



**Participation in the Arts:  
Prototype Implementation and Learning**

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## 1. Introduction

The Winnipeg Boldness Project is an Indigenous social innovation initiative working alongside the North End community to identify effective mechanisms to improve outcomes for young children in the Point Douglas area. The Project is working towards a Bold Goal:

**Children and families in Point Douglas will experience dramatically improved wellbeing in all aspects of self: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual.**

According to a 2012/13 report, about 50% of kids in the Point Douglas were doing really well in terms of early childhood development (ECD) and are starting school at a point where they're ready to begin learning and take on the world. What The Winnipeg Boldness Project is aiming to do is raise that number, because we believe that every child should have the same access to opportunity.

The three core objectives that will work to not only increase school readiness but also achieve the Bold Goal include to:

1. Design a 6-year Early Childhood Development (ECD) intervention strategy for future implementation that will help young children in Point Douglas develop the tools they need to succeed in life.
2. Create a strength-based narrative that highlights the positive and spirited aspects of Winnipeg's North End through community perspectives.
3. Build a child-centred model focusing on best practices for raising children through the deep community wisdom that exists within the North End.

Our starting point in the design process was to engage the Point Douglas community in defining success for their children. Residents, parents and leaders also identified many of the roadblocks to success for their children and are driving the development of solutions to these roadblocks. A large proportion of the residents, parents, and leaders we engage with are Indigenous and espouse an Indigenous worldview and value base. Therefore, Indigenous perspectives and methodologies form the foundation of our problem definition and solution finding. We believe that the solutions generated will lead to better outcomes not only for Indigenous children, but better outcomes for all children.

## **Boldness is Community-Driven**

The Winnipeg Boldness Project operates using community development principles; the highest level of accountability is to Point Douglas community residents, families and their children. This guiding principle is understood at every level of the Project's governance. Our community partnerships, through families, leaders, and community-based organizations are at the core of this project. They provide knowledge and direction as well as direct hands on work to test some of the ideas that they feel could produce possibilities for success and wellbeing for children and families in the community.

## **Boldness is Strength-Based**

The Winnipeg Boldness Project has employed a comprehensive strategy of community engagement through diverse arts based methods. These methods have allowed community to share in the design of the project while also sharing their own experiences raising their families in the North End of Winnipeg. These arts-based methods have included a Photo Voice Project and a Tile Mosaic Project.

## **Boldness is Community Wisdom**

The Winnipeg Boldness Project has been undertaking a deep community engagement and iterative knowledge mobilization process since April 2014. This process has brought together wisdom of community members and community service providers into a model titled: *Ways of Knowing, Being, Feeling, and Doing: A Wholistic Early Childhood Development Model*<sup>1</sup>. The implementation of this model, combined with community defined indicators of healthy children and families will produce a bold goal: Children and families in Point Douglas will experience dramatically improved wellbeing in all aspects of physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual being.

## **Winnipeg Boldness & Participation in the Arts**

Participation in the Arts is a prototype that began due to interest by National Leasing to expand the work that they had already been doing supporting access to arts in Winnipeg. Opportunities for recreation, time together and family bonding, and self-care

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on the Child Centred Model see: *Ways of Knowing, Being, Doing and Feeling: A Wholistic Early Childhood Development Model* (October 2017).

were shared as a priority within the first year of knowledge gathering with families and organizations in Point Douglas. This partnership served to address this priority.

The following document outlines the background to the development of this prototype, the small-scale implementation, evaluation and learnings.

## 2. Opportunities for Impact

Whether we perform, applaud, or volunteer, the arts breathe life into every community. They touch the lives of almost everyone. They can make us think, laugh, cry, dance, or debate. We feel pride when local artists succeed. We reminisce about joining thousands in a special concert or festival. We gather in art spaces for special celebrations or at memorials for powerful remembrance. Relationships and belonging grow in that moment when our hearts and minds are open to new experiences and to one another. The broad reach and deep emotional connections made through the arts prove they are powerful instruments to enhance belonging. (Community Foundations of Canada, 2016, p. 4)

Health and wellbeing are much more than the absence of disease. The literature on social capital recognizes that health and wellness is also about the presence of a sense of wellbeing and happiness, both of which are highly influenced by social and physical environments (Clift, 2012). While arts and creativity may seem like a lesser priority when families are experiencing challenges such as lack of food security, lack of housing, limited health care or educational opportunities, there is a significant role for arts and recreation in addressing health and wellness. The opportunity to participate in arts based events can enhance quality of life and happiness (Clift, 2012). Understanding the value of the arts to individuals, families and communities has long been a query for policy-makers and researchers. At the core of the value system is how individuals are affected and transformed by virtue of participating. Individual arts experiences are the building blocks upon which the larger outcomes of the arts, such as social cohesion and cognitive development, are constructed (Brown & Novak-Leonard, 2013, p. 223).

Studies have examined the cognitive, social, and behavioural outcomes of arts participants and learners across the lifespan. Early childhood and youth participants have been shown to have positive outcomes in each of the aforementioned areas, which in turn have contributed to longer-term outcomes such as attending and doing well in college, obtaining employment, and volunteering in their communities (Catterall, 2009).

The current evidence suggests that young children who have the opportunity to learn and participate in the arts develop critical thinking and metacognitive skills and can learn to think creatively. Furthermore, there is a fundamental

assumption that this type of arts engagement promotes changes in the brain, which, in turn, supports creative thinking and creative expression. (NEA, 2011, p.17)

Arts participation and learning have been found to have a strong connection to overall academic success and pro-social outcomes when introduced in the early years in a continual manner through pre-school, school, or out of school participation (Catterall, 2009). Arts engagement also has a role in positive social and emotional outcomes for students who feel isolated or excluded (NEA, 2011).

