



International Centre of Art for Social Change (ICASC)
Judith Marcuse Projects (JMP)
STRATEGIC PLAN: 2019-2021

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JUDITH MARCUSE PROJECTS/ICASC

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HOW WE GOT HERE

JMP Mission Statement

JMP works to nurture art for social change that is created in and with communities in British Columbia, Canada and internationally. This mission is driven by the belief that art is a powerful force for positively transforming lives, catalyzing social change and contributing to the development of civil society.

Judith Marcuse Projects (JMP) was incorporated as a non-profit society in 1980. After 15 successful years as an international touring repertory dance company that also created community residencies and special programs for young people, JMP changed direction. For six years JMP produced an annual arts festival and, during this time, also launched the first of three six-year projects that reflected a shift to a more explicit focus on **community-engaged art for social change (ASC)**. Each of these projects began with three years of arts workshops with youth, examining their perspectives on teen suicide (the ICE Project), on how they experienced violence in their lives (the FIRE Project) and on social/environmental justice (the EARTH Project). JMP then produced large-scale live national touring performances, television/video adaptations, and other related activities that were based on the content of the workshops.

JMP has also convened several international gatherings of ASC artists, many of them from the Global South. In 2006, JMP produced the international EARTH Festival. Some 20,000 people attended the festival's performances, exhibitions, presentations and workshops.

JMP has always operated from a philosophy of not starting a project until the necessary financial and human resources have been confirmed, thus ensuring that the organization has remained solvent through more than 35 years of continuous operation.

In 2007, JMP partnered with **Simon Fraser University (SFU)** to found the **International Centre of Art for Social Change (ICASC)** research institute. ICASC's mandate is to support the field of ASC with research and community-based activities, such as networking and professional development opportunities in Canada and internationally.

ICASC Mission Statement

ICASC provides a focal point for the study, teaching and practice of community-engaged art for social change (ASC) and creates professional development and national / international networking opportunities to support ASC practitioners in advancing social change agendas.

Art for Social Change

Community-engaged art for social change involves the creation of art collectively made by groups of people (who may not self-identify as artists) about what matters to them. A specially trained artist or group of artists facilitates this process.

In 2013, ICASC received a \$2.5 million grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) to run a six-year national collaborative study – the **ASC! Project** – on the current state and future needs of ASC in Canada. JMP has served as the lead on this project, which has included team members from more than a dozen academic and community partner organizations across Canada and which received more than \$1 million in matching contributions. Outcomes from this project include text and video resources, as well as practical tools for the ASC sector, many of which are available on the comprehensive icasc.ca website.

Through the ASC! Project, ICASC has positioned itself as a leader in the field of ASC in Canada, influencing and informing national conversations about the sector through a range of activities including the 2017 **Art of Changing the World** gathering and ongoing meetings with government officials in Ottawa. JMP's long history of creative development and the strong reputation of Judith Marcuse, whose work is internationally recognized, has served as the anchor for these far-reaching activities, which are generating new life and possibilities for ASC in Canada.

Together, JMP and ICASC are now ready to move into the next stage in their evolution.

ASC IN CANADA TODAY

The ASC! Project revealed a Canadian ASC sector that is rich, vibrant, and growing, with more than 500 ASC organizations and many more individual ASC practitioners working throughout the country. The Project also brought to light areas where more support and work is needed, and in which JMP and ICASC have an opportunity to make a significant positive difference on a national scale. The primary findings of the ASC! Project identified future needs in three key areas:

1. Education: Individual connections and knowledge sharing

New ASC practitioners have told us that they find it difficult to find accessible formal training opportunities or to connect with experienced practitioners as mentors. Experienced practitioners nearing the end of their careers have told us that they would like to pass on their decades of knowledge to emerging practitioners but that there is no clear venue for doing so. ASC practitioners at all levels have repeatedly told us how difficult it can be to find relevant resources and professional development opportunities to help them expand their practice, to work effectively with partners, and to meet requirements, such as those for evaluation and impact assessment. Increasing the ability of ASC practitioners to connect with mentors and colleagues is a priority for the ASC sector at this time.

2. Connection: Organizational partnerships and capacity building

Partnerships are central to the majority of ASC work. Whether those partnerships are

between an individual artist practitioner and a funder, between community organizations and the communities they serve, or amongst diverse groups of people and organizations that come together to use participatory art-making to better their community, those working in partnerships can often accomplish more than those working alone. Our research showed that there are two key barriers limiting the effectiveness of partnerships in ASC. The first is similar to the individual connections gap: People and organizations often find themselves investing significant effort in just trying to find relevant partners. The second issue is that working with others poses its own challenges. There is a need to increase knowledge sharing around making ASC partnerships work.

