

CREATIVE NOVA SCOTIA AWARDS



2025

WE ARE IN MI'KMA'KI

This territory is covered by the Treaties of Peace and Friendship which Mi'kmaq Wəlastəkwiyik (Maliseet), and Passamaquoddy Peoples first signed with the British Crown in 1726. The treaties did not deal with surrender of lands and resources but in fact recognized Mi'kmaq and Wəlastəkwiyik (Maliseet) title and established the rules for an ongoing relationship and responsibilities between nations. We want to acknowledge the people who were here before. And who are still here.



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MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

On behalf of the Province of Nova Scotia, welcome to this year's Creative Nova Scotia Awards Celebration.

Tonight, we celebrate excellence in the arts and recognize the remarkable talent and dedication of Nova Scotia's artists and creators. Your remarkable work enriches our communities, strengthens our cultural identity and drives our growing creative economy.

Thank you for inspiring future generations and for helping the arts continue to thrive across our province. Congratulations to all this year's award recipients.

The Honourable David Ritcey
Minister of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage

MESSAGE DU MINISTRE

Au nom de la Province de la Nouvelle-Écosse, bienvenue à la célébration des Prix pour la création en Nouvelle-Écosse de cette année.

Ce soir, nous célébrons l'excellence dans les arts et nous reconnaissons le talent et le dévouement remarquables des artistes et des créateurs de la Nouvelle-Écosse. Votre travail exceptionnel enrichit nos communautés, renforce notre identité culturelle et stimule notre économie de la création qui est en pleine croissance.

Merci d'inspirer les générations futures et d'aider les arts à continuer de prospérer à l'échelle de notre province. Félicitations aux lauréats et lauréates des prix de cette année.

L'honorable David Ritcey
Ministre des Communautés, de la Culture, du Tourisme et du Patrimoine



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRS

Good evening, and welcome.

Tonight, we honour the artists whose work has influenced Nova Scotia's cultural landscape.

In a world that moves fast and often feels uncertain, the artist observes, absorbs and reflects, helping us make sense of who we are and where we are going. Even when faced with resistance, artists persist. Their work gives voice to history, and shape to the present.

We gather to celebrate their courage, creativity, and commitment. We thank their communities and loved ones who support them, and we recognize the power of their work to bring light, clarity, and joy.

In these times more than ever, we move forward through the imagination of those who dare to create.

Sarah O'Toole, Chair, Arts NS

Craig Mercer, Chair, Creative Nova Scotia Leadership Council

MESSAGE DES PRÉSIDENTS

Bonsoir et bienvenue.

Ce soir, nous rendons hommage aux artistes dont le travail a influencé le paysage culturel de la Nouvelle-Écosse.

Dans un monde aux changements rapides où règne souvent l'incertitude, les artistes observent, absorbent et font rayonner leurs perceptions, nous aidant à comprendre qui nous sommes et où nous allons. Même aux prises avec l'adversité, les artistes persévèrent. Leur travail donne une voix à l'histoire et façonne le présent.

Nous sommes réunis pour célébrer ce courage, cette créativité et cet engagement. Nous remercions les communautés et l'entourage des artistes, qui les soutiennent dans leur travail. Ce travail a le pouvoir de faire naître la lumière, la clarté et la joie.

De nos jours plus que jamais, c'est grâce à l'imagination des gens qui se consacrent à la création que nous allons de l'avant.

Sarah O'Toole, directrice, Arts N.-É.

Craig Mercer, président, Conseil de leadership pour la création en Nouvelle-Écosse



ORDER OF AWARDS CEREMONY

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*Interpreting services provided by
Ayoka Junaid Sign Language Interpreting Services*



PRESHOW ARTIST SHOWCASE

JACINTE ARMSTRONG



Jacinte Armstrong (she/her) is an Acadian artist based in K'jipuktuk/Halifax, Canada. Her work explores embodied practice through performance, choreography, collaboration, and curation, communicating the experience of the body in relation to objects, materials, and people. Her choreography ranges from intimate and imagistic to large-scale collaborations with dancers, architects, visual artists, radio producers, filmmakers, actors and musicians.

Jacinte is Artistic Director and co-founder of SiNS (Sometimes in Nova Scotia) Dance, co-Artistic Director of suddenlyLISTEN, and collaborates regularly with Mocean Dance. From 2014-18 she was Artistic Director of Kinetic Studio, presenting an annual season of contemporary dance workshops and performances in Nova Scotia. In 2020 she received her MFA in Performance from NSCAD University and is a Certified Laban Movement Analyst through the Laban/Bartenieff Institute of Movement Studies in New York City.

Find out more at
www.jacintearmstrong.com
www.sinsdance.com
www.suddenlylisten.com

Photo by Kevin MacCormack



PRESHOW ARTIST SHOWCASE



DIEGO CAVEDON DIAS

Diego (he/they) is a Brazilian costume, puppet, and graphic designer based in Dartmouth/Punamu'kwati'jk, NS. With more than 10 years of experience, they have had the joy of creating costumes for many theatre companies, including Neptune Theatre, Two Planks and a Passion, Festival Antigonish, Halifax Theatre for Young People, Ships Company Theatre, Eastern Front Theatre, Dalhousie - Fountain School of Arts, and the HEIST. Originally from Porto Alegre, Brazil, Diego moved to Canada to study Costume Production, graduating in 2018. They love being part of projects that push them creatively or technically, and are always excited to see how textiles and design can bring characters and stories to life. In 2024, Diego was honoured with the Robert Merritt Award for Outstanding Costume Design. Alongside costumes, they also enjoy exploring graphic and puppet design, finding new ways to play with form and imagination.

Photo by James MacLean



PRESHOW ARTIST SHOWCASE

KEN FLETT



Ken Flett (he/him) is a Nova Scotia based artist and teacher. Hailing from Vancouver Island, Ken spent his formative years on the Island. Ken's connection to Victoria has always been strongly tied to his artwork. Ken was represented by the Fran Willis Gallery and taught workshops at the Metchosin International Summer School of the Arts and the Victoria College of Art. Ken's artwork can be found in the University of Victoria Legacy Art Collection and the Camosun College Art Collection.

Regardless of the medium, Ken's work focuses on themes of love, memory, hope, and loss. He is most interested in making the invisible visible through his art and in doing so honour the stories that would otherwise be lost and forgotten. Ken's exploration of the art form of puppetry is where he brings together all aspects of his creative practice to consider storytelling anew through this complex medium.

Photo by Gary Fraser



PRESHOW ARTIST SHOWCASE



STEPH KINCADE

Steph Kincade (they/them) is a queer, non-binary Visual Artist, working with traditional and nontraditional fibres. They are a white settler in K'jipuktuk/Halifax Nova Scotia and hail originally from Menaquesk/Saint John, New Brunswick. Beginning their artistic career working behind the scenes in the world of live theatre, they moved towards Embroidery in 2020. Working in the arts has never diminished their love of science or their long-standing love affair with marine biology and the tiny worlds many folks walk by without notice. These natural inspirations are the focus of much of their work.

In addition to MicroWorlds, past work includes Stranglehold, wearable art pieces inspired by toxic algae blooms, and The Barnacle Project, featured as part of Canada Ocean Week 2025. Current work explores freehand machine embroidery and the use of sustainably foraged plant fibres. They have had works exhibited in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Ontario.



