



Western Arctic Moving Pictures Strategic Plan 2026-2031

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Land Acknowledgement

Western Arctic Moving Pictures (WAMP) is based in the City of Yellowknife, Northwest Territories.

WAMP acknowledges that we are located in Chief Drygeese territory. From time immemorial, it has been the traditional land of the Yellowknives Dene First Nation. We respect the histories, languages, and cultures of all other Indigenous Peoples including the North Slave Métis, and all First Nations, Métis, and Inuit whose presence continues to enrich our vibrant community.

Executive Summary

WAMP commissioned this Strategic Plan to follow on from the previous plan which expired in early 2026, in order to guide the organization's next five years. Working conditions have changed in several ways since the previous plan was adopted by WAMP's Board: we have endured a pandemic; Yellowknife has been adversely affected by wildfires; and the City is also dealing with major shifts in its economic base. Mines are closing, and Federal infrastructure projects and an increased military presence in the North are shifting Yellowknife's economic focus from the mining sector to new priorities.

WAMP is celebrating its 20th annual Yellowknife International Film Festival in 2026. Ongoing year-round programming maintains WAMP's profile in the community. The Board is strong and involved in the organization, and its business affairs are well-stewarded by its small complement of staff. Current and upcoming challenges include the planned departure of WAMP's Executive Director to return to higher education, and the loss of its primary festival venue in Yellowknife, due to the expiry of the cinema's lease with its landlord. This is not a time for new, big changes for WAMP, beyond these. The three "big ideas" elaborated in this plan are:

1. Strengthen the base;
2. Explore, or formalize, partnerships and collaborations;
3. Stay in our lane.

Young Associates' Remit from WAMP

The Board of Directors of WAMP engaged the services of Heather Young and Anne Frost, of Young Associates (a division of Adams + Miles), to guide and facilitate a structured process of examination to address the goals and priorities of:



1. Organizational Development
 - a. Governance
 - b. Succession Planning
 - c. Strategic Planning
2. Capacity Building
 - a. Programming
 - b. Operations
 - c. Financial
 - d. Human Resources
3. Diversifying Streams of Revenue

Deliverables include:

- Revised and updated bylaws for the corporation
- A five-year strategic plan, 2026-31
- Ongoing consultation and support for succession planning, as well as for capacity building for programming, operations, financial structures, human resources, and diversification of revenue streams.

Who Is WAMP – What Business Are We In?

Western Arctic Moving Pictures is a membership-based non-profit Canadian arts organization based in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories (NWT).

Mission

Our mission is to support and promote independent film, video, and digital media arts made in the Northwest Territories and the Circumpolar North, and to showcase it for audiences in the NWT and across the globe.

We aim to strengthen the northern digital media arts community by:

- Cultivating interest and appreciation among creators, funders and the audience
- Making high quality equipment accessible and affordable across the NWT
- Developing learning opportunities and fostering creativity
- Enabling synergies among artists
- Reducing barriers, and supporting opportunities for northern digital media artists



- Showcasing northern digital media art productions locally, nationally, and internationally

Values

- Enabling creativity
- Focusing on the North
- Fostering culture, and the cultural economy
- Collaboration

WAMP's Backstory, YKIFF's First Twenty Years, and WAMP's previous Strategic Plan

Western Arctic Moving Pictures (WAMP) is an incorporated non-profit society in the Northwest Territories (NWT). WAMP's ongoing activities spring from its mission; emphasis placed on programming strands has tended to rely on the expertise and interests of Board and available staff (e.g. programming, training, community engagement, equipment rentals, extension beyond Yellowknife to other NWT communities).

Most recently, relying on current available talent, WAMP activities have emphasized film screenings and festival production, as well as equipment rental. Training and industry development has mostly been the purview of the Northwest Territories Producers' Association, also known as the Professional Media Association (PMA), a companion not-for-profit organization based in Yellowknife, with overlapping interests and contractors with WAMP.

PMA and WAMP began as one organization; PMA incorporated separately in 2011 to serve an industry mandate of professional development and training. Together, they serve independent filmmakers and producers in the commercial, not-for-profit and vocational sectors in the NWT, with recent emphasis at WAMP on screenings and festival production for the movie-going public as well as local media workers, and at PMA on development of local media talent, and support for potential commercial activity in the NWT. Both organizations enjoy a close and collegial relationship with the Film Commission of the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT).

