

STRATEGIC DEVE PMENT **Table of Contents**

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francophone de l'Alberta

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The play Les Blues des oubliées by Pierrette
Requier was produced at l'UniThéâtre in 2015 and
staged by Brian Dooley. On the picture: Mireille
Moquin, Gisèle Lemire, Caroline Rouleau and
Paula Humby. © Dave DeGagné/DBPhotographic

VALUES OF THE
REGROUPEMENT
ARTISTIQUE
FRANCOPHONE
DE L'ALBERTA
(RAFA)

Leadership

RAFA is the fearless champion of the
French-language arts sector in Alberta. The
organization is a vital link in the province
and nation wide networks of organizations
and a leading resource for anyone seeking
to connect with the arts in Alberta. Its fierce
vitality makes RAFA a partner of choice for the
arts community, counterpart organizations and
the private sector. Its advice feeds into and
informs government decisions. It is recognized
for its skills, integrity and professionalism.

Excellence

Artists and arts organizations in Alberta are leaders in their respective disciplines.

RAFA works to ensure that the merit and contributions of the arts community are fully recognized by their peers and by the public, supported by government, and valued by society. RAFA is meant to reflect the image of the arts community, and thus works carefully to deliver up-scale services and structured and impactful activities.

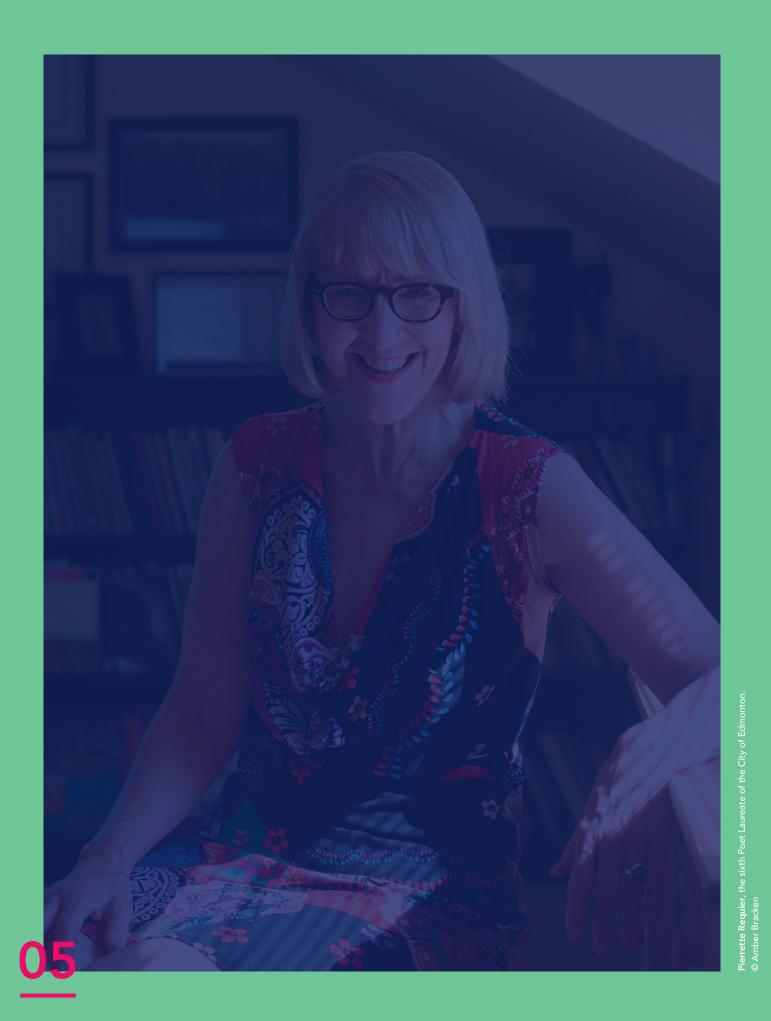
Creativity

Art is at the heart of **RAFA**'s approach.

The organization's services and activities are remarkably bold. Its programming changes regularly, its policies and management systems are continually updated, and it innovates to exceed the expectations of the arts community at all times.

