

Summary of SPAR's talk "The Nomad's Perspective: Evidence from Saskatchewan" presented at the Saskatchewan Arts Alliance's 2016 Arts Congress; Into the Future Wild in Regina, SK on 6 May 2016.



Project Introduction

The Saskatchewan Partnership for Arts Research (SPAR) was formed in 2012 for research to support evidence-based programming and policy-making for the arts. Its partners are: Saskatchewan Arts Alliance (SAA), Saskatchewan Arts Board, SaskCulture, and the University of Regina. These partners are vital to the project providing leadership and direction as well as resources such as funding, in-kind support, and staff-time). These partners also critical for disseminating our work throughout their organizations and beyond.



SPAR's Mandate

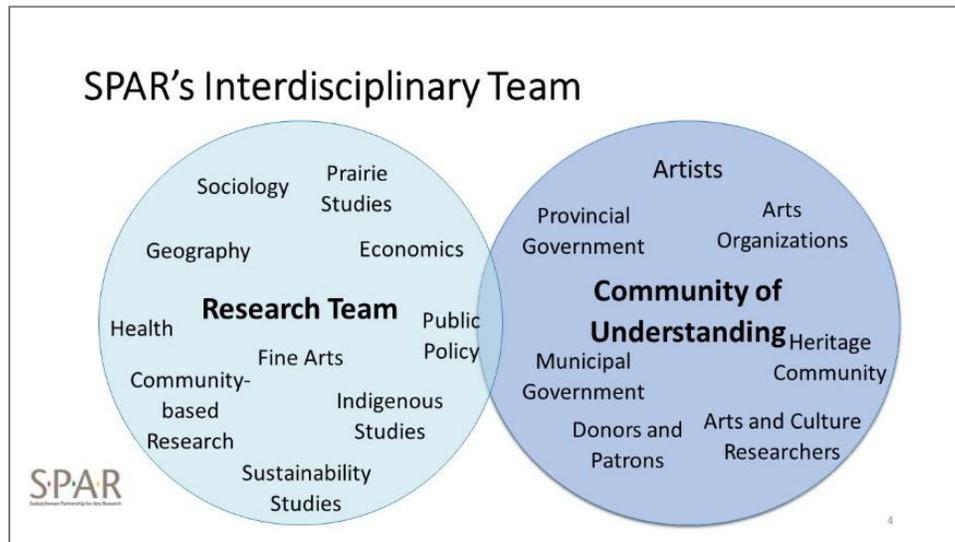
SPAR's mandate is to scientifically gather primary data on Saskatchewan, starting by studying the arts as an ecosystem in Saskatchewan (including artists and the public) in hopes of better understanding how artists create and work on a daily basis (their community interactions, needs and access). The work involves a wide range of artists and other stakeholders in the arts ecology.

Gathering primary data on Saskatchewan is challenging for various reasons, including its relatively small and geographically diverse population. Studying *individual* artists is also tough, but valuable. Studying *organizations* is easier; they are nicely grouped, keep records and reports, etc. Studying artists in their communities, their daily work and networks is challenging but crucial in order to start understanding the many intricate & interconnected ways artists work and live.

So, the work is messy.

SPAR's Interdisciplinary Team

The project needs a wide range of artists and other stakeholders in the arts ecology to attempt it. Both our research team and our community of understanding providing perspectives as well as help shape research questions and practice.



Understanding the Arts Ecology of Saskatchewan (UAES).

SPAR's first project is *Understanding the Arts Ecology of Saskatchewan (UAES)*. It is funded by a \$200,000 grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), and contributions from the SPAR partners. This project brought \$200,000 of essentially non-arts-funding into the province to study artist and the arts.

Defining Arts Ecologies

A useful definition of Arts Ecology comes from Ann Markussen, the lead author of a 2011 paper, *California's Arts and Cultural Ecology*:

An arts and cultural ecology encompasses the many networks of arts and cultural creators, producers, presenters, sponsors, participants, and supporting casts embedded in diverse communities. Forty years ago, scientists and policymakers realized that treating plants, animals, minerals, climate, and the universe as endlessly classifiable, separate phenomena did not help people understand or respond to environmental problems. So they created the integrated field of environmental ecology. In similar fashion, arts producers, advocates, and policymakers are now beginning to strengthen the arts and cultural sphere by cultivating a view of its wholeness and interconnectedness... We define the arts and cultural ecology as the complex interdependencies that shape the demand for and production of arts and cultural offerings (9).

