

# Groundstory

Addressing the roots of gentrification  
one brick, one story, at a time

## WHAT

**Groundstory (Histoire de terrain)** is a collective impact initiative with a mandate to uncover and address the drivers and adverse ripple effects of gentrification, including growing income inequality, increasing geographic segmentation/polarization by income, loss of affordable housing and vital community spaces, and involuntary socio-spatial displacement of lower-income households and small businesses (including the arts) from Toronto, Hamilton, and other communities across Ontario.

For decades, artists have been commonly implicated in traditional debates around the facilitation of gentrification and displacement. However, recent research indicates that the “standard arts-led gentrification narrative is too generalized or simply no longer applicable to contemporary arts-gentrification processes.” (Grodach, Foster & Murdoch, 2016).

**Groundstory** will detail, and respond to, these evolving narratives.

## WHY

**Groundstory** seeks to answer such complex questions as:

### a) Mapping drivers and impacts of the arts in contemporary gentrification and displacement

What are the contributing factors to gentrification? What neighbourhoods are gentrifying? Who are the most impacted by gentrification (by culture, ethnicity, region, income, etc)? Where are displaced residents and businesses of gentrifying neighbourhoods moving to? What sacrifices are being made to stay where they are, either by choice or by lack of viable housing/spacing alternatives? Are municipal plans being activated in affected communities to respond to these displacements and migrations? Do the roles of individual creative industries, and even specific businesses and venues, change in different regions and neighbourhoods across Ontario, including film/media, visual, performing arts, etc? If so, what are the factors that are driving these differences? Are there positive changes to local, regional and provincial economies due to gentrification? Are there linkages and connections to gentrification trends in other regions nationally and globally?

## b) Interventions and policies that can mitigate the growth of income inequality and arts/non-arts displacement in major urban centres

Pressure-testing the effectiveness of emerging and traditional responses to the ripple effects of contemporary gentrification, including: developing multilateral charitable, land value, foreign investor, and vacant property taxation policies; municipal zoning and economic, urban, and cultural planning strategies; national and municipal housing policies, development and maintenance of social housing and co-operatives; laneway suites; storefront theatres, DIY/makerspaces, pop-up studios, creative entrepreneur hubs; diversity and inclusion strategies; tenant's unions; neighbourhood land trusts; decent work and fair-pay policies; arts income averaging; low or universal income assistance; and others.

## c) Means of connecting independent and siloed stakeholders toward a sustainable approach

How may diverse partners come together to implement a shared agenda and theory of change? To what degree can non-profits, business, government, artists, and arts organizations play a shared leadership role in addressing gentrification that cultivates greater connections, collaborations, shared strategies and resources? What strategies, knowledge, and resources already happening or available on the ground can be brought together to deepen impact for collective benefit? How may those most impacted by the ripple effects of gentrification be engaged in the initiative? What tools and methodologies are necessary to sustain a positive shared measurement / impact evaluation process?

## HOW

With pending funding from Ontario Trillium Foundation, the first stage of **Groundstory** will invite cross-sectoral leaders from the arts, business, non-profit, and government sectors to come together to cultivate consensus and urgency to move forward with a multi-year collaboration. Spanning Winter 2018 to Spring 2019, major activities for stage one include:

- Convene cross-sectoral stakeholders, and identify who else needs to be involved
- Define the Leadership Committee and its role
- Develop a common agenda
- Establish a theory of change and shared measurement approach
- Map the system/landscape and build a strong case for change
- Identify what data (and what gaps in data) exists
- Community outreach and engagement to attract participation.

## WHO

**Groundstory** is initiated by ArtsPond / Étang d'Arts (Toronto). Founded in 2014 and incorporated as a non-profit in 2016, the mandate of ArtsPond/Étang d'Arts is to incite positive systemic change in Canada's arts and culture sector through innovative collaborations on-the-ground and in-the-cloud.

## INFO

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## ACTIVITIES (PHASE ONE)

Winter 2018 to Spring 2018

### 1) Convene cross-sectoral stakeholders

Regular monthly convening's of stakeholders will provide opportunities to:

- Define an effective governance and communications structure
- Define the Leadership Committee and its role
- Develop a common agenda
- Establish a theory of change and shared measurement approach (including shared data collection and analysis)
- Determine who else needs to be involved
- Share knowledge and resources to help establish a foundation for subsequent phases
- At least one meeting will take place in Hamilton, with the remainder in Toronto
- All meetings are video-recorded for archival purposes
- All meetings in English, with French interpretation upon request

### 2) Map the system/landscape

- International literature review
- Overview of relevant regional research efforts in Ontario and identify potential methods and technologies to interconnect them
- Case study interviews and public roundtables with displaced artists in Toronto and Hamilton

### 3) Outreach and community engagement

- Public information sessions, including webinars (3 English, 1 French), and public presentations in Toronto (Bilingual) and Hamilton (English)
- Networking and presentations at two inter/national conferences in arts and culture placemaking and urban planning

### 4) Evaluation and reporting

- Produce and maintain bilingual project website, including monthly project updates and archival video of information sessions with English and French closed captioning
- Prepare and disseminate bilingual final report in print and online formats

## DELIVERABLES

- 1) **Convene ten (10)+ cross-sectoral meetings** to foster an effective governing culture that empowers participation of diverse stakeholders representative of the fabric of Ontario (including emerging and established leaders from arts, government, business, and non-profit sectors, as well as displaced/low-income Youth, Seniors, New Canadians, Indigenous, Francophone, Disability, LGBTQ+, and other racialized groups).
- 2) **Complete eight (8) case study interviews, two (2) public roundtables with displaced regional arts groups/artists, and international research/literature review** to identify what data (and gaps in data) exists and develop an evidence base for future support.
- 3) **Host six (6) information sessions and present initiative summaries at two (2) inter/national conferences** to engage and attract greater awareness and participation by the broader public.
- 4) **Publish a bilingual website and final report** to evaluate and share lessons, summarize findings, and make recommendations for strategies, activities and interventions to take place in phase two.

Whether future resources allow Groundstory to extend into multiple cities across Ontario, or the collective decides it is prudent to focus attention on a small number of priority neighbourhoods, these deliverables will ensure a strong foundation is in place for subsequent phases.