

# ACTIVATING HERITAGE CONFERENCE



Presented by  
The Chicago  
Cultural Alliance



**10** MARCH  
2026

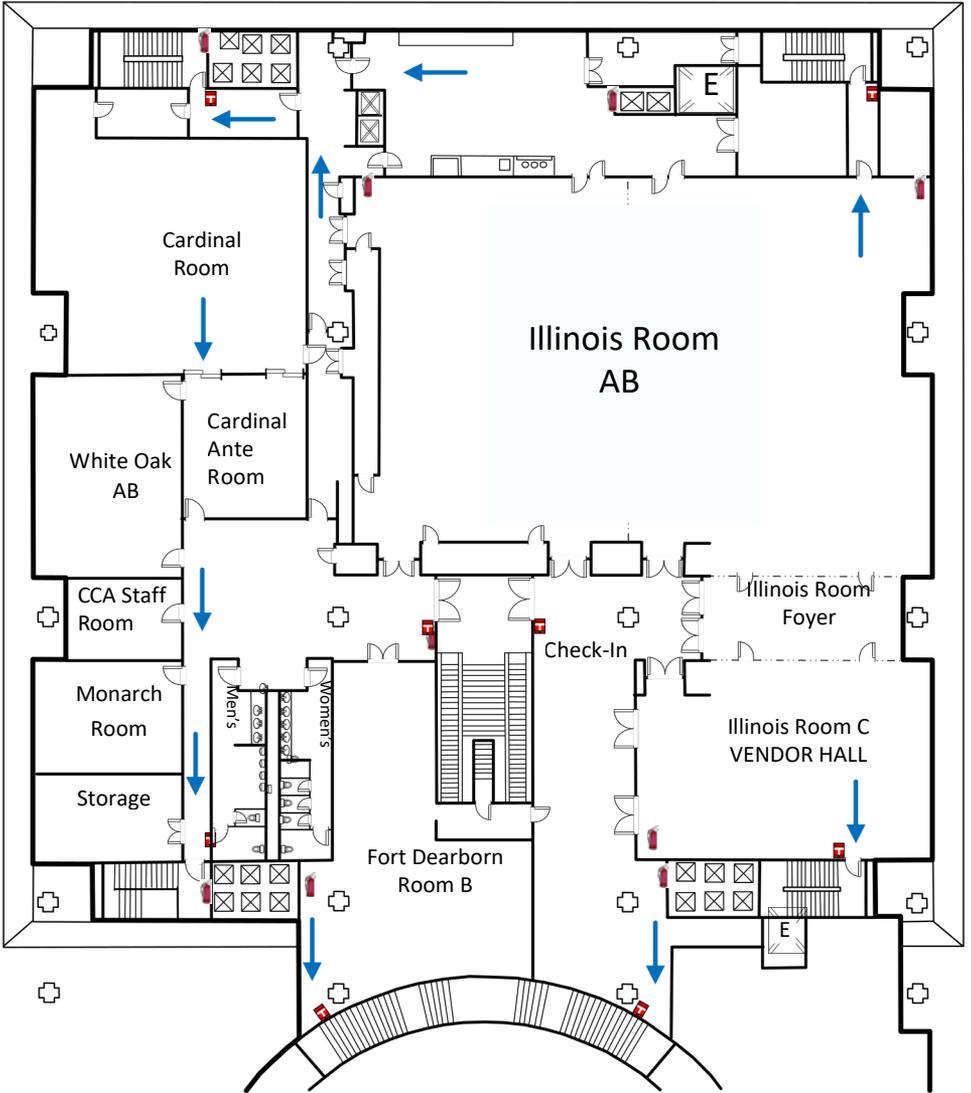
09:00 AM - 06:00 PM

UIC Student East, 750 S Halsted St,  
Chicago, IL 60607



UIC Student Center East  
Third Floor North

750 South Halsted Street



# ACTIVATING HERITAGE CONFERENCE

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## Refreshments:

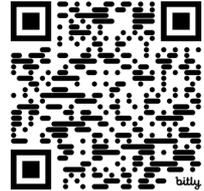
A light breakfast and full lunch will be provided. Please enjoy coffee, tea, and water throughout the day.

