

BY SUSAN ANNIS

# Respectful Workplaces in the Arts

*RESPECTFUL WORKPLACES IN THE ARTS (RWA)* was born at a roundtable for the performing arts held in Toronto in January 2018, in response to the #MeToo movement sweeping the country.

With the momentum of the roundtable in its sails, the Cultural Human Resources Council (CHRC), a not-for-profit national arts service organization with a mandate to address human resource issues in the cultural sector (learn more at <http://culturalhrc.ca/>), sought funding support from Canadian Heritage and the Canada Council for the Arts to lead a series of initiatives to deal with harassment in arts workplaces: harassment taken to include sexual harassment, discrimination, bullying, and violence.

*Respectful Workplaces in the Arts (RWA)* took shape and was launched in April 2018.

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This two-year project parallels the significant work done in other parts of the cultural sector, notably, the Creative Industries Read the Code, Québec’s Code de conduite and Aparté, and the Music Industry’s Code of Conduct and ongoing roundtable discussions.

Under the direction of an *RWA* Coordinating Committee of leaders in the performing, literary, and visual arts (from both employers/boards and employees/independent artists), CHRC led the development of several tools and the identification of resources to tackle harassment in arts workplaces; and it has engaged and is engaging the sector in conversations around harassment—all under the *Respectful Workplaces in the Arts* banner (learn more at <http://respectfulartsworkplaces.ca/>).



## A new tool on Workplace Harassment and Violence in CHRC's HR Management Toolkit

Workplace Harassment and Violence focuses on the development of policies and procedures to prevent and deal with harassment in arts workplaces. It was written by human resource experts with a strong legal background. As arts funders began to increasingly tie their funding to an organization's readiness to deal with harassment with a developed and approved policy and procedures on harassment, these publications were a priority.

## Legislative webcasts and quick reference guides

Harassment falls under provincial and territorial jurisdiction. In order to help arts organizations identify and navigate the legislation that governs them, CHRC engaged HR legal experts to create webcasts on harassment legislation for each province and territory.

The webcasts feature scenarios to help illustrate how policies and procedures can mitigate risk. They are accompanied by quick reference guides which provide key compliance strategies and practical considerations to assist to meet their obligations.

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## Training videos for employers and workers

Through a series of scenarios reflecting real arts workplace situations, 30-minute animated artist, worker, employee training videos were created to help employers and workers consider and understand “what actions to take when experiencing or witnessing harassment.”

## Consultations with equity-seeking groups

In order to engage equity-seeking groups in these initiatives and conversations, CHRC held consultations across the country with Indigenous, racialized, the deaf and disabled, LGBTQ, and official language minority communities.

## Code of Conduct for the Performing Arts

Developed through a highly consultative process, the Code of Conduct for the Performing Arts is billed as “a statement of values, expectations, and voluntary commitments developed by and for the performing arts.” The Code was launched in September and its ongoing list of online signatories includes over 100 arts organizations—and counting!

## Reporting and investigating mechanisms

Key pieces of the puzzle are a reporting mechanism for artists and cultural workers who experience harassment; and support for employers who have to undertake investigations on harassment in their workplaces. CHRC published a major report on *Reporting and Investigating Mechanisms for Workplace Harassment in the Arts*. This is now being followed up by a study on a specific reporting mechanism, and a feasibility study on support for employers on investigations—both with funding from the Department of Justice.

## Maintaining Respectful Workplaces (MRW) workshops

With all the above tools and resources (and more!) on the RWA website, CHRC is now overseeing the delivery of Maintaining Respectful Workplaces (MRW) workshops. They are being delivered across the country by specially trained facilitators who have been coached by HR experts at Williams HR consulting. This is where “the rubber hits the pavement.” It is where the conversations about harassment begin, and where organizations work together in common cause to end harassment in arts workplaces.

The RWA project is in full swing—its impact on the sector will be transformative over the months and years to come. ■



**Susan Annis** was Executive Director of the Cultural Human Resources Council through October 2019, a national not-for-profit arts organization and sector council with a mandate to address HR issues in the cultural sector. Under her leadership, CHRC has directed significant time and resources to supporting the cultural industries including digital media, film and broadcasting, music, publishing, and live performing arts, as well as the visual arts and crafts and heritage (museums, libraries, and archives). The Council has worked closely with steering committees of industry and discipline experts and practitioners to develop competency analyses and corresponding training gaps analyses for jobs in all the cultural industries; and has developed training resources in several areas across the sector including creating competency charts for stage hands and entertainment riggers. Prior to joining CHRC she served as Associate Director for the Canadian Conference of the Arts (CCA) for nine years.