

SMA

SASKATCHEWAN MUSIC AWARDS

2025 GUIDELINES

SaskMusic will honour excellence, and celebrate the achievements of our music industry members over the past year with the **2025 Saskatchewan Music Awards**. The awards will be held in Regina on Sunday, March 2/2025.

The following are the rules and eligibility criteria for each category. Minor amendments may be made to these criteria throughout the submission period; always refer to the most recent version posted.

If you require assistance in completing your submission, please contact our office well before the deadline at 306-347-0676 or smainfo@saskmusic.org.

LINKS TO SUBMISSION FORMS

[Artistic: Artist of the Year](#)

[Artistic: Single, Video, Album](#)

[Industry Awards](#)

GENERAL ELIGIBILITY AND CRITERIA

- For artistic categories, the artist (or in the case of a band, at least 50% of its regular/core members) must meet Saskatchewan residency criteria as follows:
 - Potential nominee currently resides in Saskatchewan and has resided here since at least April 1, 2024. If you are temporarily out of the province for study, performance opportunities, or other professional work, but maintain a primary residence in Saskatchewan and still self-identify as being from Saskatchewan, you are eligible.
 - We reserve the right to request proof of residency through either 1) 2023 tax filing indicating you paid taxes as a Saskatchewan resident; and/or 2) two pieces of ID including any of the following: a valid Saskatchewan Health Services card, a valid Saskatchewan driver's license, a student ID card indicating registration in a Saskatchewan educational facility, or a Status Indian card.
- For incorporated bands or industry nominees, the company must be prepared to demonstrate residency upon request.
- Where eligibility due to residency or band formation is in dispute (e.g. *is this nominee a solo artist who hires side players, or is this nominee a band*), we may request more information, and the final decision shall be made by the jury of the category.
- Where songs are a required part of your submission, at least 2 of 3 songs must be original (written by the artist themselves, OR, not previously released by another artist and appropriately licensed by the artist submitting). Exceptions will be made for: Album of the Year; Classical or Broadway Artist of the Year; and submissions of traditional blues; traditional Indigenous; or traditional jazz genres.
- Where 2 or 3 songs are required with artistic submissions, remixes or alternate versions do not count as separate songs. (e.g. *An album version, radio edit, and acoustic version are the same song, and only the (one) version that you choose to submit for the jury would count towards your song requirements.*)
- Remixes of a song may only stand as one of the artists' qualifying song releases if the artist was not nominated using a version of that same song in a previous year.
- In the case of a duet/collaboration where there is a 'Featured Artist' or one-time duo, credit will go to the main artist (not the featured artist) listed on the track/album. In the event of a track with equal billing, both artists could use the track as one of their own qualifying song submissions.
- All categories are open to non-English language submissions. Lyric translations into English would be appreciated for the benefit of the jury, where applicable.

- There are no submission fees.
- Where category nominees are determined through a jury process, there must be a minimum of 4 nominees recommended by the jury in order for that award to be presented in the current year. (The exception is the Indigenous Music Achievement Award, for which only the honouree is named.)
- Each artist/project will be able to stand as a nominee in **one** genre-based category. During the submission process, applicant will be asked to select their main, and backup genre categories. If there are insufficient submissions to proceed with a genre category, the artist's submission may be moved into their backup choice. Staff will not pick your main genre.
- All applicants must consent to SaskMusic's Code of Conduct, posted here: <https://www.saskmusic.org/about-us/code-of-conduct>. Individuals/businesses found to be operating/behaving in a manner that contradicts the Code, in particular having engaged in any forms of harassment including sexual harassment, discrimination, bullying and/or violence, are subject to removal from nomination consideration. This applies to individuals previously found to be in breach of the Code by SaskMusic, as well as those found to be in breach during or after the nomination period by a Code of Conduct review committee.
- SaskMusic reserves the right to disqualify an applicant for failing to meet any of the guidelines noted herein, and to amend these guidelines as they deem appropriate.

Unless otherwise noted, a release date is defined as:

- The first available date that the material is widely available in that it can be purchased by the general public, and/or streamed legally in its entirety by a royalty-generating music service. The primary source used to verify the release date shall be Apple Music; secondary verification methods will be accepted at the discretion of SaskMusic.
- A **single** is considered released on the day the single or the album on which it is on is first made available for public consumption as noted above, **or** the date the track was submitted to Canadian radio as a single, as long as that date was not before the current eligibility period. The primary sources used to determine date of release to radio are DMDS and !earshot Distro, but other third-party forms of verification (ie radio tracker contract, media release, etc) will be considered.

