

I'LL BE HERE

a zine compiled by Elizabeth Nelson

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INTRODUCTION

Dear Reader,

I'm Elizabeth, a PhD Candidate at Queen's University and the person that compiled this Zine. As a geographer, I'm interested in place-making, connection, and doing research that can benefit the communities I work with. In 2019 I set out to learn more about community organizations and their experiences navigating municipal heritage processes in Canada. What were their experiences, their challenges, their hopes and dreams for their communities? The COVID-19 pandemic proved an interesting time to be studying public place and gathering—all of which had been transformed. But in 2021 as I began reaching out to community organizations and having the conversations that shaped this research, it became clear that this was the perfect time to be thinking about community. Our collective attention was focused on the spaces that connection happens in, how we participate in shared experiences, and the people that keep communities running.

I reached out to 182 grassroots organizations in Ontario, in Ottawa, Kingston, and Cornwall, to ask them about their experiences. In all, 47 individuals representing these communities participated in a phone or written survey, and 16 extended their involvement by doing a mapping exercise or participating in a route mapping or walking interview. I am grateful for the relationships built through this research, and the generosity of everybody who contributed by sharing their time and insight with me. These leaders know their organizations inside and out, and give so much to their communities. Who better to share their experiences than them? This Zine features thoughts and stories from 21 participants. Though quotations have been edited for clarity (no "um"s and repeated words) and impact (several walking interviews were interrupted by friendly dogs) they are otherwise untouched.

Community organizations do an incredible amount of important work that sustains their communities. Thank you for taking the time to read this Zine.

- Elizabeth

ARTISTS

In sourcing the artwork for this Zine, I first reached out to the communities who participated to ask if they had artists who might like to contribute. Then, I sourced artists from Kingston, Ottawa, and Cornwall. Artist attribution can be found on each page. These amazing creators, both new and experienced, bring rich texture to this Zine. I am grateful for their willingness to contribute their work and be a part of this collaborative effort.



Front Cover: Grace MacDonald

Back Cover: Christine Sabourin

Alyse Mercey, Ottawa

Anne Vachon, Cornwall

Chantal Forget, Ottawa

Christine Sabourin, Cornwall

Grace MacDonald, Kingston

Jacqueline Milner, Cornwall

Jill Glatt, Kingston

Ou Zhang, Ottawa

Renée Poitras, Ottawa

Sarah Qiu, Kingston

Shelby Taylor, Ottawa



This Zine draws on research supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. The creation of this project was supported in part by funding from the Queen's University Student Initiative Fund.

ACTIVITIES

This list includes just some of the activities undertaken by participating community organizations.

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- Public Festivals
 - Cultural Arts Education
 - Music Education and Performance
 - Food Banks
 - Language Education
 - Fresh Food Boxes
 - Cultural Schools
 - Oral History Preservation
 - Religious Programming
 - Translation Services
 - Transportation
 - After-School Programming
 - Cultural Dance
 - Childcare Assistance
 - Free Assistive Technology
 - Cooking Classes
 - Picnics
 - Hospice Volunteers
 - Business Mentorship
 - Legal Aid
 - Housing Assistance
 - Community Gardens
 - Barbecues
 - School Meal Programs
 - Free Technology and Training
 - Charity Work
 - Clothing Drives
 - Meals On Wheels
 - Parenting Workshops
 - Free Sanitary Products
 - Funeral Cost Assistance
 - Cultural Healthcare
 - Anti-Racism Work
 - Graveyard Maintenance
 - Archiving and Museum Work
 - Holiday Celebrations
 - Sports Days
 - Scholarships
 - Immigration Assistance
 - Social and Political Activism
 - Seniors Programming
 - Equity and Diversity Training



These spaces, they've got to exist somewhere in the city. And how do you connect to information? How do you connect to funding? How do you put everything in place to allow for us to have the spaces that we need to thrive? Because to me, all of this is about thriving in the end.

