

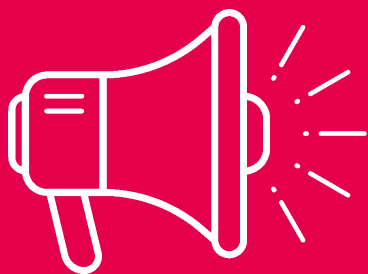
**2020
annual
report**



to our supporters,

Before we share the story of our year, we need to take a moment to say thank you for your contribution to our work during a very uncertain time.

2020 forced us to find completely new ways to interact with artists and audiences. Though we have experienced huge disruption in our plans, the year also provided unique opportunities. We have found new ways to support artists with virtual programs, build and maintain relationships across the globe, and reimagine how we work together. We said goodbye to a long-standing team member, and hello to three people in new full-time positions!



Just before the March lockdown, we were preparing for our largest production yet—Mahabharata—which would have begun rehearsals at the Shaw Festival in June, and premiered in August 2020, followed by an international tour to Australia and the UK. Our production of Prince Hamlet was also preparing for an international tour to the US and Scandinavia. Our ThisGen Fellowship was about to launch, which would send our inaugural cohort of Fellows to meet and work with their industry-leading mentors around the world. While the pandemic stopped the physical moving of bodies and shows, it also brought to light the importance of these international relationships. We pivoted our ThisGen Fellowship to a completely online program which allowed us to support independent artists at a moment where most of their income had dried up, and connect them to an international community. We were able to return to the writing of Mahabharata, and support the independent community by offering grant writing support, residencies, and expanding our SHARE Platform in order to give more artists a home in a time of intense isolation.

It has been an incredibly difficult year, but we are grateful for, and proud of, the tremendous work of our team and partners that enabled us to forge new paths. As we reflect on last year, like all years—yet unlike any other year—we know that we could not have weathered the course without the support of our incredible community. Thank you!

Ravi, Miriam, and Kelly

vision, mission, and mandate

Our vision is a world with limitless possibilities for all.

Our mission is to make things better through art. To reinvent how stories are told to inspire new ways of thinking about creativity and civic engagement.

We do three things:

MAKE

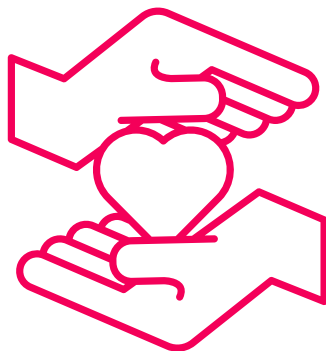
We make great art. Performances that take chances and bring new ideas to life. Plays that reflect today's stories, faces, and voices. We make it engaging and tour it all over the world. We care about our audience, we want them to connect, question; come as they are and leave with more. For more than 12 years, we've developed, co-produced and toured plays that are loved and critically acclaimed. We make art because it is our platform for change.

SHARE

We share everything. We want to democratize theatre and welcome more artists. Because more artists mean more stories. To get there we share our resources and create new models to help artists overcome barriers to make and tour their work.

PROVOKE

We provoke change. We want theatre to be human and to be for everyone. So we open doors wider, create new practices, experiment with never-before-seen models. We take on systemic challenges and remove barriers, for audiences and for artists. To make a greater impact on the world around us. And it's working.



values

What makes us different? Everything.

We are redefining what a theatre company can be.

We are grounded in imagination, integrity, collaboration, empowerment, and sustainability. These are the values that define how we impact change.



Imagination: We are curious. We encourage big dreams and push ourselves to invent new ways of thinking that allow us to do better and be more human.

Integrity: We believe in honesty and accountability, and stand up for what we believe in.



Collaboration: We are connectors. At home and around the world, we believe in the strength of many hands and different perspectives.

Empowerment: We believe art is for everyone. We make room for more artists and audiences. Support others, remove barriers, and create access.



Sustainability: We make choices with the future in mind. Of artists, of the planet, and of our company.



