, audio/sound art, media art installation, new media, or any fusion thereof.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has lived in Wood Buffalo for at least one full year on July 2, 2025 • Is over 18 years of age • Has not received an award in this category in the last five years
Ken Flaherty Music Award	Recognizes an individual or group who performs, composes, writes songs, DJs, and/or works in technical production in all genres of music. It is named for Ken Flaherty, in honour of his contributions to music and musicians in Wood Buffalo.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has lived in Wood Buffalo for at least one full year on July 2, 2025 • Is over 18 years of age • Has not received an award in this category in the last five years



AWARD	DESCRIPTION	ELIGIBILITY
Performing Arts Award	Recognizes an individual or group active in theatre, performance art, acting, directing, playwriting, theatre design, comedy, and/or technical production (such as stage management).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has lived in Wood Buffalo for at least one full year on July 2, 2025 • Is over 18 years of age • Has not received an award in this category in the last five years
Rising Star Award	Recognizes the commitment of a young artist (12-17) in any arts discipline to developing their craft through performance, exhibitions, and other forms of skill development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has lived in Wood Buffalo for at least one full year on July 2, 2025 • Is between 12 and 17 years of age • Has not received an award in this category in the last five years
Visual Arts Award	Recognizes an artist or group active in painting, sculpture, drawing, printmaking, photography, or installation art.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has lived in Wood Buffalo for at least one full year on July 2, 2025 • Is over 18 years of age • Has not received an award in this category in the last five years



Legacy Awards & Eligibility Criteria

Legacy awards recognise artists of any discipline for their impact on the arts community. These awards are open to public nomination. Recipients will be selected by the ACWB Board.

AWARD	DESCRIPTION	ELIGIBILITY
Arts Champion Award	Recognizes an individual, small business, corporation, social profit, or foundation who has strengthened arts and culture in Wood Buffalo through their support and commitment to the sector in the past year. Support can be defined as advocacy, hiring local artists, offering skills and expertise, providing space for the arts, or financial support, such as sponsorship and donations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is over 18 years of age• Has not received an award in this category before
Lifetime Achievement Award	Recognizes the long-standing and significant achievements of an artist over the course of their entire career. This typically includes artistic practice and achievement, recognition by peers, and the artist's contribution to the local and broader artistic community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is over 18 years of age• Has not received an award in this category before
Youth Leader in the Arts Award	The Youth Arts Leadership Award recognises the outstanding leadership of a youth artist. Leadership can be defined as guiding, inspiring, and empowering others; setting a positive example; fostering a supportive environment; advocacy for or through the arts; and facilitating growth and innovation within the artistic community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is between 12 and 17 years of age• Has not received an award in this category before

Support Materials

- Each entrant will be asked to submit exactly three (3) support materials as part of their submission
- Submit exactly three (3) support materials only. Extra material will not be shown to the adjudication committees.
- Carefully choose the material to submit as committee members have limited time in which to study and score each entry.
- Support materials may be submitted in the following file formats only:
 - Images: .gif, .jpeg, .jpg, .png
 - Audio: .m4a, .mp3, .wav (max 1 minute)
 - Documents: .pdf
 - Videos: YouTube or Vimeo URL links (max 1 minute)¹
 - Websites: URL links²

¹ NOTE FOR AUDIO & VIDEO MATERIALS

Audio/video submissions must not exceed more than 1 minute in length. Please ensure that any audio/video submissions are edited down to the 1 minute that you want judges to review.

If an audio/video submission runs longer than 1 minute, judges will review from the start of the file until the 1 minute mark, and no longer.

² NOTE FOR WEBSITES

You may only use a website (URL link) as support materials to direct adjudicators to one (1) particular sample of your work. Please do not link to a website overviewing all of your past work.





Personal Information

The Privacy Act gives individuals the right to access and request correction of personal information about themselves. Arts Council will protect personal information as required by the Privacy Act.

For the nominations, Arts Council requests that the nominee provide their age on the nomination form to determine eligibility. Other identifiable personal information that is provided will not be used to assess the nomination.

