

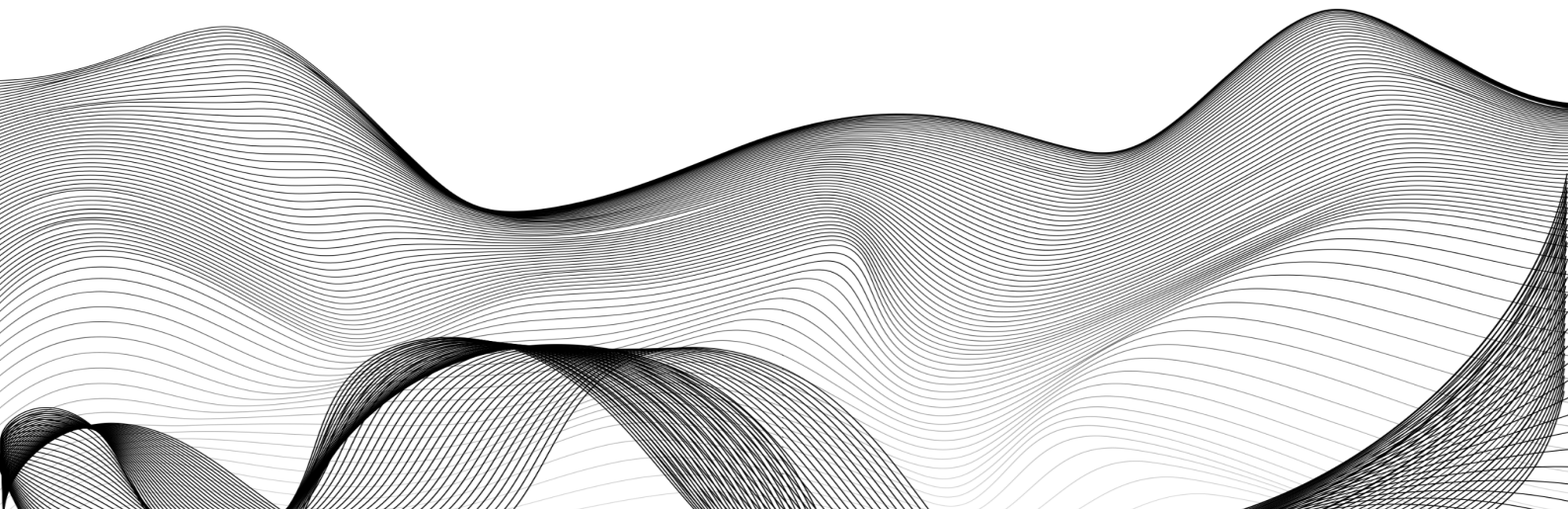
CAN
ASIAN
DANCE

FINAL REPORT

A Review of CanAsian Dance's
Impact and Opportunities

Seema Jethalal, Extra Cardamom Consulting and Sally Lee

June 2023



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Land acknowledgement

CanAsian Dance is situated in Tkaronto, a Mohawk word meaning “the place in the water where the trees are standing.” It is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishinaabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat peoples, and it continues to be the home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. This land is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaties signed with multiple Mississauga and Chippewa bands. We also acknowledge that this land is under the Dish with One Spoon covenant, an agreement between the Anishinaabeg and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. This land is a dish to be shared and cared for and we all share one spoon; the spoon is to be used to take only what is needed and to leave enough for others, thus ensuring a viable and abundant future. We recognize the enduring resilience of Indigenous peoples and we acknowledge that we are accountable to these relationships and these agreements.

Today, Tkaronto is home to many peoples: Indigenous, settlers, immigrants, and newcomers. We acknowledge and pay respects to our ancestors of Asian origin and descent, who have been systemically devalued and exploited in the history of this land. We also acknowledge those who came to Canada forcibly, particularly as a result of the Trans-Atlantic Slave trade and accordingly, we honour and pay tribute to ancestors of African origin and descent.

Gratitude

We would also like to acknowledge everyone who contributed directly and indirectly to this initiative. We hope this work will be valuable not only to CanAsian Dance, but also to other artists and organizations.

This project was supported in part with funding from the Toronto Arts Council through their Open Door Program. We would also like to thank the staff and board of CanAsian Dance for their vision and relentless support, and for giving us the opportunity to learn, grow and be inspired by the people we encountered through this project.

Specifically, we would like to thank:

Staff and board members

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Brandy Leary
Coman Poon
David Norsworthy
Linda Zhang
Tom Cho

Founding artistic director (emeritus)

Denise Fujiwara

Former staff and artistic associates

Adina Herling
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Mayumi Lashbrook
Michael Caldwell

Interview participants and informants

Alejandro Ronceria
Ame Henderson
Andrea Nann
Angie Cheng
Cara Spooner
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1. Executive summary

For this strategic initiative, CanAsian Dance hired consultants Seema Jethalal and Sally Lee (thereafter referred to as “we”, “our” or “us”) to evaluate its impact and explore alternative models of leadership.

Approach

We used a two-phase approach. In **Phase 1: Investigate options and key themes**, we consulted with dance community members via a survey and interviews, and conducted desk research. We gathered data to inform four key activities:

- Analysis of the organization’s community and impact;
- A gap analysis, primarily comprising a SWOT analysis;
- An environmental scan and consideration of CanAsian Dance’s unique value proposition; and
- Research into alternative leadership models.

Phase 1 resulted in an “options paper” outlining eight leadership models.

In **Phase 2: Map the path to implementation**, we conducted a further round of interviews to get feedback on a summary version of the options paper.

This final report draws together our key findings, and it culminates in a recommended leadership model with suggestions for implementing this model.

Key findings

Impact study and community identification

- CanAsian Dance is respected for creating opportunities for choreographers and dancers, typically from Asian backgrounds and/or artists connected to Asian dance practices, to explore their identity and evolve their craft.
- CanAsian Dance generally excels at serving adults (aged 25-40) in Toronto, particularly emerging and professional artists from other equity-deserving groups and historically excluded communities.
- Despite the shift away from the annual festival model, many community members still associate CanAsian Dance with the annual event or bring up the festival as a strength or achievement.

Environmental scan

- In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, artists are economically marginalized and the performing arts sector faces a long recovery.
- There is a lack of affordable dance spaces.
- There is slow growth in funding opportunities and funding amounts allocated are out of step with increasing inflation rates.
- Funders are placing greater value on non-Eurocentric dance styles and support for organizations led by and serving IBPOC communities. However, inequities continue for IBPOC communities in the arts.
- The survey results suggested that CanAsian Dance's unique value proposition is the opportunities it creates for artists—primarily of Asian heritage—to develop their craft. We note that this finding can inform further work that CanAsian Dance should do to revisit its vision, purpose and priorities (see *Recommendations*).

SWOT analysis

- **Strengths:** Two key strengths that were commonly singled out were the specific cultural focus of the mandate, and CanAsian Dance's work in supporting artists at different stages of their career.
- **Weaknesses:** Among the weaknesses identified, the organization requires greater precision and clarity around its mandate, mission, and vision, and how these are communicated to members of the dance community and the general public.
- **Opportunities:**
 - There are multiple opportunities to expand outreach to include untapped communities (e.g., those interested in Asian culture outside the dance sector, and communities outside of the geographic locations currently being served).
 - There are many other opportunities for CanAsian Dance to explore as it determines where its strategic priorities lie.
- **Threats/challenges:**
 - The landscape for dancers, choreographers and dance organizations in Toronto is increasingly challenging. For an organization with limited staff, financial flexibility and non-European roots, it is an exceptionally challenging time to thrive in the sector.
 - Challenges include limited funding, scarce opportunities to present dance locally, extensive venue closures affecting the dance sector, wider socio-economic challenges such as income precarity, and the ongoing negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our recommended leadership model

We presented eight leadership models to CanAsian Dance for their consideration (one of which, the Matriarchal Indigenous model, was primarily explored for instructive purposes). Given the current operating budget and capacity of CanAsian Dance, we recommend that in the short-term the organization adopt a **Lead + Artistic Committee/Curatorial Collective leadership model**. This model typically comprises a Festival Director, Producer or Administrative Lead, who is supported by a (part-time) artistic committee or curatorial collective.

This lean model is administratively simple and cost-effective, while allowing for the organization to draw on a diversity of voices and identities in its artistic programming.

If and when the organizational (and financial capacity) grows, CanAsian Dance may choose to evolve to another model. For example, CanAsian Dance could:

- add several Staff-in-Residence (e.g., Curator-in-Residence, Emerging Artist-in-Residence, Elder-in-Residence, etc.)
- move to, say, a Trio Leadership model (this model typically takes the form of an Executive Director/Managing Director + an Artistic Director + an Artistic/Executive/Company Producer).

Recommendations

We recommend four steps to implementing the proposed leadership model. Each step and its associated actions are summarized below.

1. Take time to set the vision, purpose and priorities.

Recommended action: Engage in a strategic visioning and priority-setting process that builds on the findings of this report, and review organizational capacity, programs, activities and services. The team will then be well-positioned to decide on a leadership structure for the short term. We recommend the team revisit the structure one year after it is adopted to assess if it still meets the needs of the organization, or if it needs to evolve again. CanAsian Dance should also check in annually on the effectiveness of the leadership structure for the next three years given the significant phase of transition the organization is in.

2. Find the right leaders who have the passion and ability to operationalize the vision.

Recommended action: Write high-level job descriptions for the Lead and the Artistic Committee/Collective roles.

Recommended action: Establish a hiring timeline for the Lead role.

Recommended action:

- Decide on the size and criteria for membership of the committee/collective, as well as the method by which inaugural members will join (e.g., by invitation).
- Appoint committee/collective members.

3. Set the new staff up for success.

Recommended action: The Board should immediately explore opportunities for additional funding for continued strategic planning and staffing, as well as additional operational funding to sustain and grow the organization.

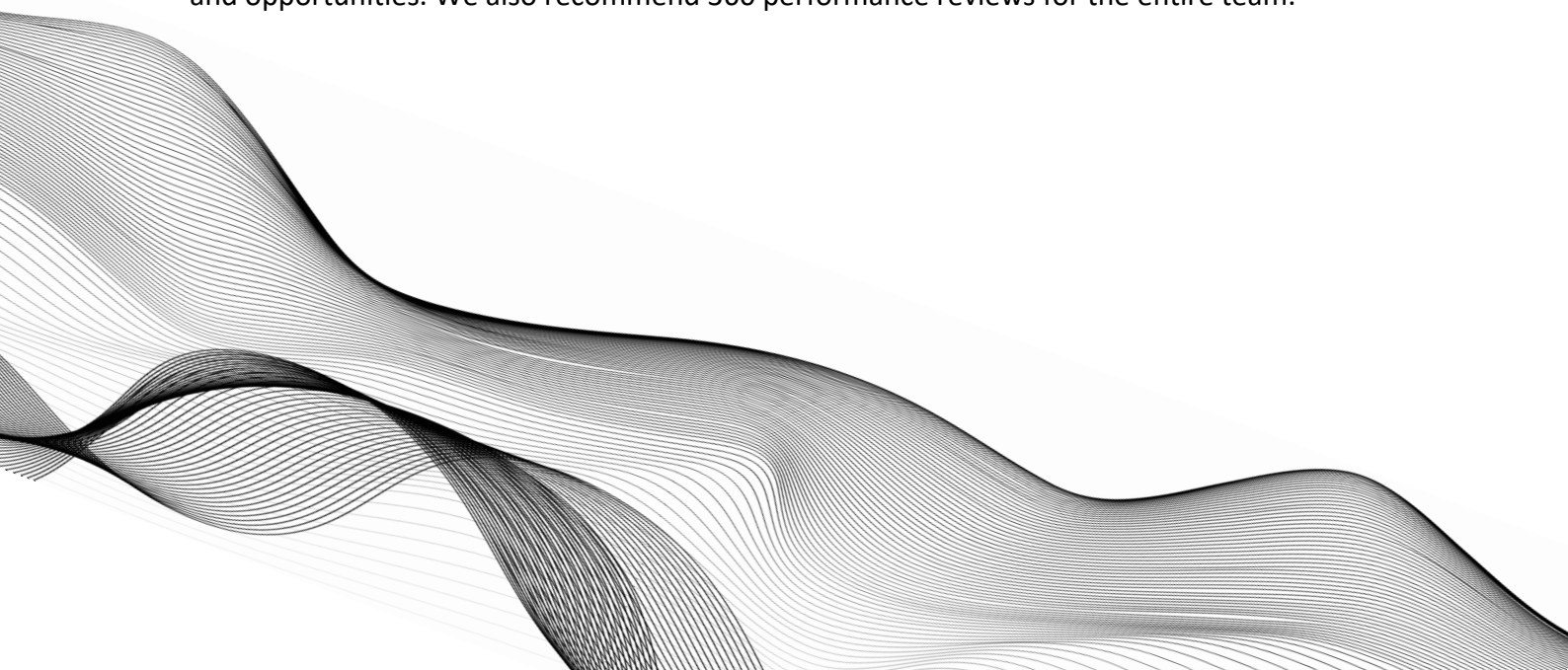
Recommended action: Create a new fundraising role at the staff and/or board level, as soon as capacity allows.

Recommended action: Ensure roles and responsibilities between all staff and board are clear. Consider using a DARCI Matrix - which stands for Decision-maker(s), Accountable, Responsible, Consulted and Informed - to do this.

Recommended action: The Board and Lead should work together to develop a new 3-year strategic plan. There is already considerable expertise on the Board, so depending on budget and Board capacity, this could be done with or without the guidance of an outside consultant; the assistance of a facilitator at key sessions would bring great value.

4. Develop mechanisms to evaluate strategic progress as well as board and staff performance.

Recommended action: Establish a regular schedule for the Lead and the Board to evaluate progress vis à vis the strategic plan, and discuss larger strategic and organizational issues and opportunities. We also recommend 360 performance reviews for the entire team.



2. Background and context

The aim of this five-month strategic initiative was to:

- evaluate CanAsian Dance's impact to date;
- better understand current issues facing the local dance sector; and
- explore alternative models of leadership for the organization, following the departure of founding Artistic Director Denise Fujiwara, who led the company from 1997 to 2022.

A total of 172 individuals contributed to the process, including 143 people who responded to a 35-question online survey, as well as 33 dancers, choreographers, and arts workers who were interviewed by the consultants.