A Brimful of Asha

In January 2020, we had the opportunity to perform [A Brimful of Asha](#) live at the Living Arts Centre in Mississauga. Our Founder and Co-Artistic Director Ravi Jain and his real-life mother, Asha, shared the stage to tell us an intergenerational and intercultural story.



Pioneering in its intimacy and yet unapologetically heartwarming, Ravi Jain's play is a beguiling blend of old and new styles, which fits the material beautifully."

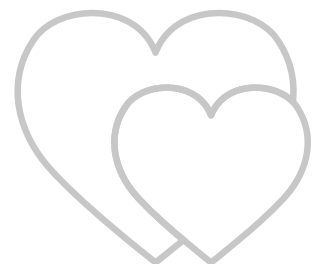
- The New York Times

make



What You Won't Do For Love: Workshop at PuSh Festival

In February, we were able to present a workshop sharing of [What You Won't Do For Love](#), in collaboration with Drs. Tara Cullis and David Suzuki. Performed at the PuSh Festival in Vancouver, the on-stage intimate dinner party tells the story of two people who fell in love with each other and the planet. This workshop served as an essential framework for the development journey of the piece, and ended up being our last live performance before the pandemic hit.



Certified

In February 2020, we helped curate and present Jan Derbyshire's Certified at The Theatre Centre as part of the Progress Festival. Jan's one-person-show takes the audience on a humour-filled, personal journey that dissects the mental health system. This show interrogates the stigmas around mental health and what society deems as "crazy".



"Fully passes evaluation - a testament to a dynamic performance and delicate storytelling."

- The Georgia Straight

make



Paradise in Flames

Exploring linguistic boundaries has always been of interest at Why Not, and in 2020 we did so just by crossing the borders of Quebec and Ontario! We commissioned Bobby Theodore's English-language translation of Québécois playwright François Archambault's newest play, Pétrole, whose English title is Paradise in Flames. The play explores how we arrived at the climate emergency we are currently facing, and a moment in history where we could have changed our course of action.



share

Lady Macbeth

In February, in partnership with 1S1 Theatre, we gathered an international team of Deaf and hearing actors to explore a new adaptation of Macbeth. We spent two weeks exploring physical and gestural language, working with the incredible Dawn Jani Birley (who played Horatio in our Prince Hamlet), and internationally renowned director and performer, Ramesh Meyyappan (Glasgow, UK). This production is part of a larger partnership with 1S1, a Deaf-led theatre company founded by Dawn to explore new theatrical languages accessible to both Deaf and hearing audiences. Why Not is playing a mentorship role, as well as learning a lot about the unique barriers Deaf artists face in creating a company, applying for grants, and presenting work in a hearing-dominant industry.

[Watch here](#)



“As a Deaf professional artist, my journey has been full of challenges because of the systematic barriers in Canada. I would have not been able to establish my company 1S1 Theatre without Why Not’s support. I cannot change the world alone so with Why Not behind my back as a hearing ally, I am able to create art that pushes for positive change for us as a society.”

– Dawn Jani Birley,
Artistic Director of 1S1 Theatre

2020 annual report



share

How I Learned To Serve Tea

As part of our first ever year-long co-residency program, we partnered with the Koffler Centre of the Arts to support a series of on-going workshops created and facilitated by artist Shaista Latif. During the Progress Festival, we presented Shaista's work at The Theatre Centre in February 2020. The ongoing workshop series provides creative consultations on the politics of capacity and resource sharing at the intersections of class and identity.

The Archivist

The Archivist, produced by Shaista Latif in association with Why Not Theatre, toured for five performances before being forced to shut down when the pandemic hit. Shaista creates a live archive of objects, music, photos, and film to inviting the audience to name what is at the risk of being erased and forgotten.



"My devotion as an artist is to disrupt western narratives of our cultures and to push for representations of endurance and empowerment."