## Parking:

For all events taking place in Student Center East, parking is available in the Halsted and Taylor Street Parking Structure (760 West Taylor Street). The entrance to this parking structure is on Taylor Street. Cost is \$15 for the day.

## Connecting to WiFi Network:

You can connect to the UIC Guest WiFi account for free via this QR Code:



## VENDOR HALL EXHIBITORS (Room: Illinois C)

**BRIDGE Chicago** is Chicago's independent, print only journal of art and public scholarship.

**Chicago Cultural Alliance** - Visit our booth to learn more about how to volunteer, subscribe to our newsletter, and support our work.

**Forest Preserves of Cook County** represents more than 70,000 acres. It is one of the oldest and largest forest preserve districts in the United States.

**IDE Interactive** is a Chicago agency that prioritizes user-driven design. They create exceptional digital experiences that resonate with your audience. **IDE will be offering free consultations at the Conference.**

# ACTIVATING HERITAGE CONFERENCE

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## ABOUT US

The Chicago Cultural Alliance's mission is to connect, promote, and support centers of cultural heritage for a more inclusive Chicago. We are an active consortium of 50 cultural heritage museums, centers, and historical societies that span 40 neighborhoods and 11 suburbs in the Chicago area and represent over 30 different cultures. Our vision is a city where all communities have a voice, and cross-cultural dialogue and collaboration are an integral part of Chicago's civic fabric.

Many people were involved in the creation of this conference. We would like to thank the University of Illinois at Chicago for hosting, our member organizations for participating, our Board of Directors for their support, our staff for their planning, and our volunteers for their assistance. All of you have made it possible for us to be here today.

## HELP US KNOW YOU

Please take the short survey below and help us make the Activating Heritage Conference even better next year!



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# CCA CORE MEMBERS

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Abrahamic Center for Cultural Education  
American Indian Association of Illinois  
American Indian Center of Chicago  
Asian American Arts Chicago  
Assyrian Cultural Foundation  
Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture  
Bronzeville Children's Museum  
Bronzeville Historical Society  
Casa Michoacán  
Center for Native Futures  
Center of Peruvian Arts  
Chicago Japanese American Historical Society  
Chicago Latvian Association  
Chicago Scots  
Chinese American Museum of Chicago  
DANK Haus German American Cultural Center  
Dominican-American Midwest Association  
Ethiopian Community Association of Chicago  
Filipino American Historical Society of Chicago  
Friends of the Gamelan  
Gichigamiin Indigenous Nations Museum  
Haitian American Museum of Chicago  
HANA Center  
Heritage Museum of Asian Art  
Hibernian Media  
Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center

International Latino Cultural Center of Chicago  
Irish American Heritage Center  
Japanese American Service Committee  
Kalapriya Center for Indian Performing Arts  
Korean Cultural Center of Chicago  
Magura Cultural Center  
National Cambodian Heritage Museum and  
Killing Fields Memorial  
National Hellenic Museum  
National Indo-American Museum  
National Museum of Mexican Art  
National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts & Culture  
OPEN Center for the Arts  
The Polish Museum of America  
Puerto Rican Arts Alliance  
ROCO Chicago: The Romanian Community  
Foundation  
Segundo Ruiz Belvis Cultural Center  
South Asia Institute  
South Side Community Art Center  
Swedish American Museum  
T. G. Masaryk Czech School  
Trickster Cultural Center  
Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art  
Ukrainian National Museum of Chicago

# CCA PARTNER MEMBERS

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American Writers Museum  
ART WORKS Projects  
Borderless Magazine  
BRIDGE Chicago  
Brookfield Zoo  
Chicago Architecture Center  
Chicago Botanic Garden  
Chicago History Museum  
Chicago Public Media  
Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association  
Choose Chicago  
Cook County Archives  
Crossing Borders Music  
DuSable Heritage Association  
Field Museum  
Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance

Illinois Humanities  
Instituto Cervantes of Chicago  
Intuit Art Museum  
Jane Addams Hull-House Museum  
Joel Hall Dancers & Center  
Kohl Children's Museum  
Lawndale Pop-Up Spot  
Lincoln Park Zoo  
Media Burn  
National Public Housing Museum  
Newberry Library  
The Peace School  
Timeline Theatre  
UIC: Centers for Cultural Understanding  
and Social Change  
UIC: Special Collections and University Archives