It's not just about, like, it just seems so cold almost to talk about a structure. But it's what that structure symbolizes. And that structure symbolizes, like—having space, holding space—and having a place where people can come together and meet and feel a sense of something. You know, feel like it's like a home away from home. Like I know I can go there and meet somebody else and we can hang out and meet somebody new, and I can learn something...

We've become increasingly—especially with COVID—in our own little space, in our own little bubble... and there's been limits to how much people interact with each other. And feeling a part of something bigger than yourself and feeling a sense of belonging is so key. That, you know, that other people have your back and that there are people who care about you and see you.

-Melisa Kamibayashi-Staples, Ottawa Japanese Community Association



I work with approximately 25 grassroots seniors groups, primarily with the leaders and volunteers. Their mandate is to support the seniors, and reduce social isolation, create recreational programming for them, create information and connect them to resources, help with language barriers, navigate systems in the city, healthcare systems, any essentials they might need. It's a huge volunteer role that they play helping to reduce social isolation... Most of them work out of their homes. Before the pandemic they would book community centre halls, library spaces, various spaces where they could access where the rent was low. The smaller groups usually meet in the basements of their homes.

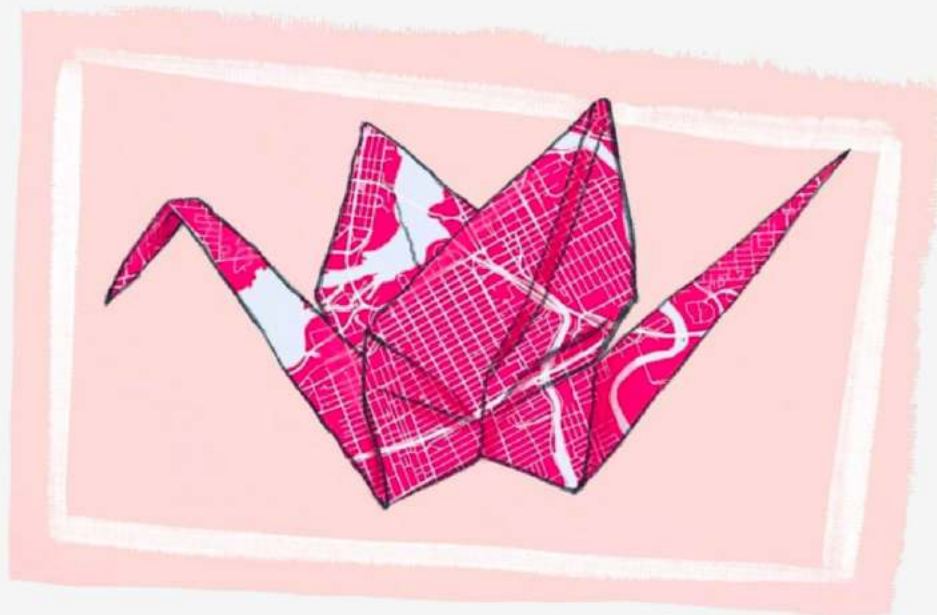
-Sybil Braganza, Social Planning Council of Ottawa and coordinator of Ethnocultural Seniors Groups



Artist: Anne Vachon

We have a cultural center, and that cultural center is located in an industrial park. The community has done a great job making the most of that tiny space... but what we're finding is that the space is no longer really optimal for our community, we did a feasibility study... We have an aging population, and it's really difficult for the seniors to climb the stairs... Also the location itself is not along major transportation routes. It's really difficult for people who don't have a vehicle to get to, women, teenagers, seniors too, a lot of the people we would like to see. And garages have moved in next door, and there's garbage and broken down cars littering the cultural center entrance... Across the country other cultural centers have beautiful spaces, to see the difference between that and ours...

The space itself just isn't ideal for everything we want to do... So we rent spaces from other organizations, and we rent spaces with the city... Using public space there's no guarantee that you can stay there... it's that vulnerability, which is the reason why we have a cultural center that we own, because we don't want to have that vulnerability of prices increasing or decreasing. Or the fact that, if it's owned by the city, they can use it for a different purpose... We have a few spaces we rented for years, the Tom Brown Arena, the Italian Soccer club, but we got pushed out because of the pandemic, and some prices have gone up threefold...



