

# Final Report for the Spring 2024 PEI Arts Grants



*Jennifer King performing as British composer Dame Ethel Smyth, and Suzanne Campbell performing as Islander Bessie Carruthers in the show *The Bessie Carruthers Study Club* presented at King's Theatre in Annapolis Royal on June 14, 2024.  
Photo: Paula Rockwell*



Economic  
Development  
Innovation & Trade

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July 31, 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 25 projects.

## Stats

Number of eligible applications received: 83

Number of projects funded: 25

Total amount requested: \$408,528.19

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

## By Discipline

Visual Arts: 5

Interdisciplinary: 3

Film and Media Arts: 1

Music: 9

Writing and Publishing: 2

Theatre: 5

## By Artist Type

Established: 14

Emerging: 11

## By Grant Type

Create (Creation): 17

Share (Dissemination): 4

Learn (Professional Development): 4

# Successful Applicants

## Emmanuelle LeBlanc (Vishtèn Connexions)

**Music, \$4,200**

With this project, Emmanuelle LeBlanc and her group Vishtèn Connexions will create a new duo performance featuring tracks from their latest album Expansion. The performance will also include pieces from their previous albums as well as new selections from the traditional Acadian repertoire.

## Ariel Sharratt (The Burning Hell)

**Music, \$8,000**

Musicians Ariel Sharratt and Mathias Kom of Fairfield, PEI, will create material for their next album as The Burning Hell. A follow-up to the award-winning Garbage Island, the new album will playfully explore ecology, ruin, memory and nostalgia. Funding will support the writing, pre-production, recording, and post-production of the record.

## Shane Arsenault (Aubin pi la S.C.B.)

**Music, \$5,000**

Aubin pi la S.C.B. (Sea Can Band), an emerging Acadian rock-n-roll collective based in Abram-Village, PEI, will record 10 new songs at the Rec Room Studio and Jam Space, and release their sophomore album tentatively titled Moyen Mess. The band is proud of its culturally unique take on French rock-n-roll music that puts French Acadian Chiac/Franglais lyrics front and centre, highlighting the language commonly used in the Évangéline region and setting the group apart from Acadian music coming out of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. With this new album, Aubin pi la S.C.B. hopes to take this culturally unique offering further by putting even more emphasis on their community's linguistic and cultural identity.

## Luka Hall

**Music, \$8,000**

Emerging artist Luka Hall will create a folk/country/trad EP featuring a collection of original songs and a set of original fiddle tunes. Two original singles were released in the spring of 2024, both recorded at SpaceCamp Productions. The remaining tracks from the album will also be recorded at SpaceCamp Productions with Jake Charron and Donny Richard. Release of the completed EP is scheduled for the Fall of 2024.

## Scott Parsons

**Music, \$5,800.00**

Musician Scott Parsons will research and collect stories of PEI Black History to write a new album of songs inspired from the research and stories collected as part of this process. This new body of work will add greatly to the catalogue of existing Black History songs and stories previously written by Parsons and will serve as a legacy project for future generations.

## Benton Hartley

**Theatre, \$7,000.00**

Pagan North is a brand-new theatrical play by Benton Hartley telling the story of the residents of Lundy Island, a small island off the coast of Devon, in the United Kingdom. Exploring themes of land ownership and usage, Hartley draws on his own familial history to weave this tale of faith and witchcraft, reminiscent of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*.

## JoAnna Howlett

**Visual Arts, \$2,201.96**

Visual artist JoAnna Howlett will expand upon a body of visual artwork that explores tradition and superstition in relation to the lobster fishing industry. With this grant, they will create three new pieces: two sculptures using lobster fishing materials such as rope, netting, and wood, as well as a series of framed photographs that were taken during the 2024 spring fishing season.

## Fairouz Gaballa

**Visual Arts, \$4,235.35**

Visual artist Fairouz Gaballa will create a handcrafted, large-scale two-part miniature diorama that consists of a booklover's dream room inspired by Montana ranches and a whimsical, Fae-inspired landscape. Each section will measure up to 60 x 50 x 42 cm. The cozy room will feature floor-to-ceiling bookshelves, a loveseat, a coffee table, and a window showcasing Montana's scenery. A magical portal in the bookshelf will lead to the second part, a fantastical scene with a well surrounded by grass, flowers, and earthy elements. This diorama symbolizes the transformative power of storytelling. The project will culminate in a stop-motion animation, bringing the miniature world to life. Through this artwork, Fairouz aims to share the profound joy of reading and storytelling with the public.

