

2025 City of Kingston Arts Fund Project Grant Recipients Announced

The Kingston Arts Council (KAC) is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2025 City of Kingston Arts Fund (CKAF). At the City Council meeting last night on 4 November 2025, Council unanimously approved the grant recommendations in alignment with the recently completed City-led CKAF Review and the 2025 CKAF Transition Plan, both approved by Council at its meeting on 6 May 2025. Council additionally approved the new CKAF Framework, which provides guidance and structure to the City's investment of funding for arts organizations, collectives, and individual artists through the CKAF, which has been in place since 2007.

[Click here to view City Staff Report Number 25-261](#) (pages 56-91), which includes the CKAF Framework (Exhibit A, pages 63-72) and the grant recommendations (Exhibit B, pages 73-87).

2025 Transition Plan

The 2025 Transition Plan detailed the distribution and administration of CKAF funding in 2025 in preparation for the implementation of broader changes to the CKAF in 2026 and beyond under the new CKAF Framework. In June 2025, as per the Transition Plan, operating grant funding was distributed to 11 arts organizations and project grants were distributed to four organizations delivering recurring festivals. The Transition Plan also required that there would be a low barrier, open call for applications for arts projects, prioritizing funding for organizations, collectives, and artists who have not received a CKAF grant in the last two years.

2025 Project Grant Recipients

A grant application process was introduced in June 2025 for individual artists, collectives, and nonprofit organizations seeking CKAF Project Grant funding in 2025. This streamlined application process sought to eliminate administrative burdens, improve clarity, reduce barriers for potential applicants, and convey essential information in a succinct and accessible manner. To this end, application forms were condensed to six key questions focused on essential project details. By contrast, 2024 CKAF Project Grant applications consisted of 16 questions for new applicants and 20 questions for applicants with recurring projects.

Applicants were invited to apply for up to \$10,000 in funding for projects occurring between October 2025 and 31 December 2026. The CKAF 2025 Project Grants Jury reviewed a total of 35 eligible applications, and awarded 17 Project Grants, for a total funding allocation of \$118,045. This funding stream prioritized applicants who did not receive CKAF funding in the past two years.

Jurors:

Haley Sarfeld
Jabra Mitwasi
Jarena Lee

Ex-officio Grants Committee Members:

Nicole Daniels, Executive Director, Kingston Arts Council
B.C. Gorrie, Program & Communications Coordinator, Kingston Arts Council

Shamara Peart, Program Administrator, Kingston Arts Council
Danika Lochhead, Director, Arts and Culture Services, City of Kingston

- **Number of Eligible Applications:** 35
- **Total Funding Requested:** \$345,725
- **Number of Grants Awarded:** 17
- **Total Funding Awarded:** \$118,045

Project Grant Recipients and Descriptions

A New Beginning, \$8,000

A project by Deaf Spirit Theatre

Deaf Spirit Theatre is a Kingston-based, Deaf-led theatre/performance collective which celebrates the richness of Deaf culture through inclusive, accessible, and expressive theatre blending American Sign Language (ASL), physical comedy, visual storytelling, signed music, and voiceover. This community-driven project will include developing a new theatre work, *A New Beginning*; touring the work in progress to local mainstream elementary and high schools, as well as Deaf schools; and Deaf theatre workshops with youth.

A Rift in the Valley, \$5,245

A project by GHY Cheung

A Rift in the Valley is a graphic novel and queer story about two artist friends in a small university town, developed by GHY Cheung and Kyle Vingoe-Cram. *Rift* explores the relationship between its protagonists as they navigate changes to their relationship and consider how racism and anti-queerness affect their respective career trajectories. This project includes the completion and exhibition of artwork for *A Rift in the Valley*, as well as a thematic group discussion event and associated documentation.

Airwave YGK Musicians-in-Residence Program, \$7,500

A project by CFRC 101.9FM

Airwave YGK Musicians-in-Residence Program supports local artists in experimenting with new ideas, collaborating, and performing newly created work using CFRC's studios and platforms. Airwave YGK includes paid 2-day artist residencies for 10 local musicians, an Airwave YGK Musicians-in-Residence Talkback broadcast and podcast series, and a creative and participatory workshop series.

Bilingual Capoeira Batizado e Troca de Cordas, \$7,000

A project by Afro-Brazilian Arts Festival Association

The Afro-Brazilian Arts Festival Association fosters creativity, equity, and cultural engagement in Kingston through Capoeira—an Afro-Brazilian art form combining martial arts, dance, and music, rooted in Afro-diasporic history. Bilingual Capoeira Batizado e Troca de Cordas is a three-day celebration of Afro-Brazilian culture through Capoeira, a multidisciplinary art form that blends music, martial arts, dance, and oral storytelling. In addition to the festival in late October, the project includes music and visual art workshops for those who speak English and French.

