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**The 12th Annual Premier's Awards for Excellence in the Arts
The 2018 Laureates are
Philip Akin, Leighton Alexander Williams
and imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival**

The laureates of the **2018 Premier's Awards for Excellence in the Arts** have been announced. The awards recognize Ontario's professional artists and arts organizations for extraordinary achievements that strengthen Ontario's vibrant culture sector.

Philip Akin has been chosen as **2018 Artist Award laureate**. Philip Akin has been acting and directing for over 40 years. In 2000, he was a founding member of Obsidian Theatre, Canada's leading black theatre company, and has served as its Artistic Director since 2006. As the winning artist, Philip Akin receives \$35,000 and also selected an emerging artist, who will receive \$15,000.

"I have always said that it's the work and not the awards that matter. And yet I find myself profoundly touched that a group of my peers conferred this honour on me. I wish my mom was still alive to see this day," said Philip Akin.

The **2018 Emerging Artist of the Year** is **Leighton Alexander Williams**. Leighton is an actor and director on stage and screen, and is a graduate of York University's Acting Conservatory. He is also a co-founder of Big Dreamers Brotherhood Productions, a production company founded by seven film and theatre artists of various disciplines.

"I'm very blessed to achieve this award, especially after a year of producing work that speaks to social issues currently happening in our world. I'm eternally grateful to Philip Akin and Obsidian Theatre who saw something within me, and gave me the platform I needed to share my artistry with this city," said Leighton Alexander Williams. "I hear time and time again, that 'art is not rocket science or brain surgery'; however, art has the power to change minds, bestow new perspective, and save lives. Therefore, I encourage my fellow artists to continue to fight the good fight, and tell those impactful stories that may be hard to share."

imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival has been selected as the laureate in the Arts Organization category. **imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival** is the world's largest festival showcasing film, video, audio, and digital & interactive media made by Indigenous screen content creators, and will celebrate their 20th Anniversary from October 23-27, 2019. The **Arts Organization Award** recognizes an Ontario-based arts organization that supports professional artists, is led by professional artists and art administrators, and has a significant history in the arts in Ontario. A jury of artists and arts professionals chooses the winner after an extensive review of all nominees and the laureate receives an award of \$50,000.

"It's a great honour to be recognized with the Ontario Premier's Awards for Excellence in the Arts and we thank the jury from the fullness of our hearts," said **Jason Ryle**, Artistic & Managing Director of **imagineNATIVE**. "This award is a testament to the incredible vitality of the Indigenous media arts community and the talented artists, supportive community members, and passionate staff, volunteers and Board that make imagineNATIVE possible. These awards are deeply meaningful to the arts organizations and artists who significantly enrich Ontario's social, cultural and economic landscapes. I'd like to congratulate all of this year's laureates and finalists; we are honoured to be in the company of these great artists and organizations and wish them the best in their continued success and contributions to the Province."

The **Premier's Awards for Excellence in the Arts program** is administered by the [Ontario Arts Council](#) (OAC) on behalf of the Government of Ontario's Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport (MTCS). Winners are selected by a jury of artists and arts professionals. [Click here to view the full list of 2018 finalists and laureates.](#)

The culture sector generates more than \$25 billion annually for Ontario's economy and supports about 280,000 jobs.

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imagineNATIVE Film + Media Arts Festival

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