



# PLURALISM IN THE ARTS IN CANADA

## A CHANGE IS GONNA COME

compiled and edited  
by charles c. smith



*This is a timely book. There has been so much change in the Canadian cultural landscape, especially in the performing arts. When I first started Red Sky Performance, I looked for dialogue around diversity and artistic expression, form, and performance. It is now exciting to see the increasing activity by Indigenous artists, people of colour, immigrants and new generation peoples who were (and perhaps still are) considered marginal in their communities and in public spaces where performance takes place.*

*This book captures some of the key moments of this exciting growing dialogue. I've participated as a panelist in two CPAMO sessions with presenters and other artists. Such forums have been very helpful to creating understanding between and enhancing the relationship between presenters and artists. Well done! We need to continue this and align ourselves with an exciting future in the performing arts.*

Sandra Laronde | Founding Artistic Director | Red Sky Performance

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**PLURALISM IN THE ARTS  
IN CANADA –  
A CHANGE IS GONNA COME**

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Fifth volume in the  
*Our Schools/Our Selves* book series  
2012





Pluralism in the Arts in Canada  
A Change is Gonna Come  
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## INTRODUCTION

# PLURALISM IN THE ARTS IN CANADA — A CHANGE IS GONNA COME

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charles c. smith

**T**he book you are holding in your hands leaps to you from the curb stones of experiences shared by artists, particularly Aboriginal and racialized artists, with individuals representing venues — theatres and stages — offering a diverse menu of performances to audiences. When I say that this book ‘leaps’, I mean that the words and experiences generated through open conversations between artists, presenters, community builders and others over a sustained period of time has led to several concrete and, yes, as well, remarkable and immeasurable outcomes.

And these encounters are all very recent. And continuing.

The experiences and research of the Cultural Pluralism in the Arts Movement Ontario (CPAMO) as well as the work of other organizations featured in this collection — the Neighbourhood Arts Network of the Toronto Arts Foundation, and, the Independent Media Arts Alliance and National Indigenous Media Arts Coalition — give ample evidence about not only what can be done but, more importantly, what is being done to demonstrably promote pluralism in the arts, to create forums for expressions from Aboriginal and racialized communities and to build engagement and audiences from these communities.

Each of these organizations has put together tools to guide interested arts organizations in transformative work, the outcomes of which would engage them in sharing the stories of those living on this land in its fullness,

with deep particularity and openness to diversity in content and form. This thought is what has guided the compilation of speeches, papers, stories, anecdotes, challenges and resource guides that are now in your hands. With narratives coming out of theatre, dance, music and other forms of artistic expression, and deeply engaged with the voices of some of the most renowned Aboriginal and racialized artists, the works collected here bring forward the heart of a very needed discussion, one related to Canadian identity, what it is not and is, and how this is seen in the public space performance occupies.

And how this is lived each day across diverse communities.

So yes, this book brings forward a challenge. It asks that we name who and where we are in this timely conversation. It asks each of us to step forward to share in the shaping of an inclusive sense of culture(s) with resources appropriately and equitably shared. It asks that we each step forward now because ‘a change is gonna come’. We see it in the sustained prominence of many Aboriginal, racialized and immigrant artists, in these communities deeply immersed in creative activities, and in the receptivity these artists enjoy across many communities.

The CPAMO experience has been about this, convening conversations, workshops and performances; engaging artists, presenters, funders, community workers and policy makers in open conversations, recorded and reported on regularly — a public space (<http://cpamo.posterous.com/>); providing research and guidance on initiatives, facilitating open forums with panel and keynote presentations as catalysts for discussion; staging some of the most exciting contemporary artists in dance and performance — Kaha:wi Dance Theatre, the Collective of Black Artists, Sampradaya Dance Creations, Lee Pui Ming, Sedina Fiati, Olga Barrios, Kevin A. Ormsby and performance artists associated with the Coalition of Performing Arts in Kitchener, the Multicultural Arts in Schools and Communities and Coalition of Newcomers for Arts and Culture in Ottawa.

The conversations sparked by CPAMO’s work include presentations by some of the authors in this book — Ajay Heble, Shahin Sayadi, Tim Whalley, Charmaine Headley — and others: Sara Diamond (President, OCAD) who gave the inaugural keynote address and spoke of the importance of centering creative work within Aboriginal communities and communities of colour; Sandra Laronde (Red Sky Performance) who spoke at CAPACOA

in Ottawa and in a panel session with presenters in Markham; Sara Roque (Aboriginal Officer Ontario Arts Council) who led a session on Aboriginal arts practices today and ways of collaborating with Aboriginal artists. And then there has been Jeanne Holmes (Canada Dance Festival), Majdi Bou Matar, (MT Space), Ahdri Zena Mandiella (b-current), Mimi Beck and Anne Marie Williams (CanDance Network), Santee Smith (Kaha:wi Dance Theatre), Patty Jarvis (Prologue to the Performing Arts), Jini Stolk (Creative Trust), Brainard Blydyn Taylor (Nathaniel Dette Chorale), Cian Knights (formerly of Scarborough Arts), Andrea Fatona (former curator of contemporary art at the Ottawa Art Gallery and now at OCAD), Melanie Fernandez (Harbourfront and Planet Indigenous), Jennifer Green (Soundstreams), and Jen Dodd and Camile Turner of Subtle Technologies.

As well, we've heard from several presenters about their experiences in this vein. Whether Eric Lariviere (Markham Theatre), Ken Coulter (Oakville Theatre), Costin Manu (Rose Theatre), Cheryl Ewing (Ontario Contact), we've been informed about these organizations' challenges and achievements, what they offer to share and ask to learn in return.

We've involved academics whose teaching and research have provided insight into the raw numbers and social capacities of diverse communities as well as probed patterns of immigrant experience, settlement and interests. Professors Myer Siemiatycki (Ryerson), Shugang Wang (Ryerson), Sandeep Agrawal (Ryerson) and Nadia Caidi (University of Toronto) made tremendous contributions to artists and presenters, unraveling and demythologizing the numbers, trends and interests of diverse communities and exploring what this means to the performing arts and audience development.

This conversation, taking place over the past three years and running parallel to other significant discussions convened by MT Space (IMPACT 2009 and 2011) and One Light Theatre (Prismatic 2010 and 2012), has been held in cooperation with a diverse range of institutions — Community Cultural Impresarios, the University of Toronto Scarborough, Magnetic North, CAPACOA, the Coalition of Performing Arts of Kitchener-Waterloo, and IMPACT 2011.

At the same time, CPAMO held workshops regularly to discuss demographic changes, working with Aboriginal artists and arts organizations, audience development in diverse communities, the importance of the rela-

tionship between form and content from diverse traditions and trajectories, many unrelated to what is taken as common. Yet, these stories are our stories, part of this landscape we call Canada, with recognition of First Peoples and those named in different ways.

The NAN (<http://www.neighbourhoodartsnetwork.org/>) and IMAA (<http://www.imaa.ca/>) /NIMAC (<http://www.nationalimac.org/>) projects have taken a similar approach — consultations and research springing out of the lived experiences of those involved, exploration of the importance of community building as part of the process, focusing on principles of Aboriginal presence and equity that share a critical approach to cultural formation, creation, production, identity and the significance of inclusivity. As such, it is quite reasonable that the NAN and IMAA/NIMAC toolkits should be included with CPAMO's work. While approaching our work from diverse perspectives, each of these toolkits shares a remarkable similarity in its principles as well as its messages and strategies around inclusion.

When I think of this, I find a symmetry between Rinaldo Walcott and Cornel West. Both looking at defining a role for Black artists and artists of colour, Walcott suggests:

The project for black Canadian artists and critics is to articulate a grammar of black that is located within Canada's various regions, both urban and rural. The invention of a grammar for black in Canada that is aware of historical narrative and plays with that narrative is crucial in the struggle against erasure...The articulation of a grammar for black, and ensuing contestations over it, is what will continue to imbibe the vital cultures of black Canadians with a continued dynamism...A grammar for black will cement blackness to the nation and reconfigure the nation for the better. (*Black Like Who?* p.156)

Shortly before that, in examining a contemporary role for artists of colour, West writes:

The most desirable option for people of color who promote the new cultural politics of difference is to be a critical organic catalyst. By this I mean a person who stays attuned to the best of what the mainstream has to offer — its paradigms, viewpoints and methods — yet maintains a grounding in affirm-

ing and enabling subcultures of criticism. Prophetic critics and artists of color should be exemplars of what it means to be intellectual freedom-fighters, that is, cultural workers who simultaneously position themselves within (or alongside) the mainstream while clearly aligned with groups who vow to keep alive potent traditions of critique and resistance. In this regard, one can take clues from the great musicians and preachers of color who are open to the best of what other traditions offer yet are rooted in nourishing subcultures that build on the grand achievements of a vital heritage. (The New Cultural Politics of Difference, p. 33 as included in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, ed. by Ferguson, R. et al 1990)

Borrowing from the Gramscian concept of the organic intellectual, West's notion of the artists of colour as a "critical organic catalyst" is one where these artists work in transformative modes of consciousness and awakening and who see beyond the boundaries of failing metanarratives, no matter their origins, creating anew with values that are inherently inclusive, democratic, transparent and engaging in social, political and cultural change, valuing a plurality of modes of expression and their engagement with the moment of creation and performance.

While Walcott addresses Black artists and West's focus is on artists of colour, I suspect that there are several elements here useful to other communities. It is for this reason I cite it in this text — a sharing.

And it is with this in mind that this book comes to you — the many conversations, lectures, artistry, panels, workshops, problem solving, the relationships developed. A beginning. The shared acknowledgement of a vastly changed and changing political, social, demographic, cultural and economic landscape(s) and its (their) proportional impact on the development of arts and culture. Different myths, stories, icons, ancestry, methods of practice and apprenticeship — connected deeply to tradition while contemporary in concern/theme and expression. Diverse and heterogeneous communities with different interests and ways of experiencing the arts. Seemingly a lot all at once with still so much more to come.

This is what is captured throughout this book. 'A change is gonna come'. A redefinition and seeing of things, taking into account the value of the contemporary in performance, aesthetics and practice, and centering the work

of Aboriginal and racialized artists as central to the narrative of Canadian cultural identity historically, now and ever more so in the times to come.

The way this book has been put together supports this perspective. Natasha Bakht and George Elliot Clarke provide a perfect entrance into the discussion. With focus on lived experiences from childhood and in professional work as artists, with a view to the historic and how it is reflected in today's culture in both society and in performance, Bakht and Elliot pose questions about what is claimed to be peripheral but is, actually, quite central to the marrow of national identity, articulating the importance of Aboriginal and racialized identity to Canadian culture, story and performance.