Arts Ecologies

- “We define the arts and cultural ecology as the complex interdependencies that shape the demand for and production of arts and cultural offerings.”

(Ann Markusen, 2011, *California's Arts and Cultural Ecology*)

SPAR
Saskatchewan Partnership for Arts Research



Creativity in the Community/Artists at Work
Photo: Courtesy of Last Mountain Lake Cultural Centre

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SPAR’s focus on individuals rather than organizations includes artists, other cultural professionals, as well as consumers of culture, as John Holden observes, “All of these people engage with other parts of the ecology to perform, sell, buy, share, and enjoy culture”(Ecology of Culture, 2015).

The work is timely and important both within the Canadian context, and internationally.

Canada Council CEO and Director, Simon Brault, asked:

How can we nurture a healthy ecosystem for the arts... and a better world for us all? How can we help creativity to thrive locally – for the benefit of all Canadians? How can we support Canada to become a leader in this regard on the world stage? (Creative City Network of Canada 2015 Creative City Summit, Kelowna, October 2015)

John Holden, author of *The Ecology of Culture* notes:

There is merit in analyzing how [local ecologies] operate, and how they integrate with the localised infrastructure, investment and economy. Understanding and analyzing local cultural ecologies would be of great help to local authorities and help them to see where their investment is best deployed (*The Ecology of Culture*, Arts and Humanities Research Council, UK 2015).

In its first three years (2013-2016) SPAR’s activities have included the first comprehensive survey of artists across the spectrum of the arts in Saskatchewan (2014), a survey of the public (2014), as well as qualitative consultations, including focus groups and interviews. These have resulted in reports and papers; articles & Presentations; mapping and other outputs available on the [SPAR website](#).

How well is the system sustaining creativity?

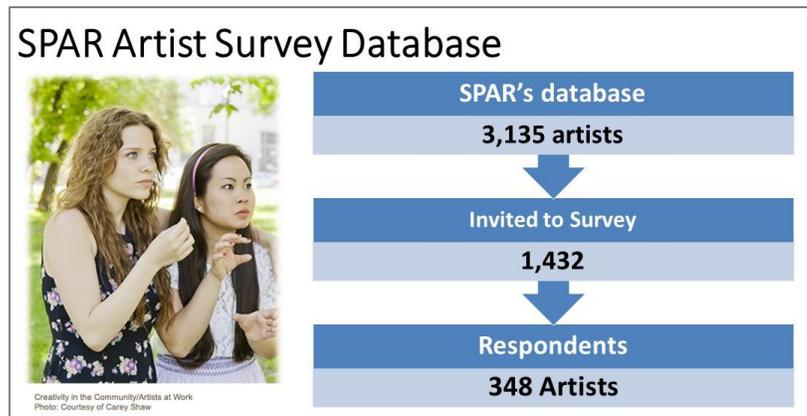
Today, we’ll be focusing primarily on the artist survey results, with particular attention to how artist-respondents are living, working, creating, and connecting in Saskatchewan.

A lot of this work is about *connections*. – specifically the nature of professional connections and networks made by artists among themselves and with their community (or communities). Are these

connections contributing to a healthy and sustainable arts ecosystem? Are they contributing to the cultural, social and economic dimensions of Saskatchewan?

SPAR Artist Survey Database

Every effort was made to develop a database, with help from our partner-orgs. While a comprehensive listing of all Saskatchewan artists is unattainable, SPAR's database included over 3,000 individuals. Of these, over 1,400 were invited to participate in an online survey. Of these, 348 individuals completed the survey. For a complete project methodology, see the [SPAR website](#), specifically [Reports and Resources: SPAR Surveys and Methodology](#).



Some Initial Numbers

Artists by Discipline

The SPAR Artist Survey asked artists to identify their general arts disciplines and allowed them to identify as many disciplines as they wished.