Use of AI (Artificial Intelligence) in submissions (NEW)

AI-generated music is music that is created with the help of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies in its creation (composition) or production. AI systems use algorithms and machine learning techniques to analyze vast amounts of existing music data and generate content based on patterns, styles, and structures found in the data. Generative AI has broadly been trained on the intellectual property of artists without their knowledge or consent. It can be impossible to attribute credit to the original copyright owners of art used in AI derivative works.

AI **tools** may be used in eligible projects, but AI generations cannot be a primary or core component. Human(s) must be the primary creative contributor(s) of all submitted work(s). Where AI is used, it must be done so in an innovative/creative way that enhances the human art but does not replace human contributions. The completed work must be original and copyrightable* by a human at the time of submission. (*With the exception where pre-existing cover songs are acceptable submissions.)

- Ineligible:
 - Where the lead or another primary vocal in a song has been generated by AI;
 - Where a lead or another prominent instrument in a song has been generated by AI;
 - Where lyrics and/or melody were AI-generated in whole or in part (as opposed to being used only as inspiration towards a final, original lyric or melody).
- Eligible: where AI has been implemented as an editing tool or effect.
- For the music video category:
 - The song used in the video must be eligible considering the above;
 - Any AI-generated visual elements or voiceovers do not infringe on the voice or likeness of a human actor;
 - Any underlying art used in generative AI can be properly attributed and credited. (e.g. original visuals created for the video could be further manipulated using generative AI);
 - AI tools may be utilized in the editing process.

AI-generated elements must be disclosed within the category submission. Final decisions on AI eligibility of a submission will be at the discretion of SaskMusic. Any nominated content later found to be in breach of these guidelines will have their recognition revoked.

AWARD CATEGORIES

Nominees may nominate themselves or be nominated by a manager/label/other party.

ARTISTIC Guidelines

Artistic: Artist of the Year by Genre Categories

The following genre-based categories will be determined through evaluation of the **artistic merit** of the musical submission, as well as an **Artist Statement** providing career achievements (and subject to third-party verification where pertinent). Tips for preparing the artist statement are [available here](#) (PDF). The nominees and the winner in each category will be determined by a jury of industry members and peers familiar with the genre.

Artists may become a nominee in one genre category only. Submitters will be asked to identify a main genre, and backup choice of genre. The second choice will be utilized only if there are not enough submissions to mount your first choice category this year; applicants in this case would have the option to move into their secondary category, **or** to extend their qualification for their first choice forward to the next occurring SMAs. We also have a spot on the intake for you to write in further genre options – this is to help us collect data and determine potential demand for future new categories. Please note if your main choice of category does not proceed, there is no guarantee your second category will proceed either.

All genres are **broadly defined** categories – **pick the closest genre to your musical style**. There are no sales qualifications for these categories.

Musical submissions are required for a category nomination. **3 tracks** must be provided which have been commercially released during the period of **April 15, 2023–November 30, 2024**. Apple Music and other providers will be used to verify release date. An **Artist Statement** of your achievements is mandatory and must refer to the same time period, including career highlights such as show dates/online concerts, streaming/social statistics, sync placements, other award recognition, etc. We will also request a promotional **photo** that we can use if you become a nominee.

An artist who was a final nominee for the 2023 Saskatchewan Music Awards cannot submit the same song(s) for consideration in this cycle, *even if the material would qualify based on release date*.

