

PROGRAMS REPORT



2024

ATA GLANCE

243 artists hired throughout 2024's programming

6,189 individuals participated in 2024 programming

\$116,717 invested in the local arts economy throughout 2024

14 organization collaborations on various programs and projects in 2024









OVERVIEW

Arts Council Wood Buffalo remains committed to empowering local artists with programs that foster growth, collaboration, and opportunity. Through partnerships with artists, arts organizations, nonprofits, and industry—as well as ongoing advocacy at all levels of government—we continue to strengthen our region's vibrant arts community.

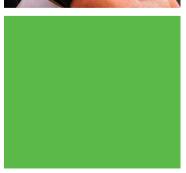
Looking back on a year of impactful programming, we are excited to share the ways our initiatives have supported artists and enriched our community. As we move forward, Arts Council Wood Buffalo is eager to build on this momentum and continue cultivating connection through the arts.















Arts Council Wood Buffalo and St. Aidan's Society have been partners since 2020, bringing arts-related programming to seniors and Elders in the Wood Buffalo region. This has been achieved through a number of different initiatives, which are planned and executed in consultation with local seniors and Elders. These initiatives also created paid opportunities for artists, driving the creative economy in Fort McMurray Wood Buffalo.

PROGRAM GOALS

AWARENESS

Highlight the valuable contributions of seniors and Elders to our community by fostering meaningful connections between older adults and the broader population.

MENTORSHIP

Facilitate intergenerational mentorship opportunities that bring seniors and artists together to exchange knowledge, skills, and experiences.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Foster opportunities for artists to earn income through their work while expanding their professional experience and expertise.









PROGRAM IMPACT

201 seniors served

11 workshops held

14 artists hired

100% of participants reported improved social engagement as a result of these workshops.

98% of participants reported improved confidence and self-esteem as a result of workshop participation.

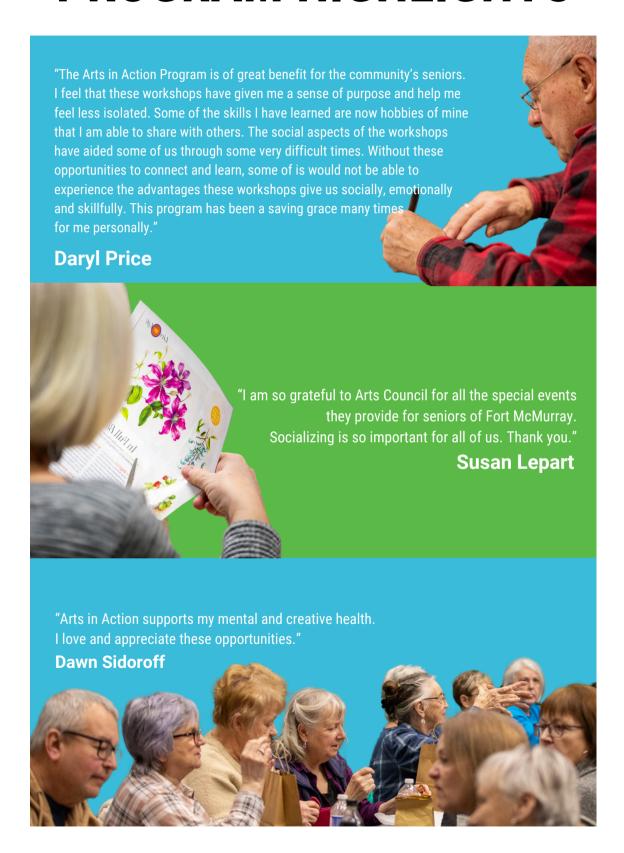




2024 ARTS IN ACTION WORKSHOPS

JAN 24	Arts in Action Day Facilitated by Jamal E Fatima Rafat, Meagan Magson & Amanda Dawson
1&7	Mixed Media Workshop Facilitated by Marina Swaggers
MAR 7	Leather Art Workshop Facilitated by Lebang Kolagano
APRIL 12	Beading Workshop Facilitated by Treasure Cooper
SEP 12	Painting Workshop Facilitated by Chris Finn
ост 24	Palette Knife Painting Workshop Facilitated by Jacqueline Morisette
28	Collage Workshop Facilitated by Liam Legault
12	Needle Felting Workshop Facilitated by Meagan Magson

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS







PROGRAM GOALS



The Artist in Residence (AiR) program invites local and non-local artists to create work inspired by Wood Buffalo's environment, culture, and people.