During the first phase of interviews, the consultants met with 15 people (including 5 staff and board) to discuss the organization in general (e.g. strengths, weaknesses, etc). During the second phase of engagement, 7 people shared examples of non-traditional leadership models, including pros and cons of those models. In the final stage of engagement, 13 people (including some who had participated in earlier phases) were interviewed to share feedback on the draft leadership models presented in the Options Paper (Appendix B).

This report is not meant to be a traditional research paper. Rather, it is intended to serve as a useful tool that compiles relevant data to support CanAsian Dance's evolution into its next chapter. It is worth noting that CanAsian Dance recently refreshed its Board of Directors to welcome new perspectives and skills, and is well-positioned to use the data in this paper in their strategic planning processes moving forward.

For context, it is worth noting that for its first 25 years, CanAsian Dance had a traditional dual leadership model in place which was centred around the artistic vision of founding Artistic Director Denise Fujiwara, who worked closely with and was supported by long-serving General Manager Adina Herling. While the organization recognizes this leadership model may still be relevant moving forward, the Board is curious to explore alternate co-leadership and decentralized structures to better reflect their values and culture as well as respond to changes in the sector.

Currently, CanAsian Dance's mission is to support choreographers in the creation of dance through the commissioning, presentation and promotion of live performance inspired by Asian ideas, cultures, and practices, and the cultivation of intercultural and intergenerational knowledge exchange. The organization is working towards a world where "openness to exchange, as well as culture specificity in knowledge and artistic practice are not only valued but harnessed for collaborative disruption and creation".

While CanAsian Dance was previously known for its bi-annual festival featuring national and international dancers, in 2012, under the founding Artistic Director's vision, the organization pivoted its artistic vision away from presenting international artists towards investing in the artistic development of local and regional choreographers. In the 2022–2023 year, CanAsian Dance has two programs: *To Be Danced* and *KickStart*. *KickStart* is a biennial event, conceived under the founding Artistic Director, that serves emerging and mid-career choreographers who are commissioned to create new work and who are given administrative and artistic assistance in their creation process. The newly commissioned works are then professionally presented in a mixed-bill festival. *To Be Danced* is a collective creative research exchange project, designed by former Co-Artistic Associates Michael Caldwell and Mayumi Lashbrook. The project seeks a supportive and generative environment that seeds connection to self, space/place and others, through the development of individual process and practice.

In the 2021–2022 fiscal year, CanAsian Dance had an annual operating budget of \$171,353 and had two part-time staff: a General Manager and an Artistic Director.

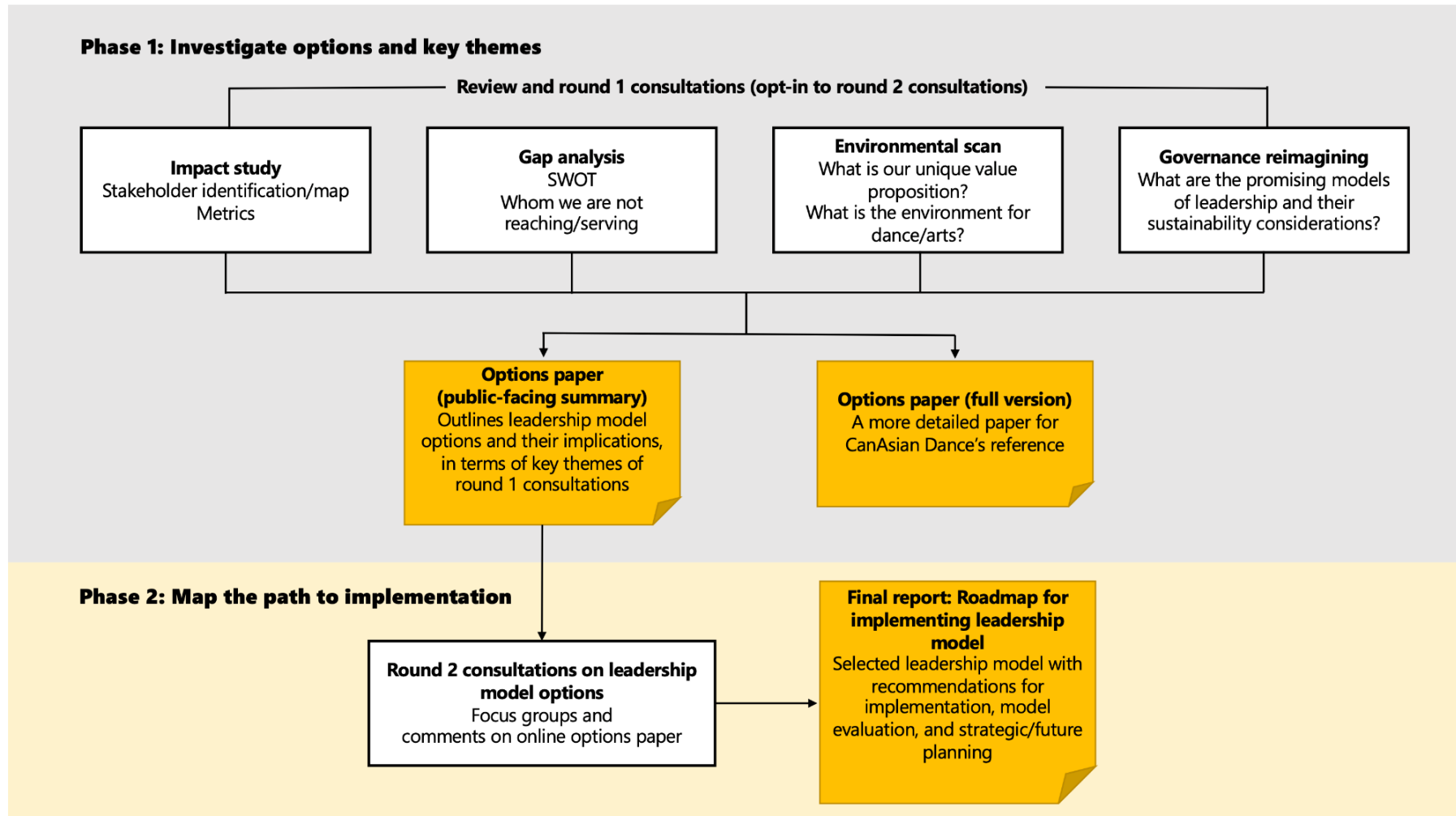
In the 2022–2023 fiscal year, CanAsian Dance had an annual operating budget of \$220,944 and had four part-time staff: a Managing Director and three Artistic Associates.

3. Approach

With deep experience and strong relationships in the arts sector, we strove to bring not only sectoral experience to the table, but also a human-centred approach in that the experiences of our key informants - whether with CanAsian Dance or the sector at large - shaped the findings and recommendations in this report

Figure 1 on the following page depicts the scope of work provided by CanAsian Dance, which we used to guide this process.

Figure 1: Scope of work provided by CanAsian Dance for this strategic initiative



In order to include a broad range of perspectives and experiences, we gathered qualitative and quantitative data through a variety of sources.

Online survey

A survey was sent to CanAsian Dance's community through two direct internal email lists, two newsletters, and various social media channels. The survey portal was open from March 9–26, 2023, during which 143 people responded. The survey included questions pertaining to anonymous demographic data, CanAsian Dance's strengths and challenges, communities the organization could better serve, changes in the dance sector, etc. For a full list of Survey Questions, see Appendix A.

Interviews

The consultants also conducted **a series of interviews** with key members of the dance and performing arts community and other community members, including board members, current and former staff, dancers, choreographers, artists, arts leaders, funders, and subject matter experts pertaining to the pros and cons of various leadership models.

Over the course of two rounds of interviews from March to June, 2023, 29 people participated in individual and group interviews, discussing their experiences with the organization, identifying perceived gaps and trends in the sector, pointing to a range of opportunities for CanAsian Dance, sharing their experiences with different leadership and organizational structures, and more.

Interview participants were either:

- known to us from our work in the cultural sector; or
- recommended to us by:
 - CanAsian Dance board and staff based on the interviewee's experience with the organization or their knowledge of/experience with approaches and models of interest to CanAsian Dance
 - interviewees who knew of other artists and leaders who could either assist in filling gaps in information or provide additional perspectives.

We attempted to ensure a diversity of interviewee perspectives, particularly in terms of ethno-racial/cultural identity, career stage, and professional role(s).

Desk research

The survey and interviews were also supplemented by **desk research** conducted in collaboration with Benjamin Bongolan of Monumental Projects. This research included a scan of strategic plans, reports, articles and community resources primarily relevant to Canadian dance organizations. Key findings from this research are included in the Environmental Scan (Section 5) of this report.

4. Impact study and core contributor/community identification

Core contributor/community maps

The following visuals were gathered from survey responses. Survey responses were confidential and individual names and demographic data were not shared with CanAsian Dance. Demographic data was only used to provide aggregated trends pictured below.

Please note we have intentionally used the term “Core Contributor/ Community Maps” in lieu of “Stakeholder Maps” given the negative connotations of the latter term in a colonial context.

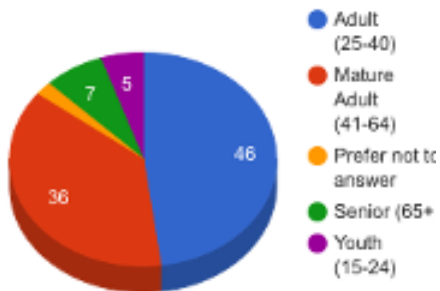
Two Core Contributor/ Community Maps are included below. See Appendix C for additional maps.

KEY FINDINGS FROM SURVEY DATA

- The majority of respondents who identify as being engaged by CanAsian Dance are Adults aged 25-40 (48%), followed by Mature Adults aged 41-64 (37.5 %).
- 72.9% of engaged respondents identify as Female / Woman (note: this may be a reflection of broader gender demographics within the dance / performing arts sector).
- Unsurprisingly, the lion’s share of respondents hail from Toronto and surrounding areas, however CanAsian Dance has some reach across Canada, in cities like Montreal, Hamilton, Ottawa, Vancouver, Kitchener, and Winnipeg.
- The three ethno-racial/ cultural categories that showed the highest levels of participation amongst engaged survey respondents identified as White (32%), Chinese (18%) and South Asian (14.5%). Collectively these three groups make up approximately two thirds of engaged survey participants.
- 61% of respondents who feel engaged by the organization identified as previous artists and audience members of CanAsian Dance.
- Seniors expressed the highest levels of engagement amongst engaged respondents, but make up only 7% of that group.
- When engaged respondents were asked directly if they identify as a current, past or prospective member of the CanAsian Dance community, 37.5% identified as prospective members. Of those who did not identify as engaged, 44% identified as prospective members of CanAsian Dance.

1. Number of Responses and Level of Engagement by Age

Number of Responses by Age Range



Average Level of Engagement by Age Range

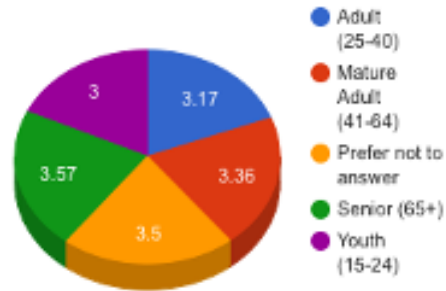


Fig 1 (left), Average Level of Engagement by Age Range

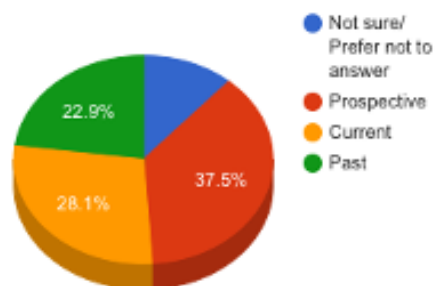
Fig 2 (right), Number of Responses by Age Range of Engaged Survey Respondents

The majority of respondents who feel engaged by CanAsian Dance are Adults aged 25-40 (48%) followed by Mature Adults aged 41-64 (37.5%). The highest level of engagement is within the Senior group (65+), however only 7% of engaged respondents identified as seniors. The average level of engagement did not vary much by age range, with all engaged respondents identifying levels between 3 and 3.5 out of 5.

Note: of the 47 respondents who identified as not feeling engaged by CanAsian Dance, 61.7% are Adults (25-40), 25.5% are youth (15-24), 18.5% are Mature Adults (41-64) and only 2% are Seniors (65+). Interestingly, although the range of engagement levels for those who identified as not engaged was 1.4 to 2.67, the exception was the Senior group, whose average level of engagement was 4 despite identifying as “not engaged” in the question that preceded the one pertaining to Level of Engagement.

2. Number of Responses and Level of Engagement Vis à Vis Relationship to CanAsian Dance – Current, Past or Prospective

Current/Past/Prospective Member of CanAsian Dance Community



28% of engaged respondents identified as current members of CanAsian Dance’s community, 23% as past members, and 37.5% as prospective members. In this survey question, when asked directly, 37.5% identified as prospective members of CanAsian Dance as opposed to 12.5% who identified as prospective members of the CanAsian Dance Community in Section 8: Primary Relationship to CanAsian Dance.

When comparing this to respondents who did not identify as engaged by the company, 49% do not have a primary relationship to CanAsian Dance, 28% are prospective participating artists, 17% are prospective audiences, and 6% are past audience members.

There is a significant opportunity to engage new artists and audiences in CanAsian Dance’s community moving forward.

Current, Past or Prospective Members of the CanAsian Dance Community **Average Level of Engagement**

Current	3.85
Past	3.55
Not sure/ Prefer not to answer	3
Prospective	2.75

The average level of engagement for the CanAsian Dance community is 3.15 out of 5. Unsurprisingly, current members of the CanAsian Dance community are most engaged followed by past members and prospective members.