- **Afrobeats Artist of the Year:** Artists working in genres including but not limited to Afrobeats, Afrobeat, Afro-fusion, Amapiano, Afro-pop, Afrohouse, Afro-soul, Alte, HighLife and all Afro-influenced genres and styles.
- **Children’s Artist of the Year:** Artists creating music specifically for children under the age of 12. Production and songwriting quality, creativity, and development of or impact on the listener will be considered. The Artist Statement should include information on how you are representing and marketing yourself as a Children’s Music artist (community engagement with families, show or live stream notes, social media channels, etc).
- **Classical or Broadway Artist of the Year:** Artists working in musical styles including but not limited to theatrical productions; public domain classical music including baroque, classical, romantic, and modern-era; and new classical or theatrical compositions. *Artists performing instrumentally may either choose this, or the Instrumental category as their main genre category.*
- **Country Artist of the Year:** Artists working in genres including but not limited to mainstream and traditional country.
- **Electronic Artist of the Year:** Artists working in genres including but not limited to dance, electronica, and instrumental electronic.
- **Hip Hop Artist of the Year:** Artists working in genres including but not limited to hip hop, rap, and urban R&B.
- **Inspirational or Spiritual Artist of the Year:** Artists whose music incorporates faith-centred lyrics, inspirational or positive messaging, and/or with spirituality as their primary context or theme. The Artist Statement should include information on how you are representing and marketing yourself as a faith-based, inspirational or spiritual artist, ie how the artist and music is marketed, live performance/festival appearances, and social media initiatives.
- **Instrumental or Ambient Artist of the Year:** Artists working in genres including but not limited to acoustic instrumental, trip hop, chillout, original score, and others.
- **Jazz or Blues Artist of the Year:** Artists working in genres including but not limited to experimental jazz, jazz rock, neo-jazz, traditional or contemporary blues, and related genres.

- **Metal or Hard Rock Artist of the Year:** Artists working in genres including but not limited to all forms of metal, hard rock, noise rock, punk, heavy alternative, and heavy instrumental.
- **R&B Artist of the Year:** Artists working in genres including but not limited to soul, funk, and R&B.
- **Rock Artist of the Year:** Artists working in genres including but not limited to those considered to be mainstream or alternative rock, rock blends and sub-genres.
- **Pop Artist of the Year:** Artists working in genres including but not limited to those considered to be mainstream or alternative pop, synth pop, alt pop, dream pop, K pop and adult contemporary.
- **Roots or Folk Artist of the Year:** Genres including but not limited to roots, folk, singer/songwriter, and Americana.

Artistic: Indigenous Artist of the Year Categories

These two categories will recognize self-identifying Indigenous artists making music in any genre. Solo artists must be Inuit, First Nation, or Métis and in the case of groups, at least 50% of its regular members must be Inuit, First Nation, or Métis. Our Indigenous Advisory may be called upon to assist in confirming category eligibility. For these two categories, submissions must include at least 2 songs for the jury to consider which have been made available to the public during the period of **April 15, 2023-November 30, 2024** in any format, including: digitally (ie Apple Music, Bandcamp, Spotify, etc), music videos (ie YouTube), and/or physical product releases.

Category nominees and winner in each category will be determined by a jury of industry members and peers who are members of the Indigenous music industry of Canada, with evaluations based on the **artistic merit** of the music submitted, as well as an **Artist Statement** providing career achievements (and subject to third-party verification where pertinent). We will also request a promotional **photo** for use if you become a nominee.

Indigenous artists may qualify in one genre-based Artist of the Year category above, **as well as** in either Contemporary or Traditional categories as follows:

- **Contemporary Indigenous Artist of the Year:** This category will recognize Indigenous artists/bands performing in any contemporary genre of music, including but not limited to the genres noted above and genre crossovers.
- **Traditional Indigenous Artist/Group of the Year:** This category will recognize Indigenous artists or groups performing in any traditional Indigenous form of music (including but not limited to Pow Wow, Round Dance, Hand Drum, Flute, Métis Fiddle music, Inuit throat singing, and A Capella singing in any language of the Indigenous people of Turtle Island. It may also include artists creating fusions that heavily incorporate elements of traditional instrumentation, rhythms, and/or Indigenous languages. Songs submitted for this category may include Traditional songs and/or original compositions recorded in a Traditional style.

Artistic: Single of the Year

Single of the Year will recognize the top commercial Saskatchewan song of the year released during the period **April 15, 2023-November 30, 2024** (see definition of release, above). If a single was released BEFORE the current eligibility period (ie: a pre-album release single that was sent to radio), that single will be considered ineligible for this category, even if an album containing it was later released during the current eligibility period. Singles that were nominated in 2023 cannot become nominees again this year, even if they are eligible based on dates. While the artist must meet residency requirements (see general criteria above), the song can be written by the artist, or written or co-written by a non-Saskatchewan songwriter. The award is presented to the artist.

