

Strategic Renewal Plan

2021-2024



PHOTO BY JERRY GRAJEWSKI

Who We Are

For over 60 years, Royal MTC has created, produced and presented extraordinary theatre for a vibrant audience. The stability and health of the organization has enabled programming across two venues, annual festivals and a regional tour. We know theatre is part of what makes communities strong. It fosters empathy and understanding, and builds human connections. Theatre is a powerful tool for social change. It also allows us to engage in critical conversations.

With the appointment of our new Artistic Director in 2019, Royal MTC has accelerated its organizational conversation about diversity, equity and inclusion. Our mission demands this shift in focus to truly “both reflect and engage the community we serve.”

Royal MTC has embraced the opportunity and responsibility to be a theatrical hub for our province. With this 2021-2024 recovery plan we will strengthen roots while broadening reach, forever connecting with Manitobans through the making and sharing of truly great theatre.

Mandate

It is the aim of the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre to study, practice and promote all aspects of the dramatic art, with particular emphasis on professional production.

Vision

Royal MTC's theatres and our province will teem with artists and audiences sharing in the act of imagining, enriching lives and communities.

Mission

Royal MTC exists to celebrate the widest spectrum of theatre art. Deeply rooted in the province of Manitoba, which gave it life and provides for its growth, Royal MTC aspires to both reflect and engage the community it serves.

Values

Excellence

Our commitment to excellence is reflected in the writing of each play and the artists who create each production, and is a promise to the volunteers, staff, funders and audiences who support it.

Balance

Our commitment to balance is evident in the composition of the playbill and in the wide range of programs and festivals Royal MTC offers.

Inclusion

Our commitment to inclusion ensures that as we share theatre throughout our city and province, we create a welcoming space for everyone.

Accessibility

Our commitment to accessibility requires that we broaden our understanding of barriers to engagement, and work to eliminate them.

Affordability

Our commitment to affordability is reflected in marshalling public and private sector support to keep ticket prices as low as possible for all Manitobans.

Sustainability

Our commitment to sustainability begins with understanding our environmental impact, and implementing best practices in environmental sustainability in theatre.

Longevity

Our commitment to longevity is evident in our governance structure, business practices and financial management.

Royal MTC in the Time of Covid

Royal MTC's most recent Strategic Plan (2017-2021) was deliberately crafted as a four-year journey, including an important Artistic Director transition. We imagined the change the company would experience in those years was to welcome new leadership, with a strong platform to envision growth and evolution. Instead, we are embarking on future-looking conversations at a most unusual time, after almost 16 months framed by closures and cancellations. Our future will be informed by the "twin pandemics" of COVID-19 and systemic racism that continue to impact communities across Canada.

To keep artists and audiences safe, the entire 2020/21 season was presented digitally. We produced the Winnipeg Fringe Festival, four significant productions for paid and free digital access, and delivered *The Bridge: A Festival of Ideas*, engaging in conversation on the theme of Art & (re)Conciliation. It was critical that we continued to make art, engage artists and creators, and keep our teams employed, even on short contracts.

Organizationally, Royal MTC is on an accelerated path of learning in equity, diversity, inclusion and specifically anti-racism, to repair and reimagine Royal MTC's relationships with the community, and to build bridges with those who have been historically excluded and underserved by our theatre.

Programmatically, we expect three "recovery-informed" seasons before the organization returns to the financial, artistic and audience health that characterized our pre-COVID scope and scale of theatre. The work ahead includes restructuring and rebuilding to support a wide range of productions, festivals, and outreach and education programs.

Through this recovery time, we look to the future, considering the place and responsibility of a Regional Theatre in our community and the national scene. There is a stirring conversation in the Canadian cultural sector, informed by and responding to the broader community. We are inspired to engage in this dialogue, to create the conditions where theatres truly represent our communities, and where the intersection of our experiences defines our storytelling. We want a range of creators to find their voice on our stages, and imagine programming that allows us to recognize our past as a country and, through art, work towards a better future.

Plan Development

With the guidance of the Board of Trustees, Governance and Strategic Planning Committee, and consultants Health in Common, this plan launched with two information-gathering processes.

First, we engaged the Board of Trustees and full staff in a survey process. Second, we felt it was important to welcome the perspectives of Royal MTC's IBPOC (Indigenous, Black, People of Colour) stakeholders (subscribers, donors, community leaders, volunteers and supporters). Health in Common convened a focus group of these stakeholders and we thank all for their honest and helpful commentary.

The Board of Trustees, staff and the group of stakeholders were further informed by the *Organizational Assessment to Support Dismantling Racism* (J. Hogue & Associates), which included feedback from IBPOC artists about their experiences working at and with Royal MTC, and our organizational learning journey this year.

Through two planning workshops, Senior Staff and the Board of Trustees came to alignment on key strategic priorities that form the backbone of this renewal plan.

The plan is intended to guide us through three seasons. 2021/22 is a season where we restart live performances, managing the expectations of artists and audiences cautiously, and creating a firm footing. 2022/23 is a season of rebound, with a robust and exciting lineup that attracts a wide audience. 2023/24 is a season ripe for growth and expansion.

In the fall of 2023, leadership and the Governance and Strategic Planning Committee will determine a new inclusive process to develop a multi-year Strategic Plan.



Priorities

Royal MTC has established a set of four priorities to inform our expected recovery seasons (2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24) with specific goals. With a focus on cultivating talent, fostering a deeper connection with community, captivating audiences and building the organizational foundation, Royal MTC will emerge from this recovery period in a stronger position to expand programming and foster a staffing infrastructure reflective of this growth.