Both Sides Now, \$7,500

A project by PeerLess Productions

PeerLess Productions is an inter-abled company that provides performance opportunities for neurodiverse and disabled artists. A team of six adult artists with Down syndrome and three neurotypical artists will produce a multimedia production, *Both Sides Now*, that blends film interviews with dance. *Both Sides Now* will include the voices of families and caregivers, seeking to broaden audiences' awareness of the complexities involved in PeerLess artists pursuing a life in the arts and honour the caregivers who journey with them.

PASS it on – Project for Accessible Sewing Skills, \$7,000

A project by Breanne Johnson

PASS it on is a community textile arts initiative creating meaningful opportunities for Kingston residents to learn essential sewing and mending skills while fostering collaboration between emerging and established artists. The project includes free monthly workshops, a weekly Community Mending Clinic that offers free drop-in support, and an Artist Residency Program supporting six emerging artists through rotating two-month terms at Wild Bobbin.

Get Sketchy: An Urban Sketch Carousel, \$5,300

A project by Sumera Khan

Get Sketchy: An Urban Sketch Carousel is a one-day, ticketed art event led by artist, arts educator, and urban sketcher Sumera Khan. The event will welcome up to 64 participants who will rotate through a series of sketching “stations” led by eight professional artists. Each station will feature a live demonstration, allowing participants to observe different approaches, styles, and techniques in real-time.

Joy!, \$7,000

A project by Sistema Kingston

Sistema Kingston provides an accessible, intensive program for children and youth that supports positive social development through the pursuit of musical excellence. *Joy!* is their 11th annual year-end concert focused on the theme of joy and its reflection in different musical genres and cultures. The concert will include a new creative arrangement of Beethoven's *Ode to Joy*, a dance presentation, and Indigenous drumming activities led by guest artist Yessica Rivera Belsham.

Paper Pulse — Regeneration, \$7,500

A project by Emily Wu

Paper Pulse — Regeneration is a community-engaged visual art project by artist Emily Wu, executed in four phases: material collection, community workshops, artistic creation, and a final exhibition. In collaboration with guest artists Tong Jia and Diana Jackson, Emily will offer a series of pulp art workshops which will inform the development of a collaborative sculptural series for exhibition in 2026.

Kingston Pop Choir, \$6,900

A project by Steph Drouin

Kingston Pop Choir is a monthly pop choir led by artist Steph Drouin and a series of guest artists and collaborators. Through this project, 12 local musicians will take turns leading a group in an arrangement of an original song or popular cover of their choice during a 2-3 hour gathering where participants come together to sing, connect, and create. The project is developed for those interested in participatory music, bridging the gap between formal choir and casual singing.

K is for Kingston, K is for Katarokwi, \$8,500

A project by Jane Kirby

K is for Kingston, K is for Katarokwi is the tentative title of a children's ABC book developed through community engagement and featuring illustrations by 13 local artists. Each letter of the alphabet will represent a particular symbol or landmark of Katarokwi/Kingston, such as a location, event, activity, flora or fauna. The list of words will be developed through a series of workshops featuring group brainstorming and art activities, delivered by Jane and fellow collaborators, ensuring diverse perspectives are reflected in the final product.

Kingston Printmakers Collective, \$7,500

A project by Kingston School of Art

Kingston School of Art (KSOA) is a nonprofit organization which provides quality, accessible arts education and engagement opportunities. With a new location secured and strategic plan completed, KSOA is now launching the Kingston Printmakers Collective to ensure and expand ongoing access to the valuable printmaking equipment under KSOA's care. Through this project, KSOA will develop a collective framework and build the collective membership, facilitate print shop access, purchase materials, train emerging printmakers, and host the inaugural Kingston Printmakers Collective exhibition.

Old Wine New Bottles - Early Music Inspiring Young Musicians, \$7,000

A project by Melos Choir & Period Instruments

Melos Choir & Period Instruments performs music from the 6th to the 19th centuries using historically informed performance practices. *Old Wine New Bottles* offers high-level workshop and performance opportunities to young musicians and to local, professional players, singers, and amateur choristers interested in Baroque music.

The Art of Visiting – National Indigenous Presenters Gathering, \$7,000

A project by Lodgepole Arts Alliance

The Art of Visiting - National Indigenous Presenters Gathering (2026) is a three day multidisciplinary event that brings together Indigenous and Treaty Partner artists, presenters, and cultural workers from across Turtle Island. The Gathering features dialogue circles and public events including performances, film screenings, and workshops that spotlight Indigenous musicians, dancers, storytellers, and theatre artists. CKAFF funding will support a Cabaret/Showcase featuring six emerging Indigenous performing artists sharing excerpts from their practice and works-in-progress.