PRESHOW ARTIST SHOWCASE

SILVIO
PUPO
MONTERO



Born in Cuba and now residing in Canada, Silvio Pupo Montero (he/him) studied classical piano for more than 12 years at the Professional School of Music in Holguin, Cuba. Currently living in Halifax, Silvio has established himself as a sought after and respected jazz pianist in Halifax and beyond. Silvio is a man of many talents as he is a piano player, composer, songwriter, producer, and collaborator with a bunch of good musicians around Canada, USA, and Cuba including Jeff Goodspeed, Alfie Zappacosta, Ben Caplan and more!



AWARD SHOW ARTIST | HOST



ZUPPA

Founded in 1998, Zuppa is a Halifax-based theatre ensemble. The core quartet determining our direction is Artistic Directors Ben Stone (he/him) and Alex McLean (he/him), Associate Artistic Director Stewart Legere (he/him) and producer Sophie Schade (she/her). Zuppa aims to make extraordinary experiences that provoke the consideration of new perspectives and ideas. With each new project we attempt to do something we don't know how to do and work with collaborators who bring new life experiences, perspectives or skill sets to the table. This compels us to experiment with new forms and grapple with relevant questions of our time. Zuppa has been touring since 2004 and performed throughout Canada, in the US and UK.

Photo by James MacLean



AWARD SHOW ARTIST | PERFORMER



MARY BETH CARTY

Mary Beth Carty (she/her), winner of the 2024 Canadian Folk Music Award for Traditional Singer of the Year, is a multi-instrumentalist, composer, song-writer, dance-caller, and folklorist from Antigonish County. A lover of language and global cultures, Mary Beth has a flair for uncovering the common threads that tie traditions together, singing a unique repertoire of songs in English, French, and Gaelic. Mary Beth has performed at festivals throughout Canada as well as internationally in Austria, Switzerland, France, Rwanda, and Congo, and on-board NCL, Holland America, and National Geographic cruise lines. She has produced two solo albums, appeared as a guest on countless recordings, and was featured on Season 1 of Radio-Canada's television show *La Grande veillée*. This September she was excited to work on new music as one of Deep Roots Music Festival's artists-in-residence.

Photo by Anastasiia Lahoda



EMERGING ARTIST

RECOGNITION AWARD



The Emerging Artist Recognition Award recognizes artists of any age who are in the early stages of their professional career, have completed specialized training, and have presented their work publicly. Recipients are chosen for their excellence in artistic achievement, momentum for the future, professional recognition, and provincial and national recognition. The award carries a cash value of \$5,000.

EMERGING
ARTIST
RECOGNITION
AWARD



LEAH JOHNSTON

Leah Johnston (she/her) is a filmmaker from Truro, Nova Scotia who has been making short films for over thirteen years. Her short film, *Ingrid and the Black Hole* premiered at Fantasia Film Festival and was showcased at dozens of film festivals, winning eight awards, including Best Canadian Short at Edmonton International Film Festival. Her most recent film *Mother's Skin* premiered in the 2023 Golden Goblet Competition at Shanghai International Film Festival. It took home two awards at Atlantic International Film Festival, including Best Short and the Joan Orenstein Award for Outstanding Performance.

She is currently in development on her first feature film, *Shopaholic*. Leah is the recipient of the Corus Fearless Female Filmmaker Award, the \$35,000 Bravofact/WIFT Prize and the National Screen Institute Drama Prize. She graduated with a B.F.A. from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts.

Photo by Janice Reid

EMERGING
ARTIST
RECOGNITION
AWARD



NICOLA MILLER

Saxophonist and Composer Nicola Miller (she/her) is based on the South Shore of Nova Scotia, where she has become a vital part of the maritime creative music ecosystem. Weaving endless sonic curiosity into a jazz foundation, the music she plays and writes effortlessly traverses boundaries of style and approach.

Miller has appeared in performances alongside a diverse cross-section of artists including Nicole Rampersaud, Charlotte Hüg, Terri Hron, India Gailey, Enrique Luna, Sam Wilson, Uri Caine, Tim Crofts, Glenn Patscha, and Nick Halley. She's been featured at the Open Waters Guelph and Halifax Jazz Festivals and also performed in contexts that span Berlin's Volksbühne and Jazz Am Helmholtzplatz to Acadia University's Physics Department. She is the winner of the 2025 Paul Cram Award and will be debuting her first piece for symphony in January of 2026 with Symphony NS.

Photo by Kevin MacCormack

EMERGING
ARTIST
RECOGNITION
AWARD



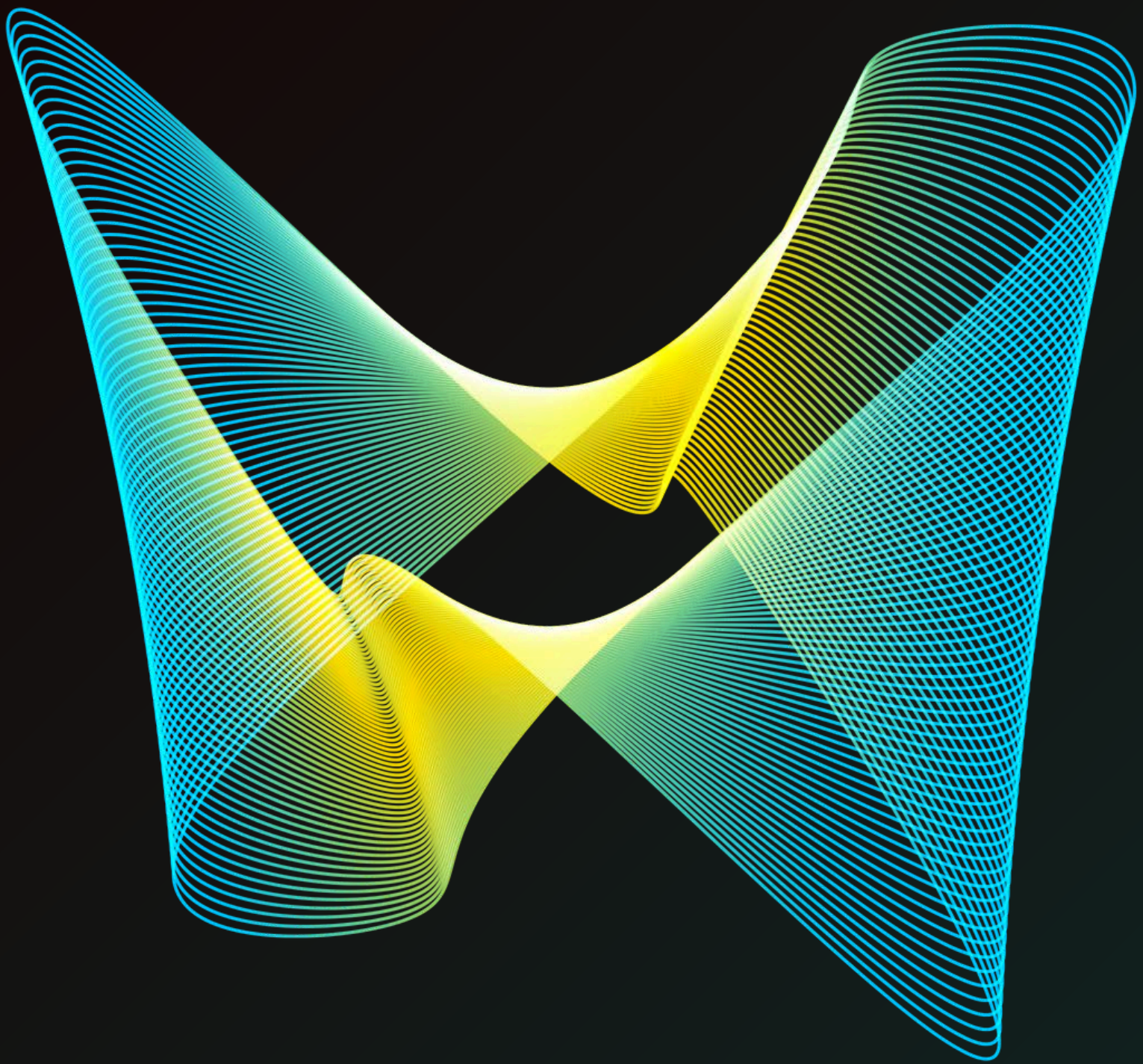
VIVIAN ZHOU

Vivian Zhou (she/her) is a Chinese-Canadian cartoonist and illustrator based in Halifax, Nova Scotia. She loves writing stories filled with magic, and her work often blends fantasy with personal narratives. She graduated from the Bachelor of Animation program at Sheridan College, and subsequently pivoted to graphic novels to continue pursuing her love for visual storytelling.