Arts Council will be sharing information related to applications and awards with the award adjudication committees on a confidential basis, to assist with the decision-making process.

Arts Council may also share information provided by each nominee on its social media accounts.

All submitted documentation becomes the property of Arts Council Wood Buffalo for use in any publicity or promotion accompanying the Arts Awards.

"Receiving a Buffy in 2018 meant a lot to me. It helped me to move forward with my art form.

I believe that every artist has their own wings; they can fly anywhere, any time.

When I moved to Wood Buffalo, I had my own wings. I had the skills, passion and drive to create. But I had no space to fly.

The Buffys gave me the space I needed to overcome these challenges and fly."

Shweta Suthar
Dance Award Recipient



Adjudication

Peer evaluation is fundamental to Arts Council Wood Buffalo's decision-making process. The Buffys adjudicators are chosen and hired based on their expertise in each category to ensure that the adjudication was credible and unbiased. Our adjudication panel consists of local and non-local experts

About the Adjudication Process

- Each Award category is reviewed by three subject experts and the nominees are scored according to individual category rubrics.
- The three nominees who receive the highest scores in each category are named the Shortlisted Nominees.
- The Nominee who scores the highest of those shortlisted is deemed the Award Recipient in their respective category.

Please Note

- The adjudication panel may decide not to award a prize in any given year.
- ACWB staff reserve the right to move nominations between award categories.
- It is important to inform Arts Council of any changes to contact information as soon as they occur.
- Arts Council will make decisions about eligibility based on the information provided on the online form only.



Notifications

- All notifications will be sent to the email address provided through our [online portal](#).
- Nominators will receive a confirmation email as soon as they submit their nomination.
- All nominees will receive a confirmation email as soon as they submit their complete entry through the [online portal](#).
- Award Recipients will be announced live at the Wood Buffalo Excellence in Arts Awards

Questions

Any questions about the nomination or adjudication process can be directed to the Arts Council Wood Buffalo Programs Team by email at **programs@artscouncilwb.ca** or by phone at **(587) 674-1625**.



Buffys Adjudication Rubrics

Arts Administration & Arts Education Awards

CRITERIA	NO EVIDENCE	VERY LITTLE EVIDENCE	SUITABLE EVIDENCE	STRONG EVIDENCE	EXCEPTIONAL EVIDENCE
Leadership Nominee demonstrates strong leadership skills, inspiring others to achieve extraordinary results	0	1	2	3	4
Impact Nominee's accomplishments have had a significant impact on the arts communities they support	0	1	2	3	4
Innovation Nominee demonstrates innovation in their support of artists and the arts	0	1	2	3	4
Growth Nominee demonstrates introspective development and growth	0	1	2	3	4
Quality of Work Support materials demonstrate a high calibre of work.	0	1	2	3	4
TOTAL:					/20

Creative Collaboration Award

CRITERIA	NO EVIDENCE	VERY LITTLE EVIDENCE	SUITABLE EVIDENCE	STRONG EVIDENCE	EXCEPTIONAL EVIDENCE
Addressing Needs Project clearly connects to an identified community need or social issue	0	1	2	3	4
Innovation Project demonstrates an innovative use of the arts	0	1	2	3	4
Collaboration Project establishes an effective, collaborative partnership between two or more artists or groups	0	1	2	3	4
Effectiveness Project was successful in building awareness through its execution	0	1	2	3	4
Quality of Work Support materials demonstrate a high calibre of work.	0	1	2	3	4
TOTAL:					/20

Craft, Dance, Indigenous Artist, Literary Arts, Media Arts, Music, Performing Arts & Visual Arts Awards