We had the bylaw police come [to the cultural center] at one point with the Taiko group. It's loud drumming, and the nine-to-five businesses didn't care. But there started being businesses that worked later at night, and they called the bylaw police on us. We knew we wouldn't pass the sound levels, so when they went next door to measure the sound, we just played our hearts out...

When the Taiko group was displaced from the cultural center we went to a community center, like a municipal community center. And we said, could we please use the space? And they said, no, because they said—it was the attitude, and it was a young person, a young white female—And she was just like, "no, it's not for you." Like "the space is not for you." And so I wondered, like, what did she mean by that? And I also wonder, why didn't I push further to ask, like, "could you please explain that?" "Do you have a superior that I could speak to?" "What are the barriers and why is it that we can't use the space?" But it's... we're so used to being told no, that it's just like, "oh, okay." No, that's the usual. So we just walked away and tried to find someplace else.



Recently there's a number of women who are coming together to do a piece that involves opera singing and Taiko drumming and dance, and they can't find a space that will accommodate the noise and the space... So we actually went to a park and we were just practicing in a park under a bridge. I would say 90% of the people that came by appreciated seeing the drumming. They were really excited... shooting video and pictures and stuff like, and then we had one person come and complain and say we were being very inconsiderate and it was very noisy. And how dare we do that in a public place?

You always feel like you're representing the entire culture. So if you're in a space you're not seen as "Melisa in the park", it's like the, "these Asian people, or the Japanese people, why are they making noise?" So you're very conscious of that. So finally we went to this space under the bridge from Ontario to Quebec. And there's like a little island underneath, so there's a park area. So they were able to practice there and make tons of noise. [laughs] I mean, that's where we should build our cultural center.

I'm sure wherever we go, there will be challenges like graffiti or theft or break-ins, or whatever—it's going to be a different series of challenges. So do you stay with what you know, and what is safe or do you move into the unknown? Because right now we own the space... the challenge that we find in leasing space means that it's not yours and you are at the whim of the owner, so they could raise the price if they want to, they can change, change their ideas to whether or not this is a—like a rental space—what's allowed. And then suddenly you don't have much time to change where it is that you would like to be... I think there are a lot of organizations that are sort of wondering about space and where to find basically a home right? A home that is functional for the entire community.

-Melisa Kamibayashi-Staples, Ottawa Japanese Community Association



Artist: Grace MacDonald

Non-profit work is very demanding and stressful, and relies on the stability of healthy staff. We have seen many issues with mental health struggles as a result of the pandemic and have done our best to accommodate... and honour... capacity at this time. However, this is an ongoing challenge.”

-Alex Maltby, Arts Network Ottawa

Currently, all expenses are borne by myself (Founder and President) of KCICA. [we are] Seeking financial help from various resources but we are a newly formed community organization, therefore hard to get any support from anywhere. Certainly, we are lacking manpower. For planning and action, we have a team of 10 members but for communication, research, and going to a higher level we need more manpower. Currently, most of the areas are covered by myself.

-Nagmani Sharma, Kanata Carleton Indo-Canadians Association

I think that our organization faces challenges that all stem back to lack of funding. Our staff experience burnout because there are not enough people to take care of all operational duties.

-'Diane', Kind Space

We have a small budget and that can make it difficult to work on important large scale work. I'm a team of one with occasional volunteers, interns, students... This means if it has to get done, it has to be me who does it.

-Teigan Goldsmith, The Ottawa Jewish Archives



Hi Elizabeth,

We do not have the resources to participate in this study at the present time. We are still dealing with the pandemic and have capacity issues. It sounds interesting though.



Hi Elizabeth,

So sorry I have been terribly busy and a little overwhelmed the last few months so I apologize for my late reply. My contract at [organization] will be ending soon but I would love to share the wealth of knowledge I have gained... but my schedule is a bit packed so sadly I don't have the capacity to support it...