She is best known for being the creator of the graphic novels “Atana and the Firebird” and “Atana and the Jade Mermaid”. When she isn’t working on graphic novels, she can often be found making short comics for zines and comic anthologies.

Photo by Y. Zhou

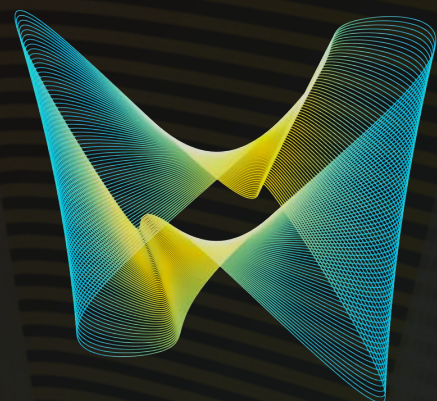
CREATIVE COMMUNITY IMPACT AWARD



Arts Nova Scotia and the Creative Nova Scotia Leadership Council recognize that artistic and cultural expression are fundamental to the collective well-being of Nova Scotians. Programs that encourage artistic and cultural development help to build creative communities that foster innovation, generate social change, and nurture cultural diversity. The Creative Community Impact Award recognizes an organization or program that has made a positive impact on a community through arts and culture. The award carries a cash value of \$10,000.



CREATIVE COMMUNITY IMPACT AWARD

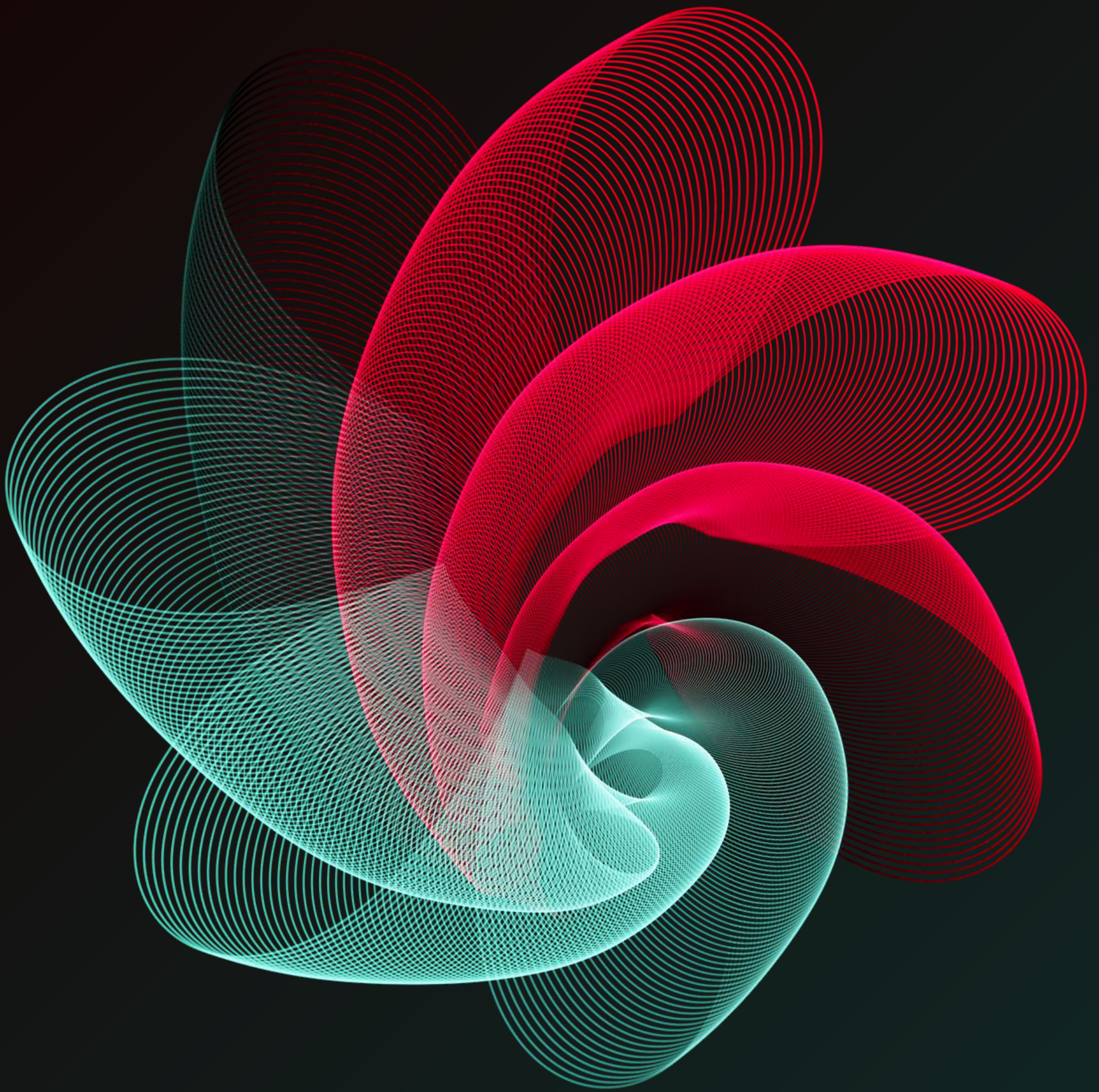


CONSEIL DES ARTS DE CHÉTICAMP

Le Conseil des Arts de Chéticamp (1999) is a community-based arts organization dedicated to promoting and preserving the French Acadian language and culture through inclusive, high-quality artistic programming. Located in Chéticamp, Nova Scotia—an official language minority community—Le Conseil plays a pivotal role in cultural life, education, and identity-building for the community. Le Conseil's mission is to foster the preservation and enrichment of the French Acadian language and to safeguard the community's rich cultural heritage through the arts. It ensures growth and visibility of the arts in Nova Scotia; provides artistic education, animation, and dissemination for community members, schools, and the general public; supports the development of local artists, from youth to professionals; promotes cultural accessibility and inclusion, regardless of age, gender or experience; manages key cultural spaces including the Place des arts Père Anselme-Chiasson and the newly established Canton cultural meeting rooms, art gallery and artists studio space.