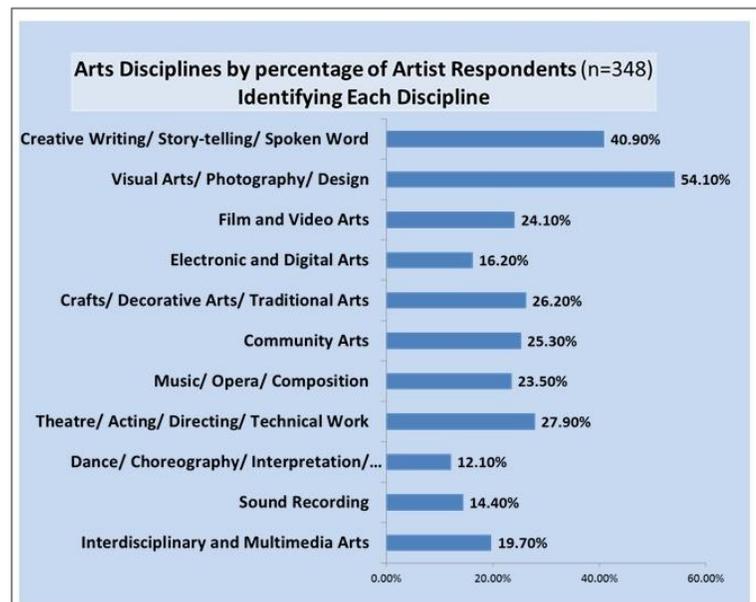
The results revealed a highly cross-disciplinary community with an average 2.77 disciplines identified per person. In fact, 74% of respondents cited more than one discipline.

The system was getting complex.

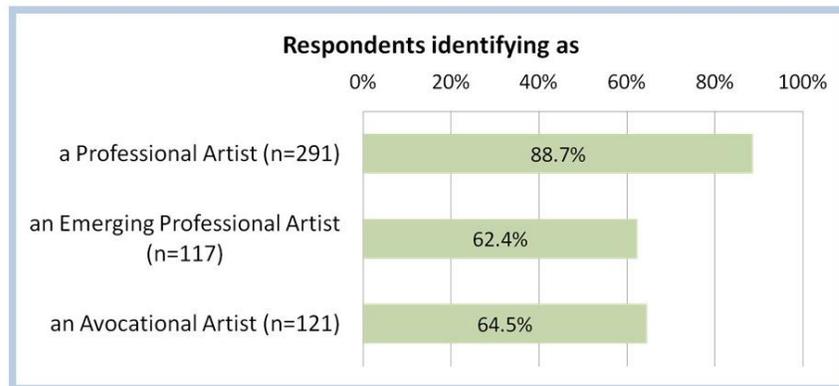
It only got more so.

We also asked artists to self-identify as Professional, Avocational, and/or Emerging Professional. Given the option to choose as many of these identifiers as they wished, many artists did so.

By allowing self-identification, we included in SPAR respondents a full range of artists – not just artists as defined by Statistics Canada (or labour force survey, etc.). Relying only on Stats Canada data gives a flawed/limited picture of how artists are working in a given place, since the identifications are based upon one occupational identifier – usually what you spend the majority of hours doing – or how you earn the majority of your money



How do Artists identify in Saskatchewan?



Artists could self-identify in any or all of the three categories. Many did.

Artists build complex networks

Artist respondents were complex unto themselves – it also soon became clear that respondents were part of complex, extensive networks. Artists ranked networking/ informal connections as important to their *overall evolution as an artist* (78%) and their *ability to create/interpret work* (68%).

