

Staff Report



Development Services Department

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REPORT TO: Finance and Corporate Services Committee

DATE OF MEETING: August 8, 2022

SUBMITTED BY: Cory Bluhm, Executive Director, Economic Development 519-741-2200 ext. 7065

PREPARED BY: Karoline Varin, Program Administrator, Arts & Creative Industries, 519-741-2200 ext. 7912

WARD(S) INVOLVED: All

DATE OF REPORT: July 14, 2022

REPORT NO.: DSD-2022-299

SUBJECT: 2022 Artist in Residence Appointment

RECOMMENDATION:

That Bangishimo Johnston be appointed as the 2022 City of Kitchener Artist in Residence as recommended by Public Art Working Group and Arts and Culture Advisory Committee: and further

That the Mayor and Clerk be authorized to execute an agreement, satisfactory to the City Solicitor, with Bangishimo Johnston, outlining the obligations of the Artist in Residence appointment.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The purpose of this report is to appoint the 2022 Artist in Residence.
- The key finding of this report is that Bangishimo Johnston has been selected by the Public Art Working Group (PAWG) and recommended by the Arts and Culture Advisory Committee (ACAC) as the 2022 Artist in Residence.
- The financial implication is artist honorarium from existing Arts and Creative Industries budgets.
- Community engagement included consultation with PAWG, ACAC and Textile Magazine.
- This report supports the delivery of core services.

BACKGROUND:

Established in 1995 as the first municipal program of its kind, the City of Kitchener Artist-in-Residence program aims to engage the community in the production of contemporary art that reflects community identities and supports the development of local artists. The program delivers on the understanding that meaningful engagement in the arts, and growth of the creative sector contributes positively to the dynamism, authenticity, attractiveness, and overall competitiveness of the City of Kitchener.

Link: Learn more about the [City of Kitchener's Artist in Residence program](#).

The annual program continues to emphasize a high level of community engagement such as workshops and events, exhibitions, collaboration with City and community events, programs and facilities, and participation on Public Art Working Group (PAWG), a subcommittee of the Arts and Culture Advisory Committee (ACAC). The artist-in-residence is provided with an honorarium as compensation for their residency project.

The program is open to artists working in a variety of disciplines including visual arts, performing arts, dance, design, digital and media arts, folk and traditional arts, literature and spoken word, music, multidisciplinary works, opera, theatre, and musical theatre. To encourage proposals from artists from equity-deserving communities, over the years staff developed the program description and language to expand the eligibility criteria. While these efforts have resulted in some expansion of both the disciplines and backgrounds of the selected artists, staff and PAWG continue to prioritize the evolution of the program to address persistent barriers for local artists from equity-deserving communities. To broaden access to the program, PAWG recommended a partnership with Textile Magazine to offer the selected artist a mentorship opportunity and reach out into communities historically underrepresented in the program. Textile Magazine is a local publication founded on the goal of merging community work with writing and other artistic practices and publication. Textile Magazine has expertise providing local artists with a nurturing environment to support their artistic practice, a focus on centering the voices of artists who have been marginalized and showcasing diverse perspectives.

REPORT:

The annual call for proposals was advertised in the spring of 2022. Twelve proposals were submitted by the competition close at the end of May 2022. PAWG members assessed the entries based on:

- Artist works in the literary arts and other art discipline;
- Applicant is a regional artist or has a connection to Waterloo Region;
- Artist proposal shows a balance of practice development, collaboration and some form of meaningful exchange with the community;
- Demonstrated commitment to their craft;
- A clear plan of how to adapt the proposal to a virtual delivery if needed;
- Strength/professionalism of submission;
- Feasibility of the proposed program;
- Community engagement strategy; and,
- Applicant would benefit from the mentorship relationship with Textile Magazine.

After reviewing the submissions and meeting as a jury twice to discuss, PAWG reached consensus on June 28, 2022. PAWG selected Bangishimo Johnston as the recommended 2022 City of Kitchener Artist in Residence.

Bangishimo Johnston is an IndigiQueer Anishinaabe originally from Couchiching First Nations located on Treaty #3 territory. They are an artist/photographer, community organizer and advocate for creating space for Black, Indigenous, and racialized voices to be heard.