The Yellowknife International Film Festival (YKIFF), WAMP's highest-profile program, has been running for 19 years, most recently based at the Capitol Theatre in Yellowknife. The 2026 festival's 20th anniversary year may take place in multiple venues, as the Capitol may not be available in November 2026; the previous movie-theatre lessee has relinquished their lease on the property.

The "goals" itemized in WAMP's previous strategic plan (2021-2026) were:



- Strengthen organizational structures and finances
- Increase presence in NWT communities outside of Yellowknife
- (Continue to) deliver quality programming throughout the NWT; and
- Prepare to take advantage of a new function-fit space.

As with many organizational strategic plans formulated before COVID, or during the early stages of the pandemic when its effect on the cultural sector was still unclear, the goals of the previous plan have been met in part, and set aside in favour of survival tactics in some cases.

The first goal has seen significant success, with revenue diversification, more clarity in financial management and reporting, and more robust records management than in the early part of the decade.

The second goal, due in part to COVID requirements not to gather in person, has not been significantly achieved. It remains a priority of WAMP, but not to the exclusion of other timely opportunities to expand our reach within Yellowknife itself.

The third goal has been met, largely in Yellowknife itself, rather than throughout the NWT. WAMP's programming is well-regarded by participants, funders and the film sector, and is well-attended and enjoyed by WAMP's patrons.

The "financial reserves" component of the fourth goal has been met, although WAMP's accumulated surplus hasn't been flagged specifically for this purpose. Beyond accumulating a "buffer" to allow for a potentially larger spend on rent/lease payments, there have been, and continue to be, so many changes in WAMP's need for space, and the real estate market in Yellowknife, that no specific brief has been created to guide a decision about moving to another location.

Environmental Scan

With a new Statistics Canada census under way in mid-2026, we don't yet have solid indications of population trends since the last Federal census in 2021. In 2021, the population of the NWT was just over 41,000, of whom around 50% lived in the City of Yellowknife, which had a population of 20,340.

Recently, mining operations have wound down and/or closed in the NWT; former mine workers may be relocating elsewhere with their families. On the other hand, geopolitical changes have led to a planned increase in military presence and increased Federal spending on infrastructure in the North. The effects of these factors on the population of the NWT, and of the City of Yellowknife, may be to reduce the year-round population, and to increase the number of folk relocating to the area for contract work, rather than for permanent employment. Military personnel

on a six-month tour of duty may not aim to relocate their families to the North. Infrastructure contract workers may be accommodated in camps closer to worksites, rather than in Yellowknife or other smaller urban centres. We can't predict how WAMP's potential market for its activities may change over the duration of this plan; contingencies are incorporated so that WAMP's staff and Board can react appropriately to changing market conditions.

Territorial and municipal data gathering and analysis have been considered for the purposes of this strategic plan (please see end of document for list of references).

The City of Yellowknife commissioned, and acted upon (to a certain extent), a cultural plan, from consulting firm Nordicity (whose work is highly respected in the sector), who wrote a final report on the project in 2022. Among the recommendations not implemented were the hiring of a municipal cultural lead worker, support for collaboration through convening of sectoral gatherings, and creation of an inventory of "meanwhile" spaces¹ potentially available to arts groups and organizations for collaborative work, rehearsal, performances etc.

The 2025-28 tourism strategy for the City of Yellowknife acknowledges that Yellowknife's cultural activities, including those produced by WAMP, are a significant draw for tourism, augmenting the geographical advantages of the aurora borealis, wild nature and access to unspoiled land. The tourism report remarks upon the lack of a cultural strategy or a key municipal worker for culture at the City of Yellowknife; observing that festivals and events are largely volunteer-run, and that the City of Yellowknife could "help to expedite and support" these tourism attractions.

The NWT Film Commission's planning publication "Rolling, Action" (2021-26) includes three relevant strategic goals:

- Managing and improving our programming;
- Showcasing and promoting our film and media sector;
- Developing skills and collaborating.

These are reiterated several times throughout the document, but few quantitative metrics are offered to gauge achievement of these goals. Ongoing communication with colleagues at the NWT Film Commission may allow WAMP to contribute to its next planning iteration, which may happen in concert with the GNWT's 10-year plan for culture in the NWT (referenced below).