Following this, Ajay Heble and Tim Whalley pose challenges faced, and provide concrete strategies used, by marginalized arts groups that knowingly take the 'risk' to be different and to seek out those who have not been traditionally 'invited to the party' as Donna Walker-Kuhne might say. Writing about the Guelph Jazz Festival and Scarborough Arts, Heble and Whalley demonstrate the link between reputedly marginalized communities and their survival/thriving strategies, strategies of working with each other in spaces where both the arts organizations and communities are empowered. You'll note their focus on outreach and education as part of audience/community engagement and development. You'll note the communities they've chosen to work with which have been considered outside the sphere of communities interested in the performing arts. You'll note their successes and how they have challenged traditional orthodoxy in including diverse communities. You'll note their vision and their principles and their flexibility to approach and engage.

There is no doubt that, as Bakht, Clarke and Heble suggest, form and content are important components of the heterogenous articulation of artistic production from diverse communities. Also, Heble (like Bakht, Clarke and Whalley) positions the art he is involved in staging as the authentic expression coming from a marginalized group, African Americans, that is now global in scope and contemporary in performance, borrowing from the root of its development and building in the diverse cultures from which the performers come. Further, Bakht, Clarke and Heble position their comments to address the hybridity of form and content.

These themes are also explored by Amanda Paixao, Charmaine Headley and Kevin A. Ormsby, each of whom focus on theories and applications of practice and how these relate to issues of memory, the first and second generation immigrant experience, hybridity, gender and race, staying and advancing the course. Here the question of practice is rigorously explored—as immigrant, African diasporic, second generation and the implications of this in a range of forms of expression, capturing spirit and ancestry in the moving body.

Using MT Space (Multicultural Theatre Space) of Kitchener-Waterloo, headed by its Artistic Director Majdi Bou-Matar, Paixao ventures into the space of body memory and the immigrant experience of attempting to find and create ‘home’. Her focus on MT Space enables her to capture the process of a theatre company using these challenging techniques in the creation of theatre that centres the immigrant experience in its diversity.

Headley and Ormsby address their concerns to their identities as persons/artists of African descent who live, work and create amidst a flurry of other cultural influences, those which can (and have at times) drowned out the voices of persons of African descent. Headley and Ormsby, however, articulate the importance of the artists’ strength in vision and flexibility/openness to both ground their work in the traditions of their ancestors while integrating new influences from African diasporic work and artistry from other communities. In this sense, as W.E.B. DuBois and Cornell West would suggest, they use a ‘double consciousness’ to call forward contemporary expressions that challenge and advance their ancestral connections.

With their focus predominantly on artistic creation and how this can lead to audience development, these chapters beg the question about what to do, why and the benefits/outcomes. Certainly Heble and Whalley address this in their papers and their concerns and ideas are amplified by Helen Yung, Shahin Sayadi and Leah Burns/Skye Louis, each of whom focus on taking the arts organization in places it traditionally has not gone.

Yung’s exploration delves into what is now the national phenomenon called “Culture Days”, a project to bring performing arts into all communities, a major theme of one of the groups CPAMO has been working with — Community Cultural Impresarios — and a particular emphasis of NAN and Burns/Louis. Yung continues her exploration by noting that the arts need

to go where people are and not sit back and simply wait for people to show up — in other words, get out there and create an audience by being part of the community and taking what you have with you to show. Yung’s concept of going to the ‘mall’ is quite a challenge but one that is echoed by Burns/Louis in their paper about the process and philosophy behind creating the NAN toolkit.

Burns and Louis open themselves as individuals from very different backgrounds and how they approached their work with a common philosophy and goal. They position their conversation as an exploration of their experience in this project and how they arrived at it with a sense of mission, pride and humility, honoured to excavate and present the work happening in a range of communities to promote pluralism in artistic expression and the importance of this to the well-being of diverse communities and the advancement of the arts.

Sayadi addresses his concerns in terms of the representation of individuals and artists from diverse communities in the governance of arts organizations, the places where decisions are made. While the notion of inclusive decision-making in the development and performance of the arts is a shared concern of all authors, Sayadi speaks to the centrality of the decision-making processes in presenting bodies and notes the ongoing absence of voices from diverse communities. Sayadi speaks from his experiences as an artist and activist and, in this context, provides several constructive suggestions about the need for change and how to bring about change. Sayadi also addresses the importance of collaboration between artists and presenters since, in his research, artists of colour do not own venues to present their work and, thereby, must rely on presenters to stage these productions.

Then there are the toolkits — each different, all complimentary, all contemporary. Other than the specific areas of focus of each of these resources, the intent, philosophy and inclusive methodology indicative in each of these documents suggests new approaches to looking at the arts in performance, within the lives of communities and the relationship between the two.

In addition to a broad understanding of arts, culture and performance, these toolkits contain much research, guides, information about resources, contacts, evidence-based case studies and research findings, annotated bibliographic essay and bibliography and glossaries of terms. Their focus is on



inclusivity in its broadest sense with a vision and understanding of equity both in substantive terms, i.e., with Aboriginal and racialized peoples, and in terms of demographic factors with other groups.

The IMAA/NIMAC resource is based on previous work done in 1995. With the understanding that much has changed since then, this toolkit provides some historical context drawing on UNESCO's approach to pluralism, the work of Betty Julian for the Toronto Arts Council in 1992 and the research of Hills Strategies on diversity in the arts labour force (2005) as well as the Canada Council's research on Inuit arts activities.

With this overview, the IMAA/NIMAC toolkit is positioned to provide a listing of contemporary terms with definitions in the field of pluralism and then focus on research conducted with its members. The results are discussions related to the importance of principles and policies, employment, outreach, mission statements and evaluation. It then provides examples of practices of its members in such areas as partnerships, programming and training.

The NAN toolkit begins with a discussion about the importance of community-based arts and then introduces the methodology for its research. The toolkit discusses the importance of using 'equity as a lens' to view, interpret, understand and practice community-engaged arts. It also discusses equity principles and posits five key principles for arts organizations interested in community engagement. These principles are: Flexibility and Adaptability, Reflexivity and Relationships, Relevance and Representation, Embeddedness, and, Sustainability.

In each of these areas, the NAN toolkit provides questions to consider in developing strategies to implement these principles. The toolkit also provides some main ideas associated with each principle. NAN then explores several case studies of equity in practice including such organizations as 'artSmarts', Scarborough Arts, and Manifesto.

The CPAMO toolkit begins with the challenge of change. It asserts that while change is a constant in the arts, the change needed now is to recognize the particular genius of Aboriginal and racialized artists and their historic and contemporary contributions. The CPAMO toolkit begins with a challenge to arts organizations to take leadership in the process of change and to do so in ways that are visionary, inclusive and promoting the fullness of cultural and performance activity across Canada.

Following a discussion on the structure of the toolkit and how to use it as well as a chronology of its own activities, CPAMO addresses the current state of inequities in the arts and the demographic changes taking place nationally, across Ontario and in a number of urban centres in Ontario. This section also shows the growing number of Aboriginal and racialized artists and, as well, the significant disparity between them and other artists. In this regard, CPAMO addresses the need for change and the timeliness of this change.

The CPAMO toolkit is then presented in five sections: Organizational Leadership, Community Engagement, Programming and Decision-making, Audience Development, and Employment. The toolkit is premised on the notion that these strategic areas are best used one following the other and that the most critical, which will lead to the others, are Organizational Leadership and Community-Engagement.

Each section of the CPAMO toolkit is replete with evidence-based studies from the U.K., Australia, the U.S. and some Canadian examples. Like NAN's work, the CPAMO toolkit provides some thoughts to consider in developing change strategies and, like the NAN and IMAA/NIMAC works, CPAMO focuses on the importance of taking an inclusive approach and of going out to work and meet with diverse communities in their spaces, rather than simply waiting for them to arrive at the stage door.

All three toolkits emphasize the importance of investing time in the process of change, that this work does not produce results over night but, through the development of trust and understanding, concrete results will inevitably appear and can then be sustained. In particular, CPAMO references several authors, e.g., Donna Walker-Kuhne, Morton Smith and Fotis Kapelos, who in different jurisdictions (U.S., U.K. and Australia) have come to similar conclusions about the importance of investing time and energy and not relying on quick fixes, one-shot deals or only on celebratory occasions, e.g., African, Asian or Aboriginal Heritage months or days.

The similarity in focus, intent, process and methodology between these three toolkits is astounding. To add to their focus, each has online resources for contacts, literature, and data. These are located on each of the organizations websites provided earlier and will also be featured together on the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (<http://www.policyalternatives.ca/>).

The CPAMO site contains a bibliographic essay and an annotated bibliography with documents sourced for the toolkit. It also contains a pilot proposal for a project entitled *Creating Communities of Practice to Implement Pluralism in the Arts in Ontario*.

The IMAA/NIMAC site hosts a variety of online resources, including: Indigenous arts and community organizations, funding programs and media resources; culturally specific media arts organizations; cultural diverse arts funding; federal cultural organizations; cultural organizations in various provinces and territories; IMAA member organizations; and a bibliography.

The wealth of research and resources in this book is what many have been interested in seeing. The articles and toolkits go a long way in unpacking issues regarding Aboriginal presence, equity, pluralism, multiculturalism, diversity and difference. They also go a long way in contributing to an increasing public concern regarding inclusion in the arts. As two papers commissioned by the Canadian Public Arts Funders network suggest (<http://www.cpaf-opsac.org/en/themes/default.htm#FutureDirections>):

Over the past two decades, public arts funders, foundations, and organizations have become increasingly aware of and concerned about inclusive practices for their various publics. Cast under the umbrella term of equity, these concerns are centred on ensuring a fair and equal arts environment where individuals and groups are not disadvantaged because of factors including, but not limited to, gender, race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, linguistic and regional background, and socio-economic status.

To address equity concerns, organizations have developed policy that is pertinent to their constituents, introduced programs for target groups, and raised awareness both within their administrative ranks and the communities they serve. This practice has taken on different forms, always dependent on specific concerns that are inflected by social norms of the community, region, and nation. It is important to recognize that activation of equity programs and the like is also linked to historical developments, which results in differential actions dependent on time, place, and expressed need. (Ashok Mathur, *Equity in the Arts Ecology: Traditions and Trends* page 6)

## PLURALISM IN THE ARTS IN CANADA — A CHANGE IS GONNA COME!

Critical diversity requires us to disaggregate multiculturalism then. By this I mean that critical diversity does not only work at the level of representational inclusion, rather critical diversity asks some difficult questions about inclusion and what inclusion signals and or means in each context. Critical diversity is about both the texture and the depth of diversity. And by taking into account the texture and depth of diversity, its critical balance and calculation comes into play...(C)ritical diversity seeks to not just populate our various arenas with one-dimensional encounters, it seeks to provide encounters that strike deeply at the core of what it means to be human. Thus critical diversity is about the ways in which categories or genres of the human cross-cut each other.

