

# Final Report for the **Fall 2023 PEI Arts Grants**



*A wall of baskets created by Jane Meredith Whitten on display at the Eptek Art & Culture Centre in the exhibition Of Growing Concern: 40 years of textile creation amid the havoc of climate change. Photo: Jane Meredith Whitten*



Economic  
Development  
Innovation & Trade

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January 6, 2024

This funding program was designed to support the development of artistic practice of PEI artists through a competitive granting system. The evaluation process is modeled after the best practice of using Peer Assessment Committees to select successful projects and award funding amounts. This round of funding competition was able to support a total of 24 projects.

## Stats

Number of eligible applications received: 106

Number of projects funded: 24

Total amount requested: \$600,293.08

Total amount available for the PEI Arts Grants: \$100,000.00

## By Discipline

Visual Arts: 4

Crafts: 4

Interdisciplinary: 4

Music: 6

Writing and Publishing: 3

Theatre: 2

Dance: 1

## By Artist Type

Established Professional Artists: 17

Emerging Professional Artists: 7

Amateur Artists: 0

## By Grant Type

Create (Creation Grant): 15

Share (Dissemination Grant): 5

Learn (Professional Development Grant): 4

# Successful Applicants

## Jane Meredith Whitten

**Crafts, \$2,500**

*Of Growing Concern: 40 years of textile creation amid the havoc of climate change* is a retrospective of Jane Meredith Whitten's creative practice experimenting with textiles in response to her surroundings. Her use of traditional techniques in non-traditional ways, often with unexpected materials, creates works that engage viewers to think and rethink about the impact of climate change and the urgency of taking action. The exhibition, along with several basketry workshops and makers' sessions, was held at the Eptek Art & Culture Centre from February 27 to March 28, 2024.

## Alexis Bulman

**Visual Arts, \$7,500**

Alexis Bulman will produce a series of large-scale colour pencil drawings and aluminum sculptures based on the webbing lawn chairs of the 1950s. While remaining true to the lawn chairs' minimalist construction and Bauhaus design principles, this new body of work will depict the object adapting to an uncertain future, creating a sense of joyous escapism.

## Annie Martin

**Visual Arts, \$5,000**

Annie Martin will create multiple large, high-end, intricately detailed pieces using pyrography. The wood panels will be made of premium Baltic Birch wood panels in large sizes, with the largest being 60 × 60"—in square, rectangle, and round canvases. Inspiration will be drawn from the artist's previous works, to include traditional Mi'kmaq motifs and designs, as well as geometric, abstract, and elements of nature. Watered-down acrylics will also be used to add colour to certain pieces. This project series will be the artist's most extensive, challenging and exciting work to date.

## Dennis Ellsworth

**Music, \$5,000**

This music recording project by songwriter Dennis Ellsworth and producer Adam Gallant is about sonic exploration and breaking patterns. The artists seek new creative forms that will help broaden their artistic approach and open new sonic worlds. Ellsworth and Gallant will eliminate the usual practices, ideas or thoughts about the recording process. This work will aim to capture essence and

repetitive or perfected takes. They will employ techniques they have yet used and play instruments/tools that aren't considered their strengths. Also, they will use original iPhone demos to build these tracks and leave the demo in the final mix.

## Kal Ross

**Visual Arts, \$3,100**

Kal Ross will be creating a series of linocut prints exploring themes of queer identity, trans joy, and the important role that community and chosen family play for queer folks. Through these pieces, they will be centering their own experiences with queer identity, trans joy, and radical love. The series will have eight hand-printed linocut prints that come together to share a unified narrative.

## Alexandra O'Sullivan (Liftkit)

**Interdisciplinary Arts, \$4,005**

Liftkit will create an hour-long audiovisual performance that combines live and original electronic music, video, lighting design, and robotic sculptures that perform and move to the music.

## Luka Hall

**Music, \$2,000**

Fiddler Luka Hall and singer-songwriter Shane Pendergast travelled to Dundalk, Ireland to perform at *Your Roots Are Showing*, Ireland's Folk Conference in January 2024 as part of the *Canadian Music. East Coast Style. Spotlight*. The two artists combined forces to present a set of original Prince Edward Island folk songs and traditional fiddle music to an international audience.

## Mathias Kom

**Music, \$2,145**

In January 2024, Mathias Kom spent ten days at the Hakoniemi Artist Residency in northern Finland, where he was invited to collaborate with composer and producer Michael Duguay on the creation of a song cycle focusing on themes of darkness, the absence of power, fallowness, and regeneration. This project will echo and speak to previous collaborations, which have centred on climate change and the changing relationship between human music making and the natural world. An album-length recording of the songs will be completed in late 2024 and released the following year.