Hi Elizabeth,

Just following up on your message. Thanks for your interest in what we do. Unfortunately we are just so busy right now. Everyone is maxed out. So I don't think anyone here can participate right now. I know other organizations are really struggling right now too, I know some of them have just been kind of dying out. But I hope you're able to find what you need.



Hi there,

Just following up as promised – I didn't have any luck finding someone to do the survey. I'm so sorry, but I think everyone is just over-stretched right now. We wish you all the best in your work.



Hello,

I wanted to return your message and say that unfortunately we can't participate. Everything is really scattered right now, and we haven't been running things because we lost our [usual space]. So this just isn't a great time...

Like I said, this is not one day, month, year's work. I really wish we had more people that could help me, that together we could work together. Funding is very important so we can hire someone from part time to full time. So I can teach them before I retire, pass on my skill to them. This kind of knowledge has to be handed down to the younger generation.

-Wen Jean Ho, Kanata Chinese Seniors Association

Age is another issue. I'm 81 and I have other things I want to do with my life but I can't find anybody to take over as president... if that doesn't happen we'll just have to shut it down. I worry about the legacy, how do we get this organization to continue?

-Mary Farrar, Friends of Kingston Inner Harbour



The biggest challenge is generating funding for the operation of the organization. Grant funding and corporate sponsors are typically interested in funding events and programming, but often are not interested in funding the core staff team, office space, etc. that is necessary to be able to put on events and programming.

-Toby Whitfield, Ottawa Pride

Permitting processes are arduous and convoluted. Regular repeating events have to reapply every year. Systems for booking and permits are not connected between municipal groups. There is no guarantee that a space will be available each year.

-Ian Burns, Kingston Pride



Artist:
Chantal Forget

Every organization providing grants and subsidies has their own format of application, both electronic and what they require. A new manager has to basically work through a full year cycle before becoming efficient. It is sometimes as difficult to complete an application for a \$2,000 grant as for \$50,000.

-Jean Lord, ACOFMI

The grant applications are so time consuming. You'll send in like 20 pages of stuff and it's like "yeah no we're not funding you". They don't understand how much it is for grassroots organizations to apply for funding. A lot of the funding is about leveraging other funding. There's also the criteria... Sometimes it's hard to fall into a category. Like anti-Black racism, where do we get funding?

-Stacey Ottley, Coalition for Unity, Respect & Equity/Equality for All

For our dance practices we were using a local school. We relocated because of the pandemic and we're seeing what happens next. We have no idea what the schools are leaning towards. So they need to look at renting space. They don't charge dancers for lessons, so this is tricky. Volunteers exchange for dance lessons. It's a free community service situation—the problem then becomes how do we cover rent? It's either out of our personal pocket or the UCC provides it. Because neither group is a charitable group, they can't apply for city funding. Years ago when I started the dance group, if you needed the money you applied. Now, why do I need to go through all this paperwork to apply for a grant that I may or may not get? We are locked out of any support from the municipal level of government.

-Nadia Luciuk, Ukrainian Canadian Club of Kingston & Maky Ukrainian Dance Ensemble



Artist: Jacqueline Milner

Paula: It was purchased by this community. I think it was 1964... a band of the community, people who were some of the originals who came here, banded together and pooled their funds to purchase this building. [Paula tours us into the large main community room off of the nave]. So this is our large space. I believe it was built in the 1980s. This was built, again, with money pooled by the community members... [she gestures to a smaller area off the main room] Here's another area where I've applied for a grant, a Capital Grant by Trillium, again, very competitive. So instead—fundraising. I started a fundraising campaign and we collected over... I think we're at \$140,000 now for this.

Elizabeth: Who applies for these grants?

Paula: Myself. They are very difficult. I guess I'll call myself the grant writer here because we try to write grants. We've been successful in getting some, obtaining those two grants—a grant for the door, a grant for security. We're limited because our taxable status is non-profit, but it's for religious. Therefore we are not allowed into some cultural [grants]... so we go for the arts and culture grants that have nothing to do with the church. So what we've done, anything we've received has been out here [gestures to community rooms and the school area], not in there [gestures to the sanctuary]... I'm not successful at many though. They're not easy. They're not easy.