Fundamentally, it is only when some form of critical diversity is approached that we move towards social justice. Social justice is the greatest unknown in all this work. Social justice cannot be decided in advance, it has no particular destination, it is a process of coming into, a “to come” moment. Social justice and indeed its achievement can only be known to be accomplished when those seeking it declare it to be so — that is declare that social justice has been done. Thus social justice is more a desire and a constant project to be worked on and worked at, than a set of programs, a product and or a concluding deadline. (Rinaldo Walcott *What’s Art Good For: Critical Diversity, Social Justice and the Future of Art and Culture in Canada*, page 3)

This book, *Pluralism in the Arts in Canada: A Change is Gonna Come* opens up to these critical thoughts and provides so many ways to enter this dialogue.

This is what you now hold in your hands.

## MERE “SONG AND DANCE”

### Complicating the Multicultural Imperative in the Arts

---

NATASHA BAKHT

**T**he meaning of multiculturalism in Canada is multifaceted. For some, multiculturalism is a descriptive term that simply captures the social phenomenon of Canada’s racial, ethnic, cultural, religious, and sexual diversity. As a normative concept, multiculturalism suggests that this diversity is a positive development and that the appropriate policy response is to “accommodate difference” in the public sphere. Legally, this is achieved through provincial and federal human rights codes, employment standards acts, and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.<sup>1</sup> Multiculturalism also refers to the official policy of multiculturalism advanced by the Liberal government in the 1970s and enacted in 1985.<sup>2</sup> Though Canada’s Multiculturalism Act offers little in the way of substantive rights to minorities, it does indicate the government’s symbolic policy preference for integration over assimilation. However, this framework has since changed because Canada’s policy of multiculturalism was criticized for, among other things, its emphasis on the mere “song and dance” aspect of cultural pluralism, its failure to improve the living conditions of many new immigrants, and the promotion of fragmentation rather than a common vision of values for all Canadians.<sup>3</sup> As a result of this criticism, the language of anti-racism has infiltrated discussions of multiculturalism.<sup>4</sup> In 1982, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms entrenched the concept of multiculturalism in the Constitution. Section 27 reads: “This Charter shall be interpreted in a

manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians.”<sup>5</sup> Section 27 does not independently confer any rights, but legal scholars have interpreted it as modifying or adding meaning to the other rights contained elsewhere in the Charter.<sup>6</sup>

However one understands multiculturalism in Canada, one of the shared features of its multiple definitions is diversity – what many would describe as the undisputed success of a multicultural policy. This chapter is a personal reflection on what diversity means in this context, with a particular and serious focus on the “song and dance” aspect of multiculturalism. While multiculturalism encourages cultural diversity, it correspondingly seeks to contain it. This chapter is intimately connected to some of the goals of multiculturalism while still being wary of its consequences, including the classification of individuals and groups into predetermined categories.<sup>7</sup> My experience as an Indian classical and contemporary dancer in Canada has shown me that while multiculturalism has partially furthered artistic production and appreciation in Canada, the corresponding categorization of certain art forms and modes of performance as “multicultural” fetishizes and essentializes cultural difference.<sup>8</sup>

### **Culture or Art?**

I am a South Asian woman and a naturalized Canadian. I came to Canada with my immigrant parents as a young child. I grew up doing the things that many middle-class kids do, including extracurricular activities such as swimming lessons and skating classes. In addition, my parents were keen to ensure that I was connected in some way to Indian culture, so they enrolled me in a south Indian classical dance class focusing on a technique called *bharata natyam*. Neither of my parents is south Indian; they come from the north of India. Thus, they do not speak any of the south Indian languages. When they have traveled to the south of India, they have had to rely on English because Tamil, Kanada, Malayalam, and Telegu are as foreign to them as Mandarin.

Thus, in enrolling me in *bharata natyam* classes, their intention was not so much to preserve a cultural form that had a long history in my family (or indeed even in my north Indian culture). Rather, it was about

MERE "SONG AND DANCE"



PHOTO BY DAVID HOU

Choreographer and Dancer Natasha Bakht in "White Space"

the transfer of an art form that they believed would make me a better developed, more whole person.<sup>9</sup> So, they sent me off to learn dance from Toronto's Dr. Menaka Thakkar, who as it happens, is also a north Indian teaching and performing a south Indian classical dance style. The recurring adoption of south Indian dance forms by north Indians suggests that dancers practicing the art form, both in India and in the diaspora does not reliably indicate a linear, intergenerational transmission of culture, or cultural patrimony, that is uniquely or authentically one's own. Yet I have commonly heard the assumption from white Canadians that young Indian children learn Indian art forms in the diaspora as a way of maintaining cultural traditions. In fact, learning Indian dance, at least in my family, was less about maintaining ties to a community back home, and more the result of a strong connection to the beauty, rigour, and value of the arts in the day-to-day development of a person. My parents enrolled me in Indian dance because this was a form of dance to which they had been exposed, just as many in Canada and elsewhere in the West are exposed to ballet.

Too often, certain forms of artistic pursuit and training are readily conflated with a desire to retain an authentic ethnic heritage, however inaccurate the lineage of this heritage may be. This assumption is steeped in the belief that some cultures produce art while others simply practice culture. Marlene NourbeSe Philip has drawn a distinction between the maintenance of "tradition for tradition's sake in an alien environment" versus an "attempt to build on what ... individual cultures have passed on ... in the possibility of creating something new."<sup>10</sup> Multiculturalism in the arts presupposes that racialized artists or artists working outside of dominant artistic traditions are necessarily replicating the creations of the past rather than innovatively generating fresh artistic works.<sup>11</sup> One of the problems with the rhetoric of multiculturalism is the assumption that we racialized, "outsider" artists are easily categorizable, that as individuals we have some sort of causal connection to "core cultural characteristics,"<sup>12</sup> and thus, that multiculturalism in the arts must necessarily be about cultural preservation. In my case, it was a little more complicated than that.

The benevolent side of the liberal idea of multiculturalism recognizes and celebrates cultural difference by asserting that belonging to another



culture does not necessarily imply inferiority or exclusion, but merely "difference." When my dance teacher, Menaka Thakkar, came to Toronto in the 1970s, she began to make a career for herself as a performer and teacher. She was very successful, receiving critical acclaim for her performances, and her school grew in size with each passing year. She had heard that the provincial and federal governments provided arts funding to dance companies and individuals engaged in artistic practice. When she approached the dance divisions of the various arts councils she was told that, while the dance departments would not be able to fund her, the department of multiculturalism might be willing to receive her application.<sup>13</sup> My dance teacher knew then that multiculturalism was not working for her. She was practicing dance and she wanted to be funded by the departments that supported dance.<sup>14</sup> At that time, only ballet and modern western dance were supported by arts funding.

The message was quite clear: ballet and modern western dance are *bona fide* art forms deserving of arts funding. While dance associated with a different culture might be recognized, it would not be given the status of "real dance." Indeed, the categories of "modern" or "contemporary dance" were implicitly defined to exclude non-western (or integrated) cultural forms, suggesting that "Indian dance" was frozen in time and could never be "contemporary." This colonialist logic divided the realm of art from the realm of culture.<sup>15</sup> Arts councils, not surprisingly, had larger budgets than departments of multiculturalism. If multiculturalism was the "catch-all trough"<sup>16</sup> to which all but Ontario's Anglophone and Francophone artists were expected to apply,<sup>17</sup> then racialized and minority artists were always perceived as separate — read substandard — from artists of the dominant culture. As Philip has noted, the work of Black artists often gets labeled as "folk" or "multicultural," which contributes significantly to the funding problems that Black artists often face.<sup>18</sup>

Much has changed since the 1970s, and most arts councils are now far more inclusive in their funding criteria.<sup>19</sup> These changes are the result of many people — including my dance teacher — having fought long and hard battles to reveal how racist these exclusionary policies were, despite the existence of a multiculturalism policy. However, while arts councils can no longer be criticized for completely excluding minority artists, the frequen-

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PHOTO BY MICHAEL SLOBODJAN

Natasha Bakht in "Still" by Yvonne Coutts

cy and degree to which these artists are funded relative to their majority counterparts is of ongoing concern.<sup>20</sup>

### **The Multicultural Learning Experience and the Onus of Teaching**

My early experiences of performing bharata natyam took place in two kinds of venues. First, local school shows or South Asian community events and second, multicultural festivals or events such as Caravan,<sup>21</sup> Carabram,<sup>22</sup> the CNE, and Expo '86. The first kinds of performances were typically self-produced by dance teachers or local organizations in churches, high school auditoria, or other non-prestigious theatres. The media never covered these events unless they were pursuing some obscure human interest story that rarely had anything to do with the arts. Nonetheless these performances had an important function in that they offered Indian migrants, like my family members, a positive sense of belonging. While I have noted that my parents did not enroll me in bharata natyam to preserve a specific south Indian heritage (that in any case was not our own), such cultural events and public performances were important in a diasporic context. They established a shared "Indian" identity to which Canada's Indian minority community could lay claim, and around which we could form a sense of communal belonging. Adopted practices like bharata natyam could thus become a locus for a sense of "Indianness" that, in the diaspora, developed around practices and in configurations that may not have been shared at "home." Indeed, the kind of shared identity these performances fostered was a necessary response to the multiple experiences of racism that we encountered in the dominant culture.