Running alongside it, the Suncor Indigenous Artist Program enhances accessibility for Indigenous artists, fostering broader collaboration.

Resident Artists mentor emerging and professional artists, engage with the community, and present their work in a final event. Open to all disciplines, the 3-4 week residencies include accommodation, creation space, administrative support, consultations, and financial aid from Arts Council Wood Buffalo.

CREATION

Support incoming artists in the creation of new work, inspired by their time spent in the Fort McMurray Wood Buffalo

MENTORSHIP

Further develop local artists growth through mentorship opportunities provided by the resident artists (i.e. workshops).

INNOVATION

To inspire innovation for local and non-local artists, through exposure to new perspectives, artistic ideas and techniques that the resident artists can bring to our region.

AWARENESS

Bring awareness of Fort
McMurray Wood Buffalo to
non-local artists, motivating
creative reflection and artistic
production, inspired by our
unique region and its people,
landscape, infrastructure,
culture and heritage.

Visting artists become ambassadors for our region.







MICHELLE WILSON

Michelle Wilson (she/her) is a neurodivergent artist, researcher and mother who currently lives in London, Ontario. She is of settler descent and her intermedia practice focuses on confronting colonial knowledge systems and conservation regimes with criticality and care.

She is an organizing and founding member of the Unsettling Conservation Collective, the Coves Collective, and the (Re)mediating Soils Collective. She recently completed her SSHRC-funded doctorate from the University of Western Ontario.

Currently, Michelle is an instructor in the Faculty of Design at OCADU and a postdoctoral scholar working with the Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership at the University of Guelph.



"As an aspiring or emerging artist, my advice to you may seem contradictory, but here it is: listen deeply to those around you, but don't ask permission. As artists and individuals striving to live justly in the world, we can benefit from listening without defensiveness to those around us. Listening with humility can help us find our path to doing work that is meaningful and valuable to us. However, we should not wait for others to give us permission or validate our work. Instead, we should work on a scale that is manageable with our resources, and not wait for that grant or opportunity. Even if we have limited resources, we can start making what matters to us with integrity and passion. If we do that, the support we need will eventually find us."





DAN CARDINAL MCCARTNEY

Dan Cardinal McCartney is an interdisciplinary artist and emerging curator with a degree in Drawing from AUArts (2016). Working in mixed media collage, painting, moving images, and performance, he explores themes of intergenerational trauma, gender euphoria, and Indigenous storytelling, particularly within contemporary Indigenous horror.

Of Athabasca Chipewyan, Mikisew Cree, Métis, and settler descent, Dan's roots trace to Fort Chipewyan and Treaty 8. A Two-Spirit, transgender artist and foster care survivor, his work challenges colonial narratives of individuality. His art has been featured at the Alberta Gallery of Art, Agnes Etherington Arts Centre, and the Dunlop in Regina. He is the 2021 William & Meredith Saunderson Prize winner and received the Emerging Arts Management Award from the Rozsa Foundation in 2022.

Dan is Co-Artistic Director at Stride Gallery, a Core Member of Ociciwan Contemporary Art Centre, and a collective curator at Window Winnipeg.



"My advice for aspiring and emerging artists is to delve deep into the creation process, not just the end result. Each individual possesses artistic potential and should be allowed to explore, create, and share. Remember, the act of observing and experiencing life is often a crucial aspect of being an artist, both within and beyond the studio. While productivity may fluctuate, focusing on the creative process can help you navigate through waves of criticism, which can be detrimental to your creativity."





PROGRAM IMPACT

Due to the May 2024 wildfires, our Artists in Residence had a shortened stay but made a meaningful impact in Fort McMurray and Fort Chipewyan.

