Alberta Foundation for the Arts

2025-26 Annual Report

Alberta

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Message from the Chair

On behalf of the Alberta Foundation for the Arts board, I am pleased to present our 2025-26 Annual Report.

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts (AFA) is proud to support and celebrate our province's arts sector. In 2025-26, more than ever, we continued to embrace our role as champions for Alberta arts. We are grateful to Alberta's government for providing the AFA a second consecutive increase of $4.5 million, which brought our annual allocation up to $34.6 million for 2025-26. These investments have increased our ability to support the artists and arts organizations that access our programs. A third increase announced for 2026-27 brings the AFA's funding level to its highest amount in its history.

The AFA focused its funding on increasing the level of support for arts organizations in 2025-26. Healthy organizations that rely on stable operating funding from the AFA have an enormous impact on shaping a vibrant provincial arts community. Not only do our province's art organizations enhance Albertans' quality of life, but they are a significant driver of our economic prosperity to the tune of $2.4 billion which we learned from the *Arts Impact Alberta 2025: Ripple Effects from the Arts Sector* research report the AFA commissioned last year.

Through a detailed analysis of the AFA's operating grants during a six-year period (from 2018 to 2024), we learned more about the incredible return on investment provided by arts funding. The arts create jobs—both in terms of contracts for artists and in full- and part-time jobs for arts workers—and create an economic return of $1.76 for every dollar the AFA spends. We are sharing the results of this report widely with Albertans to promote the value of the arts.

Albertan artists are key to defining our province's unique cultural heritage and identity. The AFA manages the world's largest collection of visual artworks created by Alberta artists. We are immensely proud to have opened another venue to exhibit these works: the AFA *art house.* Located at The Edison in Downtown Calgary, AFA *art house* is a new home for Alberta art. Through exhibitions, multiple special events and artist talks, we are incredibly proud to elevate our local talent. Our sincere thanks to the City of Calgary and Aspen Properties for partnering with us in this initiative that not only supports our sector but will contribute to the ongoing revitalization of the city's core.

It was a transformational year for the AFA last year. We look forward to continuing to build on these successes and growing and promoting Alberta's arts community.

A special thank you to all of the dancers, musicians, writers, painters, sculptors, craftspeople, curators, actors, producers, directors, filmmakers, artistic directors, general managers, board members and all others in the arts community that contribute so much to Alberta's quality of life.

With kindest regards,

[Original signed by]

Cynthia P. Moore, Chair
Alberta Foundation for the Arts Board of Directors

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Overview

The AFA was established in 1991 as a public agency and a provincial corporation of the Government of Alberta. The AFA provides funding to artists and arts organizations, researches and promotes the arts and manages an extensive provincial art collection.

Mandate

Reporting to Alberta's Minister of Arts, Culture and Status of Women, the AFA is guided by the objectives found in the *Alberta Foundation for the Arts Act*:

- To support and contribute to the development of and to promote the arts in Alberta,
- To provide persons and organizations with the opportunity to participate in the arts in Alberta,
- To foster and promote the enjoyment of works of art by Alberta artists,
- To collect, preserve and display works of art by Alberta artists, and
- To encourage artists resident in Alberta in their work.

In addition, the AFA is guided by direction included in the Minister of Arts, Culture and Status of Women Tanya Fir's December 2023 mandate letter to the AFA, which directed the AFA Board to prioritize Alberta artists, art and cultural materials.

Linkages to the Ministry's Business Plan

AFA programs are linked to the following outcome articulated in the 2025-28 Business Plan:

Outcome Two: All Albertans have the opportunity to enjoy and benefit from vibrant, inclusive and active communities that enrich their lives.

Specifically, the AFA worked on Key Objective 2.3:

"Increase investment in artists and arts organizations through the Alberta Foundation for the Arts."

In 2025-26, initiatives supporting key objectives under Outcome Two included:

- Increase investment in the Alberta Foundation for the Arts to $34.6 million to support Alberta artists and Alberta's arts sector.

The work of the AFA also contributed to the results of performance measure 2.a:

Percentage of Albertans attending and participating in arts events and activities.

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Board Governance

The AFA is governed by a Board of Directors appointed by government through Order in Council. The AFA Chair reports to the Minister of Arts, Culture and Status of Women on behalf of the board. The AFA Board of Directors encourages and supports Alberta's arts community by:

- Developing and implementing the AFA's strategic plan,
- Allocating the annual budget,
- Approving AFA funding and scholarships, and
- Approving and monitoring the acquisition, exhibition and preservation of works in the AFA collection.

The board operates under a code of conduct that reflects a commitment to the AFA's values and provides a framework to guide ethical conduct in a way that upholds the integrity and reputation of the agency.

In 2025-26, the AFA board welcomed two new members, Jason O'Connor, whose term began on October 8, 2025, and Gwen Snell, whose term began on March 1, 2026.

Government also reappointed four members whose terms were set to expire. They are:

- Le Bo, Vice Chair
- Yasmin Jivraj
- Sylvester Ndumbi
- Shana Yang

Board Compensation Disclosure

The AFA publishes the names and compensation of board members online as required per the *Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act*.

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Membership



Cynthia P. Moore

Chair, Calgary



Le Bo

Vice Chair, Calgary



Robert Fernandez

Edmonton



Yasmin Jivraj

Edmonton



Sylvester Ndumbi

Calgary



Shana Yang

Calgary



Jason O'Connor

Sylvan Lake



Gwen Snell

Hanna



Melody McKnight

Red Deer (resigned September 11, 2025)

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Results Analysis

Performance Measure Results

Results for performance measure 2.a from the 2025-28 Business Plan are gathered through the annual Survey of Albertans.

In 2025-26, 84.9 per cent of adult Albertans attended arts activities or events.

Core Businesses and Goals

AFA activities are developed through adherence to goals set out in the AFA 2024-27 Strategic Plan.