¹ "meanwhile" spaces are those that are in transition between commercial or other uses, e.g. factories being considered for development into lofts and condos. There is often a significant delay between the end of one use and the start of the next. "Akin Studios" in Toronto operates out of multiple "meanwhile" spaces, leasing studio space to artists in many locations across the city, often for a couple of years while a developer gets permits and financing lined up. The benefit to the developer is that the building remains in use and is less likely to degrade as it would if unoccupied.

In 2021, the GNWT's budget for the arts was approximately \$3M. The GNWT's Arts Strategy (2021-31) is at its half-way point now, and interim reporting from GNWT arts-related programs is due in 2026. Among the initiatives mentioned in the plan is to "explore the creation of an NWT arts association" at arms-length from the GNWT. Funding decisions are now made with the input of advisors to the GNWT's ministries; the GNWT may be curious about the structure of an arm's-length "arts council" modelled on those elsewhere in Canada, in lieu of this. The reference to an "arts association" may also include an entity that includes elements of an "arts service organization" such as sectoral research and policy development, a job board, awards and recognitions for excellence, member discounts on block-purchases of advertising, advocacy to other levels of government, etc. WAMP may wish to query GNWT colleagues about the status of this element of the Arts Strategy, since WAMP already performs some functions of an arts service organization for film in the NWT.

The PMA's 5-year strategic plan (2023-28) includes a range of robust sector-serving programs and activities aimed at professional and pre-professional filmmakers, rather than vocational or recreational film-adjacent folk, or "movie buffs." Responsibility for various elements of the plan is ascribed to individuals involved in the PMA by name, rather than by role, highlighting reliance on specific skill sets currently available among PMA Board and other workers. Since the PMA isn't currently able to support a salaried worker, the plan may include more than can be achieved in 5 years, and may be "blended and extended" so as not to lose the valuable work that's gone into the document. Among the goals of the plan is to hire a full-time Executive Director before 2028; this will rely on securing adequate funding for operations, which would allow PMA to make this commitment to an ongoing staff role.

Post-secondary options in Yellowknife and the NWT don't currently include training in media, production, post-production, arts management, or any of the skill sets that WAMP relies upon. Aurora College, aiming to become a Polytechnic, is currently undergoing a change in leadership, which typically results in a period of internal review and reflection before external partnerships can be contemplated. Current leadership is characterized as "interim," indicating that the transition is not yet complete. Although Makerspace YK has relationships with the Aurora College Visual Arts faculty, WAMP doesn't currently have faculty connections at the institution that would form the basis for collaboration on projects. Aurora College's 2024-27 Strategic Plan has "Connections" as one of its four "pillars," and not-for-profit community partners are referenced. The plan also observes that the majority of learners at Aurora College are Indigenous, and that Aurora College aims to hire an EDI co-ordinator during the term of this plan. Once leadership is in place, Aurora College may have capacity to be a sectoral partner for WAMP, extending our reach into the post-secondary realm.



Beyond these documents, several factors influence the working environment for WAMP. First among these is the lack of a cinema in Yellowknife. The lessee at the downtown movie theatre location relinquished its lease on March 31st, 2026, citing the effects of the pandemic followed by wildfire evacuations as factors in its inability to run a profitable business. The venue is in poor condition, with few capital improvements in the recent past, but it is the only facility of its kind in Yellowknife. Intermittent access to the screening rooms is available from the landlord, McCOR, but there is no prospect of continued reliance on their use, nor of a qualified operator assuming a lead tenancy, that may facilitate plans for the future. Commercial rent for the space puts it out of the range of possibility for a community-led “rescue” effort. Alternative options are available, some more or less suitable for film screenings, and are included in the plans for the 20th annual festival event in 2026. Alternative venues are the Northern Arts and Cultural Centre; the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre; the “Top Knight” above the Black Knight pub; the Elks’ Hall; various restaurants, and small screening rooms in e.g. church halls and seniors’ homes. Producing a November film festival in a city with no cinema, when outdoor screenings are non-viable due to weather, is challenging.