The second type of venue, the CNEs and Caravans, were places that people came to in order to experience the "food, fun, and dance" of multiculturalism. One would rarely see ballet performed there. As a child, I liked performing at the CNE; I especially liked when the performance was over and I could run around freely with my friends. But as I got older, my attitude changed. When I was young, I was happy to explain the purpose of the red decorative markings on our hands and to point out that not every hand gesture that we made meant something. As I got older, I grew impatient with the questions and began to tire of explaining to wide-eyed white

people what this charming form of dance was. This is the load that multiculturalism insists that some of us carry, while allowing other Canadians to take no responsibility for their own learning. What amazes me when I attend these events today is that the questions have not changed. The burden of educating people about bharata natyam still rests on the shoulders of young women, usually women of colour. Today, when someone asks me “what is bharata natyam?” I feel like saying, “google it.”<sup>23</sup>

In addition to general audiences’ ignorance of bharata natyam, there are mainstream dance critics who assume that their knowledge of specific western dance traditions is easily transferable to all dance. Of a four-day festival of Indian dance in Manhattan in August 2008, one critic wrote of a Canadian dance company:

One issue invariably arises when traditional Indian dances are shown here: *the works seldom illustrate their supposed subjects with anything like the clarity that Western audiences, trained by three centuries of belief in narrative dance drama, usually expect.* You watch a dance that’s gorgeous in detail and architecture, but you can’t see how it’s supposed to be about Krishna and the cow girls (a favorite subject), as the program note tells you. Accompanying words may explain what’s missing, but they aren’t translated.<sup>24</sup>

Amazingly, this critic, savvy in the ways of western dance drama, assumes that his inability to comprehend the unfolding narrative is the result of a pervasive lack of clarity in Indian dance, rather than in his own interpretive deficiency. Thus, even when Indian dance is explained to white audiences, their inability to understand also becomes our responsibility.

### **Predictable Responses to Unpredictable Identities and Artistic Choices**

I believe art is a very important tool with which one can effect change. Artists can provide critical social commentary on the world in which we live. And by creating new configurations, art pushes at the “edge of semantic availability,”<sup>25</sup> enabling new meanings to be imagined, and hence new possibilities for identification. As a medium, dance differs from theatre or po-

etry, for example, where the artist can use words to express her intention. While some dances rely on text to assist in expressing a message, most dance work relies on movement vocabulary and the inherent emotion of the body to express intention. Indeed, many people claim to shy away from dance for fear of "not getting it." One of the challenges then, for a dance artist, is the abstract medium in which we work. To be fair, then, some of the failures of comprehension that I am describing here indicate the challenges of the dance medium generally. However, the formal challenges that dance presents are heightened for those dancers whose practice is not marked as mainstream. For these artists, the failure of the audience to comprehend is also sometimes a failure of imagination, since the cultural projections of audience members and critics are, at times, virtually unshakeable. In response to their confusion, these spectators interpret the dance by resorting to received stereotypes and assumptions about cultural practices. So while many people might avoid dance for fear of not getting it, when it comes to non-dominant forms of dance, critics and audiences frame the shared formal challenges of the medium as problems of cultural comprehension, thus rendering non-dominant practices as unreadable racialized ciphers.

A revealing example of this occurred when I worked with the Shobana Jeyasingh Dance Company, one of the most successful dance companies in Britain. Shobana Jeyasingh is known internationally for her groundbreaking Indian contemporary choreography.<sup>26</sup> From 1995–1999, when I was with the company, its funding from the British Council was the fourth largest among all dance companies in Britain. We toured mainly through the United Kingdom and Europe, but we also traveled to North America. In 1997, we danced at the Joyce Theater in New York as part of the curated program for that year, and were the first-ever South Asian dance company to perform at this prestigious venue.<sup>27</sup> We performed a piece called *Palimpsest*. An archaeological artifact, a palimpsest is a document that has been written on more than once, with the earlier writing completely erased and often still legible. Using the layered metaphor of the palimpsest, Jeyasingh depicted the multiple identities that people carry with them, a theme that was in keeping with her interest in migration. The piece further explored the multiple lenses through which a migrant sees the society in which she lives.<sup>28</sup>

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Marketing material produced by the Shobana Jeyasingh Dance Company described the performance as follows: “Palimpsest — a new piece — captures the resonance of many stories told simultaneously. The present is layered with memory, the public with the private, for a dramatic, sometimes explosive exploration of space, reality and identity.”<sup>29</sup> Despite such a clear articulation of the work’s narrative and conceptual framework, the *New York Times* arts critic described Palimpsest this way: “One might have been looking out a London window onto a street crowded with workers hurrying home, eddying around a sari-clad woman slowly returning from the shops to cook the family dinner.”<sup>30</sup> The dance critic must literally have been looking out the window, since none of the performers wore saris, but rather fitted trousers with matching tops. The critic’s reference to food is an instance of the ubiquitous association of Indian food with Indian dance imagined by many non-Indians.<sup>31</sup> Scenarios such as this demonstrate how some audiences are studiously missing the point. Artistic criticism of this sort has hidden within it the values, assumptions, and dispositions of the dominant culture that both propose and impose a specific identity on “others.”<sup>32</sup>



PHOTO BY DAVID HOU

This piece, “Riaz”, was choreographed by Natasha Bakht for the Menaka Thakkar Dance Company

This phenomenon was similarly illustrated in the critical reception to *Obiter Dictum*, an original dance work I created in 2002. The piece emerged after I had spent three years in law school, immersed in case law. *Obiter Dictum* is a Latin phrase that refers to comments made by a judge in a decision that are not entirely on point. They are “remarks made in passing,”<sup>33</sup> as it were. As a law student, I was fascinated by how some of the judiciary’s most interesting comments were often relegated to the unauthoritative realm of obiter. As a lawyer, I was taught that making a legal argument that relied on obiter was dangerous. As a dancer, I saw a clear relationship between obiter dictum and the kind of dance that I do. I wanted to reposition my marginalized dance practice and centre it. My intention was to make obiter dictum — in this case, Indian contemporary dance — authoritative.

Despite my best efforts, however, the *Globe and Mail*’s dance critic, while appreciative of the look of the piece, wrote that *Obiter Dictum* “could be called anything.”<sup>34</sup> For me, the title and what it signified were key. Yet clearly, my piece remained inaccessible to the critic, who rather than expressing the common complaint about dance (“I don’t get it”), declared the work incoherent. The movement was deemed meaningless or at least unintelligible to a western framework of dance. Ironically, *Obiter Dictum* was relegated to the realm of irrelevance and, as the Latin phrase literally translates, deemed of no great weight.

Thus, even as multiculturalism encourages cultural diversity, it correspondingly seeks to contain it. In a multicultural framework, as Homi Bhabha has observed, other cultures are permitted to coexist so long as they can be located within the appropriate cultural grid.<sup>35</sup> The media responses I have cited here speak poignantly to the conditions under which Indian dance is located as multicultural.<sup>36</sup> Either the work means nothing at all and the body of colour is dehistoricized, or in order to comprehend the work, one must rely on cultural caricature. And little lies in between.

As Sanjoy Roy has argued, the ghettoization of “‘other’ cultures into different compartments does not take into account the traffic which crosses the borders between them, both in historical and social terms.”<sup>37</sup> Individuals and groups in a diverse society are not living in silos. They are influenced by each other, they form alliances with one another, and their artistic

works are fed and transformed by the dynamism of their encounters while living in close urban spaces together. Indeed, the recent history of bharata natyam, its nineteenth-century decline and twentieth-century rejuvenation, is intimately interwoven with the British presence in India.<sup>38</sup> Yet this sociohistorical context, which complicates the landscape of Indian dance, is rarely acknowledged because it obscures the neat, compartmentalized story of multiculturalism. It is much simpler for Indian dance in Canada to be persistently associated with food, Bollywood, or arranged marriage.

## **Conclusion**

The arts play an important role in contesting and complicating categorizations of peoples and their histories. New artistic formations can prefigure new social identities. Emergent social groups that have yet to be positioned within dominant regimes of representation may find points of identification in the emergent meanings articulated in art.<sup>39</sup>

The literal “song and dance” of multiculturalism could have a profound impact on reshaping preconceived notions of difference: “Art can be, and often has been, seminal in changing the way people think and feel ... the arts can be dangerous because they help people to think independently.”<sup>40</sup> However, many artists get co-opted into multiculturalism’s tendency toward cultural fetishization. They unwittingly become the makers of “dances of curry and spices” helping to create, perhaps, the multiple and contradictory demands for “authenticity” that come from within and outside their communities. To impugn such artists is difficult when these dances of curry and spices are what presenters and consumers of dance want to see. Moreover, the reality is that artists are among the most marginalized and poverty-ridden groups in the country, a trend that is aggravated if the artist is racialized.<sup>41</sup> In order to make a viable living, artists often have more than one job; that is, they engage in paid employment beyond their artistic practice. In addition to their artistic practice and other work, artists are typically also involved in several hours a week of art-related administrative work and art-related volunteer work.<sup>42</sup> The tremendous demands on artists and the constant financial and personal sacrifices that they make might explain their decisions to create art that will be presented



(and therefore remunerated) versus art that will be ignored yet that is true to their voices — a dilemma that characterizes art production generally, but that is particularly poignant when it demands that artists inhabit or embody racialized identities in order to make their work legible.

The rhetoric of multiculturalism in Canada has often stifled Indian dance artists, or at least this one. It has not allowed us to be unpredictable because it has insisted upon categorizing us, usually inaccurately. The "Canadian-Canadians," to rely on Eva Mackey's terminology, "sustain dominance by refusing categorization as other than just 'normal' and 'human.'"<sup>43</sup> The rest of us look forward to the day when such a refusal is a possibility for everyone.

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PHOTO BY CYLLA VON TIEDEMANN

## THE STAGE IS NOT WHITE — AND NEITHER IS CANADA

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GEORGE ELLIOTT CLARKE

Last Halloween, 2010, two members of the Campbellford, Ontario, Royal Canadian Legion, staged such a terrifically horrifying, pretend pageant of anti-black racism, that the actors, both white, took First Prize for Best Costume. In this tableau, one man played the part of a Ku Klux Klansman, while the other, his face blackened, acted the role of a soon-to-be-lynched Negro. The controversy over this at-first-presumed-innocent, likely impromptu, community show, soon achieved viral pitch, thanks to the seemingly blatant racism of parading the blackface ‘victim’ on a rope tugged by the white-hooded, proto-lyncher.

Although I appreciate the righteous protests over this offensive, Halloween horror display, much of the vituperation has been vented by urban and urbane commentators, sneering, sophisticatedly, at the gauche antics (and optics) of the hicks and rubes inhabiting the great darkness that pertains just beyond the borders of the Greater Toronto Area. In those outer suburbs, the downtown hip believe, Martin Luther King is even more dead than William Lyon Mackenzie King, and The Queen herself is present only in coin, not cash.

