

Final Report for the **Fall 2025 PEI Arts Grants**



*From left to right: Brieonna Locche, Leah Ellis and Lucy Farrell of Tunes and Tales.
Photo: Andrew Lewis.*



Economic
Development
Innovation & Trade

January 19, 2026

This funding program was designed to support the development of artistic practice of PEI professional 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: 104

Number of projects funded: 25

Total amount requested: \$518,264.50

Total amount available for the Fall 2025 PEI Arts Grants program: \$100,000.00

By Discipline

Visual Arts: 5

Interdisciplinary: 5

Film and Media Arts: 3

Music: 3

Writing and Publishing: 4

Theatre: 3

Comedy: 1

Crafts: 1

By Artist Type

Established: 13

Emerging: 11

Amateur: 1

By Grant Type

Create (Creation): 17

Share (Dissemination): 5

Learn (Professional Development): 3

Successful Applicants

First-time grant recipients are identified by an asterisk.

Erin Arsenault

Writing and Publishing, \$3,100

With support from this grant, author and illustrator Erin Arsenault will create a children's picture book for ages 4 to 7. Inspired by Frankenstein and the journey of parenting an autistic child, the book explores themes of societal expectations, uniqueness and acceptance. The illustrations will use mixed media (gouache, colour pencil, etc.) with a playful, image-driven vision. This project synthesizes the artist's history in portraiture with her recent abstract sequential art series.

Willow Bell

Music, \$4,750

This grant will support electronic music duo Liftkit to create and release a four-track debut EP, capturing the energy and experimentation of their live electronic music performances on recording.

Patricia Bourque

Visual Arts, \$7,825

With this visual storytelling project, Mi'kmaw photography artist Patricia Bourque will capture portraits of Elders from Epekwitk, immortalizing their presence and wisdom. This series of photos will illustrate the Elders' teachings, stories, and connection to the land.

Kassinda Bulger*

Film and Media Arts, \$2,000

Kassinda Bulger will train in motion capture (mo-cap) acting in order to expand upon her artistic capabilities, and to sculpt a future in which she can dedicate herself full-time to her multidisciplinary training in the arts.

Shawnte Burrell

Theatre, \$2,500

With this grant, Shawnte Burrell will attend a four-day personalized intensive wig training course with industry professional Sharon Ryman, who has over 44 years of experience in the field. Shawnte will be elevating her knowledge from Intermediate to Advanced, gaining skills that will benefit her work in theatre and film in PEI.

Diana Castro Roa*

Music, \$5,000

With support from this grant, Diana Castro Roa will create *Delirio*, a collaborative album blending Latin jazz, folk, blues, rock, cumbia, and electronic sounds. Featuring six original tracks, including instrumental and vocal pieces, the album reflects the artist's cultural journey and artistic growth. In 2026, Diana will perform the songs live, share her creative process on social media, and connect with audiences across Colombia and Prince Edward Island.

Ashley Anne Clark*

Writing and Publishing, \$1,600

With support from this grant, visual artist and author Ashley Anne Clark will bring to life "Animals and Water", a children's picture book that explores how animals rely on water to survive. Through vibrant watercolour illustrations and simple, engaging facts, the book reveals the vital and unique connections between wildlife and water. From whales communicating across oceans to otters floating hand in hand, it inspires young readers to reflect on the importance of clean water and engages them to protect our planet's most essential resource.

Millefiore Clarkes

Film and Media Arts, \$2,200

With support from this grant, filmmaker Millefiore Clarkes will present the event "Talking to Humans", a multi-disciplinary presentation and gathering that provides a space for community to embody their climate grief through experiencing and participating in film, poetry and music.

Trevor Corkum

Writing and Publishing, \$7,200

With support from this creation grant, Trevor Corkum will bring to life "Be Brave When I Am Gone", a coming-of-age young adult novel in which Devon and Ruby, both seventeen, take a road trip to PEI for Ruby's final summer.

Brynn Cutcliffe

Theatre, \$5,500

In preparation for a premiere production, PEI playwright Brynn Cutcliffe will finalize a rehearsal draft of the script and music of their play, "The Weatherman," in collaboration with composer Cameron MacDuffee and dramaturg/director Keshia Palm.

Tanya Davis

Interdisciplinary, \$5,000

With support from this grant, multidisciplinary artist Tanya Davis will develop her solo show "Seeker" into an export-ready production by undertaking major revisions of the script and working with a creative director/dramaturg and lighting designer.

Darrell DesRoches*

Crafts, \$2,000

PEI craft artist Darrell DesRoches has been chosen as one of eleven Atlantic Canadian artisans to share his wood turned vessels at the 2026 Collect Art Fair to be held at the Somerset House Gallery in London, UK. Darrell will create a series of open and closed vessels in oak and ash that portray his unique style of texturing (hand carved, sandblasted) and completing the pieces using ebonizing, copper verdigris or iron oxide finishes.

Donnalee Downe

Interdisciplinary, \$7,500

In the first year of a multi-year project, artist Donnalee Downe will create work for a new exhibition and various performances tentatively titled, "Once the artist is gone". The new body of work will explore themes of loss, aging and death by posing the question, What is to become of the curated collections of an archival artist once the artist is gone?

Doug Dumais

Visual Arts, \$4,750

"Ultra Deep Field" is a series of large-scale mixed-media photographs by Doug Dumais inspired by constellations, scientific imagery, and cosmology. Created on eight-foot by four-foot drywall panels layered with stars, poems, and photographs, the works borrow the visual language of scientific imagery to evoke awe and mystery, as well as explore the limits of the scientific understanding of our universe. The series will be included in an exhibition presented in PEI in 2026.