Other environmental factors are the small local population base, which limits potential participant numbers for WAMP activities; there isn’t a deep pool of local talent who can assume load-bearing staff roles for WAMP, nor is there significant capacity among local volunteers to donate their skills as Board, committee and unpaid workers for WAMP. As is the case in most small to mid-size cities, those who do volunteer, tend to do so for many organizations – typically, 10% of the population provides 90% of the unpaid support to the not for profit and charitable sectors (with other intermittent assistance from special event volunteers, who may prefer to work in more social than governance roles). This informal network can assist with communication between organizations so that collaborations and conflicts can be negotiated, but there are limits to any one organization’s ability to retain a large volunteer cohort for help with events, etc. Robust record-keeping allows organizations to steward resources – contacting folk via a “customer relationship management” database such as Neon One, Raiser’s Edge, Sumac, Tessitura (as of date of writing)

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Sometimes “softened” as “strengths, opportunities and challenges,” a SWOT analysis includes factors inside the organization that predispose it to success or failure (S/W); and factors outside its influence, external to the organization, that may indicate a positive or negative working environment (O/T). The environmental scan narrative above expands on some of the O and T bullet points. Taken together, the

environmental scan and SWOT quadrant aim to describe WAMP's working conditions as we embark upon this strategic plan.

Strengths • Productive and positive relationship with the NWT Film Commission • Consistent participation from ongoing staff and Board members, and partners • Diversified revenue sources • An operating financial surplus • Robust financial management systems • Strong media presence, especially around the festival • Positive community brand	Opportunities • Capitalize on the new, positive attention from the Federal government for the NWT to build on available funding sources, e.g. for capital costs • Modify programming as warranted to meet new demand from influx of temporary workers • Relocate to a more visible and functional location as downtown space becomes available • Seek formal recognitions for e.g. volunteer management, tourism attraction, business excellence • Explore formalized collaborations and relationships to reduce duplication of effort
Weaknesses • Lack of internal capacity for succession planning • Low-profile physically in the community • Sub-optimal office space/location in a basement • Weak Board recruitment process; reliance on personal networks may reduce reach to a diversity of candidates	Threats • Reduced local workforce may lead to lower box office revenue • Lack of a formal cinema venue compromises the look and feel of "going to a movie" • Other GNWT priorities may reduce available territorial funding

WAMP's 2026-2031 Strategic Plan – Goals and Objectives

The previous plan was completed and adopted during the pandemic; COVID's effects weren't known, or knowable, for the cultural sector, while we were in the thick of it. While not all of the previous plan's goals were met, some of the thinking behind the previous plan remains valid and useful. With necessary updates to reflect current and potential market conditions, we propose three main goals for 2026-2031:

1. **Strengthen the base**

- two full-time salaries (e.g. ED and program lead), plus contractors



- consistent staffing supports sustainability and succession planning
- several potential screening location options for the future
- more visible location and profile in the local community
- maintain/increase and diversify funding streams
- have a positive presence in at least one other NWT community outside of Yellowknife,
 - perhaps via Aurora College/Poly
- robust Board recruitment/retention, beyond personal networks
- Seek charitable status with CRA to enable philanthropic and other donations
- seek Arts Service Organization funding if/when available, as a sectoral entity
- pursue nomination for awards and recognitions (e.g. business awards [Chamber of Commerce e.g.], volunteer of the year, as available in Yellowknife and/or the NWT.

2. Explore, or formalize, partnerships and collaborations with

- PMA
- Northern Arts and Cultural Centre
- The proposed new art gallery
- Yellowknife Community Foundation (once WAMP acquires charitable status)
- McCOR
- City of Yellowknife
- other film festivals (both domestically and circumpolarly) to program reciprocal content (with a potential of correspondingly higher public profile)
- potential new markets, for example
 - military folk
 - Federal contractors
 - youth and families, via the Library.

3. Stay in our lane

- assess programming mix for relevance and ROI
- revisit former offerings, if warranted
- upscale successful programming strands, as the market may support
- assign 10% of operating surplus to piloting new ideas, to reduce risk.

Objectives and tactics, along with metrics by which we'll know if we're succeeding, are included in the following landscape-orientation tabular format pages. We recommend that these be revisited semi-annually for the next three years at Board meetings to determine how WAMP is doing, to accelerate or delay milestones or deliverables, and to modify targets based on reality. The last two years of the Strategic Plan are not broken out into semi-annual increments, as life has taught us



to be careful about long-range planning. You have to do it, but you also have to know it may change.