Making arts accessible for children and families, who would not otherwise have the financial means or resources to participate, continues to be an area of interest nationally and internationally. Organizations that provide tickets to low-income families in Toronto, New York, Denver, Boston, and the United Kingdom are highlighted in a scan of available programs. There is a challenge in the comprehensive evaluation of the impact of arts-based activities beyond qualitative exploration of perceived impact on health and wellbeing. There are research programs that are beginning to assess the impact of participation in the arts on health and wellbeing in order to provide an evidence base for scaling and to produce measureable public health outcomes (Clift, 2012). For example, in 2011 the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in partnership with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) gathered to showcase studies and evidence-based programs that have identified cognitive, social, and behavioural outcomes from arts interventions. Some of these outcomes include:

- Neuroscience research showing strong connections between arts learning and improved cognitive development;
- Small comparison group studies revealing the arts' contributions to school-readiness in early childhood;
- Longitudinal data analyses demonstrating positive academic and social outcomes for at-risk teenagers who receive arts education; and
- Several studies reporting improvements in cognitive function and self-reported quality of life for older adults who engage in the arts and creative activities, compared to those who do not (NEA 2011, p. 7).

Matarasso (1997) undertook a study that sought to outline policy implications of the impacts of participation in the arts, with the following aims:

- To identify evidence of the social impact of participation in the arts at amateur or community level; and
- To identify ways of assessing social impact that are helpful and workable for

policy-makers and those working in the arts or social fields.

The study found that arts participation produces impacts on: personal development, social cohesion, community empowerment and self-determination, local image and identity, imagination and vision, and health and wellbeing.

Participation in the arts does bring benefits to individuals and communities. On a personal level these touch people's confidence, creative and transferable skills and human growth, as well as their social lives through friendships, involvement in the community and enjoyment. Individual benefits translate into wider social impact by building the confidence of minority and marginalised groups, promoting contact and contributing to social cohesion. New skills and confidence can be empowering as community groups become more (and more equitably) involved in local affairs. Arts projects can strengthen people's commitment to places and their engagement in tackling problems, especially in the context of urban regeneration. They encourage and provide mechanisms for creative approaches to development and problem solving, and offer opportunities for communities and institutions to take risks in a positive way. They have the capacity to contribute to health and social support of vulnerable people, and to education (Matarasso, 1997, p. 74).

Researchers have delineated between active and passive engagement with art. Active arts engagement includes behaviours such as making, creating, writing, and teaching art whereas passive engagement involved visiting, attending, listening, viewing, watching, and discussing art. Research into the varying impacts of active versus passive engagement in arts has indicated that active participation is seen as providing higher levels of engagement with the potential impact to produce strengthened outcomes as a result (Davies et al, 2012).

The impact of active and passive participation in various arts venues such as live theatre or museums has been studied. Museums have been shown to be spaces that contribute to health and well being through promoting relaxation and creating space for beneficial change in physiology and emotions, encouraging introspection and fostering health education. When people have the chance to interact with museums and the collections a variety of responses can occur. Practice-based examples have shown how engaging in museum spaces has contributed to emotional wellbeing through the following outcomes: sense of connection, optimism and hope, identity and self-esteem support, relationships, and opportunity for success (Camic & Chatterjee, 2013).



The Community Foundations of Canada report, *Vital Signs: Arts and Belonging* (2016) indicates that in order to continue to build belonging through the arts, it is critical to support high quality arts experiences:

This research establishes a clear relationship between excellent arts and culture in the community and greater belonging. It suggests the need to focus not only on attendance or number of performances but also on the quality of the experience. We must value and harness art's ability to attract, retain, involve and connect Canadians. (CFC, 2016, p. 18)

As well as increasing social and learning opportunities:

Increasingly, audiences expect opportunities to meet performers, experts and other audience-members. Not only do these opportunities enrich the experience, but connecting with others on an emotional and intellectual level helps develop social ties. (CFC, 2016, p. 18)

Meaningful experiences engaging with arts and culture in community is directly related to a greater sense of belonging. Attending arts events also involves socializing with friends and meeting new people, providing opportunities to gain new insights and deeper empathy for different cultures and experiences (CFC, 2016).

A significant amount of literature reviews the positive impacts of direct participation for children and youth in ongoing arts programs in schools, after school programming, and in community organizations. In a search for literature on the impact of arts participation and attendance on families' health and wellbeing there is a gap. Questions remain:

1. If removing barriers to accessibility makes it easier for families to participate in these types of events, will families be more likely to attend?
2. What impact does participation in enriched community arts and recreation activities have in families with young children?

At the outset of the partnership, a literature review and a scan of families in Point Douglas indicated that there were multiple barriers to families participating in arts based opportunities in the city. These barriers include cost, lack of transportation, lack of information, feeling too nervous, location of the event, being unaware of the event, and feeling unwelcome in the venue. It was hoped that through participation in this prototype, families who had little to no previous experience participating in arts based events in the city would have increased access to opportunities with their families,

creating a space for family bonding and building belonging. In addition, the partnership for this prototype was founded with the hope to learn more about the barriers to participation and learn how to remove these barriers.