# ACTIVATING HERITAGE CONFERENCE

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## WHO WE ARE

### Board of Directors

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CHICAGO CULTURAL ALLIANCE  
**THE CITY**



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## KEYNOTE SPEAKER

### Iona Calhoun-Battiste

*Senior Director of Collective Power,  
The Chicago Community Trust*

**10:45 am - 11:30 am - Room IL-AB**

Iona Calhoun-Battiste is the Senior Director of Collective Power at The Chicago Community Trust. Admired for her ability to cast vision, strategically plan, develop cross-functional teams, and fund innovative social impact solutions, Iona is a trusted leader with more than 21 years of nonprofit experience.



Most recently, she served as senior director of programs for Thrive Chicago managing Chicagoland Opportunity Youth and The Obama Foundation, MBK strategies. Before that, she served as a community engagement manager for United Way Metro Chicago directing community investments and developing collaborations through collective impact initiatives. Iona has a master's degree in developmental psychopathology from Teachers College, Columbia University and a bachelor's degree in psychology, human development from Howard University.

# ACTIVATING HERITAGE CONFERENCE

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Read full session descriptions with panelist info on pages 12-23

## TIME / ROOM

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### 09:00 am - 10:15 am Check-In & Breakfast

- IL-AB
  - Breakfast
- IL-C
  - Vendor Hall Opens

### 10:15 am - 10:45 am Opening Remarks

- IL-AB
  - Mónica Félix, CCA Executive Director
  - John Russick, CCA President

### 10:45 am - 11:30 am Keynote Speaker

- IL-AB
  - Iona Calhoun-Battiste, Senior Director of Collective Power, The Chicago Community Trust

### 11:30 am - 11:45 am Coffee Break

- IL-AB
  - Coffee, tea, and water available in Illinois AB
  - Registrants to head to the Breakout Rooms

### 11:45 am - 12:45 pm Session #1 (4 Rooms)

- IL-AB
  - Move Fast and Save Things: Building a Nonprofit Accelerator to Prepare Cultural Nonprofits to Face New Challenges | Case Study: Chicago Cultural Alliance's "Meeting the Moment"
- Cardinal Room
  - Weaving Memory and Roots: Indigenous Migrant Women, Cultural Resilience, and Community Healing in Chicago
- White Oak Room
  - Archiving Resistance: Combating Political Erasure
- Dearborn B Room
  - Volunteer Management for Nonprofits

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Read full session descriptions with panelist info on pages 12-23

## TIME / ROOM

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### 01:00 pm - 02:15 pm Lunch

- IL-AB  
Cardinal Room
- Main Lunch Hall
  - Lunch & Learn with Arts Alliance Illinois

### 02:15 pm - 02:45 pm We Invite You to Visit Our Vendors

- IL-C
- **Vendors:** Bridge Chicago, Forest Preserve of Cook County, IDE Interactive, and Chicago Cultural Alliance

### 02:45 pm - 03:45 pm Session #2 (4 Rooms)

- IL-AB
- Grants for Cultural Heritage Institutions
- Cardinal Room
- Art in Response to Injustice
- White Oak Room
- Making Visible Erased Urban Native Cultures
- Dearborn B Room
- An Introduction to Know Your Rights Training

### 03:45 pm - 04:15 pm Networking Coffee Break

- IL-AB
- Enjoy a beverage in the main room and connect with other attendees

### 04:15 pm - 05:15 pm Session #3 (4 Rooms)

- IL-AB
- Community Gardens II: Green Placemaking and Environmental Justice in Chicago Neighborhoods
- Cardinal Room
- When the Space is Gone: Reimagining Cultural Programming During Renovation and Disruption

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Read full session descriptions with panelist info on pages 12-23

## TIME / ROOM

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### 04:15 pm - 05:15 pm Session #3 (4 Rooms) - (Cont'd)

White Oak Room

- Media Relations for Arts & Cultural Institutions

Dearborn B Room

- Artist as Archivist: A Community Approach to Preserving Heritage

### 05:15 pm - 06:00 pm Closing Session & Activity

IL-AB

- Join us for a final discussion of learnings from the day, make new contacts, and give feedback to the CCA.

