



**Inspire Manual**  
**The Visual Arts Coordinator**  
**and the Role of Mentorship**

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Colby Richardson, *Inner Vision*, Video (continuous loop), 2015.

## **1. Introduction to Inspire: Mentorship and Youth Engagement**

Amidst the changing demographics in communities across Saskatchewan, OSAC has heard Arts Councils consistently voice two issues that they face: Youth Engagement and Succession Planning. The Inspire Program has been designed in response to these concerns and takes into consideration the changing arts and culture landscape in rural Saskatchewan.

Meaningful youth engagement is more than seeing younger faces in the audience or having a token youth on the Arts Council; it is about genuine inclusion and allowing new members to participate in decision-making processes. The greater the sense of ownership and personal investment a person has in an endeavour, the more excited and engaged they are likely to be. The Inspire program is about engaging people under age 29 as audiences, participants, and decision-makers and enabling them to make a genuine impact in their communities. Through this approach, Inspire aims to develop the next generation of visual arts presenters in Saskatchewan communities.

Remember what it was like when you installed your first exhibition? Presenting an art exhibition can be very intimidating for first-time arts presenters, but a single exhibition with some guidance is much more manageable. By working with the local Arts Council's Visual Arts Coordinator as a mentor, the INSPIRE coordinator will select and present an exhibition which they believe they can market to their peers. OSAC recognizes that for organizations that have operated a certain way for a very long time, such a change may be daunting for various reasons, not the least of which is financial. With INSPIRE, OSAC will relieve some of the risk that the Arts Councils may face for trying something new. OSAC will cover 100% of the exhibition fee to a maximum of \$157.50 per Arts Council, up to a total cost of \$1100 for OSAC. If OSAC receives more than 6 proposals, the grant will be reduced to cover all applications.

## **2. Mentorship**

A mentor is an experienced and knowledgeable person who works alongside an emerging person in the same field to help them in their professional development and to succeed in their goals. In the INSPIRE program, the mentor would be the Arts Council's Visual Arts Coordinator or other qualified Arts Council member and the shared goal is to present a visual arts exhibition in the community. It is important to note that the role of a mentor is not to delegate tasks but to let the INSPIRE coordinator be in the driver's seat. You are the trusted advisor and role model who provides support, guidance, and practical assistance.

### **Benefits of Mentoring (for you and your Arts Council)**

Mentoring is a working relationship that goes both ways, and the benefits of learning and professional development aren't solely received by the mentee.

Benefits for the Mentor and Arts Council:

- ✓ be a part of developing the next generation of arts presenters in Saskatchewan
- ✓ play a key role in growing the skill base in your Arts Council and community
- ✓ renewed enthusiasm, inspiration, and confidence in your own skills and duties
- ✓ gain leadership and communication skills
- ✓ learn new ideas and approaches that the mentee may have to offer
- ✓ diverse networking and increased awareness of the Arts Council in new segments of the community
- ✓ opportunities to welcome new gallery attendees and volunteers
- ✓ positive mentorship experiences can attract, retain, and develop new Arts Council members

## Role of the INSPIRE Mentor

As the INSPIRE Mentor, your role is to use your knowledge and experience in presenting visual arts to guide and assist the INSPIRE coordinator as they present an exhibition in the community. Ideally, they will have participated in the selection of the exhibition and are confident that it is a exhibition they can market to their peers. One of the tenets of the INSPIRE program is that the mentor offers support, sound advice, and practical tools to empower the mentee to present a quality exhibition, but in their own unique way. The INSPIRE coordinator will look to you for guidance, but it is likely that they will also have a few ideas of their own that may be new to the Arts Council.

### Do's and Don'ts of Mentoring

#### DO

- Share your own experiences
- Offer suggestions based on your experience
- Be a sounding board for ideas
- Provide honest and constructive feedback
- Listen to other perspectives and ideas
- Be open to learning new things
- Work together to problem-solve
- Give support and encouragement
- Reach out and touch base regularly

#### DON'T

- Expect things to be done as they always have been
- Give orders on how things should be done
- Be biased or jump to conclusions
- Create a dependency
- Micromanage
- Take things personally
- Feel pressure to have all the answers
- Get discouraged too easily when facing obstacles
- Assume that silence means everything is okay

## The Mentor and the Mentee Working Together

Elements of the successful mentor-mentee working relationship:

**Mutual Respect and Understanding.** A priority in mentorship is having a positive relationship in which both participants feel a sense of trust and that their opinions are heard. Being approachable and unbiased opens up opportunities for more honest questions and feedback.

**Availability and Commitment.** Both the mentor and mentee must respect the time that the other is dedicating to the program. Be available and accessible, respond in a timely manner, and honour commitments so that the other person knows that their time is not being wasted. Give notice in advance if you are delayed on a certain task or unable to make a meeting.