Dan led a workshop where participants created 5"x7" collage postcards using reprinted photographs of the region's forest growth and historical images. These postcards could be kept or sent to loved ones, reflecting the transient yet deeply rooted nature of the community.

Michelle collaborated with community members to craft a touch-sensitive textile story map, embedding conductive thread to play recorded stories when interacted with. This evolving archival piece will capture personal, familial, and historical ties to the land.





Despite the limited time, 27 community members came together, sharing stories and forging lasting connections.



PROGRAM GOALS

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.



PEER REVIEW

Creating an opportunity for local artists to have their work reviewed by professionals in various artistic disciplines through the adjudication process.

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.



WOOD BUFFALO **EXCELLENCE IN ARTS**AWARDS

The Wood Buffalo Excellence in Arts Awards, also known as the Buffys, is more than an annual celebration of artistic excellenceit's a tribute to how the arts change lives and strengthen our region. Now in its tenth year, the Buffys honours the local artists who uplift our communities, spark connection, and respond creatively to the challenges we face. Through career development, paid opportunities, and public recognition, the Buffys supports artists as changemakers and builds awareness of their essential role in Wood Buffalo.



PROGRAM IMPACT

72 artists hired

\$54,534.00 invested in artists

245 guests were in attendance for the Buffys in 2024

This year, we relocated the Buffys to a new venue to accommodate a larger audience, leading to the highest attendance in Buffys history.









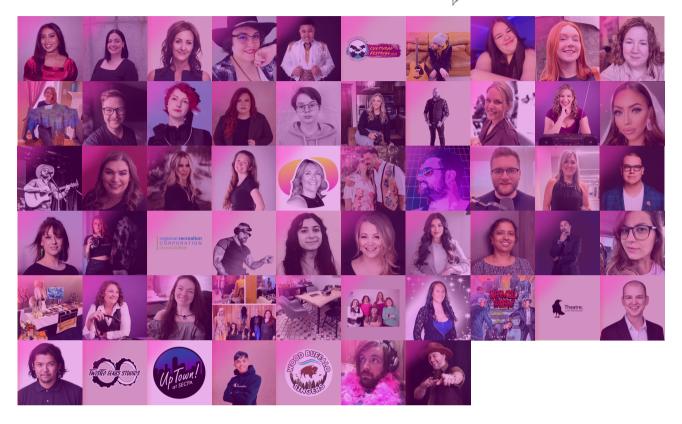
Wood BUFFALO EXCELLENCE IN ARTS AWARDS (Midnight in MALA)

ABOUT THE THEME...

The 2024 Wood Buffalo Excellence in Arts Awards embraced Midnight in Miami, a bold and glamorous theme that blended Miami's neon glow, art deco charm, and rich cultural history with the vibrant energy of our artistic community. Each year, Arts Council selects a theme to educate the public on past arts movements while shaping the Awards Showcase's visual identity. This year, we celebrated the fusion of art, music, and nightlife—where creative freedom, bold colors, and a touch of tropical mystery embodied the spirit of innovation in Wood Buffalo.



