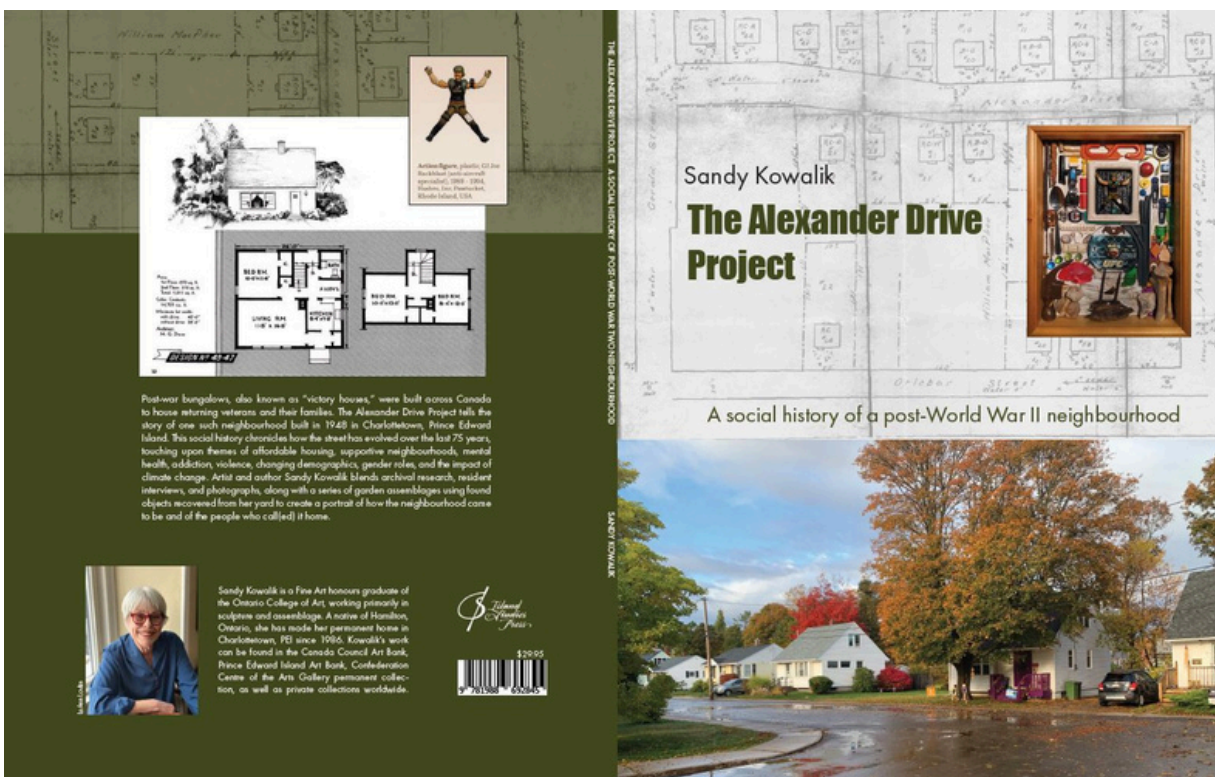


Final Report for the Spring 2026 PEI Arts Grants



Book cover of *The Alexander Drive Project* by Sandy Kowalik. Artwork: collage, collage detail, Alexander Drive photo by Sandy Kowalik. Author photo: Luann Lovlin.



Economic
Development
Innovation & Trade

July 30, 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 22 projects.

Stats

Number of eligible applications received: 69

Number of projects funded: 22

Success rate: 32 %

Total amount requested: \$441,896.61

Total amount available for the Spring 2026 PEI Arts Grants program: \$100,000.00

By Discipline

Crafts: 2

Dance: 2

Film and Media Arts: 3

Interdisciplinary: 1

Music: 5

Theatre: 3

Visual Arts: 4

Writing and Publishing: 2

By Artist Type

Established: 17

Emerging: 5

By Grant Type

Create (Creation): 16

Share (Dissemination): 3

Learn (Professional Development): 3

Share (Dissemination): 4

Learn (Professional Development): 3

Spring 2026 PEI Arts Grants Recipients

First-time grant recipients are identified by an asterisk.