### 3. Prototype Background

#### Overview

This proof of possibility explores strategies and partnerships that have potential to make arts accessible to families in Point Douglas. It evolved out of a partnership with National Leasing that supported families working with the Winnipeg Boldness Project to attend various arts, theatre and recreation focused events in the city.

National Leasing is a local Winnipeg business, in operation for 40 years, that has been giving back to community through philanthropic investments that target the following key areas:

#### **Community development**

- Support for at-risk youth
- Provision of attainable housing
- Promotion of arts and culture

#### **Education**

- Encouragement and/or advancement of financial literacy
- Access to post-secondary education for at-risk youth
- Curriculum development for business-related educational programs

#### **Health research & promotion**

- Health research and disease management focused on children and youth
- Encouragement of recreation and physical activity for all ages<sup>2</sup>

The work of The Winnipeg Boldness Project was of interest to National Leasing due to alignment with these key areas. National Leasing sought to adjust the funding relationships that they had previously held with arts organizations to include supporting families to access arts events in a more meaningful manner. This meant that rather than simply reserving and donating event tickets to families, the prototype would include more wholistic supports for participation and enhanced experiences within the arts. The Project saw this partnership as an important way to address priorities identified by Point Douglas families during the first year of knowledge gathering, which included recreation, self-care, and time together as families.

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<sup>2</sup> Retrieved from: <http://www.nationalleasing.com/en/about/community-investment>

### 3. Prototype Design & Implementation

The work on this prototype began in the winter of 2015 with implementation beginning January 2016. As of November 2017, the prototype had finished its second year.

#### 3.1 Prototype Design

The goal of the partnership is to help improve family outcomes by giving them access to arts and recreational activities in Winnipeg.

Through the support of National Leasing and their strong connections with organizations such as Prairie Theatre Exchange, Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre, and the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, families involved with The Winnipeg Boldness Project are able to not only attend certain theatre and music productions free of charge, but are also given the VIP treatment with backstage tours, workshops, free acting classes, and other exciting opportunities for learning and skill building.<sup>3</sup>

Over the course of almost two years National Leasing committed to creating experiences for families participating in the prototype with arts and recreation partners. This included planning transportation, providing tickets, arranging for childcare, encouraging partners to implement child and youth friendly arts activities, and providing meals. It was the intention that through the design of this prototype the barriers previously identified by families would be removed, creating a welcoming and accessible space for families in Point Douglas to participate in the arts.

#### 3.2 Prototype Implementation

Members of the Parent and Caregiver Guide Group<sup>4</sup> were offered the opportunity to

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<sup>3</sup> Excerpt from *New Possibilities through Arts*, a blog post from Winnipeg Boldness Project, [http://www.winnipegboldness.ca/blog\\_details.php?blog\\_id=29](http://www.winnipegboldness.ca/blog_details.php?blog_id=29)

<sup>4</sup> The Parent and Caregiver Guide Group was developed with parents and caregivers who had attended one or more of the community conversations, community events, and the Photo Voice Project. We invited interested parents and caregivers of children 0-6 years of age to join us on a regular basis to inform the work of the Project moving forward. From this core group, ongoing invitations are extended at community events for participation. For more information on the Parent and Caregiver Guide Group see the following reports:

Promising Practices in Community Driven Research and Development: The Winnipeg Boldness Project Parent Guide Group (November, 2016).

participate in this prototype. A few other families who had been involved in previous prototypes with the project were invited to participate. Eight families were enrolled at the beginning of the prototype. Most of these families consistently participated with the addition of a few families that later joined the Parent and Caregiver Guide Group. A few of the families participated in only one or two events, but most of the families participated in five or more.

Organizations who worked with National Leasing to provide experiences for families within this prototype included:

1. Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra
2. Manitoba Theatre for Young People
3. Royal Winnipeg Ballet
4. Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre
5. Fort Whyte Alive
6. Children's Museum
7. Winnipeg art Gallery
8. Prairie Theatre Exchange

Winnipeg Boldness staff provided some administrative support and coordinated communication of events and logistics with families.

National Leasing covered direct participation supports. A school bus was hired from Vital Transit to provide door-to-door transportation for all events, with the exception of the Canada Summer Games, for which taxis were ordered. Families received a childcare allowance for in-home care when attending events not suitable for younger children. All of the theatre shows included a meal catered by a local restaurant; other meals included a barbeque (Fort Whyte event) and a concession order (Canada Summer Games).

Most of the organizations created opportunities that extended beyond tickets to the event or show. This meant that families' experiences were enriched through backstage tours and hands-on activities. Specific opportunities at each event are outlined in the descriptions below. A summary of events and associated supports can be found in Appendix 1.

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Strengthening a Foundation for Success and Wellbeing: Looking back in order to journey forward ([http://www.winnipegboldness.ca/wcm-docs/docs/wpgboldnessproject\\_2yrreview\\_finalweb.pdf](http://www.winnipegboldness.ca/wcm-docs/docs/wpgboldnessproject_2yrreview_finalweb.pdf)).

**Mission: Munschpossible**

Prairie Theatre Exchange hosted six families on January 3, 2016. Mission: Munschpossible brought the stories of Robert Munsch to vibrant life on the stage. This larger-than-life, kid-friendly presentation included the stories: Thomas' Snow Suit, Mortimer, Angela's Airplane, Something Good, and Too Much Stuff<sup>5</sup>. Families were also treated to a backstage tour.

