



Surveying the Landscape:

The New Play Ecology in Canada Executive Summary

Research Compiled & Reported by Louise Casemore
for Alberta Playwrights Network



Canada Council
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project overview

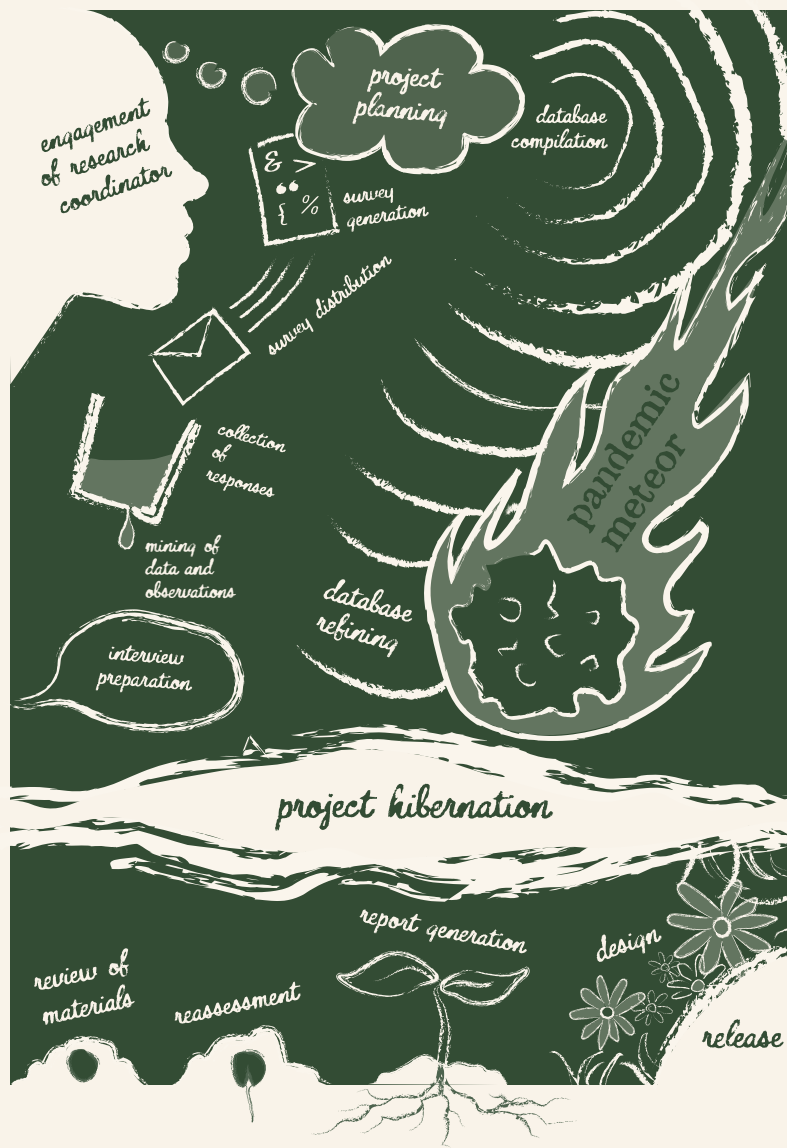
Spearheaded by Alberta Playwright's Network and compiled by Research Coordinator Louise Casemore, this 24 month study focuses on:

“ gathering information directly from playwrights about their experiences with creating new work across the country

% analysis of the resulting data and firsthand accounts to determine patterns and recurring themes

{ compilation of a practical resource database for playwrights; indicating programs, contacts, and opportunities for developing and distributing their work

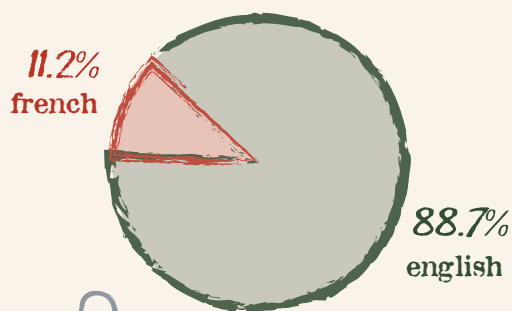
& reporting back to the community with research findings, survey data, and public release of the database



