



Northwest Territoriesmi

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MEETING EDE 132-19-23

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT

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THURSDAY, MARCH 9, 2023
EAGLE ROOM (COMMITTEE ROOM A)
10:30AM

AGENDA

1. Prayer
2. Review and Adoption of Agenda
3. Declarations of Conflict of Interest
4. Public Matters
 - a) Hearing regarding NWT Arts Strategy
 - i. Ben Nind
 - ii. Sarah Swan, yk ARCC
5. In-Camera Matters
 - a) Confidential Correspondence
 - i. 2023-02-14 – Minister of ITI
 - ii. 2023-02-14 – Minister of INF
 - iii. 2023-02-14 – Minister of ITI
 - iv. 2023-02-15 – Minister of Lands
 - v. 2023-02-17 – SCAOC
 - vi. 2023-02-21 – Minister of ITI
 - vii. 2023-02-22 – Minister of Environment and Natural Resources
 - viii. 2023-02-23 – Minister of ITI
6. New Business
 - a) Letter on Public Participation in Resource Management – O'Reilly
 - b) E-bike Rebates – Nokleby
 - c) Mine Training Society – Nokleby
 - d) Freshwater Fish Harvesters Association – Nokleby
 - e) Tucho Board – Nokleby

7. Date and Time of Next Meeting: Thursday, March 30, 2023 at 10:30AM in Eagle Room
8. Adjournment

The Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment and the Standing Committee on Social Development (Committees)

NWT Arts Strategy

March 09, 2023

Thank you. Good morning, everyone.

My name is Ben Nind. I have been a resident of the NWT since 1966. I am a graduate of the National Theatre School of Canada's English Acting Program. I returned north and founded Stuck in a Snowbank Theatre. As the Artistic and Executive Director of the Northern Arts and Cultural Centre for close to a decade, I worked with an incredible team at the community level to expand the programs of the Centre across the NWT. I have served as Co-Chair of the Northwest Territories (NWT) Arts Council and have been actively involved with northern artistic and cultural initiatives including the NWT Minister of Education, Culture and Employment's Special Committee on Arts and Culture, the Arctic Winter Games Cultural Program and have been honoured as an individual member of the Minister's Cultural Circle. I am currently serving my second term as a Board Member of the Canada Council for the Arts.

For reference's sake, before delving into the particulars of the strategy. Here is some background to put the NWT Arts Strategy in context for my comments.

1. NWT Economic Opportunities Strategy

There is no creative economy sector in the larger picture but there is under Objective 5B a section on increasing opportunities in the Arts. Which has some interesting linkages to branding initiatives, increased funding for festivals, tourism linkages, a film strategy through a separate Film Commission, provision of raw materials and the creation of an NWT Artist Association. Note that over 50% of the illustrations in this document are cultural or artistically themed.

https://www.iti.gov.nt.ca/sites/iti/files/0004-704_econ_opp_strat_low-res.pdf

2. 2022-2023 Economic Review NWT

When searching the document "arts" there is one hit – "parts". When searching "culture" there are two hits both are "agriculture" There is no mention of an creative sector.

https://www.fin.gov.nt.ca/sites/fin/files/resources/2022-23_budget_address_and_papers_final_economic_review.pdf

3. NWT Bureau of Statistics

GDP for 2020-2021

Arts, entertainment and recreation are lumped together showing \$3.9 million generated in 2020 fell to \$3.2 million in 2021 - a loss of 17.9 percent.

Digging deeper, there is a capture of language and traditional activities activity (hunting and trapping, berry picking) in the NWT but only one year of data of “Persons who produced Arts and Crafts during by Community NWT”. That was in 2013.

<https://www.statsnwt.ca/Traditional%20Activities>

What it showed was that 23.3% of the population of the NWT produced arts and crafts. That is 23.3% of the population 15 and older was active in the creative sector.

This is valuable data but it was only caught one year. Why? Because the “NWT Arts Council” asked for a question to be put in the survey. Why was this data not captured before and since then? Although there is mention of data in 2018, I was not able to find it.