CRITERIA	NO EVIDENCE	VERY LITTLE EVIDENCE	SUITABLE EVIDENCE	STRONG EVIDENCE	EXCEPTIONAL EVIDENCE
Innovation Nominee demonstrates original thought and expression through their work	0	1	2	3	4
Commitment to Field Nominee demonstrates a commitment to their artistic practice (i.e. takes courses, makes art, mentors other)	0	1	2	3	4
Growth Nominee demonstrates introspective artistic development and growth.	0	1	2	3	4
Effectiveness Nominee's work is effective in communicating their self-identified themes/topics	0	1	2	3	4
Quality of Work Support materials demonstrate a high calibre of work.	0	1	2	3	4
TOTAL: /20					

Rising Star Award

CRITERIA	NO EVIDENCE	VERY LITTLE EVIDENCE	SUITABLE EVIDENCE	STRONG EVIDENCE	EXCEPTIONAL EVIDENCE
Innovation Nominee demonstrates original thought and expression through their work	0	1	2	3	4
Commitment to Field Nominee demonstrates a commitment to their artistic practice (i.e. takes courses, makes art, mentors other)	0	1	2	3	4
Growth Nominee demonstrates introspective artistic development and growth	0	1	2	3	4
Shows Promise Nominee demonstrates an interest in continuing to pursue the arts	0	1	2	3	4
Quality of Work Support materials demonstrate a high calibre of work	0	1	2	3	4
TOTAL:					/20



**"Whenever someone recognizes your
work, it's always a nice feeling.**

**I know when I see artwork that I like,
and I get to meet the artist
themselves, it's always a pleasure.**

**So for someone to step out and say
"I'm going to nominate this artist,
because I think they deserve it..."**

...it's an amazing feeling."

Jon Qpid

**Ken Flaherty Music Award
Recipient**

Accommodations

Arts Council celebrates and supports diversity, and is committed to creating an inclusive environment for all, free of barriers and discrimination. We are committed to providing programs that are accessible and barrier free.

We welcome the unique contributions all artists make towards the arts community in terms of education, opinions, and culture, and all eligible nominees will receive consideration for their respective award categories, without regard to ability, race, religion, beliefs, colour, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression, age, veteran status, or status as an individual with a disability among other things.

Arts Council hopes to build local artist capacity by paralleling a nominations process that is adopted by the wider arts communities across Canada and the world. However, we also recognize that this process may be stressful to some.

Any artists who may be struggling to complete their nomination in any way are encouraged to reach out for help.

Arts Council staff may review your entry prior to submission, as they do not participate in the adjudication process. For more information or support on this or any part of the nominations process, please contact the Programs Team at programs@artscouncilwb.ca or by phone **587-674-1625**.





Oral Submissions

In an attempt to honour the oral tradition for Indigenous Artists, Arts Council has created an option for artists to submit their entries orally as a recorded audio file.

This audio file will not be transcribed to text. It will be presented to the Buffys adjudicators in its recorded form, so that it is received in the voice of the nominee, as originally intended.

While this accessibility support was created with Indigenous Artists in mind, it is available to all artists who may wish to submit their entry orally.

To complete an oral submission, you will be asked to:

- Orally respond to questions about yourself and your creative practice while being recorded.
Note: You can record yourself or contact Arts Council to set-up a time to be recorded.
- Share 3 photos of support material with Arts Council Wood Buffalo

If you are interested in completing an oral submission, contact Arts Council Wood Buffalo at programs@artscouncilwb.ca or by phone at (587) 674-1625.

Glossary

AWARD RECIPIENTS

Those who receive a Buffy in their award category.

THE BUFFYS

The name of the handcrafted award each award recipient receives. Also colloquially used to nickname the awards program as a whole.

NOMINATE

Describes what a "nominator" does for a "nominee".

NOMINATION

The piece that a nominator completes, inviting an artist to submit an entry. You may submit nominations at artscouncilwb.ca/buffys.

NOMINATOR

A person who submits a nomination for a "nominee".

NOMINEE

A person who responds to a nomination or self-applies for a Buffy.

SELF-APPLY

Describes what an artist or group does when they put themselves in the running for an award.

WOOD BUFFALO EXCELLENCE IN ARTS AWARDS

The name that encompasses the entire program, including the Nominations Process, Adjudication Process, Award Showcase, and all subsequent elements within.



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