I come to trouble this condescending analysis: Blackface minstrelsy has a long and proud history in the Great White North, no matter whether you speak English or French. It survives, too, in the Kitsch of Sambo lawn jockeys and grinning, straw-hat fishers, as well as in the Confederate flag —

‘Stars and Bars’ — insert in the grills of 18-wheeler transport trucks. Though it would be simplistic to cast every lover of Dixie mementoes as racist, I will posit that such folk have purchase on bucolic, pacific, and sentimental images of American slavery and, specifically, of the happy-go-lucky ‘Darky,’ content to pluck a banjo and chow down on as much fried chicken and watermelon as he or she can steal from a tolerant, good-hearted ‘massa.’ I wager that our Campbellford actors in the faux, lynching comedy were blissfully unconscious of their presentation of Grand Ole Opry folklore, for they likely deemed it good, ol’ Canuck folklore, and, if so, they were right.

Indeed, before the advent of radio, cinema, and television, mass popular entertainment of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries took the form of vaudeville, including travelling American acts. These programmes often featured live depictions of scenes from Harriet Beecher Stowe’s tear-jerking, abolitionist novel, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852), where they would field black-corked minstrels, who would recreate nostalgic scenes of plantation life, complete with banjo and imaginative dances. In their book, *Maritime Music Greats: Fifty Years of Hits and Heartbreak* (1992), Virginia Beaton and Stephen Pederson note that some of Atlantic Canada’s country music stars got their starts, as children, by emulating the blackface minstrels who toured their towns. It is probable that, for many audiences in rural Canada, the first “black people” — in quotation marks — they saw were dancing, singing, charming fools, but all whites in blackface.

(Although Canada does not share the American Republic’s history of bloody pogroms, it does have its own record of racially prompted hangings, which served as a polite equivalent. Although unlawful lynching and lawful hanging were marked as ‘justice’, they were also set forth as entertainment, or even as secular form of the Passion of Christ, or as neo-pagan sacrifice ritual, with the demise of the black subject [scapegoat] serving to expiate the unspoken lust and greed and violence of the white perpetrators.)

Our Campbellford ‘players’ are innocent, presumably, of how thoroughly Canadian their Dixie tableau was, and they may be excused, if we recall the popular writing of Thomas Chandler Haliburton, whose Victorian era political satire makes wanton use of Negro characters as figures of tomfoolery and menace, many of them abused on African-Nova Scotians who Haliburton encountered as a circuit judge. As late June

2008, the town of Windsor, Nova Scotia, was able to issue a tourism brochure whose cover depicted an ex-slave, abjectly kneeling before Haliburton's well-dressed and recoiling Sam Skick character. When the local black community protested this caricature, the first reaction was not unlike that of some of the Campbellford Legionnaires: "Why all this fuss?" Historian Jim Hornby notes that blackface minstrel acts were still a draw in rural Prince Edward Island into the 1980s (Hornby, *Black Islanders*, 1991,) and the Smokey Mokes Minstrels that played to packed houses in Canada, in the mid-1960s, are still remembered fondly (see Sue Carter Film, *Radio Free Northwood*, The Coast [Halifax, NS], November 18, 2010).

Despite such examples, one may be forgiven for thinking that Dixie lore, or even cross burnings (as occurred in Nova Scotia in late February 2010), or fantasy lynching, is the antiquarian interest of country bumpkins. But blackface minstrelsy, in other, sophisticated incarnations, has enjoyed elite support. Check, for instance, the 1992-93 dispute over the Toronto staging of Jerome Kern's and Oscar Hammerstein II's musical, *Show Boat* (1927), at the then-North York Centre for the Performing Arts. According to some black intellectuals, the show constitutes a white fantasy of black subservience and submission, which is, incidentally, exactly how the plot unfolds. Show boat Captain Andy's daughter, Magnolia, a would-be singer, gets her chance when Julie, the mixed-race star, abandons the stage so as to give Magnolia the break. Not only that, but the story begins in Natchez, Mississippi, where, in actual history, a murderous race riot had just unfolded. Yet, there is little reference to black suffering in *Show Boat*. Though the signature Paul Robeson-sung tune, *Ol' Man River*, is presumed to acknowledge African-American struggle, the song lyrics speak to a naïve communism, suitable to the 1920s, emphasizing the oppression of workers. I do not canvass the opposition to *Show Boat* to inveigh against it; rather, I seek to illustrate the ways in which this supposedly progressive show may yet constitute a modern or post-modern example of blackface minstrelsy. Unfortunately, some black protestors who opposed the show on the basis of its allegedly racist and foreign (i.e. American) provenance, soon were themselves accused of anti-Semitism or of advocating censorship, and these rejoinders serves to stymie any serious debate about the mounting of the production. The chief producer

of the show, Garth Drabinsky, of Livent, Inc., to flout the charges of racism, flew renowned African-American literary scholar Henry Louis Gates, Jr., to Toronto, Ontario, to lecture African-Canadian intellectuals on the merits of *Show Boat*, its principal advantage being that it apparently gave African-Americans entrée to Broadway during the Depression.

Gate's intervention did not quell the controversy. Yet the brouhaha served to obscure salient points: 1) It was impossible to deny the nostalgic desire of many to hear *Ol' Man River*, which has been decontextualized and misinterpreted. Thanks to Roberson's bravura reinterpretation of the tune, so that it seems to belong to the Civil Rights Movement, when it really belongs to the Wobblies. Never mind: For many, *Ol' Man River* is Broadway's prelude to King's 1963 "I Have a Dream," speech, and so is just as anthemic and just as sacrosanct, though it is blackface minstrelsy in a social demographic guise. 2) Naturally, any consideration of Canadian issues of class and race was left unaddressed: Still, one must ask, what is the racial history of Canadian mass entertainment? (Meilan Lam's 1997 National Film Board documentary, *Show Girls*, featuring black dancers and singers in Montreal, 1920s-1960s, treats some of this history, but it is a rare effort.) 3) Another unanswered question: How much of the opposition to black intellectual protest against *Show Boat* was driven by a need to contain — or "cover" — black analysis of black experience by suggesting that some white writers or analysts could be responsible and qualified to say 'it' better — or more universally? Note that communications professor Monica Kin Gagnon has discussed "a certain 'white' anxiety around definitions of art making," centering on questions of 'aesthetic quality'" (45). She explains: "It's routinely perceived, I think, that to be accountable to a process of equitable representation necessarily involves a loss of 'quality' work"; however, "this very notion of quality is frequently an alibi for a whole set of exclusions and inclusions that maintain the primacy of a white expert, and ethnocentric notions of artistic production" (Gagnon 45 [13 *Conversations About Art and Cultural Race Politics*, 2002]). Arguably, by forwarding *Show Boat* as a protest against (anti-black) racism, the producers were suggesting that even Walt Disney's *Song of the South* (1946) could be cast in this light. But, in reality, the musical and the movie are virtually mutual white fantasies.

A similar problem arises, however, with Harper Lee's novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960), and its cinematic and stage productions. Every other year, a black parent or two (or three or four) complains that their child or children is being embarrassed and humiliated in one high school or another due to the novel's authenticity in using nigger as dynamically as it was used, historically, given the book's setting. Given that some adolescents tease and bully others, to the point of sexual and verbal harassment, some parents have argued that it would be best to withdraw Lee's novel from the classroom, rather than see their black children traumatized, stigmatized, and marginalized. Occasionally, such requests outrage civil libertarians, who then slam the black parents as benighted, book-banning or book-burning Neanderthals or Nazis (you choose), and shame their offspring as lily-livered and weak-kneed, all because they can't endure a little name-calling. When some black intellectuals have argued that the book need not be banned, but that it should be taught with greater care, and certainly not prescribed as being the only or even the best book on anti-black racism, they also have been critiqued for their alleged backwardness. To me, this dispute centres on the same belief that arose over the reception of *Show Boat*, namely, that 'white' authorship or authority can 'cover' or contain the stories and histories of the 'Coloured' or 'raced' other. Professor Richard Fung registers that, whenever a subject "touches on race, it is important to show the stamp of approval from a disinterested (hence white) authority figure" (47). He also insists, "Whether ethnicity is fetishized or erased, problems arise when critics and curators are insensitive to what the work is about" (Fung 47 [13 *Conversations About Art and Cultural Race Politics*, 2002]). Indeed, few commentators seem to care that Lee's novel is not about poor, black, oppressed Southerners, but is more about how a young white girl and her white, liberal, lawyer father learn to 'do the right thing', despite the prejudices of their white neighbours. For me, the actual silencing of black history and story in the novel is portrayed nicely in the film version (1962), in a terminal scene, wherein Scout's father, Atticus Finch, who has ably defended a black man accused of rape, in a lynchmob society, receives silent support from the segregated blacks present, who stand up as the attorney, played stolidly by Gregory Peck, leaves the courthouse. For me, this scene is about white heroism and black passivity.

But it also means the Harper Lee and/or the filmmaker (Robert Mulligan) are speaking consciously or unconsciously, on behalf of black subjects who are not permitted to speak for themselves. Richard Fung protests: “I see a lot of white experts and white activists speaking out against white leaders on behalf of Third World peoples who are mainly absent or silent” (Fung 127 [13 Conversations, 2002]). This critique applies to the heroes of *To Kill a Mockingbird*: The ‘speak for’; they ‘cover’; they contain. Finally, though I will say squarely that *To Kill a Mockingbird* is a fine book, one whose secure position on high school syllabi is partly due to Boomer nostalgia for the Civil Rights Movement, it cannot be the only text that we may consult for an understanding of *Negrophobia*, just as Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice* cannot be the final statement on European anti-Semitism.

Monica Kin Gagnon reports that, in an age weary of so-called ‘identity politics,’ its “largest” proponents “may well be white supremacists, yet such racial politics are rarely named as such. Imagine calling the identity politics of white supremacy ‘politically correct,’ which would be the logic of political conservatives” (Gagnon 134 [13 Conversations, 2002]). To my mind, some of the defences of *Show Boat* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*, when not issuing from innocent or ignorant yearning for the progressive alliances of the 1930s and 1960s, represent wishes to return ‘Coloured’ critics to the position of being mute, thankful receivers of white saintliness.