4. Arts Program Review

Carried out by the Qatalyst Research Group and published in October 2022 basically found that

“ departmental mandates with respect to supporting arts in NWT are not well articulated through a set of goals and objectives for the programs under the review. The programs generally lack specific and measurable goals that can be used to measure success in meeting the Arts Strategy Goals. There is a significant overlap across some programs, in terms of who is funded and what costs are covered. This has led to confusion and frustrations among applicants navigating through the programs.”

https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/sites/ece/files/resources/arts_program_review.pdf

5. Strong Culture and Strong Territory GNWT Culture and Heritage Strategic Framework 2015-2025

This document is GNWT-wide Culture and Heritage Strategic Framework whose purpose is to identify the GNWT’s culture and heritage vision, goals and priorities until 2025. This enables GNWT departments to better coordinate and align their existing work, and to ensure that future decisions recognize the powerful link between culture and heritage and a strong territory.

NWT ARTS Strategy 2021-2031

The current NWT Arts Strategy should practically enhance the lives of artists and cultural workers and arts and cultural organizations in the NWT. The key word is that it should. It should but there are some key challenges. The reasons for this are that the strategy is unfocussed, unsupported, and underfunded.

UNFOCUSSED

Here are the reasons the strategy is unfocussed.

Baseline information. It is the root of why this strategy is unfocused.

You can't manage what you do not know.

'Under the Arts Program Review Section 1.1 Background, a summary of the arts ecosystem in the NWT is provided but it is extremely limited in its detailed information. It is evident that the GNWT does not have a baseline for the 'arts, culture, creative sector'. They cannot with 100% certainty put on your table a detailed breakdown of the who, what, where, how, and why for the sector. This is in stark contrast to the details collected for the mining sector, or the construction, transportation, and warehousing sector.

Not having a baseline affects how you mark progress and how you adjust to make progressive change. Nowhere in this strategy is the establishment of a baseline mentioned. This is troubling, especially considering the 'Strong Culture and Strong Territory GNWT Culture and Heritage Strategic Framework 2015-2025' document which highlighted Culture as an investment for the future. The baseline data needs to be captured door-to-door in each of our communities because a large percentage of the population is involved in the sector. Without it there is no focus.

Baseline reference should be considered key for each of the sections I will touch upon.

Goal 1 IMPROVE GNWT ARTS PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Interesting that the first goal of a strategy, that is for the creative sector, is for the departments producing the strategy to look at ways on how it can fix itself to make their strategy work better.

Goal 1 is not a goal for the sector – it is a goal for two wandering government departments. It has no place in the strategy and should be removed. So when, under Next Steps in the documents, it is stated that the key to success is action 1. Then one knows that this is not about the creative sector, this is about the inefficiency of government departments who continue to be unable to do the work effectively.

All the recommendations in this document directed to the Departments should be focussed instead on the creation of a fully facilitated NWT Arts Council to take the lead. More on that later.

Goal 2 STRENGTHEN EDUCATION, ENGAGEMENT, AND LEADERSHIP IN THE ARTS

This has solid intentions, but the actions, “Education”, “Engagement”, and “Leadership” are not mutually inclusive of each other. These three things alone could be the whole strategic plan.

Education

Education, for example, could simply call for the development of a full “Artist in the School Program” where creators of all descriptions rotate in and out of a full, year-round arts enhancement system to all schools in the NWT. This ensures full employment of artists and full arts programming for any school year. There are forty-nine schools in the NWT – forty-nine lead artists should be working in them on a rotational basis. These lead artists can then work with community artists, so one could double the amount of employment in the sector with a single partnership.

I have spoken of the baseline requirement necessary for good management. Education of the creative individuals is a perfect example. Who are master artists? Who is just coming into the sector? Who is interested in mentoring and teaching? These questions once answered can then be managed by asking – who is interested in further education? Who is interested in collaborating with a southern or international artist etc.? Do they go south? Or do we have a place here where teaching can occur?

The institutional question – why do we not have a fully established creative learning institution here in the NWT? Why has Aurora College failed miserably in this? Why has a Polytech not even considered it, even with a massive digital and AI shift? Why has leadership not understood that education and the arts are the base of a healthy society? Why have they not committed to it? Why is this not in the strategic plan?