Encouragement

RAFA is a springboard for the development of the French-speaking arts community in Alberta. It is an inclusive, unifying organization that relies on collaboration so that artists, arts organizations and cultural workers in Alberta may progress, excel and reach new heights throughout their careers.



end of the very first Five-Year
Strategic Development Plan of
the Regroupement artistique
francophone de l'Alberta. The
Plan was ambitious and its
detailed action plan served as a
roadmap for the organization's
staff and directors, who often
held their breath as it was
being implemented... Despite
everything, with a few rare
exceptions, the RAFA team and
its members managed to achieve
their objectives¹.

The end of 2015 also marked the

Although it is still a young organization,

RAFA learned a lot during this initial strategic exercise. This newly acquired experience enabled the board of directors, consisting of eight members, and the RAFA team to adjust their appraisal of current capacities and fine-tune their reasoning on objectives for the coming years.

Following various consultations with RAFA members, and with the support of a consultant, everyone participated in the development of this new plan². The Association's decisions always begin with the arts community. RAFA's strength and its future will always rest with the artists it brings together.

- See the appended assessment of Strategic Development Plan 2010-2015.
- ² See the appended process for this new Strategic Development Plan.

PREAM -

The foundations of Strategic Development Plan 2016-2021 are directly linked with RAFA's values and the overview of its current situation.

Foundations of Strategic Development Plan 2016-2021

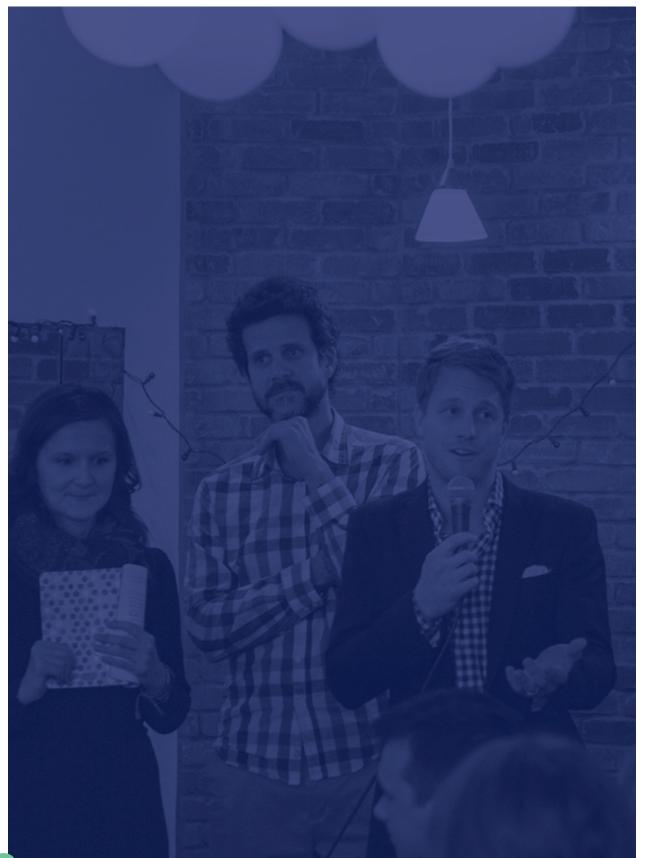
MISSION To foster the growth and vitality of the French-speaking arts community in Alberta.				
VISION 2016-2021 Art by French-speaking artists in Alberta inspires, thrives and radiates here and abroad.	VALUES Leadership, excellence, creativity and encouragement.			

Expected Outcomes

STRATEGY 1 SERVING THE ARTS COMMUNITY	STRATEGY 2 POSITIONING THE ARTS COMMUNITY	STRATEGY 3 CONSOLIDATING RAFA`S CAPACITY FOR ACTION
EO1 — The arts community is a prosperous, dynamic network.	EO2 — Contributions of the arts community to society are more readily recognized.	EO3 — RAFA has all the resources necessary to achieve its mission.