In Canada, white supremacy is a phrase that is seldom heard, beyond ‘freak’ news events of a cross-burning here, a blackface minstrel show there. But I’ll agree once again with Richard Fung that “white racism is the bedrock of identity politics of race” (Fung 20 [13 Conversations, 2002]), even here. The art we stage and produce occurs, essentially, in this context. This when Toronto’s Queen of Pudding Music Theatre sought to cast the black female lead for my opera, *Beatrice Chancy* (composed by James Rolfe), the company was informed that no singer of requisite caliber could be found in Canada. In June 1996, then, at a workshop showcase of the music of Act I, an African-American woman played the lead, but was audibly shown up by a certain Measha Gosman — now Bruggergosman — who soon claimed the principal role for herself. Certainly ‘a star was born’ when the opera debuted in 1998-1999. When my second opera, *Québécois: A Jazz Opera* (composed by D.D.Jackson), debuted at the Guelph Jazz Festival



in September 2003, one critic accused me of having tragically ‘hijacked’ Quebec’s symbols, while others said I was racist because none of the work’s star quartet is white. Yet, the purpose of the opera was, in part, to show that Quebec is not a whites-only province, nor is Quebecois identity only available to ‘whites’. Thus, two African-Canadian men marry separately, a Chinese woman and a South Asian Woman, in Quebec City. Moreover, the opera displays and critiques the racism and sexism of these characters: Neither the composer nor myself believed that we needed a ‘white’ Quebecoise(e) to validate these characters’ experience. In my third opera, *Trudeau: Long March/Shining Path* (composed again by D.D.Jackson), I do stage Pierre Elliot Trudeau and his wife, Margaret, as ‘white’. But I put my Trudeau in dialogue with Mao Zedong, Fidel Castro, Nelson Mandela, as well as with a Chinese flautist and a Jewish-Canadian journalist, for I wanted to set the late, great Canadian prime minister in a global context, opposed to the Caucasian-only, provincial-federal context that usually dominates his depictions. Surely, my Trudeau is a multicultural cosmopolitan; others may imagine or anomate a more provincial being.

Richard Fung reminds us, “In Canada the gatekeepers, whether they are knowledgeable and progressive or uninformed and reactionary, are always white” (Fung 48 [13 *Conversations*, 2002]). I will add that this monochromatic stewardship of the arts is unhealthy and impoverishing. We need to be truly avant-garde by, not just embracing diversity, but engaging it, so that we may be more accurate in depicting who we are: Officially bilingual, but polysemous; multiracial, multicultural, and multi-faith. Sharon Fernandez warns, ‘elitism, cronyism and racism continue to be forces in the struggle for plural, cultural symmetry” (Fernandez 73 [13 *Conversations About Art and Cultural Race Politics*, 2002]). We must rid ourselves of these complexes to achieve more democratic and more inclusive arts organizations and programming. If we glance at the U.S., we see, as Richard Fung declares, “a substantial number of Asian, Africans, and Latinos right at the top and all the way through in a way that has moved beyond tokenism” (Fung 78 [13 *Conversations*, 2002]). The difference is that America is a Republic, where all groups and individuals contend for ‘success’ or ‘happiness’ as theoretical equals. But Canada is a Monarchy — an ethnic hierarchy — which, by definition, cannot permit true egalitarianism, but

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rather a more explicit (if mutely upheld) race-class stratification, with Aboriginals and Africans perpetually at the bottom of the society.

Yet, the story and history of Canada cannot begin to be popular, to be about who we really are until we begin to stage the works where Laura Secord is played by an Asian, or we stage stories of ethnic and racial heritage, that is, of struggle and triumph, or defeat and despair. Let us re-imagine the Riel Rebellion as Japanese Canadians facing internment camps; or, we replace the Fathers of Confederation with First Nations representatives, reminding everyone that Confederation was achieved on Aboriginal territory.

There is only one path forward: To reinterpret the classical repertoire from a multicultural perspective; to tell marginalized histories and stories; to reach out to all Canadians by caring enough to relate the struggles of us all to achieve, finally, at last, The Just Society! Can I get an amen?

## **DIVERSIFYING THE BASE OF VALUED KNOWLEDGES**

### **Jazz, Improvisation, and the Cultural Politics of Arts Presentation**

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AJAY HEBLE

I'd like to use my comments today to talk to you about music curation and arts presentation as a form of community-based education and activism. As the Artistic Director of The Guelph Jazz Festival, an arts organization dedicated to presenting innovative jazz and creative improvised music, I've become increasingly aware of the ways in which the choices I make (about what artists to present, in what context, etc.) ought to be understood not simply as programming matters, but as pedagogical acts, acts which frequently question static relations of power, which seek to build alternative visions of community and social cooperation, and which often explicitly set out to challenge taken-for-granted representations. Programming decisions, in short, involve choices that are connected in complex and important ways to broader struggles over resources, identity formation, knowledge production, and power. In this context, festivals might purposefully be considered as opportunities to recast the histories, identities, and epistemologies of diverse (and often marginalized) peoples and to promote counter-narratives that invite and enable an enlargement of the base of valued knowledges.

In today's talk, I'd like us to open up consideration of the extent to which the act of music curation should itself be understood as a form of pedagogical activism. Our programming choices and omissions, as arts presenters, are not neutral expressions of meaning; they inevitably and

necessarily reflect some kind of interest, whether it be racial, sexual, national, and so forth. I want, then, to make the case that as arts presenters we must learn to see our work as being concerned with more than just programming. While it's impossible to predict the exact outcome of this work, or to know in advance whether it will have liberatory effects, it is my belief that the community-based work of cultural institutions (such as arts organizations) can occasion a purposeful disturbance to orthodox habits of response and judgement. As a presenter of improvised music, my work, at least as I see it, is largely about creating new knowledges and opportunities, about generating alternative ways of seeing (and hearing) the world.

This commitment to an activist pedagogical approach to arts presentation as a vital social-purpose enterprise mandates fresh new ways of thinking about programming — approaches that involve a willingness to take risks, to resist orthodoxy, to shake listeners (and to shake ourselves) out of settled habits of response and judgement. As presenters working with improvising musicians, I want to suggest that we are uniquely positioned to cultivate purposeful resources for listening, to provide our audiences with encounters that encourage them to hear the world anew. And at issue, if we take seriously the notion of arts presentation as a form of community-based practice that can and does lead to social change, is the need to create more equitable and non market-driven structures of inclusion. Taking such a challenge seriously, I would contend, means attending rigorously to matters of diversity (of, for example, race, gender, and sexuality), not only in terms of the artists we present, but also at the level of our audience members, our boards of directors, our staff, and even our sponsors. We need to think of the presentation of improvised music, in short, as an opportunity to radicalize public understanding.

In this presentation, I'd like, then, to talk about the role that arts presentation can play as an important part of this process that I'm calling the radicalizing of public understanding. I'll do so by using as my point of departure two related areas of inquiry: programming and audience development. I hope through our conversations today also to encourage us (perhaps during the question period) to reflect on some of the questions the organizers of this town hall have asked us to consider: What are the challenges in promoting cultural pluralism in performing arts organizations?

What needs to be done in building the curatorial capacities of performing arts organizations so that they are more aware of the cultural values of performers from culturally diverse communities?

As I've already noted, our Festival, from its inception, has sought to be somewhat distinct in its artistic vision. Rather than trying to offer something for everyone (which seems to be the programming strategy advanced by many of the other festivals in the region and the country), we have focussed our efforts on the presentation of innovative forms of jazz and creative improvised music both to community audiences and to aficionados who come from far and wide, and on bringing underexposed and often unrecognized artists to our stages. This mandate involves the programming of an art form that has derived primarily out of the experiences and experimentalist impulses of peoples of African descent that now has practitioners and enthusiasts from around the world. Now, in thinking about how my artistic vision and programming mandate has sought to create opportunities and audiences for performances by culturally diverse artists, I'm particularly interested in reflecting on the question of how, as arts presenters, we might best play a role in inter-culturalizing the field<sup>1</sup>, that is in terms of the range and scope of cultural references that the field (in this case, the field of innovative jazz and creative improvised music) takes on. Well, I can tell you that at The Guelph Jazz Festival I've sought to inter-culturalize the field by bringing together ad hoc groupings of artists from different cultures. Much of the music that I program involves real-time improvisational encounters among such artists. Think about what happens in such a context: a group of people who may never have met, who, in many cases, know very little, if anything, about one another, who may not even speak the same language, can create inspired and compelling music. And they can do this on the spot with no explicit prearranged musical direction (remember that they are improvising, and, in many cases, the first time they are meeting is on stage). What makes it work? And what does this tell us? How might such musical examples enable us to think about what it means to negotiate differences and diversity within a community, what it means to be living in a culturally diverse society?

In addition to creating opportunities for these sorts of inter-cultural improvised musical encounters, I've also sought to extend the range and

scope of cultural references in the field of innovative jazz and creative improvised music through the commissioning of new work. Of particular interest in the context of this town hall's focus on cultural pluralism in the arts is a new jazz opera that I commissioned to mark our Festival's 10th anniversary in 2003.

Entitled *Québécoisité*, the opera, with music by D.D. Jackson and a libretto by George Elliott Clarke, explicitly reflects and supports our Festival's continuing efforts to present culturally diverse forms of music both to new audiences and to aficionados. Enlarging on the success of George Elliott Clarke's previous opera, *Beatrice Chancy* — about slavery in Canada — *Québécoisité* was, in part, an attempt to encourage more artists to base creative projects on themes and subjects of more specific and immediate social and cultural relevance to Canadians. *Québécoisité* is a three-act, multicultural romance set in modern-day Quebec City. The plot tells the story of two inter-racial couples whose respective and developing romances expose the inherent minefield of establishing relationships that cross racial and cultural boundaries. The principal characters are Laxmi Bharati, a student architect who was born in Bombay, India; Ovide Rimbaud, an architect originally from Haiti; Colette Chan, a law student whose parents, avid jazz fans, fled the Tien An mien massacre to find refuge in Canada; and jazz pianist Malcolm States, a native Black Nova Scotian currently playing at the jazz club owned by Colette's parents. As the story unfolds, the couples learn to navigate the stormy waters of gender, race and culture in order to establish relationships based on love that are firmly rooted in mutual respect and understanding — relationships strong enough to withstand the trials of opposing parents and clashing cultures. The story, in short, demands involvement from artists who are sensitive to the politics, the pitfalls, and the possibilities of cross-cultural communication. As composer, D.D. Jackson was ideally positioned to take on such a challenge not only because of his own mixed-race background, but also because, as so many of his projects demonstrate, he is a relentless innovator whose work has always sought to find creative and articulate ways to synthesize a diverse range of influences.

The featured vocalists for the opera included Haydain Neale (the dynamic young African-Canadian leader of the popular R&B/acid jazz group JackSOUL — Haydain as many of you will know, passed away last month

after a battle with lung cancer), acclaimed Toronto-based Indian vocalist Kiran Ahluwalia, avant-jazz/ gospel singer Dean Bowman, and New York-based Korean-Canadian experimental jazz vocalist Yoon Choi. The opera was directed by African-Canadian director Colin Taylor.