Leah Ellis

Interdisciplinary, \$1,600

Tunes and Tales will tour their new multidisciplinary show "Under the Same Sky", which features two

original stories, "Ballad of the Beavers" and "The Frog's Journey", in the Maritimes. The production combines live music, storytelling, and crankie illustrations to highlight themes of community, interconnection, and the natural world. This grant will directly support hiring a bass player for rehearsals and performances and hiring an audio technician for this tour.

Clare Engen*

Visual Arts, \$545

This professional development grant will enable visual artist Clare Engen to further develop her skills in acrylic painting by providing her with an invaluable opportunity to gain knowledge, guided practice, and mentorship from an established artist.

Shawn Hogan

Comedy, \$6,450

PEI comedian Shawn Hogan will record his debut comedy album live at The Guild in Charlottetown on April 18, 2026. After fifteen years performing across Canada, this album will showcase Shawn's sharp writing, storytelling, and East Coast voice. Mixed, mastered, and released nationally, it marks a defining step in his career and celebrates his roots while reaching audiences across the country.

JoAnna Howlett

Visual Arts, \$2,000

Visual artist JoAnna Howlett makes art that addresses superstition and tradition in the Atlantic lobster fishery as well as her relation to it. With support from this grant, they will create two new artworks, an installation and a sculptural diptych, for their upcoming solo exhibition "As Waves Break" presented at the Hilda Woolnough Gallery.

Nathan Lacroix

Film and Media Arts, \$3,000

The Co-Op is a four-part short-form dramedy series (12 to 15 minutes per episode) created by emerging PEI filmmaker Nathan Lacroix. Set in a small cooperative housing complex in Charlottetown, the series follows a queer teen of immigrant parents navigating self-discovery, community, and belonging among a lively group of LGBTQ+ residents. Blending humour and heart, The Co-Op explores identity, inclusion, and the everyday complexities of shared living.

Karson McKeown

Music, \$6,600

This project bridges past and present through the reimagining of archival family fiddle recordings from western PEI. Led by musician and composer Karson McKeown (of Inn Echo), the album will blend traditional Celtic influences with contemporary instrumental textures, creating a modern sound rooted in heritage. The project will culminate in a physical album release, live performance, and workshop celebrating the family's musical legacy.

Richard Pellissier-Lush

Writing and Publishing, \$5,000

Being Indigenous, but not looking Indigenous, has been a constant struggle throughout Richard Pellissier-Lush's life. The Mi'kmaw artist captured his story in the children's book "The Creator's Plan", which was also adapted as a theatrical play for the stage. With the success of his first children's book, Richard will continue building on this story to create the second volume of the series.

Julie Pellissier-Lush

Interdisciplinary, \$6,000

MMIWG2S is a song composed by Julie Pellissier-Lush together with her son, Richard, as a tribute for the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two Spirited people. With this project, Julie and Richard will create a recording of this song with members of the Northern Lights ensemble, as well as a music video in collaboration with a dancer. Their vision is to amplify the message of this impactful song and together help to end some of this pain through healing.

Lisa Theriault

Visual Arts, \$4,500

Lisa Theriault's project explores the architecture and culture of artist-run centres through large-scale coloured-pencil drawings and paper installations. Beginning during her residency at the Nordic Artists' Centre Dale in Norway, she will create reconfigurable cut-out works that merge research, imagination, and lived experience. The series will culminate in a solo exhibition at Galerie Sans Nom in Moncton in 2026, linking Atlantic and international artist-run contexts.

Konrad Wendt

Interdisciplinary, \$880

Support from this grant is contributing to the completion of Konrad Wendt's upcoming exhibition Welcome to the Art Gallery (working title) with This Town Is Small by giving the artist the means to take care of printing and framing required to professionally prepare the work for display. The solo exhibition will be presented in the Hilda Woolnough Gallery in May 2026.

Larry “Jay” Whitehead

Theatre, \$2,500

333: The Toronto Bathhouse Raids, written by Jay Whitehead, will be staged at The Guild in Charlottetown from June 18 to 20, 2026. This powerful play revisits the 1981 police raids on Toronto's queer community, a pivotal moment in Canadian LGBTQ2S+ history. Through bold storytelling and live performance, the production amplifies queer voices, sparks dialogue on human rights and connects PEI audiences with a vital chapter of national history.

Process for Selection of Grant Awards

The Cultural Development Division oversees the administration of this funding program. A program officer coordinates the submission of grant applications and the peer assessment selection process. The program uses a peer assessment model where a multidisciplinary committee of five to six peers review all eligible applications and assess them 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/writer, etc.?
- What is my artistic practice about? (a general statement that speaks to an overarching vision)
- Where is this project situated within my practice, and does it demonstrate artistic growth?
- Other things to consider: Are the concepts written in language that is understandable (not too jargon filled or 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 and realistic?
- Does the artist have a well-thought-out timeline?

Impact: 10 points

This criterion relates to the 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, and/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 experiences in the artistic community. The assessors for the Fall 2025 PEI Arts Grants were:

Norma Jean MacLean (visual arts)

Adam Hill (music)

Graham Putnam (theatre, performing arts)

Brian Markham (arts administration)

Kirstin Lund (multidisciplinary arts)

Yvette McKenna (visual arts, crafts, Indigenous arts)

Timeline for the Fall 2025 PEI Arts Grants

- September 22: Call for applications and peer assessors opens
- October 20: Call for applications closes
- October 23 to November 18: Peer assessors review eligible applications
- November 28: The Peer Assessment Committee meets in person for the adjudication process
- December 3 to 5: Results are communicated to all applicants