## Adam Florian

**Writing and publishing, \$4,800**

"As They Are" is an autobiographical graphic novel about Adam Florian's experiences with Crohn's disease and infertility. After three losses, seven years and no answers, Adam made the decision to halt his Crohn's treatment with the hope of improving his fertility. As a result, in July of 2023 he was hospitalized needing his stomach pumped. An expression of the little moments that go unseen, "As They Are" is one artist's journey through a whirlwind of events where he discovers new perspectives and, much to the surprise of him and his wife, a small bit of optimism for the future.

## Brenda Hickey

**Writing and publishing, \$5,500**

Graphic novelist Brenda Hickey is creating Don't Call Me Sidekick, an 84-page fantasy adventure aimed for children 12 and up. The story follows a young student named Kailee who is studying to join the acclaimed Phantom Guard, an elite force that protects her city from the monsters known as Phantoms. As part of Kailee's studies, she must form a partnership with Ary, a magical creature that the school assigned to grant her powers. However, Ary is not interested in being Kailee's sidekick as mysterious disappearances within the school have shaken her belief in the system.

## Sarah Nicole Dart

**Visual Arts, \$1,774.08**

Visual artist Sarah Nicole Dart's project The Really Long Tumble is a 6' x 140' photo monogram on fabric, creating a visual story representing hardships and mental health struggles. The cyanotype coated sheet of 'film' will be exposed in the sun in multiple series of 7-minute body portraits that will be taken over a 3-hour period on one sunny afternoon. The model will appear as if she is floating in space, falling, cartwheeling and whir-winding around in time, trying to adapt to her surroundings. It expresses a visual story about mindfulness, resilience, and the importance of being adaptable to situations that arise in life.

## Dylan Menzie

**Music, \$2,500**

Musician Dylan Menzie will present a series of performances with PEI indie jazz fusion band Somewhere Soon. Showcasing their new performance to audiences in Alberta, Saskatchewan and British Columbia, the show will feature arrangements of songs from Menzie's newest offering, North American Dream Kid, which is a collection of vulnerable, catchy songs with themes surrounding love,

depression, and the abuse of power. Working with Somewhere Soon, Menzie's songs will be modified and extended to include space for improvised soloing throughout the performance. These shows will also include featured performances of Somewhere Soon's new instrumental piece, "Video Games".

## Charles Aondo

**Music, \$2,000**

Charles Aondo, aka C. Ruth, in collaboration with The Umbrella Collective, is set to embark on a transformative tour to perform their album released in 2023, *Welcome to Studio UC*. This tour represents a significant milestone in their artistic journey, bringing their digital creations to life on stages in Vancouver, Calgary, Montreal and Fredericton. For C. Ruth, exploring new territories beyond the East Coast is pivotal. The exposure gained from these performances extends beyond geography, offering invaluable networking opportunities, fostering relationships with industry insiders, and establishing a presence in new markets. This expansion is poised to elevate C. Ruth's career, unlocking previously untapped opportunities and propelling them to new heights.

## Kristian Williams Dart

**Theatre, \$2,000**

Theatre artist Kris Williams' play *Elmsdale* is a psychological realist play set in West Prince County, PEI. Over the course of one evening a family is forced to reconcile with the decisions they made 18 years ago. It's about the lengths people will go to protect their family, legacy, and way of life. Even if protecting it requires violence, and a shallow grave. *Elmsdale* explores the secrets hidden down the dusty dirt roads of rural PEI. It is a dark and comedic play that tears up the red soil and takes a hard look at the roots of a small town. Kris Williams plans to stage this play over four nights at The Guild, in Charlottetown, in October 2024.

## Suzanne Campbell

**Interdisciplinary, \$2,065.15**

It's August 1919, and local Women's Institute activist Miss Bessie Carruthers of Charlottetown, PEI, has a very special guest for her Study Club: British musician, composer, and renowned suffragette, Miss Ethel Smyth. Produced by local company Pirate Jenny Productions, musical theatre performance *The Bessie Carruthers Study Club* features Suzanne Campbell as the titular suffragette and Jennifer King as English composer Ethel Smyth. With the support of the PEI Arts Grants program, Campbell and King will be taking *The Bessie Carruthers Study Club* on the road in Nova Scotia and PEI throughout the summer of 2024.

## Adam Hill

**Music, \$2,500**

Musician Adam Hill will be attending the Blue Ridge Fiddle Camp at the Brevard Music Center in Brevard, North Carolina, in August 2024. Throughout the 4-day workshop, he will be studying with master fiddlers Casey Driessen, Darol Anger, Scott Tixier, Tatiana Hargreaves, and Zachary Brown. This professional development opportunity will allow Adam to continue expanding his skills of adapting the music and technique of fiddling for the double bass.