Engagement

Marketing campaigns and raising the profile of employment opportunities. All I can say is that when the creative community feels supported, feels safe in the space it is creating, and feels that it can pay its bills, feed the kids and fend off the fuel bill – then the artists do all the work. Marketing is secondary – the engagement really is between the artist and community, very simple. But you cannot promote an unhappy unsupported artist. So, invest in the artist and you immediately will build a community. You miss the mark when your focus is first upon a marketing campaign and promoting employment in a sector that is not even seriously considered as an import part of the territorial makeup.

Leadership in the Arts

Interestingly there is no mention in this ‘strategy’ of arts leadership initiatives – only the mention of buildings, renovation, and conferences.

So, leadership can be divided in this instance into many levels. Individual, institutional, and political. The creatives are leaders. For the act of creation demands stepping out and taking the lead. Since the beginning, there have been storytellers, the finders of rhythm, singers, and composers. The first paintings on the walls of caves. The first embellishment on clothing. Leadership is what it takes to make these things happen. They do not happen on their own. How does this strategy support it? It is sadly not addressed.

I remind the Committee that the greatest resource in the north is its people and its greatest renewable resource is the individual’s “imagination” and drive. If you supported the exploration of imagination as you do the exploration of diamonds and gold and lithium then you support possibilities that have unlimited potential. Diamonds run out – imagination is unlimited. The creative has this power – to create something out of absolutely nothing.

Goal 3 SUPPORT ARTS INFRASTRUCTURE

It is easy to build infrastructure. It is harder to run a sustainable program. If you are going to build arts and cultural infrastructure it must be backed by two things – the community and an active supportive organization.

Again, the baseline if done properly will guide you in this. What communities have what? Which communities need the most cultural infrastructure? Which communities are working on it now? Has a Health and Safety audit ever been done for cultural spaces? How many community spaces are used for creative activity? How many are public? How many are private? How are they organized? Are they publicly funded? Donated spaces? Or paid for by the artist or a group?

Increasing access to materials starts at home. Be targeted with something that is tangible. Baseline information – material supply. What can be provided here in the NWT that is not sourced from the south? Simple question how many moose hides are left in the bush by hunters? Why are we importing hides from the south? How are stone supplies managed?

Goal 4 STRENGTHEN THE NWT CREATIVE SECTOR

Everything else seems to be thrown under this heading.

Linkages with outside networks and funders. Lots of dollars from the outside lie unused or used by someone else that could enhance artists’ endeavors here in the NWT. If you

don't apply you cannot receive it. Nowhere in this strategy does it say we will invest in a grant writing team to go community to community to assist in the writing and support individual or organizational grant writing? This is a key component of success. That and the understanding of accountability.

Creation of an NWT Arts Association – interesting that the government, which is totally unorganized and confusing in its support wants the NWT arts community to organize into a single unit instead of doing what is best for the sector and rolling itself into a one-stop shop where everyone can come to do business. I call this a diversion of unfocussed energy.

And then promote the sector to the national and international marketplace. Does the baseline data support this? Has any economic modeling been done to show how a product culturally and creatively manufactured in the NWT makes its way through the marketplace? Isn't there a question of how many artists are doing this right now on their own?

UNSUPPORTED

The creative sector is treated like a clown with two personalities. There is the Happy Clown who makes everyone laugh and claps their hands and is dragged out willingly and sometimes unwillingly when the uniqueness of the NWT needs to be showcased but is quickly stuffed in the closet when the hubrabra is all over and done with. And then there is the Sad Clown whom they feed with a little spoon every now and promise the moon and the stars, just to keep its hope and energy up in preparation to drag it out again to feel good about itself.

The sector deserves better. Far better. Expression, identity, culture, heritage. Notice they are all intangibles. But they are at the core to who we are. Leadership at all levels needs to invest in it.

UNDERFUNDED

There is no identified money for this strategy. Need I say more?