**Billy Elliot**

Royal MTC hosted nine families on February 5, 2016. Billy Elliot the Musical is based on the 2000 film Billy Elliot. The music is by Elton John, and the book and lyrics are by Lee Hall, who wrote the film's screenplay. The plot revolves around Billy, a British motherless boy who trades boxing gloves for ballet shoes<sup>6</sup>. Families also enjoyed a backstage tour.

**Peter Pan**

This event was hosted by the Royal Winnipeg Ballet. Seven families attended the performance that tells the story of Peter, who invites Wendy to Neverland to be the mother of his gang of Lost Boys. Many adventures ensue, including the near-death of Tinker Bell and a climactic confrontation with Peter's nemesis, the pirate Captain Hook<sup>7</sup>.

**Wildest Dreams**

On August 18, 2016, eight families were hosted by the Winnipeg Zoo, who partnered with community agencies to invite children and families facing health and/or socio-economic challenges for a once-in-a-lifetime Zoo experience. Families enjoyed a barbeque and self guided tour through zoo and its special exhibits.

**Winnipeg Art Gallery**

Six families attended the event on August 28, 2016. It included a tour of the art gallery and an art class.

**Fort Whyte Alive**

Six families attended this event, which took place on September 25, 2016. It included outdoor activities such as a scavenger hunt and dip-netting in the marsh. Families enjoyed a special presentation on Canada Geese and their migration that ended with sunset goose flights.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.pte.mb.ca/plays/past/plays/70.php?season=2015>

<sup>6</sup> <http://royalmtc.ca/billyauditions>

<sup>7</sup> <https://rwb.org/whats-on/show/peter-pan>

### **Children's Museum**

The event took place on October 22, 2016. It included a special museum activity, as well as free time for families in the museum. Seven families participated.

### **E.T.**

This event was hosted by the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra (WSO) on December 11, 2016. Audiences experienced the Steven Spielberg classic family fantasy on the big screen with the WSO performing the music score by John Williams live<sup>8</sup>. Seven families enjoyed the show as well as a special instrument petting zoo.

### **Baobab**

This event was hosted by Manitoba Theatre for Young People on March 25, 2017. African music blended with puppetry, drums, song and captivating shadow theatre in this stunning West African legend. Baobab exuberantly celebrates the joy of passing down traditions from one generation to the next<sup>9</sup>. Three families attended the show followed by a craft workshop.

### **Sarah Ballenden**

The event was hosted by Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre. Against the landscape of the developing Red River Settlement, Sarah Ballenden has developed a thick skin as the Métis wife of a high-ranking Hudson's Bay Company officer. But when a spark of gossip spreads through the Fort like wildfire, her reputation is tarnished, leaving Sarah with nothing to depend on but her own true grit to clear her name. On April 22, 2017 six families attended the show. They were also provided on-site childcare that included engaging activities for the children.

### **Canada Summer Games Baseball**

This event was hosted by the Canada Games Council, which is the governing body for the Canada Games. It is a well-established, national organization that fosters on-going partnerships with organizations at the municipal, provincial and national levels. It allocates resources in support of its mission and strategic goals that include being inclusive and innovative<sup>10</sup>. Four families attended two baseball games on August 1, 2017.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://wso.ca/et>

<sup>9</sup> <https://mtyc.ca/baobab.cfm>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.canadagames.ca/about-us>

## 4. Evaluating the Prototype

### 4.1 Methods and Data Gathering

In order to track the learning from the implementation of Participation in Arts activities, a mixed-methods evaluative framework was designed. This included:

1. The Winnipeg Boldness Project National Leasing Arts & Theatre Partnership Intake (See Appendix 2)
2. Semi-structured interviews with participating families (See Appendix 3)
3. Online survey with National Leasing and arts organizations representatives (See Appendix 4)
4. Partner observations

These methods were designed to capture the learning of the prototype. While there were pre and post evaluation methods used, the most significant learning took place in a continuous loop of reflections between Winnipeg Boldness staff, National Leasing staff, partner organizations, and the families involved. Informal reflection sessions took place at various Parent Guide Group meetings that allowed National Leasing and the Project to make adjustments.

### 4.2 Evaluation Reflections and Observations

#### 4.2.1 Prototype Observations

Families felt that the resources provided by National Leasing addressed the barriers identified at the beginning of the prototype.

About half of the families consistently used the transportation, which was provided via school bus. The bus would pick up families at their homes, taking them to the venue, and then return them home after the event.

Challenges with transportation were largely related to communication. For example, one family had changed addresses without letting the project know. At times, families had to cancel at the last minute due to illness or were not home for pick up. This was mostly manageable by the staff member who was coordinating and communicating with families. Connecting through Facebook messenger addressed most challenges.



The meals provided were varied and included options at each of the events. The catering was well received.

Childcare was covered through the partnership. Families were able to access money to pay a babysitter to watch children during events not suitable for younger children. Partway through the prototype National Leasing had a change in the budget and had to make a decision on how to continue support in the best way possible. At first, it was suggested that childcare be removed as a support for families. The Project reiterated the importance of childcare, in particular, for families who have very young children. This support was maintained, but with a stricter criteria for when it would be offered.

The Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre provided on-site enriched activities for children who were not able to attend the performance. This was well received by families.

Some of the events in the first year were hosted too close together. This was challenging for coordination and schedules of families. This was taken into consideration in planning for the second year of the prototype.

Families most enjoyed the events that included all family members – where they had experiences as an entire family. Families appreciated when prototype partners planned activities that encouraged children to explore and be creative.

National Leasing worked with the arts organizations to share the goals of the prototype and expectations around making arts and recreation accessible. As a result, Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre met with Winnipeg Boldness staff to learn more the Project and to plan a positive and engaging experience for the families.