BUFFYS 2024 NOMINEES



NOMINATION STATISTICS

237 NOMINATIONS

144 UNIQUE NOMINEES



AWARD RECIPIENTS

ARTS ADMINISTRATION AWARD

Hanna Fridhed

ARTS EDUCATION AWARD

Theatre; Just Because

CRAFT AWARD

Rachelle Solbak, Tobacco & Tulips

CREATIVE COLLABORATION AWARD

Sisters in Cancer YMM Anniversary Event

DANCE AWARD

Vinz Hernandez

INDIGENOUS ARTIST AWARD

Wood Buffalo Singers

LITERARY ARTS AWARD

Sahar Saifee

MEDIA ARTS AWARD

Amy Arendt

KEN FLAHERTY MUSIC AWARD

Supermodel Taxidermy

PERFORMING ARTS AWARD

TJ Carabeo

RISING STAR AWARD

Bentley Penn

VISUAL ARTS AWARD

Rienna Blair Davey

ARTS CHAMPION AWARD

Athabasca Tribal Council

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Claire Antoine

YOUTH LEADER IN THE ARTS AWARD

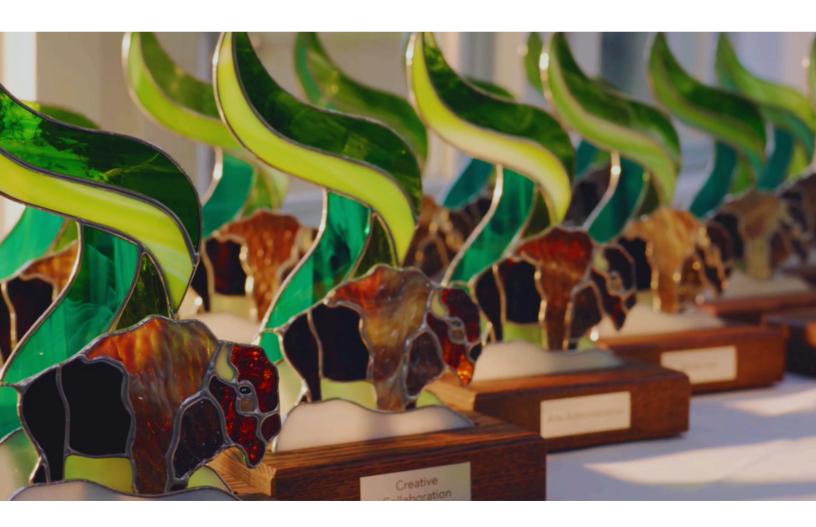
Cadence Kucy-Locke

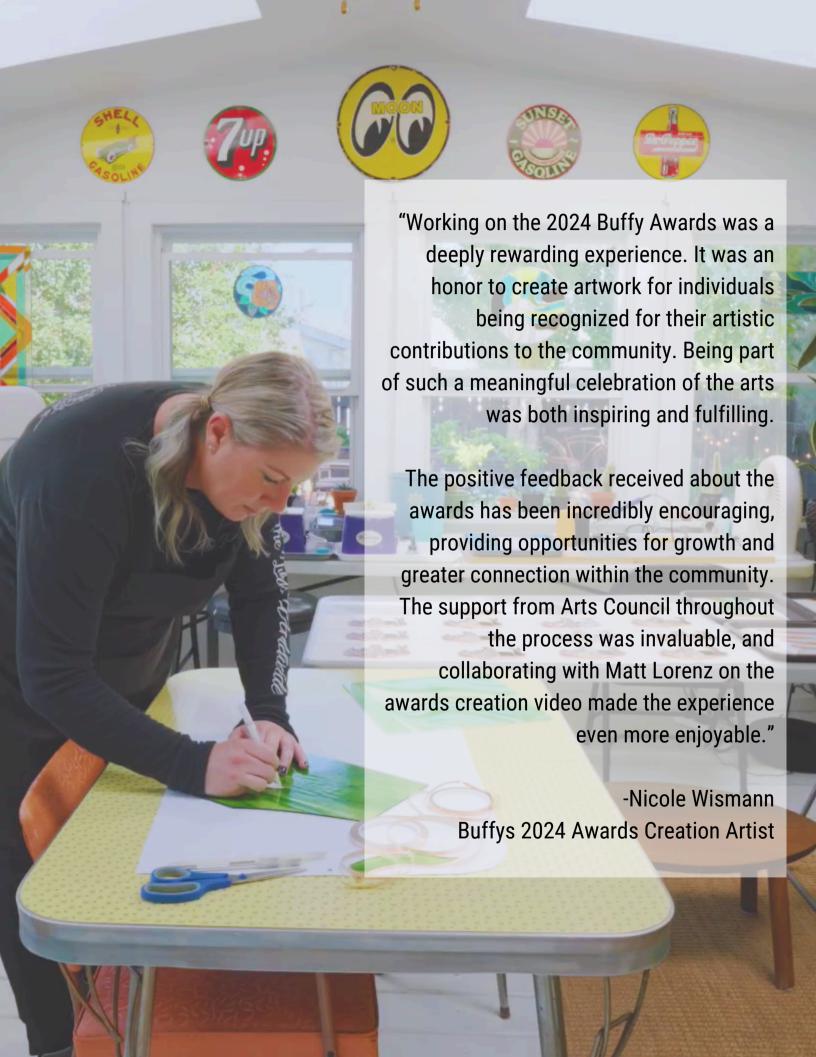


AWARDS CREATION

The 2024 Buffy Awards were created by stained glass artist, Nicole Wismann. The award was a tabletop, layered stained glass art piece created to capture the essence of the northern landscape. The wooden base supported four layers of 2D stained glass, each contributing to a cohesive scene. The back layer featured the northern lights, followed by a rolling snowy hill. In front of the hill stood a Wood Buffalo Bison, with a final foreground layer of snow completing the composition.

The artist's design was inspired by her interpretation of the most symbolic elements of life in the northern region—the majestic presence of a bison against the crisp white snow, illuminated by the dancing aurora above.





ABOUT THE PROCESS

The 2024 Wood Buffalo Excellence in Arts
Awards adjudicators were selected and hired
based on their expertise in each category to
ensure that the adjudication was credible and
unbiased. Our adjudication panel consisted of
local and non-local experts.

Each category was reviewed by three subject experts and the nominees were scored according to individual category rubrics. The three nominees who received the highest scores in each category were named the Shortlisted Nominees. The Nominee who scored the highest of those shortlisted was deemed the recipient of the award in their respective category.



THE ADJUDICATION PROCESS



2024 ADJUDICATORS