Photo by Robert Deveaux

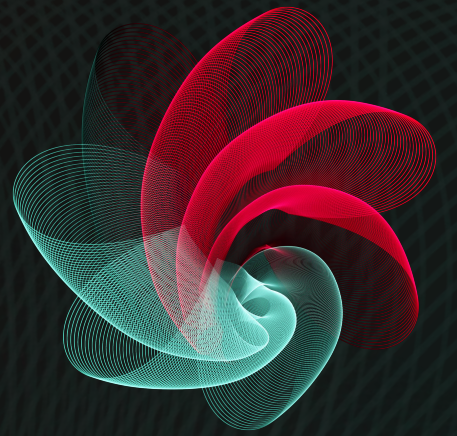
BLACK ARTIST RECOGNITION AWARD



The Black Artist Recognition Award recognizes artists who are members of the historical Black communities of Nova Scotia and the wider African Diaspora within the province, who have emerged from their initial training or gained experience to become recognized, established artists amongst their immediate communities and Nova Scotia. The award carries a cash value of \$5,000.

BLACK ARTIST

RECOGNITION
AWARD

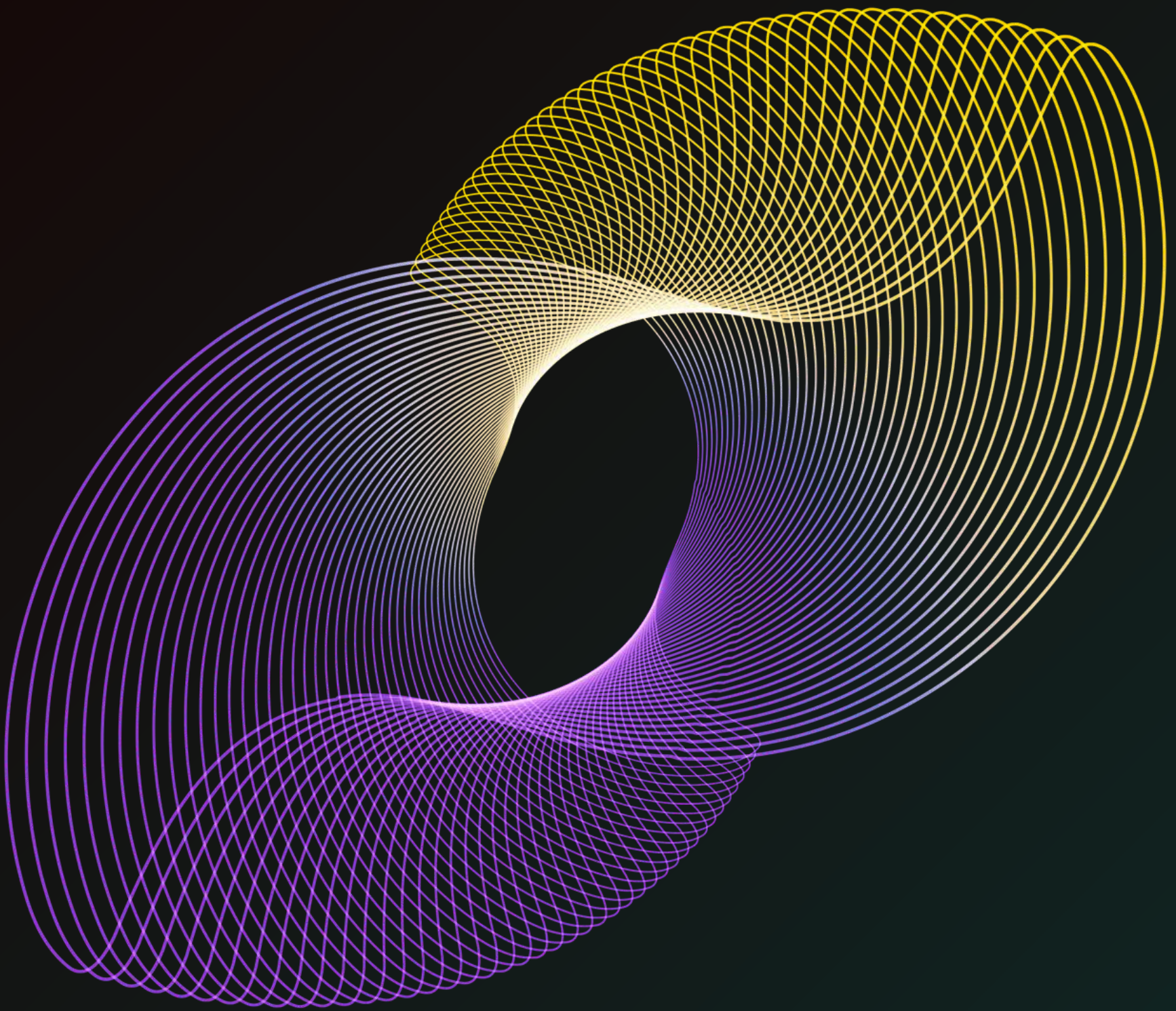


AQUAKULTRE

Aquakultre is the artistic voice of Lance Sampson (he/him) — an uncommonly versatile rapper, songwriter, performer, and storyteller from Halifax, NS. Since winning the 2018 CBC Searchlight competition, Aquakultre has released two Polaris-nominated albums and numerous genre-diverse, multi-media collaborations. He presented his debut installation Matriarchs as an Anchor Artist at Nocturne in 2024; he is creator, writer, and host of the TV series GenerationNS: Black Memories of Nova Scotia, and is currently developing The Aquakultre Project in collaboration with the award-winning 2b Theatre. Through all his works, Aquakultre is on a mission to share his love for his unique and beautiful corner of the Black diaspora.

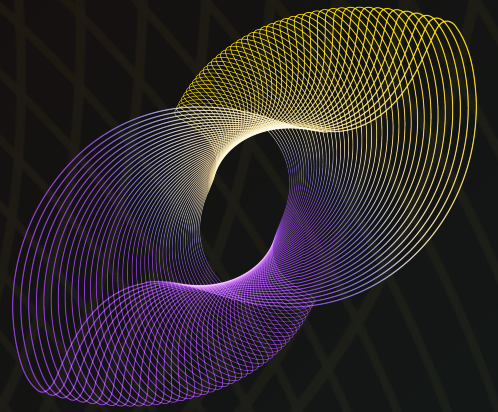
Photo by Mo Phùng

PRIX GRAND-PRÉ



The Prix Grand-Pré recognizes Nova Scotia's creative and interpretive artists working in any medium whose work reflects Acadian cultural values, while demonstrating excellence and originality. Each year an established creative or interpretive artist, or artistic group, working in any medium will be awarded a prize of \$5,000.