From my deliberate emphasis on the diverse and hyphenated identities of the production's principals, you'll recognize that, in casting the opera, we deliberately sought to choose artists (many of whom, including the composer and the librettist, had not previously worked together) who enabled us to broaden and diversify the constituency traditionally defined as a jazz audience. Diverse in cultural backgrounds, and also, of course, in the musical contexts for which they are best known — Punjabi folk songs, acid/hip hop jazz, classical music, gospel/roots, alternative rock, avant garde jazz, R&B, creative improvised music, etc. — the opera's unique cast played a key role in helping us reach out to new target audiences with this production: especially more young people, opera fans (who might not otherwise attend our Festival), and audiences associated with the musics of various world-folk traditions. Add to this mix the fact that the libretto was written by African Canadian author George Elliott Clarke, and the result was an explicit broadening of the cultural scope of (and subject matter for) new Canadian opera. And this, of course, is in keeping not only with our nation's stated multicultural objectives, but also with the democratizing impulses that, in its most provocative instances, have shaped so much of the history of jazz and improvised music. The opera was, in short, part of an effort to reflect (and to project) a much desired image of Canadian plurality and diversity across the nation, and, indeed, throughout the world.

I've already said a few words about audience development through my comments about the jazz opera. To that, I would add here that the other most significant aspects of our audience building strategies for the festival have to do with our educational and outreach efforts. The Guelph Jazz Festival is the only jazz festival in Canada to offer an ongoing educational colloquium as part of its regular schedule of events. The colloquium seeks to bring together diverse constituencies and communities of interest by providing a unique educational forum for dialogue and discussion among scholars, musicians, and members of the general public. It has, perhaps more than any other aspect of our event, helped to broaden and diversify

the audiences we've built for the music we present at the festival. Additionally, the Festival has expanded its outreach initiatives with an off-season jazz-in-the-schools program, and, more recently, and in association with the Improvisation, Community, and Social Practice research project, we've partnered with community-based social service organizations to run workshops on improvisation. Through these partnerships, we've put improvising musicians in direct and meaningful contact with marginalized youth in our community. The benefits of such partnerships are many: they serve to break down silos, to bridge gaps, and to enable different kinds of people, and different kinds of organizations to come together, to engage in a productive process of knowledge-exchange. Part of what's at issue here, in fact, is the need to increase and diversify the base of valued knowledges, to enable understanding of a diversity of educational principles and sources of knowledge. Using improvisation as a pedagogical model in these communities, in other words, allows creative practitioners to tap into principles of learning that come out of diverse communities that have not historically been valued. These improvisational workshops have been an important tool in building new and diverse audiences for the music.

The challenges? Well, there's the obvious and ongoing problem of funding (always challenging, but the difficulties are compounded when, as in the case of our festival, we're dealing with non-mainstream forms of artistic expression). There's also the need to unsettle implicit but lingering assumptions among some presenters that the exercise of diversifying may be happening at the expense of tradition and quality (read: mainstream music-making). What kind of paradigm shift would it take, then, to encourage the development of a community of practice for arts organizations to build their knowledge and their capacities in the area of cultural diversity? What kinds of changes in policies and institutions would we need to implement such a vision? The examples I've discussed through my work with The Guelph Jazz Festival are, at least in some measure, offered to you as documents of hope, for they suggest, in their own modest way that – well, yes – it is possible, even for arts organizations presenting avant garde improvised music in small community-based markets, to develop purposeful relationships that will bring about greater understanding of culturally diverse performances and their audiences.



# CREATIVE MOSAICS

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TIM WHALLEY

## **Scarborough Arts**

Tonight I am going to talk about the arts program planning process — as it pertains to a new project recently undertaken by Scarborough Arts. The project I discuss is multidisciplinary, involving performing, visual and other art forms, but its methods are applicable to a variety of community-engaged projects and programs.

To provide some background, I work for a community arts council, a not-for-profit organization that serves Scarborough through arts programs and services. We are not a granting body, but rather develop and implement programs of all artistic disciplines, often working with partners to achieve this. We recently celebrated 30 years since incorporation — growing from a small volunteer-led organization to one of the larger community arts councils in Ontario.

SA programs and services emphasize community engagement, professional development and youth-focused programs geared towards skill development. In order to be as accessible as possible, and respond to service gaps in socially and culturally diverse communities, programming has been brought directly to communities throughout Scarborough. We also support and facilitate existing arts activities and programs in service of the commu-

nity, providing promotional and program support to a number of emerging arts initiatives, with a particular focus on under-served neighbourhoods.

### **Scarborough Demographics/Realities**

The history of Scarborough — as a sparsely populated area that grew considerably in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century as a area dominated by suburban development—has impacted its cultural landscape, activity and infrastructure, but it has developed its own distinctive traits — conditions that provide tremendous opportunity for arts and culture and also obstacles for funding, access to the arts and recognition for artists and arts groups. The planning process for the new project looked to social conditions in Scarborough as a starting point.

Scarborough is among the most diverse communities in Canada. According to the 2006 Census, visible minorities make up 67% of its population, for example, compared with 47% for Toronto as a whole, and 23% for Ontario (2006 Census). Newcomers make up 57% of its population, in contrast to 50% for all of Toronto.

In addition, its rates of child poverty are now above those of the city as a whole. It is also underserved, having, for example, seven of the thirteen Priority Neighbourhoods identified by the City of Toronto and the United Way for their lack of key services. There is an identified lack of after school and in-school programs and arts programming connected with school communities. North-east Scarborough, for example, ranks among the lowest areas of child care available in Toronto.

The Toronto Community Arts Action Plan, adopted by the City in 2008, put forward recommendations following series of community consultations conducted across Toronto. The community arts consultation process revealed key areas that require development/attention: 1) increased funding/resources 2) creating more accessible space for arts 3) raising profile of community arts sector 4) sharing resources. These issues are particularly pronounced in Scarborough.

While these facts are important, it is the discussions that we had with community members and organizations that really informed the project.

## Creative Mosaics Process

SA sought to work with other arts organizations, cultural and community organizations, social service and settlement agencies to create a program that sought to serve service gaps — for newcomers in Scarborough. A sample question — What sorts of issues and obstacles do newcomers and youth in Scarborough face and how can arts programs play a role in serving these needs?

Through the development phase of *Creative Mosaics*, the Scarborough Arts reached out and held roundtable discussions representatives from cultural organizations, grassroots arts and community groups, settlement and social service agencies and other bodies. The organizations and groups involved included Arising Women, Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), Children’s Aid Society of Toronto, South Asian Visual Arts Centre, Kapisanan Philippine Centre for Arts and Culture, ACCESS Employment, Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto, Toronto District School Board — Newcomer Services for Youth, Justice for South Asian Women, Younited Neighbourhoods Festival, Philippine Advocacy Through Arts & Culture and others.

The first stage of the process: looked at more general social needs of newcomers

- Discussion of gaps and needs among newcomers in Scarborough — more generally
- What programs/services could work to serve these needs

The second stage of the process was to provide more of a focus on arts and cultural programs

Focus on needs assessment

- What should be included in the needs assessment?/form/distribution?

The third stage of the process:

- Worked towards defining roles of the collaborative and formalizing the workplan
- Secure resources to support a full-year needs assessment.
- Decision made that resources needed to conduct a full-year needs assessment

### **Creative Mosaics Findings**

The first two stages of the process brought many issues to the fore, some well-known and established and others not so. The process ensured that there was an input from many stakeholders that the needs assessment proposal was informed by discussion and dialogue.

This process revealed a series of findings that informed the work of the Creative Mosaics collaborative.

We were able to arrange the responses into a few categories:

For social and cultural programs and services for newcomers, there is a *need for outreach and greater accessibility*. Organizations are often not visible and immediately accessible and there is a lack of knowledge about resources at the community level. Organizations need to operate at the neighbourhood level. Several participants say arts as a way to outreach, and increase capacity for non-arts organizations to deliver programs. Programs need to serve and reach out to Scarborough's diversity of cultural communities. As with all community arts programs, accessibility was an issue that was discussed – in this case, schools were highlighted as neighbourhood-based and local and sites for potential arts programs. Programs must be free or low cost.

The process revealed that a *need for resources* was pressing. Lack of funding for groups and organizations was, not surprisingly, a huge issue. For artists who have recently settled in Canada, they may have been able to make a living in their home country, but this becomes difficult after settling in Canada – something we also often see at the SAC. There is not only a need to connect artists, groups to infrastructure but to facilitate sharing across communities.

As you know, there are *certain perceptions of the arts* that prevent participation and access. Addressing these perceptions and definitions and investigating ways to overcome them was also seen as an issue. Arts are not seen as a viable career choice, with many parents wanting their children to select a more traditional career path. Definitions and perceptions of the arts differ among communities. Several participants mentioned that the arts need to be presented in ways that can be accessed across cultures and backgrounds.

Participants also discussed some key elements of a potential arts program:

- free space
- develop hubs for information and resources
- programs that express culture and identity
- emphasis on mentorship for youth
- offer free workshops (e.g. on theatre, poetry) in exchange for volunteering

The group identified significant gaps in programs and services involving new Canadians and culturally diverse communities in Scarborough — and how arts programs could be used to serve these needs. These gaps included a lack of venues for cultural programs and events, lack of funding and support, deficiency of networking and resource sharing opportunities and difficulties in gaining recognition and exposure. More generally, the round table discussions, meetings and other exercises revealed a lack of arts programming for youth that reflected cultural identities and diverse cultural practices in what has been identified as the most culturally diverse area in Canada.

### **Creative Mosaics Needs & Capacity Building Assessment**

As of next week, the Creative Mosaics Needs & Capacity-Building Assessment will begin. Involving seven organizations in the collaborative, Creative Mosaics will set out to identify and respond to the needs of newcomers and culturally-diverse communities with the goal of developing

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an intergenerational, youth-focused arts program. The Ontario Trillium Foundation, an agency of the Government of Ontario, has awarded a grant to support the one-year project that will commence in January 2010.

*Creative Mosaics* will involve a comprehensive community needs and capacity building assessment in order to develop a proposal for an arts program that integrates after-school, mentorship and intergenerational components, providing learning opportunities in the arts and an exploration of diverse cultural identities. The *Creative Mosaics* collaborative includes Scarborough Arts, Catholic Cross-Cultural Services, Children's Aid Society of Toronto, Kapisanan Philippine Centre for Arts and Culture, Arising Women, Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCA-SI) and Philippine Advocacy Through Arts and Culture.

*Creative Mosaics* will include engagement with youth, mentors, artists and cultural leaders, organization of community discussions and focus groups, distribution and collection of surveys, outreach, exploration and development of arts program models and writing of the final report.