Feedback from Interviews

According to key community members who were interviewed, the following groups were identified as groups CanAsian Dance could better serve:

- **Dancers outside the core/“community dance” practitioners** who typically operate outside the grant structure.
- **The Indian dance community:** *“Much of the Indian dance community isn’t being served by anybody...think about the dancers in Scarborough, Mississauga... in small dance schools. There are dancers who are not a part of grant infrastructure and would like to be part of wider dance communities but don’t know how to access it or what they are eligible for”*
- **Interdisciplinary artists**
- **Non-professional dancers:** That is, dancers who may not know they want to become professional dancers yet, or who know little about the professional side of the sector
- **‘Urban’ and street dancers** who typically operate outside the grant structure
- **Circus artists**
- **Mid-career dancers,** who are not yet established but are no longer considered emerging artists: *“Established artists continue to be supported, and I’m thankful there is increased funding for emerging artists, but mid-career artists seem to fall through the cracks in terms of support”*
- **Seniors**

- **Choreographers** who need additional training to better understand the broader context of their work: *“Dancers have been forced to be choreographers without having had much training. This is a big issue. There are no companies, like the old days, to support differentiated roles. We support choreographers without training them. There are very few formal programs, maybe some universities with programs to support choreography, but a lot of dancers are jumping into being choreographers without learning about research, context, the bigger picture. In Quebec they have a lot of time and do 3-4 years of research, and here [in Ontario] they do 2 weeks of research... it’s all about producing, directing, dramaturgy, etc. but to have a great outcome it’s necessary to support choreographers. Invest in support for choreographers and the quality of the sector will elevate.*
- **Middle Eastern/Central Asian practitioners**
- **Young/emerging dance companies and collectives** with little infrastructure

5. Environmental scan summary

a. What is the environment for dance/arts?

Environmental scan: Key findings from desk research

Benjamin Bongolan of Monumental Projects reviewed a variety of key reference documents from 2016-2022 related to:

- the state of the dance sector in Ontario
- the state of the arts and culture sector post-pandemic in Ontario
- Asian-Canadian diasporic strategies on decolonizing the dance sector and embedding equity-centred practices within dance spaces.

Across all of these categories, the following themes were the most prevalent.

1. Economic marginalization of artists post-COVID-19

- In general, **Canadian artists have a median individual income of \$24,300**, which is 44% less than all Canadian workers (\$43,500)
- Artists who do not have regular access to institutional support often **rely on other sources of income to support their artistic practice**. Arts councils do great work to support independent artists, but this funding rarely covers full project expenses, which means that artists often pay out of their own pocket in order to make projects a reality.
- **The economic pressures from COVID-19 and an already precarious freelance working culture have created a recipe for devastating impact on the Canadian cultural industries.**
- **Real estate prices are surging across the country, pricing out artists in major cities.** In Toronto, for example, the median income for artists in 2019 was \$30,000—less than half of the \$65,000 median income for other Toronto residents (Toronto Arts Foundation).

Source: [A Statistical Profile of Artists in Canada in 2016, Hill Strategies](#)

2. A long recovery for the performing arts sector, post-COVID-19

- On average, in October 2022 performing arts organizations reported **attendance levels 19% below pre-pandemic levels**. At this time:
 - 64% had returned to outdoor events.
 - 57% had returned to indoor events.
 - 56% had returned to museums and galleries.
 - 24% of culture goers were still unsure when they will return to indoor performances.

- 14% still plan to wait.

Source: [Where Are The Audiences, Orchestras Canada, November 2022](#)

3. Lack of affordable dance spaces

- **While existing dance rehearsal spaces have availability, affordability is by far the bigger issue.**
- **The research found few dance rehearsal spaces outside of major hubs** (e.g., Toronto and Ottawa).
- There is a **low inventory of dance rehearsal spaces**, and issues with the discoverability of these spaces.

Source: [Needs Assessment of Ontario Rehearsal Spaces, September 2022](#)

4. Slow growth in funding opportunities

- In 2020–2021, approximately \$19.9 million was distributed to Ontario dance across the three major public arts funders: Canada Council for the Arts (CCA), Ontario Arts Council (OAC), and the Toronto Arts Council (TAC).
- Over the last 5 years specifically, funding for dance across the CCA, OAC, and TAC has increased (20%, 39%, and 9% respectively). Some of this increase can likely be attributed to time-limited COVID-19 pandemic financial support and top-ups from funders. **However, the actual number of individual grants awarded dropped across all three funders**, especially at OAC (-16%) and TAC (-6%). **While fewer dance community members received funding from the CCA, OAC and TAC, those who were funded may have received more than in previous years, due to emergency COVID-19 funds.**
- **There has been little growth in the amount of funding allocated to operating support**, suggesting operating funding amounts may not be properly adjusted for inflation year over year and may be inadequate to support dance company operations today.
- Funding data from the TAC and OAC suggests that **requests for funding have also declined**. This may be an indication of a shrinking dance community, although further research is needed to substantiate this claim.

Source: [Needs Assessment of Ontario Rehearsal Spaces, September 2022](#)

5. Gaps between the needs of dance companies and the offerings of arts service organizations (ASOs)

- **The types of services offered by ASOs are a product of assumptions, principally colonial assumptions, about what legitimate dance is; what legitimate support for dance and movement arts is and can accomplish; and what arts organizations are mandated and resourced to do.** Among dance companies, desired services cited

include online support for reporting/management, shared office space, project management, creation subsidies, capacity-building, risk capital, and even advice.

- While it may be appropriate for ASOs to take a needs-based approach and address the above list, they **should be more proactively attentive and respond better to real needs in the dance community**, rather than make assumptions based on their existing interests, or even those cited by their members, as the constitution of the memberships are products of decades of systemic exclusion of many groups.
- At the same time, one of the key tensions of the current ecosystem for dance is that resources are becoming more scarce, yet greater numbers are seeking access to services for dance. This suggests that **distributive or needs-based approaches may be inadequate** and that the engine to sustain dance in Canada will derive from the energy and generosity of those participating in the dance community. **Service can then be understood as a means of catalyzing and scaling contributions and facilitating a marketplace for exchange.**
- The strategic framework would then be to **tap into other resources that already exist within the community; harnessing community members as resources.**
- Allow for the disruption of traditional engagement strategies with core contributors/community members and develop a consciousness that an organization is serving the dance community in a way that fosters **collective responsibility** and is reflective and responsive to community needs.

Source: [Landslide: Innovations in Service for Dance in Canada](#)

Environmental scan: Key findings from interviews

Several people interviewed spoke about **the fragility of the Toronto dance sector**: several venues for dance have closed, dancers continue to be significantly underpaid and overworked as costs of living are rising, and there are limited opportunities to perform and present dance in Toronto and across Canada. **Dance organizations continue to struggle to fully recover from the pandemic** (e.g., in terms of attracting audiences, sustaining staff, sustaining a company of dancers, etc.). Most people interviewed spoke to the dire need of support for the dance community, particularly small- to medium-sized dance organizations, and even more so in a post-pandemic era.

In addition to financial struggles, **the impact of the pandemic on dancers, choreographers, and their artistic practices has been significant**. For instance, the pandemic had a negative effect on the physical and mental well-being of dancers who, over the past three years, had limited opportunities for training, performances and connection. In addition, the pandemic caused a significant backlog of dance performances which, for some, has created a sense of competition with newer works that are also ready for audiences. During the pandemic, many artists and arts workers pivoted to other careers, which has impacted the dance scene

significantly (for instance, there is a considerable shortage of technical staff and qualified administrators).

Over the last few years, there have also been **significant changes at the leadership level, particularly the retirement of founders and senior leaders in dance**. This has created opportunities for emerging leaders, and leaders from IBPOC communities. However, it is important to note that these changes may not have yet resulted in significant shifts in the mainstream dance sector culture. There was a general sentiment that newer or younger dance organizations—particularly those led by and serving “equity-deserving” communities—have not benefited from the same levels of support as larger, Eurocentric dance institutions. There have also been conversations recently questioning the role and effectiveness of Boards of Directors for arts organizations (note: Yvette Nolan, Algonqui playwright was referenced as a key thought-leader on this subject).

The rise of social media has brought about a major shift in the dance landscape. The trend for shorter dance pieces on platforms like TikTok and Instagram has impacted audiences in many ways, from shorter attention spans, to reducing the body to an image, to creating a disconnect from the power of the embodied experience of witnessing live dance.

Many also spoke to **dance as the “underdog” discipline amongst most arts funders**, often receiving the smallest slice of the arts funding pie. In addition, support for choreographers is particularly scarce, leaving many dancers who choreograph works ill-equipped to understand how to weave together lighting, dramaturgy, music, etc. Some also spoke to **the limited funding in Ontario compared to other provinces like Quebec and British Columbia**. This disparity has contributed to the challenges faced by local Ontario dance artists and their ability to create large-scale works. In addition, some dancers spoke to the challenge of **adjusting their practices to fit into outdated models of funding with “colonial expectations”** (e.g., developing new works in the span of 1–2 years when traditionally, dance pieces—particularly those steeped in cultural traditions—take several years to come to fruition).

The dance community in Ontario has struggled to recover from previous funding cuts, particularly those implemented by Mike Harris's Conservative government in the 90's and early 2000's. In addition to limited funding, there is **a lack of infrastructure and support for dancers and choreographers** (e.g. agents and presenters) compared to other disciplines like music. There is an unquestionable gap and opportunity for an IBPOC artist presenters' network given the shift in focus by funders to support creation by IBPOC artists, who struggle to find opportunities to share these works with audiences. Dancers stressed **the importance of advocating for dance as an art form**, particularly in this post-pandemic period.

As noted earlier in this section, while the dance sector in Canada remains dominated by Eurocentric dance styles and white leaders, the recent wave of retirement of artistic directors and founders in the dance sector has opened up previously limited opportunities for other emerging leaders and leaders from IBPOC communities. It is also worth noting the increase in second and third generation Asian artists, as well as the rise in mixed-race Asian artists. In addition, **funders are placing greater value on non-Eurocentric dance styles and support for organizations led by and serving IBPOC communities.** In terms of funding, conversations about redistribution of public funding are happening (particularly through an equity lens i.e. shifting funds away from historically privileged towards historically disadvantaged communities and organizations), as well as conversations about moving towards trust-based granting practices amongst some funders (i.e., investing in artists to explore and develop new work, versus investing in an artistic project). Some funders are having discussions about how Western, Eurocentric **approaches to art-making privileged certain artforms over others which has, in turn, impacted how certain practices have not been valued as expressions of culture, and worthy of investment.**

Many artists are becoming more versed in understanding the impacts of colonialism, racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism and other forms of discrimination in the arts, particularly in light of recent waves of social justice movements, including the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action, the #MeToo movement, etc. While there has been a growing awareness and some efforts to make organizations and artistic practices more inclusive, fair and equitable, significant work remains to be done. Additionally, while there is growing awareness and more conversations about subjects like consent and safe spaces, there is a corresponding need to better support dancers and organizations in navigating these challenges.

Finally, climate change and its impact on the performing arts sector was raised by one key informant. For instance, the greening of the sector is leading to questions about the ethics of touring (particularly internationally) and the impact those choices have on dancers and audiences.

Environmental scan: Key findings from surveys

"Post COVID everything is changing, now's the perfect time to reinvent."

Survey respondents offered many personal insights into the current environment in which CanAsian Dance is operating. The following themes emerged as the most prevalent or pertinent among their observations and concerns:

- Demographic changes in the make-up of Asian diasporic communities:
 - Awareness of newcomers with extensive dance backgrounds

- More South Asians in contemporary dance
- Rise of second and third generation Asians and mixed-race Asians
- Changes in Asian diasporic consciousness and mainstream awareness of Asian communities:
 - Amid the rise in visible expressions of anti-Asian racism, there is a greater acknowledgement of the racism faced by the community and the need to support Asians and combat stereotypes (including model minority myths which use Asians as an example of a successful and well-adjusted racialized group, which ultimately serves to deny the persistence of structural racism and the ongoing damaging effects of racism in general)
 - *“...we can slowly shift away from immigration topics. There are more and more Asian artists, in North America and Asia who work creatively and fearlessly towards building their own artistic language/at a crossroad between their mixed identities.”*
 - *“Asian diaspora is growing in consciousness and support of their own communities; would like to see more intentionality with considerations of interconnectedness with other cultural groups in Canada”*
 - *“The Asian diaspora is the fastest growing demographic group in Canada. This group includes newcomers, 1st, 2nd, 3rd and beyond generations; all of whom have different, but all equally valid, connections to Canada and Asia. There is no One Way to be Can/Asian - and that is different from previous generations, which tried to be as Western as possible as a way to stay safe in a hostile environment. We do not have to be afraid of embracing our heritage/tradition anymore.”*
 - *“Over the decades there has been increasing scholarship in Asian arts, aesthetics and choreographic practices. Artists are more adept at articulating their practice and art work, to speaking and writing about it.”*
- Sectoral changes in dance:
 - Growing interest in digital and multi-/interdisciplinary forms
 - Growing interest in other forms outside of western dance
 - *“ Huge Asian-Canadian presence in the street dance community”*
 - Challenging to get audiences back post-pandemic
- Complexity of addressing ongoing structural inequities for IBPOC communities in the arts:
 - Despite progress, inequities continue in more subtle and nuanced ways
 - *“Identity explorations through arts/dance have resurfaced in a different way than previously (i.e earlier periods of identity politics). Tri-level funding priorities and culture is aligning and recentering on the global*

majority/Canadian-marginalized at face value while those who hold power in the sector largely remain the same. Lots of instrumentalization, virtue signaling and opportunistic money-chasing.”

- *“CanAsian can co-lead in ‘calling in’ offenders and fostering a critical capacity within the sector to ensure that dancers and choreographers are empowered to hold employers/presenters publicly accountable.”*
- A few respondents expressed anxiety around restrictions to cultural exchange and collaboration:
 - *“In the guise of inclusivity, the dance community is becoming more and more exclusive and restrictive of artistic research that departs from identity as primary. How does one 'earn the right' to engage in cultural research? I don't know, but presently the community is saying that to engage in cultural research, you must already belong to that culture. This is restrictive and not welcoming, and goes against the spirit of what I understand the CanAsian festival is about. I understand that to go too far in the other direction could lead to cultural appropriation, but there must be some middle ground. Where do we begin if we want to collaborate? How can the CanAsian festival support this?”*

b. Unique value proposition

According to the survey data, CanAsian Dance’s unique value proposition is the opportunities created for artists—primarily of Asian heritage—to develop their craft. CanAsian Dance’s investment in the artistic development of Asian dancers and ideas is responding to a growing need in the local dance sector. This is particularly meaningful and important in a sector that remains dominated by Eurocentric practices, and in a time where there is a growing number of contemporary dancers of Asian heritage, as well as a rise in anti-Asian racism.

