

AKA artist-run

Strategic Vision 2019 to 2022

AKA gives thanks to the many voices who contributed to the research, consultation, and authorship of this vision.

Mandate and values

AKA is a centre for emergent practices for artists at any stage of their careers, providing space and support for critical, safe, and open exchange.

We are committed to creating space for experimentation, artist-led research, and self-determined direction. We aim to build connections between artists, local communities, and national and international audiences, posing questions without knowing the answers.

AKA's artistic direction considers the intentionality behind our founding - led by a female cooperative making space for experimental work - and our role within the national ecology. We have a renewed belief that our relevance is tied to our ability to take risks, to be responsive and agile in our support of artists and their ideas. AKA values:

Flexibility, Support, and Self-Determination

AKA acknowledges that emergent practices can happen at any stage in a career. At the core of our work, we prioritize flexible relationships with artists, enabling them to propose their own direction, adapting to artists' individual needs for support, education, and learned experiential knowledges.

Visibility and Inclusivity

Throughout our history AKA has been informed by the cultural context of this land and the perspectives of the people who live here. This means that we program significantly more work by artists identifying as Indigenous, newcomers of diverse backgrounds and circumstances, and artists who experience marginalization for their beliefs, backgrounds, or identities.

Community, Kinship, and Transparency

AKA defines community as *joint ownership* referencing the founding of artist-run centres, social responsibility, and the idea that a place can be created and given meaning through the actions of its users. This concept has been the core of AKA's program since its origin as The Shoestring Gallery and is the foundation upon which we seek to build kinships with artists, local communities, and partners. AKA is dedicated to the ongoing education and transparency required to be an ally, committed to our location, Treaty Six Land and the Homeland of the Métis, and meaningful acts of reconciliation/conciliation.

Strategic Vision Statement 2019 to 2022

Throughout 2018, AKA has developed this strategic vision with authorship from the board, staff, members, artists, and collaborators by consulting with working groups and surveying a wide range of participants on their engagement and perspectives of AKA. This planning work has uncovered key priorities that describe AKA's responsibilities to:

Respond to the evolving needs of artists. AKA's relevance as a multidisciplinary artist-run centre is rooted in our founding. Responding to a need for visibility and space, AKA, formerly The Shoestring Gallery, was founded by a female-led collective solidifying our purpose to enable artists to propose their own direction, led by individual research interests. AKA's key artistic activities over the next four years will continue to prioritize emergent practices at all professional career levels by increasing research and creation support, and enabling artists to inform the shape of their projects through thematic frameworks. Our dedication to experimentation is also built upon our relationships with artists, providing support throughout project creation, development, and presentation. AKA creates opportunities for education, experiential learning, partnerships, and intergenerational mentorships.

Pursue sincere relationships. AKA continues to learn what it means to engage in sincere kinship, dedicating ourselves to the continued education and transparency required to be an ally and community resource. Over the past two years, and particularly through recent knowledge-keeper guided programs, AKA has been given meaning through the actions of individual users. Our publics are changing, as artists and their projects are building connections with new participants. Over the next four years, AKA will disrupt the institutionalism of our white cube by inviting diverse communities and individuals to share their personal histories in connection with featured projects, while seeking new ways to bring artist's work into direct contact with publics through engagement activities outside of the gallery.

Build financial stability. As equal shareholders in the property managed by 20 Above Holdings Inc., AKA and Paved Arts share an investment in a significant capital asset, as such we have a responsibility to our neighbourhood and the constituents of Saskatoon and Saskatchewan. Fortified by our 2018 success in achieving a new City of Saskatoon property designation as a non-profit arts space, and securing reduced and abated taxes into the future, 20 Above Holdings will conduct research on our next phase of capital growth and investment in Saskatoon. As a thriving non-profit arts hub in Riversdale, our goal is to expand our support to local artists, multidisciplinary arts groups, essential service organizations, and neighbours.

Preserve our history for an informed future. AKA recognizes that the understanding of our history is necessary for our future and the preservation of our legacy. Through 20 Above Holdings, AKA

and Paved Arts will work to fund a Saskatoon archive of artist-run activity including AKA, BlackFlash Magazine, Paved Arts, and the former Tribe Inc., located at 424 20th Street West. As we continue to evolve, the histories of our artist-run centres must be accessible to boards, staff, artists, and constituents in perpetuity.

Refresh and review governance. By capitalizing on the immense amount of work and consultation accomplished through AKA's strategic planning process, we will undertake a thorough review of our policies. Further, given the safe work spaces policy development that has been undertaken by our artist-run peers, AKA will be drafting a new policy and undergoing safe work space and conflict resolution training. Accomplishing this governance and administrative work will contribute to our current momentum, evolution as an artist-run, and ongoing stability. This work includes forming a new staffing model for AKA, with equal responsibility and pay, to provide an even distribution of the operational workload and effectively implement strategic priorities, while ensuring the transfer of institutional knowledge for future staff.

Brief History

Founded in 1971 by Dorothy Boerma, Lorna Russell, Ann Newdigate, Jo Claire, Betty Meyers and others, The Shoestring Gallery was among the first in Saskatchewan to prioritize exhibitions representative of the province's Indigenous and Ukrainian communities. In 1982, the gallery was accepted as a member of the Association of National Non-Profit Artists' Centres, changing its name to Also Known As (AKA) Gallery. In 1985, AKA moved to the Saskatoon Warehouse Artspace (SWA) where it resided for twenty years with The Photographer's Gallery and Video Verite, (later to become PAVED Arts), Tribe Inc. and Blackflash Magazine. In 2005, when the warehouse building was sold; SWA was dismantled and 20 Above Holdings Inc. was formed as the centres began the search for new homes.

As equal shareholders in 20 Above, in 2008 AKA and Paved Arts purchased our current location at 424 20th Street West in the historic Riversdale district. The Riversdale neighbourhood has been dubbed part of the cultural corridor of Saskatoon, and it is a rapidly gentrifying area dividing new populations of young professionals and displaced core neighbourhood residents. AKA's neighbours are largely food, health and family support services continuing to serve clients who can no longer afford to rent or own property within Riversdale. Throughout AKA's ten years in the area our programming has expanded to build sincere relationships with core neighbourhood communities and local service organizations by seeking relevant intersections with local and visiting artist projects, residencies and partnerships. As a non-profit arts hub in Riversdale, through 20 Above Holdings, together AKA and Paved support local artists, multidisciplinary arts groups, and essential service organizations.