I wrote to obtain funding for the festivals, it was to do with culture and bringing tourism in and aligning with all the other cultures in Kingston. And I wasn't successful. So it's, it's well, there's so much competition and other people are better grant writers than I am. I suppose it's also a small pool... we are also committed to helping and partnering with other organizations... We have dances here. People rent the space. We've had the Iranian community, Persian community, Mothers of Africa, all kinds of organizations.

Elizabeth: Do you feel like you're known in the broader community?

Paula: [People] know where we're located... [They say] "oh, that's across from the public library!"... It's the colours. They think of Greece and Santorini and all that. So they know where we're located. But I'm going to say the majority of them... say, "wow, I did not know you were here" [gestures to everything in the large space]. So part of the challenge is getting that out there, right. Making it available to people... I mean, there's so many organizations who come in and use our space. We're happy to share. I hope that comes through.

-Paula Antonakos, Koimisis Tis Theotokou Greek Orthodox Community of Kingston




Artist:
Jacqueline Milner



"We use this room, but safety is a huge concern. We have had people threaten us... Online, and there have been people who come by... It's concerning to the community to be safe and not have to defend themselves. When I had somebody thrown out of Monte's, the one night, anyway they were getting arrested. It was just a mess. I'm standing outside and the guys hollering all kinds of obscenities at me. The police officer, he asked me, he said, "do you want us to charge him with a hate crime?" I went, "no. I've heard all those names before. If you're not creative, go away."

-Keith Bilow, Beers for Queers



Due to safety concerns we do not disclose the
physical location of our meetings.

-Ruth Wood, TransFamily Kingston

Efe: There are a lot of things that the government can actually do for us. It's just we have to outline them and bring it forward to them, but you can't do that because the government wants to see numbers. That's why we are trying to do our own underground work first. Trying to bring people together. When they see that you have numbers— then they will listen to you.

Elizabeth: So you feel like you won't get the help without having the numbers?

Efe: They won't. They feel like they're wasting their time. "Why should we be listening to you when you have like 100 people?" "How do you intend to contribute to the economy, or how do you intend to support us politically?"

Elizabeth: Where there's 100, there are usually more...

Efe: Exactly. I will bet you, in Ottawa, we probably have close to 5,000 or 6,000 Nigerians, plus or minus. When it comes to events, what normally you see is mostly 400 or 500. Sometimes less than that...

With grants as soon as they approve it for one, the next time you apply, they're going to keep approving it. That's how it works. I know how the government works. When I joined the government in 2016, it was my first time working with the government. What they told us was, as soon as you step foot in the government, you're just going to keep going. I didn't get it, but now I've got it.



As soon as you have that prior grant or numbers, that's it... Then whenever you talk to them, they listen to you. The problem is getting that first foot in. I think that's what we are struggling with...

Elizabeth: If you could get your foot in the door, could ask for that support. What would you ask for?

Efe: Two things. There is community and cultural heritage people... I think there is Heritage Canada? We've reached out to them before. If we have an opportunity to talk to them, we will be like, "can you create a platform," like what I mentioned earlier, "for us to showcase our heritage, our culture?" Like a festival... Then, the community, how can our community get access to government resources, governmental funding? So, how do we do it? How can get, how do we put it now? How do we have access to other facilities without paying so much out of our pocket? Because we're not for profit, isn't there something they can do a little bit more for us to have access to these things because we don't have funds? Anything I'm doing right now, I'm doing it as a volunteer.

Elizabeth: You're not paid for this.

Efe: So, I'm not paid for anything. I'm doing 7.5 hours for my regular job and I'm doing 7.5 hours for the community job, but the important thing is I put myself forward to do it, so I have to do it, and I'm not complaining. I enjoy doing it. Whatever I'm doing, I'm doing it for my legacy. For my children to be like, "Oh, Daddy did that. Daddy did that." Right now, when you go to the Nigerian community and ask the name Efe, I believe everybody knows the name. It's not because of wrong reasons, but for the good reasons, so that's the goal. It's something I enjoy doing, supporting my community.