OF NOTE

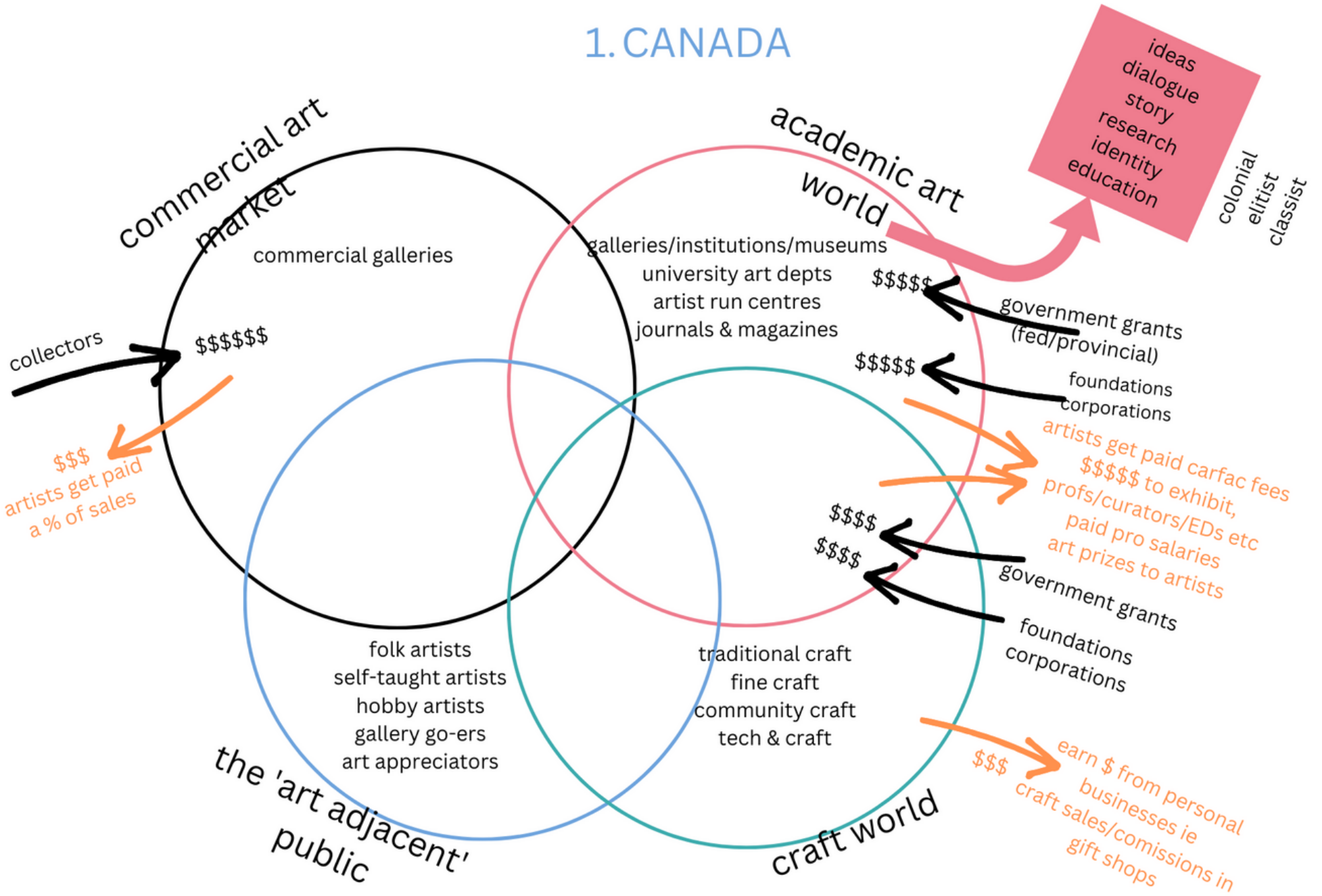
The NWT Arts Council is sadly missed in this document, and it is unfortunate because it really is the only community-based arms-length organization that serves the NWT arts and cultural sector across the NWT, except for the NWT Film Commission which takes care of that creative stream.

