

UPDATE

ACCOUNTABILITY

THIS IS A LIVING DOCUMENT. OUR WORK IS EVOLVING. OUR JOURNEY WILL PROCEED AT THE SPEED OF TRUST. WILL YOU JOIN US?



December, 2022

Dear WAM Community & Supporters,

As we head into our 14th Season, we want to uphold our commitment to ongoing practices of accountability, and give you an update on our continued work in inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility (IDEA).

Since releasing our last [accountability action plan](#) in January of 2021, we are proud that: our programming has centered stories of BIPOC women, we have grown the BIPOC leadership of our Board to over 50%, and that WAM has committed to pay equity by increasing pay and benefits for our artists and year-round staff. All the changes that we have made are detailed below along with our ongoing commitments for 2023.

We are inspired by the growing diversity of our community and the stories that we are telling. We are also spurred on by the injustices perpetrated against local, national and global communities of women and other marginalized identities.

As a performing arts non-profit, we acknowledge that we still have work to do further aligning our organization with our values, and we will continue to envision and implement our productions and community engagement activities in connection to these needs and in conversation with sister social justice organizations.

We are ultimately accountable to YOU—the community that we work for and with—and so we once again ask for your feedback. Please reach out to us with ways that we can be more accessible or inclusive: accountability@wamtheatre.com

In Solidarity,

WAM Theatre Team & Board

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WAM's Accountability Statement

This is a living document. Our work is evolving.
Our journey will proceed at the speed of trust.
Will you join us?

To read more about our accountability journey
and previous action plans click [here](#).

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As per our January 2021 accountability plan, our efforts continue to be focused in three areas. Under each, we list our goals and corresponding efforts to date.

In Leadership and Training:

- We devote time during our team and board meetings to **conversations about accountability** including intentionally engaging in ongoing mindfulness about language, recognition of unconscious bias, and breaking down [white supremacy norms](#).
- WAM's Producing Artistic Director and Board President were **part of a year-long Inclusive Leadership Cohort** facilitated by BRIDGE.
- WAM led a **pilot program on accessibility** with our 2021 production of Kamloopa which included streaming the production. This then led to a decision to continue to offer online/streamed content throughout our 2022 season.
- WAM's leadership team receives **regular and ongoing leadership coaching** by an executive leadership coach of color, Karen Senteio.
- WAM's **new Strategic Plan** includes contributing to the global work of dismantling oppression as one of the three overarching goals of the organization.
- The 2023 WAM **Board of Directors is made up of 50% BIPOC-identified people**. Board cultivation and orientation processes have been updated and our in-coming Board President is a regional leader in IDEA work.
- The WAM leadership team has adopted a **shared leadership model** with the Managing Director working in partnership with the Producing Artistic Director and in close consultation with other team members. It should be noted that currently both members of the upper management of WAM are white.
- WAM has achieved **greater parity in compensation** for our year-round staff. Taking into account an employee's entire benefits package in relation to their wage and adding the opportunity for all to start an IRA account.

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- WAM is **transparent about our salaries** and is working in a regional group on pay equity initiatives across the creative sector. In the past two years we have made great strides in our parity of pay, including closing the salary gap, so all team members are within 30% of each other for total compensation package.
- WAM **maintains a flexible working environment** including: remote working, flexible schedules, occasional childcare funding, paid time-off, technology and travel stipend.
- We are **cultivating a culture of taking a “moment of pause”** before diving into a shift in programming or big decisions, to promote thoughtfulness and intention over urgent decision making.
- WAM’s Managing Director implemented changes to the company’s hiring and interview practices to be more in line with **equitable hiring practices** based on [ArtsEquity Antiracist Approaches to Radical Recruitment in the Arts](#).

In Productions and Season Planning:

- The 2022 season planning and **play selection decisions were made with a committee of diverse artistic voices** who read a broader selection of plays and tested them out in internal readings and group discussions.
- WAM’s 2021 and 2022 seasons have **centered plays by and featuring BIPOC women**, and we have prioritized hiring BIPOC women as directors, designers and production team members.
- WAM made adjustments to our **casting calls** to ensure they **occur in welcoming spaces** where actors are represented by those in the audition room. We continue to ensure that artists are greeted warmly, have what they need to audition (which sometimes includes childcare) and are thanked for their work.
- WAM’s **BIPOC Staff Advocate** continues to be a key resource for our temporary and year-round artists, doing things such as attending first rehearsals, checking in with company members, providing advice, and conflict resolution.
- For our productions we run a **five day rehearsal week**. In 2022, WAM experimented with an extended design and tech period on our Fall production.
- In 2022, **parent artists involved in Cadillac Crew were granted additional compensation** to help alleviate the financial burden of childcare during rehearsals and performances.

- **Artists are invited but not required to do talkbacks.** In the past two years we have started each production with a questionnaire to gauge artist's interest and comfort level with participation in marketing, PR and social media campaigns.
- WAM continues to **explore accountability within the context of the media.** In 2021, digital press kits included a letter from the playwright about how to enter and write about an Indigenous Artistic Ceremony.
- WAM has **increased pay for the artists/technicians** we employ for our productions.

