

# National Cultural Policy Submission

**Josephine Mead**

Submitted: On behalf of a not-for-profit arts organisation; On behalf of an arts peak body; As a worker/professional in an industry who uses arts (e.g. art therapist, tour guide); As an artist (and curator and writer); As an individual

**What challenges and opportunities do you see in the pillar or pillars most relevant to you? Feel free to respond to any or all pillars:**

**First Nations** This pillar is not directly relevant to me as I am not First Nations. From working as a curator, artist and arts worker with FN practitioners, I feel there is inadequate support for FN artists and arts workers in the form of funding, emotional protection and cultural literacy. FN practitioners are asked to do a lot of free labour, particularly in advisory volunteer roles, often being asked to advise white people/organisations on cultural protocols. Many FN practitioners are overstretched. Funding these roles would help to ease the burden on said practitioners. More work needs to be undertaken by white individuals and organisations to learn about cultural literacy and protocols for working with FN practitioners. This information should then be passed on by said white people/ white organisations, rather than always putting this responsibility and time commitment on FN practitioners. This starts with councils / governments funding this education – create funding, create programs, create education, create change. There needs to be more emotional support in place for FN practitioners working in this field – this should be facilitated by governmental bodies. These resources need to be properly advertised so people actually know about them.

**The Centrality of the Artist** As a practising artist I feel that much of my time goes into administration – particularly grant writing / acquittals and devising and implementing promotional strategies for my projects. I hold several volunteer roles in different arts organisations, which allows me to contribute to national conversations and be an active agent in deciding what work is shared within our communities. These are wonderful experiences, but volunteer labour and working in an incredibly underpaid sector is hard. I often experience burnout and as my arts roles are underpaid, and I need to supplement income with other work, I usually am unable to dedicate enough time to my own personal practice. The costs associated with exhibiting work put me in frequent debt, so I am under constant financial pressure. I am asked to do work for “exposure” rather than pay. Through the organisational roles I hold, I focus on “care” for the artists I work with. It is hard for organisations to maintain care when employees are voluntary and burnt out is constant. More funding needs to be directed at artist run initiatives – this is a vital part of the sector and is the main source of artist support (major institutions often don’t know how to prioritize support, ARIs do!). ARIs are also one of the main platforms for emerging artists and bring cross-cultural and cross-generational practitioners together.

**Please tell us how each of the 5 pillars are important to you and your practice and why. Feel free to respond to any or all that are applicable to you:**

**First Nations** I am not FN, but believe that celebrating and highlighting FN practitioners is a key responsibility I need to undertake as a curator, writer, artist, artistic director and public programmer working within the arts. I am particularly interested in centrally positioning FN practitioners through my curatorial practice. I have much learning to do around protocols for working with FN practitioners and wish that governmental bodies would publish free resources surrounding this.

**Are there any other things that you would like to see in a National Cultural Policy?**

- Focus on support for artist run initiatives
- Focus on increased funding for local artists
- Focus on emotional support / initiatives to prevent burn out in the arts
- Free resources to advise white peoples/organisations on working with First Nations practitioners
- Increase of small project grants
- Free resources to advise on how to work with diverse communities
- Focus on direct funding for artists to exhibit work
- Focus on abolishment of rental fees for gallery spaces
- Focus on "care" within the arts