PRIX GRAND-PRÉ

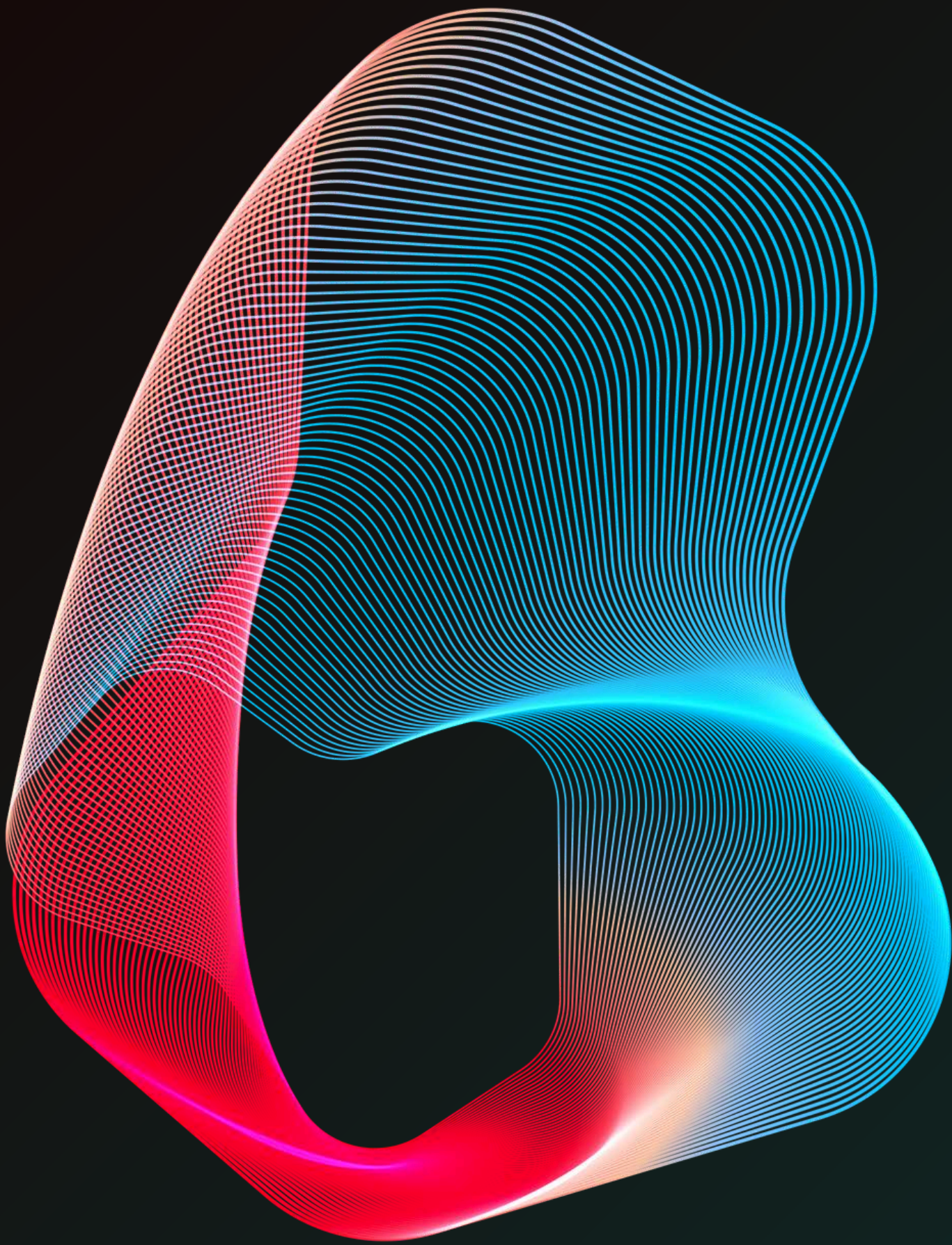


YVETTE d'ENTREMONT

Yvette d'Entremont (she/her) is a renowned multidisciplinary artist from Nova Scotia, celebrated as a singer-songwriter, playwright, producer, documentarian, and dedicated educator. For over 30 years, she has inspired countless students through French, drama, and music, nurturing a deep appreciation for Acadian culture and the arts. Yvette's creative legacy includes three acclaimed albums, more than twenty original plays and musicals, and the award-winning documentary *Raconte-moi un souvenir*. Her works, such as *La voix de la mer* and *Nelson Dormait*, spotlight Acadian history and traditions. Honoured with numerous awards, including Music Nova Scotia nominations and the *Hommage en développement culturel* from FéCANE, she continues to share her passion both locally and internationally. Yvette's artistry is rooted in her love of language, community, and heritage, making her a vital figure in the preservation and promotion of Acadian and Francophone culture.

Photo by Clifton Saulnier

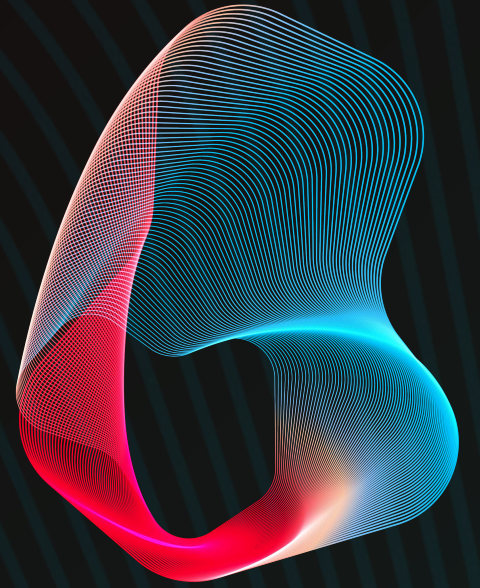
INDIGENOUS RECOGNITION AWARD



The Indigenous Artist Recognition Award recognizes artists who are Indigenous (Mi'kmaq as well as other First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) who have emerged from their initial training and development and are active in the Nova Scotian/Mi'kma'ki arts community. The award carries a cash value of \$5,000.