Charles Aondo (C. Ruth)

Music, \$1,000

This project supports C. Ruth's travel from Prince Edward Island to Toronto, Ontario, to perform at the prestigious NXNE Festival with the Mango Street Trio. Funding will help cover transportation, accommodation, and related expenses, enabling him to present his original work to national audiences. This opportunity will expand the artist's professional profile, strengthen industry connections, and showcase PEI's vibrant music scene on a renowned international stage.

Christopher Bailey

Writing and Publishing, \$6,000

With support from this grant, Chris Bailey will create THE TRUTH IS BAD ENOUGH, a clear-eyed examination of life and fishing in eastern PEI through the firsthand experiences of the author. Based on a journal kept by Bailey in his father's final season as captain, the book expounds upon this life through entries, reflections, poetry, and visuals. Here the back of the picturesque PEI postcard is shown.

Jordan Beaulieu

Visual Arts, \$2,000

With support from this Share grant, PEI artist Jordan Beaulieu will exhibit original artwork in the Atlantic Canada Zone at the 65th Toronto Outdoor Art Fair (TOAF). Taking place at Nathan Phillips Square in downtown Toronto, Ontario, from July 10 to 12, 2026, the fair will feature eight artists from the Atlantic region as part of the showcase curated by Bushra Junaid, entitled "The Land and the Sea Bind Us."

Patrick Brunet*

Visual Arts, \$4,000

Red Beds will be the artistic sum of five years of Patrick Brunet's fossil fieldwork, study and collection, brought to life through a visual art installation. A panelled ceiling-mounted mural will show the creation of the "red beds", the red sandstone cliffs, of what is now Prince Edward Island and all the snapshots of life captured within its strata 295 million years ago. Inspired by all the fossils he has discovered, Patrick Brunet will use the visual arts to share this land's prehistoric tale. To accompany the artistic installation, a program will be created. Patrick Brunet will also present an artist talk to explain the artwork and share the prehistoric and geologic story of Prince Edward Island.

Marlene Campbell

Theatre, \$7,000

With support from this Create grant, theatre artist Marlene Campbell, in partnership with Halstead Electric, will design, rehearse and present the world premiere production of the play *The Conversation*, touring it with professional actors to five venues across Prince Edward Island in September 2026. *The Conversation* tells the story of an independent and successful career woman and mother, who is not gracefully accepting the confinements of aging, and taking out her frustrations on her primary caregiver, a daughter. Both women desire more from their relationship, especially as the mother is moving towards her final chapter. But it will require each of them to become real and vulnerable. Can a mere conversation be the answer?

Nishta Gokul*

Dance, \$2,000

Nishta Aadesh Gokul, an emerging Charlottetown-based Kathak dancer, will undertake an intensive training residency in July 2026 at the India School of Dance, Music & Theatre in Winnipeg. Building on nine years of guru-led study in this North Indian classical dance form, the residency will consolidate her technique for solo performance and lay the foundation for sustained Kathak presentation and teaching on Prince Edward Island.

Rebecca “Becca” Griffin

Theatre, \$2,000

Catching Fish is a puppet show created by Becca Griffin and produced by Brielle Ansems with music by Jasmine Michel. This piece follows *The Old Man* and *The Child*, as they become unlikely friends with an extended cast of seabirds and fish. This 25-minute, memorable piece has no dialogue, but through movement choreographed to an original score, it is an accessible show for folks of all backgrounds and languages. With a story for all ages, *Catching Fish* is sure to capture your heart. The show will be presented as a scheduled production at the new children’s theatre festival, the Silly Goose Theatre Festival, taking place at Beaconsfield Carriage House from August 10 to 21, 2026.

