


**THUNDER BAY
ART GALLERY**
Strategic Plan



Cover Images

<p>Rick Rivet Shaman and Familiar, 1991 acrylic on canvas 96.5 x 71 cm Thunder Bay Art Gallery Collection</p>	
<p>Ahmoo Angeconeb Family Migration, 2000 coloured pencil on paper 76 x 112 cm Thunder Bay Art Gallery</p>	<p>Valerie Palmer Eunice Oil on linen 91.4 x 86.4 cm Thunder Gay Art Gallery Collection</p>
<p>Patkau Architects (Vancouver) and Brook McIlroy (Toronto/Thunder Bay) Architectural Rendering of Waterfront Gallery</p>	



Mandate

As a non-profit, public art gallery, the Thunder Bay Art Gallery exhibits, collects, and interprets art with a particular focus on contemporary artwork of Indigenous and Northwestern Ontario artists. The Gallery advances the relationships between artists, their art, and the public, nurturing a life-long appreciation of contemporary visual arts among visitors to Thunder Bay and community members of all ages.

Guiding Principles

Inclusion

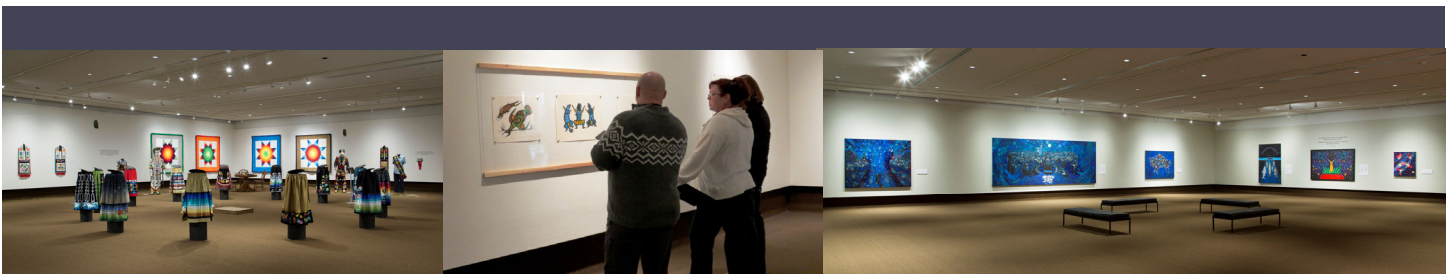
We value diversity in our staff, our exhibitions, and our audiences; striving for accessibility, connections, and understanding.

Respect

We respect art in all its forms, art makers, visitors, and their experiences. We honour our history, our land, and art.

Education

We exhibit and collect contemporary indigenous art and hold it in trust for our community and the nation; the collection is for education and sharing.



STRATEGIC PILLARS

Strategic Pillars make a strategic plan a reality. As a result of the consultative process, the Board has identified four pillars for this strategic plan. The pillars include a clearly articulated permanent collection, exhibition philosophy, an inclusive programming and learning environment, and relationships and community connections. These pillars will drive the work of our Gallery for the next three years.



Pillar 1: Permanent Collection

Thunder Bay Art Gallery's Permanent Collection is exhibited, loaned, and studied. With over 1600 diverse works, our collection reflects the Gallery's longstanding engagement with contemporary Indigenous art, as well as the art of many local and regional artists.

Visitors come to the Gallery hoping to see original works by Norval Morrisseau, his contemporaries, and the Northwestern Ontario artists he influenced. Carl Beam, Daphne Odjig, Benjamin Chee, Edward Poitras, Jane Ash Poitras, Robert Houle, Jim Logan, Joanne Cardinal-Schubert, Arthur Shilling, Shelley Niro, Allen Sapp, Rick Rivet, Bob Boyer, and Christian Chapman are proudly represented in the collection.