# ACTIVATING HERITAGE CONFERENCE

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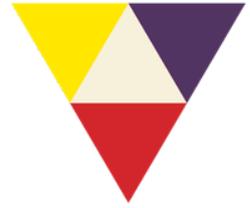


ideinteractive



# ACTIVATING HERITAGE CONFERENCE

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## PANELS & PANELISTS

*(Subject to Change)*

**11:45 am - 12:45 pm - Session 1 - Block A (IL-AB)**

### **Move Fast and Save Things: Building a Nonprofit Accelerator to Prepare Cultural Nonprofits to Face New Challenges | Case Study: Chicago Cultural Alliance's "Meeting the Moment" Series**

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In 2025, the Chicago Cultural Alliance launched a program series designed to strengthen and support our membership of 50 ethnic museums and cultural centers as they increasingly came under threat by new challenges. This session will 1) address why the series was launched, 2) discuss the structure of programs & activities, 3) cover how subject areas were identified, 4) discuss the outcomes for participating museums & cultural centers, and 5) explore ways that other organizations could take up similar work.

#### **Panelists:**

Mónica Félix, Chicago Cultural Alliance

John Russick, Chicago Cultural Alliance

Oana Dobreanu, ROCO - Romanian Community Center of Chicago



**11:45 am - 12:45 pm - Session 1 - Block B (Cardinal Room)**

## **Weaving Memory and Roots: Indigenous Migrant Women, Cultural Resilience, and Community Healing in Chicago**

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This interactive workshop will explore the cultural resilience, living history, and healing practices of Indigenous Kichwa women in the Chicago diaspora. Through storytelling, dialogue, and hands-on participation, attendees will learn how community memory, ancestral knowledge, and cultural identity help migrant families navigate displacement, fear, changing policies, and social challenges. Participants will engage in a guided reflection using ancestral concepts such as Sami (breath), Ayllu (community), and Kawsay (life), connecting these principles to contemporary community care and cultural preservation. You will leave this session with a deeper understanding of Indigenous Kichwa perspectives on migration, memory, and cultural resilience, grounded in real stories from Chicago's diaspora community; practical tools for creating culturally responsive programs in museums, nonprofits, and community spaces—especially for immigrant, Indigenous, and intergenerational groups; insights into how cultural centers can respond to contemporary challenges, such as fear caused by immigration enforcement, limited funding, and shifting public attitudes; experience with an Indigenous-led healing practice, including breath, intention, and community-centered reflection using the Kichwa principles of Sami, Ayllu, and Kawsay; and be shown a model of how small organizations can use ancestral knowledge and storytelling to strengthen community engagement and build emotional well-being.

### **Panelists:**

Gladys De La Torre, Amawa Cultural Center

Moisés Amaguaña, Amawa Cultural Center

Julio De La Torre, Amawa Cultural Center



**11:45 am - 12:45 pm - Session 1 - Block C**  
**(White Oak Room)**

## **Archiving Resistance: Combating Political Erasure**

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Recently, we've seen a sustained effort to erase not only protections for LGBTQ+ people, but also the systematic, evidential erasure of their contributions to history. This is part of an intentional attempt to rewrite history to conform to a singular ideology, one that devalues diversity and inclusion. UIC-SCUA and Chicago Collections Consortium have begun a collaborative project meant to highlight LGBTQ+ collections across the Chicagoland area. Participants will learn about digital humanities, collaborative methods, emphasizing autonomy and organizational control.

We will demonstrate technologies available to non-profit and academic organizations like ArcGIS, controlled vocabularies, and consortia. We will also share strategies for identifying, developing relationships, and working with community members in non-extractive ways.

### **Panelists:**

Amy Sherwood, UIC - Special Collections and University Archives

Jessica BrodeFrank, PhD, Chicago Collections Consortium

Riley Wanjing Ren, Chinese American Museum of Chicago

Erin Bell, Gerber/Hart Library and Archives

Jorge Felix, Puerto Rican Arts Alliance



**11:45 am - 12:45 pm - Session 1 - Block D  
(Dearborn B Room)**

**Volunteer Management for Nonprofits**

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Join four different non-profit organizations in discussion on volunteer management. Organizations, depending on their size, mission statement, and age, will all have different ways of intaking new members of their community, placing those individuals in different areas, and tracking data in regards to their current volunteer base. This panel will discuss some of the ways our organizations handle volunteer management, and how we hope to improve it in the future. While there is not one way to handle volunteering, looking at what has worked for others is a good first step towards improving systems for everyone.

