

Femme Wave
Arts Society

Report to Community

**“I think it is healing
behavior, to look at
something so broken
and see the possibility
and wholeness in it.”**

— adrienne maree brown,
Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds

LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Femme Wave acknowledges it is based in Mohkinstsis (Calgary), which is located in Treaty 7 territory and the traditional lands of the Blackfoot or Nitsitaapi people. Treaty 7 is comprised of the Blackfoot Confederacy, including the Siksika, Piikani and Kainai First Nations; the Tsuut'ina First Nations or Beaver People; and the Lyaxe Nakoda, which includes the Chiniki, Wesley and Bearspaw First Nations, all of whom offer us a vision of what it could mean to live together on and with the land in harmony and right-relations. Treaty 7 is also home to many Indigenous people from all across Turtle Island, including the Metis people of Region 3.

In sharing this acknowledgement, Femme Wave recognizes that words must be rooted in right-actions, or in other words the literal actions and efforts of dismantling colonial systems and reimagining our world through right relations. All of us have a role to play in redressing the many wrongs of colonialism, including the erasure, displacement, violence and genocide visited upon Indigenous, Black and racialized communities for hundreds of years. This process of organizational transformational change is just one way we can begin to challenge ourselves to be humble and brave enough to be guided by the wisdom of the original keepers and caretakers of this land, and imagine a world without oppression and inequity.

REPORT OVERVIEW

This Report to Community collects data and insights from Femme Wave's Transformation Survey, which was shared through December 2020 and January 2021.

Femme Wave's intention is to engage the community through a learning and change process that will center the perspectives of 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous, Black and Racialized people who have been historically invisibilized in our arts community.



FEMME WAVE'S JOURNEY

Femme Wave's awakening to its own role and complicity in the reality of systemic racism and inequity began in the summer of 2020, at the beginning of a global reckoning sparked by the tragic murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and many others.

Guided by the generosity of Indigenous, Black and Racialized community members who sacrificed their peace to call the festival in to confront these revelations, Femme Wave has undertaken the following as part of an ongoing process of transformation.

"I feel the call-in gifted me with the agency to be critical in the space of white supremacy in Calgary's arts space."

- Rosalinda Hernandez, Femme Wave Board Member

2020

JULY

The Femme Wave team participated in Anti-Racism training through [CommunityWise's AROC](#) (Anti-Racist Organizational Change) framework

SEPT

The Board of Directors committed to a list of five strategic priorities designed to advance equity within in the organization (*visit [Femme Wave's Accountability Blog](#) for details*)

DEC

Current staff stepped down from paid positions to work as volunteers on a succession process centering racialized perspectives in the organization's overall leadership

2021

JAN

Femme Wave engaged Jordan Baylon to design and implement an engagement process that would lay the groundwork for community-led change, including this survey process and a series of forthcoming community conversation circles. [The Colour Factor](#), an organization led by racialized women to foster community-care and healing, was engaged to provide support for participants navigating these difficult spaces and conversations

SPRING

The Femme Wave team participated in anti-racism training provided by [Sankofa](#), a local Black-led youth-focused organization in Mohkinstsis, with the support of [Sled Island](#)

The Femme Wave team took time to process and reflect on the survey results and to produce a report to share back with the community.

APPROACH

What is presented here is not intended to provide prescriptions for completely addressing the roots of colonialism and systemic racism and inequity. Instead, this is just the beginning of what needs to be a long-term, ongoing, and iterative process for:

- **Naming and validating experiences**
- **Creating conditions for safety, care and accountability**
- **Working together to ask questions and experiment with new approaches that better align with the ways art and culture can transform society**

Rather than focusing on the analysis and frameworks of experts boasting institutionally-validated credentials, this approach sees the individuals and communities with lived experiences of oppression and barriers as the true experts we need within our non-profit and arts sectors.

This grassroots approach models the values of anti-racism and equity by engaging these communities from the beginning and inviting them to own the process, and by extension, Femme Wave itself.

The survey had two components:

- **An online form distributed through social media, the Femme Wave website and Femme Wave's stakeholder email lists**
- **The option for confidential one-on-one conversations with either Jordan Baylon or The Colour Factor to create a safer and more equitable entry point option for those that prefer to share verbally**

Wherever possible, this report centers the recommendations and questions from 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous, Black and Racialized people in the local community about the kinds of equitable actions that can be taken within Femme Wave's programming and curation, staff and leadership, and internal culture and structures.