INDIGENOUS

RECOGNITION AWARD

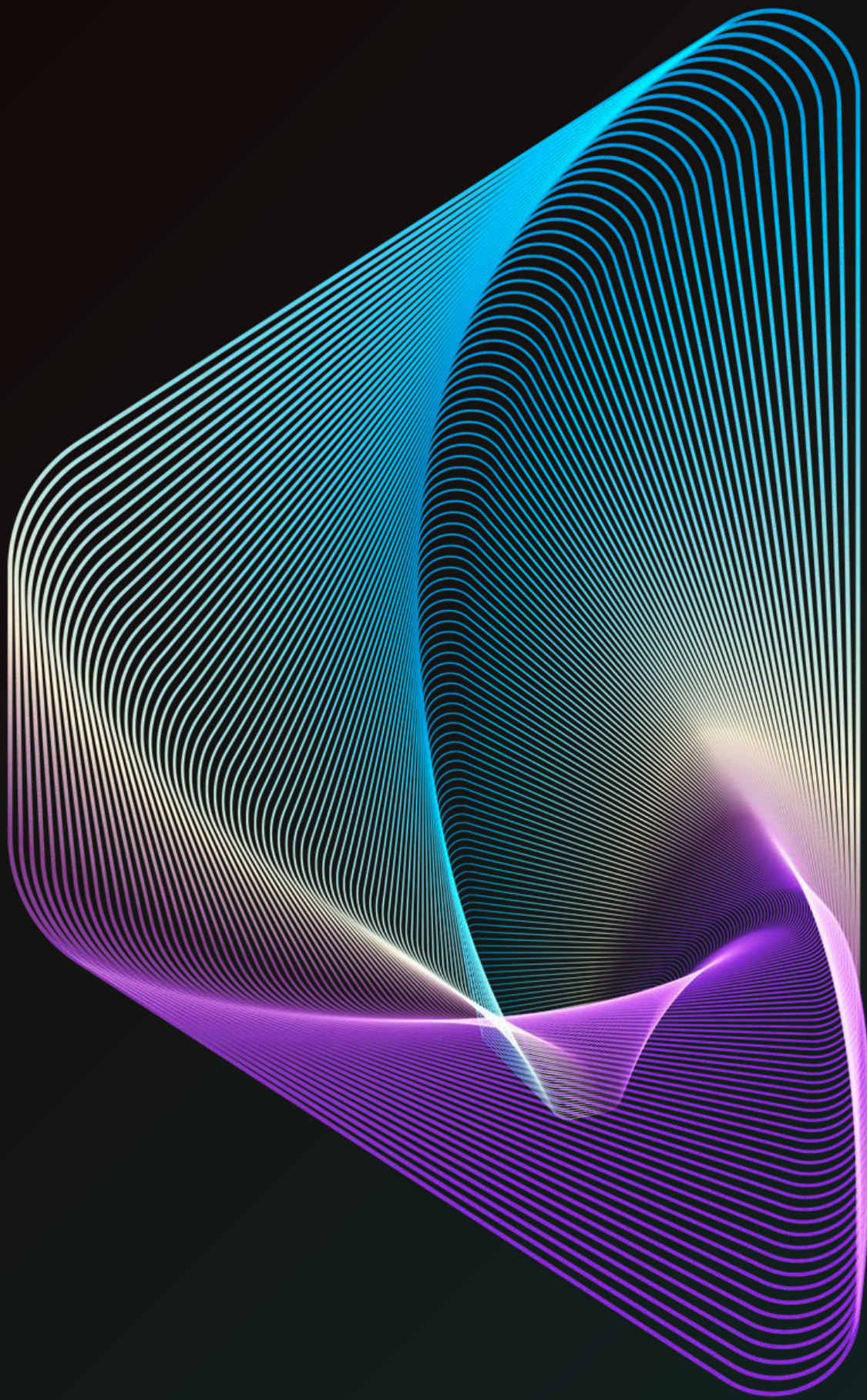


MORGAN TONEY

JUNO-nominated Mi'kmaq fiddler and singer, Morgan Toney (he/him), wields music as an almost alchemical force, blending the fiery fiddling of Cape Breton Island with ancient Mi'kmaq melodies, dating back up to 500 years. Through his fusion of Mi'kmaq and Celtic traditions, dubbed Mi'kmaltic, Toney bridges Atlantic music and Mi'kmaq teachings, forging a path where song and fiddle harmonize. His new album ""Resilience"" earned him a 2024 Juno Nomination for Traditional Roots Album of the Year and two 2024 East Coast Music Award wins for Roots/Traditional Recording of the Year and Indigenous Artist of the Year.

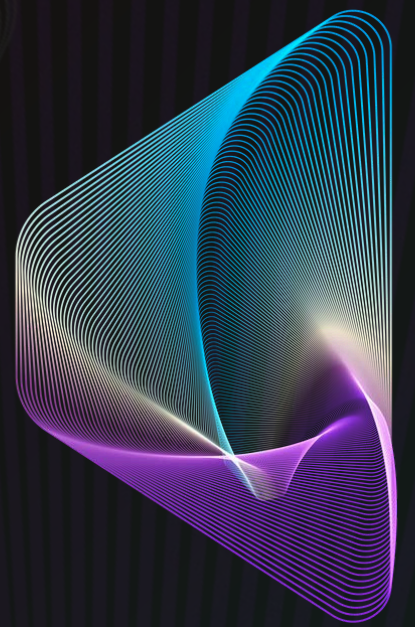
Photo by John Butler

ESTABLISHED ARTIST RECOGNITION AWARD



The Established Artist Recognition Award recognizes artists who have emerged from their initial training and development to become recognized, established artists in Nova Scotia. Recipients are chosen for their excellence in artistic achievement, momentum for the future, professional recognition, and provincial and national recognition. The award carries a cash value of \$5,000.

ESTABLISHED ARTIST RECOGNITION AWARD



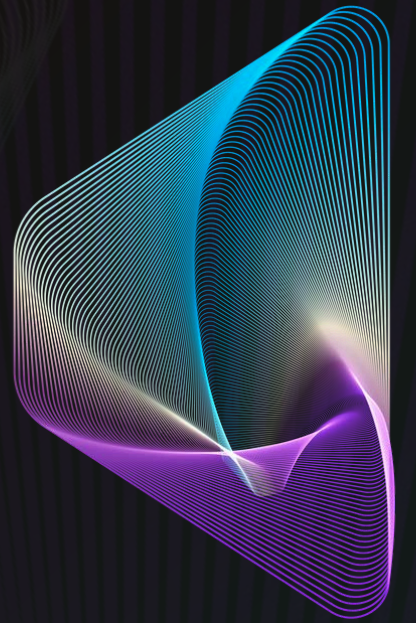
CHRISTOPHER WEBB

Christopher Webb (he/him) is a multidisciplinary, self-taught visual artist based in Nova Scotia, Canada. In 2024, he was awarded the CREA – Cantieri del Contemporaneo Venezia Prize for Painting and will present his first international solo exhibition at Marina Bastianello Gallery in Venice in 2026. His work has been exhibited across Canada and internationally, including Contained (Dalhousie University School of Architecture, 2024), Dys(U)topia (CREA Cantieri del Contemporaneo, Venice, 2024), Dominus Vobiscum (Halifax, 2022), and Air Land 4.0 (Turin, 2021).

Beyond his studio practice, Webb has been an artist-in-residence in Canada and Europe, including ARCAC (Annapolis Royal, NS) and Quasi Quadro (Turin, Italy). He is the co-founder of PAVIA Gallery, where he curates exhibitions and directs residencies, and he frequently mentors and lectures. Webb also teaches painting workshops both in his studio in Herring Cove and internationally, bridging practice, pedagogy, and cultural dialogue.