In Audiences and Community Engagement:

- WAM has **actively reimagined the process by which we donate money** from our productions, focusing our giving around relationship, repair and reparation. Read about the evolving process [here](#). In 2022, we solicited ideas from across our team and board for organizations (local, national and global) whose mission spoke to the theme of the play and fitted into our mission for repair, reparation and relationship.
- Trained and overseen by BRIDGE, WAM's Producing Artistic Director offered their **Cultural Competency Training for our volunteers.** We also offered a well-attended online workshop on Presenting Indigenous Theater led by Amanda Luke (Citizen of Choctaw Nation and a descendant of the Cherokee Nation) and one on Black Theater Aesthetic led by Tatiana Godfrey.
- WAM maintains a **land acknowledgement** page on our website that is updated annually after consultation with the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of the Mohicans with action steps for our community. We also include a land acknowledgement in our playbills, curtain speeches and lobby displays.
- WAM has **implemented equitable ticketing practices**, allowing audience members to select their ticket price from a range and then pick a seat in the theater that works best for them.
- We also joined an initiative through the Department of Transitional Assistance and MassCultural Council to offer **\$5 tickets to anyone with an EBT card.**
- WAM's Director of Finance, alongside a committee of staff and board, **completed a comprehensive survey of our vendors**, looking at cultural competency and diversity.
- WAM has **begun to implement more equitable fundraising practices:** instead of a summer gala we presented a benefit performance with multiple ticket levels and equitable seating. Similarly, we have moved towards removing hierarchy in our donor listings, by removing the donor amount and level of individuals and listing our annual donors in alphabetical order.

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- In 2022, WAM's Teen **Ensemble concentrated on process over product**. They were paid a stipend for their participation to help remove any barriers to participation, as we explored themes of Afrofuturism.
- In order to increase access to performances for parents, we **provided free childcare for our 2022 production of Cadillac Crew** both on-site at the theater and as a reimbursement for babysitters at home.
- **Implemented Universal Participation website audit recommendations to ensure greater accessibility for our patrons.**

2023 Intended Actions include the following:

- **Deeper training in Anti-Racism and Universal Participation** for WAM team members including WAM's Managing Director and Incoming Board President joining the 2023 Inclusive Leadership cohort, and WAM's new Director of Community Engagement taking the Universal Participation training, passing training onto our volunteers and overseeing the implementation of more Universal Participation in our programming.
- Growing our organizational **budget lines for IDEA initiatives** at WAM, including training (detailed above) and **caregiver stipends** for artists and administrators.
- Ensuring diligent accountability around season planning is an area WAM is focused on for future seasons, including **prioritizing plays written by and featuring BIPOC women**.
- Continue to examine and **adjust our hiring, contracting and employment practices** for production artists and year-round staff.
- Going forward, we will more widely publicize our **new ticketing policies** (including equitable sliding-scale ticket prices, group sales, the EBT, WIC, and ConnectorCare Card To Culture, and other ticket subsidies) to **remove barriers for our socio-economically disadvantaged patrons**.
- Continue to prioritize **building community and vendor relationships with BIPOC and women-owned businesses** and those who are prioritizing cultural competency work.
- Continue to **build strategies to reduce the culture of urgency** and alleviate burnout, including more paid time off and extending the rehearsal period for productions.

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Influences

WAM Theatre acknowledges with gratitude the following influences, teachers, thought-leaders and texts:

[Nicole Brewer](#) (Anti-Racist Theater)

[Amanda Nita Luke](#) (Presenting Indigenous Theater in Non-Native Spaces)

[Gwendolyn VanSant](#), Cultural Competency Coaching.

[BRIDGE](#) (dba Multicultural BRIDGE)

The teachers, facilitators and participants of the [Inclusive Leadership Cohort](#)

Massachusetts Cultural Council's [Universal Participation Initiative](#)

[Karen Senteio](#), Executive Coaching

[Right To Be](#) (Bystander Training)

[Tatiana Godfrey](#) (Black Theater Aesthetic)

[The Stockbridge-Munsee Band of the Mohican Indians](#)

[Heather Breugl](#) (Indigenous Historian)

Victor Vazquez ([X Casting](#))

[Emerging Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds](#) by adrienne maree brown

[The Art of Gathering: How we Meet and Why it Matters](#) by Priya Parker

[Onawumi Jean Moss](#), Cultural Consultant.

[Trenda Loftin](#), BIPOC Staff Advocate

[Arts Equity](#) and Shariga Johka (Equitable Hiring Practices)

Facilitators and colleagues at the [Theatre Communication Group](#) retreats.

Tema Okum and ([divorcing](#)) [White Supremacy Culture](#)

The Parent Artist Advocacy League ([PAAL](#))

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Thank you, dear WAMily, for reading our living document, for holding us accountable, and for joining us in our evolving anti-racism, accountability and accessibility work.



Where Arts & Activism Meet

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