## Graham Putnam

**Theatre, \$1,436**

With years of experience creating and performing in projects for the stage and screen on PEI, particularly in comedy, Graham Putnam is very excited to open a new range of skills and possibilities by developing his singing voice with this project grant. Under the mentorship of Melissa MacKenzie, they have developed a series of voice lessons honing and training Graham's skills with a focus on musical theatre. Regular weekly sessions will work on his breathing techniques, basic scales, range and repertoire and audition process. He is keen not only to expand his professional range but also for what creative ventures this may facilitate.

## Alexandra MacLean

**Theatre, \$2,000**

Theatre artist Alexandra "Alix" MacLean is working on a play based on a year in the life of Lucy Maud Montgomery: 1919 and the Spanish Flu pandemic. Montgomery lost her best friend and cousin to influenza and was quite sick herself. The play explores themes of the deep love between friends, grief, and creative inspiration in the face of such a huge loss. She will be working with Hamilton-based dramaturg and director Aaron Joel Craig.

## Brynn Cutcliffe

**Theatre, \$2,000**

Emerging theatre artist Brynn Cutcliffe will spend part of the fall and winter working as the inaugural Playwright in Residence at Watermark Theatre, under the guidance of Artistic Director Robert Tsonos. The residency will allow Cutcliffe to learn and grow as a writer by spending time developing plays in progress, as well as receiving dramaturgical support from Tsonos.

## Hans Wendt

**Visual arts, \$6,000**

Visual artist Hans Wendt will produce a series of large-scale watercolour paintings for exhibit pop-up style in Charlottetown, and later at the Michael Gibson Gallery in London Ontario. This series will also be featured in a publication about Hans' work, which will be produced by Saint Thomas University later this year.

## Phil Mercier

**Visual arts, \$5,000**

Phil Mercier will create a series of analog photographic works exploring PEI's history of black bears. These photographs will be shot on black and white film and developed by Mercier. The resulting images will be hand-printed traditional silver gelatin prints.

## Natalie Williams-Calhoun

**Music, \$8,000**

This grant will support a performance entitled 'Songwriters & Strings', featuring three PEI artists in a songwriters' circle accompanied by a nine-piece string ensemble, with charts arranged and written by Natalie Williams-Calhoun. Natalie is well-known to PEI audiences as a member of the PEI Symphony Orchestra as well as a founding member and arranger of Atlantic String Machine. 'Songwriters & Strings' will feature Alicia Toner, Tiffany Liu and Emilea May performing at St. Paul's Anglican Church in Charlottetown on Saturday, November 16, 2024.

## Leah Ellis (Tunes and Tall Tales)

**Interdisciplinary, \$1,871.28**

With this grant, Tunes and Tall Tales will illustrate a new story for inclusion in their summer season. For this new project, the musical storytelling group will create thirteen new illustrations to accompany an original musical story via "crankie." The story to be illustrated, "Hedgie and Bear-Beach Day" centres around a disagreement between friends. Tunes and Tales hopes to help children navigate the complexities of interpersonal relationships by modelling positive conflict resolution through music, storytelling and art.



## Ryan E. Drew

**Interdisciplinary, \$2,616.23**

This multimedia presentation explores the life cycle of water and all its messy and beautiful entanglements with island life. Through a bricolage of words, sounds, and images (including a glass harp), PEI artists Laurie Brinklow, Ryan E. Drew, and Laurie Langford celebrate water in all its manifestations – sweet-salty-fog-ice-rain-snow-sleet, and all the stages in between – as they bring island nature and culture together in the dance that ultimately sustains life on this little island Earth. This installation will be exhibited at the first Islands Water Congress at Norðurlandahúsið (Nordic House) in Tórshavn, Faroe Islands, in September 2024.

## Millefiore Clarkes

**Film and Media Arts, \$6,500**

Talking to Humans about the End of the World is a poetic short documentary film by Millefiore Clarkes that will weave together the perspectives of an array of humans whose common denominator is simply living on Epekwitk/PEI. It will seek out reflections, wisdom, spiritual and philosophical insight to the question of “What does it feel like to live in end times?”. The aim is not to alarm or create undue anxiety, but rather to “stay with the trouble”. While some people will immediately resonate with the question, others will challenge it and describe its meaning from another lived perspective. The aim is to tap into the shared subconscious web in this corner of the world, at this point in time.

# 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 and doable?
- 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:

- Jordan Beaulieu: visual arts and community-led arts
- Jeremy Thornhill: film, writing and publishing
- Ayelet Stewart: fine crafts
- Liam Corcoran: music
- Rob MacDonald: theatre and music

# Timeline for the Spring 2024 PEI Arts Grants

- April 15: Call for applications and peer assessors opens
- May 13: Call for applications closes
- May 18 – June 11: Peer assessors review eligible applications
- June 13: The Peer Assessment Committee meets in person for the adjudication process
- June 17 – June 18: Results are communicated to applicants