Alexa Blunnel **Christina Schell Colin Wolf Crystal Mercredi Dene Plews Emry Mika Geraldine Ysselstein Jennifer Lynch Kelly O'Donnell** Meagan Magson Michelle Campbell Michelle Wilson Natalie Farahani **Olivia Street Steph Link** Winona Julian



ARTIST HIRES

ARTISTIC TEAM:

NILS HOGNESTAD

KARLIE CHRISTIE

MATT LORENZ PRODUCTIONS

HEXWAVE MEDIA

RACHELSIERRA PHOTOGRAPHY

NORTHCOTTE PHOTOGRAPHY

CAST:

TJ CARABEO

ALEXANDRA DUROCHER
BAILEY YARKIE
BRODIE DRANSUTAVICIUS
BRYDEN TRAPP
CHASE GARGUS
HELEN KILLORN
JENNY PRICE
KG BANJOKO
NATHAN LOITZ

PERFORMERS:BENTLEY PENN

BOY NILS
DJ QPID
MKD THE SPACE
THE MIKISEW MINIS
(KYE COURTOREILLE,
BRIELLE COURTOREILLE,
& ELIJAH MOORE)
THE SOCIABLES
VINZ HERNANDEZ
THE WOOD BUFFALO SINGERS
XACH EDWARD
& MEGHAN WHITMORE

LIVE PAINTING:

DANIELLE FAIRWEATHER

COMMUNICATIONS SUPPORT: WOOD BUFFALO MEDIA GROUP

EVENT TESTIMONIALS

"I really admire the artistic vision for the Buffys every year and wouldn't change anything, this year the venue was amazing, the decor was fantastic and all the performers were amazing; I wouldn't change anything and look forward to next year!"

ar

Anonymous



"If possible, it would be great to have somewhere to put things during the showcase, I really missed that at the new venue (drinks, food, bags, awards, programs etc). Overall, well done! Very entertaining and fun evening. I wouldn't mind if the storyline/plot piece was scrapped, shifting the focus to singular characters instead. There's usually so much going on that I miss a lot of plotline. Keep being awesome, ACWB!"

Anonymous

"I loved the before and after performances shared this year. And the story skit concept is also my favourite. I did miss the beginning portion in the lobby that was part of the act, as I was on the other side. But I liked that it was put together/explained on the stage for anyone who missed it."

Anonymous





"As a recording artist and stage performer, it's easy to lose sight of the impact we have on our craft. At times, it can feel like our efforts don't hold the value they were meant to or that our work is going unnoticed. This is one of the greatest struggles an artist can face — sometimes, it's the final roadblock that brings a lifelong passion to an end.