**Communication Plan.** Regular communication is important in keeping both parties on the same page. At the start of the program, it may be helpful to agree on how Mentor-Mentee meet-ups will happen (ex: in person, over the phone, or email) and roughly how often they will take place. While it is important to be flexible, having this conversation early on will ensure that expectations are aligned and help prevent misunderstandings down the road.

**Clear Communication and Active Listening.** Mentorship is not like a course in which the more experienced person projects everything they know onto the less experienced person. Rather, communication between the mentor and mentee is a two-way street. Conversations are focused on learning from each other and sharing knowledge, experiences, and practical information. Listen actively, ask thoughtful and open questions, and clarify. Confirming any action steps is a good way to remain accountable to each other and stay on track.

**Follow-up.** Conversations are an invaluable piece of mentorship, but moving forward on the action steps is what gets things done. This means that both parties follow through on their commitments and report back on their progress. Provide positive feedback or a simple thank-you for tasks well done to exhibition encouragement and appreciation.

## Getting Started.

**First Meeting.** At the beginning of the mentorship, arrange a casual meeting to get to know each other and discuss the program. If you and the INSPIRE coordinator are not already well acquainted, allow time to get to know each other. Partnerships based in trust do not happen overnight. Every mentorship is different, and depending on how well acquainted you are with the INSPIRE coordinator, their familiarity with the Arts Council, and their experience working in presenting visual arts, this initial meeting may vary greatly across communities in the INSPIRE program. Some topics to cover may include:

- Introductions and sharing reasons for participating in INSPIRE
- Discuss how exhibitions have traditionally been presented in the community, what concepts to keep, and new ideas to try. This may include but is not limited to: marketing, branding, media relations, events, target audience, program design, and other event details.
- Overview of the timeline for presenting the exhibition. Make a checklist and set target deadlines.
- Agree on how often you will meet and best means of communication (phone, email, etc). Exchange contact information.
- Allow time for questions!

**Throughout the program.** Every now and then, take a step back to evaluate how the mentorship is going.

- What is working well?
- Have successes been recognized and praised?
- What needs to be done differently?
- Are there any concerns and how can they be addressed?
- How can OSAC help?

### 3. Additional Resources on Mentorship

"Coaching, Mentoring and Succession Planning." *Work in Culture - Our Publications*.

<<http://www.workinculture.ca/Resources/Our-Publications>>.

"Tips and Templates: Coaching, Motivating, Mentoring" *Work in Culture – Resources*.

<<http://www.workinculture.ca/Resources/Tips-and-Templates>>

### 4. INSPIRE Evaluation

#### Inspire Evaluation

In addition to the performance evaluation, both participants are asked to complete the Inspire Program Evaluation. There are a couple different questions depending on whether one is a mentor or mentee. The official survey is online and the link will be sent, but the survey questions are included below so that participants know what to keep in mind throughout the program.

\*1. Please provide your name and Arts Council

\*2. Which exhibition was presented through Inspire?

\*3. I participated in Inspire as a:

#### **Inspire MENTEES:**

\*4. Prior to your role as Inspire Coordinator, how involved were you with the Arts Council?

\*5. How much do you see yourself being involved in the Arts Council in the future?

\*6. Please describe what was done to advertise the exhibition, plan an event, and work with other volunteers to set up and take down the exhibition.

\*7. Did you make specific efforts to market this exhibition to your peers/people in your age group?

\*8. How likely are you to consider presenting another visual arts exhibition (either with the Arts Council or in any other capacity in the future?)

#### **Inspire MENTORS**

\*9. In what ways was the preparation for the Inspire exhibition different from other Arts Council shows with regards to advertising, events, and working with other volunteers?

\*10. Did the Inspire Coordinator make specific efforts to market this show to their peers/people in their age group?

\*11. How different was the audience of the Inspire exhibition from other Arts Council exhibitions?

\*12. How did youth engagement (as audience and volunteers) in the Inspire show compare to that of other regular Arts Councils shows?

\*13. How much did the Arts Council benefit from this experience?

\*14. How likely are you to consider being a mentor again?

### **Inspire PROGRAM**

\*15. Were the workload and responsibilities required of you reasonable?

\*16. Were your responsibilities clearly defined?

\*17. Would additional training or resources have helped you in your role?

18. Please share any comments regarding roles and responsibilities in the Inspire program.

\*19. Please rate your experience working in a mentorship relationship.

\*20. Did you find there was an appropriate amount of contact between the mentor and mentee?

21. Is there anything you suggest that OSAC do to help Inspire Coordinators in their role?

22. Is there anything you suggest that OSAC do to help Arts Council Visual Arts Coordinators in their role as mentors?

\*23. Did you gain personally from this experience?

\*24. What contributions or successes are you most proud of from this experience?

\*25. How would you rate the Inspire program overall?

26. What did you like the best?

27. What did you like the least?

28. Please share any additional comments on any aspect of your experience with OSAC and Inspire.

\*29. Does OSAC have your permission to include quotes from this evaluation as testimonials in future reports?