They hold a Social Service Work diploma from Lambton College (2010), a Bachelor of Social Work Honors degree from King's University College at Western University (2013), a Master

of Social Work degree from Wilfrid Laurier University (2014), and a Photography diploma from Fanshawe College (2021). They worked at the Waterloo Indigenous Student Centre at St. Paul's University and co-founded the Land Back Camp in Kitchener.

In their work, Bangishimo focuses on bodies of Black, Indigenous, and racialized people. They use their photography to educate others by sharing stories of decolonization, resistance, and resilience.

Their residency project, "The Medicines We Carry" includes the production of a series of large-scale portraits that engage the local Indigenous, racialized, and Black communities in their production: models, makeup artists, hairdressers, and assistants. The portraits, through their visual imagery, will explore the ancestral connection to the land, and the medicines carried to maintain this connection. These works will be displayed in a public exhibition where visitors will be able to interact with the photographs through a QR code, linking to audio and text narration about the portrait process and the traditional medicines used. Further, Bangishimo plans to collaborate with Textile Magazine to hold a workshop for emerging photographers to offer guidance and share knowledge to support the growth of their practice.

A component of the 2022 residency is the opportunity for Textile Magazine to provide mentorship to the selected artist. As an emerging artist and oral storyteller, Bangishimo anticipates that working with Textile Magazine will strengthen their skill as a literary storyteller. This opportunity will support the creation of the written component of the work and provide them with guidance with the overall narrative of the photography series.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report supports the delivery of core services.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The \$10,000 artist honourarium and up to \$2,500 allocation for expenses are supported by Arts/Creative Industry budgets.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

INFORM – This report has been posted to the City's website with the agenda in advance of the council / committee meeting.

CONSULT – In addition to consulting on the Artist-in-Residence call for entry, PAWG serves as the selection committee for the appointment, as a subcommittee of ACAC and as outlined in Terms of Reference. Guidelines for the jury process are outlined in Jury Procedures and provided to each member. A PAWG motion that ACAC support the selection of Bangishimo Johnston as the 2022 City of Kitchener Artist-in-Residence, was considered and supported by ACAC on July 19, 2022. Further, Textile Magazine also consulted on the call for entry and served on the jury.

COLLABORATE – An important component of the Artist-in-Residence program is the requirement for meaningful public engagement. City staff works with the artist to identify interesting opportunities for public engagement and develop creative programming to suit these opportunities. Bangishimo Johnston is proposing to engage equity-seeking individuals directly in the production of the photographs. Further, they plan on engaging the broader

community through exhibitions, workshop, artist talk and the relationship with Textile Magazine.

PREVIOUS REPORTS/AUTHORITIES:

- DSD-2021-171 Partnership with Textile Magazine for the 2022 Artist in Residence Appointment

APPROVED BY: Readman, Justin, General Manager of Development Services.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A – Bangishimo Johnston’s 2022 Artist in Residence proposal.

Attachment B – PAWG Terms of Reference.

Attachment C – Jury Procedures.

APPENDIX A

2022 Artist in Residence Proposal

Bangishimo Johnston
The Medicines We Carry

My name is Bangishimo, and I am a IndigiQueer Anishinaabe originally from Couchiching First Nations located on Treaty #3 territory. I moved to Kitchener-Waterloo in August 2013 to attend Wilfrid Laurier University. I decided to stay because there was a strong grassroots and arts community here and I wanted to be a part of that. I have been an educator and advocate on the Residential School System, Intergenerational Trauma & Resilience, Community Organizing, Indigenous Rights Movements, and Decolonizing Travel. For the last eight years, photography has played a major role as a medium through which I continue my community work. I hold a Social Service Work diploma from Lambton College (2010), a Bachelor of Social Work Honors degree from King's University College at Western University (2013), a Master of Social Work degree from Wilfrid Laurier University (2014), and a Photography diploma from Fanshawe College (2021).

Through my work with Indigenous urban and rural communities for the past fifteen years, I have developed skills in leadership, advocacy, and community building. As Events Coordinator for the Waterloo Indigenous Student Centre at St Paul's University College, I created space for Indigenous community members while creating new relationships with groups and organizations throughout Waterloo Region. This work contributed to the cities being more prepared and informed by Indigenous Communities to take actionable steps towards Reconciliation. It has also allowed me to become a voice for others and a leader within many spaces. My personal strength lies in community advocacy and education.