3. Integration: Cross-sector-awareness and systems change

Those immersed in ASC work understand the work and its value. However, too often those outside the field have not heard of ASC or are not aware of what it can offer. As a result, ASC practitioners must not only show why a *particular* project idea is valuable, they must also provide basic introductions of what ASC is and evidence of the positive impacts it can bring before starting on the work itself. This lack of cross-sector awareness also means that communities that might benefit greatly from ASC approaches foreclose on this option before even becoming aware of its existence. Challenges like these cannot be effectively addressed on a case-by-case basis. Instead, there needs to be a systems change approach that integrates an awareness of ASC methods and evidence of ASC impacts into the decision-making processes of policy-makers, leaders of other change agendas, and funders.



HOW WE WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE / STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

1. EDUCATE

Serve as a leader in providing informational resources, tools, and guidance for those seeking to increase their ASC knowledge

Building on JMP's long-standing international reputation for success and the momentum generated by the ASC! Project, our four strategic priorities illustrate how we will tackle these areas of challenge, as well as how we will ensure both organizations are well positioned to support the field of ASC into the future.

ICASC has already established itself as a central resource for newcomers asking their first questions about ASC through to established practitioners seeking to expand their knowledge in a particular area or seeking like-minded practitioners to connect with. We are well positioned to build on this existing strength and will do so by:

1.1 Competency → *Increase skills competency across the field by making educational tools and resources available in ways that are accessible, affordable, and relevant to a wide audience of existing and emerging ASC practitioners, researchers, and those who work with ASC organizations.*

ICASC.ca is currently home to a broad range of resources, including an in-depth evaluation tutorial / tool (<http://www.ascevaluation.ca/>), developed as part of the ASC! Project. We will build on this solid base by creating a user-friendly clearinghouse of resources from across the sector with the intent that by 2021, ICASC.ca will be the go-to source for information, tools, and access to training for ASC in Canada.

1.2 Mentorship → *Enable learning and connections through the development of a mentorship program that connects individuals across ages and stages of career.*

The richest learning often comes from one-to-one connections between experienced practitioners and those new to a field; yet, in the Canadian ASC sector, there are few mechanisms to connect those who have decades of knowledge and experience to share with those seeking to learn. To address this and to increase awareness of best practices in mentorship across Canada, ICASC will create a formal mentorship program. We will actively seek out practitioners at different career stages and with varying backgrounds and experiences to ensure that there is a diverse pool of mentors and mentees, and we will

provide guidance and financial support to help mentors and mentees get the most from their participation. In exchange for access to the program, participants will be required to report on their mentorship activities and this knowledge will be shared with the ASC community. We will begin with a pilot program in 2019, and expand across Canada in 2020-21.

1.3 Peer-to-Peer Learning → *Leverage the mentorship program to connect experienced practitioners to foster knowledge exchange.*

ASC practitioners have told us that it can feel like they are working in silos because of challenges in connecting with others with whom they could form learning communities. Building on the infrastructure we create for the mentorship program, we will support peer-to-peer learning by creating opportunities for experienced ASC practitioners to connect with peers from other ASC communities and traditions and with changemakers from non-arts sectors for knowledge exchange and collaboration.



2. CONNECT

Organize and support national and international activities and resources to build vibrant, inclusive ASC networks

ICASC will play an important role in increasing the ability of ASC practitioners to successfully partner with one another and with other organizations and communities that may benefit from ASC work by:

2.1 Networking → *Hosting events (e.g. conferences, webinars, dialogues and consultations) for ASC and non-ASC practitioners to connect and share knowledge about effective partnership strategies.*

Building on JMP and ICASC's long history of hosting successful knowledge-sharing events across Canada, we will continue to host a variety of collective activities, and we will add a particular focus on events that support the integration of ASC practices into other change agendas and that address the challenges and benefits of working with



diverse partners. We anticipate that these activities will foster the development of partnerships amongst artists, individual organizations, and public programs that otherwise would not have connected.

2.2 Regional Centres → *Develop a strategy for, and begin implementation of, regional centres for ASC in Canada.*

ICASC can serve effectively as a national hub for information, resources, and knowledge-exchange, but local connections are also critical. To help build partnerships and increase capacity at the local level, ICASC will partner with select regional ASC organizations in multiple locations across Canada to create regional centres that will serve as focal points for local activities, knowledge-sharing, and professional development. ICASC will provide overall guidance and resources, including support for a part time staff person. Each centre will develop locally relevant programming and support local partnership development, with a particular focus on addressing urban-rural divides. We envision the process of setting up the regional centres as a five-year project that will involve an iterative approach to finding the best model for the relationship between ICASC and the regional centres. Within the current three-year plan, we will develop and refine the overall strategy and work with at least three organizations (in Winnipeg, Toronto, and Montreal) to set up pilot regional centres.