More than that, this report raises questions intended to engage our curiosity and hope, and encourage us to continue to challenge our biases about the arts and what is possible through them.

A Note on Terminology:

This approach centers racial equity as a way into the complexity of these conversations. So whenever you see “2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous, Black and Racialized” in this report, what is shared across all of the perspectives being represented within this term will be racialized identity, unless otherwise stated.

As we take accountability for this choice, we also want to acknowledge and affirm the plurality of diverse approaches and terminology equity-deserving people use to identify themselves. We believe that it is important in this work not to create a singular authoritative lexicon, but to honor the intersectional richness and complexity of lived experiences represented among the communities we want to center and use language as an entry point into curiosity and relationship-building.

ABOUT THE FACILITATOR

Jordan Baylon (they/she/he) is a second generation PilipinX settler, artist and community worker imagining justice and abundance for equity-deserving peoples within the spaces of all our relations: personal, communal and societal.

With a decade of experience serving in the non-profit arts sector in Mohkinstsis (Calgary), Jordan advocates a collective, grassroots approach to dismantling and rebuilding organizational structures, processes and ideologies with values of anti-racism and social justice.

Jordan is a proud associate of CommunityWise's Anti-Racist Organizational Change program, and co-authored RE-Tool, a handbook on equity-driven grantmaking as part of Equity in the Panel Room working group. Jordan currently serves as General Director for Chromatic Theatre, a company founded to nurture and incubate the practices and stories of racialized theatre makers in Mohkinstsis.

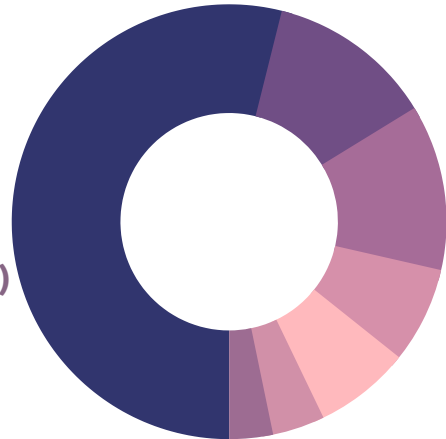
As an artist, Jordan's work gnaws at the intersection of queer identity, race, colonialism, food, ritual and the deep dark places that represent our possibilities for pleasure and liberation.

SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

A total of 68 individuals participated in the survey
(65 through the online form and 3 in one-on-one conversations)

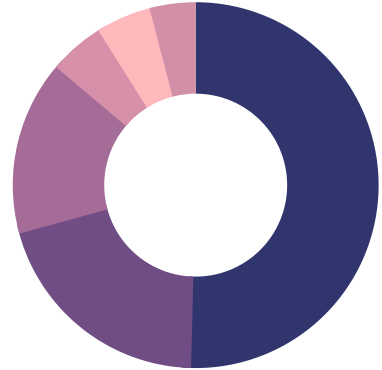
Respondents represented the following relationships with Femme Wave (past or present), with many identifying with multiple relationship types:

- Audience (83%)**
- Artist/Performer (19%)**
- Volunteer (19%)**
- Board Member (11%)**
- Community/Presenting Partner (11%)**
- Staff (6%)**
- Sponsor/Funder (5%)**



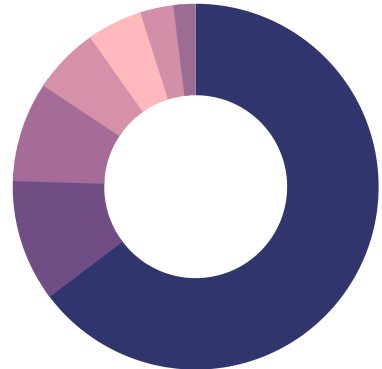
The following describes the Gender identities among respondents, who were encouraged to select from all of the options that applied:

- Women (62%)**
- Cisgender (25%)**
- Non-binary (19%)**
- Gender Non-conforming (6%)**
- Gender Fluid (6%)**
- Men (5%)**
- Transgender (0%)**



The following describes the Racial identities among respondents, who were encouraged to select from all of the options that applied:

- White, Western European (66%)**
- South Asian (11%)**
- Black, African (9%)**
- Indigenous (to Turtle Island/North America) (6%)**
- East Asian (5%)**
- Pacific Islander (3%)**
- Latinx, Hispanic, Chicax (2%)**
- Middle Eastern, North African (0%)**