As a community organizer, my work has allowed me to spend the last fifteen years speaking to classrooms and conferences around the globe and here in the Region of Waterloo. Through a decolonial lens, I've been sharing my personal journey of my battle with drug addiction, to embracing my queer Indigenous identity and becoming an advocate for change. Most recently, I co-founded O:se Kenhionhata:tie, known as Land Back Camp, a land reclamation camp for IndigiQueer Two Spirit, trans and non-binary youth. Starting in 2020, we successfully advocated for Kitchener and Waterloo to give local park space back to Indigenous Peoples, waive fees for their use of public space, and create paid positions to enable continued work towards the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action. With each demand met, we continue to advocate throughout the region. We have been able to create space for land-based education such as a community garden, medicine walks, cultural ceremonies, weekly drum circles and community gatherings. We are now planning to set up camp again in the summer of 2022. I wish to emphasize how critical this land-based education is, and to bring social change into the classroom, empowering students to embody teachings throughout their lives.

As an artist, my photography focuses on the bodies of Black, Indigenous and Racialized foix (BIR). This platform helps to educate others by sharing the subject's stories of

Decolonization, Resistance and Resilience. Through the "Nations and Voices" photo project, I spent a year visiting twelve countries and taking photos of the BIR folk I met along the way. While planning for this journey, I saw no representation of Indigenous peoples traveling the world. I wanted to change the narrative and encourage others to explore their creativity and follow their dreams. Upon my return home, I exhibited these photos in locations throughout Kitchener-Waterloo. My hope is to one day publish these photos into a coffee table book. Since then, I have been fortunate to have numerous photo installations throughout the region in partnership with DTK, CAFKA, KWAG and most recently at The Grand in Calgary, Alberta. In 2021, I was selected as the winner of the Briarpatch Writing in the Margins - Photography and received a full spread in the magazine. Most recently, I was voted Best Photographer 2021 for the Community Edition. I believe my strengths as a visual communicator who is passionate/dedicated to showcasing BIR stories would be a tremendous asset as the Artist in Residence for The City of Kitchener.

Sept 2022

- Complete rough designs
- Recruit remaining models
- Recruit hairdresser, makeup artist and seamstress
- Purchases materials and equipment
- Scout studio space
- Begin working with Baldwin Beads in creating headpieces

Dec 2022

- Shoot portraits 1, 2, 3, and 4
- Continue working with Baldwin Beads on headpieces
- Contact art gallery spaces
- Begin editing process

March 2023

- Shoot portraits 5, 6, 7 and 8
- Finish editing process by March 25th
- Send to printers by April 1st

June 2023

- Launch Exhibit for Pride month and National Indigenous Peoples month

Community Engagement

City Hall: With the new square being built in front of Kitchener City Hall, my goal is to install my work in the rotunda of Kitchener City Hall. By having my work on display here, it would encourage the community to come inside City Hall, a space that hasn't been accessible since the pandemic as well during construction.

Portraits: The community can interact with the installation by scanning the QR code located beside each picture. The code will take them to my website for an audio and text narration about the portrait process and the traditional medicines used. Each narration will include both audio and text for accessibility.

Artist Talk: My goal is to host an artist talk inside the Rotunda, free to the public. The evening will start with traditional teachings by a Knowledge Keeper that will share about medicines used in each picture and the need for us to reclaim these teachings. This will be followed by a speakers panel that will include myself, Britney Baldwin of Baldwin Beads,

and a few of the models to share their experience with the process. Because we are still in a pandemic, my goal is to have the Artist Talk accessible to everyone. The event will be live streamed, or recorded, and will be shared on my social media platforms as well The City of Kitchener.

Workshop: My goal is to host a 2-hour workshop with Textile for aspiring young artists. The workshop will be free of charge and will be hosted outside in a public park or indoors in a city facility. The goal of this workshop is to educate young artists on how to find your narrative, working with art spaces and publications, how to promote yourself and tips for starting your own business. Snacks and drinks will be provided. If we are rained out, the event will take place at the Victoria Park Pavilion.