2.3 Coalitions → *Develop connections with national and international coalitions seeking to advance the arts and social change.*

To date, ICASC has focused on connecting with individual ASC practitioners and ASC organizations. Now that ICASC is a mature organization with a strong national presence, it's time to expand our connections with existing coalitions that are working in areas relating to social change in Canada and internationally, and contribute to forming new coalitions. Engaging with the larger social change community in this way will create a more inclusive knowledge base for ASC work and, in turn, increase capacity for ASC practices.

3. INTEGRATE

Support systems change by increasing cross-sector awareness and understanding of ASC as a high-impact contributor to positive social change

In addition to encouraging an inquiry mindset among those who participate in our EDUCATE and CONNECT activities, we will actively seek to bring about systems change and increase cross-sector recognition of the benefits of ASC by:

3.1 Research → *Foster a culture of rigorous inquiry and cross-sector knowledge sharing around ASC practice and impact.*

ICASC recognizes that ongoing rigorous research on ASC methods and outcomes is essential to improving the impact of ASC work and to demonstrating that impact to policy-makers, change-leaders in other sectors, the public, and funding agencies. ICASC itself will shift its focus from engaging directly in research-intensive activities to providing resources and guidance to academic researchers and ASC practitioners seeking to share their research findings with those in other sectors.

3.2 Systems Change → *Foster policies and structures that will advance systems change by increasing understanding among policy makers and change sector leaders of the nature and benefits of ASC in shaping a just society.*

Private and public sector funders, non-arts NGOs and policymakers are recognizing the potential of ASC to advance/enrich their own agendas for community wellbeing and social justice across the country. ICASC's 2018 [Policy Recommendations](#) document provided a starting point for federal-level conversations around the role of ASC work in Canadian society. We will expand this conversation to other levels of government and to major Canadian arts- and non-arts-social change organizations and funders through *ASC101* presentations and workshops.



4. BUILD

Establish a strong foundation for near-term operations and long-term sustainability to ensure that we continue to be able to serve as an ASC leader in Canada and internationally

Finally, although JMP and ICASC are distinct organizations, their purposes and activities are deeply intertwined. While our first three strategic priorities are outwardly focused, this one looks inwards. Over the next three years, JMP and ICASC will put in place the structures and resources necessary to ensure long-term stability and continued success by:

4.1 Governance → *Review and update governance structures for JMP and ICASC to reflect the evolution of both organizations and to ensure appropriate input from the national and international ASC sectors.*

Both JMP and ICASC have benefitted from having stability in the membership of their governing bodies – the JMP Board of Directors and the ICASC Steering Committee. As we look to the future, we seek to add new perspectives, starting in 2019, by increasing the size of the JMP Board, revising the structure of the ICASC Steering Committee, and adding an Advisory Committee. These changes will also include reviewing and, as necessary, updating the relevant governing documents (JMP Bylaws and Constitution; ICASC Constitution).

4.2 Staffing → *Address succession planning and scale up core staffing to support the activities outlined in this plan and to build for the future.*

A stable core staff is critical to long-term planning and to the relationship-building required to achieve our EDUCATE, CONNECT, and INTEGRATE strategic priorities. Core paid staff roles will include: a JMP Executive Producer and ICASC Co-Director and three positions that may be housed in either JMP or ICASC: a Project Manager, a Communications Director, and a Director of Stewardship and Fundraising. Additional staffing will be project-based. In addition, we anticipate significant changes in the senior leadership roles (JMP Executive Producer, ICASC Co-Directors) by 2021 and will be engaging in succession planning to ensure a smooth transition and retention of institutional memory.

4.3 Funding → *Develop a long-term funding strategy that will provide stable funds for core operations and guidance for pursuing project-based funding for specific programming and initiatives.*

Securing stable core funding is an ongoing challenge for many organizations, including JMP/ICASC. We are currently in discussions with, or have applications submitted to, a range of funders to support activities outlined in this plan. In addition, some of the activities, such

as the mentorship program, will be designed to generate revenue to offset expenses, while remaining affordable for participants. We anticipate that development of a long-term funding plan will be a priority for the renewed JMP Board and ICASC Steering Committee, working in conjunction with key core staff members.

4.4 Creation and Production → *Revitalize JMP's work as a production company.*

At its core, JMP is an arts production company. It is this extensive first-hand experience that enables JMP to provide leadership for ICASC. However, JMP's arts production activities have been less of a focus for several years to allow JMP to support ICASC as it developed from an idea into an internationally recognized source of information and connections for ASC. It is now time for JMP to shift focus again and create a balance between arts production and support for ICASC. This will include the creation of new work and a possible retrospective to be produced in Fall 2019 or Spring 2020.

IT'S TIME FOR ASC!

Recent policy and think-tank trends in social innovation, cross-sector collaboration, and systems change have provided a ripe environment for the rapid growth of ASC in Canada. More and more public and private foundations, governments, businesses and other organizations are looking for community-focused engagement methods and solutions. This is an exciting time for the sector, and together, JMP and ICASC are well positioned to step up as national champions of – and network weavers for – community-engaged art for social change in Canada.



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