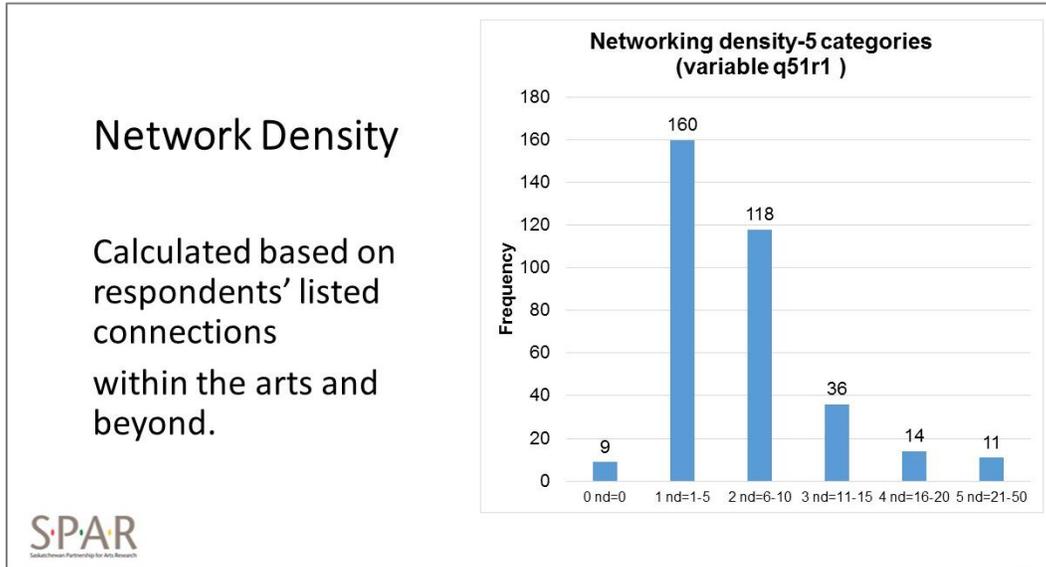
For example, one artist specifically listed local businesses that were part of a network.

I have worked with a number of Saskatoon businesses to produce work, most recently: Don's Photo, Mondrian Hall, Globe Printers, Laser Impressions, Art Placement. I purchase materials and supplies from hardware stores (Home Depot, Rona, COOP) as well as Art Placement and Michaels.

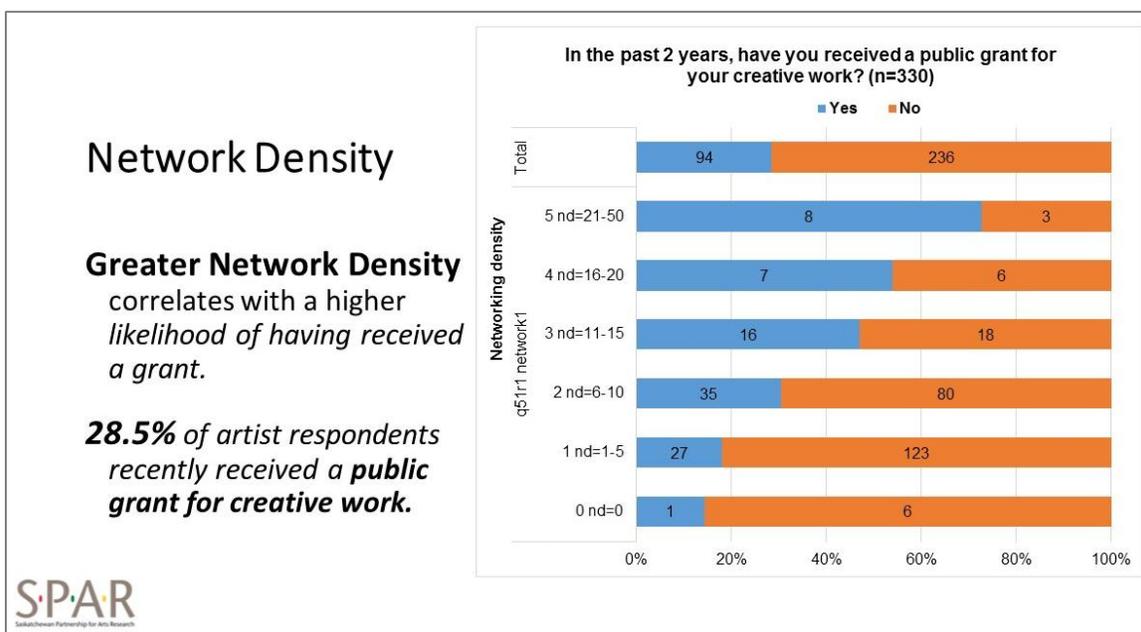


The survey asked several questions regarding artists’ connections, networks, and important connections (including groups, people, entities within and beyond the arts). Respondents provided many examples.

Generally, artist respondents also ranked networking & informal-connections as important. We developed a new variable: “networking density.” It was calculated based on respondents’ listed connections within the arts and beyond. The more connections identified, the higher the network density. Now that we could compare network density to other variables, we started seeing a few interesting things.