Photo by Wiebke Schroeder

ESTABLISHED ARTIST RECOGNITION AWARD

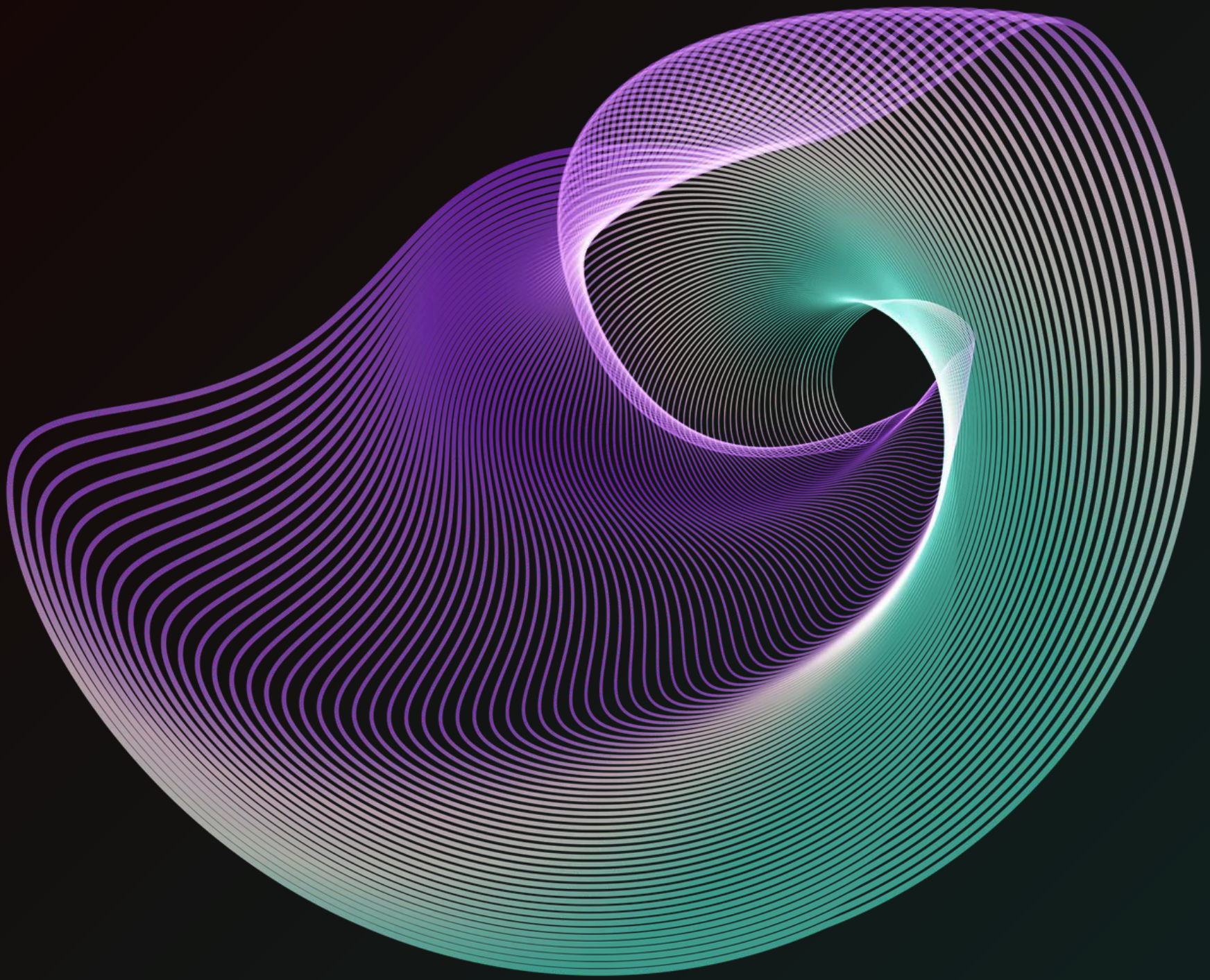


SOLOMON NAGLER

Solomon Nagler (he/him) is a filmmaker, poet and community activist who teaches at NSCAD University. His films have been featured in film festivals across the globe, and retrospective programs of his work have been screened in Germany, Australia, New Zealand, Korea, Japan, France and across Canada. His work also includes 16mm celluloid installations that engage with sculpture and experimental architecture in galleries and public space. He is founder of the Community Mobile Media Lab, a purpose-designed mobile media production hub, which houses film production equipment that can be situated temporarily in Nova Scotia Communities across the province to explore innovative models of co-creation, training and mentorship for populations underrepresented in the film industry. In Halifax, he is a past Board Member of The Atlantic Filmmakers Cooperative, Wonder'neath Art Society and was on the Programming Committee for the Centre for Art Tapes and the Halifax Independent Filmmakers' Festival.

Photo by Jeff Wheaton

PORTIA WHITE PRIZE



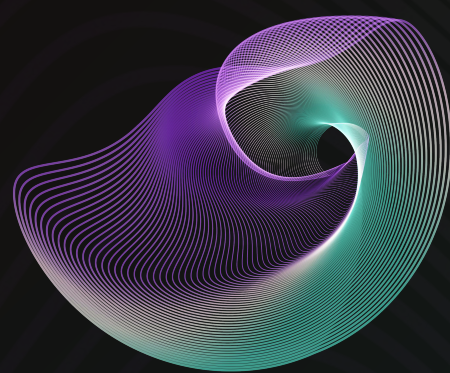
The Portia White Prize recognizes an outstanding professional Nova Scotian artist, who has attained mastery and recognition in their discipline and has made a significant contribution to the province's cultural life over a sustained career.

The primary recipient will receive \$18,000 and a certificate of recognition.

A secondary recipient, who is an emerging Nova Scotia artist or a Nova Scotia cultural organization selected by the primary recipient, will receive \$7,000 and a certificate of recognition.



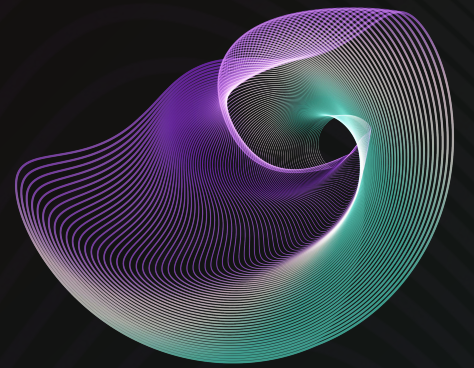
PORTIA WHITE PRIZE



This prize is named for Portia White, an extraordinary contralto who was born in 1911 in Truro, Nova Scotia. Without any doubt, she is the foremother of contemporary Canadian female singers of any genre. A trailblazing artist, she began her career as a teacher in all Black, segregated schools in the Halifax area, including in Africville and Beechville. Her hard work, dedication and stunning stage presence endeared her to critics and audiences alike. Portia White rose through adversity to achieve international acclaim as a classical singer as she toured extensively across North and South America and the Caribbean. Portia White became a source of pride for Nova Scotians and all Canadians.

*Text provided by Nova Scotian filmmaker Sylvia D. Hamilton whose documentary Portia White: Think On Me explored the life of Portia white. Hamilton received the Portia White Prize in 2002.

PORTIA WHITE PRIZE



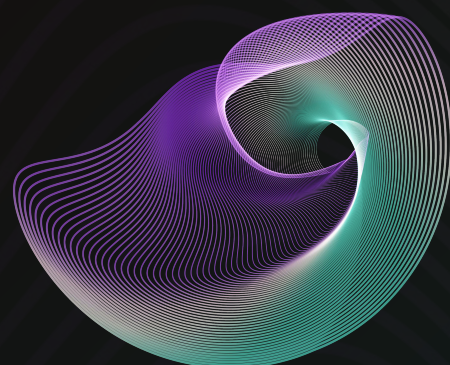
JOEL PLASKETT

For over three decades, Joel Plaskett (he/him) has been one of Canada's most inventive and celebrated songwriters. From his early days with Thrush Hermit to his eclectic solo albums and work with The Emergency, Plaskett's music spans heavy riff rock, lo-fi folk, and sprawling concept records like *Three* (2009), *Ashtray Rock* (2007), and *44* (2020). His latest, *One Real Reveal* (2024), strips songwriting to its raw essence. A beloved live performer, he's headlined Massey Hall, collaborated with the NAC Orchestra, and shared stages with Paul McCartney and The Tragically Hip. With JUNOs, ECMAs, and Polaris nods to his name, Plaskett remains rooted in Nova Scotia, recording at his Dartmouth studio Fang, producing for artists like Mo Kenney and Jimmy Rankin, and curating community events like Window Inn Wednesdays. In 2025, his influence was further cemented with *Songs From the Gang*, a star-studded tribute album featuring Arkells, Sloan, Bahamas, Rose Cousins, and more.

Photo by Robert Georgeff



PORTIA
WHITE
PRIZE
PROTÉGÉ



CRESCENDO FEST

Crescendo Fest was created to turn up the volume on African Nova Scotian and Black artists who have long been underrepresented within Atlantic Canada's music scene. Founded in 2023 by Micah Smith, the festival stands as a powerful celebration of Black music, culture, and excellence — a space built by and for our community.

Rooted in Nova Scotia, home to Canada's largest Indigenous Black community, Crescendo Fest is more than a stage — it's a movement. The festival showcases the depth, creativity, and resilience of Black artistry while creating economic opportunities within the community. Whenever possible, Crescendo Fest partners with African Nova Scotian suppliers and highlights Black-owned businesses across Nova Scotia, ensuring that the celebration of Black culture extends beyond the stage.

Since its launch, Crescendo Fest has been recognized for its growing impact, earning consecutive Music Nova Scotia Live Sector Award nominations (2023 & 2024) and the African Nova Scotian Music Association Development Award in 2025.