Finalized and approved in 2024, the plan affirms the foundation's commitment to Alberta's arts community and identifies key priorities for a three-year period. The AFA aligns its strategic priorities for the arts sector with those of the Government of Alberta, which includes ensuring the AFA prioritizes Alberta artists, art and cultural materials. For the first time, the strategic plan is available in French.

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Funding

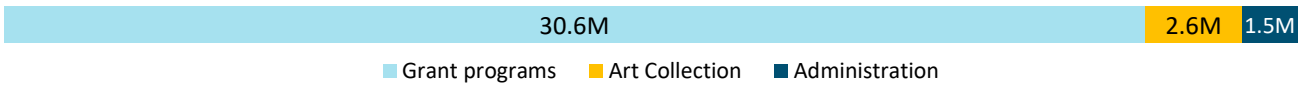
The AFA's support for the arts is primarily delivered through its granting programs. Operational grants provide ongoing support to organizations that create and provide access to art experiences and generate job opportunities for artists and cultural workers. Project funding is awarded to organizations and individual artists primarily through an expert panel adjudication process.

Impact of Funding

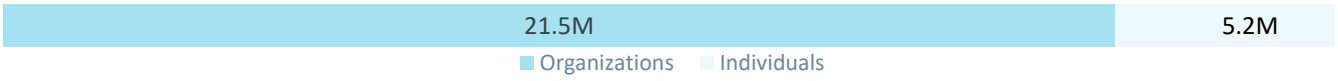
AFA expenditures 2025-26

$34,736,000

AFA expenditure breakdown[1] ($ in millions)



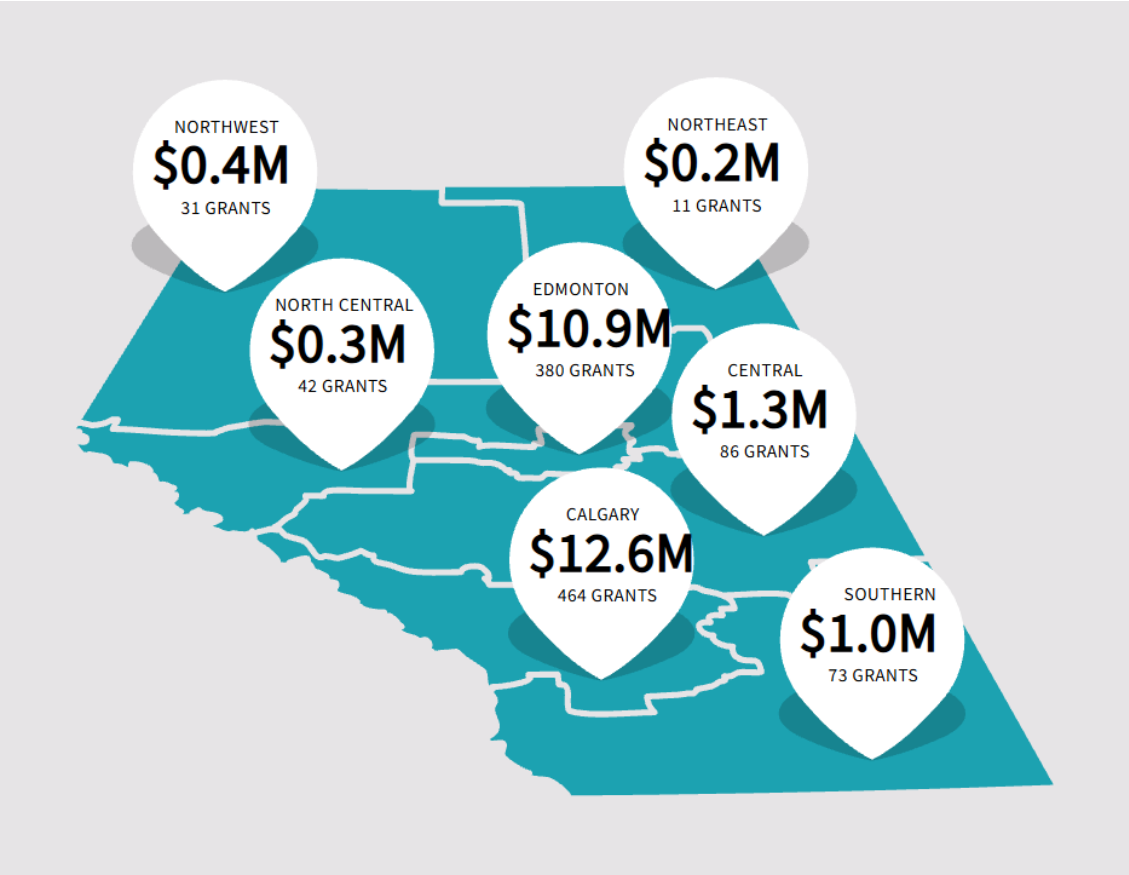
Funding awarded by recipient type[2] ($ in millions)



[1] Expenditures for each category include program support expenses.
[2] Funding awarded does not include program support expenses.

