



June 23, 2022

RE: Welcoming City Initiative

To Whom It May Concern:

REP Here In Canada welcomes the opportunity to submit a request for financial support for the annual Better Together Gala on October 22, 2022, the activities of which are closely aligned with recommendations detailed in the City of Victoria's Welcoming City Strategy and Action Plan.

Event overview

The Gala is a unique celebration of over 100 newcomer and Indigenous performing, literary, and visual artists and creates a space for true and meaningful representation and participation of newcomer and Indigenous artists in the local arts landscape. This roving feast of arts features exhibitions, dance, musical, literary, and theatre performances, as well as a presentation of a youth award to honour achievements of newcomer, immigrant, and Indigenous youth building bridges across diverse communities. Throughout the evening, over 275 guests and 50 volunteers engage with artists and performers in an intimate setting that allows for one-on-one authentic connections and conversations. Dozens of different cultures and faith communities, along with multiple intersectionalities, are represented at the Gala and interact in a safe and supported space. In addition to the important organic and spontaneous dialogue and relationship-building that occurs at the event, the artists' exhibition and the performances themselves are structured intentionally to introduce and pose questions of culture, faith, and intersectionality. The artists and performers weave cultural-sharing and lived-experience storytelling in their exhibitions and performances to grow and further intercultural knowledge and to encourage attendee participation and interaction with their art.

The Gala creates a beautiful artistic and social space not just to showcase the talents of racialized artists and to connect the wider community with diverse communities and perspectives, but, perhaps most importantly, to have members of racialized communities see themselves represented and honoured in community arts institutions and events they may have, in the past, not have had access to or felt welcomed. Our partner, the Belfry Theatre, is pro-actively attempting to break down these real and perceived barriers and through our partnership is able to connect more meaningfully with communities that historically have not been equitably represented as performers and/or attendees/audience members. At the 2020 Gala, approximately 90 percent of the artists and attendees had never been inside the Belfry Theatre before. By the end of the event, the Belfry seemed like a second home to all present—the sense of belonging and agency palpable. The event is supported pre-, during, and post- with the development of multimedia content to promote and amplify the artists and performers, as well as the experiences of attendees, staff, and volunteers. Visible representation across digital and print platforms and social media is an integral part of furthering the sense of community and belonging that is a powerful outcome of the event.

Project Sponsors

- REP Here In Canada
- Department of Canadian Heritage
- Belfry Theatre

Welcoming Cities Request

1. The event's primary funder, the Department of Canadian Heritage, is unable to fund refreshment costs. In order to remove financial barriers to attendance, we have chosen not to charge admission to recoup these food costs. Food is an integral part of cultural-sharing and community-building; in past Galas, we were able to hire local newcomer and immigrant businesses to cater the event to further support newcomer communities. This year we would also like to support Indigenous caterers.

Estimated cost: \$20/per person @375= \$7,500

2. A pre-event or post-event activity and dialogue to host the artists and performers together would introduce the artists to specific city spaces. local community leaders and other community members in our region, broaden their connection to the community, and strengthen cross-discipline relationships and knowledge-sharing.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our proposal.

Sincerely,
Kareece Whittle-Brown
Director of Operations, REP Here In Canada