In its infancy, CanAsian Dance was the only company presenting some of the artists they have supported. However, recently, a growing number of presenters (e.g. Harbourfront, DanceWorks, etc.) have been diversifying their performers and programming. CanAsian Dance may wish to revisit its desired unique value proposition moving forward, in light of the shift to a more competitive presentation environment. Regardless, CanAsian Dance’s recent shift away from producing an international festival to investing in the artistic development of local Asian artists and artists presenting Asian ideas, continues to fill a critical niche in the dance sector.

6. SWOT analysis summary

a. Strengths

There was a remarkable degree of alignment between the survey results and the interviews with core contributors and community members regarding CanAsian Dance's strengths. While awareness of the organization is still growing in the arts sector, the organization has established credibility over the years with those who are familiar with its offerings. The specific cultural focus of the mandate continues to be the company's most outstanding feature. Having support for artists at different stages of their career, manifested across a range of programs, was consistently mentioned as one of the things CanAsian Dance does well. More highlights follow.

Strengths from the interviews

- **The Board of Directors:** The board was regarded as a passionate group of leaders who are “deeply committed,” “engaged,” “helpful” and “accessible.” A few interviewees noted the positive shift towards greater board involvement and diversity in more recent years.
- **Nimbleness:** While being small has its challenges, CanAsian Dance can be agile, adaptable and responsive in ways that larger institutions cannot. One interviewee mentioned that CanAsian Dance has a “rare opportunity to be radical.”
- **Creating opportunities for artists to explore identity, particularly Asian identity:** Given the history and landscape of dance in Canada, and the communities that have traditionally been served by it, this cannot be overstated.
- **Excellence:** CanAsian Dance has traditionally been an organization respected for its excellence in programming and aesthetic.
 - *“I have been struck by Denise’s particular ethic and aesthetic around making dance, and I’ve been really struck by the language of how she described dance. I still have a program from a CanAsian Dance event when they were presenting a [Butoh] artist years ago, that spoke to ‘having virtuosity, but not valuing it over what was being expressed’. CanAsian Dance didn’t just make and present interesting work, they framed it in memorable ways.”*
- **Pushing boundaries and challenging tradition.**
 - *“Over time, CanAsian has consistently invited discomfort, which is such a vibrant and thriving place.”*
- **Systemic impact:** Before CanAsian Dance, audiences often had to venture to the suburbs to see the kinds of artists that CanAsian Dance programs. CanAsian Dance shifted the landscape for Asian artists, many of whom, as a result of their involvement with the organization, learned about public funding and started applying to the councils for support.

- **Investment in artists** through artistic development, mentorship, commissions, etc.— particularly for emerging artists/choreographers.

Strengths from the survey

- **Support and opportunities for emerging and mid-career Asian-Canadian dance artists (mentorship, creation, presentation, marketing).**
 - *“I think CanAsian’s biggest achievement is being able to provide several funded opportunities to artists throughout the year. I see several calls and they all meet CADA rates. I also like how they are not all performance or creation opportunities but also research, development, collaboration opportunities.”*
- **Support for creation of new work.**
- **KickStart:**
 - *“I participated in Kickstart and it was great and think that this program has continuity and legacy.”*
 - *“I wouldn’t have had such a solid sense of who I am had it not been for CanAsian Dance’s Kickstart Program. I was connected to a mentor who has since become my greatest inspiration, and who has helped me make sense of my own connection to my culture. For me, the program was life-changing.”*
- **Deep engagement with artists; creating safe spaces to explore artistry.**
 - *“I felt that I could really dive in artistically because many things were taken care of on my behalf (rare!). Also, I got paired with a dramaturg who since has been a huge inspiration for me! So I learned a lot.”*
 - *“From personal experience with organizations and presenters across the country, the amount of care that CanAsian provides for their artists is very high, and has made me feel safe and taken care of as a programmed artist.”*
- **High quality of work and presentations.**
- **Clear and unique mandate to focus on Asian diasporic artists and Asian dance practices:**
 - *“I like how it’s pan-Asian and represents diversity across Asia. I like how CanAsian interprets Asian dance practices in an open way, allowing dancers to evolve their practices how they want.”*
- **Interaction between established and newer artists.**
- **Organizational longevity, stability and credibility among funders.**
- **Stable and diversified funding.**
- **Agility:** The organization has evolved over the years, and remained open-minded
 - *“They have the advantage of being potentially wide-reaching as their scale seems to cover workshops, shows, commissions, community, etc.”*
- **Strong curatorial vision.**
- **Previous presentation of international dance programs.**

b. Weaknesses

Despite the mandate's focus on Asian dance ideas and traditions being cited as a strength by many, there remains considerable room for greater precision and clarity around the organization's mandate, mission, and vision, as well as the communication thereof to members of the dance community and the general public.

Survey responses also showed a trend in weaknesses related to external-facing elements such as audiences, marketing, and program outreach. While interviews with core contributors and key community members noted some of the same weaknesses, they also touched on operational areas for improvement specifically around fundraising, board development, and human resources/succession planning.

Weaknesses from the interviews

- **Identity, brand and visibility:**
 - *“CanAsian Dance as an organization doesn't quite know itself, and it doesn't quite know how to communicate what it does.”*
- **Financial and fundraising capacity:** The operational budget is limited and negatively impacts staff capacity, ability to fundraise, programming, etc.
- **Audiences:** Lack of audience loyalty to the organization; audiences are inconsistent; relationships with audiences are transactional.
 - *“CanAsian Dance has yet to create its own community.”*
- **Diversity of skills on Board of Directors:** Specifically a lack of corporate and fundraising skills that would support the operations and growth of the organization.
- **Resilience and succession planning:** Investing in future-proofing the organization to support transitions at the staff or board level.
- **Long-term systemic impact:** A feeling that CanAsian Dance's investments in dancers and choreographers are short term.

Weaknesses from the survey

- **Poor outreach to Asian communities outside of the dance sector.**
- **Lack of reach beyond Asian communities to the general public.**
 - *“Perhaps [one of CanAsian's greatest challenges is] connecting with audience members who do not identify as Asian or do not have an artistic practice based on Asian ideas.”*
- **Lack of loyal audience:**
 - *“CanAsian Dance doesn't really have its own audience because artists pass through the organization, bring their community and then leave.”*
- **Disconnection from current cultural trends:**
 - *“It's dated and disconnected from the larger Asian-Canadian community. We are seeing an amazing level of support and excitement surrounding pop*

culture events like the success of Everything Everywhere All At Once, Simu Liu's popularity, community organizations like RepresentASIAN Project, etc. I question who CanAsian Dance's target market is and how they may better be able to leverage community partnerships, marketing, and engagement to amplify the work of their dance artists and increase accessibility to the community—especially Millennials + Gen Z's."

- **Lack of cross-country representation, particularly from west and east coasts:** CanAsian Dance needs to engage more with communities across the country where possible and be less Toronto-centric.
- **Questioning the pivot away from international programming** towards support for artistic development of local dancers and choreographers.
- **Insularity on various fronts:** Inaccessibility to artists outside of established networks; concern about pan-Asian representation, and a lack of intersection with other artistic disciplines.
 - *"From an outsider perspective, the Asian participation in terms of its diversity could be improved [speaking] as someone who has Filipino ancestry. Outreach to developing artists, being aware of dancers in the Asian/diaspora landscape that is outside of their established network and opportunities for community building."*
 - *"In my view, CanAsian has not connected with community outside of the contemporary dance community in its history... it has not moved into more multi/interdisciplinary spaces, and it has not invested in the many Asian cultural communities in the city of Toronto."*

c. Opportunities

On the programming front, there is an enormous opportunity to think deeply about the role CanAsian Dance wants to play in addressing a resounding need for artist development and support, especially in the context of increasing resistance to colonial structures and capitalist imperatives. Operationally, there are multiple opportunities to expand outreach to include previously untapped communities including those interested in Asian culture outside the dance sector, communities outside of the geographic locations currently being served, etc.

Overall, as demonstrated in the most striking data from interviews with key community members and the survey shared below, there is no shortage of opportunities for CanAsian Dance to explore as it looks towards the future and determines where its strategic priorities lie. It is worth noting that pursuing some of the ideas proposed may result not only in mission drift, but also staff and board burnout as organizational capacity is currently limited. Nevertheless, these ideas are worth keeping in mind over the coming years as the bandwidth of the organization hopefully grows and as the team gains clarity on the direction it hopes to move in.

Opportunities from the interviews

- **Programming:**
 - **Providing learning and professional development opportunities by artists for artists.** Examples shared include workshops in grant-writing, dramaturgy, lighting, wellness, land acknowledgements, etc. This would, in turn, support intergenerational knowledge transfer and could also assist choreographers in understanding the context and lineages in which they work.
 - **Creating space for dialogue and critical discourse** with other artists and industry professionals, including fostering a more nuanced approach to Asian identity.
 - *“Other countries make space for discussions about dance. In the Canadian dance scene, what’s missing as a whole is conversations about dance. York University is one of the only places that hosts dance conferences, and many of CanAsian Dance’s community don’t have access to it.”*
 - **Creating residencies** to allow for exposure to new practices, meaningful community-building and deepening artistic practices.
- **Broadening CanAsian Dance’s reach and investing in communities who are new to CanAsian Dance:**
 - **Serving specific cultural communities who are active but disconnected from CanAsian Dance.** For example, CanAsian Dance could engage with Filipino dance communities and South Asian suburban dance communities via cultural associations.
 - **Serving audiences who are not traditional “theatre-goers.”**
 - **Serving communities outside the downtown Toronto core.**
 - **Developing partnerships with other arts organizations** (e.g., to amplify efforts, benefit from economies of scale, etc.).
 - *“How is CanAsian connecting to other opportunities and platforms in the city? Can CanAsian Dance partner with other festivals or platforms to ensure that Asian artists are being supported in a wider arts ecology?”*
 - **Developing a membership model** to establish an alternative funding source and build a community that is specific to CanAsian Dance.
 - **Continuing to connect artists to opportunities in other cities.**
 - *“Incredible work is being made in Canada. It’s great that CanAsian Dance is building relations with cities like Montreal. How can we get in conversation with even more cities?”*
- **Being in “service” to artists and communities in need:**

- Finding ways to **contribute meaningfully to reconciliation**: *“For organizations like CanAsian Dance, what is the responsibility to move forward and support Indigenous creators too?”*
- **Leveraging networks, marketing channels, etc. to promote other artists and organizations.** For example, featuring alumni initiatives in newsletters, promoting companies with similar values on social media, etc.
 - *“CanAsian Dance has status, networks, communication channels...how can it be available as a partner to provide even more support for local artists?”*
- **Continuing to invest financially in artists from marginalized communities** and increasing the scope of micro-grants, ensuring applications and reporting requirements are barrier-free.
- **Developing a strong artistic vision.**
 - *“A strong artistic vision is a priority and the foundation for a vital organization. When you can articulate the artistic vision, you have consistency at the centre and everyone knows what’s going on, there’s no need to check in all the time. Dance organizations that have been clear on their vision have thrived as a result.”*
- **Growing the Board of Directors**, especially in terms of fundraising capacity (which may involve amending the by-laws).
- **Managing a facility**, potentially in partnership with other organizations to contribute to more affordable rehearsal space.
- **Audience surveys** to better understand CanAsian Dance’s community.

Opportunities from the survey

- **Generational shift in leadership** across the entire sector, leading to new openings at the leadership level:
 - *“Denise Fujiwara and I grew up as arts presenters in the same seminal period in Canada and have been close colleagues supporting each other throughout the years. We are now experiencing a generational shift in leadership and learning how to step away gracefully from the festivals and venues we founded in the 1980s. This major change is an important opportunity to rethink arts presenting in the context of today’s socio-political landscape.”*
- **Incorporating interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary practices.**
- **Supporting older artists.**
- **Exploring collaborative/community-based practices.**
- **Connecting with smaller cities** and regional centres across Canada.
- **Innovations in digital/virtual programming** with potential to provide opportunities to increase CanAsian Dance’s impact.

- **Expanding networks and creating opportunities for exchange with other Asian diaspora artists** across the country, outside the country, and globally; creating a community beyond borders.
 - *“Your organization has so much connections to many dance artists nationally. The advantage would be something that you can program different events and shows in different cities with various artists in Canada.”*
- **Advancing the influence of Asian dance practice through increased intellectual engagement:**
 - *Over the decades there has been increasing scholarship in Asian arts, aesthetics and choreographic practices. Artists are more adept at articulating their practice and art work, to speaking and writing about it. My suggestions for how to implement these changes is... publish a catalogue, hold a forum.”*
- **Increasing interest in supporting IBPOC artists** and decentering whiteness presents an opportunity for CanAsian Dance to explore and engage in more innovation, adventure and risk-taking as it relates to its artistic programming.

d. Threats/Challenges

The findings from the interviews and survey responses were in alignment and set against a larger backdrop of income inequality as well as chronic underfunding for arts and culture in general, and the dance sector in particular. Many cited slow recovery from the pandemic and its impact on both the overall sector and individuals in the dance community. The lack of affordable work space and absence of an active network of presenters, both locally and across the country, also came up multiple times in interviews.

Interestingly, increased interest in Asian dance, while positive in many ways, has made for a more competitive presentation environment for CanAsian Dance, which will have to further refine its unique value proposition as a result.

Threats/challenges from the interviews

- **The pandemic** has resulted in physical and mental health challenges for artists and arts workers, negatively impacted audiences, and in some cases, created an increased sense of competition.
- **Arts funding landscape:**
 - Recent changes in arts funding (particularly at the provincial level) have negatively impacted dancers and artists in general.
 - More funding is available for dancers than for presenters (which, in turn, impacts dancers who develop works but have few opportunities to perform them afterwards).