Most of the organizations were able to provide inclusive and welcoming environments for families. However, one organization did not succeed in providing this. The organization indicated that their event was suitable for the whole family, and they had activities designed to occupy the attention of the smaller children. However, when the activities were not successful in keeping the attention of some of the younger children, staff became frustrated making the families feel uncomfortable. Either the staff at the organization had unrealistic behavioural expectations of the children or they were not experienced in the delivery of activities with small children. Additionally, staff were difficult to communicate with and seemed less flexible. From this we have learned that not all organizations are ready or able to engage with families in a way congruent with the goals of the prototype.

Attendance was a challenge at some of the events. Families would confirm attendance, but would either cancel last minute or not show up. In the later part of the prototype there seemed to be less interest in events and more incidences of people not showing up without notice. The Project is exploring the reasons for this to be able to adjust the partnership. We understand that it is impossible to ensure 100% attendance 100% of the time no matter how many barriers are removed for families. Life happens, children get sick, and other priorities arise. It is important though to ensure we remain open to discovering barriers that we may not have previously identified and addressed.

#### 4.2.2 Organization Reflections

National Leasing, Royal Manitoba Theater Centre (Royal MTC), Royal Winnipeg Ballet, and Manitoba Children's Museum responded to a short online survey administered through Survey Monkey. They were asked about their experiences engaging with community, working with marginalized groups and interacting with families who have various ages of children.

As the core partner in the design of the prototype, National Leasing was also involved in continual reflection and was in contact throughout the prototype. The fluid reflection process allowed partners to continually adjust events as needed.

Overall this prototype was seen as a positive learning experience that was well received among the hosting organizations that were surveyed:

Most organizations we've talked to have the same reactions as us. They are happy to be part of a program like this help provide access and different experiences for these families. They are always willing to do future events with us/Boldness as well! (Janet, National Leasing)

National Leasing identified that the partnership and implementation of this prototype resulted in a change in the way that arts and recreation opportunities were provided to families.

When we started our partnership with Winnipeg Boldness, we changed the way we support local arts organizations. It's gone from simple show sponsorships to providing meaningful experiences. This is definitely something we will want to continue. (Janet, National Leasing)

Each of the organizations indicated that engaging with community was extremely important in their work. Included in the strategic plan for Royal MTC is the goal to engage with diverse youth and grow their familiarity with theatre. To increase accessibility to the theatre for youth, the Royal MTC hosts student-only matinee performances and a Backstage Pass program for students who are interested in learning more about the theatre. The Royal Winnipeg Ballet shared that they are looking to increase the accessibility for Indigenous youth through an endowment for a scholarship to study dance in their professional and recreational division dance school. The Manitoba Children's Museum shared that they regularly engage with communities to ensure that the organization is meeting community members' needs.

The Royal MTC shared that meeting with the Winnipeg Boldness Project prior to hosting the event with families was an important part of the success of the event. It allowed their organization to learn more about the work of the Project and to also understand barriers that impact families in the North End. After the first event hosted by the Royal MTC and in conjunction with the conversations with the Project, Royal MTC took the initiative to include on-site childcare that included arts projects for the second event. They recognized that their shows did not provide a whole family experience and wanted to rectify this by providing childcare workers and children's art facilitators for the younger children.

#### **4.2.3 Family Reflections**

At the beginning of the prototype, nine families completed the intake form that asked questions about previous experience participating in arts and recreation events, barriers to participation, and what they hoped to achieve by participating in the prototype. In the winter of 2017, four qualitative interviews were completed with parents and caregivers of families. The interviews took place with families who most consistently participated in the events.

Before the beginning of the prototype, most of the families had very little to moderate participation in arts based and recreation activities as a family. One family was already extremely active in arts and recreation activities in the community. The most common barriers identified by the families prior to participation included cost and transportation. Other barriers identified included lack of information, feeling too nervous, and being unaware of opportunities.

At the outset of the prototype, the majority of families hoped that activities would provide opportunities for skill building, family bonding, recreation, identity building, belonging, and community pride. Improved mental health was also identified by three of the families as a desired outcome of participating in the prototype.

At the end of the prototype, four families were interviewed. These parents indicated that attending the prototype activities was a positive and beneficial experience that impacted them in multiple ways. Each of the parents shared that at least one of the events was new for themselves or their families, and that they would not have been able to access these opportunities had it not been for the partnership and prototype. The time and effort required to organize a family outing was identified as an additional barrier. Families appreciated that all of the logistics were arranged for them.

Family bonding was identified most often as an outcome of the prototype:

Last year, I think it was the Fort Whyte for the goose stuff. Me and my son really bonded there a lot—with the stuffed animals...Taking pictures, asking questions and hanging out. (Darrin)

Having the opportunity to create memories together as a family was also shared as a positive outcome of the prototype:

I think the Fort Whyte one was the biggest one they remembered. Now they're really talking about animals and how certain animals live – they still remember the geese – the other day they saw geese flying by and said 'grandma remember when we went to Fort Whyte?' and I was like 'Yeah, I remember.' Anything that is tangible, that they can touch and keep their attention on, is good for them. And that's one of the things that sticks out for them all the time, they keep talking about it. (Mary)

Families also created memories through the hands on activities organized through most of the partnering organizations. Being able to tour backstage and to interact with the props was meaningful for the families. The activities engaged the children in new experiences that evoked feelings of belonging, wonder, and hope.

