

## **CASC/Mass Culture Gathering**

### SYNOPSIS

Mass Culture is a collaborative initiative designed to support artists nationwide by forming a network of stakeholders that, through research, will address cultural policy issues at all levels of government. One of the key methods of creating these networks and initiatives is through Mass Culture Gatherings. These gatherings, supported by the Toronto Art's Council's Open Door funding, are initiated by arts and culture leaders.

Inspired by the Kitchen Table Conversation format, they are designed to provide informal, facilitated small-group discussions, focusing on specific research questions. The framework supports meaningful participation, emphasizing hospitality, respect, confidentiality, and the expression of difference and mutual search for shared solutions. Participants co-produce a Sharing Document which is published on the Mass Culture website, enabling these local meetings to have a wider resonance across the country.

The CASC/Mass Culture Gathering, held on February 23<sup>rd</sup> 2019, was an historic assembly of various stakeholders in the comedy industry. It served as a leap-off point for strengthening the comedy industry in Canada for everyone by asking: "How can professional Canadian comedy creators make Canada a global leader in comedy content?" In addition to highlighting some of the major inequities plaguing Canadian comedians compared to many other art forms in the country, here are some of the key takeaways that will be reflected in CASC initiatives moving forward:

**Funding**- Explicit recognition of comedy as an art form and "field of practice" by public sector arts councils is needed in order for comedians to have access to domestic and cultural export funding programs. This is a priority, as, in addition to the immediate financial assistance, recognition through funding would strengthen Canadian comedy's legitimacy in the eyes of the government and the public at large.

Other feedback related to funding focussed on establishing an economic and development infrastructure that would create a source of funding specifically for comedians, that would also benefit all relevant stakeholders in the production, presentation, broadcast, and distribution of Canadian comedy content. Such an infrastructure would support programs that fund the creation of media content, live performance, tourism events, and cultural content exports.

**Resources**- Create a resource hub for Canadian comics that provides, amongst many things, standardized contracts, Canada-wide touring routes, contacts, ethical comedy venues & promoters, and general professional development resources.

**Cancom**- A Canadian content policy framework must be created to lobby the government to change CRTC standards in order to level the playing field for Canadian comics as the current system protects the broadcasters, not the storytellers. Moreover, to lobby the CRTC and private industry to elevate the overall minimum requirement for Canadian content written, performed, and produced by Canadians.

**Live Comedy** – Standards of practice for: prices/pay for professional comedy, (comedy club ticket prices and pay to performers has not significantly risen in over 20 years); exclusivity contracts and other restrictions imposed on performers by club owners/bookers, (research continues into whether these are illegal business practices, going against section 2(d) 'freedom of association' in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*).