-Efe Omueti, Nigerian Canadian Association of Ottawa

Artist:
Renée Poitras

Greg: A hope and dream I have is just to do programming in a way that we want. Like just something that will take shape according to what the people that come want it to be... like how can we create a space where people can reconnect, especially with new folks outside of [their] demographic... And actually I'm learning that just little gestures like that, unlike what many granting organizations want, aren't necessarily measured in success by like, the number of people that attend... I'm realizing they're more valuable. Like I'm realizing that, you know, to go to the Northern part of the neighbourhood and offer programming on someone's front porch in front of like a diverse group of people that live nearby, that are neighbours... it can be way more valuable than a big stage with 5,000 people.

Elizabeth: So scaling down can actually help people connect?

Greg: Yeah, definitely. And it's tricky. We walk a fine line between, you know—we are recognized—a little bit popular, and I think that Kingston tourism or the downtown, you know, support us and it's helpful. And they kind of see us as a little arts district that they can show off or whatever. But at the same time, not unlike corporate sponsorship... it can be dangerous too, to recognize what is motivating money.

Elizabeth: You worry about being used for the city's gain?

Greg: I worry that like, "oh yeah, look at this cool vibrant arts district"... that it would be a thing to sell. And you know, I worry about that because I think that is happening as opposed to—like we've been saying, building community, or serving marginalized groups, which is way more important.

-Greg Tilson, Skeleton Park Arts Festival

Artist: Jill Glatt



The community garden... I remember 2013, when we started to apply for this funding from the government... Chinese seniors like to find space to garden. And I used to live in Chicago, and there they have city gardens where they will share their backyard garden with their neighbor. So the original idea for our community garden was like that. And we were planning to maybe choose five to ten families who would like to participate and then we can help them to build raised beds, and then later on they can share with the community...

The reason why I wanted to do this is because there are so many family disputes between the seniors and their children, because seniors say "I wanted to do this", they put it here, there. They don't know the culture here. They don't get that you can't just do whatever you want. The neighbors will complain if you don't tidy up your front yard or your backyard. Right. So if you can make it look neat and then share with others, people will probably welcome this idea. And especially lots of newcomers, they don't have money in the beginning, so they don't have fences or they just garden [gestures around and then to the ground] they don't build beds. So that's another reason why we wanted to do this.

But, the city insists that we have to do it on city property. So we ended up having this community garden under the power lines... I don't know who the property belongs to, I think it's Hydro Ottawa... But it was very hard at the time to tell you the truth. Because first, Chinese seniors—they don't have a car! They can't go there...

Although the funding is granted for the Kanata Chinese Seniors Support Center. The City spent \$25,000 just to put a faucet. And then they ask the Canada Chinese Seniors Support Center to do the fundraising. Because five thousand, how can you make it? So I remember when I have the last community meeting with the program manager. I said—and also the Chinese seniors at the time still don't have that capacity to do the fundraising yet. Right?—So I said, "if that's the case, then I just have to say, no, I'm sorry. I have to give up." And then they said, "if you give up, then you will never receive any funding."

And I said, "well, if that's the case, it's so be it. I'm so sorry, but that's it. We've been doing all that we can do, you know, to collaborate with the City. But if that's the case, we can help to build the raised beds. That's no problem. But if you ask us to do the fundraising, I'm sorry, I can't, we can't." So at the end, they try to, you know, scramble funding from other places. So our volunteers—which is my husband [laughs], helped to build the raised beds. And so we have that community garden together right now, still out in North Kanata, But sadly the Chinese seniors cannot participate. Because they can't get there! And they still prefer, you know, their backyard.

And it's too bad, because also the benefit would have been there for the whole community. To have the opportunity to learn how Chinese seniors, you know, manage their backyard gardens. I will send you some pictures.