Greater networking density correlates with a higher *likelihood of having received a grant*. This is *correlation, not causation*. We don’t even know if there is a chicken or egg, here (Note: artist respondents who reported having received a public grant for creative work in the previous 2 years = 28.5%. Also, in several disciplines, the primary funding comes indirectly (through salaries, stipends, and fees) from arts organizations which are directly funded by their municipalities and/or agencies such as the Saskatchewan Arts Board, and/or Canada Council.

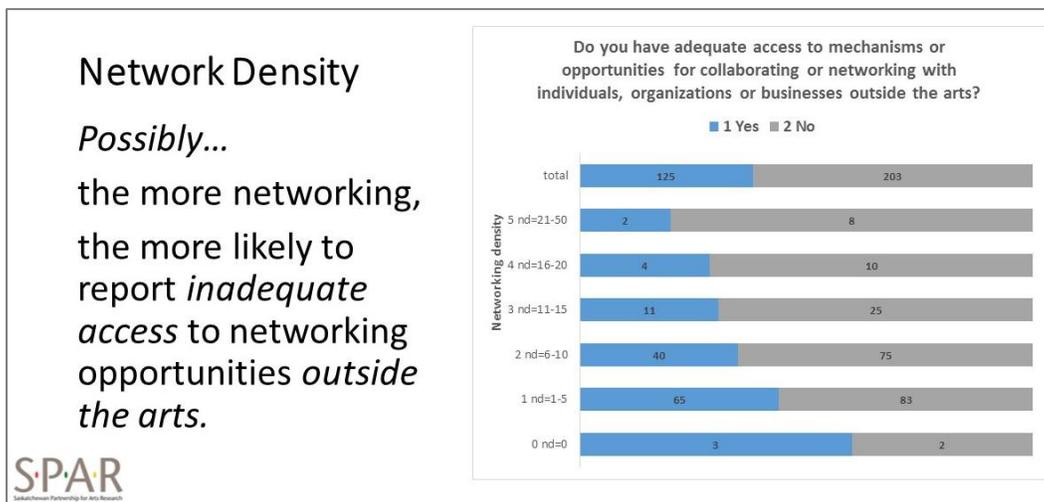


Higher networking density was also associated with both higher incomes, and residence in Regina or Saskatoon. It is still not possible to name a cause and effect relationship; this is something we need to look into further.

Opportunities for Networking and Collaboration

Networking and collaboration were important to respondents. Many artist respondents were building complex networks. Still, respondents reported wanting more connections within and outside the arts. Even this gets complex, though. Of all artist respondents:

- **44%** felt they lack adequate opportunities for networking or collaboration *with other artists or arts organizations*
- **60%** felt they lack adequate collaboration or networking opportunities *with individuals, organizations or businesses outside the arts*



Through the lens of networking density, however, it is possible that there is a connection between increased networking density and being more likely to report *inadequate access* to networking opportunities *outside the arts*. I say possibly, because this has a discernable trend, though not quite as marked as the other examples. Few responses are cut-and-dry, most lead to more questions.

Can we foster even more complex networks? (or Infrastructure for connections)

We asked, “Are there any resources that you consider to be necessary for the realization of your creative goals as an artist to which you do not currently have access?”

Answers often mentioned networking opportunities (or Infrastructure for connections):

- Social *as well as* Physical
- Within the Arts
- Within the Wider Community
- Beyond the Province

Artist respondents identified the importance of virtual spaces, for example: “Virtual space is important as is physical space,” and “The world has grown smaller and is now on our very doorstep... We have to open up more, work together, and stop being so closed off. As artists and as a people.”

Artist respondents also identified the importance of physical spaces:

- “I see the internet as a great way to still find opportunities, but ***I have made the greatest leap forwards with my career when I have been able to collaborate and be inspired by local people*** doing the same thing as I am or that I aspire to do.”