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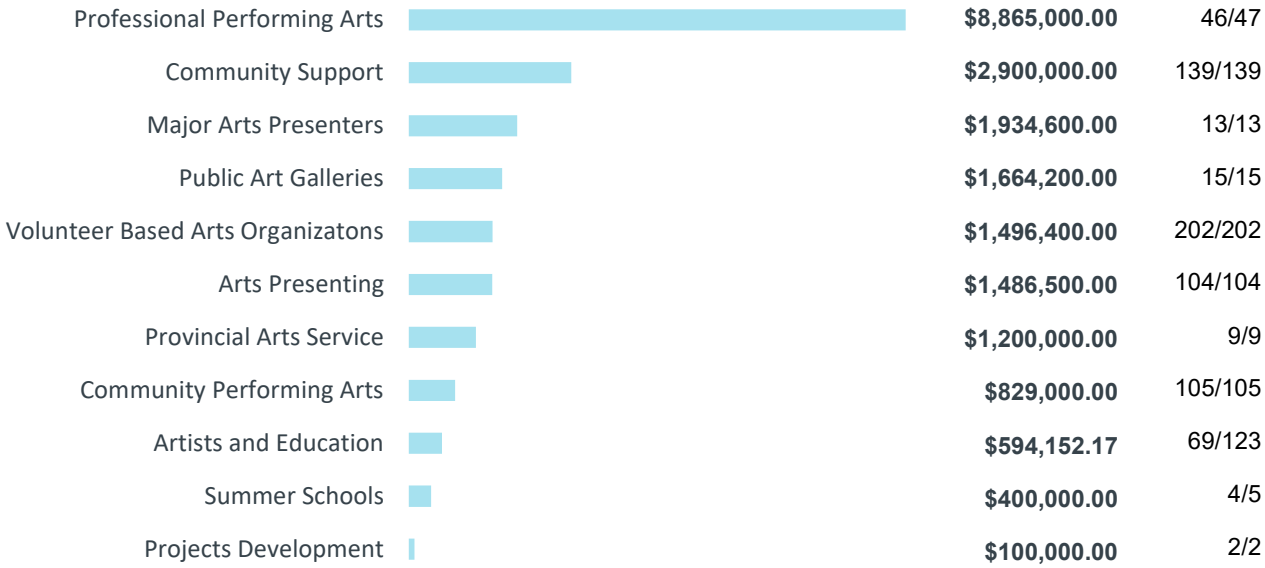
Funding approved by region



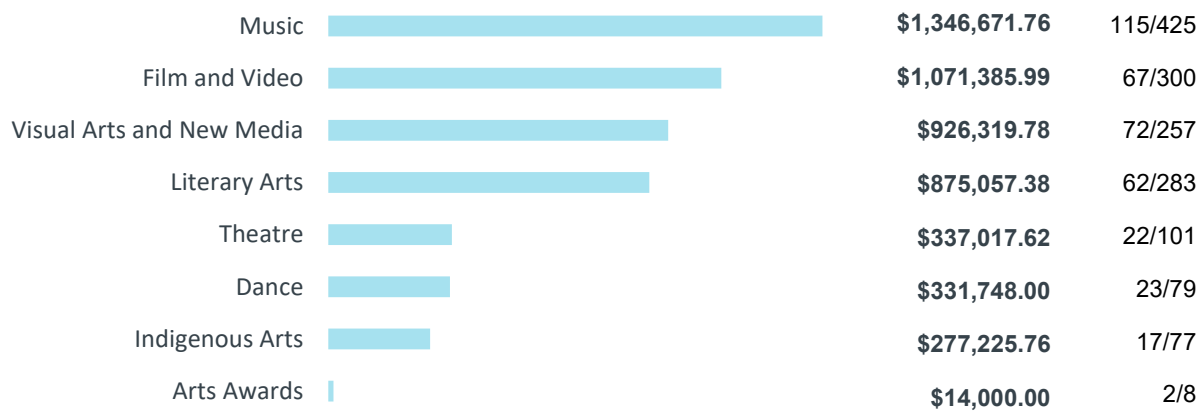
Interested in exploring our data? More details are available on our Impact of Funding page and on open.alberta.ca.

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Funding awarded to organizations



Funding awarded to individuals



Support for Organizations

In 2025-26, the AFA delivered 529 operating grants and 179 project grants to diverse organizations across the province. These grants helped organizations plan with greater stability, offer programming to Albertans and provide opportunities for artists, arts workers and volunteers in communities throughout Alberta. These funding programs included the new Volunteer Based Arts Organizations program.

Following a comprehensive review of the AFA's programs that started in 2022, the AFA began restructuring its operating programs to improve delivery of grants and provide greater impact for the arts sector and Alberta as a whole. This restructuring includes both updates to existing programs

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and introducing new programs. Changes are also intended to provide more options to support organizations' future planning.

In 2025, the AFA launched the Volunteer Based Arts Organizations operating grant. This program provides annual funding to arts-based organizations that foster community connections and primarily run on volunteers to carry out their missions and mandates. It is the first new AFA operating grant introduced since 2016.

Annual funding provided through this new program supports a broad range of artistic activities. It can support the production, presentation and dissemination of artistic works. It funds organizations that provide artists with support that aligns with their mission and mandate. In 2025-26, the AFA provided $1,496,400 to 202 organizations through this program. The following example illustrates how this grant translated directly into benefits for organizations, artists and communities.



Figure 1. Kensington Sinfonia
Image Credit: Kensington Sinfonia



Figure 2. Kensington Sinfonia
Image Credit: Kensington Sinfonia

The Kensington Sinfonia Society is a Calgary-based string nonet[3] dedicated to bold and innovative programming. The Kensington Sinfonia used the operational stability provided by the Volunteer Based Arts Organizations program to launch its Orchestral Excerpt initiatives.

The Orchestral Excerpt initiatives featured a multi-month series of masterclasses and a three-day intensive. The society reported that these training opportunities served as a bridge to high-level career pathways, with participants successfully securing tenure-track positions in the United States, joining the prestigious New World Symphony in Miami, as well as earning placements within the Rocky Mountain Symphony Orchestra based in Southern Alberta.

[3] A nonet is a group of nine musicians.

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The 2024-25 season also underscored the Kensington Sinfonia Society's commitment to artistic innovation. It commissioned new works by Calgary composers Mark Limacher and Roydon Tse. These performances were noted for their artistic integrity, with Tse's composition innovatively blending Western and Eastern classical traditions.

