

# CENTERING INDIGENOUS ARTISTS' WELL-BEING WITHIN THE ARTS INDUSTRY

Our project intends to develop recommendations for STEPS Public Art to initiate and sustain meaningful, long-term relationships with Indigenous artist through the principles of intentionality, humility and reflectively, within the fast paced grant economy.

Acknowledging the history of stolen land and the current context of power dynamics and the gig economy, we centre Indigenous-led theoretical frameworks, reports as well as lived experiences, which we learned about through interviews and hosting a roundtable. Based on our research and conversations, our strategies and recommendations can be used by other public art and community based organizations.



## Recommendations

**Overarching Theme: Building Intentional Relationships**

**1. Onus on the Organization**  
An organization should not expect that the artist they have a relationship with, and are working with also act an educator and a healer.

**2. Approaching Indigenous Artists:**  
The organizations should approach artists with intentional plans, prepare intake forms, provide artists with adequate funds and utilize referrals.

**3. Accessibility in Public Art Organizations:**  
By integrating a more diversified approach, organizations can better support Indigenous artists.

**4. Embedding Principles into Governance Structures**  
Without ratified institutional bylaws, there is no way to ensure future directors or boards will uphold these principles.

**5. Creating a Safe Environment**  
There should be a structure to protect Indigenous artists with procedures and tools to correct mistakes, in order to pre-empt the perpetuation of trauma and ensure the environment is safe and supportive of Indigenous folks before they enter the organization.

**6. Advocacy & Systemic Change**  
Organizations should use their power and networks to advocate for systemic change at the municipal, provincial, and national levels, while changing their own operations.

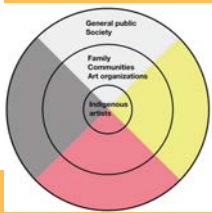
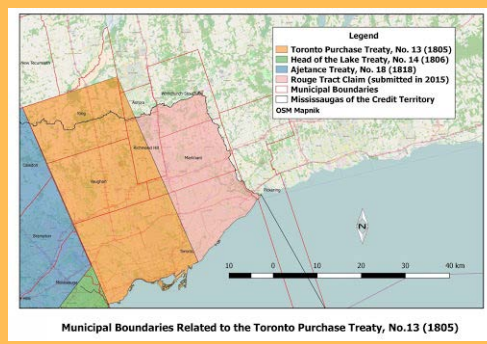
**7. Centering Indigenous Sovereignty**  
This allows for Indigenous nations to rebuild traditional systems of governance and exist outside of the settler colonial governance structure

**8. New forms of revenue to invest in Indigenous artists and their wellbeing**  
The opportunity to include Indigenous artists as co-owners and revenue sharers within public art organizations operations, should be considered. .

**9. Adjusting Evaluation Metrics**  
Non-Indigenous public art organizations should take into consideration that their typical evaluation criteria and Indigenous approaches do not come from the same framework. .

**“The Toronto area was covered by two fraudulent agreements: Treaty 13 and the William treaty”**

To align with Indigenous philosophy and ensure the viability of recommendations, this report is place-based, mainly focusing on the Indigenous history on the land of Toronto and opinion from artists who based in this area. With the original name of Tkaronto, Toronto is the traditional territory of the Anishnabeg, the Haudenosaunee, the Chippewa, the Mississauga's of the Credit and the Wendat peoples. Throughout this report, we embed the history, land and knowledge of the Anishnabeg and the Haudenosaunee.



## Medicine Wheel

There are various forms of medicine wheels, spanning across the different Indigenous nations. All forms are sensible and center one value: people should learn, appreciate, respect, and practice interconnectedness and balance in all things (Four Directions Teaching, 2018). Institutions can use medicine wheels as a conceptual guide to identify their roles in supporting Indigenous communities, and to understand the gap they need to overcome to support Indigenous artists' interconnectedness.