- Challenging for newer dance groups, especially those without infrastructure, to secure funding.
- Colonial expectations on artists i.e. *“Choreographers are being forced to produce works quickly and within funding cycles, without proper time, space, and tools. Choreographers lack the time to work...In Colombia, the preview for theatre was 1-2 years and the lifespan 20 years. These days, performances here are not tech’d properly because of lack of time to invest in dramaturgy, tools, etc...Now young choreographers replicate these patterns, and...histories are in danger of being erased.”*
- **Influence of the US dance scene on the local dance scene:** Changes in the U.S. dance cultural sector are having a negative impact on local dance in Toronto.
 - *“Vancouver has a natural connection to Asian artists and markets, Montreal has a natural connection to European artists and markets, and Toronto has traditionally been the main connection between the U.S. and NYC in particular... but the U.S.’s dance scene has been tanking since the early 2000s which has had a ripple effect on Toronto, and which is only getting worse.”*
(Note: This is in part due to changes in funding by the National Endowment of the Arts.)
- **Lack of affordable space** due to increasing rent, unionized staff rates, venue closures, etc. There is a sentiment that Toronto no longer has a “proper dance centre.” As a result of venue closures, dancers in Toronto have felt a loss of connection to place, which in turn “creates a sense of disembodiment for artists.”
- **Increase in presenters of Asian dance and ideas:** While this is not a “threat” in the traditional sense, it is worth noting that CanAsian Dance is no longer filling a niche that was not being filled by other organizations 20+ years ago. However this is also taking place within the larger context of more Asian contemporary dancers as well as an overall lack of presenters for dance in Toronto and Ontario.
- **Increase in anti-Asian racism exacerbated by the pandemic.** This impacts the physical and mental wellness of Asian artists and audiences, raising concerns around safety and wellbeing for artists inside and outside the workplace.

Threats/challenges from the survey

- **Despite increased awareness, Western and European dance forms remain centred, and institutionalized racism persists** (as do microaggressions, unconscious bias, etc).
 - *“Working in a sector that is characterized by racism and non-inclusion, where funds are not enough.”*
- **Exposure of potential risk of cultural appropriation given inclusion of Asian traditions by non-Asian artists:**
 - *“...in today's climate of social justice and political struggle for representation, artists who are not Asian but have an interest in making work at the CanAsian*

Dance festival are not welcome. This is clearly not the messaging of the festival, but it is a social inclination that cannot be ignored. I think this is an obstacle for the festival, but also an opportunity to open up other activities like creation workshops or collaborative research endeavours that welcome everyone under the umbrella of a shared artistic interest.”

- **Rise of the gig economy:**
 - *“How can the org [sic] contribute to healthy livelihoods and deeper practices via well-resourced time in contrast to gig economy and scarcity thinking.”*
- **Growing awareness of the risks inherent in a singular artistic vision,** concurrent with increased numbers of choreographers:
 - *“As with so many presenting organizations in Canada, there has been reliance on a single founder's vision, dedication, choices, and willingness to work ceaselessly, and so too much weight and power on her (strong) shoulders... Artistic direction [now] needs an aesthetically diverse team of curators. CanAsian Dance now needs a larger group to shoulder the responsibilities of choice and familiarity with all artists' work who might be eligible to apply, as the number of choreographers has grown across Canada (and around the world) exponentially.”*
 - *“Asian-ness is huge, with so many facets. How can an org [sic] hold all of it? It encompasses so many cultures and ideas and communities.”*
- **Increase in artists moving out of Toronto and major urban centres in Canada due to soaring costs of living.**
- **Lack of agents in the dance sector.** Unlike the music industry and other sectors, dancers who once had access to a limited number of dance agents in Canada are now finding that there are little to no agents left to support them in finding work.
- **Ongoing impacts of the pandemic:**
 - *“I think the dance and performing arts communities are struggling. It's certainly not a unique idea that as we emerge from the pandemic we are reshaping our communities and perhaps don't exactly know which direction/s to go in. I believe people are excited to get back to theatres and watch live performances. However, some people are more apprehensive about attending in-person events, so live streaming options are an advantage.”*

7. Governance re-imagining

The leadership model options we explored

We presented eight leadership models to CanAsian Dance in May 2023 for their consideration.

We outlined each model in an options paper. As noted earlier (e.g., see Figure 1), we produced two versions of the options paper:

- A more detailed version for internal use. This version included key pros, cons, considerations and examples of each model.
- A summary external version that interviewees responded to in the third round of interviews. This version intentionally omitted the “pros”, “cons” and “considerations” sections in an effort not to bias the interview participants. For a copy of this summary, see Appendix B

The models comprised:

Model 1: Dual Leadership

The default leadership model in the majority of non-profit performing arts organizations. Artistic and programming responsibilities fall under an Artistic Director (AD), while revenue generation, operations, and board management responsibilities fall under a second leader, typically either a General Manager (GM) or an Executive Director (ED).

Model 2: Administrative Lead + Co-Artistic Leads

A GM/ED who is supported by two or more Artistic Leads. One or more of the Co-Artistic Leads may be rotational (e.g., a 2–3 year term) or they may be indeterminate.

Model 3: Trio Leadership

Typically takes the form of an ED/Managing Director + an AD + an Artistic/Executive/Company Producer.

Model 4: Disbursed Leadership/Artist Collective/Co-op

A group of artists who share common values and organize themselves in a flat structure, where decisions are typically made based on consensus, and non-artistic work is divided amongst the artistic leaders (horizontal governance) or contracted out.

Model 5: Lead + Artistic Committee/Curatorial Collective

Typically a Festival Director, Producer or Administrative Lead is supported by a (part-time) artistic committee or curatorial collective.

Model 6: Dynamic Governance

Also known as sociocracy, this is a peer governance system for organizations that want to self-govern in a non-hierarchical way, distribute decision-making and decentralize power.

Model 7: Matricultural Indigenous Leadership

A “heart-centred” organizing model that prioritizes matriarchal leadership values such as unconditional love, mutual support, acceptance, connection, etc. Decisions are made by consensus, which are arrived at in talking circles. Gatherings typically begin with ceremony and there is a sincere and radical openness to spirituality and a confidence that guidance will come from a higher power/creator to help in setting priorities. (Note: As stated earlier, this model was researched for informational purposes, however there is no intention to recommend or adopt this model for CanAsian Dance).

Model 8: Staff-In-Residence

One or two core leaders are supported by a team of staff-in-residence (e.g., Curator-in-Residence, Emerging Artist-in-Residence, Elder-in-Residence, etc.). In this model, staff-in-residence are on contract, and given the invitation, space and support to dream, experiment, innovate and present fresh ideas and approaches.

Our recommended model

Given the current operating budget and capacity of CanAsian Dance, it is recommended that in the short term, CanAsian Dance adopt a **Lead + Artistic Committee/Curatorial Collective** (see model 5). This model is lean yet highly collaborative, allowing for the organization to draw on a diversity of voices and identities in its artistic programming. As a pan-Asian organization that fosters values of shared power, this model would allow for a plurality of representation and shared agency amongst artistic staff.

If and when the organization (and its financial capacity) grows, CanAsian Dance may choose to evolve to another model. At that stage, CanAsian Dance could add several Staff-in-Residence (see model 8) or move to a Dual Leadership model (see model 1), eventually expanding to add a second artistic lead (see model 2), or move to a Trio Leadership model (see model 3), depending on available resources and strategic priorities. These suggested models are more feasible (in comparison to models 4 and 6), which despite their merits, would require considerable investment in time and resources to (un)learn old ways of working and learn new protocols and ways of collaborating.

8. Roadmap for implementing the proposed leadership model

In terms of implementing a new leadership model, we heard from many interviewees that the “who” is far more important than the “how.” In other words, attracting the right leader(s) with aligned values, vision, passion, commitment and skills is of greater importance to an organization than the organization’s structure. Time and time again, we heard stories of organizations having to pivot, grow, and evolve their structure according to evolving needs and external forces, and the crucial role that staff with strong relations played in sustaining those changes.

Having said that, an organization’s leadership and organizational structure should support its mission, vision and values; and certain structures are better suited for CanAsian Dance’s current work, organizational capacity and commitment to staff wellness. The care and intentionality with which CanAsian Dance is proceeding in determining the right leadership model is indicative of the organization’s desire to set itself up for the best possible success given the complex landscape and organizational realities.

Recommendations

We recommend the following four steps, each with associated actions to implementing the proposed leadership model:

1. Take time to set the vision, purpose and priorities.

It is critical for CanAsian to think carefully about the need it fills, and revisit its purpose and values to establish a North Star for the organization. In other words, the “why” should precede the “how.”

Recommended action: Engage in a strategic visioning and priority-setting process that builds on the findings of this report, and review organizational capacity, programs, activities and services. The team will then be well-positioned to decide on a leadership structure for the short term. We recommend the team revisit the structure one year after it is adopted to assess if it still meets the needs of the organization, or if it needs to evolve again. CanAsian Dance should also check in annually on the effectiveness of the leadership structure for the next three years given the significant phase of transition the organization is in.

2. Find the right leaders who have the passion and ability to operationalize the vision.

Recommended action: Based on the findings and decisions made during the strategic visioning process, write high-level job descriptions for the Lead and the Artistic

Committee/Collective roles. These job descriptions will form the basis of the job postings. We recommend low-barrier job descriptions that feel accessible to high-potential candidates.

Recommended action: Establish a hiring timeline for the **Lead role**. The timeline should provide adequate time to conduct outreach, disseminate the posting, conduct interviews, make a decision and job offer, and permit the successful candidate to make necessary arrangements that may be necessary to transition.

Recommended action:

- Decide on the size, criteria and term for membership of the **committee/collective** based on the job description and budget, as well as the method by which inaugural and subsequent members will join (e.g., by invitation, public call for applications, or both)
- Appoint committee/collective members.

3. Set the new staff up for success.

Recommended action: The Board should immediately explore opportunities for additional funding for strategic planning and expanding staff, as well as additional operational funding to sustain and grow the organization while ensuring new ideas have both the programming and operational staffing needed to be successful.

Recommended action: Create a new fundraising role at the staff and/or board level, as soon as capacity allows.

Recommended action: Ensure roles and responsibilities between all staff and board are clear. Consider using a DARCI Matrix - which stands for Decision-maker(s), Accountable, Responsible, Consulted and Informed - to do this.

Recommended action: The Board and Lead should work together to develop a new 3-year strategic plan. There is already considerable expertise on the Board, so depending on budget and Board capacity, this could be done with or without the guidance of an outside consultant; the assistance of a facilitator at key sessions would bring great value.

4. Develop mechanisms to evaluate strategic progress and board and staff performance.

Recommended action: Establish a regular schedule (e.g., quarterly) for the Lead and the Board to evaluate progress vis à vis the strategic plan, and discuss larger strategic and organizational issues and opportunities. Given the nature of the working board, and small

staff size, we also recommend 360 performance reviews for the entire team, to ensure alignment around expectations and to provide time to course-correct and create opportunities to further refine roles and improve relationships.

9. Conclusion

Among the key findings from our consultations, there is confusion about CanAsian Dance's mission and vision. This indicates that before pivoting to a new organizational structure or artistic vision, it is critical that the Board revisits the organization's Ikigai—that is, the intersection of what CanAsian Dance loves to do, what it excels at, what the sector (or society) needs of it, and what offerings it can get paid to do or attain funding for.

Given the challenging state of dance and recent shifts in the sector that have negatively impacted local dancers and choreographers, the timing for CanAsian Dance to reflect on its purpose and priorities is opportune. As CanAsian Dance embarks on a continued journey of self-reflection, it might consider questions such as, but not limited to:

- Why should CanAsian Dance exist?
- Does CanAsian Dance need to be exclusive to dance?
- Should CanAsian Dance exclusively support artists of Asian heritage?
- Should CanAsian Dance expand its mandate to support under-served communities, and if so, which ones?
- How can CanAsian Dance develop and nurture partnerships to have greater impact?
- What private and public funding opportunities exist that CanAsian Dance can leverage to support its growth?

Once CanAsian Dance revisits its vision and mission, and becomes clear on whether it will shift its artistic vision and/or program offerings, it can then seek the appropriate staff and leadership structure to support that artistic vision and engage in strategic planning to steward the organization into its next chapter.

Appendix A: Survey questions

CanAsian Dance Survey

Thank you for participating in this important survey for CanAsian Dance.

We are pleased to offer a \$50 honorarium to the first 143 respondents who submit a completed survey. Once this threshold has been reached, we will update the survey to indicate that honouraria are no longer available.

The deadline to complete this survey is Sunday March 26, 11:59pm ET.

There are two sections in this survey, and we anticipate the entire survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. If you pause the survey without closing the window, you can come back to it to finish at a later point. (Google Forms automatically saves your progress for 30 days when you're signed in to your Google Account so that you can work across devices or take a break without losing a step.)

CONTEXT

With the departure of founding Artistic Director, Denise Fujiwara, CanAsian Dance's current staff and Board of Directors are excited to engage community members in taking stock of the organization's impact and role to date, as well as opportunities that lie ahead.

CanAsian Dance has previously operated with a co-leadership model, with an Artistic Director and a General Manager. At this important juncture in the organization's 25-year history, CanAsian Dance is open to exploring other possible leadership models.

SURVEY CONFIDENTIALITY AND ACCOMMODATIONS

CanAsian Dance has hired two independent consultants to assist with this stocktaking process. These consultants will keep your identity confidential: they will not share your identity with anyone, including any CanAsian Dance staff or board members. Your answers will be used internally only for organizational development work. Any quotes used (e.g. for reports) will be shared anonymously and any demographic data will be reported as a group.

If you have a visual impairment, motor limitation, or have any need for an accommodation to participate in the survey, please email info@canasiandance.com with "SURVEY ACCOMMODATION" in the subject line, or call 647-231-8728.

Thank you again for your participation and for supporting CanAsian Dance!

PART 1: YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT CANASIAN DANCE

Please answer the following questions to the best of your abilities.

Relationship to CanAsian Dance

- 1. Have you ever engaged with CanAsian Dance (i.e. attended or participated in CanAsian Dance programming in-person or online)?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Other

- 2. If you have *not* engaged with CanAsian Dance, please share why. (Select all that apply.)
 - I'm too busy
 - I'm not aware of opportunities to attend/participate
 - I tried to engage with CanAsian Dance and/or I applied to a CanAsian Dance program but my application was not successful
 - Distance (i.e. location) is a barrier for me
 - Cost is a barrier for me
 - I'm not interested in the offerings
 - Other (Please specify)

- 3. On a scale of 1-5, please describe your level of engagement with CanAsian Dance (note: 1 = not engaged at all, 5 = big fan of CanAsian Dance and try to participate as much as possible):

1 2 3 4 5

Your Understanding of CanAsian Dance and Perspective on the Organisation

- 4. Off the top of your head, what do you think CanAsian Dance's mandate is? *Note: this is not a quiz. Please do not Google the answer! We want to gauge your authentic response.*

- 5. What does CanAsian Dance do best? What advantages do you think CanAsian Dance has compared to other organisations in the sector?

- 6. What do you think are some of CanAsian Dance's greatest challenges, obstacles or disadvantages?