Through professional training and the creation of new contemporary works, the Kensington Sinfonia demonstrates how sustainable operating support positively impacts Alberta's arts sector. Its work creates career opportunities for Alberta's musicians as well as enriches our province's cultural landscape through high-quality, diverse performances.

Support for Individuals

In 2025-26, the AFA provided 380 individual project grants to artists working in a variety of disciplines. Individual project grants fund activities in art production (creation), marketing, research or training/professional development through seven artistic disciplines. The AFA accepts applications for these grants twice per year, on March 1 and September 1.

Kim Logan, a filmmaker from Canmore, received funding through the AFA's Film and Video Individual Project funding opportunity. Logan's project focused on marketing and outreach of her first major film project, "Trailblazing: The Matt Hadley Story." This project was a documentary about a mountain biker and professional trails technologist who lost one of his legs after a hiking accident.

For Logan, AFA support was fundamental to the documentary "successfully achieving its goal of maximizing audience reach, awareness and industry recognition." Marketing activities funded by the AFA contributed to the film being selected for 12 international film festivals, spanning North America, South America and Europe. In addition, it received three awards, including the Golden Sheaf Award for Documentary POV (Point of View) at the Yorkton Film Festival.



Figure 3. Matt Hadley and Kim Logan
Image Credit: Michael Klekamp

Logan emphasizes that the value of this grant extended well beyond the documentary's distribution. She describes how the experience was pivotal for her professional development. "The marketing and release of 'Trailblazing' significantly advanced my professional development as a documentary filmmaker. It expanded my skills beyond storytelling into audience development, festival strategy, media relations, and public engagement."

By enabling artists to bridge the gap between creation and distribution, AFA funding strengthens the capacity of Albertan creators. As Logan concludes, the project "strengthened my understanding of positioning a documentary for industry recognition and built credibility for my work within the film and outdoor communities."

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AFA Individual Project Funding contributed to ensuring that Kim Logan's work—and the powerful story of her film project—resonated with audiences across Alberta and beyond.



Figure 4. Poster for "Trailblazing: The Matt Hadley Story"

Art Collection

The AFA collects, manages and shares the largest collection of visual artwork by Albertan artists anywhere in the world.

Acquisition value of AFA Art Collection as of March 31, 2026

$18,506,498

Number of artworks

9,614

Acquisitions

The AFA actively collects artworks through competitive purchase, curatorial purchase and donation programs that document the province's visual artistic achievements over time. Each new acquisition is a treasured cultural resource for Albertans, today and for future generations.

The AFA Collection Development Plan guides how the AFA Art Collection is acquired and developed. It ensures that collecting decisions remain intentional, sustainable and aligned with the AFA's mandate.

Refreshed in 2026, this plan ensures that acquisitions continue to reflect the AFA's strategic direction and core collecting priorities. This helps ensure the collection grows responsibly and remains reflective of and accessible to all Albertans.

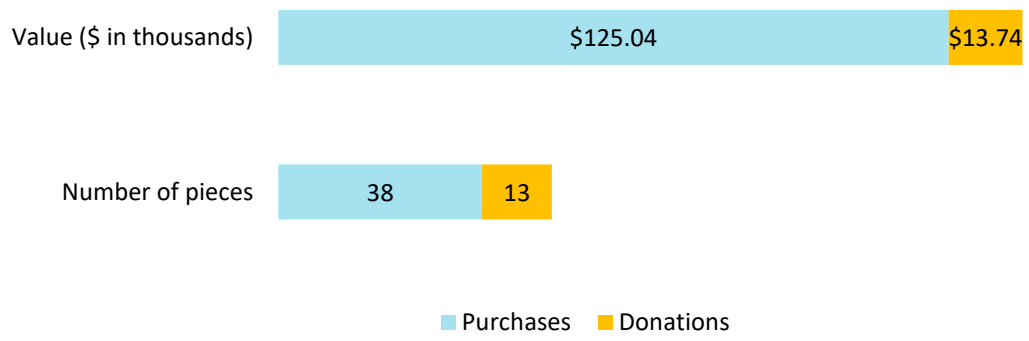
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Value of new acquisitions, 2025-26

$138,775

Number of new acquisitions

51



Art Acquisitions by Application

The Art Acquisitions by Application program is an annual competitive purchase program. Eligible Albertan artists submit artworks created within the last five years for consideration. All submissions are reviewed by an external three-member expert panel. In 2025-26, the AFA acquired 14 artworks by nine artists through this program, including two artists new to the AFA Art Collection.

The AFA acquired two thematically connected pieces from Lauren Chipeur's *S* series in 2025. Chipeur's practice explores the stories embedded in everyday materials, tracing their industrial and domestic origins, and examining how these materials shape our lives. Through photography and ceramics, she constructs narratives that reveal the hidden systems and processes behind the objects that surround us.

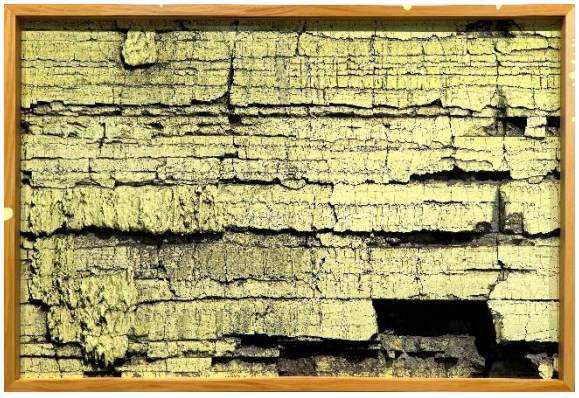


Figure 5. Lauren Chipeur, *S (Syncrude Mildred Lake Facility II)*, 2025, photograph, wood, and sulphur on photo rag baryta



Figure 6. Lauren Chipeur, *S (Syncrude Mildred Lake Facility IV)*, 2025, digital photograph, wood, sulphur on photo rag baryta paper

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Of the *S* series work, Chipeur writes, “The sulphur piles at Syncrude’s Mildred Lake Facility north of Fort McMurray, Alberta are among the largest human-made structures in the world (by volume) and the largest accumulation of a single element (S). The sulphur piled up in the Vancouver Harbour, once a waste product from oil and gas, is shipped around the world to be used as fertilizer. This sulphur is then absorbed from the soil into onions that are consumed every day, all over the world.”