-Wen Jean Ho, Kanata Chinese Seniors Association

Artist: Alyse Mercey



It's almost like they're invisible. Because we've had a number of events and the public has reacted at times positively, but after a few months it's forgotten. We constantly have to bring it up, our agenda, that these are our needs—how can this group of senior leaders be recognized for their work? Because if they were not there it would be a big burden on the health system, on other support services... So we should recognize them for the value they bring to the system... recognizing the work of the seniors groups. They just do it, they don't do it for any benefit, they know the value they do for their seniors... Each group brings their own strength to the table, each has different needs and programming, and there is no competition between each other. We are a real collective.

-Sybil Braganza, Social Planning Council of Ottawa and coordinator of Ethnocultural Seniors Groups

The city has to have someone involved in their planning that is more attuned to what the reality is of everyday cultural organizations. [At events] the city comes, the mayor comes, they come and are supportive... But it would be nice for city to be a little more aware of what an organization's day to day looks like.

-Nadia Luciuk, Ukrainian Canadian Club of Kingston & Maky Ukrainian Dance Ensemble



Artist:
Renée Poitras

[We want] to provide a space/opportunity for socially conscious and/or marginalised makers, artists, and creators a place where their goods and works aren't just allowed, but are embraced, supported, and celebrated. To create a space that the community can come together and learn, grow, and support each other.

-Kaitlynne-Rae Landry, Pride Not Prejudice



With everything we do, Summer Solstice included, as well as all of our year round programming. We really just like to kind of create that safe space where Canadians can come together with, you know, Indigenous people and learn and share. But you know, not be afraid to ask questions. And we try and create a really open environment... Our message is always about the living culture, right? Like we're still here, we're still, you know, practicing our culture.

-Trina Mather-Simard, Mādahòkì Farm and Summer Solstice Indigenous Festival

[My dream space would be something like the Ottawa Korean Cultural Centre That is essentially a little bit of my dream space. It is easily identifiable from the outside. As you drive by it has beautiful images that clearly identify it as a Korean Cultural Centre... There's an exhibition space, with a reception area and a board room area. They also have a convertible black box space... so you can pull them out and host performances in that space or retract them, and they are able to provide different workshops and classes on an ongoing basis—dance, martial arts. Having that convertible space would be awesome. They've also hosted talks, just hosting events, networking...

That is my dream for our new site one day. In addition, in order to supplement income and support the financial health of the space, I'd love it to be connected to a business space that would be working in cohesion with the cultural center. Maybe a teahouse or café. Where people would congregate and also see what's happening within the community.

-Melisa Kamibayashi-Staples, Ottawa Japanese Community Association

Artist: Shelby Taylor





Artist: Sarah Qiu

I would like to have a community center that would serve my people and their different needs. I do see a significant need, especially for seniors in the community... One of the biggest issues has been loneliness. I would like somewhere where people could walk in and find someone to tend to them. And young people too, there's lots of unemployment, they come [to Canada] educated and can't find work, so a community center where they can have help... to see how we can bridge the gap for our people... facilitate a smooth transition.

We are only as strong as our family units. And we have young people heading in directions that are really preventable, because their parents cannot attend to them, they are working so many hours to provide for them, and so their parenting becomes compromised. If I had money that's what I would address, that's what I would do. Offer programs for youth and women, to give them someplace to go... Because if you have space, even if it wasn't exclusively ours, it means "I'll be here", it means someone has somewhere to go. We could build capacity for our seniors, our women, our children.

Because the current systems are not sufficient... There are some spaces you go and its quite detached from who you are. The questions they are asking you are so far away from what you know and who you are. And so you almost feel like it is excluding you, even though the service might be there... but when I'm dealing with my community, there is a unique understanding and context I have. Because when I moved here alone, I longed for a community like the one I am a leader to right now.

I wish there were better relationships with public office. Where referrals could be made to us. Because there are different levels of care you can attach to one of your own, specialized care and understanding... Our goal is not to have people detached from the Canadian culture, but to have them transition better, limit the shock that comes with just landing and interfacing with something really foreign and strange.

People call me, and they ask me to help. But its hard because, I have a life too—responsibilities. I can only do so much. But a community centre could offer that. Someplace with the cultural background and understanding... it just works better when there's that familiarity.

-David Kajoba, Uganda Association of Ottawa

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