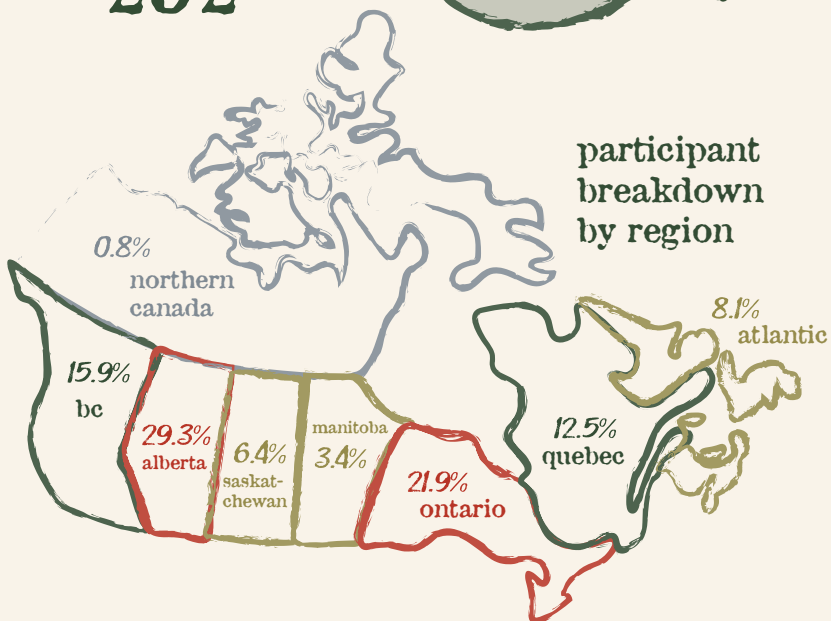
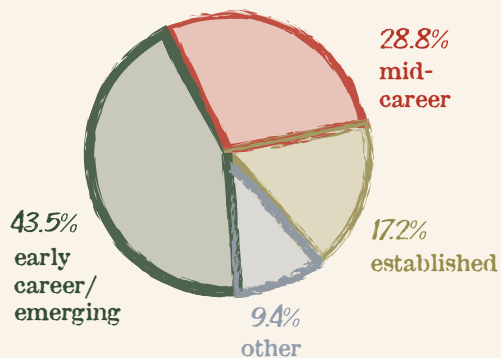
playwright survey

participant demographics

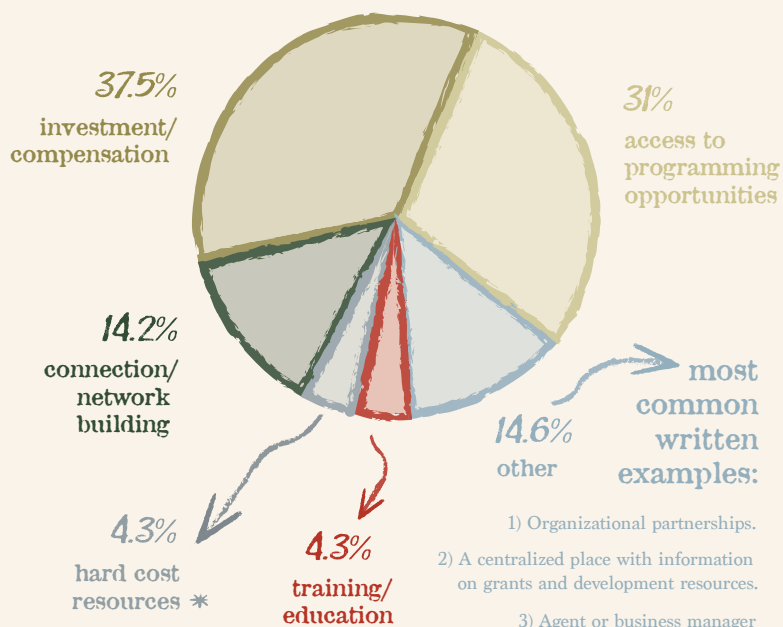
total survey responses
232



What stage do you identify with in terms of your playwriting experience?



What would provide the highest impact to your current needs as a playwright?



most common written examples:

- 1) Organizational partnerships.
- 2) A centralized place with information on grants and development resources.
- 3) Agent or business manager to market productions.
- 4) Dismantling of systemic racism and patriarchal values inside the industry.

* Note: this was a significantly higher priority for the french language respondents

communication
compensation
production
attendance
autonomy
longevity
approval
time

key components of positive impact during play development

creative differences (particularly with dramaturgs and directors)
bad contracts/lack of contracts

key components of negative impact during play development

burnout
difficulty with access/dissemination
bullying
gatekeeping
demoralizing rejections
insufficient development
isolation
discrimination
lack of communication

database

statistical highlights

purpose



To compile information surrounding programs and initiatives dedicated to play development across Canada.



To analyze the submission process, policies, and methods of engaging with playwrights being utilized by arts organizations.