Receiving a 2024 Buffy Award has reignited my artistic passion and inspired me to keep going—not just for myself, but for the community and everyone who continues to support what my peers and I create. After putting so much work into this town through free music festivals, it has been incredibly rewarding to know that those efforts haven't gone unnoticed. When I wasn't sure if I should keep going, Arts Council Wood Buffalo was there to lift me up and remind me why I started. For that, I'm deeply grateful—to Arts Council, to my hometown, and to the incredible arts community that makes Fort McMurray so unique. Leaning on each other is what life is all about, and ACWB truly understands how to foster that support.

Winning a Buffy Award has also helped elevate my band's presence in the music industry. The achievement has been shared worldwide through our record label and PR agent, giving me that extra spark of confidence to keep chasing my dreams."

Shawn Maynard, Supermodel Taxidermy

THANK YOU TO OUR BUFFYS 2024 PARTNERS











The Flaherty Family













FADDEN FAMILY ARTWORKS

SPECIAL THANKS TO





FOR YOUR ONGOING OPERATIONAL SUPPORT





RURAL ARTS
SUPPORT PROGRAM

The Rural Arts Support Program (RASP) was created in response to the needs of the rural and Indigenous communities, previously identified through ACWB's Arts Recovery Project. ACWB employed Indigenous staff to co-envision and create meaningful cultural arts programs and services to meet the unique needs of the residents of rural communities within our region. Doing so enabled the community-at-large to engage with the arts, crafts, traditions, and values of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

PROGRAM GOALS

CONNECTION

Elders feel connected to youth and are supported in sharing their culture.

BELONGING

Residents of rural communities feel connected to the larger region.

GROWTH

Economic and social development in the rural and Indigenous communities

ENGAGEMENT

Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members are provided with opportunities to engage with arts and culture.

EMPOWERMENT

Youth are heard and supported to develop their full physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual potential.









PROGRAM IMPACT

2,286 community members engaged

14 workshops held

14 artists hired

Beyond workshops, we remain actively engaged throughout the year at Fort Chipewyan Community High School, Athabasca Delta Community School, and various community events, including a weekly Beading and Healing session.

In addition to our workshops, we maintain a strong presence in the Anzac community throughout the year, offering a monthly Crafters Circle that fosters creativity and connection.





2024 RURAL ARTS SUPPORT WORKSHOPS

_{БЕВ}	Seal Fur Flower Pin Facilitated by Treasure Cooper
mar 5	Needle Felting Facilitated by Meagan Mason
apr 1	Beaded Hats Facilitated by Rita Vermillion
APRIL 2	Red Dress Pin Facilitated by Rachelle Solback
^{APR} 20	Altered Clothing Facilitated by Sharon Heading
мач 7	Metis Sash Beaded Earrings Facilitated by Treasure Cooper
JUNE 21	Wood Burning Facilitated by Kara Langford
18	Traditional Tobacco Pouch Facilitated by Treasure Cooper
^{SEPT} 21	Pastels to Pixels Facilitated by Adam Gavel & Anna Pottie
mar 5	Dream Catchers Facilitated by Kayla Atkins
ост 11	Moss Bag Workshop Facilitated by Dr. Trudy Cardinal
DEC 2	Caribou Hair Tufting Facilitated by Treasure Cooper
12	Knitted Arm Blanket Workshop Facilitated by Mary Mclement
DEC 18	Beaded Christmas Ornament Facilitated by Stacey Grant

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

"I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to Arts Council Wood Buffalo for bringing impactful programs to Anzac in 2024. These workshops allowed us to craft, connect, and share cultural teachings, making a profound difference in our community. The addition of Crafters Circle helped us complete projects—like my crow boots, which I proudly wear! The recent baby moss bag workshop was especially meaningful, reinforcing the power of creativity and tradition. Instructors were incredibly skilled and patient, with special thanks to Treasure Cooper for her guidance and encouragement. These programs combat rural isolation and uplift our mental well-being. We truly appreciate ACWB's efforts and look forward to 2025!"