Interim Results

STRATEGY 1 SERVING THE ARTS COMMUNITY	STRATEGY 2 POSITIONING THE ARTS COMMUNITY	STRATEGY 3 CONSOLIDATING RAFA`S CAPACITY FOR ACTION
IO 1.1 — The arts community benefits from a range of activities, resources, programs and tools tailored to its needs. — IO 1.2 — Alberta has a vast pool of French-speaking artists and cultural workers at all stages of the arts continuum. — IO 1.3 — Artists from all disciplines have an increased presence in Alberta and abroad.	IO 2.1 — RAFA is a strong, united voice for its arts community with regard to political and association leadership across the country. IO 2.2 — RAFA is more inclusive of culturally diverse artists and arts organizations. IO 2.3 — The arts community and society as a whole are more aware of RAFA's mission and actions.	IO 3.1 — RAFA has tools that promote the stability of its human resources. — IO 3.2 — RAFA's financial situation is stable.



-ar West Productions, is a new bilingual production company founded by J<mark>essica l'Heureux, Benoît Pellerin .</mark> Corey Loranger. Their launch took place in October 2015 at Café bicyclette at La Cité francophone. © Damia

Internal environment

After more than a decade of actions and delivering programs and services, RAFA is a well-known, important ally of French-speaking artists in Alberta. It always contributes to the professionalization of the arts community, and an increasing number of French speaking artists seem to be promoting themselves as professionals. No doubt this is partly a result of RAFA's programming, which directly meets the needs of its members (e.g. professionalization service), the development of pertinent resources for French-speaking artists and cultural workers, and ensuring that French-speaking Albertans are increasingly connected with the professional arts network across Canada (e.g. Entr'Arts],

The Association now has a solid permanent team that is well-respected by cultural industry workers in the province and across the country.

As with many non-profit organizations, its staff must change from time to time. However,

RAFA has a wealth of experience in succession planning. In fact, it is a national leader in this regard, having navigated successful transitions with its executive director and president over the past few years.

Fortunately, despite some uncertainty surrounding grants received from public funders, **RAFA** benefits from a good financial stability. This overall stability is an important asset, and allows the Association to maintain a permanent team and implement its annual programming.

Finally, note that membership remains important, so that **RAFA** can remain in close, frequent contact with those it serves.

O V E R V I E W O F T H E S I T U A T I O N I N 2016.

Internal environment

Dynamic leadership Solid, respected team Established transition management skills, in matters of governance as well as staffing Stable membership Recognition of the quality of the organization's activities Services tailored to directly meet member needs Mobilization of the organization of the directly meet member needs Document the organization of the	ous funding from e sources mming too broad to implemented activities require artistic on and it may be difficult to ne expectations of members

External environment

As we know, arts and culture are significant economic and social forces. For example, a recent study by the *Alberta Foundation for the Arts* indicated that 85% of Albertans attend at least one arts event per year³. According to this same study, the direct GDP contribution of the arts sector to Alberta's economy is estimated at \$110 million, resulting from approximately \$203 million in total economic activity generated by non-profit arts organizations⁴.

In addition, the arts and culture sector is being increasingly recognized for its contribution to strengthening the feeling of belonging and the vitality of official language minority communities. It motivates considerable investment by the federal government and several provinces⁵.

Yet the socioeconomic situation of artists remains widely deplorable. A recent study by the Canadian Institute for Research on Linguistic Minorities (CIRLM) indicated that over 40% of the artists in the Canadian Francophonie had an annual income of \$10,000 or less, which is clearly below the poverty line in Canada⁶.

Having been a voice for the Frenchlanguage arts and culture sector in Alberta for a number of years already, RAFA has established considerable credibility with funders, government officials and elected representatives, which should enable it to properly position sectoral interests in relation to various decision-making authorities. Its presence at certain key levels attests to its credibility as a voice for the sector.

Note that RAFA's influence is not limited solely to its government contacts, but it also has echoes in an entire series of formal and informal links with its counterparts in the association network. Having multiplied its partnerships with stakeholders from one end of the country to the other, RAFA can now be considered to be among the French-language institutions most widely recognized by stakeholders and decision makers in Alberta, and among the most dynamic arts service organizations in the Canadian Francophonie.