Adam Hill

Music, \$7,000

Led by artist Adam Hill, the Charlottetown Improvisers Orchestra is a new large-ensemble project bringing together musicians from across Prince Edward Island to explore conducted improvisation, collective creation, and experimental performance. The orchestra will present three unique concerts in 2026 and 2027, including outdoor site-responsive performance, immersive spatial sound, and newly commissioned works.

Carlie Howell

Music, \$8,000

With support from this Create grant, Carlie Howell will rework and expand upon their contemporary classical composition "Seeking Congruency" and arrange it for symphony orchestra. Established arranger and composer Natalie Williams-Calhoun will provide mentorship to Howell as they undertake this ambitious project.

Elder Francis Jadis

Crafts, \$3,540

With support from this Create grant, Elder Francis Jadis, a respected basketmaker from Abegweit First Nation, will travel to the mainland with an apprentice to harvest Black Ash, process it and bring it back to the Island where he will pass down cultural practices and traditional basketweaving skills to younger generations in the Mi'kmaq community.

Sandy Kowalik

Interdisciplinary, \$4,620

Post-war bungalows were built across Canada to house returning veterans and their families. The Alexander Drive Project chronicles the social history of one such neighbourhood built in 1948, in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. Interdisciplinary artist and author Sandy Kowalik blends archival research, interviews, and photographs, along with images of assemblages using found objects recovered from her garden, to create a portrait of how the street evolved, touching on themes of affordable housing. The project will culminate with the publication of a book and the presentation of a solo exhibition.

Emmanuelle LeBlanc

Music, \$5,000

With support from this Create grant, Emmanuelle LeBlanc will develop a new body of original compositions and arrangements of traditional Acadian songs through an approach that explores rhythm, voice, language and contemporary performance. Inspired by both her own compositions and the archives left by her twin sister Pastelle LeBlanc, the project will also incorporate the development of "snodhrán," an original Acadian percussive approach.

Cameron MacDuffee

Theatre, \$2,500

With support from this Share grant, artist Cameron MacDuffee will present *Become*, an original theatrical work for one actor and four musicians exploring the theme of transformation. The piece consists of 12 original songs linked by prose exploring the theme of *Becoming*. The work is written by Cameron MacDuffee and publicly presented by Farmgate Theatre on August 30, 2026.

Annie Martin

Visual Arts, \$7,000

Annie Martin will create a 60-inch (5-foot) round, hand-burned and painted wall piece exploring resilience, renewal, and personal power. Funds will be used for the purchase of materials required to work at this scale and to cover documentation of the finished work through professional photography and video. This grant gives the artist dedicated time and resources to complete a technically demanding large-scale project and expand her practice into new subject matter.

Julie Pellissier-Lush

Film and Media Arts, \$5,000

Through this project, Mi'kmaw artist Julie Pellissier-Lush and the Mi'kmaq Heritage Actors will give back to the community through stories, connection, and food by creating a monthly cooking class to teach community members how to preserve food and make it last longer. The classes will be filmed, and videos will be made available online afterwards.

Robin Gislain “Gessy” Shumbusho

Film and Media Arts, \$4,840

The Ones Who Stay is a portrait series and photo book documenting the real cultural fabric of Prince Edward Island. From June to October 2026, Robin Gislain Shumbusho will photograph 30 to 50 Islanders across various communities in their own spaces. The project will culminate into a professionally designed and printed photo book, distributed locally and made available to community libraries across PEI.

Reequal Smith

Dance, \$6,000

Daughter in the Soil is a contemporary dance work by Bahamian artist and choreographer Reequal Smith exploring the relationship between women, land, ancestry, and resistance. Rooted in Afro-Caribbean movement traditions and emotional cartography, the work transforms the body into a living archive of memory, survival, ritual, and resilience through grounded movement, percussive rhythms, and embodied storytelling.

Lisa Steele*

Crafts, \$1,000

With support from this professional development grant, artist Lisa Steele will attend an intensive five-day pottery course to expand into more advanced throwing technical pottery skills and learn about smoke and primitive firing in a downdraft barrel kiln. These new skills will benefit her work in pottery in PEI.