To create a practical resource for artists on Canadian companies and festivals that publicly identify as producing and developing new plays.

play development centres - 10

theatre companies - 80

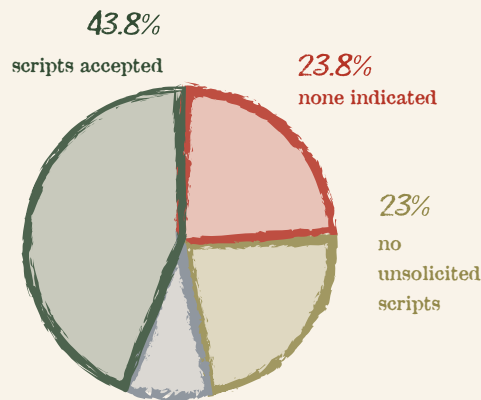
festivals - 21

service organizations - 10

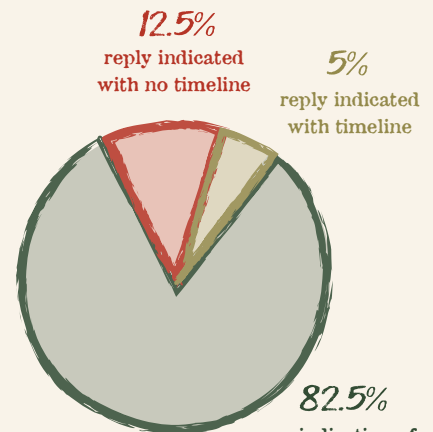
funders - 15

publishers - 10

Theatre companies accepting script submissions from playwrights:

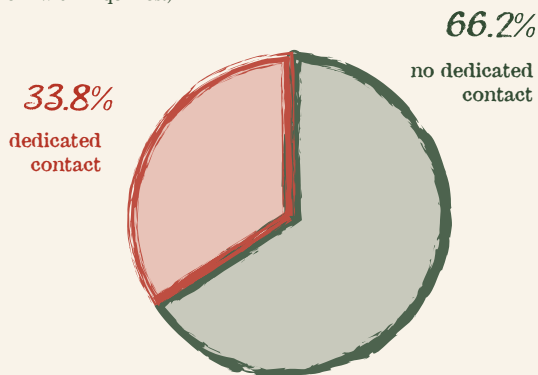


Theatre companies indicating they will offer a reply to playwright inquiries/submissions:



Theatre companies with a dedicated contact for play development:

(This includes Artistic Directors/Company Leadership, if playwrights are invited to contact them with inquiries.)



Theatre companies with programs or activity involving playwrights or new work development:



summary of recommendations

for organizations and agencies within the sector

employ a policy for submissions

Organizations indicating a defined set of guidelines pertaining to how inquiries and submissions from playwrights are handled go a long way toward fostering welcoming relationships with artists who may wish to connect with a company.

1

abandon the one-size-fits-all development model

A meaningful step inside the process of dismantling the colonial and hierarchical practices associated with play development includes evolving out the mindset which traditionally dictates a draft/read/workshop/repeat model as the path for most new plays.

2

develop a communication policy for artist inquiries

The most basic approach includes a publicly available indication that artists who submit plays or inquiries will not hear back unless selected for further steps or more information is desired.

3

eliminate opportunity stipulations based on age

Organizations can create greater access in areas of historical exclusion by reassessing the application criteria for programs and submission opportunities which places limitations on eligibility based on age.

4

expand the definition of local

5

A call for organizations to assess how their programs and opportunities may serve artists who are historically excluded by virtue of their location being outside of the larger city centres by allowing a wider geographical breadth for opportunities, allocating a portion of budgets toward subsidizing travel costs for regional artists/ participants to attend events or presentations, and creating inclusion pathways for out of town artists to regularly participate in activities through video conferencing

support for existing works/secondhand productions

6

Producing organizations are asked to prioritize second and subsequent productions as part of their overall programming strategies and consider opportunities for inter-provincial collaborations.

carving space for feedback

7

The presence of feedback can be the oxygen of healthy and sustainable artistic ecology. Outbound feedback includes offering input on submissions or playwright inquiries, inbound includes regular invitations for members of the community (both artistic and beyond) to share their insights both directly and anonymously.

contract reform

8

Within the scope of play development, it is critical that we bring an end to contracting which perpetuates pay exclusion for playwrights who are working between workshop and premiere.

follow up study

9

Given the scope of research and timeframe of the data, which was compiled immediately before a global pandemic, there is a significant need for follow up study and comparative data to analyze the post-COVID impact on the sector and the subsequent impact to playwrights.

for questions or
more information,
please contact:

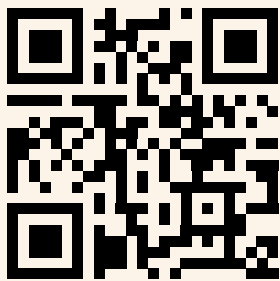
Louise Casemore

Author and Research Coordinator
louise@albertaplaywrights.com

Trevor Rueger

Executive Director, Alberta Playwrights Network
trevor@albertaplaywrights.com

to access
the full report
and study
database,
please visit:



[albertaplaywrights.squarespace.com
/surveying-the-landscape](http://albertaplaywrights.squarespace.com/surveying-the-landscape)

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