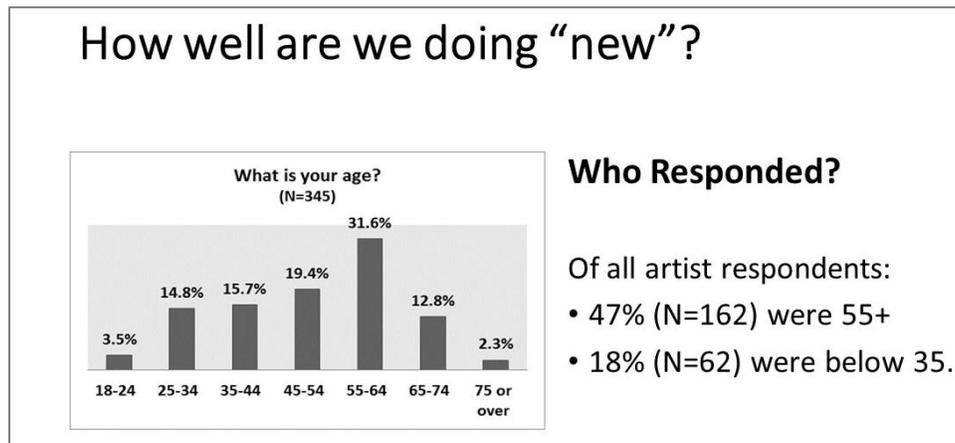
Some respondents were sure to identify the importance of very specific physical spaces:

- “In Lloyd, we have a place called *The Root: Community Emporium* that is a restaurant, a live music venue, an art show & sale venue and a site that groups can rent studio space for classes or group sales. The Root has been very important and useful to the arts in Lloydminster.”

How well are we doing “new”? – Young and Emerging Artists

SPAR needed to study not only *responses* but also *who responded*. Since our database was developed with help from our partner orgs, it is likely that the artists in that database have some connection to these orgs. Under-represented among artist respondents were newcomers to province as well as young and emerging artists.

In the Artist Survey, nearly 47% (N=162) of respondents were 55 and over. Only 18% (N=62) were below 35. In the General Public Survey, just 32% (N=41) were 55 and over and over 26% (N=34) were below 35. Within Saskatchewan’s population (2012), it was reported that 27% (N=280,100) were 15-34 and 27% (N=280,705) were 55 and over.¹



In responses to open-questions, some respondents highlighted the need for opportunities for emerging and mid-career artists and makers to collaborate, learn, and inspire together, for example:

There is a severe lack of opportunities for emerging and mid career artists and makers to get together in collaborative settings. The transfer of knowledge, ideas and learning is immense in those settings. Increased opportunities for collaboration and learning may also encourage young artists to see potential for careers in the arts.

¹ Statistics Canada. 2012. Saskatchewan (Code 47) and Canada (Code 01) (table). Census Profile. 2011 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-XWE. Ottawa. Released October 24, 2012. www12.statcan.gc.ca (accessed September 30, 2014). Note: Statistics Canada data is provided with the advice to review the source-charts and tables with their various notes regarding “data quality indicators” as provided by Statistics Canada.

How well are we doing “new”? Are newcomers included?

Newcomer-artists were not- or under-represented in survey responses. The SPAR artist respondents revealed very “Canadian” and “European” origins:

- Canadian 81.2%
- British 6.3%
- German 4.6%
- French 4.3%

(According to the 2011 NHS, 76% of Saskatchewan’s total population of European ancestry)

SPAR artist respondents were also fairly homogeneous according to birth country:

- Canada 93.6%
- United States 2.7%
- United Kingdom 2.4%

(According to the 2011 NHS, 92% of Saskatchewan’s total population born in Canada)

Artist respondents, in open-response questions, observed that it might be hard for newcomers to Saskatchewan to break into the arts community successfully without a strong network in place:

- “The arts community in Saskatchewan is very much a word-of-mouth, networking community.
- “There is no cohesive place to find opportunities and access to auditions and artist related information. It is very hard to get 'in'.”

SPAR is conducting qualitative research to reach specifically newcomer and emerging artists. To date, focus groups & interviews indicate newcomers and young and/or emerging artists might face challenges connecting with existing structures, organizations, and groups. It could be that Saskatchewan’s arts ecosystem is perceived as difficult to “break into.”

How can we foster a more robust system? Or, how generative is the system?

SPAR respondents identified need for developing resources, such as:

- Professional development opportunities
- Arts Infrastructure
- Human Resources training
- Organizational development
- Funding
- Critical discourse
- E-resources/information

Our ongoing work will continue to examine the question, “How generative is the system?” More specifically, perhaps, how can the arts become more accessible and equitable as well as more representative of the diversity of the provincial population?

We also hope to find out more ways to continue addressing issues like access, equity, and diversity.