## Megan Stewart

**Theatre, \$2,500**

Funding from the PEI Arts Grants supported Megan Stewart's attendance at *Something from Nothing*, a two-week workshop in ensemble-based devised theatre at the Pig Iron School in Philadelphia in January 2024. Through participation in this program, Stewart intends to invigorate and diversify the approaches to theatre directing and performance creation she employs as director of The River Clyde Pageant, and within her solo theatre work.

## Melissa Peter-Paul

**Crafts, \$7,500**

This grant is supporting Melissa Peter-Paul as she prepares for three group exhibitions happening in 2024 with all Indigenous artists. Peter-Paul is creating 12 pieces of new works this winter and spring for presentation in these shows.

## Natalie Williams-Calhoun

**Music, \$2,500**

Natalie Williams Calhoun has been accepted to attend the Screen Composer Academy Summer Intensive Program for Film & Game Composers in Athens, Greece. This program offers a three-week intensive training that incorporates lectures, individual tutorial sessions, workshops, masterclasses and recording sessions. There are three recording sessions with different sized ensembles during the course, all of which are videotaped for future portfolio use, and there are music business workshops for film and game composers, as well as networking opportunities with the L.A. film music scene.

## Pan Wendt

**Writing and Publishing, \$6,500**

This project will support fees for PEI writers and artists featured in the inaugural online issue of *Meet Us Halfway*, a journal of art and culture set to be launched in 2024. The first issue of *Meet Us Halfway* will provide an initial platform for generating an audience, a roster of writers, and support from readers, advertisers, sponsors and funders.

## Patricia Bourque

**Visual Arts, \$7,000**

Patricia Bourque is on a journey of discovery of her ancestors. There are stories to be told, connections to be made, and Bourque intends on doing this through portrait photography.

Connecting the past with the present and future and keeping her people relevant not only outside the Mi'kmaq Nation, but more importantly, within. Pride is what keeps them strong, and that spark encourages learning and conversations. Bourque intends on keeping this pride alive by creating *Msit No'kmaq~All My Relations*, a series of portraits focusing on Lennox Island First Nation youth and making connections to the past.

## Reequal Smith

**Dance, \$2,500**

From February to March 2024, Reequal Smith was enrolled in a five-week training program with Neptune Theatre in Halifax, Nova Scotia, as part of the RBC Chrysalis Project. The RBC Chrysalis Project supports forging professional relationships and giving participants the opportunity to work with creative, supportive, and dynamic experts within the theatre and its affiliated partners. Smith joined the RBC Chrysalis Project as a Choreography Apprentice for the 2023–2024 season of the Full Monty show under the supervision of theatre choreographer Julie Tomaino.

## Ryan Murphy

**Crafts, \$2,500.00**

Ryan Murphy attended four days of hands-on wheel throwing workshops in Vancouver, B.C. presented by Eric Landon, an internationally acclaimed potter based in Denmark. During these workshops, Murphy learned that together, specific hand positions, an awareness of the head and body alignment and a slow wheel make handling any amount of clay feasible—where bodily strength of a maker is secondary to the precision of technique. His own approach to forming ceramic pieces has changed for the better, and with practice, will continue to be refined.

## Sion Irwin-Childs

**Visual Arts, \$2,500**

*A Home in My Heart* is a solo exhibition by Sion Irwin-Childs presented at the Hilda Woolnough Gallery at The Guild from mid-February to mid-March 2024. It is composed of photographic images, video installations and soundscapes that explore the abstract, intangible concepts of “home” and “belonging” taking place.

## Patricia Richard (Sirène et Matelot)

**Music, \$2,500**

Island Acadian duo Sirène et Matelot, composed of Lennie Gallant and Patricia Richard, have recently

released their second album to very positive reviews. With this fresh new artistic creation in hand, the artists are anxious and ready to move forward and market this Island Acadian product at an international level. This project grant permitted them to attend Folk Alliance International in Kansas City where they successfully obtained a mainstage showcase. There, they had the opportunity to present their French Island songs and stories to international delegates and network with them in person.

## Tamara Steele (The Umbrella Collective)

**Music, \$5,000**

Following the release of their debut tape, WELCOME TO STUDIO UC!, PEI's premier alternative hip-hop band has embarked on a journey to bring the WELCOME TO STUDIO UC! concept to life through the recording of two live shows leading to a double-live album which will be released on the one-year anniversary of the studio album, in November 2024. Live recordings took place at Baba's Lounge and at the Black Cultural Society of PEI Theatre in the spring of 2024.

## Tanya Davis

**Interdisciplinary Arts, \$6,000**

*Seeker* will be a full-length solo stage show by Tanya Davis based on poetry and literary performance. Exploring themes of connection and meaning, disparity and unrest, it is comedic and critical commentary on the many ways we seek, the troubling realities we find, and the truth we miss along the way. *Seeker* will be a new export-ready work that contributes to the cultural discourse and highlights Davis' accumulated skills as a professional mid-career artist.