1. **Cultivating talent:** Royal MTC will invest in development that grows artistic talent.

Specifically, Royal MTC will:

- Create opportunities for Manitoba artists, creators and production talent
- Prioritize candidates for mentorship and training programs through an equity lens
- Invest in the development of Manitoban playwrights

As the largest theatre employer in Manitoba, Royal MTC celebrates the responsibility to create meaningful opportunities for artists who live in Manitoba, working alongside the best of Canadian talent.

Programs for emerging Manitoba-based artists – including Scholarships, Apprentices, Assistants, Residencies and the National Mentorship Program – can help propel careers and address a history of an exodus of talent, most notably among emerging artists who bring diversity to the community.

The creation of the Pimootayowin Creators Circle signals where play development resources will be prioritized, fostering the talent of Manitoba's Indigenous community through extended development opportunities and a commitment to see their stories being told on our stages.

2. **Connecting to community:** Royal MTC will ensure more Manitobans see themselves reflected throughout the theatre.

Specifically, Royal MTC will:

- Foster strategic partnerships with community members and organizations to extend reach
- Identify and address barriers for new stakeholders (including audiences, volunteers, artists and staff)
- Apply an anti-oppression lens to organizational policies and practices

Royal MTC must reflect the diversity of our Province across the organization – onstage with creators and artists; backstage and throughout administration offices; in our theatres with audiences; and in the volunteers who contribute so meaningfully to our success.

We will develop best practices for igniting sustainable relationships with community ambassadors, and actively welcome new audiences to join the existing base.

As the organization continues to deliver commitments to equity, diversity, anti-racism and inclusion, we will remain transparent with community updates.

3. Captivating audience: Royal MTC will attract and grow audiences with artistic excellence.

Specifically, Royal MTC will:

- Ignite critical conversations with our art, onstage and off
- Enhance the live theatre experience with digital engagement
- Enhance programs for high school students to foster the next generation of theatre lovers

During COVID, Royal MTC embraced digital offerings, which opened up the work to a wider audience and connected us to artists across the country. As audiences return to live performance, digital offers engagement opportunities to cultivate new points of access to our art.

Emerging from the pandemic, the safety of our artists, staff, audiences and volunteers will continue to be a priority. When gathering sizes allow, a dedicated focus on audience expansion and retention will continue to be critical to our organizational success. Theatre can be a portal into conversations with audiences, and a way to deepen the relationship between the citizens of Manitoba and our theatrical output.

We will continue to nurture a love of theatre among young adults, to help ensure that emerging artists and audiences better reflect the diversity of Manitoba.

4. Building a strong foundation: Royal MTC will ensure that artistic vision aligns with operational capacity.

Specifically, Royal MTC will:

- Balance staffing structure to ensure organizational and financial sustainability
- Evaluate our operational model to ensure alignment with priorities
- Prioritize connections with private sector stakeholders (donors, corporate partners, sponsors, foundations) to foster financial stability

In 2020, to lower overhead and increase agility, Royal MTC made a significant number of permanent staff layoffs. On our recovery path, we need to ensure we scale up our human resources to deliver the scope of programming. As new priorities emerge, Royal MTC must assess how best to deliver our mission and determine which partnerships will thrive. Continued focus on philanthropic and private sector opportunities is key to revenue growth, but also enables greater artistic opportunities.



Looking Forward

As Canada's oldest English-language regional theatre, the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre is deeply symbolic not only as a national institution but as a local treasure. From the inspiring dreams of John Hirsch and Tom Hendry who believed that art can “give a great city an image of its soul”, Royal MTC has played a significant role in delivering a cultural identity to Manitobans.

With this Strategic Renewal Plan, we set the course for the future, acknowledging a changing landscape, informed by equity, diversity and inclusion, and integrating these principles into powerful programming that will forge a path towards integration of all voices on the Canadian stage.

A profound responsibility lies within our power as storytellers and theatre-makers, forging a Canadian theatre where the boundaries that divide us are replaced by the essence of what unites us, carrying us forward as a society. Today, Royal MTC has the opportunity to use our resources, our dedicated stakeholders and our powerful platform to lead this change.

2021-2024 Strategic Renewal Plan approved at the June 21, 2021 Board of Trustees meeting.

Covid Risk Committee Framework

In the early days of the pandemic, our Board of Trustees established a COVID Risk Assessment Committee. The Committee created a framework of critical areas of consideration for activities in the time of COVID. This framework will be reviewed periodically while Public Health is still communicating regularly on COVID.

Health & Safety	Royal MTC understands the applicable Public Health guidelines, adheres to these guidelines, and ensures a safe working environment for all employees, artists and contractors.
Financial & Risk	Royal MTC understands the financial impact of the decision to be made, and the short, medium and long-term financial considerations. The activity or decision has no material impact on Royal MTC's insurance policies and falls in the scope of its existing policies.
Capacity & Quality	Royal MTC has the necessary staff, capacity and skill to deliver the activity and/or the ability to bring in contractors to ensure the quality of the activity.
Reputation & Brand	The activity or decision aligns with Royal MTC's reputation and brand, and meets the needs of customers (subscribers, ticket buyers, donors, etc).
Public Sector & Sponsorship Obligations	The activity or decision supports Royal MTC in fulfilling agreements and commitments with public sector funders and sponsors.
Volunteer & Audiences	When Public Health guidelines allow volunteers and audience members to enter the building, Royal MTC will ensure health and safety protocols are established, followed and communicated clearly.
Governance	Royal MTC's Board of Trustees has confidence that the activity or decision fulfills the mission and mandate of the organization.