- Shaista Latif



Brainstorm

Lucid Ludic's award-winning show took place at the Dancemakers Studio Theatre in the Distillery District in Toronto in February and March of 2020. Produced in association with Why Not, this visually arresting and comically haunting piece explores neurodiversity and the journey to understanding the mind.



[Click here to hear a clip of Writer & Director Taliesin McEnaney's interview on Metro Morning](#)



"Brainstorm is a fascinating look at what makes us who we are."

- Mooney on Theatre

I Am Puff

I Am Puff is a children's series created by 1S1 Theatre in collaboration with Why Not, as a part of our SHARE Platform. This series sheds a positive light on sign language and Deaf identity by celebrating ASL and teaching children how to sign. We love this show which is so engaging for Deaf and hearing children alike, teaching them about acceptance, difference, and allyship.

Interactive link to Episode 1:

[Watch here](#)

Interactive link to interview with Dawn:

[Watch here](#)



Space Project

From late 2019 to early 2020, we provided free space to more than 80 artists in 5 different locations over four and a half months via our Space Project. Space Project activates underutilized space in our city and provides it to artists for free by partnering with property managers.



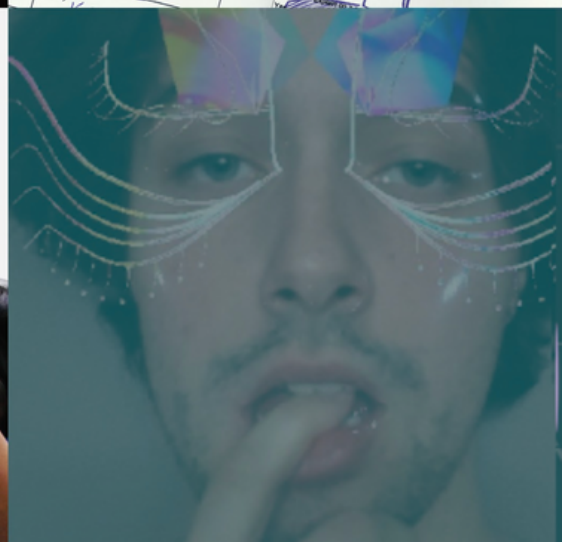
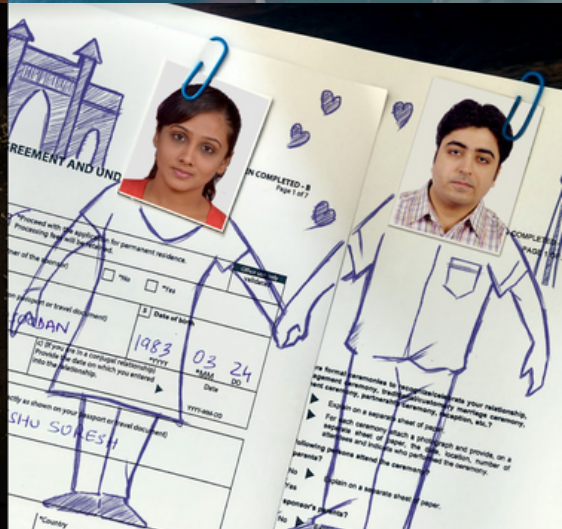
We were set to expand to more spaces later in 2020, but due to COVID-19, our activities were cut short. We refocused the project on research, advocacy, and partnership-building throughout the rest of 2020.

This advocacy included in-person meetings with with Minister of Heritage Steven Guilbeault, and Julie Dabrusin, MPP and Parliamentary Secretary.



RISER

Our collaborative producing model, RISER Project, was developed to address challenges producing independent theatre in Toronto. Four new shows were about to move into the theatre when the pandemic hit and forced us to cancel all live performance. Over the year, we offered virtual training and skill-building sessions to the artists, as well as providing them with a small residency to work with a film-maker creating digital projects related to their shows.





ASL/Anti Oppression

As we began the cascade of cancellations, since we were no longer able to be with our audiences, we turned inward to reflect on Why Not as an organization, and incorporate new learning opportunities in our day-to-day work life. As a team, we worked with a Deaf ASL teacher, to learn a new language and improve our ability to support the Deaf community.