To accompany her photographic works, Chipeur creates custom-made frames using melted elemental sulphur as inlay. This approach adds both a tactile and sensory, including olfactory (smell), dimension to the viewer experience that extends its reach beyond the image itself.

Curatorial Purchase

Through the Curatorial Purchase program, the AFA sets aside funding annually to strategically purchase works of art that address specific gaps in the Collection that could not otherwise be acquired through other programs. In 2025-26, the AFA acquired 24 artworks through this program.

Among these acquisitions are four works by Indigenous artist Tiffany Shaw: two inkjet prints on paper and two Computer Numerical Controlled (CNC) laminated wood drawings. CNC is a process of using computer software to control the movement and operation of machines that can cut, carve or engrave materials. Together, these four artworks map the histories of Shaw’s matrilineal family homes, including her great-grandmother’s home along the Snye River in Fort McMurray and her mother’s home near West Edmonton Mall.



Figure 7. Tiffany Shaw, *Great Grandma’s House by the Snye, Fort McMurray*, 2017, CNC laminated wood (walnut, mahogany, plywood)

The inkjet prints were created first, using digital mapping tools and analogue printing methods. They were then translated using software onto laminated wood maps through CNC machining. This process extended the conceptual and material exploration across the artworks. The resulting pieces draw on Shaw’s public installation practice and architectural background, emphasizing the interconnectedness of place, memory and material form.

Donations

The AFA considers donations of artworks from artists, individual collectors, organizations and corporations as another avenue of art acquisition. Not all donations are accepted. Each one is carefully assessed to ensure it aligns with the AFA Collection Development Plan. This approach ensures that only works of appropriate quality, relevance and significance are added to the Collection.

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In 2025-26, the AFA received a generous donation of five artworks by Edmonton-based artist Kettle Shoemaker Ross. Born in Philadelphia, Ross studied at the Art Institute of Chicago before moving to Edmonton where she began taking art classes through the University of Alberta, eventually enrolling in the Bachelor of Fine Arts program.

Ross drew inspiration from the city's natural surroundings and the broader Alberta landscape. She worked using oil, acrylic, watercolour, printmaking and mixed media. Influenced by the North Saskatchewan River Valley, she often depicted the wooded ravine just a block from her Edmonton home. This intimate connection to place has shaped her artistic practice.

Her work has been featured in numerous solo and group exhibitions throughout the province, and is held in several private and public collections, including those of the City of St. Albert and the University of Alberta, as well as the AFA Art Collection.



Figure 8. Kettle Shoemaker Ross, *Untitled*, n.d, acrylic on board

Artwork Loans

The AFA shares artwork locally and abroad by working with partners to exhibit, tour and place work in public spaces. In 2025-26, the AFA saw a two per cent increase in its total circulation rate over the previous year.

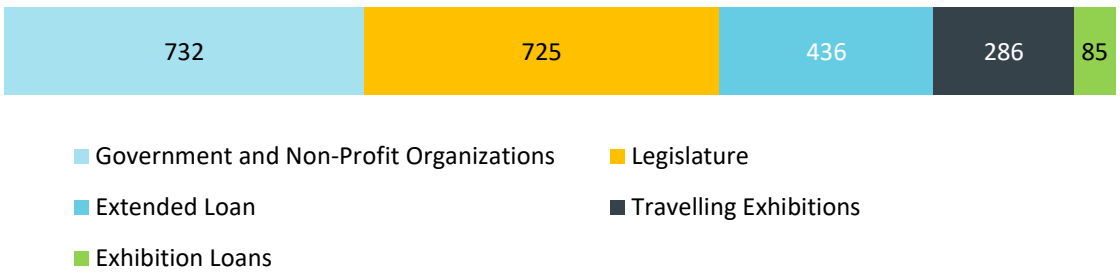
Number of artworks on display

2,264

Percentage of collection on display

23.5%

AFA artworks on display by program 2025-26



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Art Placement

The Art Placement program displays artworks from the AFA Art Collection through facilitating placement requests from eligible recipients of the program. Eligible recipients include government offices, non-profit organizations and the Alberta Legislature.



Figure 9. John Fukushima, *Mrs. Tomiyama, Grandmother and Grandchild, Coaldale*, Alberta, 1977, silver gelatin photograph on paper

Last year, *Mrs. Tomiyama, Grandmother and Grandchild*, *Coaldale, Alberta* by John Fukushima was installed in a government office. The photograph exemplifies Fukushima's black and white silver gelatin work from 1977. This work focused on the Japanese Canadian community in the Raymond area in Southern Alberta during the 1970s, particularly survivors of the Second World War internment.

A graduate of the Banff School of Fine Arts, Fukushima drew on his lived experiences and connections to the Japanese Canadian community to produce a deeply personal body of work. During his early practice, he focused on documenting the Japanese *Issei*, or first-generation immigrants to Canada, who were interned in southern Alberta. The AFA Art Collection contains 18 of his original 24 series of portraits from 1977.

Travelling Exhibition Program

Venues visited by travelling exhibitions, 2025-26

180

Number of visitors

534,660

The AFA's Travelling Exhibition Program (TREX) strives to ensure every Albertan is provided with an opportunity to enjoy professionally curated exhibitions in schools, libraries, health care centres and smaller rural institutions and galleries throughout the province. The program provides educational support materials to encourage teachers to include visual arts exhibitions in their curriculum.