Community pride was another outcome that parents identified. Families were able to come together as "North End families" with their shared experiences. Some of the events themselves inspired pride. For example, the play Sarah Ballenden at Royal

Manitoba Theatre Centre was identified by participants as “speaking to them” and made them take more of an interest in live theatre.

For some families, the events were a completely new experience that had not been accessible in the past due to several barriers. Miranda, a mom who has been actively involved in the prototype from the beginning, was excited at the new opportunities this partnership provided, “I even went to my first baseball game”. Other parents shared that it was their first time experiencing a ballet, the symphony, and Fort Whyte Alive.

By taking part in arts and recreation these families have built new skills and the hope to continue to learn more about the arts:

My son is into acting now. He likes acting. He likes a lot more sophisticated things now as opposed to your typical like games and stuff like that. He’s into theatre now... He likes pictures—taking pictures because he did that one time [at an event] and there’s a lot of arts and crafts... I think his confidence has gone up, he's not afraid to be in a crowd and he's starting organized sports (Darrin)

Following the first event at the Prairie Theatre Exchange (PTE), Mission: Munschpossible, four kids expressed an interest in theatre classes and were able to connect with PTE for weekly theatre classes sponsored through the organization<sup>11</sup>.

Parent Guide Group members expressed that the prototype allowed them to experience things like the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra in a way that would not have been accessible otherwise.<sup>12</sup> Families felt that the barriers they had faced in the past were removed during the implementation of the prototype and there is an understanding that participation in arts and recreation events can produce positive outcomes:

It helps with skill building definitely, because the arts they help you to identify what your strengths are, what your weaknesses are, and how to build on those strengths... I think in other ways by broadening your horizons, by going to the symphony, by going to Fort Whyte, by going to the ballet – I’d never been to the ballet before in my life – I didn’t know whether I was going to like it or not...I

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<sup>11</sup> National Leasing shared a blog post on the partnership and feedback after two initial events: <http://www.nationalleasing.com/en/blog/entry/national-leasing-opens-doors-to-arts-and-opportunity-for-kids-in-need>

<sup>12</sup> United Way Winnipeg shared stories and photos from the event in their blog post: <https://unitedwaywinnipeg.ca/e-t-gets-orchestra/>

think that's what this program does, it tests your boundaries and pushes you to decide whether – and ultimately you decide, we decide – whether we want to go or not. No one pushes us to go, no one says you have to go but it's really, it's something fun to get you out of the house and to get you into the arts to see what you like and what you don't like. And that's the thing, that's where the main barrier is for a lot of families, not just our family. All families in the North End, that's what the barriers are, they just don't have these opportunities.  
(Mary)

## 5. Alignment with the Child Centred Model

### 5.1 Child Centred Model Summary

The foundation of the work developed through the Winnipeg Boldness Project relies on the wisdom and direction of community leaders who have, from the beginning, informed a *way of working* in the North End of Winnipeg, Manitoba that promotes success for families. This way of working has been brought together into the Child Centred Model as a promising practice. Each of the prototypes designed and implemented by community partners with the support of the Project are demonstrations of the Core Values and Attributes of Promising Practice.

The model is a way of working with families that honours the strengths, knowledge, passion, and commitment that families bring to raising their children. The model honours this and provides opportunities to learn, build, grow, experience, and belong to a community. The underlying belief within the model is that children are at the centre of a community and members, organizations, structures, and policies that are a part of that community are in interrelated and interdependent relationships with children, families and communities. These relationships are important and need to be led by families and those who are in their circles of support.

#### 5.1.1 Implications for Designing and Implementing based on the Model

1. Early childhood development initiatives will need to see sacredness of the whole child, within the context of history, culture, family, community, their full human potential, and right to the fullness of life.
2. Supports to parents must include teachings that affirm sacredness, dignity, value and worth, healing from trauma, and hope. Keeping families together must be priority. A variety of learning experiences must be accessible, affordable, culturally safe, and drawn from strength-based perspectives, with opportunity to spend some time on the land.
3. Healing strategies and modes of healing must integrate trauma counseling and restoration of balance in healing relationships between professionals and ones seeking help. The help of Elders, medicine people, sweat lodge ceremonies,

healing circles, should be offered as an integral part of healing when the need is expressed.

4. Community Learning Circles should be implemented to share knowledges, wisdom and worldviews of the community.
5. The community has its own answers. Service providers can only be facilitators in the process of building strong, vibrant communities. The community is enriched with wisdom, knowledge and experience that can be drawn from in future initiatives.
6. Human resource development strategies must include multicultural proficiency education and training.
7. The whole community of service providers, everything that touches the lives of our children, must be fully engaged with, and invested in the early childhood development initiatives.

Based on the values and principles of the Child Centred Model, promising practices have been outlined and this prototype is a demonstration of this model.

## 5.2 Participation in the Arts & the Child Centred Model

Participation in the Arts addresses the following Core Values and Attributes of Promising Practice in the implementation of the process:

**Strength-based:** Focusing on strengths gives them energy to grow; regardless of an individual or group's situation in life, they have strengths. These strengths are valued, respected and nurtured.

*The Participation in the Arts prototype hoped to enact a strength-based perspective by cultivating conditions in which children and families can explore and build on their own strengths. Families were provided opportunities to engage in meaningful events that fostered imagination, creativity, hope, and laughter. Children were encouraged to explore and engage with activities that were designed by the organizations to connect with the themes of the shows. As a result, some of these children have developed new interests and are pursuing activities to further explore the possibilities.*



**Self-determination:** “We are put here by the creator to care for each other and for mother earth. We should therefore be responsible for ourselves, for our families, for the next generation and for our community.”<sup>13</sup> Having voice and volition to make choices to attend to individual needs leads to recognition of the responsibilities to family and community.