Strategic Steps (tabular format)

We propose that the primary goals and their supporting tactics of this five-year strategic plan be as follows:

WAMP strategic plan 2026-2031										
Goals	Jul-Dec 2026	Jan-Jun 2027	Jul-Dec 2027	Jan-Jun 2028	Jul-Dec 2028	2029	2030	2031	Responsible/ resources	Notes
1: Strengthen the base:										
Two full-time salaries (e.g, ED and program lead), plus contractors - consistent staffing supports sustainability and succession planning		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	ED applied for Canada Council funding in 2026	If unsuccessful, reapply in 2031, seek other supports
Several potential screening location options for the future	X		X		X	X	X	X	ED/Board research	Online inventory in CRM
More visible location and profile in the local community		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	ED research, build, populate desirability rubric	Realistically, after YKIFF 2026

Goals	Jul-Dec 2026	Jan-Jun 2027	Jul-Dec 2027	Jan-Jun 2028	Jul-Dec 2028	2029	2030	2031	Responsible/ resources	Notes
Maintain/increase and diversify funding streams	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	ED, ongoing, goal of 1 new/yr	Many funding streams may support longevity
Have a positive presence in at least one other NWT community outside YK, potentially via Aurora College/Poly			X	X	X	X	X	X	Board/ED, longer gestation period to build network, goal of 1 new/yr	Dependent on availability of external partners
Robust Board recruitment/retention, beyond personal networks		X		X		X	X	X	ED advertises (\$), Board interviews, AGM approves	Raise status by inviting applications; share Board manual
Seek charitable status with CRA to enable philanthropic and other donations		X	X						ED applies, CRA responds in around 8 months, follow-up/re-apply	Provides broader funding base e.g. matching funding from YCF

Goals	Jul-Dec 2026	Jan-Jun 2027	Jul-Dec 2027	Jan-Jun 2028	Jul-Dec 2028	2029	2030	2031	Responsible/ resources	Notes
Seek Arts Service Organization funding if/when available, as a sectoral entity		X							ED confers with funders	Recognizing WAMP's sectoral role
Pursue nomination for awards and recognitions (e.g. business awards [Chamber of Commerce e.g.], volunteer of the year, as available in YK/NWT.		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	ED/Bosrd ongoing, research, self-nominate , goal of 1 new/yr	Raises profile and status, provides content for social media
2: Explore, or formalize, partnerships and collaborations, with:										
PMA		X							ED/Board, PMA	As a first priority, due to proximity
NACC			X						ED/Board, NACC	Venue-based
new art gallery		X				X	X	X	ED/Board, Adrian Bell (realtor, ex-city councillor)?	Indicate interest, monitor and act as and when appropriate

Goals	Jul-Dec 2026	Jan-Jun 2027	Jul-Dec 2027	Jan-Jun 2028	Jul-Dec 2028	2029	2030	2031	Responsible/ resources	Notes
Community Foundation (once WAMP acquires charitable status)				X					ED, YCF	See note above re: charitable status
McCOR		X							ED negotiates	To use old Capitol space if viable
City of Yellowknife	X	X		X		X	X	X	ED negotiates	Formalize and revisit service provision relationship
Other film festivals (ALFF, Gimli e.g.) to program reciprocal content (with a potential of correspondingly higher public profile)		X		X		X	X	X	ED, Board, when not in YKIFF production mode, goal of 1 new/yr	Formalise existing partnerships, establish new ones
Potential new markets:										
o military folk		X		X		X	X	X	ED, Board	As JTFN ramps up
o Federal contractors		X		X		X	X	X	ED, Board`	As contracts are awarded

o youth and families, e.g, via the Library.		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	ED, Board	To augment YKIFF and year-round family and youth programming
3: Stay in our lane:										
Assess programming mix for relevance and ROI		X		X		X	X	X	ED, Board	Establish rubric, assess annually
Revisit former offerings, if warranted		X		X		X	X	X	ED, Board	As the market or funding allow
Upscale successful programming strands, as the market may support		X		X		X	X	X	ED, Board	Establish rubric, assess annually
Assign 10% of operating surplus to piloting new ideas, to reduce risk.		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	ED, Board	Establish policy, revisit annually

References and resources consulted as part of the plan

- GNWT Arts Strategy 2021-31
- GNWT Film Commission “Rolling, Action” plan, 2021-26
- City of Yellowknife Cultural Plan (final report 2022)
- PMA Strategic Plan 2023-28
- Prior WAMP strategic plan (2021-26)
- City of Yellowknife Tourism Strategy 2025-28
- Aurora College strategic plan 2024-27
- Cabin Radio – social media posts re: mine closures and Federal gov’t announcements
- Interest-holder interviews – i.e. with Board, film workers, community peers