³ Government of Alberta, Arts Impact Alberta 2014: Ripple Effects from the Arts Sector, 2014, page 3.

Ibid, page 4.

⁵ Government of Canada, Roadmap for Canada's Official Languages 2013-2018, 2013, page 13.

⁶ Robineau, Anne, A Current Look at the Situation of Artists in the Canadian Francophonie, CIRLM, Canada Council for the Arts, FCCF, September 2013, page 2.

Recent changes in the provincial and federal governments imply that new sector development policies are forthcoming. The impact of this shift in priorities and the funds available to funders and cultural agencies is unclear at the moment, but certainly should be monitored.

Given the erosion of and changes in the
French-language media world, an increasing
number of partners have expressed an interest
in closer ties with the English-language
media. This would make it possible to reach
French speakers who do not subscribe to
French-language media, as well as non-French
speakers, who are showing increasing
openness to and interest in French-language
arts and culture.

One thing is certain. French-language artistic activity is definitely increasing in the province. The variety of artistic practice, at all stages of the practice continuum, in all disciplines, is definitely increasing and diversifying. This diversification is due in part to the immigration of French-speakers into the province, greater artist visibility, and an increased capacity of organizations from culturally diverse origins.

RAFA must remain watchful of all these changes on the horizon.

OPPORTUNITIES CHALLENGES • Solid relations with government • Adjusting approach and maintaining a solid officials, agencies and representatives network in the face of changes in the provincial in the province and federal governments • Close connections with counterparts • Gradual erosion of the capacity in French- and English-language of the SRC association networks. • Upcoming adjusting (in 2017) to the new • History of collaboration with other arts funding model of the Canada Council for the service organizations in Alberta Arts, which has not yet been put to the test Arrival of TVS-UNIS • Increased visibility in the English language media • More and more research documenting the benefits of arts and culture • Long distances to connect regions of Alberta





e visual artist studios participating in the **2015 edition of Entr'ARTS** at the Banff Centre. pement artistique francophone de l'Alberta

Strategy 1 - Services to the arts community

This strategy provides support to strengthen the skills and professional practice of artists and cultural workers; to enrich, highlight and raise awareness of the Frenchlanguage arts community in Alberta; and to maintain, find and develop new markets.

Current key activities:

Development of professional practice:

professional development structure including thematic workshops, individual coaching, and the biannual creative program *Entr'ARTS*.

Presenting: coordinating communities of practice; supporting the development of network programming; developing the skills of cultural workers; coordinating provincial tours.

Promotion: handing out RAFA awards of excellence; maintaining and developing partnerships for the presentation of various events; collaborating on new cultural product launches; supporting the creation of promotional tools for professional artists; publishing on the web portals *Coup d'œil* and *Répertoire des artistes*.

Development of new markets: participating in various performing arts markets in the country to represent artists and cultural products; producing the Annual Bilingual Catalogue of Cultural Products; strengthening initiatives aimed at bringing our artists into schools.

Strategy 2 - Position the arts community

This strategy focuses on representing the interests of artists and cultural workers; seeking and maintaining the support of various political and community leaders; and mobilizing support for artistic and cultural development.



Current key activities:

Holding the Forum annuel des arts et de la culture; continuing to work on developing and promoting arts and culture on the national scene; representing its members and defending their interests at the regional, provincial and national levels (Alberta Partners for Arts & Culture, Réseau des grands espaces, Fédération culturelle canadienne-française, Alliance nationale de l'industrie musicale); maintaining and creating new ties in the cultural industry in Canada and abroad; continuously discovering and welcoming French-speaking artists.

Projet R: "to revitalize French-Canadian folk dancing troupes in Alberta". A performance grouping La Girandole with its troupe Zéphyr from Edmonton and the following companies Les pleins soleils from Saint-Isidore, Vol aux vents from Bonnyville and Les Blés d'or from Saint-Paul performing at the Fête franco-albertain in July of 2014. © Regroupement artistique francophone de l'Alberta

Strategy 3 -Consolidate RAFA's potential for action

This strategy focuses on bringing all of RAFA's services and activities mentioned in its action plan to the forefront.