*Self-determination implies that people have the power or freedom to control their own life. This includes feeling competent with the knowledge and skills, or ability to seek out the knowledge and skills, to be successful. One young man has been positively impacted by his participation in that he sees options that are available to him now and he is choosing to be involved in different arts and recreation opportunities:*

*It showed him a side of himself, I think, that he didn't see before, with the music, and with the play. I never saw that out of him before, and now he wants to go to Manitoba Theatre for Young People. He wants to do things like that. He wants to be active, be a part of the everything. (Miranda)*

*Parents and caregivers shared the importance of being able to choose the different arts and recreation activities that best suited their interests and their family. They felt that trying new opportunities was an exciting part of this prototype and allowed them to learn more about their preferences and emerging interests they can pursue.*

**Person Centred:** Services are responsive in considering people as wholistic beings who have competing needs and differing priorities; therefore, services are flexible.

*Offering the resources and supports to address the barriers of cost, transportation, and childcare were important acknowledgments of the different needs and priorities of families who want to access arts and recreation events. The prototype was able to address these individualized needs for each of the performances and events.*

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<sup>13</sup> KSCS (Kahnawake Shakotiiia'Takehnhas Community Services). *Aboriginal values and social services: The Kahnawake experience.* (Ottawa: Canadian Council on Social Development) 1994 at 22.

**Non-judgment:** All people are welcomed and respected regardless of situation or circumstance. People are met where *they* are at: services recognize that people are at different stages in their own journey, face different challenges and have varied gifts.

*Families were welcomed into spaces where some had previously felt unwelcome. Most of the organizations were very aware of how they interacted with the families to overcome this barrier. They worked to make the events welcoming, respectful, and positive experiences for all members of the family attending the venue.*

*Well, at least I know, like before I just thought no one goes to this except really high-end people, you know? Like, to an actual theatre. (Miranda)*

**Restorative:** Time, space and opportunity for healing and self-care is available to people regardless of their socio-economic status; people in poverty are often denied any access to the respite and relaxation that most people feel is essential for their well-being.

*The opportunity for families to engage in arts and recreation activities is indicative of this value. These events provided the venue and resources for families to come together, build memories, and foster belonging. They were able to take the time to enjoy what was often a new experience. This prototype was built to acknowledge the need for families to have time and space to connect and enjoy themselves – an important part of emotional and mental wellbeing.*

**Equity:** Certain individuals or groups face more challenges than others and therefore require more support. Specialized services, increased opportunities, and support is available to those who have greater need.

*The enactment of this principle in the prototype meant that resources that would not normally accompany tickets to a performance or venue were made available to families. Equitable access to arts and recreation is a critical element to overall health and wellbeing. This prototype supported equitable access through tickets, transportation, childcare, and meals.*

*I wasn't really able to go before because, you know, money, transportation, I don't have a driver's license. Another big one is that I have two children with ADHD so that's another barrier because they can get extremely angry when I try*

*to go out with them. They have meltdowns. But they loved the symphony. They loved the loud music. (Mary)*

**Options:** A wide variety of resources and services are accessible and appropriate to effectively meet the diverse needs of families and individuals.

*The families were provided a variety of arts and recreation based options as a part of this prototype. Feedback from the families indicated that these options allowed them to learn more about each of the arts areas and learn about their own preferences for engaging in arts and recreation in the future. Even when families did not end up loving all of the activities (for example the ballet), they did appreciate the opportunity to decide for themselves these preferences. In addition, families ended up really enjoying activities that they would not normally have had access to. Families were also provided activities within some of the arts and recreation events that were tailored specifically for the families and this was appreciated and enjoyed.*

The Child Centred Model is based on the work of leaders in the North End of Winnipeg. Using the model in conjunction with their work with families organizations have seen tangible and meaningful successes for families. In the application of this model to the design and implementation of the Participation in the Arts prototype the Project was hoping to remove barriers experienced by families who would like to access arts and recreation events and create spaces of hope, relationship building, and family bonding.

The application of this model is consistent with the review of literature, completed in Section 2, which outlines key learning from previous research in this area. The review indicated that the opportunity to participate in arts based events can enhance quality of life and happiness and produce positive impacts on: personal development, social cohesion, community empowerment and self-determination, local image and identity, imagination and vision, and health and wellbeing. There is a difference in potential impacts felt as a result of active versus passive participation by an individual. Finally, meaningful experiences engaging with arts and culture in community is directly related to greater sense of belonging.

When considering the implementation of work that increases families' access to participate in arts and recreation events in the community it is critical to address the application of the promising practices of the Model including: strength-based, self-determination, person-centred, non-judgment, restorative, and equity.

## 6. What Did We Learn

The goal of this prototype was to understand and document barriers experienced by families in accessing arts and recreation events in Winnipeg while also learning more about the positive benefits experienced as a result.

**Addressing barriers to participation makes the arts accessible** for families with young children who have low-incomes. In addition to the costs of tickets, transportation and childcare, the time and effort to organize these logistics are barriers for families.

**Feeling welcomed and engaged contributes to positive impacts.** Families indicated that they felt welcomed at each of the venues and this impacted their desire to attend arts events in the future. Families responded very positively when special activities and considerations for their families were made. They were appreciative of extra efforts, which made them feel they truly belonged.