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The program has a provincial reach and the AFA engages four regional partners to deliver the program across the province. Each TREX regional partner is responsible for the curation of three annual exhibitions, including at least one exhibition curated from the AFA Art Collection.



Figure 10. John Hall, *Artist's Palette II*, 1998, acrylic on canvas

This Is Not a Photograph is an exhibition curated by Steven Teeuwsen for Alberta's TREX Region of North Central and Northeast Alberta. It features 15 artworks, from the AFA Art Collection. At first glance, each artwork looks just like a photograph; however, upon closer examination the works are revealed to be hand drawn or painted with incredible detail.

A particularly strong example of an artwork in the exhibition employing the hyper-realistic technique is John Hall's *Artist's Palette II*. This acrylic painting imitates a photograph of every day tools found in an artist's studio, such as half-opened paint tubes, used brushes and other scattered supplies. Those moments when viewers realize an artwork is not a photograph have made this exhibition a favourite at TREX venues across Alberta.



Figure 11. Faye HeavyShield, *homecoming*, 2017, digital print on paper

Exhibition Loans

The AFA regularly lends artworks to recognized museums, galleries, interpretive centres and archives for public exhibition. In 2025-26, the AFA collaborated with eight institutions across the province and one international partner to facilitate these loans.

In 2025, the AFA lent two installation artworks to the Spencer Museum of Art at the University of Kansas for its exhibition, *Bold Women*. Curated by Susan Earle, the exhibition

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explored the artistic practices of women and non-binary contemporary artists who challenge institutional and artistic conventions. Featuring more than 70 works, the exhibition reflected a wide range of identities, experiences and perspectives, highlighting how artists used bold ideas and materials to challenge conventions and inspire change.

The AFA was pleased to loan *blood* and *homecoming* by Kainai artist Faye HeavyShield to this international exhibition. In *blood*, red cloth bundles suspended by string serve as the artist's reflection on memory, ancestry and heritage. In *homecoming*, children's footwear abandoned amongst prairie grass alludes to the physicality of absence. Constructed from similar paper, the shoes and grass become interchangeable.

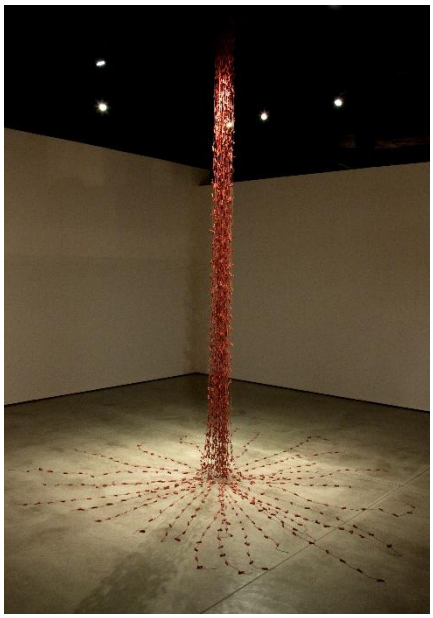


Figure 12. Faye HeavyShield, *blood*, 2004, cotton, cotton string acrylic

Both works demonstrate HeavyShield's practice of creating minimalist installations informed by her lived experiences. Particularly, these works reflect experiences of colonial assimilation and the residential school system, emphasizing the importance of remembrance, family and a return to place as a means of reconnecting with culture and identity.

The AFA's ability to facilitate international lending to exhibitions such as this provides valuable opportunities to expand the global reach of the work of Alberta artists and increase awareness of the AFA Art Collection.

AFA Art House

In early 2025, the AFA identified an opportunity to use the former Glenbow Museum temporary space at The Edison in downtown Calgary. In partnership with the City of Calgary and Aspen Properties, owners of The Edison, the AFA officially opened AFA *art house* on September 10.



Figure 13. AFA *art house* opening event, from left to right: Shana Yang, Le Bo, Cynthia P. Moore, The Honourable Minister Tanya Fir, Yasmin Jivraj, Melody McKnight, and Robert Fernandez
Image Credit: David Kotsibie

AFA *art house* was developed as a strategic initiative to expand public access to Alberta art, promote Alberta artists and strengthen the AFA's presence in Calgary and

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Southern Alberta. The initiative also contributes to broader efforts to support cultural activity and downtown revitalization in Calgary.

AFA *art house* is an approximately 9,500-square-foot visual arts gallery and multi-purpose arts space dedicated to exhibiting art by Albertan artists, including artworks from the AFA Art Collection. AFA *art house* is designed to complement Calgary's vibrant cultural landscape and supports the Government of Alberta and City of Calgary's efforts to revitalize the city's downtown core.



Figure 14. AFA *art house* opening event
Image Credit: David Kotsibie

AFA *art house* offers free admission to the gallery. The AFA coordinates all exhibitions and produces events for special arts programming to help create awareness of the gallery, promote Alberta art and the value of the arts, and develop an audience for the space.

In 2025-26, AFA *art house* offered three exhibitions:

- *New Views,* the inaugural exhibition, features a selection of 50 artworks from the AFA Art Collection, including the first piece added to the collection in 1972, and additional artworks that have never been publicly exhibited before.
- *Across Alberta: Paintings from the 2024-25 Alberta Artist in Residence* was a solo exhibition by Samantha Williams-Chapelsky, Alberta's 2024-25 Artist in Residence/Arts Ambassador. It ran from October 23 until December 12.
- *TREX: Art on the Move featuring Montageries* opened on February 12. It is the first in a recurring series of exhibitions at AFA *art house* that will feature shows from the AFA's TREX program. The exhibition features interactive educational elements designed for students and families.