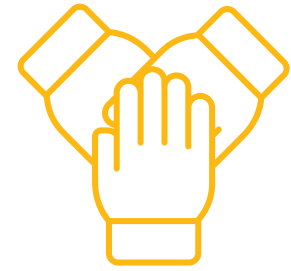
We engaged in anti-oppression conversations that focused on deconstructing narratives while creating a safe space to talk about sociopolitical issues affecting our world today. These conversations led to exciting fundamental changes in how we operate as a company!

Organizational Restructure

Our conversations around anti-oppression challenged us to look at the structures at play within our own company. Inspired by Dr. Tema Okun's writing on [dismantling white supremacy culture](#), we reimagined how we could work together. We have put an emphasis on shared decision-making, increased collaboration, focussing on achieving deeper impact for our work, which has allowed us to grow into a new kind of organization. We brought on new team-leads in the roles of Marketing and Production, as well as a third Producer to lead our SHARE Platform.



Provoke



ThisGen Fellowship

During our inaugural ThisGen Fellowship, seven artists from across the country participated in one-on-one sessions with their mentors, masterclasses with industry experts, and peer-to-peer sessions, equipping them with the resources they need to thrive in the arts sector.



"ThisGen 2020 was truly a beacon of light for me during the dark days of the pandemic.

Getting the chance to connect with artists across the country, and inspiring arts leaders around the world affirmed for me the importance of inter-cultural exchange in the arts. Especially in times when we cannot physically travel, it becomes more important for our ideas to reach beyond our own borders. It was not only incredibly inspiring, but really helped with the loneliness of the pandemic. We knew we were not alone."

- Miriam Fernandes, Co-Artistic Director and ThisGen Facilitator

ThisGen Fellowship is one of the ways that Why Not is removing systemic barriers and creating a path of access for more BIPOC women and non-binary artists. Through this national program we were able to connect Canadian artists to world-class mentors, create a network of peers, and provoke new ways of thinking about cultural leadership. By pivoting the program online, we were able to introduce a panel of mentors that included Tony Award-winner Mimi Lien (New York, USA), The Stage Award-winner, Kirsty Housley (London, UK), and creator of the international sensation Hot Brown Honey, Lisa Fa'Alafi (Brisbane, Australia). We were thrilled to build such strong and meaningful connections between the Fellows and mentors. We are also lucky to have had two of our ThisGen 2020 Fellows join our team at Why Not!

To help share the success of the program, Toronto-based playwright Rimah Jabr created a podcast to share the journeys of the Fellows and their mentors.

[Listen here!](#)



Mahabharata

Our largest project to date, Mahabharata is a contemporary take on a Sanskrit epic that is more than four thousand years old and foundational to Indian culture. Presented in partnership with the Shaw Festival, this play is an exploration of deep philosophical and spiritual ideas that showcases an international cast from across the South Asian diaspora.

While the pandemic paused our premiere, we continued to develop the show by completing a new draft of the script which we read virtually, and hosting a week-long music workshop of the Bhagavad Gita—a Sanskrit opera within our Mahabharata—that we produced in partnership with Canadian Opera Company. We also partnered with the Jaipur Literary Festival (Toronto), to present a sneak peek of the opera, have a conversation with renowned Indian mythologist Devdutt Pattanaik, whose writing on the Mahabharata has been a huge inspiration for our adaptation.