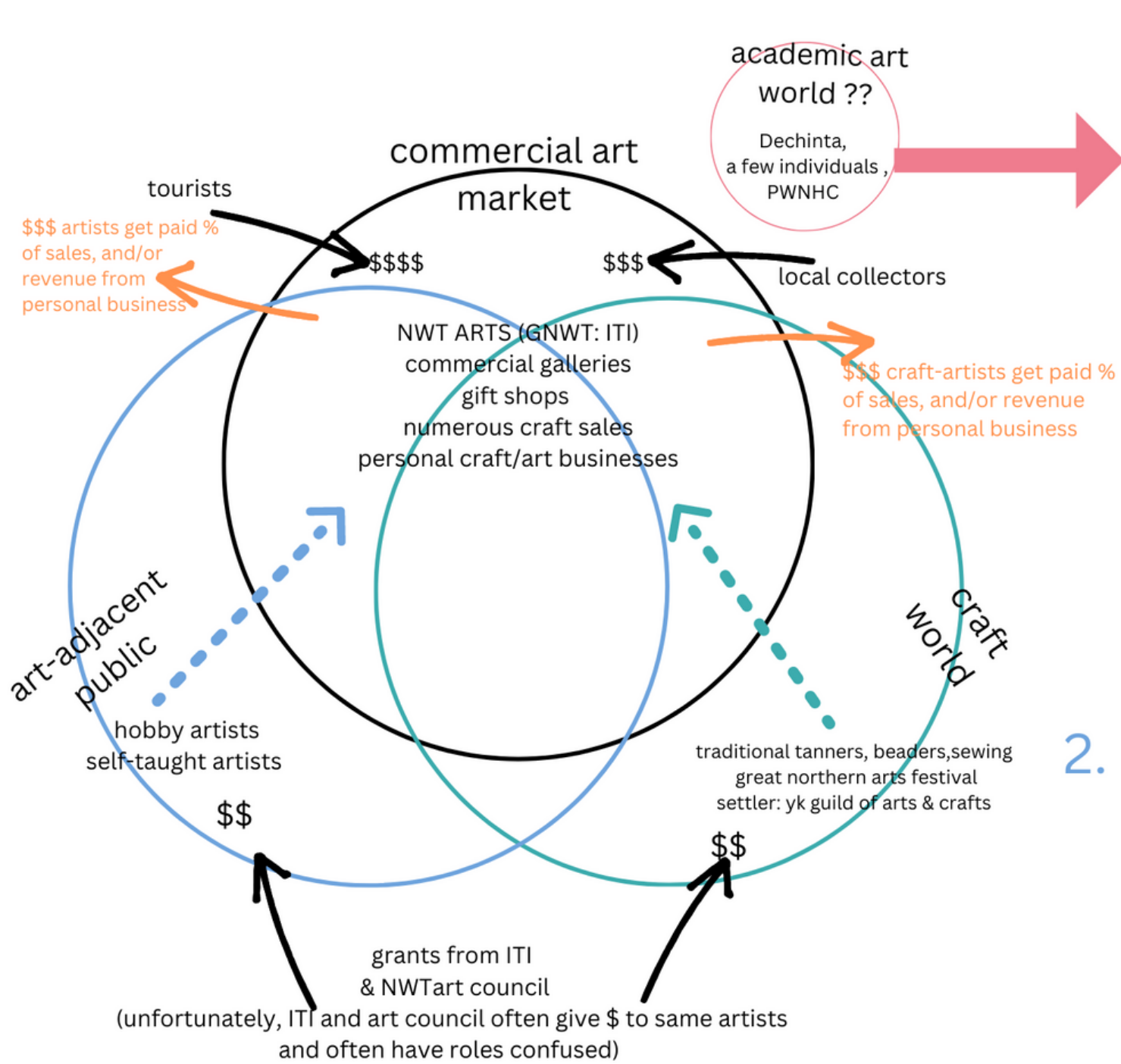
Why is the NWT Arts Council not central to this strategy? To me, it is very evident. The Council is independent. It is community-based, and it was/is/and should continue to be the litmus test of the health of the sector in the NWT. The fact that ECE has not bolstered the administration of the Council, raised its profile, or worked with ITI to establish the Council as the one-stop shop to support the sector in a very real manner, shows a total lack of leadership and concern to serve the needs of the artistic and cultural, creative community in the NWT. There are a lot of leaders in the community who have sat on this Council and know how to build and measure success at the ground level. They should all have been central to the development of this Strategy. I know that when this was first being developed the Chair of the Council at that time was not asked for her input or that of Council. And this goes to the heart of meaningful engagement and coopting community strength to back this initiative.

I thank the Committee for your time to hear this feedback. My hope is that this Strategy can be reworked to serve the needs of the creative community in a real and possible manner. Otherwise it remain too broad, too self serving for the Departments responsible and too weak to implement and measure progress.