In addition to a reception to officially open AFA *art house* in September 2025, special events hosted by the gallery in 2025-26 included:

- *The Gift of Christmas Art*, a holiday reception on December 11. Premier Danielle Smith attended and spoke during the reception. The event was an opportunity to highlight the value of the arts, and the AFA first shared its economic research report with guests before publishing it on its website.
- A recurring event series called *After Hours* that features Alberta artists for talks, performances, or other engagement activities. The first *After Hours* event featured Samantha Williams-Chapelsky on November 6. The event focused on her exhibition and provided a platform for her to discuss her practice and lead a guided tour.

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- A public opening reception on February 19 for the *TREX: Art on the Move featuring Montageries* exhibition, which featured a curatorial talk by Montageries curator, Ash Slemming.

The AFA also began developing educational opportunities for students and youth through AFA *art house*. The AFA invited public arts and culture educators, including representatives from the Calgary Board of Education, to a knowledge-sharing session on March 12 to inform the development of on-site school programming. This session led to the design of a pilot project to engage invited Calgary-area school groups, test educational programming and gather feedback.

The AFA has updated its Fellowship for Emerging Curators program to offer a more immersive, public-facing experience through AFA *art house.* Through the Fellowship, an emerging curator or curatorial team develops and presents an original exhibition at AFA *art house.* The exhibition is developed from available artworks in the AFA Art Collection. On March 30, the AFA announced that fibre and textile artist, Natalie Gerber, will be its next Emerging Curator. Gerber's exhibition will open in 2027.

From September 10 to March 31, approximately 1,000 visitors attended AFA *art house*. This demonstrates public interest in the new space and provides a foundation for future programming, audience development and educational partnerships.

Research and Engagement

The AFA uses research and engagement to better understand the needs of Alberta's arts community and improve access to its programs. Research can help demonstrate the value of arts investment, while engagement activities can help the AFA reach communities that may experience barriers to accessing information, funding or connections within the arts sector.

Research

The AFA is actively involved in evaluating the impact of arts and culture in Alberta and beyond through specialized research projects.

In January 2025, the AFA contracted KPMG LLP to perform an economic impact assessment of the AFA's operating funding clients. KPMG is a global professional services network that provides audit, tax and advisory services. The resulting report, *Arts Impact Alberta 2025: Ripple Effects from the Arts Sector*, was released on December 11 at *The Gift of Christmas Art* reception at AFA *art house*.

This research report provides an extensive overview of the economic, social and cultural impacts of the AFA's investments in Alberta's arts sector through its operating grant programs. Covering a six-year period, from 2018 to 2024, the report describes the contributions made by AFA-funded arts organizations. During the period covered in the report, an incredible 488 organizations in 102 communities received operating funding from the AFA. Among the highlights in the report:

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- AFA operating clients generated an estimated total economic output of $2.4 billion, including $185 million that can be directly attributed to AFA funding.
- Every one dollar invested by the AFA generated an economic return of $1.76, while every one dollar expended by AFA operating clients generated a return of $22.53.
- Every $1 million invested by the AFA created 16 full-time equivalent jobs, and every $1 million spent by AFA operating clients created 195 full-time jobs.
- AFA operating clients employed an annual average of 930 full-time employees and 3,300 part-time employees, as well as 27,500 hired artists.
- AFA operating clients presented an average total of 20,245 arts events every year.
- An average of 38,619 volunteers dedicated their time each year to these arts organizations and their events.

The report is available on the AFA website in both English and French.

Community Connector Program

In 2025-26, the AFA approved the expansion of the Community Connector program for its second year. The program provides an ongoing way for the AFA to engage with artistic communities across Alberta, with a focus on strengthening outreach, supporting participation and building connections with communities that have traditionally been underserved.

The AFA reengaged with its first Community Connectors, Danielle George from Edmonton and Hanna Fridhed from Fort McMurray. They were asked to produce two follow-up events for their community members to build on their initial introductory events and help cement the AFA's presence in their communities.

The AFA also welcomed three new Community Connectors to this program: Cecilia Alcaraz from Calgary and Robert and Jessica Tyndale from Edmonton. These new Connectors produced two introductory outreach events for their respective communities. All Community Connectors promoted the AFA and its programs through their respective social media accounts.

In total, three Community Connector events were reported for 2025-26. These events provided accessible entry points for artists and arts workers to learn about AFA programs, build relationships and identify opportunities for future participation.

- Led by Literary Artist Connector Cecilia Alcaraz, the *Calgary Artists Shindig* was held on January 19, at the Calgary Public Library. The event brought together 82 attendees from across creative disciplines, many from communities that have traditionally been underserved, and provided an accessible entry point to connect with the AFA and learn more about provincial funding opportunities.

Classification: Protected A

- Danielle George's *Creative Grounding: Caribbean Arts, Funding & Future* initiative was hosted on January 24, at the Island Brew Coffee House in Edmonton. A follow-up to George's first event in 2025, this event was tailored specifically to reach Caribbean cultural groups and festival organizers. The information session brought together 35 attendees to focus on organizational alignment with AFA funding models.
- *The Art of Funding: Guidance & Connection*, a follow-up on Hanna Fridhed's 2025 event, took place on January 23 and 24, at the King Street Theatre in Fort McMurray. Designed specifically to reach regional artists in the Wood Buffalo area, the two-day event drew 31 attendees.

Number of Community Connector Events held, 2025-26

3

Attendees

148



Figure 15. Community Connector Cecilia Alcaraz speaking at the *Calgary Artists Shindig*



Figure 16. *The Art of Funding: Guidance & Connection*
Image Credit: Hanna Fridhed

Engagement

The AFA actively engages with various segments of Alberta's arts community. As part of its broader engagement strategy, the AFA Board introduced *AFA 101* events in 2025-26. For these events, the AFA Board conducts initial outreach and establishes contact with interested groups. The Executive Director then works with the board to schedule a session that includes an introductory presentation about the AFA and a dedicated time for questions and answers.

