

The Need in Canada

“I want to be connected with others in the arts in health care field – right now. Although I have colleagues in my city, we all work separately in a variety of locations.”

“I see the merit of a national network as being one which helps facilitate and shift policy-making, increases funding resources, and advocates for change. Regional networks, while they could fill a similar agenda, could also meet the specific needs of each region.”

“The immediacy of the network is very important. When you are right in it, the broader the conversation, the better the job you can do for the people you are working with.”

“What people in the mainstream of health care are looking for is ways of doing things differently.”

“Support — feeling there are others with similar concerns who want to share and build together.”

“Research methodologies; collection of data to ‘make the case.’”

“Updated regularly, there is no such thing as too much information.”

“Meet yearly in a different location so that we start to build a uniquely Canadian network.”

“Please help to create training opportunities – too many people here have to go to the US or UK for this and we lose them.”

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From 2005 Forum evaluations and follow-up consultations in 2005 and 2006.

What is Needed in Canada

There are a number of pressing needs to be addressed if Canada is to catch up with other western countries, and Canadians are to fully benefit from the many contributions that arts and culture can make to our health care system and to the promotion and maintenance of both individual and community health and well-being.

For Canada to participate actively and be among the global leaders in coordinated investment in arts and health, it is necessary to create:

- A central contact point to connect those involved in arts and health initiatives in Canada;
- A comprehensively-researched, current source of information on arts and health initiatives in Canada;
- A source for, or link to, research from around the world on arts’ contributions to health care, health promotion and wellness; and best practices;
- A primer for decision makers and practitioners on the benefits of arts and health (Arts and Health 101);
- A multi-disciplinary forum to bridge disciplinary and institutional barriers to understanding and action;
- Appropriate, accepted methodologies to evaluate the impact on health of arts-based activities in Canada; determine best practices; and identify arts involvement in data generation;
- Availability of appropriate training and professional development in Canada;
- Expertise in writing grants and raising funds to advance arts and health in Canada.

Since Canada lags as much as four decades behind other countries in recognizing and benefiting from the contributions of arts and culture to health, it has the opportunity to learn from experience in more advanced countries and to build upon their foundations. **Canada can leapfrog a decade or more in development**, if it learns from the leaders in the field, and if it puts in place the necessary policy and investment structures and other resources to support the continued development of arts and health in this country.

The network will focus on the contributions arts and culture make to **both health promotion and health care**. Thus, the Canadian network will become an “*arts and health*” network, rather than the more narrow focus on “*arts in health care*” seen in the US. British Columbia is considered an appropriate starting place for a national network because of the level, scope and sophistication of arts and health activities in the province, and the fact that BC organizations have already taken initiatives to pull people together from across the country to advance arts and health.