[Link to BG Opera Workshop](#)

[Link to JLF Conversation with Devdutt Pattanaik](#)



2020 annual report



make

whynot

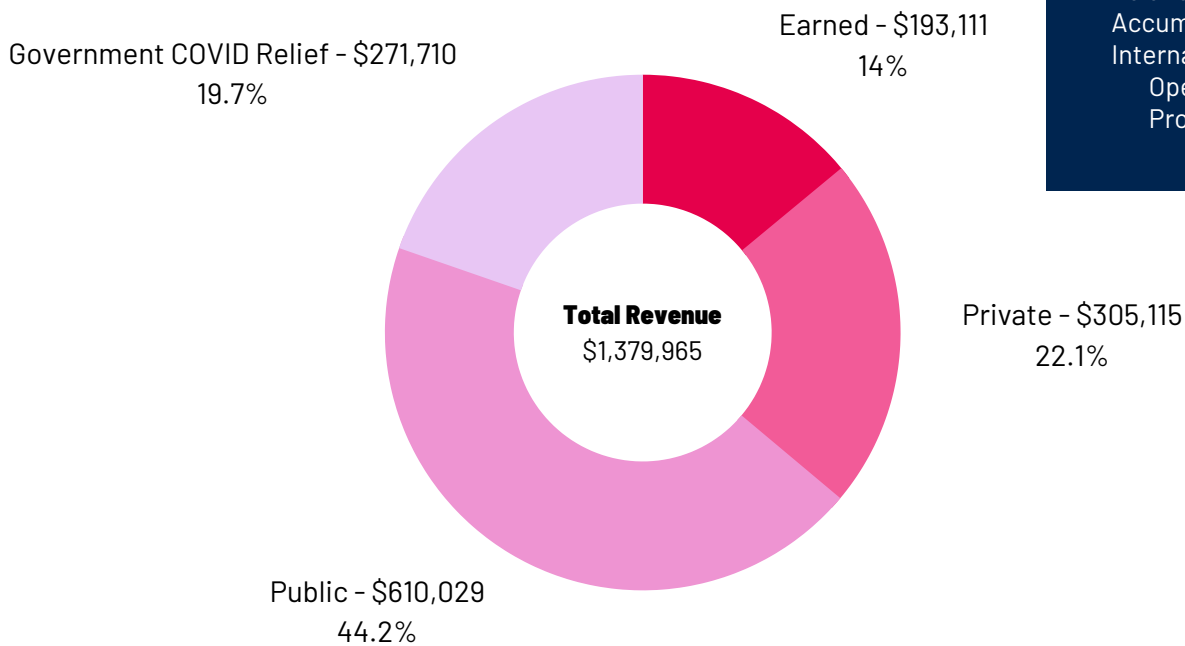
financial summary

For the year ending Dec 31, 2020

Net Assets Beginning of Year:
Unrestricted Surplus: \$108,865
Internally Restricted:
Operational Reserve \$250,000

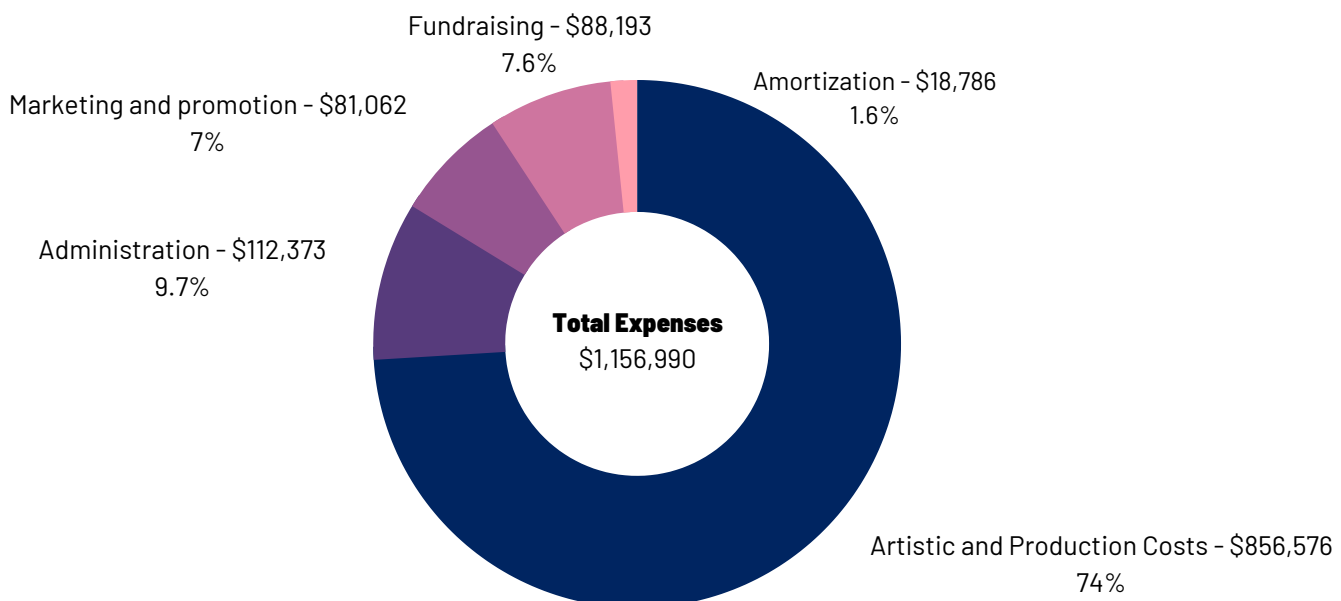
2020 Excess Revenue: \$222,975
Balance, End of Year:
Accumulated Surplus: \$81,840
Internally Restricted:
Operational Reserve: \$250,000
Programming Reserve: \$250,000