- On November 20, AFA Chair, Cynthia Moore, and Vice Chair, Le Bo, hosted an *AFA 101* session at the Calgary Chinese Cultural Centre. Executive Director Jeff Brinton delivered an introductory presentation to approximately 30 attendees.
- On December 18, Executive Director Jeff Brinton hosted an *AFA 101* session for approximately 50 high school students from the dance, visual arts and photography and film programs at J. H. Picard Catholic Elementary/Junior/Senior High School.
- On February 27, Executive Director Jeff Brinton hosted an *AFA 101* session entitled *Alberta Foundation for the Arts Info Session – Black History Month Special Arts & Culture Event* at ArtSphere in Edmonton. It was hosted by Africanival and approximately 75 people attended.

Classification: Protected A

Number of AFA 101 events held, 2025-26

3

Attendees

155

Throughout the year, the AFA hosts grant information sessions to provide tips and guidance on preparing successful grant applications. Grant information sessions can be held online or in-person, and the AFA will sometimes partner with local arts organizations to co-host a session to increase promotion and accessibility.

Number of funding information sessions held, 2025-26

44

Attendees

658

In addition to offering sessions, Arts Development Consultants regularly meet with and respond to potential grant applicants throughout the year to provide advice and support on preparing their applications.

Communications and Marketing

In 2025-26, communications and marketing activities focused on increasing awareness, improving access to information and promoting the public value of Alberta's arts sector. These activities helped connect artists, arts organizations, audiences and the public with AFA programs, research and opportunities to experience Alberta art.

The AFA uses a variety of tools to connect with stakeholders, disseminate information about programs and promote awareness of the arts community. The AFA supports most communications and marketing activities through digital content developed and published on its website properties, social media channels (including video content) and its e-news platforms. Its social media platforms include Facebook, Instagram, X/Twitter and YouTube.

In addition to its regular activities to promote awareness of AFA programs and services, the AFA focused on the following communications priorities in 2025-26:

- Develop a marketing plan and the associated communications and marketing infrastructure to open AFA *art house*.
- Publish and promote the *Arts Impact Alberta 2025: Ripple Effects from the Arts Sector* research report.
- Showcase Alberta artists and their work, including through video storytelling.

Classification: Protected A

Marketing and Infrastructure for AFA *art house*

Marketing objectives for opening the AFA *art house* included generating awareness, attracting visitors, engaging with the local community and supporting local artists. The AFA worked to achieve these goals through:

- programming exhibitions and producing special events,
- public relations and promoting the gallery to the media,
- designing and installing signage and decals to help visitors locate and identify the gallery,
- designing and producing promotional materials featuring the AFA *art house* brand, and
- digital marketing, including developing a separate micro-website for the gallery, with its own architecture and content strategy, and eNews platform, with its own subscriber base.

The AFA continues to build on these foundations to grow its audience for AFA *art house* to more effectively promote and showcase the Alberta artworks and artists featured in the gallery.

Publish and Promote *Arts Impact Alberta 2025*

Following the publishing of the report in December, the AFA continued to communicate key facts from the report and promote the arts sector's economic and social value. The groundwork of this campaign was established in 2025-26 and is intended to fully roll-out during summer and fall of 2026-27. Key activities in 2025-26 included:

- The AFA designed a four-page highlights/summary promotional brochure that features key economic statistics from the report. The insert is in both English and French.
- Approximately 2,250 of these brochures were mailed to members of Alberta's arts community through a partnership with Theatre Alberta and its Artstrek summer arts school.
- The AFA shared copies of the report and brochure with all government MLAs.

In addition, the AFA booked advertorial and ad space in *Global Heroes* news magazine in its print and online publications in February. The content focused both on the opening of the AFA *art house* in Calgary and the release of *Arts Impact Alberta 2025*. *Global Heroes* publications are delivered alongside major news publications. The February *Global Heroes* publication was inserted into Alberta-based editions of *The Globe & Mail*, the *Calgary Herald*, the *Edmonton Journal* and the Calgary and Edmonton *SUN*, with an approximate total circulation of 400,000. The online version was published on the *Global Heroes* website.

Showcase and Promote Alberta Artists

The AFA increased its content output to develop, publish and promote stories about Alberta artists and Alberta art. This activity supports the AFA's legislative mandate to "foster and promote the enjoyment of works of art by Alberta artists" and "encourage artists resident in Alberta in their work." Increased content generation was naturally boosted through the opening of AFA *art house* in September 2025.

Classification: Protected A

The AFA uses a content strategy with an open submission policy for local arts opportunities and events to develop an online audience of artists, arts stakeholders and supporters. The AFA typically receives 400 to 500 submissions per year. It then leverages this community generated content to promote its own programs, activities and communications that are developed in house, including artist and artwork profiles.

In 2025-26, the AFA:

- Produced nine videos in multiple formats optimized for different social media platforms. [4] Four of these videos focused on the AFA *art house.*
- Published 21 “AFA News” stories on its website[5], including 18 “Artist Profiles,” seven “Community News,” and seven “Works of the Week.”
- Sent 45 eNewsletters, invitations and branded email messages through both its regular AFA Newswire and “State of the *art house*” platforms.

Note on Financial Statements

In accordance with section 9(4) of the *Sustainable Fiscal Planning and Reporting Act*, financial statements are available in the Ministry of Arts, Culture and Status of Women 2025-26 Annual Report.

Social Media Contact Information

Keep up to date with Alberta Foundation for the Arts’ programs, stories and initiatives by signing up for the AFA Newswire or connect through Facebook, X, Instagram or YouTube. You can also browse or share community news, events or arts opportunities on the AFA website news feed.

[4] Video count does not include ‘stories’ or short-form reels.
[5] Due to AFA’s taxonomy, the same content can be listed multiple times in separate categories.

Classification: Protected A