**Panelists:**

Layne Borden, Swedish American Museum

Marne Bariso, Chicago History Museum

Perla Sánchez Aparicio, National Hellenic Museum

Cristina Haidau, ROCO - Romanian Community Center of Chicago

**Moderator:**

Pooja Das, Chicago Cultural Alliance



**01:00 pm - 02:15 pm - Lunch & Learn**

## **The Illinois Arts & Culture Policy Landscape — What’s Shaping the Sector Now**

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Arts and cultural organizations are navigating a rapidly shifting landscape shaped by policy decisions, funding realities, workforce trends, and evolving public priorities. This interactive Lunch & Learn from Arts Alliance Illinois offers a timely “state of the sector” briefing focused on what cultural leaders need to know now — from federal and state policy developments to emerging opportunities for dedicated revenue, workforce investment, and arts education advocacy. Participants will gain: A clear snapshot of current cultural policy trends impacting Illinois and beyond Insights into funding advocacy, creative workforce supports, and arts education priorities; Practical ways cultural heritage organizations can engage in advocacy and strengthen public support for the arts; and have the opportunity to engage in discussion and real-time input on future policy directions. Whether you’re an artist, cultural administrator, educator, or heritage leader, this session will help connect policy developments to your daily work — and highlight how collective advocacy can sustain and grow the cultural sector.

### **Panelists:**

Andrew Schneider, Arts Alliance Illinois

Sasha Ongtenco, Arts Alliance Illinois



**02:45 pm - 03:45 pm - Session 2 - Block A (IL-AB)**

## **Grants for Cultural Heritage Institutions**

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This is a panel convened by the Chicago Cultural Alliance. Join us to meet grantors from a variety of foundations that support arts and cultural programs. Attendees will learn more about current opportunities, how to tailor their applications, and other useful information to use in developing your organization's grant strategy.

**Panelists:**

Ellen Placey Wadey, Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation  
Jackie Banks-Mahlum, Illinois Arts Council  
BB Cooper Browne, Illinois Humanities

**Moderator:**

John Bateman, Nonprofit Sanity LLC



CHICAGO CULTURAL ALLIANCE

June 12th, 2026  
6:00 - 10:00pm

**EPIPHANY** CENTER FOR THE ARTS  
201 S Ashland Ave  
Chicago, IL



**02:45 pm - 03:45 pm - Session 2 - Block B (Cardinal Room)**

## **Art in Response to Injustice**

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Crossing Borders Music (CBM) will share how it has responded to this moment when over 100 million people have been forced from their homes worldwide - more than ever before. Fleeing oppression and violence, new arrivals often experience further marginalization at their destination: scapegoating, misinformation, and dehumanization. CBM will also share LIVE MUSIC excerpts, highlighting ways it has responded to injustice by amplifying others' voices and raising our own through art. The session will include breakout group discussions so we can all learn from each other, discussing how to be community-led, deciding when and how to speak up on politically sensitive topics, centering the needs of survivors of injustice, and communicating with funders and the media.

### **Panelists:**

Tom Clowes, Crossing Borders Music

Caroline Jesalva, Crossing Borders Music

Wilfred Farquharson, Crossing Borders Music



**02:45 pm - 03:45 pm - Session 2 - Block C**  
**(White Oak Room)**

## **Making Visible Erased Urban Native Cultures**

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This panel discussion will explore how the American Indian Association of Illinois and other members of our community have effectively used social media, radio, television, and film to Make Visible the Erased Urban Native Cultures in Chicago. The panel will highlight media strategies that have proven successful, identify areas that need strengthening, and examine how philanthropic partners and media institutions can work more collaboratively with us—especially during Native American Heritage Month, but importantly throughout the entire year. This presentation would most benefit nonprofit leaders and communications staff—particularly those from small, underfunded, or culturally specific organizations—who are seeking practical, low-cost strategies to increase visibility and public engagement. It will also be highly valuable for philanthropic partners, foundation program officers, and individual funders interested in supporting more effective, community-led storytelling and outreach. This presentation will also benefit cultural institutions, public agencies, and media outlets committed to accurately integrating Native American history, contemporary culture, and lived experiences into year-round programming rather than limiting engagement to Native American Heritage Month alone.