revenue



expenses

Excess of revenue over expenses for the year \$222,975



2020 year in review

activities

A Brimful of Asha (Production)
Brain Storm (Co-Production)
Certified (Presentation)
How I Learned to Serve Tea (Residency)
Lady M (Workshop)
Mahabharata (Development)
PUFF (Production)
RISER Toronto (Presentation)
Space Project (Strategic Initiative)
The Archivist (Co-Production)
ThisGen Fellowship (Strategic Initiative)
What You Won't Do For Love (Workshop)
Women of Usher (Workshop)

world-wide collaboration

ThisGen Fellowship (Strategic Initiative)

Canada
USA
UK
AUS

Lady M (Workshop)

Canada
UK
Norway

Mahabharata (Development)

Canada
AUS
UK
USA
India
Malaysia

artists

Allan Teichman
André du Toit
Asha Jain
Beth Kates
Camellia Koo
Crystal Lee
Dahlia Katz
Darren Kuppan
Dawn Jani Birley
Divya Sarma
Elisheba Ittoop
Erin Brubacher
Goldy Notay
Adolyn H Dar
Harmage Singh Kalirai
Jay Emmanuel Masih
John Gzowski
Julie Fox
Lisa Fa'alafi
Meher Pavri
Melissa Joakim
Miriam Fernandes
Nadeem Philip
Nadine Bhabha
Navtej Sandhu
Nikki Shaffeeullah
Praneet Akilla
Ravi Jain
Sharada Eswar
Suzie Balogh
Tara Mohan
David Suzuki
Tara Cullis
Suba Sankaran
Shaista Latif
Kevin Matthew Wong
Nimet Kanji
Taliesin McEnaney
Hayley Carr
Maıza Dubhé
Alexandra Montagnese

Shayna Virginillo
Jess Watkin
Shireen Jeejeebhoy
Will Bezek
Ellen Brooker
Olivia Shortt
Melanie Nablo
Nicole Smieja
Annie Clarke
Emma Westray
Ellora Patnaik
Sukania Venugopal
Waleed Ansari
Roy Surette
Jan Derbyshire
Jillian White
Dana Ayotte
Tara Cheyenne Friedenberg
Gloria Mok
Ben Laird
Sarah Mansikka
Echo Zhou
Intisar Awisse
Tai Amy Grauman
Bianca Guimarães de Manuel
Anita Ramanan
Helen Yung
Kirstey Housley
Latiana Gourzong
Spike Lyne
Mimi Lien
Jamie Nesbitt
Sturla Alvsvaag
Ramesh Mayyappan
Conor Moore
Duston Baranow-Watts
Zach Levis
Meg Roe
Mitchell Ingram
Devdutt Pattanaik

tours

A Brimful of Asha

Mississauga

The Archivist (in association)