Aboriginal Identification (First Nations, North American Indian, Métis or Inuit)

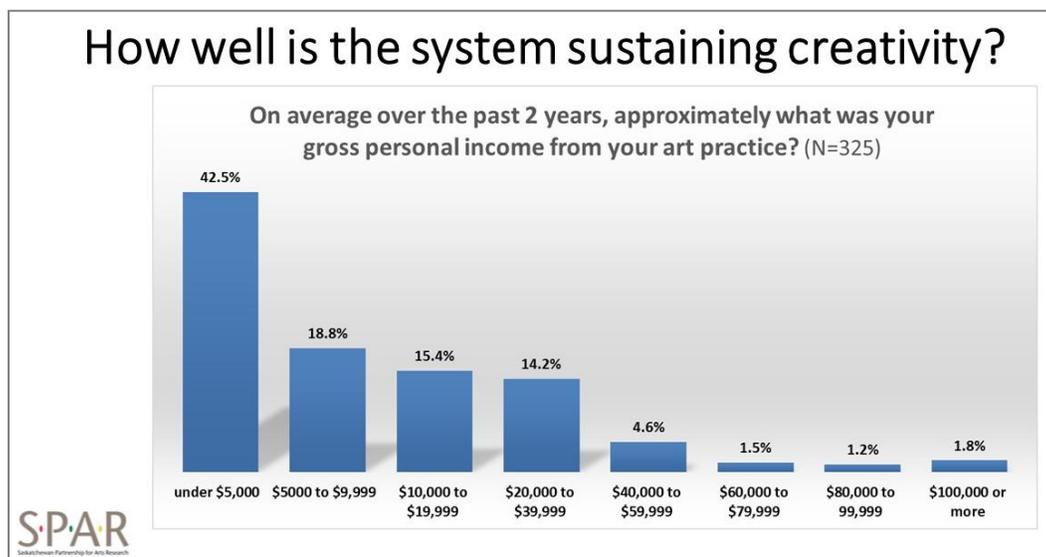
When asked “Are you an Aboriginal person? (First Nations, North American Indian, Métis or Inuit)?”, 9% of SPAR artist respondents answered “yes” (by location: Regina = 2%, Saskatoon = 4%, and other places = 3%). While this is less than the overall percentage of the Saskatchewan Population of Aboriginal identity (16%²), these response-rate for this group was higher than, e.g. newcomer or young artists. This could be due to a specific effort to recruit indigenous artists into the SAA’s Saskatchewan Artist Registry in the years leading up to the survey.

When exploring “How generative is the system?” it is important to note the apparent gaps among our respondents, e.g.: newcomer artists, artists from non-European and Indigenous backgrounds, and specifically Indigenous artists outside of major cities. SPAR is already working to involve such individuals and groups through focus groups, interviews, and case studies.

Returning to our question: “How well is the system sustaining creativity?”

Artists’ Incomes

Most artist respondents, 96.8% (n=334), reported income from creative work. Many didn’t receive much. On average over the past two years 42.5% (N=138) reported “Under \$5,000.” Less than 10% (N=30) of respondents reported earnings of more than \$40,000/yr. from their art practice. SPAR’s calculated *average* artist income *from creative work* was \$15,380.³