INSIGHTS & LEARNINGS

Community Connection & Belonging

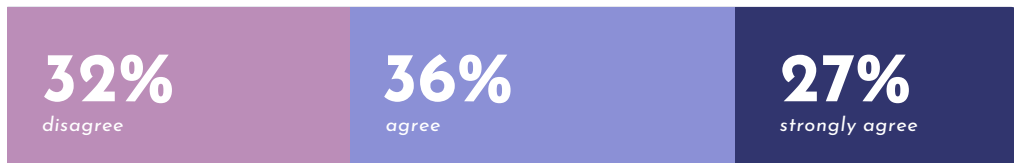
Do you feel connected to a sense of community in general?

Overall respondents



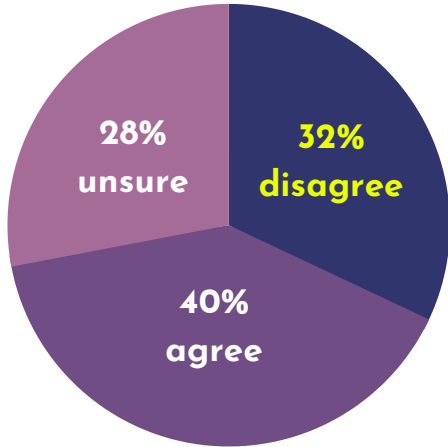
The majority of overall respondents indicated they feel connected to a sense of community in general (71%), with 22% feeling they “strongly agree.”

2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous, Black and Racialized respondents



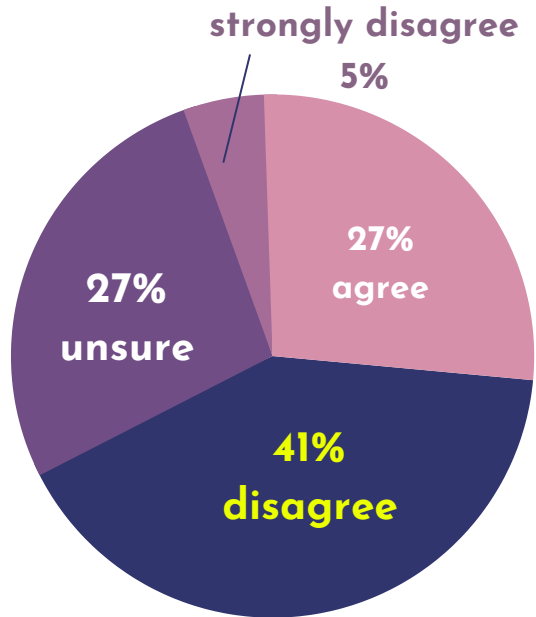
Fewer 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous, Black and Racialized respondents felt connected to a sense of community in general (64%), but a higher number of those that did “strongly agreed” (27%).

Do you feel a sense of community through Femme Wave?



Less than half of the overall respondents felt a sense of community through Femme Wave itself (40%).

Unfortunately, the majority of 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous, Black and Racialized respondents did not feel connected to a sense of community through Femme Wave, or were unsure.



TAKE AWAYS

Community connection and sense of belonging is integral to our individual and collective health.

There is a lack of belonging across all demographics, and a general lack of belonging to the Femme Wave community. This is particularly true for 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous, Black and Racialized respondents.

The Femme Wave team views this data as a clear indication of the organization's failures to provide welcoming, inclusive, and accessible community spaces and connection in the arts sector.

What are we going to do with this information?

Does it / could it apply across the arts sector?

ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK

Respondents were also encouraged to share written or verbal feedback around what Femme Wave should prioritize or attempt through the organization's anti-racism and equity journey, which are summarized in the follow sections.

In keeping with the anonymity of the survey, this feedback has been summarized by Jordan Baylon, and any quotes are not direct from respondents.

Indigenous Community

Overall, the Indigenous respondents felt Femme Wave needed to take meaningful and direct action to centre their perspectives across all areas of operations

- **Leadership/Governance**
- **Hiring**
- **Programming**
- **Curation**
- **Strategy/Planning**

Here is a summary of what Indigenous respondents said:

There needs to be a much stronger and more proactive stance among all arts organizations against the ongoing misappropriation and tokenization of Indigenous art, cultures and ways of knowing.