### **Panelists:**

Melanie Cloud, American Indian Association of Illinois  
Julia Pello, Northwestern University  
Joann Maney, American Indian Association of Illinois

### **Moderator:**

Dr. Dorene Wiese - American Indian Association of Illinois



**02:45 pm - 03:45 pm - Session 2 - Block D**  
**(Dearborn B Room )**

## **An Introduction to Know Your Rights Training**

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Chicago Cultural Alliance members are standing united as our families and communities combat unprecedented public health and safety risks posed by Federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) activity on the streets of Chicago. The dire impact of current ICE activity and threat of further influx of ICE agents this spring must be met with a strong rallying cry to join together and protect one another. This session will offer an introduction to Know Your Rights training accessible to all audiences regardless of experience. We will offer tips for potential interactions with ICE agents, an overview of the basics of the immigration system, digital hygiene best practices, tips for re-entry into the US following international travel, and strategies for buddy systems and emergency planning. Time will be dedicated to Q&A and resource sharing. Participants will also compile a list of common challenges, needs, and concerns, for further action. Ultimately, this will act as an entry point toward building ICE-related mutual aid as well as an opportunity to share safety tips, resources, and draw collective strength.

### **Panelists:**

Elsie Hector Hernandez, Haitian American Museum of Chicago

Carlos Bossard, Haitian American Museum of Chicago

Andrew Leith, Northwestern University



**04:15 pm - 05:15 pm - Session 3 - Block A (IL-AB)**

## **Community Gardens II: Green Placemaking and Environmental Justice in Chicago Neighborhoods**

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With more than 600 community gardens throughout the region, Chicago truly embodies its historic motto, *Urbs in Horto*, or *City in a Garden*. These community gardens are verdant sites of social and environmental justice. CCA Members representing a diverse array of cultural communities and neighborhoods are practicing horticultural traditions, some in their organization's greenspace, others by participating at local gardens, and still others by growing in their own backyards. This session will highlight stakeholder and professional perspectives on the vital role community gardening can play in placemaking, at a point in time when green coalition building has never been more important in galvanizing solidarity and amplifying community voices. Participants will explore how to identify and build upon models of green stewardship they may be already practicing in order to maximize both community engagement and the impact of grassroots spatial practices.

### **Panelists:**

Matthew Randle-Bent, Jane Addams Hull-House Museum

Caroline Ng, Chinese American Museum of Chicago

Sarah Leff, Chicago Botanic Gardens

Shelby Hatch, Northwestern University

### **Moderator:**

Andrew Leith, Northwestern University



**04:15 pm - 05:15 pm - Session 3 - Block B (Cardinal Room)**

## **When the Space is Gone: Reimagining Cultural Programming During Renovation and Disruption**

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Over the past three years, the Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance has been navigating a long-anticipated lobby renovation—a project that temporarily eliminated nearly all our core public-facing spaces. This panel explores how our organization responded to this challenge by rethinking not just where programming happens, but how it functions. This panel will offer practical strategies for maintaining and growing engagement without traditional program infrastructure; insights into designing low-barrier, flexible programming rooted in community participation; a real-world case study demonstrating how constraints can generate innovation; and language and frameworks for communicating program pivots to funders, partners, and the public.

### **Panelists:**

Mattie Wilson, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance  
Shayna Wildermuth, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance  
Quinton Sledge, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance  
Dae Reynolds, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance  
Chris Oloroso, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance

### **Moderator:**

Onyx Engobor, Garfield Park Conservatory Alliance



**04:15 pm - 05:15 pm - Session 3 - Block D**  
**(Dearborn B Room )**

## **Artist as Archivist: A Community Approach to Preserving Heritage**

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Artist as Archivist: A Community Approach to Preserving Heritage brings together artists, cultural workers, and scholars to explore how creative practice can serve as a pathway for safeguarding memory, tradition, and lived experience.

