

On behalf of all of us at Arts AccessAbility Network Manitoba, I want to express our deepest thanks for this incredible honor—the Manitoba Accessibility Award for 2025. To be recognized at the provincial level for accessibility in the arts is both humbling and deeply affirming.

We are a disability led arts organization rooted in the belief that creativity knows no limits—and that access is not an afterthought. It's the very foundation of artistic freedom.

Our artists work across disciplines: painting, writing, installation, theatre, music, photography, and more. And they do so not in spite of disability, but with it—as an integral and powerful lens through which they shape the world. Disability, for us, is not a deficit. It's a perspective, a source of insight, beauty, and innovation.

When we talk about accessibility, we're not just talking about ramps, captions, or large-print labels—though all of those matter deeply. We're talking about culture change. About building art spaces where disabled artists are not merely included, but centered. Where the ways we create, curate, and exhibit art reflect the full spectrum of human experience.

Over the years, we've learned that true access happens when we listen. When we slow down. When we let disabled artists lead. And when we stop treating accessibility as a checklist, and instead embrace it as an artistic process in itself—creative, evolving, and collaborative.

This award reflects the work of so many people. Our artists, whose work dares to challenge, soothe, provoke, and inspire. Our staff, who hold the values of care and equity at the heart of everything they do. Our accessibility consultants, support workers, and volunteers, who often work quietly behind the scenes to make the impossible possible. And of course, our community—our audiences, our funders, our partners—who walk with us and push us forward.

We also want to acknowledge those who came before us. The disability arts movement is built on the shoulders of pioneers who fought to be seen,

to be heard, and to have their creativity taken seriously. Many of them did so without funding, without access, and without recognition. We are here because of their courage.

Receiving this award doesn't mean the work is finished. It's a moment of celebration, yes—but also a reminder that access is an ongoing practice. We are still learning. Still stretching. Still reimagining what inclusive art spaces can be. We hope this recognition helps to spark more conversations across the province, more partnerships, and more support for disabled artists and disability-led organizations.

To the Manitoba Accessibility Office, thank you for uplifting this work. By recognizing accessibility in the arts, you are helping to shape a future where all artists—disabled or not—can thrive, create, and contribute without barriers.

We accept this award with immense gratitude, and with a renewed commitment to keep pushing for equity, for imagination, and for a world where every body and every mind belongs.

Thank you.