**Participation in the arts contributes to families' sense of wellbeing.** During the implementation of this prototype, outcomes identified for families included increased attendance at arts and recreation related venues, opportunities for creating memories with children, exposure to new experiences, interest in continued arts participation, and community building. Interest was piqued for the children who visited the various events. Acting, photography, creativity, exploration, and curiosity were shared as an impact seen by the parents and caregivers.

## 7. Impacts and Ongoing Efforts

The prototype demonstrates a promising model for philanthropic organizations to make the arts both accessible and meaningful for marginalized families.

The prototype implementation also had several direct impacts such as:

- Increased family and community bonding through shared experiences
- Fostering hope and imagination for the future by providing opportunity for new experiences for all participating family members
- Increased understanding among the parents and caregivers of the importance and benefits of engaging children in the arts
- Increase understanding among arts organizations of the challenges facing marginalized families

At the time of this report, the partnership continues to move forward with supporting families to attend arts and recreation events in Winnipeg. For 2018, there are four family events planned.

## 8. Conclusion

The prototype was successful in addressing the barriers of attending arts and recreation events for families with young children. It allowed families to increase their involvement in these types of activities, which had previously been described as very little participation to moderate. Families felt the prototype was successful at meeting their needs and the hopes of achieving opportunities that supported skill building, family bonding, identity building, community pride, recreation, positive mental health, and belonging.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Summary of prototype activities

Date	Event	Host Organization	# of Families	Supports
Jan 3, 2016	Mission: Munchpossible	Prairie Theatre Exchange	6	Transportation, lunch
Feb 5, 2016	Billy Elliot	Royal MTC	9	Transportation, Dinner, childcare
May 8, 2016	Peter Pan	Royal Winnipeg Ballet	7	Transportation, Lunch, childcare
Aug 18, 2016	Wildest Dreams	Assiniboine Zoo	8	Transportation, dinner
August 28, 2017		Winnipeg Art Gallery	6	Transportation, lunch
Sept 25, 2016		Fort Whyte Alive	6	Transportation, dinner
Oct 22, 2016		Children's Museum	7	Transportation, dinner
Dec 11, 2016	E.T.	Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra	8	Transportation, lunch, childcare
Mar 25, 2017	Baobab	Manitoba Theatre for Young People	3	Transportation, lunch
Apr 22, 2017	Sarah Ballenden	Royal MTC	6	Transportation, meal, childcare (on-site and organized by Royal MTC)
Aug 1, 2017	Canada Summer Games - Baseball		4	Transportation, meal



## Appendix 2: National Leasing Arts & Theatre Partnership Intake

### The Winnipeg Boldness Project National Leasing Arts & Theatre Partnership Intake

**\*Please fill out one form for each parent/guardian in the household**

#### Parent/Guardian Information

Legal First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Legal Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Your previous/current participation in the arts/theatre:

- 0 - None       1 - Very Little       2 - Somewhat       3 - Moderate   
4 - Active       5 - Extremely Active

Your family's previous/current participation in the arts/theatre:

- 0 - None       1 - Very Little       2 - Somewhat       3 - Moderate   
4 - Active       5 - Extremely Active

What have been barriers to participation in the arts for you and/or your family?

- Cost       Transportation       Lack of Information       Too Nervous/Anxious   
Location       Unaware       Feeling Unwelcome       Other \_\_\_\_\_

What do you and your family hope to achieve through participation in this partnership?

- Skill Building       Family Bonding       Identity Building       Community Pride   
Recreation       Mental Health       Belonging       Other \_\_\_\_\_



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### Appendix 3: Interview Guide for Families

1. How many events have you attended?
2. Did you have a favourite event?
  - a. If yes, why was it your favourite?
3. Have you attended shows or visited the places before?
  - a. If no, are these experiences that you have wanted to do beforehand?
4. Is there anything you would change about how the events are generally structured? (i.e dinner, show of some kind, activity)
5. Is there a way you would improve the experience for families?
6. Have the experiences been positive for you?
7. Have they been positive for your kids?
8. How did you feel having the opportunity to experience these events as a whole family?
  - a. How about events that weren't appropriate for all ages?
9. Do you feel the barriers to participating in the arts were removed for these events?
  - a. If no, what barriers were you still experiencing.
10. Has the exposure to different arts and recreation activities impacted your children?
  - a. Have they expressed interest in trying new things?

## Appendix 4: Interview Guide for Partners

### National Leasing

1. How long has National Leasing been involved in arts granting?
2. Have you seen an evolution in how arts and recreation organizations engage with the community? Particularly marginalized communities?
3. What made The Winnipeg Boldness Project an ideal partner for this program?
4. Over the last two years, have there been challenges to providing arts and recreation experiences for families while also removing barriers?
5. Will you continue to try and provide these types of opportunities after the partnership with Boldness ends?
6. What have you learned about working with families in a different way?
7. What was the response from the various arts/recreation organizations about doing a Boldness night for families?
  - a. What was there feedback after the events?

### Partner organizations

1. Is engaging with the community, particularly marginalized communities something that has been identified by the organization as important?
2. Has the organization taken steps to implement any of the TRC's Call to Action?
3. Has the event(s) you hosted for Boldness families made you think differently about how you engage with marginalized communities?
4. Have there been any changes to how you engage and work with these communities following the event?
5. Are there ways the organization can still improve engaging with marginalized communities?
6. Have you or the organization thought of ways to engage with whole families?