Zac Thompson

Writing and Publishing, \$5,000

The Prison Doctor's Assistant is a neo-noir graphic novel by Zac Thompson about the weird history of so-called Canada. Set in the 1950s, it follows a med-school dropout doing hard time at Oakalla Prison Farm in British Columbia. It's here where he finds himself assisting the experimental plastic surgeries performed at the prison during this time.

Jeremy Thornhill*

Film and Media Arts, \$6,500

Dearly Discarded is a poetic short film by Jeremy Thornhill that explores the relationship between consumer waste and human neglect on Prince Edward Island. The film is driven by an original spoken-word poem, an original piano score, and poetic slow-motion imagery "from single-use garbage to dumpsters to expansive landfill sites" culminating into a quiet, human portrait of homelessness.

Maggie J. Whitten Henry*

Visual Arts, \$3,500

For the month of June 2026, Maggie J. Whitten Henry will be taking up residence at The PEI Crafts Council Studios. During her residency, the artist will explore the concept of "lines" and themes of climate change (particularly "climate stripes") through textile experimentation and quilting techniques, creating an installation piece as well as guiding the creation of a community art quilt.

Natalie Williams-Calhoun

Music, \$6,500

This Create grant will support the creation of string quartet arrangements to be included as part of a new "Acoustic East Coast" show that will be produced in 2027. Following on the success of the original Acoustic East Coast, this show will feature instrumental cover arrangements of favourite Canadian East Coast songs, written for the Bayfield Quartet by composer and arranger Natalie Williams-Calhoun.

Process for Selection of Grant Recipients

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 on the PEI arts sector. 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 sector, and/or raising the profile of PEI arts outside of the province.

Selection of Peer Assessors for the Peer Assessment Committee

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 Spring 2026 PEI Arts Grants were:

- Alexis Bulman (visual arts, disability arts, community-led arts)
- Patricia Bourque (visual arts, Indigenous arts)
- Ben Kunder (music)
- Kristian Williams Dart (theatre and film)
- Sadie McCarney (writing and publishing)
- Millefiore Clarkes (film and media arts)

Timeline for the Spring 2026 PEI Arts Grants

- April 13: Call for applications and peer assessors opens
- May 11: Call for applications closes
- May 14 to June 3: Peer assessors review eligible applications
- June 10: The Peer Assessment Committee meets in person for the adjudication process
- May 28 to June 15: Results are communicated to all applicants

Final Report for the 2026 Indigenous Arts Grants

The Indigenous Art Grants program was established in 2021 to celebrate, highlight, support and encourage the artistic accomplishments of the Mi'kmaq people of Epekwitk (PEI). Just like the PEI Arts Grants program, the evaluation process is modeled after the best practice of using Peer Assessment Committees to select successful projects and award funding amounts. Each Peer Assessment Committee for the Indigenous Arts Grants consists of a chairperson and an interdisciplinary committee made up of Indigenous members of the arts and culture community. This round of funding competition was able to support a total of 18 projects.

Stats

Number of eligible applications received: 25

Number of projects funded: 17

Success rate: 68%

Total amount requested: \$77,798

Total amount available for the 2026 Indigenous Arts Grants program: \$10,000

By Discipline

Visual Arts: 5

Crafts: 8

Film and Media Arts: 1

Dance: 1

Other: 2

By Artist Type

Established: 6

Emerging: 9

Amateur: 2

By Grant Type

Create (Creation): 8

Learn (Professional Development): 1

Visual Arts Materials Microgrant: 8

2026 Indigenous Arts Grants Recipients

James Bernard

Crafts, \$1,000

With support from this Create grant, Keptin James (Jimmy) Bernard, a Master Mi'kmaw basket maker from Lennox Island First Nation, will travel to Eel River Bar to harvest black ash for creating intricately woven baskets using traditional techniques passed down through generations. Funds will support travel, safe transportation of harvested trees, and materials for basket making. The artist will then craft a new series of baskets, sharing his knowledge through hands-on demonstrations and community events, including craft fairs. This project strengthens his artistic practice, preserves Mi'kmaw cultural traditions, and fosters public engagement, ensuring that both the art and the heritage it represents are shared with current and future generations.