## Tanya MacCallum

**Theatre, \$1,950**

Bits & Bites is a standup comedy series, based out of Bar1911 in Charlottetown, PEI. The series showcases local comedians of all levels, as well as touring pros. The comedy production also produces LGBTQ+ standup comedy events, and women comedian showcases.

## Eberechi Okwuolu (The Gøod Company)

**Interdisciplinary Arts, \$4,000**

"Land/love" by The Gøod Co. is a vibrant collaboration of four BIPOC Island artists, interweaving decolonization themes through poetry, projections, and interactive installations. This multidisciplinary experience invites participants to engage with the land, themselves, and spirit. From spoken-word

performances exploring anti-colonialism to projection mappings of collective artworks, each element fosters thoughtful engagement. The “box” installation challenges perceptions of BIPOC women through audience interaction. A guided and unguided meditation tent fosters a sensory connection to the land. The Gøod Co. aims to provoke thoughtful engagement, encouraging viewers to reflect on individual and collective actions towards anti-colonialism and showcasing vulnerability within the community.

## Trevor Corkum

### Writing and Publishing, \$4,800

Trevor Corkum’s novel *The Wedding* takes a close look at contemporary Prince Edward Island, exploring issues like climate change, immigration, assisted dying, and gender fluidity through the prism of that rowdy, old-fashioned family experience—the good old Island wedding. Nate and Kai are a gay couple in their late 30s who have rashly committed to an outdoor wedding on PEI at the end of September. Despite meticulous preparations, their plans risk complete ruin when a monster hurricane begins snaking its way up the Eastern Seaboard a few days before the guys are set to tie the knot.

## Zac Thompson

### Writing and Publishing, \$5,000

Zac Thompson is writing a novel, tentatively titled *That Thing I Found in You*. The book is a mystery/thriller that thematically explores the unexplained neurological illnesses plaguing the people of New Brunswick. The goal is to create a work of fiction that’s in discussion with the pressing issues facing Maritimers today. Funding from the PEI Arts Grant will support dedicated time for the research, development, writing and rewriting of the piece for the first six months of 2024. Upon completion of a polished draft, Thompson will pair with his literary agent to shop the project to Canadian publishers.

## Isako Suzuki

### Crafts, \$6,000

This grant is to assist in the creation of 25 to 30 unique pieces of Neriage pottery in preparation for a solo exhibition planned for the fall of 2024. The theme of this exhibition is the illusory effect of tonal gradation clay on the surface of Neriage pottery. Through this project, the artist will gain insight into how the works created with achromatic and chromatic gradations may influence and even manipulate viewers’ visual perception when presented in different contexts.



# Process for Selection of Grant Awards

The Director of Cultural Development oversees the administration of this funding program. A contracted program officer coordinated the grant applications and peer assessment selection process. The program uses a peer assessment model where a committee of six peers reviewed all applications and then were brought together to assess each application on the following criteria:

## Artistic Merit: 25 points

Questions the artist(s) should be able to answer within this section:

- Why do I/we make art? Why am I a musician/filmmaker/visual artist etc?
- What is my arts practice about (a general statement that speaks to an overarching vision?)
- Where is this project situated within my practice and does it demonstrate the growth of my practice?
- Other things to consider—are the concepts in language that is understandable (not too jargon filled, academic)
- Is this about business or about artistic merit?

## Achievability: 15 points

Does the artist(s) have a track record of successfully completing projects? Does the plan seem reasonable? Is the budget sufficient? Does the artist have a well-thought-out timeline?

## Impact: 10 points

This criteria relates to impact for the PEI arts community. Essentially the question is: Will the project contribute to PEI arts? It can be understood in many ways: growth of the individual artist/group, raising the profile of the artist within the community, contributing to the growth of the arts community, or raising the profile of PEI arts outside of the province.

# Selection of Peer Assessors

Peer assessors were solicited from an open call for applications. Peer assessors represented a mix of disciplines and experience in the arts community. The assessors were:

- Charlotte Engel: Film/TV/Screen Industries
- Colin Buchanan: Music
- Emily Smith: Theatre/Arts Administration
- Evan Furness: Visual Arts/Multidisciplinary Arts
- Nicholas Herring: Writing and Publishing
- Robin 'Gessy' Shumbusho: Photography/Visual Arts

# Timeline for the Fall 2023 PEI Arts Grants

September 20: Call for applications and peer assessors opens

October 25: Call for applications closes

October 31 to November 21: Peer Assessment Committee reviews applications

December 8: Peer Assessment Committee meets face to face for the adjudication

December 11: Results communicated to applicants