- 7. What do you think is CanAsian Dance's greatest achievement?

- 8. What would you like to see CanAsian Dance do (or do more of) moving forward? Please select all that apply:
 - a. Artistic development for emerging artists
 - b. Artistic development for mid-career artists

- c. In-person programming/vents
 - d. Online programming/events
 - e. Community consultations for programming decisions
 - f. Community consultations for visioning/strategy work
 - g. Round table discussions on dance ecology issues
 - h. Workshops with dance/movement content
 - i. Workshops with interdisciplinary content ie. workshops based on art practices rooted in Asian ideas outside of dance
 - j. Workshops to support Asian-based dance artists' career paths (business and networking etc)
 - k. Supporting the touring of dance artists working with Asian-based dance practices in Canada
 - l. Supporting relationship building between Canadian dance artists and artists/presenters in Asia
 - m. Programming in cities other than Toronto
 - n. Programming that bridges sectors and arts disciplines (ie. collaborations with museums, architecture firms, science/academic institutions, health, politics etc)
 - o. Programming that works more with public space (i.e. libraries, parks etc)
 - p. Audience development initiatives
 - q. Support for collaborative artistic research
 - r. Support for newcomer artists
 - s. Support for senior dance artists
 - t. Other (please specify)
9. CanAsian Dance's mandate is to support choreographers in the creation of dance through the commissioning, presentation and promotion of live performance inspired by Asian ideas, and the cultivation of intercultural and intergenerational knowledge exchange. We are working towards a world where openness to exchange, as well as culture specificity in knowledge and artistic practice are not only valued but harnessed for collaborative disruption and creation.
- a) On a scale of 1 to 5, how successful or not do you think CanAsian Dance is in fulfilling this mandate (note: 1 = not successful at all, 5 = very successful)?
- 1 2 3 4 5
- b) Why?
10. What do you think CanAsian Dance can do today that isn't being done in the dance/performing arts sector (or that needs to be done more)?
11. How is CanAsian Dance's field and/or community changing (e.g. dance, performing arts, Asian diaspora, etc.)? How can CanAsian Dance take advantage of those changes?

12. Who can CanAsian Dance better support/serve through its programming? How?
13. Which individuals or communities (e.g. artistic communities, cultural communities, partners, etc.) should CanAsian Dance proactively engage with (e.g. as audience members, artists, donors, sponsors, etc.)?

You Thoughts on Industry Models and Best Practices

14. To date, CanAsian Dance has been led by an Artistic Director and General Manager. Are you aware of any other leadership structures (or best practices for organising) that CanAsian Dance can look into as it considers the best leadership model for the organisation? If so, please describe the model and, where possible, share the name of the organisation using it. Examples outside of the dance world and the arts sector are welcome.
15. Who are some other local/international dance organisations doing important and impactful work that CanAsian Dance should be aware of. Why?
16. Would you like to be more involved in or connected to CanAsian Dance? Please select all that apply, and know that you are simply indicating your curiosity about these options (not committing to anything):
 - Attending a future in-person event
 - Attending a future online event
 - Applying to an open call
 - Subscribing to CanAsian Dance’s newsletter
 - Joining the Board of Directors/Board Committee
 - Becoming a member of CanAsian Dance
 - Attending an AGM
 - Following us on social media (IG, FB,: @canasiandance)
 - Other (please specify):
17. Would you like to share any other questions or comments?

PART 2: DEMOGRAPHICS

All questions related to demographics will be kept strictly confidential and only viewed by the external consultants hired to do analysis and organisational development for CanAsian Dance. Any demographic data used for reporting will be aggregated (i.e. no individual demographic data will be shared with anyone, including CanAsian Dance staff or board members).

Your answers will help us understand who we are serving and not serving.

If you do not identify with any of the options provided, please feel free to add your own details under the “Not specified” option.

1. First name
2. Last name
3. Preferred name/artist name
4. Email
5. City / Town / Reserve
6. Province or territory
7. Organization
8. Organizational role
9. Are you a current, past or prospective member of the CanAsian Dance Community?
 - a. Current
 - b. Past
 - c. Prospective
10. What is the primary sector you work in?
 - a. Not for Profit Sector
 - b. Private Sector
 - c. Not sure
11. If you work in more than one sector, what is your secondary sector?
 - a. Not for Profit Sector
 - b. Private Sector
 - c. Not sure
12. If you are an artist, what is your primary discipline?
13. If you are an artist practising more than one artform, what is your secondary discipline?
14. What is your gender?
15. What is your age (select range)?
 - a. Child (14 and under)
 - b. Youth (15-24)
 - c. Adult (25-40)
 - d. Mature Adult (41-64)
 - e. Senior (65+)
 - f. Prefer not to answer
16. How do you identify ethno-racially?
 - a. Arab
 - b. Bi-racial / Multi-racial
 - c. Black - African
 - d. Black - Caribbean
 - e. Black - not listed here (please specify in notes)
 - f. Chinese
 - g. Filipino
 - h. Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, Inuit)
 - i. Japanese
 - j. Korean
 - k. Latin American
 - l. South Asian (e.g. East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan etc.)
 - m. Southeast Asian (e.g. Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, Thai, etc.)
 - n. West Asian (e.g. Iranian, Afghan, etc.)

- o. White
 - p. Other (please specify)
17. Do you identify as a member of the 2SLGBTQ+ community?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not sure / Prefer not to answer
18. Do you identify as a member of the deaf, mad and/or disabled community?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Not sure / Prefer not to answer
19. If you live in the Greater Toronto Hamilton Area (GTHA), do you live downtown or outside the core?
- a. Downtown Toronto
 - b. GTHA
 - c. I don't live in the GTHA
 - d. Not sure / Prefer not to answer
20. What is your primary relationship to CanAsian Dance? Please select
- a. Audience Member - Past
 - b. Audience Member - Prospective
 - c. Board Member - Past
 - d. Board Member - Current
 - e. Donor / Sponsor - Past
 - f. Donor / Sponsor - Present
 - g. Donor / Sponsor - Prospective
 - h. Funder
 - i. Participating Artist - Current
 - j. Participating Artist - Past
 - k. Participating Artist - Prospective
 - l. Staff - Current
 - m. Staff - Past
 - n. Volunteer
 - o. I don't have a primary relationship to CanAsian Dance
21. Do you have a secondary relationship to CanAsian Dance? Please select
- a. Audience Member - Past
 - b. Audience Member - Prospective
 - c. Board Member - Past
 - d. Board Member - Current
 - e. Donor / Sponsor - Past
 - f. Donor / Sponsor - Present
 - g. Donor / Sponsor - Prospective
 - h. Funder
 - i. Participating Artist - Current
 - j. Participating Artist - Past
 - k. Participating Artist - Prospective
 - l. Staff - Current

- m. Staff - Past
 - n. Volunteer
 - o. I don't have a primary relationship to CanAsian Dance
22. If any of the questions above did not adequately capture your answers, please add any other details or clarification here:

Please indicate the e-mail address you would like us to send your e-transfer payment to:

Should CanAsian Dance's consultants wish to contact you for a confidential group Zoom interview, would you be open to participating? (CanAsian Dance will pay you another honourarium)

- Yes
- No

Thank you again for your participation!

Appendix B: External options paper

CAN
ASIAN
DANCE

LEADERSHIP OPTIONS

EXTERNAL PAPER FOR CANASIAN DANCE

JUNE 2023

A. Context

In January 2023, CanAsian Dance sought input from two consultants to understand its audience and the current state of the performing arts sector, to analyze its organizational impact to date, and to explore alternative leadership models as the organization enters a new chapter in its herstory. This document—one of the deliverables in this strategic initiative—outlines eight leadership structures for CanAsian Dance to consider.

Given the limited availability of research on arts leadership structures appropriate to CanAsian Dance, the consultants conducted a first round of interviews with artists and arts workers to arrive at these models, and supplemented that data with research. Data pertaining to leadership structures was also harvested from a survey conducted in March 2023, to which 143 of CanAsian Dance’s stakeholders and community members responded. The consultants led a second round of interviews to harvest feedback on the pros, cons and considerations for each of the eight leadership models.

The paper is a reflection of the input received from core contributors during both phases of interviews. This work has informed a separate final report that also includes a recommended leadership model for CanAsian Dance as well as a roadmap for implementation.

This strategic initiative has been supported in part by the Toronto Arts Council Open Door Funding program. Funding provided by the TAC was directed to the 160+ stakeholders who were consulted in the broader project. CanAsian Dance is grateful to the artists and arts workers who generously shared their expertise and experiences, and hopes that this paper may be valuable to other artists and organisations.

B. Notes on the Models

Scope and limitations

- **The list of leadership models presented is by no means comprehensive. There are countless versions and iterations of the organizational models shared below, as well as the specific leadership roles.**
- **CanAsian Dance may, of course, choose a model that will evolve over time.** This evolution might depend on considerations such as staff capacity, operational and project funding, programming vision, etc. It is worth noting that the organizations interviewed that have moved away from traditional models (e.g. Artistic Director + General Manager, or Artistic Director + Executive Director) went through several iterations before arriving at a leadership model that made sense for their teams and their organizations. Many organizations are not committed to the models they have landed on, rather to adjusting the models as necessary over time.

- **The model selected by CanAsian Dance will take into account a range of factors.** These factors will include the future direction of the organization (following the retirement of the founding Artistic Director), funding, talent, etc.
- **The models outlined in this paper are meant to provide inspiration to CanAsian Dance and can be amended as necessary.** In certain instances, models that may be unrealistic for CanAsian Dance were included, given the organization might adopt one aspect of the model. For instance, it is unlikely that CanAsian Dance would adopt an Indigenous model given the sensitivity to cultural appropriation (among other reasons). However CanAsian Dance might, for instance, draw inspiration from a talking circle process in their decision-making.
- **A decision was made to exclude a singular leadership model (e.g. a Managing Artistic Director) from this paper.** The singular leadership model is typically used by smaller/emerging organizations in which a single leader oversees all executive, administrative, and artistic functions (including but not limited to the artistic vision, operations, producing, etc), with the central figure supported by staff e.g. administrative coordinator, communications coordinator, etc. (whether fractional, contract, or full-time). This model was ruled out because collaboration and power-sharing have emerged as key values for CanAsian Dance; also taken into account was the organization's commitment to staff wellness, and sensitivity to ongoing sectoral issues of burnout.

Other Considerations

- **CanAsian Dance could explore developing new and personalized leadership roles and titles in addition to organizational models.**
- **The leaders/members of disbursed/artist collective models acknowledged that these models were not financially sustainable for staff.** Most staff were “working full-time and earning part-time” and had to subsidize the work they were doing with other jobs (i.e. often because granting models do not typically recognize alternative organizational models as being eligible for operating support). CanAsian Dance has flagged that in reviewing the various models, it will be a factor in the larger socio-economic conditions in which the organization is operating, specifically the rise of the gig economy and overall income precarity among arts workers, and consider the ways in which the organization can avoid contributing to this issue.
- **CanAsian Dance should be mindful of ongoing risk of staff turnover, and strive for a model that is resilient and/or responsive to changes in personnel.** Several interviewees shared experiences working in models that included roles and functions that were “too dependent” on the individuals in them. (At the same time, there were successful alternative models where structures were shaped to suit the specificities of individual leads.)
- **In models with rotating leadership, term lengths are a consideration.** Arts workers interviewed about these models recommended a 2–3 year term (minimum) to ensure that those leaders can settle into their new roles, build and nurture relationships, provide continuity, and have ample time to develop or deliver a vision impactfully.
- **Hierarchy may not be a bad thing if power is shared fairly and effectively.** Despite working in alternative leadership structures, some interviewees remarked that a hierarchical organizational structure is not necessarily a problem if there is clarity of vision and trust.

C. Organizational Models

1. Dual Leadership: Artistic + Administrative

Overview/Main Characteristics: The default leadership model in the majority of non-profit performing arts organizations. Artistic and programming responsibilities fall under an Artistic Director (AD), while revenue generation, operations, and board management responsibilities fall under a second leader, typically either a General Manager (GM) or an Executive Director (ED). Typically, when the nomenclature of “GM” is used, a prioritizing of the artistic role is implied, versus “ED” which indicates equal authority with the AD. Producing responsibilities/ authority can fall under the purview of either, or be divided between the two.

2. Administrative Lead + Co-Artistic Leads

Overview/Main Characteristics: A General Manager/Executive Director who is supported by two or more Artistic Leads. One or more of the Co-Artistic Leads may be rotational (e.g. 2-3 year term) or they may be indeterminate. In some instances, responsibilities may be divided between artistic leads e.g. one might oversee all educational and Artist-in-Residence programs while the other takes the lead on programming festivals and events.

3. Trio Leadership Model

Overview/Main Characteristics: This model typically takes the form of an Executive Director/Managing Director + an Artistic Director + an Artistic/Executive/Company Producer.

4. Disbursed Leadership/Artist Collective Model/Co-op

Overview/Main Characteristics: A group of artists who share common values and organise themselves in a flat structure, where decisions are typically made based on consensus, and non-artistic work is divided amongst the artistic leaders (horizontal governance) or contracted out. In some instances the vision is to allow for a more unified artistic vision whereas in other models, this collective structure allows for a plurality of distinct artistic visions and projects.

5. Lead + Artistic Committee/Curatorial Collective

Overview/Main Characteristics: Typically a Festival Director, Producer or Administrative Lead is supported by a (part-time) artistic committee or curatorial collective. The level of involvement of the artistic committee/curatorial collective is contingent on the vision and budget. Roles can be as minimal as reviewing applications and assisting in selecting works, or can involve co-creating the artistic vision in a meaningful way.

6. Dynamic Governance Model

Overview/Main Characteristics: Also known as sociocracy, this is a peer governance system for organizations that want to self-govern in a non-hierarchical way, distribute decision-making and decentralize power. This egalitarian model can be traced back to the Sociocratic Circle Method by Gerard Endenburg in the Netherlands in the 1980s and is said to mirror the interconnectedness of nature.

Its key elements are:

- The organization is made up of semi-autonomous circles. Circles form around a subject matter area e.g. governance. Trust is given to each circle, with the understanding that they are knowledgeable about their own processes and goals. The purpose - the vision, mission and values - are at the center of the circle, which is the foundation from which all pods do their work. Each circle is expected to adhere to the values and policies set by the organization.
- The circles are double-linked. That is, some individuals participate in the decision-making of both their own circle and another adjacent/related circle, which results in a feedback loop between circles. The circles are “dynamic” in that they self-organize and form, shift and dissolve as needed. See fig. 1. *(Note: the organization we spoke to does not double-link their circles; they have adapted the model. See fig. 2)*
- Consensus in decision-making. Members of the team are polled for the reasons for or against proposals made by other team members. A decision is considered finally made when there are no “paramount objections.”