Current key activities:

Maintaining, reviewing and adapting the wage and human resources structure.

Implementing strategies aimed at maintaining and increasing RAFA's basic funding and consolidating its services.



Paul Cournoyer, Steph Blais and Brayden Treble of Post Script. The album If not for you was launched in October 2015. © Dana Dusterhoft

 $^{^{\}rm 7}$ Contact RAFA to obtain the detailed action plan.



Bearing in mind the experience acquired during the implementation of the previous strategic development plan, the RAFA team and its board of directors are prepared to continue working along the same path that led them to success. Its programming is currently sailing along at a good cruising speed.

The important thing in 2016–2021 is to maintain a strategic development plan that reflects who we are and brings us together. It reflects who we are when it meets the needs, interests and aspirations of its members. It brings us together when it reunites artists and organizations again and again during its process to debate and discuss actions it should take to serve them better.

In closing, it should be remembered that the very existence of our Regroupement artistique francophone de l'Alberta is to bring together artists from all the artistic disciplines, all levels of practice and all regions of Alberta, along with their cultural worker counterparts.



Appendix 1 - Background

RAFA was created in 2001 on the initiative of artists in the community to provide artists in French-speaking Alberta with a voice.

A number of people gave their body and soul to find a name, define its objectives, provide it with articles of association and bylaws, and see to its funding and development. Everything had to be done! It is amusing to think that the initial decisions were made in an Albert's Restaurant in Edmonton's Bonnie Doon Shopping Centre.

The Regroupement artistique francophone de l'Alberta (RAFA) has experienced rapid growth since it was first established, and has stood out as an accomplished arts service organization. Called the leader in the arts and culture sector since 2006 by the Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta (ACFA), RAFA is the dynamic, credible voice of French-language arts in Alberta. It represents the interests of the sector, and oversees its development by giving a voice to French-speaking artists, arts organizations and cultural workers throughout the province.

A praised unifying organization, **RAFA** mobilizes artistic workers in Alberta around activities

intended to raise the public and media visibility of French-language arts. Holding events such as the *Forum annuel du RAFA* – a large gathering of French-speaking artists and cultural workers – has already fostered a notable link between arts and cultural workers (presenters) in the various disciplines and regions of the province.

In addition, RAFA has contributed to raising the public and media profile of French-language arts and culture in Alberta with two other accomplishments: the Sylvie Van Brabant and Martin-Lavoie awards of excellence commemorating the significant contributions of two champions of the arts in the Alberta Francophonie; and the creation of its website, where it posts the Répertoire des artists d'expression française de l'Alberta (artist directory), as well as the online portal for arts and culture news Coup d'œil and the publication of its weekly electronic newsletter.

Over the years, **RAFA** has worked on organizing the *Grand marché des arts de la scène*. It also significantly revamped its website to promote interactivity with its members by giving them

two options: the responsibility and opportunity for artists to develop their artistic profile in the Artist directory as a personal website; and the option for presenters to promote their own events on the portal *Coup d'œil*. It also supported networking amongst cultural and artistic intervenors – especially performing arts presenters. These activities have substantially increased the flow of artists in French-speaking communities in the province.

It has also demonstrated leadership in its initiatives to bring together stakeholders from several western provinces and the northern territories. This is particularly the case with the development of the *Réseau des grands espaces* and the organization of *Contact Ouest*, an event that has taken place in Alberta three times since **RAFA** was created.

RAFA has also invested considerable time and resources in designing the career development service and specialized member support. These services, as well as the regular offering of top-quality resourcing and training opportunities – particularly *Entr'Arts* at the Banff Centre – are among the strong links in its programming and have strengthened the arts community in the province, all disciplines combined.

None of these actions would be conclusive, or even possible, without the ongoing work of RAFA's team. The staff's vitality and skills have consistently set the organization apart and helped it to become truly exemplary in its programming as well as its management and governance. All this despite the decrease in its staff from five to three employees because of budgetary constraints.