The nominees and winners of this category shall be determined solely based upon a numerical calculation of industry data to determine the artist with the largest outcome of said metrics for a single during the reporting period beginning closest to April 15, 2023 and up to the time of category calculations post-deadline, including: Canadian airplay, digital song downloads, and streaming obtained through our data provider(s); as well as consideration of Spotify overall streaming and YouTube video views. It is the responsibility of the artist to ensure their data is available through industry data portals such as Mediabase (for commercial airplay tracking) and, to ensure their single is not overlooked, to submit it for consideration in this category. *Nominees in this category may be held back until the awards event.*

Artistic: Music Video of the Year

This category recognizes an exceptional music video made available to the public during the period of **April 15, 2023-November 30, 2024** (for example: uploaded to YouTube or posted to a public artist profile/website).

- The award will go to the nominated director, filmmaker, producer, or production company, as named in the nomination submission.
- Up to three entries may be submitted for each potential nominee, and up to two videos per nominee (as determined by the category jury) would be eligible for inclusion on the final nomination list.
- The nominee(s) must meet residency criteria (see above); in the case of multiple names submitted with a video, at least 50% of those listed must meet residency (or if a corporation, its legal head office must be in Saskatchewan). The artist performing the song does not need to meet Saskatchewan residency requirements.
- All videos under consideration must be available for public viewing and be for the purpose of supporting a song. (Spoken word videos will not be accepted into this category.)
- Any style of video may be submitted including but not limited to lyric videos, live concert videos, rehearsal space-style 'raw' videos, full storyboard videos, etc.
- The song must be original (written by the artist themselves, OR, not previously released by another artist and appropriately licensed by the artist submitting). Exceptions will be made for: classical; traditional blues; traditional Indigenous; and traditional jazz genres.
- The video must be a minimum of 90 seconds in length, and must have received >500 views on YouTube and/or its primary viewing location by the day of deadline.
- Music videos that were nominated in 2023 cannot become nominees again this year, even if they are eligible under other criteria.

Following a preliminary pre-screening of all submissions in this category, the top submissions will go forward to a jury of industry peers. Final nominees and the winner in this category will be determined by jury based on artistic merit, regardless of the amount of views/plays the video may have garnered.

Artistic: Album of the Year

Album of the Year, also known as *The Best Saskatchewan Albums of the Year* poll, is in its tenth annual iteration. This category is based on an album, as a whole, released during the period of **September 15, 2023-November 30, 2024**. This is a submission-based category. Artists and/or labels are invited to submit releases in any genre for consideration.

To be considered in this category, an album:

- Was released by an artist who meets residency criteria (*as above*) at the time of the album's release date regardless of where artist is living at the time of the submission deadline.
- **Is a) at least 25 minutes in length, or at least b) 5 tracks and >18 minutes in length.**
- Was first released to the public for sale or streaming between **September 15, 2023-November 30, 2024**. The primary verification we will use will be its date of release on Apple Music. If not on Apple Music, we'll accept other forms of verification of "release date" and "commercial release" at our discretion (including a manufacturer's shipping date). The album must still be available to the public for sale or streaming as of the intake deadline in order to qualify (fanclub-only limited releases would be ineligible).
- A maximum of two albums per artist name will be accepted into this category. Collaborations/featured appearances by an artist do not count towards their maximum; e.g. an artist could submit 2 albums that were released under their own name, and 1 album released by a band that they are also part of.
- Official reissues/remixes/compilations of previously released material, released as a new package with a new UPC number, will only be considered if 3 or more previously unreleased/new songs are included in the package.
- Albums that made the short list of albums (nominees) in a previous year will not be in consideration this year, even if reissued.

Process

- 1) The awards intake will collect eligible releases for consideration.
- 2) A jury of industry professionals and peers will listen to the qualifying albums to determine a Long List.
- 3) The Long List will open for online voting by the general public.
- 4) A combination of public votes (weighted to 50%) and jury decisions (weighted to 50%) will determine the Short List (nominees). Rules applicable the public voting portion will be announced when polls open.
- 5) The nominee list will be announced. The top-placing album overall will receive the Saskatchewan Music Award for Album of the Year.

INDUSTRY: Guidelines

Unless otherwise noted, the following categories will refer to a period of work from **April 15, 2023-November 30, 2024**.

Industry Achievement Award: This category is intended to recognize those helping to strengthen the music community of Saskatchewan. Their work or volunteerism has contributed forward momentum to our scene and has had an impact on creating new opportunities for performance, provided support for equity-deserving artists/industry members, and/or provided services serving the wider good. Potential nominees can include individuals, groups, organizations or businesses, and submissions should clearly demonstrate community impact. Producers, venues, and festivals are not eligible in this category, as they may submit in their respective categories. The nominee must reside in and pay taxes in Saskatchewan, however, the scope of their work can be national and/or international. Final nominees will be determined by an industry jury, with the winner to be determined by a combination of industry jury and public vote.