Fig. 1, from [Kosmos Journal](#).

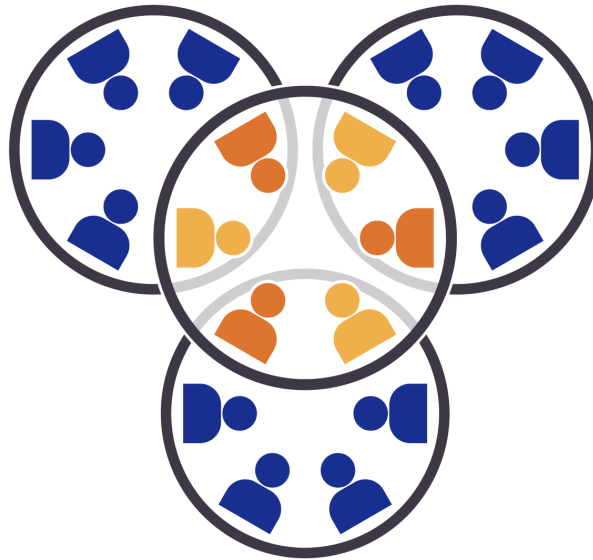
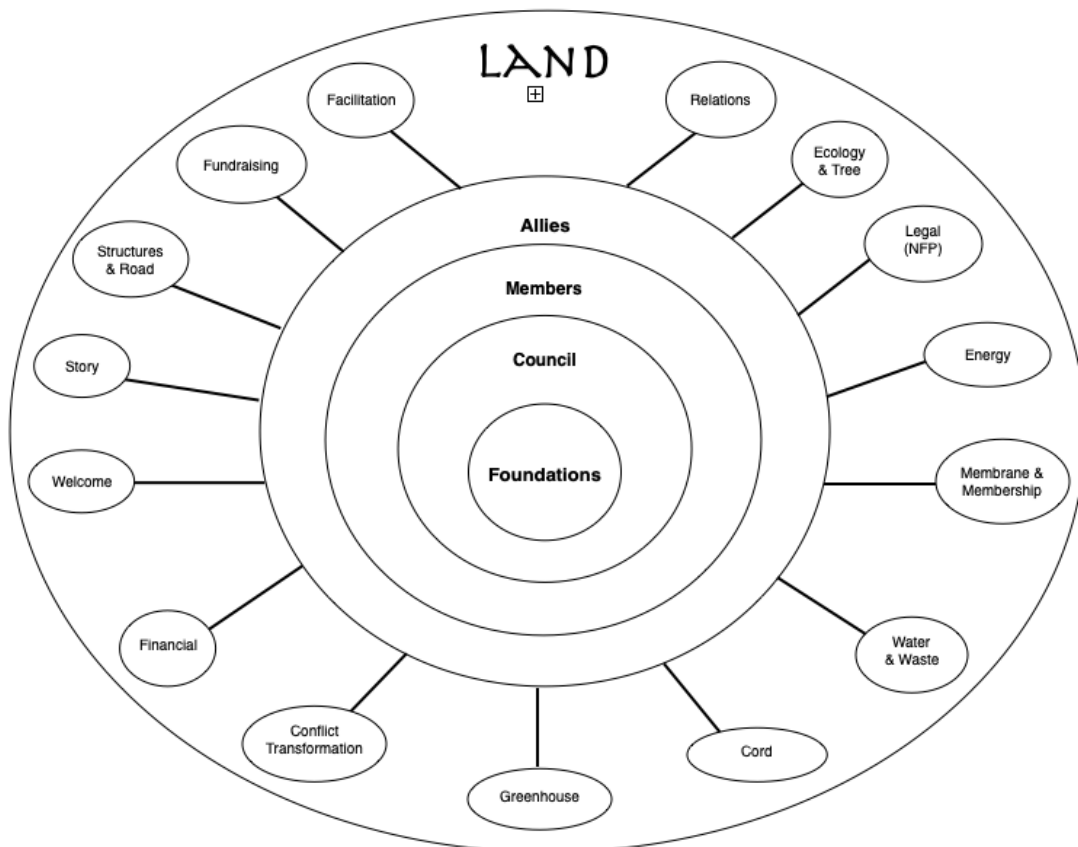


Fig. 2, shared with the permission of a Land Collective in Ontario



7. Matricultural Indigenous Leadership Model

Overview/Main Characteristics: A “heart-centred” organising model that prioritizes matriarchal leadership values such as unconditional love, mutual support, acceptance, connection, etc. Decisions are made by consensus, which is arrived at in talking circles. Gatherings typically begin with ceremony and there is a sincere and radical openness to spirituality and a confidence that guidance will come from a higher power/creator to help in setting priorities. The circle of leaders expands and contracts to bring in others as needed, depending on the work ahead.

8. Staff-In-Residence Model

Overview/Main Characteristics: One or two core leaders are supported by a team of staff-in-residence (e.g. Curator-in-Residence, Emerging Artist-in-Residence, Elder-in-Residence, etc). In this model, staff-in-residence are on contract, and given the invitation, space and support to dream, experiment, innovate and present fresh ideas and approaches. (Effectively, they are freelance staff with more agency, creative licence and recognition.) The intention is to create a container for symbiotic relationships whereby the staff-in-residence are impacted by CanAsian, and CanAsian, in turn, is changed as a result of the staff-in-residency.

D. Food for Thought from Key Stakeholders

- ❖ *“For two years, we went through a process of collectivisation, trying on various iterations to get to the model we’ve arrived at. It felt like a research project to arrive at the right structure, with lots of experimentation and reconfiguration of people. If we wanted our company to have certain values i.e. decolonizing and non-hierarchical modalities, then it had to really be present in how we organise ourselves.”*
- ❖ *“There’s nothing wrong with [someone] being in charge. That’s where we’re getting lost if we’re worrying about someone being in a leadership role. It’s more productive to think about **how** we lead.”*
- ❖ *“A strong artistic vision is a priority and the foundation for a vital organization. When you can articulate the artistic vision, you have consistency at the centre and everyone knows what’s going on, there’s no need to check in all the time. Dance organizations that have been clear on their vision have thrived as a result.”*
- ❖ *“I’ve watched organizations start up over the last 50 years, and many have tried alternative structures. Most [of these] last for about 3 years and then fall apart.”*
- ❖ *“Create opportunities to be slow during any major transition. Take time to be nurturing and responsible, to build relationships and to listen to community. Take extra time when supporting non cis-white men stepping into positions of power.”*
- ❖ *“How are we training the next generation of artistic leaders, especially from a curatorial context? There are very few opportunities to learn, especially in an institutional context.”*
- ❖ *“When bringing new leaders to the organization who are not working full-time, be mindful about the external perceptions and expectations placed on those leaders who may be perceived to be working full-time.”*
- ❖ *“When models are working well, we think they are old and tired.”*
- ❖ *“If CanAsian is going to move in a new direction, having a leadership model that allows for fluidity and multiple perspectives is key.”*
- ❖ *With whichever model you choose, create space regularly to evaluate - to look at the structure, how the team is doing in terms of how they collaborate, understand everyone’s roles, etc.”*

- ❖ *“Consider what you can support well with your resources.”*
- ❖ *“I can’t stress enough the importance of investing in succession planning. Whenever you shift models, do everything you can to build in overlap between old and new staff.”*
- ❖ *“When considering leadership models, remember to think about which options enhance the well-being of the folks in those roles”*

Appendix C: Core contributor/community maps

The following data was gathered from a survey written by the consultants and launched by CanAsian Dance in March 2023. A total of 143 survey respondents contributed to this survey over the course of 5 weeks. (Note: Many statisticians concur that a sample size of 100 people provides meaningful results). Participants were asked 17 multiple-choice and open-ended questions related to their thoughts about CanAsian Dance as well as industry models and best practices. They were also asked another 18 questions related to their demographics (i.e., identity, location, work, discipline and relationship to CanAsian Dance).

Survey responses were confidential and individual names and demographic data were not shared with CanAsian Dance. Demographic data was only used to provide aggregated trends pictured below.

Of the 143 respondents, 96 responded “Yes” in response to the first question, “Have you ever engaged with CanAsian Dance (i.e., attended or participated in CanAsian Dance programming in-person or online)?”. The figures presented below relate to respondents who identified as being engaged. The scale indicating level of engagement is 1 to 5, where 1 was defined as “Not engaged at all” and 5 was defined as “Big fan of CanAsian Dance and try to participate as much as possible”.

Please note we have intentionally used the term “Core Contributor Maps” in lieu of “Stakeholder Maps” given the negative connotations of the term “stakeholder” in a colonial context.

KEY FINDINGS

- The majority of respondents who identify as being engaged by CanAsian Dance are Adults aged 25–40 (48%), followed by Mature Adults aged 41–64 (37.5 %).
- 72.9% of engaged respondents identify as Female/Woman (note: this may be a reflection of broader gender demographics within the dance / performing arts sector).
- Unsurprisingly, the lion’s share of respondents hail from Toronto and surrounding areas. However, CanAsian Dance has some reach across Canada, in cities like Montreal, Hamilton, Ottawa, Vancouver, Kitchener, and Winnipeg.
- The three ethno-racial/cultural categories that showed the highest levels of participation amongst engaged survey respondents identified as White (32%), Chinese (18%) and South Asian (14.5%). Collectively these three groups make up approximately two-thirds of engaged survey participants.
- 61% of respondents who feel engaged by the organization identified as previous artists and audience members of CanAsian Dance.
- Seniors expressed the highest levels of engagement amongst engaged respondents, but make up only 7% of that group.
- When engaged respondents were asked directly if they identify as a current, past, or prospective member of the CanAsian Dance community, 37.5% identified as prospective members. Of those who did not identify as engaged, 44% identified as prospective members of CanAsian Dance.

1. Number of Responses and Level of Engagement by Age

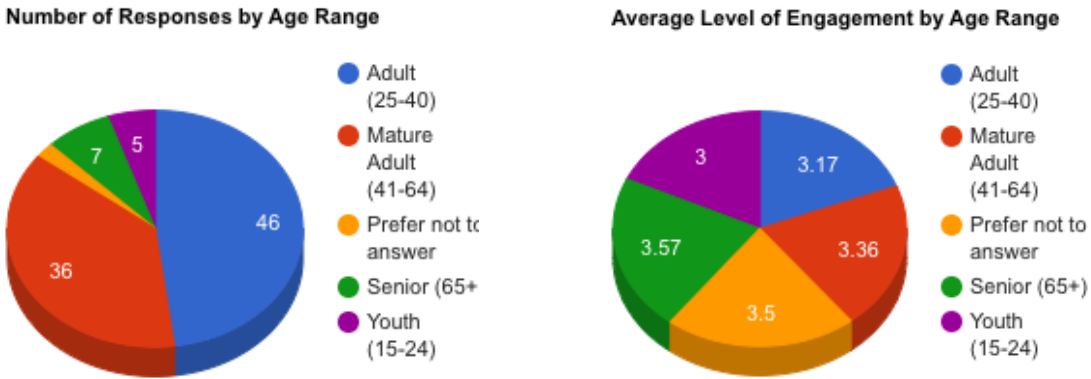


Fig 1 (left), Average Level of Engagement by Age Range

Fig 2 (right), Number of Responses by Age Range of Engaged Survey Respondents

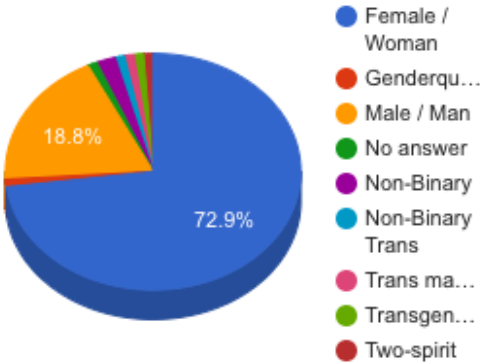
The majority of respondents who feel engaged by CanAsian Dance are Adults aged 25–40 (48%) followed by Mature Adults aged 41–64 (37.5 %). The highest level of engagement is within the Senior group (65+), but only 7% of engaged respondents identified as seniors. The average level of engagement did not vary much by age range, with all engaged respondents identifying levels between 3 and 3.5 out of 5.

Note: Of the 47 respondents who identified as not feeling engaged by CanAsian Dance, 61.7% are Adults (25–40), 25.5% are youth (15–24), 18.5% are Mature Adults (41–64) and only 2% are Seniors (65+). Interestingly, although the range of engagement levels for those who identified as not engaged was 1.4 to 2.67, the exception was the Senior group, whose average level of engagement was 4 despite identifying as “not engaged” in the question that preceded the one pertaining to Level of Engagement.

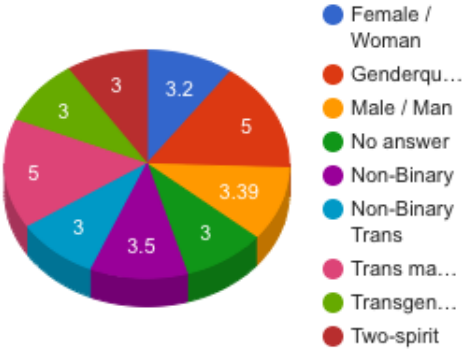
2. Number of Responses and Level of Engagement by (Self-Identified) Gender

Gender	Average Level of Engagement
“Genderqueer”	5
“Trans man; man; trans”	5
“Non-Binary”	3.5
“Male/Man”	3.39
“Female/Woman”	3.2
“No answer”	3
“Non-Binary Trans”	3
“Transgenderqueer”	3
“Two-spirit”	3

Number of Responses by Gender Category



Average Level of Engagement by Gender



The vast majority of survey respondents who identified as engaged by CanAsian Dance identified as Female/Woman (72.9%), followed by 18.8% Male/Man. A further 7% identified as either Non-binary, Transgenderqueer, Two-spirit, Non-binary trans, and a Trans man. There is little variation of the level of engagement when looking across the gender spectrum, with the exception of one respondent who identified as Genderqueer and expressed a 5 out of 5 level of engagement. In comparison to those who don’t feel engaged by CanAsian Dance, 62% identify as Female, 23.4% Male, and 8.5% identify as either a trans man, non-binary, or a fluid femme.

