



## ArtStarts in Schools

### ANTI-OPPRESSION GUIDELINES

ArtStarts is committed to using its privilege as a well-established organization to address systemic oppression and colonial practices, especially those that we perpetuate. We are committed to providing students with accessible arts-based experiences in their schools and believe that intentional representation of equity-seeking groups an important part of this commitment. We take cultural safety and cultural appropriation seriously and are committed to ensuring that students are thoughtfully engaging with traditional knowledge and stories in context.

This document seeks to outline some of the ways ArtStarts is applying anti-oppression frameworks to our practices in order to:

- reduce barriers for equity-seeking groups to access our programs, services and facility;
- determine who we work with and how;
- engage in the broader conversation in our communities; and
- clarify the expectations of our staff, board and volunteers.

#### DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this document, we use the following definitions:

##### **Oppression**

The use of power or privilege by a socially, politically, economically, culturally dominant group (or groups) to disempower (take away or reduce power), marginalize, silence or otherwise subordinate one social group or category.

##### **Systemic Oppression**

Consists of practices, policies, laws and standards that disadvantage a particular group or category of people.

##### **Individual Oppression**

Demearing and oppressive behaviour towards and treatment of a particular group or category of people, expressed through individual attitudes, beliefs and values.

##### **Anti-Oppression**

The work of actively challenging and removing oppression perpetuated by power inequalities in society, both systemic oppression and individual expressions of oppression.

We are grateful to the Canadian Council for Refugees for their work in this arena and providing the thoughtful definitions above. Source: <http://ccrweb.ca/en/ccr-anti-oppression-policy>



*ArtStarts in Schools provides innovative arts programs for young people, practical resources for teachers and artists, and leadership in advocacy for arts in education.*

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### **Cultural Appropriation**

Includes use of cultural motifs, themes, “voices,” images, knowledge, stories, songs, drama, and so on without permission or without appropriate context or in a way that may misrepresent the real experience of the people from whose culture they are drawn.

Source: <https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/curriculum/overview>

### **Equity-seeking groups**

Communities that face significant collective challenges in participating in society. This marginalization could be created by attitudinal, historic, social and environmental barriers based on age, ethnicity, disability, economic status, gender, nationality, race, sexual orientation and transgender status, etc. Equity-seeking groups are those that identify barriers to equal access, opportunities and resources due to disadvantage and discrimination and actively seek social justice and reparation.

Source: <https://canadacouncil.ca/glossary/equity-seeking-groups>

### **ARTSTARTS' COMMITMENT**

ArtStarts will work to ensure that:

- We develop and improve policies to promote anti-oppression.
- We identify and challenge barriers to our programs, services and facility.
- We encourage thoughtful, carefully considered conversations about anti-oppression and decolonization with stakeholders.
- We build our capacity and the capacity of our network to challenge unequal distribution of power and biases that lead to oppression.
- We support artists and educators who thoughtfully engage with traditional knowledge and stories in context.
- We dedicate resources to serve equity-seeking artists.
- We do not provide services to artists who practice cultural appropriation.
- We do not fund projects that are culturally unsafe and perpetuate systems of oppression.
- We provide staff, board and volunteers with anti-oppression training tailored to their role.
- We ensure staff, board and volunteers can challenge oppressive and colonial practices without harassment and discrimination.

### **ACCOUNTABILITY**

We do not work in isolation; ArtStarts works through a variety of different relationships with artists, educators, schools, school districts, families, arts and community organizations. We ask that members of the ArtStarts community read and understand this document. We ask artists who are contracted with ArtStarts to hold us and themselves accountable to these practices.

### **THIS IS A WORKING DOCUMENT**

This document is one step in our fight against oppression. We plan on evolving it into a formal policy to be adopted by our Board of Directors. We recognize that this will be an ongoing process and no document will abolish oppression. We also recognize the inherent contradiction in using policies and hierarchical structures to combat oppression. This is our effort to create organizational practices that are self-reflective, rooted in community and guided by a commitment to anti-oppression.