We have contemporary pieces—both donated and purchased—from Northwestern Ontario artists such as Roland Martin, Ruth Tye McKenzie, Catherine Kozyra, Christopher Stones, Susan Ross, Ann Clarke, Michele Coslett Goodman, Patrick Doyle, and John Books.

Private collectors and artists have helped us build our collection over time. We also purchase works of art from artists with assistance from the Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Foundation.

Our collection management practices and aspirations include reaching out to and listening to the needs of Indigenous elders, artists, and community members in an effort to incorporate Indigenous knowing into our records, research, and programming and our policies around use of and access to the collection.

The Gallery also commissions projects such as our most recent one 'madaabii s/he goes down to shore', which draws



inspiration from Gitichigumi (Lake Superior). This ambitious, large-scale, multidisciplinary commissioning art project involves twenty-five artists (emerging, mid-career and established) from Thunder Bay and across Canada. The works being produced are inspired by the cultural and industrial history, ecology, and sacredness of this living body of water. This unprecedented commissioning project will coincide with the opening of the Gallery's new waterfront facility.



Pillar 2: Exhibitions

The Gallery organizes and presents an annual program of up to twenty-five local, regional, national, and sometimes international exhibitions mainly focused on the work of contemporary artists. These exhibitions address the spectrum of contemporary artistic practices – from works rooted in Indigenous practices and material culture, to art belonging to Western traditions. Issues of relevance to both our community and our broader audience are addressed including climate change and environment protection, and issues around truth and reconciliation.

Solo and group exhibition opportunities for emerging and established local and regional artists are important priorities. Exhibitions of work by both Lakehead University and Dennis Franklin Cromarty High School students and regional secondary schools are annual commitments made by the Gallery. Travelling exhibitions from other museums and galleries introduce the local audience and artists to creators from across Canada.

Engagement of the audience with innovative local and visiting artists and curators is stimulated through artist talks, workshops, and walking tours.

Provincial and national travelling exhibitions are organized periodically by the Gallery with the objective of introducing the work of contemporary Canadian Indigenous artists, as well as regional artists, to a much-expanded audience.





Pillar 3: Programming and Education

Thunder Bay is a diverse community. Our Gallery provides an environment that is inclusive and respectful of the needs of the artists and the citizens of northwestern Ontario. The objective of our programming is to increase meaningful engagement with the community through on-site ancillary programming, as well as outreach activities. These serve people from all walks of life including older adults, people with physical and cognitive concerns, and youth and others who are marginalized.

By ensuring that enough staff are dedicated to educational and outreach programming – our Education Coordinator and our Community Engagement Coordinator – the Gallery consistently provides art classes and workshops for students of all ages, and school tour and workshop programs delivered both on-site and digitally.

Community programming is often intentionally reactive in order to fill immediate needs of prospective partners. This programming takes many forms, from special exhibitions by schools and mental health organizations, to support of community programs in our space including author's festivals, Pride poetry readings, and concerts. Local outreach is varied as well and is designed to serve the specific needs of the groups involved, whether the programs are for youth-at-risk, adult learners in precarious situations, or presentations for community organizations who want to explore art as a catalyst for change or communication.

Pillar 4: Real Relationships and Community Connections

The relationships between and among the citizens, our staff, the artists, and local educators is central to our Gallery. We want everyone to *"See yourself here"*. Respect, trust, and honesty are essential to open communication and strong relationships.

The Gallery provides professional opportunities for local and regional artists to have a solo, curated exhibition. This concentration on their work is crucial to the development of the arts milieu and artists in our region. As a result, many artists in the area are able to not only gain valuable professional

opportunities for solo exhibitions, but also gain insights in the areas of networking, entrepreneurship, and knowledge sharing.

The Gallery provides support to the artists, communities, organizations, galleries, and museums across North-western Ontario. By means of partnerships, we address regional access to the Gallery's education and curatorial programs through the delivery of both in-gallery and online content; circulating exhibitions from the collection, serving regional artists through professional development activities, and connecting both artists and organizations in the region with our existing ancillary programs.