The Colours of Us: A Community Art Project on Connection, \$7,000

A project by Kingston Hidden Artist Collective

Kingston Hidden Artist Collective (KHAC) is composed of local artists who are unseen or hidden, often navigating houselessness, housing precarity, mental health challenges, and other forms of systemic marginalization. *The Colours of Us* is a community-engaged project that invites participants to co-create artwork with members of KHAC. KHAC artists will produce partially completed artworks to be featured in a public exhibition, purchased, and completed by other community members. The event will also launch a colouring book featuring the original pieces.

Slow Dance 2026, \$4,600

A project by Slow Dance

Slow Dance is an annual event that blends the spirit of a queer-friendly fake prom with high-quality multidisciplinary arts programming. Slow Dance seeks to foster celebratory and inclusive spaces where diverse artists and audiences can come together. The 2026 edition of Slow Dance will feature dance cards, designated dancers, DJs, and a photobooth. Now in its 17th year, Slow Dance is seeking to welcome and mentor a new generation of organizers through a public call for committee members, investing in the longevity and sustainability of the event.

Wordlabs, \$7,500

A project by Kingston Literacy and Skills

WordLabs is a new literary arts project under Kingston Literacy & Skills which features writing workshops, seminar classes, peer writing groups, onstage artist events, and a weekly *Wordlabs Out Loud* radio show on CFRC. With CKAF, the organization will expand its fall programming to include workshops and seminars specifically for youth, public open mic opportunities for *WordLabs* students, a screenwriting seminar and culminating showcase in partnership with KCFF, and professional development workshops with the Kingston Music Office.

Operating Grant Recipients

11 Operating Grant recipients were identified and approved for funding via the CKAF 2025 Transition Plan, for a total funding allocation of \$434,745:

- **Agnes Etherington Art Centre, \$75,000**
- **Cantabile Choirs of Kingston, \$31,620**
- **Centre culturel Frontenac, \$14,229**
- **Kingston Canadian Film Festival, \$51,000**
- **Kingston Symphony Association, \$75,000**
- **Kingston WritersFest, \$45,710**
- **Modern Fuel Artist-Run Centre, \$54,060**
- **ReelOut Queer Film Festival, \$24,480**
- **Single Thread Theatre Company, \$10,200**
- **Theatre Kingston, \$38,767**
- **Union Gallery, \$14,679**

For more details on Operating Grant recipients, please visit artskingston.ca/ckaf-operating.

Project Grant Recipients: Recurring Festivals

The CKAF 2025 Transition Plan additionally identified 4 organizations who receive CKAF Project Grants annually to support the delivery of recurring festivals. While not classified as operational

support, the grants have, by default, functioned this way in practice. In order to ensure sustainability for these organizations during this transitional period, funding was allocated towards their 2026 festivals. A total of \$60,000 was allocated to the following festivals, approved via the CKAF 2025 Transition Plan:

- **Festival of Live Digital Art (FOLDA)**, \$15,000
 - Presented by SpiderWebShow Performance
- **Ground UP Dance Festival**, \$15,000
 - Presented by Ground UP Dance Festival
- **Juvenis Festival**, \$15,000
 - Presented by Blue Canoe Theatrical Productions
- **Skeleton Park Arts Festival**, \$15,000
 - Presented by Skeleton Park Arts Festival

For more details on Project Grant recipients, please visit artskingston.ca/ckaf-project.

About the City of Kingston Arts Fund (CKAF)

The [City of Kingston Arts Fund](#) (CKAF) was established by Kingston City Council in 2007, and has been administered by the Kingston Arts Council since its inception. CKAF enables the City of Kingston to continue to invest in and support the arts, heritage, and culture in Kingston. Through this program, the City has invested over \$10.3 million in the local arts industry since 2007.

Between 2007-2024, the KAC submitted annual plans for administration of the CKAF to be approved by City Council. In 2025, the CKAF was administered according to the CKAF 2025 Transition Plan approved in May 2025. The new CKAF Framework, created in alignment with the recommendations outlined in the CKAF Review Report, was approved at Kingston City Council on 4 November 2025 and supersedes previous CKAF administrative and reporting structures.

About the Kingston Arts Council (KAC)

The Kingston Arts Council (KAC) is the region's primary resource for arts information and support. Through communications, programming, and advocacy, the KAC promotes the creation, development, and appreciation of the arts in Katarokwi/Kingston and supports artistic growth and engagement for arts organizations and artists at all levels of their careers. The KAC also administers key funding programs, the City of Kingston Arts Fund and the Nan Yeomans Grant for Artistic Development.

Our mission: The Kingston Arts Council (KAC) provides strategic leadership and services for the arts – as funder, leader, advocate, resource and facilitator of opportunities – in Kingston and the surrounding area.

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