Today, RAFA's impact is widely recognized by artists, cultural workers, the media, non-profit organizations and government officials for the quality of its work, the many spinoffs from its activities, and its continuing leadership.

Finally, **RAFA**'s path is such that it has managed in just a short while to set itself up as a valued asset, while leaving its mark and strengthening the arts ecosystem in Alberta.

Appendix 2 -Assessment of the Strategic Development Plan 2010-2015

This section provides a brief assessment of RAFA's Strategic Development Plan 2010-2015, including certain key accomplishments over the past five years. It should be remembered that RAFA's Strategic Development Plan 2010-2015 focussed on four strategic priorities: Development of professional practice; Market development, promotion and communication; Positioning of the arts community; and Governance and consolidation. All in all, this plan outlined an ambitious program, but it was often difficult to achieve given the range of matters and actions to be undertaken. That said, the overall assessment is rather positive, much has been accomplished over the past few years, and both the organization and the sector have made considerable progress.

Strategy 1 –Development of professional practice

RAFA developed an approach, tools and support services that are among the most flexible and innovative in the sector nationwide.

RAFA's individual support is truly appreciated by artists. In addition, the range of training

offered from one year to the next is effective and relevant. The activity *Entr'Arts*, to give just one example, allows French-speaking artists in Alberta to rub shoulders with seasoned artists from across the country and to have an intensive, revitalizing experience focussed on creativity and generous collaboration. In many cases, this training was instrumental in developing long-lasting relationships between artists who did not know each other previously.

In addition, the establishment of communities

of practice for presenters has counteracted the isolation felt by many of them. This approach also made it possible to contribute to professional development through the exchange of expertise, best practices and concrete tools, which in turn made it possible to improve the changing situation of presenters.

RAFA's approach also substantially increased the ties between artists working in various disciplines or regions of Alberta. Finally, it has been noted that RAFA's overall action contributed to an increased legitimization of professional artistic practice in the Alberta Francophonie.



Strategy 2 - Market development

Over the past five years, **RAFA** substantially increased the number of partnerships in order to extend the influence of French-speaking artists to a greater number of larger audiences.

RAFA took a very special approach to strengthening the dance sector. *Project R* mobilized four troupes and highlighted the French-speaking dance community in the province. The development of the sectoral plan for dance also helped to increase the influence of this sector.

RAFA also maintained close ties with its counterparts in the Canadian Francophonie. Its presence and that of several Frenchspeaking artists from Alberta at showcases such as Contact Ouest, Contact Ontarois and FrancoFête en Acadie, its participation in the Réseau des grands espaces, and its collaboration with Festival Fry in New Brunswick, are all examples of actions that allowed French-speaking artists from Alberta to share their work with presenters and audiences elsewhere in the country.

RAFA also initiated several projects that contributed to advancing the French-language arts sector in Alberta. This was particularly the

case during the Tournée des arts visuels or the organization of the Grand marché des arts. This showcase alone allowed a few thousand Albertans to witness the talent of local French-speaking artists. Note that one of the results of these events was the development of a certain closeness with English-speaking Albertans who often proved to be open and curious about our artists. This was particularly noticeable at the literary evening French Twist, or in the collaboration with Canadian Parents for French, which resulted in the presentation of some sixty shows by member artists in the French immersion school system. These undertakings have led to increased interest in and recognition of Franco-Albertan artists by the English-speaking majority in Alberta.

Strategy 3 – Positioning of the arts community

For the past five years, **RAFA** has seized numerous opportunities to remind various stakeholders in Alberta and in Canada of the linguistic, cultural and historical particularities of the Alberta Francophonie. It has maintained its presence in certain nation-wide groups, including the Fédération culturelle canadienne-française (FCCF), and actively participated in certain federal initiatives such as the consultations on renewal of the *Roadmap for*

Canada's Official Languages, or bilateral meetings with the Canada Council for the Arts and the Department of Canadian Heritage.