Stephanie Burtenshaw



"Donna's work at Athabasca Delta Community School is both inspiring and deeply impactful. Through her dedication to traditional and contemporary Indigenous teachings, she has created a nurturing environment where youth can connect with their culture. Many students express gratitude for the privilege of learning from her, as she not only enriches their knowledge but also fosters a strong sense of pride and identity. The meaningful connections she builds with the youth are invaluable, and her unwavering commitment to their growth and cultural understanding is truly commendable. Donna's contributions are leaving a lasting legacy in their lives."

Priscilla St.Pierre

"Bead & Heal has been truly transformative over the past three years. It's a brave space where I feel safe to express myself and connect with others. Through beading, I've found not just creativity but also healing. For many, it has been a vital support in their sobriety journey, offering a sense of belonging and open dialogue that brings our community closer together."

Anonymous





AlbertaCultureDays.ca September 2024

Discover • Experience • Celebrate

Alberta Culture Days is a month-long celebration of arts, heritage, diversity and community-spirit featuring free activities for Albertans to enjoy. Held annually in September, it is an opportunity to discover, experience and celebrate arts and culture through local events and activities. Alberta Culture Days coincides with the Month of the Artist, a celebration of artists, and the value they bring to the province, both socially and economically.

Arts Council Wood Buffalo stewards funds from the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo among individual artists, groups and organisations who wish to host free arts & culture-based events for residents of Wood Buffalo.

PROGRAM GOALS

ENGAGEMENT

Foster deeper connection and engagement within the community by offering diverse, inclusive, and interactive arts, culture, and heritage-based programming

SUSTAINABILITY

Support the economic sustainability and professional development of local artists by creating opportunities for artists to be paid for their work

VISIBILITY

Elevate the profile of Wood Buffalo's artists and community groups by enabling them to reach new audiences and showcase their work



AlbertaCultureDays.ca September 2024

Discover • Experience • Celebrate

PROGRAM IMPACT

1,078 community members reached

More than 20 workshops/events held

124 artists hired

\$23,522 invested in the local arts economy





Alberta Culture Days has brought our community together, celebrating diversity, creativity, and belonging. Positive feedback and strong collaborations highlight its lasting cultural impact.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Participants of a IBPOC poetry workshop described it as "phenomenal and magical" in how it nurtured creativity and self-expression. One attendee shared how they were "moved by the beauty and raw emotion a poem can hold," while another reflected on their spontaneous decision to join, stating, "Curiosity didn't kill the cat—it wrote a poem." The workshop's impact was evident in participant feedback, with 81% finding it highly effective in addressing IBPOC issues and 100% expressing renewed confidence in their ability to write poetry.





The NorthWord Magazine launch fostered deep connections through shared stories, readings, and artwork, sparking strong engagement both in person and online. Guest speakers Sundas Shamshad and Steve Reeve led a compelling discussion on metamorphosis, art, and mental health, creating a reflective and inclusive atmosphere. Sundas and Shanzey's voices brought vital IBPOC representation, encouraging diverse perspectives. The event inspired both new and experienced writers to submit future work, while 500 copies were distributed across Canada, the U.S., and Pakistan, expanding NorthWord's reach and impact.

The Ukrainian Cultural Society's workshops saw a strong turnout, sparking interest in membership and community support, including financial contributions to Ukrainian newcomers for baked goods. New and returning workshops received high praise for their engaging and accessible instruction, leaving participants eager for more. A playwright also gained valuable insights for future development, highlighting the event's impact on artistic growth. The program's success was made possible through the support of the Suncor Energy Centre for the Performing Arts and collaborations with Arts Council Wood Buffalo and Alberta Culture Days, ensuring a well-attended and enriching experience for all.