The Gallery provides the community with a meeting place for service clubs, guilds, celebrations, and events. We are not an exclusive or dedicated space, but rather a community hub.

"The Thunder Bay Art Gallery has, over the years, welcomed literally thousands of groups, organizations, artists and collaborators into their space. When I think of a publicly funded space that truly opens its doors to the community, the Thunder Bay Art Gallery comes to mind immediately. Because of that, the community feels an investment towards the gallery; and feels comfortable coming through its doors. This is one public space that fully engages with the community." - Eleanor Albanese, writer, visual and community artist, Thunder Bay



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2021-2023

In the spring of 2021, the Board of Directors and Gallery Director began the work of identifying the Gallery's strategic priorities for the next two and a half years. This work has been done within the reality of the pandemic and understanding its impacts to-date on the Gallery, its members, and visitors. There are unknowns related to our recovery from the pandemic- economic, social, and otherwise, but our overarching goal is the building, transitioning to, and opening of the new Gallery on Thunder Bay's waterfront.

We began our work by conducting an Environmental Scan and updating our SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats), as well as exploring the connection and importance of strategy as it relates to the governance responsibilities of the Gallery's Board of Directors.

Strategy is defined as "the intentional decisions an organization makes to give itself the best chance to succeed". It was with this definition in mind that the Board and Gallery Director met to develop its strategic objectives and priorities. Following this meeting, we identified emerging strategic themes and the work critical to construction, opening, and success of the new Gallery.

The strategic priorities are as follows and form the basis of our Strategic Plan 2021-2023:

Develop and implement a suitable and robust new Gallery Project monitoring system that ensures the entire Board is informed and able to make timely and best decisions regarding the project. Board responsibilities and accountabilities should be known, understood, and accepted. Risk management and potential liabilities will be a key part of this system.

Develop a long-term financial plan with priority given to both revenue generation and sustainability of operations. Confirm any funding gaps for the new gallery and develop a plan to close those gaps, with clear targets and accountabilities identified.

Develop and implement a human resources and succession plan for the Thunder Bay Art Gallery to ensure the Gallery has the necessary talent and capacity to continue to successfully operate while building, opening, and transitioning to the new facility on the Waterfront. Recruitment and retention of staff will be a key component of this plan.

Develop and implement a stakeholder management and communication plan that re-engages with the community, funders, all levels of government, members, and donors and focuses on our present and our future at the Waterfront.

Ensure the Board of Directors has the necessary governance policies and capability, knowledge, understanding, performance monitoring systems, and succession plans in place to effectively govern, be accountable for, and support the success of the Gallery and its Director.

Be steadfastly focused on the construction and opening of the Waterfront Gallery. Given the uncertainty of these times though, we will also develop a Gallery Operating



Daphne Odjig, *Cradled in Repose*, 1985,
acrylic on canvas



Don Ense, *Untitled*, c1978, acrylic on paper



Angus Trudeau, *Rimous*, c1977, enamel paint

Plan B to prepare for the possibility of our new gallery project not moving ahead.

Continue to identify, evaluate and prioritize, and develop strategic partnerships that will enhance the offerings of the gallery, its reach, digital presence, and engagement with existing and new visitors and members.

Extend the Gallery's vision of Indigenous art and artists and its role in healing by exploring opportunities connected to the new gallery, the numerous calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, the formal corporate name, eldership and guidance to the Board, creating opportunities for First Nations People, and building relationships and cross-cultural competencies.



Michael Anderson, *Inner Conflict*, nd, moose antler

(Note: Our strategic planning effort was led and facilitated by COMPASS and all Board, Working Group, and working meetings over the April to July 2021 period were held virtually via Zoom due to pandemic and related health considerations and restrictions.)



THUNDER BAY
ART GALLERY



Amanda Burk, *Things Coming Into Being*, 2016, white charcoal on paper