Brampton
Mississauga
St Catherines

What You Won't Do For Love (Workshop)

Vancouver



team as of December 31, 2020

Ravi Jain - Co-Artistic Director and Founder
 Miriam Fernandes - Co-Artistic Director
 Kelly Read - Executive Director
 Kira Allen - Finance & Administration
 Kevin Mathew Wong - Producer, MAKE
 Michelle Yagi - Producer, SHARE
 Tom Arthur Davis - Producer, PROVOKE
 Samantha Semczyszyn - Partnerships (On Leave)
 Mira Salti - Partnerships (Interim)
 Yvonne Lu Trinh - Marketing & Communications
 Crystal Lee - Production & Technical

board as of December 31, 2020

We welcomed Max and Jennifer to the board!!

Upkar Arora (Co-Chair)
 Tamara Balan
 Pramod Jain
 Paul Nagpal (Co-Chair)
 Max Rosenfeld
 Jennifer Haskett



our supporters

“Why Not is asking all the right questions that keep theatre vital, current and an essential part of the artistic life of our city and country. The Kingfisher Foundation is proud to support the Why Not team in their devotion to find new answers and their delight in the responsibility of nurturing creativity in artists and citizens.”

- Martha Burns, Kingfisher Foundation

2020 partners



Conseil des arts du Canada Canada Council for the Arts



Foundation



THE READY COMMITMENT



FUNDED BY THE CITY OF TORONTO



ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO an Ontario government agency un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario

HJF HAL JACKMAN FOUNDATION



NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE CENTRE NATIONAL DES ARTS Canada is our stage. Le Canada en scène.

the wuchien michael than foundation



METCALF FOUNDATION

major partners

Deb Barrett & Jim Leech
Charles & Marilyn Baillie
Kingfisher Foundation
Tamara Zielony
Richard & Nancy Hamm
Blake & Susan
Hutcheson
Lindy Green & Sam
Chaiton
Chanchlani Foundation
Andrew Gillespie
Suresh Bhalla

why not supporters

Barbara Fingerote
Deborah Roitberg
Barry Matsui
Michael Trent
Usha Agrawal
Kalpana Srinarayanadas
Karthik Subramanian
Kent James
Darren O'Donnell
Max Rosenfeld
Alison Friedman
Antoinette Pokua - Afriyie
Kim Solga
Larry Moore
Ann Connors
Bobby Theodore
Anne Fleming
Barbara Tessman
Soheil Parsa
Leslie McIntosh
Alexandra MacLennan

Ines Buchli
Jessica Carmichael
Owais Lightwala
Doris Rajan
Jeanne LeSage
Stewart Arnott
Leslie Francombe
Don Kendal
June Wilson
Krista Jackson
Stephanie Jung
Steven M Bush
Diane Rothman Pinsky
Ashley Williamson
Brenda M Leader
Charles Ketchabaw
Erika Morey
Cheryl LaFrance
Thambirajah Yogarajah
Guillermo Verdecchia
Andrew Lamb

Chelsea Omel
Karen Fricker
Lillia Leon Tovar
Kristen Ward
Sarah Muir
Janet Mairs
Larry Lubin
Eva Barrie
Alexandra Murphy
Marcie Januska
Roz Tobias
Helen Chang
Jini Stolk
Ronica Sajjani
Neha Ross
Marilyn Tate
Dana Lafarga
Sonya Popovich
Kate Barris
Bruce Barton
Victoria Urquhart

Kevin Wong
Darryl Cooper
Victoria Jackman
Sandy Houston
Stephanie Lupinacci
Nonna Aroutiounian
Lynda Powers
Karlee Vukets
Upkar Arora
Tamara Balan
Donna Armstrong
Pramod Jain
Cookie Sandler
Sarah Bay-Cheng
Neil Jain
Deepa Jeswani
Vahe Koraian
Richard Rooney
Trish Blackstaffe