Crescendo Fest exists to amplify our stories, strengthen our communities, and share the brilliance of Black music with Atlantic Canada and the world.

PRODUCTION TEAM



HEIST | EVENT PRODUCER

As a leading live art company in Kijipuktuk/Halifax and beyond, we are committed to playful queer work that is innovative and genre-bending. Our organization has a clear and strong commitment to diversity within culture, abilities and gender. Since our inception in 2016, HEIST has been nominated for over thirty Theatre Nova Scotia Awards and has been awarded eight of them, including Outstanding Production in 2022 with our show Frequencies. HEIST was also a finalist for the Nova Scotia Masterworks Prize in 2021 with their original show The Princess Show. HEIST has toured work across the country, been a part of the National Arts Centre season and was featured at Spotlight Canada in Edinburgh in 2022. HEIST is led by Richie Wilcox (he/they), Aaron Collier (he/him) & Sylvia Bell (she/her).





MARGOT DURLING | GRAPHIC DESIGN

After 20+ years as a Creative Director working behind a desk/mask, Margot (they/them) is now living as an independent artist in Punamu'kwati'jk, Dartmouth. Their award-winning body of work focuses on public art, playgrounds, monuments, community activism, and neurodivergence. Their sculpture 'Chosen Family' on the Halifax Commons celebrating trans liberation, queer kinship, and gender expression has been exhibited at the National Arts Centre and Halifax Mural Festival. Honoured in another life as one of Canada's Top 100 Most Powerful Women, Margot's background in medical design (NSCAD) and industrial design (Germany) led to a career in architecture. Before leaving corporate life in 2022, they led an international team to become runner-up for Canada's 2SLGBTQIA+ National Monument design competition. Margot is now returning to their fabrication, metalsmithing and woodworking background to complete the trifecta and build artworks from vision, to prototype, to reality.

Photo by Matt Horseman





DUANE JONES | INTERVIEWER/PODCAST HOST

Vere “Duane” Jones Jr. (he/him) is an award-winning conceptual artist, designer and podcast host with degrees from Bermuda College, NSCAD University and Dalhousie University. Best known as the founder of artist focused clothing brand and podcast, Art Pays Me – his diverse creative practice includes conceptual art, visual identity design, fashion and public art installation. Duane regularly contributes to creative juries and boards – including but not limited to being the co-chair of the Canadian Art Foundation, a member of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia’s Curatorial committee, a former member of the NSCAD University Board of Governors and former president of the NSCAD Alumni Association.

Photo by Stephanie Lane





KEKE BEATZ | FILM PRODUCER

KekeBeatz (he/him) from North Preston, NS is an Artrepreneur in the Music & Entertainment industry who founded, own & operates KekeBeatz Films, a company specializing in Multimedia arts & collaborating with like minded creatives.

In 2007 at age 13, being self taught, Keke recorded his first set of Music Videos & began also producing music for the artists he worked with locally at his home studio, which his parents would convert a spare room at Keke's childhood home for him to create out of. From there, he would upload the music videos to the at the time new video sharing platform Youtube, gaining a following online.

Today, being part of some of the most thought of Independent Filmmakers, Editors/Music Producers in the Atlantic Canada Music & Visual arts in most national urban circles, his work has proven to be a moving Pillar of Inspiration, DIY Positivity, Independence for both emerging & seasoned veterans of the art form.

Photo by Telemae





CATARINA CICCONE | PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

Catarina Ciccone (she/her) is an artist, educator, and co-founder of Merry Time Music Co., a community-minded music school in Kjiptuk's North End. Her practice bridges music, theatre, and education, rooted in the belief that creativity builds confidence and connection.

As a performer, Catarina has appeared in *Bend It Like Beckham: The Musical* (North American Premiere) and *Massive Monster Mayhem* (Nickelodeon US). She may also still dream about the time she got to sing the national anthem for the Toronto Blue Jays at the Rogers Centre.

Through her teaching, Catarina celebrates the individuality of each student, fostering curiosity, expression, and agency in their musical journey. Beyond the classroom, she continues to collaborate with artists and organizations that champion creative community, including Heist, Arts Nova Scotia, and the Creative Nova Scotia Leadership Council. She is thrilled to help bring the 2025 Creative Nova Scotia Awards to life.

Photo by James MacLean





ZACH FAYE | TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

Zach Faye (he/him) is a performer, designer, and production manager based in Punamu'kwati'jk/Dartmouth, NS. Often working in theatre, Zach has collaborated with HEIST in the past and is excited to be helping with this year's CNS awards.



MATT DOWNEY | DESIGNER/TECHNICIAN

Matt is a Queer Neuro spicy Theatre and Visual Artist from St John's Newfoundland. They have backgrounds in Lighting, Projections, Photography, Videography and Technical Direction. they have a passion for using their skill sets and experience to support other queer and disabled artists.





OLIVIA RANKIN | STAGE MANAGER

Olivia (she/her) is a production manager and arts administrator based in Kjiipuktuk / Halifax. In addition to her work as an independent theatre artist, she is the General Manager at 2b theatre company. Throughout her career she has supported a number of world premieres and new works, as well as managed award-winning productions and tours internationally. In 2022 Olivia received Theatre Nova Scotia's Merritt Award for Stage Management. She is thrilled to be here working with this brilliant team of artists. Olivia grew up in Vernon, British Columbia on the land of the Syilx people of the Okanagan Nation.

Photo by Kat Jones





BLAZE FRASER | SOCIAL MEDIA & PROGRAM DESIGN

Blaze Fraser (they/them) is a queer, white settler living in Taqamiku'jk/Parrsboro who is dedicated to developing spaces, programming, and resources for artists to support art creation, development, and performance. Specializing in financial arts administration and project management, they are the current General Manager of Ship's Company Theatre and Managing Director of Halifax Fringe. Blaze also has experience working with HEIST in administration and marketing, in hospitality administration & operations management, in event management, and as a project advisor.



ABOUT ARTS NOVA SCOTIA

Arts Nova Scotia is the provincial funding agency that provides support to professional artists and arts organizations, arts education programs and a number of arts awards and prizes. Governed by a board of directors, Arts Nova Scotia is an arm's length agency of the Nova Scotia Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage created by legislation in 2011.

ARTS NOVA SCOTIA BOARD

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Pamela Edmonds

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ABOUT THE CREATIVE NOVA SCOTIA LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

The Creative Nova Scotia Leadership Council is a partnership between the cultural sector and the government of Nova Scotia designed to foster better understanding and decision-making. The council represent the diverse arts and culture industry throughout Nova Scotia. As a group, they work together to provide advice and leadership on policies, making recommendations on programs to promote arts and culture and generally representing the sector's interests and acting as a voice for artists and cultural workers.

CREATIVE NS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

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A SPECIAL THANK YOU

Trevor DeSouza

Taryn Hanrahan

Gina Thornhill

Declan Watson

Groundsound

Lord Nelson Hotel & Suites

Pavia Cafe & Gallery

Ramblers

NOMINATIONS AND AWARD INFORMATION

Go to artsns.ca for more information on the Creative Nova Scotia Awards and how to nominate someone for an award.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Arts Nova Scotia welcomes you to complete a survey on the Creative Nova Scotia Awards and the future of the Masterworks Award. The survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Responses are confidential.

[Click here to access the survey](#)

Thank you for joining us for the 2025 Creative Nova Scotia Awards!