Music Company or Organization of the Year: This award will recognize a music business/organization/company that has demonstrated excellence in sales, services, or craftsmanship in their offerings to the public and/or music industry during the period. Potential nominees might include but are not limited to instrument builders, production companies, music schools, and music equipment stores. Venues and festivals are not eligible in this category, as they may submit in their applicable category. The physical address of the company nominated must be in Saskatchewan, or the company must pay taxes in Saskatchewan, although their clientele can be national and/or international in scope. Final nominees will be determined by an industry jury, with the winner to be determined by a combination of industry jury and public vote.

Music Professional of the Year: This award will recognize an individual who provided excellent sales, service, skills, or craftsmanship during the period. Potential nominees in this category might include but are not limited to individual sound or lighting technicians (including studio engineers and live techs), freelance musicians, music teachers, promoters, publicists, booking agents, members of the media, event coordinators, managers, and more. Producers are not eligible in this category, as they may submit in their applicable category. Final nominees and winner will be determined by a jury of industry peers.

Venue or Festival of the Year: This category will recognize live music venues and music festivals that strove to celebrate and present live music during the period. The location of its live music performances must be physically located in Saskatchewan. The category will consider both in-person shows/events and alternate programming initiatives, as well as excellence in programming and community engagement. Qualifying nominees have presented at least 10 artists that reflect an intention toward gender equity during the eligibility period, with submissions to include a list of their highlights over the period. A history of fair payment to artists and equitable treatment of artists is a pre-requisite of nominees. Final nominees will be determined by an industry jury, with the winner to be determined by a combination of industry jury and public vote.

Producer of the Year: This award will recognize excellence in music production by a producer residing in Saskatchewan, who was primarily responsible for the recording and/or mixing process for a submitted project(s) released within the period. Nominees can be submitted individually, as a cast of producers, or a combination of producer and studio name together. In the case of co-productions, co-producers would stand collectively for the co-production; all team members in this case must meet residency requirements. Nominations must include 3 songs produced by the nominee(s) and released during the eligibility period, which demonstrate the producer's skill. Submitted songs may be performed by one artist, or various artists. A producer who was a final nominee for the 2023 Saskatchewan Music Awards cannot submit the same song(s) for consideration in this cycle, *even if the material would qualify based on release date*. A producer's biography, including achievements during the period, is required with the nomination submission. Final nominees and winner will be determined by a jury of industry peers.

SPECIAL HONOURS: Indigenous Music Achievement Award

The Indigenous Music Achievement Award recognizes excellence in an individual demonstrating musical impact, leadership, innovation and/or community-building which has created a positive and lasting impact on the Indigenous music community. A potential honoree may be, for example: an established music artist; a music manager or label owner; and/or a music teacher, as long as the activities they are nominated for are centred on music practices. This award is intended to honour a long-term commitment to integrity and involvement in music which has inspired and uplifted others, and will consider the individual's work over their career.

Self-nominations as well as community-suggestions will be considered. The SaskMusic Indigenous Advisory will make the selection for this year's recipient. As this is a lifetime award, recipients can only receive the award once.

About the juries

Nomination submissions will be checked for completeness and eligibility by SaskMusic. With an exception for any special notations above, for juried categories, submissions will then be presented to a panel of industry jurors who will ultimately decide, by the assignment of their marks, the number of nominees presented in each category. Jurors may sit on more than one category. All jurors are advised of our Conflict of Interest criteria stating they will not jury submissions for which there may be real or perceived conflicts of interest or bias. Chosen jurists are knowledgeable industry professionals, and will review submissions following the guidelines set out for each category. Jurors will be sought both from within and outside of Saskatchewan as needed to ensure impartiality and appropriate music experience.

As per the SaskMusic Policy Guide, SaskMusic staff and board members are eligible to stand as nominees as long as they had no involvement or influence in the jury selection or tabulations for their submitted category(ies).

Additional information on the awards can be found on the SaskatchewanMusicAwards.com website.

For questions and comments on this process please contact Lorena Kelly, Executive Director, SaskMusic, 1-800-347-0676 or email execdir@saskmusic.org.

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