Ben Nind

1. CANADA

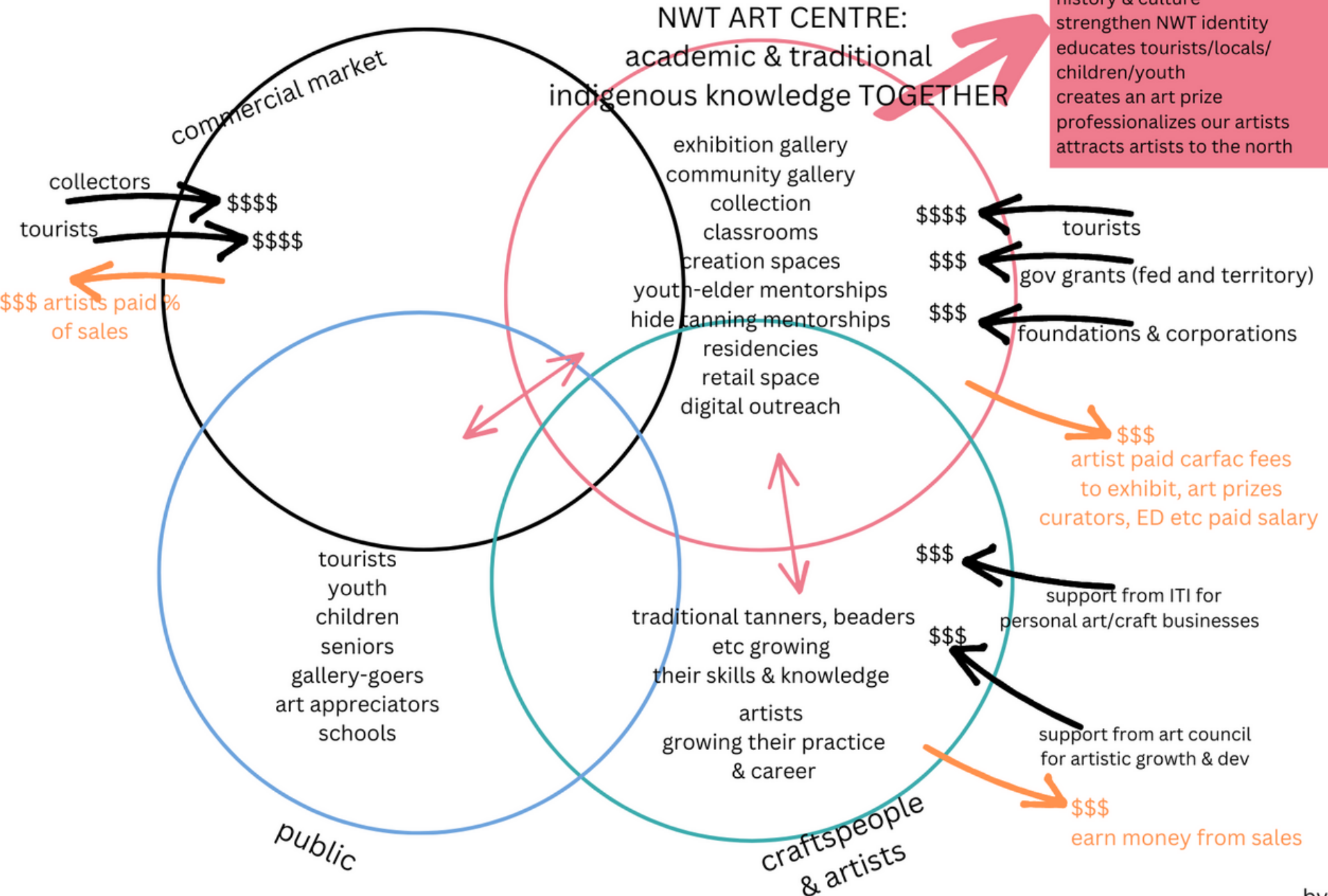




so: NWT has little dialogue with rest of canada no idea of our art narratives is conducting no research is not building NWT identity is not educating our tourists/ locals/children/youth does not have an art prize is not allowing artists any professional opportunities, artists must leave the NWT

2. NWT at present

3. NWT, ideally



develops relationship with other art centres in Canada
conducts research on our art/craft history & culture
strengthen NWT identity
educates tourists/locals/children/youth
creates an art prize
professionalizes our artists
attracts artists to the north