Mary Jane Bernard

Visual Arts, \$350

With this Visual Arts Materials Microgrant, Mary Jane Bernard, a Mi'kmaw visual artist from Abegweit First Nation, will purchase materials and supplies needed to expand her craft and grow her artistic practice. With these supplies, she will work on new techniques, expanding her artistic output in 2026 and 2027.

Kimberly Bernard

Crafts, \$300

Kimberly Bernard, a Mi'kmaw visual artist and craft artisan from Abegweit First Nation, will use this Visual Arts Materials Microgrant to purchase materials and supplies required to complete a candle-making artistic project. All materials will support small-batch, high-quality production and ethical sourcing and go towards supporting candle-making as an artistic practice that integrates Indigenous knowledge systems with contemporary art. Emphasis is placed on process, material integrity, and storytelling rather than mass production. The final body of work will be unified through consistent visual language, carefully considered packaging, and written contextual materials that invite audiences to engage with the work thoughtfully and respectfully.

Liam Bourque

Film and Media Arts, \$400

With support from this Visual Arts Materials Microgrant, Liam Bourque, a Mi'kmaw visual artist from Oromocto First Nation, will purchase materials and supplies required to create a series of aerial photographs, short aerial video clips, 3D printed models based on landscapes or designs and a small collection presented online or in person.

Rosalie Bourque

Visual Arts, \$400

With support from this Visual Arts Materials Microgrant, Rosalie Bourque, a Mi'kmaw visual artist from Lennox Island First Nation, will purchase materials and supplies to cover printing costs of her photography work onto greeting cards, bookmarks and journals.

Clare Engen

Visual Arts, \$350

With support from this Visual Arts Materials Microgrant, Clare Engen, a young Cree visual artist and artisan from Opaskwayak First Nation, will purchase materials and supplies needed to create artworks such as coloured beads, a large piece of hide, acrylic paint colours and brushes.

Francis Jadis

Crafts, \$1,000

With support from this Create grant, Elder Francis Jadis, a respected basketmaker from Abegweit First Nation, will travel off Island to harvest Black Ash and create more molds and baskets for the purpose of teaching and passing down these skills to youth in the Mi'kmaq community of Epekwitk.

Barbara Jadis

Crafts, \$500

Barbara Jadis, a Mi'kmaw artist from Abegweit First Nation, will use this grant to create a full traditional woman's regalia kit with matching beaded hair ties, barrette, medallion, bone breast plate, and a T-shape dress. The completed set will then be professionally photographed to support the artist in developing a webpage for her work.

Ashley Moore

Crafts, \$500

Support from this grant will help Ashley Moore, a visual artist and craft artisan from Lennox Island First Nation, build her career as a basket weaver as well as her name as an artist. Funding will be used to purchase creation supplies, namely, to build inventory of reed and stock of baskets, allowing the artist to continue learning new techniques and designs to display her baskets publicly as well as build new relationships to further her artistic career.

Richard Pellissier-Lush

Other, \$2,000

With support from this grant, Richard Pellissier-Lush will work with youth in the Mi'kmaq community on a land-based cultural project focused on harvesting traditional medicines alongside Elders and knowledge keepers, culminating in the creation and gifting of 25 Smudge Kits to Elders who can no longer harvest their own medicines. Funding will cover materials and supplies needed to respectfully harvest, dry, and assemble the medicines into completed kits, travel to harvesting locations and meetings with Elders; meals during land-based harvesting days, and honoraria and gifts for Elders sharing their teachings.

Melissa Peter-Paul

Crafts, \$500

With this grant, Melissa Peter-Paul, a quill artist from Abegweit First Nation, will create quillwork for the 2026 Toronto Outdoor Art Fair taking place from July 10 to 12, to which she was invited to participate by the event's curator. As part of this opportunity, the artist will also be giving quillwork workshops in Toronto, Ontario, a unique chance to connect with new audiences and grow her practice and connections outside of the Maritimes.