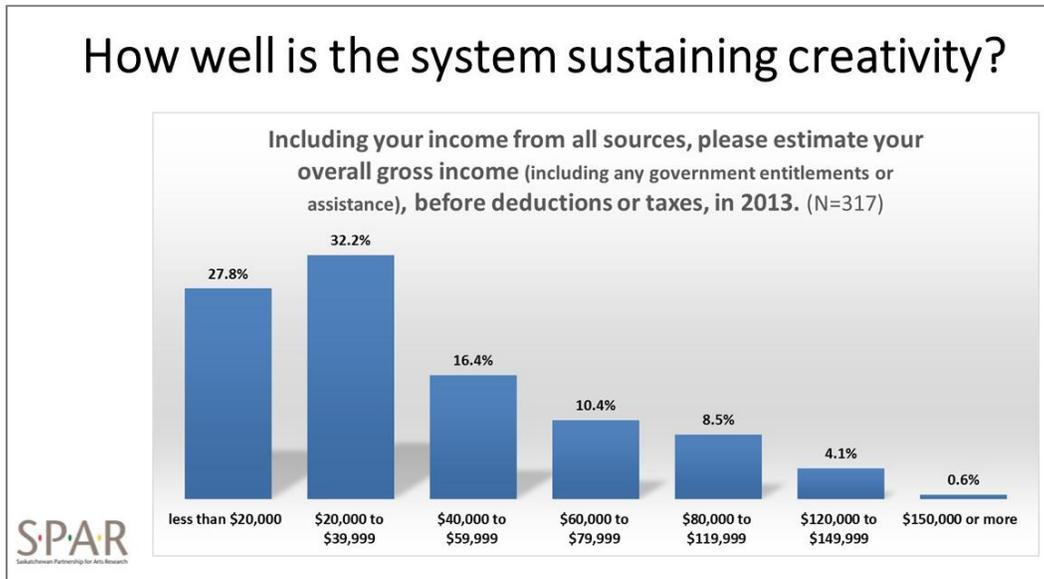
² Of the *Saskatchewan population*, those self-identifying as having Aboriginal identity are as follows: Aboriginal = 157,740 or 15.6%; First Nations = 103,205, 10.2%; Métis = 52,450, 5.2%; Inuit = 290 (Saskatchewan Bureau of Statistics, Saskatchewan Population Reports from the 2011 National Household Survey www.stats.gov.sk.ca/pop/. Released 8 May, 2013. Accessed 23 September 2014).

³ Rose Olfert 2014; Labour Force Survey, 2012.

Artist average incomes in Saskatchewan (2006 census) = \$15,400 as cited by K. Hill, [Saskatchewan Arts & Culture Statistics and Data Gaps](#), presentation at the University of Regina, March 2, 2013; accessed October 4, 2014.

Of artist respondents, 55.3% (n=188) of derived income from employment *outside the arts and culture*:

- approximately 60% reported total income under \$40,000;
- 10% of artists reported incomes of \$60,000-\$79,000; and
- another 12% reported income of \$80,000 or more.



SPAR Artist respondents average income *from all sources* = \$44,335. This is approximately \$4,000 less than the average Canadian income of \$48,100 for 2010 and \$11,535 *above* the average 2010 income of Canadian artists derived from Stats Can data (which excludes artists who teach or work more hours at other occupations than they do as artists).⁴

Artists' Work Weeks

Artists were clear: work times vary widely from week to week.

- 57% (N=194) of respondents devoted 20 hours or more per week to their creative work
- 38% (N= 129) devoted 20 hours or more a week to work outside their creative practice
- 51.6% (N=176) devoted up to 9 hours a week to teaching or mentorship in their creative discipline

Overall, SPAR calculated an "average" respondent work week of 48.5 hrs:

- 24.5 hours/week devoted to creative practice,
- 8 hours/week devote to teaching or mentorship in a creative discipline, and
- 16 hours/week devoted to work outside their creative practice.

An workweek for the *average* Saskatchewan worker is 38.8 hours.⁵

⁴ From K. Hill, *A Statistical Profile of Artists and Cultural Workers in Canada Based on the 2011 National Household Survey and the Labour Force Survey*.

⁵ Rose Olfert; Artists' Comparisons with some Provincial Benchmarks, and Artists' contribution to the economy, report prepared by Rose Olfert for SPAR, 2014; Statistics Canada. Table 282-0028 - Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by total and average usual and actual hours worked, main or all jobs, type of work, sex and age group, annual (hours), CANSIM (database): The Questionnaire categorized hours worked into ranges. For purposes of these calculations to produce

Respondents also indicated a wide range of education: not only in the Fine Arts but rather in fields such as agriculture, commerce, education, humanities, journalism, law, nursing, psychology, and various sciences.

Respondents reported a variety of advanced/professional degrees and certifications, and the occupations they pursued outside the arts reflected this diversity in fields such as secondary and postsecondary education, research, agriculture, communications, business and consulting, administration and management.

Is this a strength or success? Artists working part-time or full-time outside the arts contribute effectively to arts ecology – to what degree do they want to receive their primary income from their creative practice?

Future Planning

SPAR will continue to conduct research (especially focus groups and case studies), produce more reports and policy papers, and is in the process of applying for a multi-year SSHRC Partnership Grant of \$2.5 million over 7 years.

Thank You

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