

PRESENTATION 3: LANRE AJAYI & DANIELLE WHYTE

The complex issue that Lanre Ajayi and Danielle Whyte identified was **How do we use our networks to expand our reach in a way that also respects artists and arts professionals?**

Lanre and Danielle identified 5 BOLD ideas to address the complex issue of networks that they are personally facing in their arts organizations. Four of these ideas were developed prior to COVID-19 and their 5th BOLD idea was an idea in response to the pandemic. Both organizations are in a growth phase with limited resources, but they know that they have their networks to support them.

1: RELATIONSHIPS WITH ARTISTS We can invest in emerging artists by supporting their creative development and creating a platform for them to showcase their talent. We can also deepen relationships with established artists through continuous and innovative collaboration. For example, Ethnik Festivals supports local artists and talent by putting them on centre stage with their international counterparts in order to foster future collaborations. Downstage has found ways to help artists to diversify their skillset by offering mentorship opportunities in producing so that they can create their own platforms. They recognize that doing so will set them up for long-term reciprocal relationships with artists who are their most valuable assets.

2: RELATIONSHIPS WITH STAFF AND BOARD MEMBERS We can strengthen our organizations with unconventional team structures that foster efficiencies and grow our community connections. For example, Ethnik Festivals has a multi-ethnic diverse team who are given opportunities to share new ideas as well as own their own project. We can also leverage the networks of staff and board members to champion our message and amplify our reach. For example, we can help our staff and board develop communication skills, create an elevator pitch, or have a business card to hand out.

3: RELATIONSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS We can share our expertise and artists with community partners to create a bridge for Calgarians to embrace a creative life through interactive artistic experiences. Community partners may include: The City of Calgary, Calgary Public Library, Immigrant Council for Arts Innovation, Centre for Newcomers, and Immigration Services of Calgary. In doing so, we can bolster empathy within our community and connect with a wider range of Calgarians.

4: RELATIONSHIPS WITH DONORS AND SPONSORS We can thank and celebrate our donors and sponsors which deepens our relationships with them, encourages continued support, and creates enthusiasm for additional support from new donors and sponsors.

The support we receive from donors and sponsors lets us dream bigger, do more, and reach more people. For example, Downstage has asked donors to host a fundraising event at their home to support specific projects that artists are working on.

5: RELATIONSHIPS DURING COVID-19 We can create interactive programming via social media that provides comfort and gives audiences something to do. We can also create opportunities for independent artists to connect with one another and continue to develop their practice. For example, Ethnik Festivals began an Instagram talk show called Global Talk Active in May which is about “common-unity in uncommon times.” Downstage is connecting one-on-one with independent artists, extending their Stage It program, and supporting new work development by emerging creators.

We invite you to engage with these 5 BOLD ideas presentations. What ideas captured your attention? Let Lanre Ajayi ethnikfashion@hotmail.com and Danielle Whyte at danielle@downstage.ca know by emailing them, starting an online chat with friends or colleagues, answering our [short survey](#), or letting us know your ideas at geraldine@rozsafoundation.org.