2024 ALBERTA CULTURE DAYS EVENTS

SEPT 7	Henna Workshop Multicultural Association of Wood Buffalo, Komal Modi, Neelam Tajik
sерт 7	Latin American Dance Workshop Multicultural Association of Wood Buffalo, Cecilia Sara
sерт 7	Staged Reading of New Work Swamp Rat Experience, Brodie Dransutavicius
SEPT 8	Sign Language Interpretation Workshop Multicultural Association of Wood Buffalo, Lasha Barbosa
SEPT 20	IBPOC Poetry Workshop Jamal E Fatima Rafat
sерт 21	Cooking Competition Multicultural Association of Wood Buffalo, Evangeline Lim, Irka Perez, Alaa Ali, Naghma Najmi, Zhanna Baig
SEPT 21	All Ages Drag Show Oil Royals
SEPT 21	Vibrancy Event Wood Buffalo Telugu Association

SEPT 22	Improv Workshop Theatre; Just Because
SEPT 22	Indian Dance Presentation Nishka Rai
28	Ukranian Culture Day Fort McMurray Ukrainian Cultural Society
28	Indigenous Teaching Workshop Multicultural Association of Wood Buffalo, Elder Bernadette Dumais
28	Indian Dance Workshop Multicultural Association of Wood Buffalo, Munia Chatterjee
SEPT 29	Dance Showcase Fort McMurray Dance Association
SEPT 29	Indigenous Teachings Workshop Multicultural Association of Wood Buffalo, David Cree
1-20	Various Cultural Workshops Sonia Burke-Smith

Acknowledgements

FINANCIAL SUPPORT







































COMMUNITY PARTNERS



















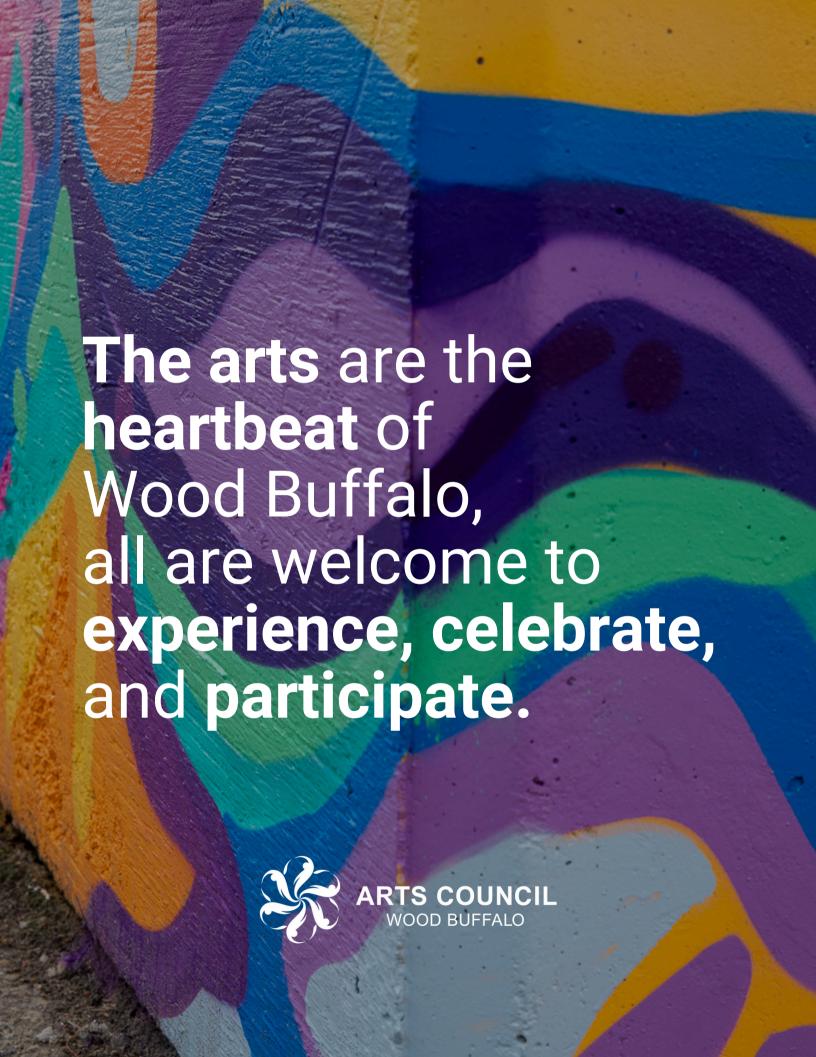














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