3. Number of Responses and Level of Engagement by (Self-Identified) Ethno-Racial/Cultural Identity

Ethno-Racial/Cultural Identity	Number of Responses
White	31
Chinese	17
South Asian (e.g., East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, etc.)	14
Bi-racial/Multi-racial	7
Japanese	2
Filipino	2
Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, Inuit)	2
Southeast Asian (e.g., Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, Thai, etc.)	2
Bi-racial—Hakka Chinese and White	1
Bi-racial—Chinese and White	1
Black—African	1
Bi-racial—Filipino and Indian	1
Latin American	1
Mestiza, Mexican Indigenous—Spanish heritage	1
White/Unknown	1
Slavic	1
Chinese Canadian	1
Bi-racial—Chinese/Filipina	1
West Asian, Arab and Biracial	1
Jewish	1
Scottish and Italian	1
Black—African and Caribbean descent	1
North African and Arab	1
Bi-racial—British and Japanese	1
Bi-racial—Southeast Asian, White	1
Ashkenazi	1
Multi-Racial—Black/Indigenous/African/Carib/French/mixed race	1

Please note that because respondents were invited to self-identify versus select from a pre-determined list of options, there may be some overlap given the terminology used. The highest volume of responses from engaged respondents came from community members who identified as White (32%), Chinese (18%), and Bi-Racial/Multi-Racial (18%), and South Asian (14.5%). The most notable ethno-racial/cultural categories of those who do not identify as engaged by CanAsian Dance are Bi-Racial/Multi-Racial (23%), White (20%), South Asian (15%), Filipino (11%) and Chinese (11%). There were no glaring disparities between people who feel engaged versus not in terms of their ethno-racial/cultural identity.

Ethno-Racial/Cultural Identity	Average Level of Engagement
Chinese Canadian	5
Bi-racial—Chinese/Filipina	5
Bi-racial—British and Japanese	5
Bi-racial—Southeast Asian, White	5
Japanese	4
Black—African	4
Filipino	4
White/Unknown	4
West Asian, Arab and Biracial	4
Southeast Asian (e.g. Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, Thai, etc.)	4
Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, Inuit)	3.5
Bi-racial/Multi-racial	3.43
Chinese	3.29
White	3.1
South Asian (e.g. East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan etc.)	3.07
Bi-racial—Filipino and Indian	3
Mestiza, Mexican Indigenous—Spanish heritage	3
Slavic	3
Jewish	3
Scottish and Italian	3
Black—African and Caribbean descent	3
North African & Arab	3
Ashkenazie	3
Multi-Racial—Black/Indigenous/African/Carrib/French/mixed race	3
Bi-racial—Hakka Chinese and White	2
Bi-racial—Chinese & White	2
Latin American	1

The individuals and groups with the highest level of engagement identified as Chinese Canadian; Bi-Racial—Chinese/Filipina; Bi-racial—British and Japanese; Bi-racial—Southeast Asian and White (however these four ethno-racial/cultural categories are represented by only one respondent each).

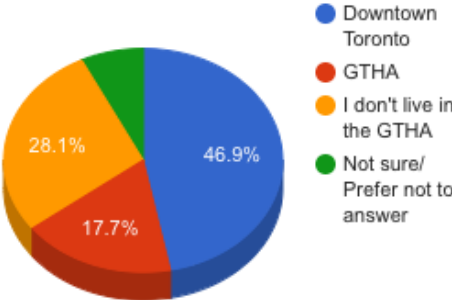
4. Number of Engaged Respondents by City, Town, or Reserve

City, Town or Reserve	Number of Responses
Toronto	50
Montreal	6
Hamilton	5
Ottawa	4
Vancouver	4
Kitchener	3
Mississauga	3
Markham	2
Winnipeg	2
Bowling Green	1
Dawson City	1
Edmonton	1
Halifax	1
Kingston	1
Laval	1
Newmarket	1
Oakville	1
Paris	1
Richmond Hill	1
Saint-Lambert	1
Salt Spring Island	1
Saskatoon	1
Surrey	1
Thornhill	1
Toronto and St. John's	1
No Answer	1

52% of respondents live in Toronto, 6% in Montreal, 5% in Hamilton, 4% in Ottawa and Vancouver respectively, 3% in Kitchener and Mississauga respectively, 2% in Markham and Winnipeg respectively, and the remainder of respondents hail from other cities and towns across the country. The vast majority of engaged respondents live within driving distance from Toronto. Of the respondents who do not feel engaged by CanAsian Dance, approximately 63% live in Toronto and surrounding areas including Brampton, Etobicoke, Markham, and Mississauga. Ten percent of respondents who do not feel engaged reside in Vancouver, and 6% in Montreal.

5. Number of Engaged Respondents by Location in Relation to Toronto

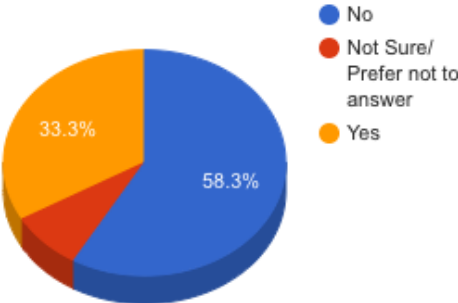
Engagement with CanAsian Dance by Location



In taking a closer look at respondents from Toronto and the surrounding areas, 46.9% live in downtown Toronto, 17.7% live outside downtown Toronto, and 28.1% reside outside the GTA.

6. Level of Engagement from Engaged Respondents by Sexuality

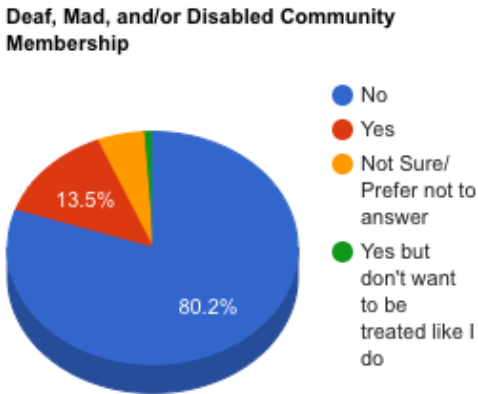
Number of Participants by 2SLGBTQ+ Community Membership



Member of 2SLGBTQ+ Community	Average Level of Engagement
Yes	3.47
No	3.2
Not Sure/Prefer not to answer	3

58.33% of engaged survey respondents did not identify as being a member of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, while 33.33% did (note: 8.33% of engaged respondents did not indicate their sexuality). There was minimal variation in the range of engagement across groups, with those that identify as members of the 2SLGBTQ+ showing slightly higher levels of engagement (3.47 out of 5 vs. 3.2 out of 5 on average). Of the respondents who did not feel engaged by CanAsian Dance, 32% identified as part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community while 51% did not.

7. Level of Engagement of Members of the Deaf, Mad and/or Disabled Community



Member of the deaf, mad, and/or disabled community	Average Level of Engagement
No	3.32
Yes	3.08
Not Sure/Prefer not to answer	3
Yes but don't want to be treated like I do	3

13.5% of the people CanAsian Dance engages identify as members of the deaf, mad and/or disabled community. Members who do not identify as living with a disability feel slightly more engaged (3.32 vs. 3.08) on average. Of those who do not feel engaged by CanAsian Dance, 9% identify as a member of the Deaf, Mad and/or Disabled community. It does not seem that living with a disability poses a barrier to engagement with CanAsian Dance.

8. Number of Responses and Level of Engagement by Primary Relationship to CanAsian Dance

Primary Relationship to CanAsian Dance	Number of Responses
Audience Member—Past	44
Participating Artist—Past	15
Participating Artist—Prospective	8
Participating Artist—Current	6
Audience Member—Prospective	4
Not sure/Prefer Not to Answer	3
Board Member—Current	3
Past Artistic Associate, Past Participating Artist, Past Audience Member	1
Volunteer	1
Donor/Sponsor—Past	1
Donor/Sponsor—Present	1
Staff—Past	1
Audience Member—Past	1
Colleague (arts presenting), Artist exchange project partner	1
Former Mentor of Participating Artist	1
Former Applicant	1
Former Video Editor	1
Partner through my organization	1
Past presenter/partner (Kickstart)	1
I don't have a primary relationship to CanAsian Dance	1

Former audience members and former participating artists of CanAsian Dance make up the majority of respondents who feel most engaged by the company (45.8% and 15.6% respectively). Also worth noting are the 8.33% of engaged respondents who identified as prospective participating artists, 6.25% as current participating artists and 4.17% as prospective audience members. According to this survey question, 12.5% identified as prospective members of the CanAsian Dance Community.

Whereas only 1 respondent from those engaged identified as not having a primary relationship to CanAsian Dance, almost 50% of those who identified as not engaged do not have a primary relationship to CanAsian Dance.

It is worth noting that 28% of those not engaged identify as a prospective participating artist, 17% as a prospective audience member and 6% are past audience members. In other words, 44% of those who don't currently feel engaged by CanAsian Dance are open to getting involved as artists and audience members.

Primary Relationship to CanAsian Dance	Average Level of Engagement
Board Member—Current	5
Colleague (arts presenting), Artist exchange project partner	5
Past Artistic Associate, Past Participating Artist, Past Audience Member	5
Past presenter/partner (Kickstart)	5
Participating Artist—Current	4.67
Donor/Sponsor—Present	4
Partner through my organization	4
Participating Artist—Past	3.87
Audience Member—Past	3
Audience Member—Prospective	3
Former Applicant	3
Former Mentor of Participating Artist	3
I don't have a primary relationship to CanAsian Dance	3
Staff—Past	3
Audience Member—Past	2.98
Participating Artist—Prospective	2.38
Not sure/Prefer Not to Answer	2.33
Donor/Sponsor—Past	2
Former Video Editor	2
Volunteer	2

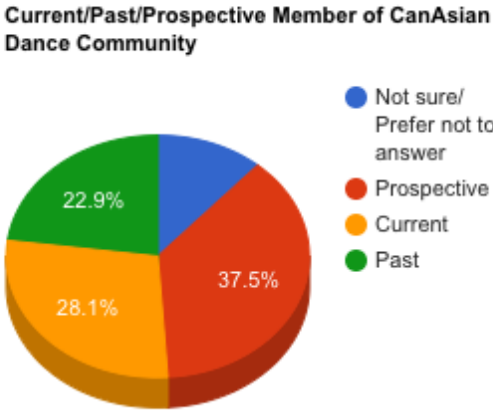
Unsurprisingly, respondents currently involved with CanAsian Dance (e.g. board members, current participating artists, donors/sponsors) report very high levels of engagement, with an average score of 5. Those who have had past relationships with CanAsian Dance (e.g. past participating artists, past audience members) also report very high levels of engagement, suggesting a strong connection with the organization even after their involvement has ended. Respondents who have never had a primary relationship with CanAsian Dance report an average level of engagement around 3, indicating a baseline interest or awareness of the organization.

9. Primary Sector of Engaged Respondents

Primary Sector (Work)	Total People
Not for Profit Sector	48
Public Sector	14
Private Sector	14
Not Sure	9
Former York U Dance professor	1
In private studios, public schools, universities, art centres	1
Performer	1
Student	2
Prefer not to answer	2
Mixed of above	1
Arts worker	1
Independent Artist	1
All of the above	1

Note: Because respondents were invited to self-identify using their own terminology, there may be some overlap of categories (e.g. “Arts Worker” and “Not for Profit Sector”). The most represented primary sector among engaged respondents is the Not for Profit Sector representing 50% of engaged respondents. Public and private sectors followed representing 14.58% each. Of the people not engaged by CanAsian Dance, approximately 40% are from the Not for Profit sector, 15% from the private sector and 13% from the public sector. There are no glaring distinctions between the primary sectors of those engaged and not engaged by CanAsian Dance.

10. Number of Responses and Level of Engagement Vis à Vis Relationship to CanAsian Dance— Current, Past or Prospective



28% of engaged respondents identified as current members of CanAsian Dance’s community, 23% as past members, and 37.5% as prospective members. In this survey question (i.e., when asked directly), 37.5% identified as prospective members of CanAsian Dance as opposed to 12.5% who identified as prospective members of the CanAsian Dance Community in Section 8: Primary Relationship to CanAsian Dance.

When comparing this to respondents who did not identify as engaged by the company, 49% do not have a primary relationship to CanAsian Dance, 28% are prospective participating artists, 17% are prospective audiences, and 6% are past audience members.

There is a significant opportunity to engage new artists and audiences in CanAsian Dance’s community moving forward.

Current, Past or Prospective Members of the CanAsian Dance Community	Average Level of Engagement
Current	3.85
Past	3.55
Not sure/Prefer not to answer	3
Prospective	2.75

The average level of engagement for the CanAsian Dance community is 3.15 out of 5. Unsurprisingly, current members are most engaged followed by past members and prospective members.

11. Artistic Disciplines of Engaged Respondents

Specific Artistic Discipline	Total Respondents
Dance	45
No answer	8
Dance—Contemporary	8
Dance—Bharata Natyam	2
Music	2
Theatre	2
Photography	2
Interdisciplinary and performing arts/Interdisciplinary performance	2
Literary arts and storytelling/Literature	2
Actor	1
Aerial Acrobat	1
Choreography	1
Costume	1
Dance—Contemporary and disability arts	1
Dance—Contemporary and hip-hop	1
Dance—Contemporary, Improvisation	1
Dance—Indian contemporary	1
Dance—Interdisciplinary/Burlesque	1
Dance—Modern	1
Dance—South Asian	1
Dance—Street dance (hip-hop, popping)	1
Dance and Choreography	1
Dance and Movement	1
Fibre arts	1
Multidisciplinary Dance artist (contemporary, urban and neo Filipino/Indigenous dance)	1
Painting	1
Performance/Butoh	1
Performing arts	1
Theatre/classical music	1
Visual	1
Visual art (needlework)	1
Writing	1

Approximately 70% of engaged respondents identified as dancers and the remainder represent a broad range of other artistic disciplines. A further 7% did not answer, which may be an indication that they do not identify as artists. In comparison to the respondents who did not identify as engaged, 66% identified as dancers, 13% had no answer, 4% actors, 2% aerial arts, and the remainder represent a variety of other disciplines.