RAFA also significantly increased the number of occasions on which it defended the interests of the arts in the Alberta Francophonie by including certain authorities such as the Premier's Council. The organization currently has a broader network of influence as a result of these efforts to speak out. The list of parties seeking to consult RAFA in order to better accommodate the needs and realities of our members has actually grown considerably over the years. RAFA has thus become an active member of networks such as Alberta Partners for Arts and Culture.

Strategy 4 - Governance and consolidation

The past five years have been marked by considerable development and innovation in RAFA's programming. However, this was also a particularly busy period in terms of governance and administration. Its head office moved to a new location to accommodate the current team and provide a more conducive work environment.

RAFA also underwent two significant transitions over the past five years: it prepared for and navigated the transition from its founding executive director to a new one as of 2011; it also changed presidents during the same time period. This was adroitly managed, taking into account preserving the organizational history and the continuity of program and service delivery, and without weakening the governance or management of the organization. The commitment of the board members who remained in their positions to ensure continuity of governance of the organization is especially notable.

In addition, RAFA reviewed its human resource needs and had fairly significant turnover in its team over the past five years. Finally, although its total funding appears stable, the organization has seen both progress and shifts in its various funders.

Only through hard work to diversify its income sources has it managed to close out the past five years with revenue that is, on the whole, almost stable.

A FEW KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Held the Forum annuel du RAFA
- Designed and organized Entr'Arts at the Banff Centre
- Designed the professionalization service
- Signed an agreement with the NFB
- Supported Project R, mobilizing four dance troupes from different areas of the province
- Developed a sectoral plan for music
- Francophone artists participated in the TREX tour
- Designed and coordinated the literary evening French Twist
- Organized and held the Grand marché des arts
- Participated in federal government consultations on the renewal of the Roadmap for Canada's Official Languages

- RAFA's president participated in the Premier's Council on Culture
- Participated in the network Alberta Partners for Arts and Culture (group of provincial arts service organizations and arts industries in Alberta)
- Participated in activities of the FCCF, including the Table des organizations artistiques
- Participated in bilateral meetings between the FCCF network and Canada Council for the Arts, and Radio-Canada
- Managed the replacement of the founding executive director
- Managed the transition of presidents

Appendix 3 Process for this New Strategic Development Plan

In Fall 2014, **RAFA** retained the services of consultant Éric Dubeau and began the organization's strategic development planning exercise for the next five years. This approach focuses on identifying clear, attainable objectives and confirming desirable changes over the next five years.

The process began with a two-day retreat for RAFA's board of directors and staff. During this time of collective reflection, participants assessed the 2010-2015 strategic development plan, renewed RAFA's vision and updated its mission. Then they participated in a series of guided discussions to identify issues which RAFA and the entire arts and culture sector in Alberta would have to face in the medium term. The group also articulated the values that support RAFA's approach and in some way characterize its approach to challenges and day-to-day work.

True to its willingness to continue to learn, evolve and improve, **RAFA** also took advantage of this retreat to provide training on strategic governance for the team and the Association's board members.

This retreat confirmed that bringing together artists from all artistic disciplines, all levels of practice and every region of Alberta, in the same way as their cultural worker counterparts, remains the organization's fundamental priority. This, in turn, made it possible to focus the organization's actions on three strategic activities: Serving the arts community, Positioning the arts community, and Consolidating RAFA's capacity for action. Based on these strategies, participants agreed on a series of expected outcomes for the next five years.

The strategic development planning process continued during Forum 2015, when the organization invited the members and partners present to share their thoughts on three themes: Continuum of practice, Influence of the arts, and French-language media. Each of the themes is linked to issues that had already been identified at the January 2015 retreat. Exchanges during the Forum focussed more on reading the environment that is at the heart of this planning, and ensuring the alignment of expected outcomes, anticipated actions, and member concerns.



A member survey validated the strategic foundations of the new plan and confirmed the expected outcomes. Note that 35% of the members participated in this survey, which seems rather representative of the membership of the organization.

Finally, based on a draft of the strategic foundations of the new plan, the staff developed the organization's multiyear programming in order to better implement the new strategic development plan. Then, based on this programming, the team also designed a performance measurement framework in order to monitor and document the impact of RAFA's actions over the next five years.