Femme Wave should develop, nurture and maintain partnerships with Indigenous-led organizations, offering direct support in terms of resources, skills, capacities and platforms.

Land Acknowledgements and use of the term “decolonization” are superficial if they are not rooted in a commitment to understanding the ongoing history of colonialism and the work of reconciliation, and also a willingness to dismantle oppressive systems.

Disability Justice

Some respondents noted an even greater and ongoing

lack of representation of individuals who identify as Disabled or Neurodiverse in the arts community

and the need for these perspectives to be represented in all areas of consideration. Specific recommendations include:

- Ongoing review of safe/accessible space policies at Femme Wave
- Alcohol and drug-free areas where all individuals have the option of safely experiencing Festival programming
- Accessible options for online or home-viewing Festival experiences

Community Care

One major theme among the responses from 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous, Black and Racialized individuals was the need to

create conditions for rest, healing, self-care and mutual-aid

for these communities that are constantly taking on the labour of naming and working to transform systemic racism and inequity.

Reflections

How can we centre the joy, reclamation, agency, wholeness and self-determinacy of 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous, Black and Racialized people instead of extracting the trauma of their lived-experiences of violence and oppression?

Where are our 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous, Black and Racialized elders and how can we support them and honour their wisdom and experience?

How do we develop capacities within these communities for trauma-informed care and conflict resolution tools based around restorative/transformational justice?

How do we shift the focus from the rehabilitation of predominantly white-led organizations and institutions to focus on nurturing, resourcing and platforming the existing organizations and groups led by 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous, Black and Racialized communities?

Organizational Change

There were many perspectives around what Femme Wave itself should consider and prioritize in its process of transformation:

Representation in programming and hiring alone are not sufficient for creating safe conditions for 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous, Black, Racialized individuals to thrive: values of anti-racism, equity and Truth & Reconciliation need to be woven into the organization's culture and organizational structures.

Our current paradigm of arts leadership focuses too much on charismatic individuals and cults of personality instead of collectively-owned and validated efforts.

How do we do a better job of creating meaningful relationships with 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous, Black, Racialized people where they are, so that we are not constantly retraumatizing them and compromising their safety by asking them to self-identify and signal that they want to be part of a community and explain what that needs to look like?

NEXT STEPS

Community Conversations

When asked if respondents would be interested in shared community conversations about “how Femme Wave can transform to radically centre 2SLGBTQIA+ Black, Indigenous and Racialized people in every aspect of its work,” the majority of survey respondents answered yes.



When 2SLGBTQIA+ and Black, Indigenous and Racialized respondents were specifically asked about their interest in caucused spaces for conversations around how to center them, the majority responded yes (68%), with 22% responding no, and 10% feeling unsure.



Before inviting the greater community to join in the conversation, we will be holding space to centre the voices of 2SLGBTQIA+ Black, Indigenous and Racialized people.

Big Questions for the Entire Community

How does Femme Wave currently define Femme as an identity? How can we be really clear about this to signal who we as a community should be centering in this space? How do we grapple with the different complexities and stakes involved for different intersections within Femme identity?

How do we acknowledge the white-dominated history of Feminism while redressing the ways that 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous, Black, Racialized communities have been both excluded and oppressed within those contexts and spaces?

To what degree is it fair or appropriate to focus on the renewal and rebuilding of Femme Wave from its starting place as a predominantly cisgender, straight, white-lead arts organization, instead of investing time/skills/resources/platforms in the organic development of 2SLGBTQIA+ Indigenous, Black, Racialized-led organizations? Is there a both/and option?

How can would-be white allies do the work of healing the distorted perception that this work is about excluding or disposing of white people, and instead focus on how dismantling white supremacy and systemic inequity creates conditions for us all to flourish together and in right-relation?

CLOSING AFFIRMATIONS

Perhaps the most encouraging finding of this survey is the sense that the majority of respondents feel

the way forward is to talk about all of these issues, challenges and opportunities together as a community.

While it is humbling to confront the sheer scope and complexity of these conversations as individuals,

together we can unlock the potential for Femme Wave to transform and make an even greater impact on our city and communities.

We are deeply grateful for the care, time, and emotional energy of community members who took part in this survey, as well as those who have offered feedback, criticism, and support of Femme Wave over the years.

Thank you.