Junior Peter-Paul

Crafts, \$950

Junior Peter-Paul, an artist from Elsipogtog First Nation and Abegweit First Nation, will create a series of hand drums with dyed hide, matching rattles and hand drumsticks that will represent each Mi'kmaq month of the year. Each hand drum and matching rattle will be made with colours and design inspiration from the land and the meaning of each month.

Emma Pickering

Dance, \$600

With support from this Learn grant, Emma Pickering, an emerging dance artist from Lennox Island First Nation, will travel to Edmonton in October 2026 to represent the Wabanaki People of Atlantic Canada at the national Treaty 6 powwow gathering. The funding will support the continued development of the artist's practice as a Jingle Dress and Fancy Shawl Dancer while strengthening community engagement and cultural knowledge sharing. Through this work, Emma Pickering aims to contribute to the preservation of Indigenous dance traditions while fostering connection, wellness, and intergenerational knowledge within her community.

Jolene Rolle

Other, \$500

With this Visual Arts Materials Microgrant, Inuk artist Jolene Rolle will purchase fabric and sewing supplies to create silapait (traditional Inuit pullovers). As the artist continues developing her sewing practice, she is shifting from primarily working with sealskin to producing Inuit-style clothing that is more accessible and in greater demand in her region. This project will allow her to build skills in traditional-inspired garment making, create an initial collection of silapait, and contribute to the visibility and continuity of Inuit design and cultural expression through her work.

Kayla Sark

Visual Arts, \$1,000

This grant will support Kayla Sark, an emerging Mi'kmaw visual artist from Lennox Island First Nation, in the continuation and growth of her Mi'kmaq quillwork practice by covering essential material and travel costs. This includes travel off Island to ethically source porcupine and purchase quills from other harvesters, as well as transportation required to harvest birch bark. Funds will also be used to purchase necessary supplies such as clothing dye and sinew. By reducing financial barriers, this funding will provide Kayla Sark with focused studio time to complete works for an upcoming exhibition at The Rooms in St. John's, Newfoundland, and market inventory, contributing to both cultural continuity and sustainable income through her artistic practice.

Jillian Sark

Crafts, \$500

Jillian Sark, an emerging Mi'kmaw artisan from Abegweit First Nation, will use this Visual Arts Materials Microgrant to purchase materials and supplies needed to create handmade wool textile items with Indigenous-inspired designs. It will allow the artist to expand her collection, increase production, and provide more items for powwows, markets, pop-ups, and retail stores throughout the year.

Morgan Varis

Crafts, \$350

With support from this Visual Arts Materials microgrant, Morgan Varis, a Nehiywa Cree artist from Peguis First Nation, will purchase materials and supplies needed to create children's traditional regalia for upcoming mawi'omis.

Process for Selection of Grant Recipients

The Cultural Development Division oversees the administration of this funding program with support from a member of the Mi'kmaq community. Together, they coordinate the submission of grant applications and the peer assessment selection process. The program uses a peer assessment model where a multidisciplinary committee of Indigenous peers review all eligible applications and assess them on Artistic Merit, Achievability and Impact.

Selection of Peer Assessors for the Peer Assessment Committee

Peer assessors were solicited by a member of the Mi'kmaq community working in close collaboration with the Cultural Development Division. Peer assessors represented a mix of disciplines and experiences in the artistic community. The assessors for the 2026 Indigenous Arts Grants were:

- Corinne Chappell
- Julie Pellissier-Lush
- Misiksk Jadis

Timeline for the 2026 Indigenous Arts Grants

- January 19: Call for applications opens
- February 17: Call for applications closes
- February 25 – March 13: Peer assessors review eligible applications
- March 16: The Peer Assessment Committee meets in person about the decision-making process
- March 18 and 19: Results are communicated to all applicants