This panel examines archives not only as institutional repositories, but as dynamic, community-held spaces shaped by storytelling, family histories, embodied knowledge, and artistic interpretation. Takeaways include: understanding how artists function as archivists by interpreting, preserving, and activating cultural memory through creative practice; exploring community-centered approaches to heritage that value lived experiences, family histories, and intergenerational knowledge alongside formal archives; learning practical and conceptual methods for documenting culture through art, folklore, material culture, and personal storytelling; recognizing the role of artists, scholars, and community members in shaping narratives that might otherwise be overlooked or marginalized; identifying collaborative strategies that strengthen cultural preservation across disciplines, communities, and generations; and will help inspire participants to consider their own archives—both personal and communal—and how these can contribute to a shared cultural future.

### **Panelists:**

Kioto Aoki, Heritage Museum of Asian Art  
Ayako Yoshimura, Heritage Museum of Asian Art  
Phillip Chen, Drake University

### **Moderator:**

Ji Yang, Heritage Museum of Asian Art

**04:15 pm - 05:15 pm - Session 3 - Block C**  
**(White Oak Room)**

## **Media Relations for Arts & Cultural Institutions**

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This is a panel convened by the Chicago Cultural Alliance. Join us to meet media contacts from television, radio, and online news sites. These media professionals will present on how nonprofit institutions can best pitch a story and how to build their network within public media.

### **Panelists:**

Diana Palomar, ABC 7 Chicago

Gwen Ihnat, Block Club

Lynnea Domienik, WBEZ

### **Moderator:**

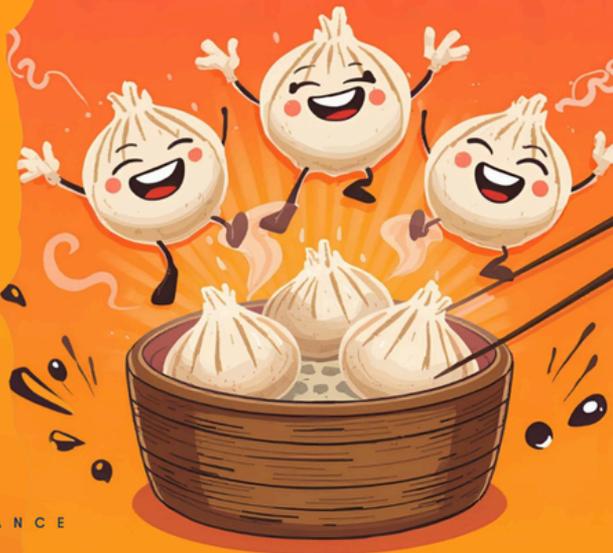
Paul Durica, Chicago History Museum



**World**  
**Dumpling**  
**Fest**

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CHICAGO CULTURAL ALLIANCE

# MEETING THE MOMENT



## MEETING THE MOMENT

*A Professional Development Series for Cultural Nonprofits*



Fundraising



Operations



Communications



Policy



Finance

**Meeting the Moment** is a professional development series from the Chicago Cultural Alliance designed to support cultural and heritage nonprofits during a time of rapid change and uncertainty. Through hands-on workshops led by experienced sector leaders, the program provides practical guidance across key nonprofit functions including marketing and communications, fundraising, finance, operations, and security. Participants gain actionable tools, shared learning, and access to one-on-one consultations with session leaders, ensuring support is both strategic and tailored. Meeting the Moment equips organizations with the clarity, confidence, and capacity needed to adapt, strengthen their operations, and continue serving their communities with impact.

- March 12 ● Organizing Programs for Strategic Grant Writing: The Umbrella Approach
- March 26 ● Financial Storytelling
- April 9 ● Social Media Strategy: Less Content, More Impact
- April 30 ● Data Security - Protecting Your Digital Information
- May 14 ● Crafting a Common Narrative
- May 28 ● Budgeting for Grants
- June 11 ● Crisis Communications 101: Planning Before You Need It
- June 25 ● Getting Started with Fundraising: Software and Procedures
- July 16 ● Using a Simple Grant Strategy
- July 30 ● Crafting Cash Flows and Budgets
- August 13 ● Media Relations for Mission-Driven Organizations
- August 27 ● Diversifying Revenue

**Scan for full calendar**



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