## **“ABRE A CORTINA DO PASSADO”**

### Embodied Memory and Counter Hegemonic Practice in Postmodern Performance: A Cross-Cultural Study of Diasporic Intercultural Performers in Southern Ontario

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AMANDA GOMIDE PAIXÃO

#### **Introduction**

In this paper, I discuss embodied memory in the creation of postmodern performances that explore processes of identity formation. I define embodied memory, according to Paul Connerton (1989), as images and recollected knowledge of the past that is bodily conveyed and sustained. Although the term postmodern has no precise definition, except as a style that reacts against modernism, what I mean by postmodern performance is an artistic tendency after World War II that is characterized by the rejection of objective truth and universalizing cultural narrative. I therefore define postmodern performances as those that encourage participants to reach their own individual understanding by raising questions rather than attempting to supply answers.

My argument is that embodied memory can and is being used by diasporic performers to change preconceptions of their identity by seizing an opportunity to define themselves. By diasporic performers I am referring to immigrant artists who have left home to look for more and better opportunities. I myself am a diasporic performer, as I am a dancer and choreographer who left my home-country of Brazil after struggling to survive as an artist for four years. This study will focus on my research and artistic

experiences with a specific performance group, The MT Space, that dedicates itself to working with diasporic performers like me. My experience suggests that these immigrant artists, who come from diverse cultures, such as Syria, Lebanon, India, Colombia, Brazil, and China, fuse their traditional training and individual “movement knowledge” (Sklar, 1991) with their current bodily experiences and memories of home in their new land.<sup>1</sup>

I choose to research this performance group in an attempt to contribute to debates around Canada’s efforts to define itself within its multicultural reality. According to the latest census there were 6.7 million people living in the extended Southern Ontario region in 2006 — an increase of 9.2% from the previous ten years. Almost one-half of Canada’s total population growth occurred in this region; and, the main cause for this growth is international immigration. Therefore the questions I am asking have relevance because The MT Space is like a microcosm of Canada’s future.

In this paper I discuss how embodied memory relates to identity formation, cultural politics, and postmodern performance. I am concerned with how social relations, involving authority and power, can impact cultural representation and affect individual identity formation. Toward this end, I examine how scholars and postmodern performers have theorized these ideas and aim to put their views into dialogue.

The central methodologies used in my research project are those of discourse analysis, ethnography, and theoretical exploration. The scholarly writings I analyze are from different fields of inquiry, such as neuroscience, philosophy, critical pedagogy, performance studies, social anthropology, and history. My goal in choosing these fields is to understand their theorization of human cognition, embodiment, power relations, and aesthetics. My ethnographic practices are founded on the premise that human experience is best understood when looked at from many perspectives. For this reason the data collected is gathered from different sources, including informal interviews, and surveys. I also participated in and observed the creative practices and everyday life of The MT Space’s postmodern performers who are focusing their artistic work on issues of immigration and cultural identity. Furthermore, in interpreting my ethnographic data, I endeavour to be self-reflexive about my own cultural conditioning and its influence on my perceptions of other diasporic performers. My theoretical



exploration focuses on conscious and unconscious embodied memory and its potential for critical identity formation as a form of political action. I explore these ideas in these ways in order to integrate and interrelate the ideas of scholars and practitioners and expand our understandings of how cultural identities can and have been negotiated and embodied on stage.

I will discuss how embodied memory can help define an intercultural bodily identity through performance. To do so, I draw on cultural studies sociologist Paul Gilroy’s model of identity in which he goes beyond ethnic, national, and racial absolutism to articulate a contemporary perspective on the hybrid, interactive identities that are generated by any collective sense of belonging.<sup>2</sup> I use this perspective to understand the identity of diasporic performers, which often stretches beyond the experience of their home culture to self-consciously include other cultures that are experienced in their travels and through their creative work. Moreover, I focus on how such complex cultural connections can be inscribed i/on the body through performance.

As mentioned, for my case study, I focus on a physical theatre company based in Kitchener, Ontario, called The Multicultural Theatre Space (The MT Space), their work explores cultural intersections among performers with different backgrounds and styles of practice, developing hybrid forms of performance that aim to intervene in dominant definitions of a homogeneous Canadian identity. This company was founded in 2004 by artistic director Majdi Bou-Matar, a Lebanese actor-director who immigrated to Canada in 2003. Since then, his company has been supported by Ontario Trillium Foundation, Canada Council for the Arts, Ontario Arts Council, and the cities of Kitchener, Waterloo, and Cambridge. About forty-seven artists are listed as members of this company. However, each production only deploys around five to ten performers, on average, depending on the budget and the vision for the project. In the past six years the company has created over seven main-stage productions and four other productions specifically for their program called Theatre for Social Change, which I will discuss later.<sup>3</sup> In 2006, I began collaborating with this program as a creative performer in shows that focused on the barriers that prevent immigrants and cultural minorities from accessing the Canadian Mental Health System.

Working with The MT Space has inspired this research because of its unique creation process. By focusing on bodily movement exploration and collaborative creation, this process enabled me to access my individual memories, and to identify and question hegemonic cultural conditionings about identity. It pushed me to become a more critical thinker and more creative artist.

### **Theories on Memory**

In order to frame my discussion of intercultural identity formation and the role memory, the body, and consciousness can play in this, I will now explore some of the scholarly writing that address these concepts. I will argue that it is through a critical and conscious use of memory that diasporic performers empower themselves to construct alternative identities. Here I will focus on how embodied memory can impact the nature of identity formation, cultural politics, and intercultural post-modern performance. I first discuss memory in relation to the body and identity formation, as a phenomenon that is always in process. Then, I explain that memory is ultimately an individualized manifestation, since it is perceived through each person's life experiences. I also explore the fact that, because experiences can also be shared to some degree between individuals, memory can also occur as a collective manifestation and help define a society. Finally, I focus on the conscious and unconscious aspects of embodied memory, and it is the former form that creates the potential for political action in collective memory making through performance.

#### ***Memory – Identity***

In this section I discuss how memory is an always-changing phenomenon that can impact greatly identity formation. My definition of memory draws upon the writing of philosopher Dan O'Brien, who argues that memory is a means of storing, retaining and recalling knowledge. He states that everything we do, know, or perceive is based on our ability to recall knowledge that we have previously acquired via *a priori* reasoning, testimony, or per-

ception.<sup>4</sup> In these ways, memory is absolutely central to how humans perceive themselves and others.

Scholars of neuroscience have explored the cognitive aspects of identity formation. Their work suggests that human beings, over the course of their lives, accumulate a network of memories that enable them to conceptualize themselves in an ever-evolving way. For example, Joseph LeDoux (1949), in his *Synaptic Self: How Our Brains Become Who We Are*, discusses the functioning of memory as a mechanism of self-awareness. He states that the network of connections between neurons in our brains — the synapses — is shaped by a person’s experiences. The synapses encode and store information about our experiences that is accessible to us through memory.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, memory arises from the synaptic mapping of our experiences.

Another neuroscientist, Antonio Damasio (1944) takes LeDoux’s ideas further, suggesting that the neural basis of the self resides with the continuous reactivation of the individual’s past experience through memory. He points out that it is for this very reason that memory cannot be understood as a constant sameness. In his book *Descartes’ Error* he explains that when remembering, old information is channeled through convergence zones where it connects with new information. These networks of intersection between old and new information are constantly being modified as new information arrives and connects with what is already stored.<sup>6</sup> This means that each time one remembers a single event, for instance, this person in fact, experiences, perceives and understands it differently — in other words, memory is individualized and changeable.

Memory is also a shared experience. Maurice Halbwachs (1877 - 1945), one of the leading scholars on the relationship between memory and its social construction, influenced by a contemporary of his, anthropologist Marcell Mauss (1872 - 1950), argues that memory representations can arise exclusively within a group and society, which he called collective memory.<sup>7</sup> For Halbwachs, memory subsists in an unconscious state but can become conscious when recollected. He argues that memory is not preserved but reconstructed on the basis of the present predominant thoughts of the society, and that individuals always use social frameworks when they remember. Halbwachs’ contribution is to enable the question

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MT Space ensemble performing "Other End of the Line" (from right to left) Eva Labadi, Badig AbouChakra, Nicholas Cumming and Amanda Paixao

of how different groups of people collectively use memory to reconstruct their past in an attempt to define themselves.

On one side there is Damasio with his idea of memory being of an individual nature. On the other, there is Halbwachs suggesting that memory is a social phenomenon. Building on both these scholars, I argue that memory, including embodied memory that is the focus of this study, can be both individualized and shared at a social and cultural level. Such forms of memory can be conscious or unconscious, however.

Henri Bergson (1859 - 1941), a great influential philosopher of the early 20th century, agrees with the point of view that memory is an individualized process. Ironically, his work on memory was written in reaction to the idea that memory is material in nature, after the scientific discovery of the anatomic localization of its operation within the nervous system. He was concerned with the realist and materialist belief that memory possesses the power to define/produce representations in us and of us.

In *Matter and Memory*, Bergson explains that unconscious embodied memory concerns habit, which informs our way of walking or eating, for example. For Bergson, the body stores behavior patterns that are automatic. He defines this kind of embodied memory as a ‘smaller’ memory, which he views as trivial as it is tied to habits and serves a utilitarian purpose. This kind of bodily memory, instead of representing the past, simply replays and submissively repeats it.<sup>8</sup> The other kind of embodied memory observed by Bergson is conscious, which recognizes a past experience as such. He believes that this past experience can be consciously remembered and registered in the present as a representation of the past.

To acknowledge these two types of embodied memory has importance to the issue of critical identity formation through postmodern performance because it raises awareness of how performance creation can be both a conscious and an unconscious process. By identifying habits of movement emanating from unconscious memory, the performer can observe and reflect on the multiple meanings and utilities such movements convey.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, by consciously understanding that a remembrance is a representation of the past, the performer is empowered to actively create multiple versions of an event or story. For these reasons, these two aspects of embodied memory can be extremely useful for the diasporic performer

who wants to challenge stereotypes, norms, and histories that contribute to their identity formation.

### *Memory — Politics*

In the last section, I have explored some ways memory operates and related it to postmodern performance. Now I will engage with historical writings that address some of the political implications of social memory making and how memory can be applied to the creative process of performance. I explore how control of a society's memory is a crucial political issue that helps determine hierarchies of social power. In particular, I draw attention to the ways performance and identity formation can be affected by social memory, which is influenced by hegemonic political power.

Here I would like to discuss how memory is collectively conveyed, transferred, and used to define a group of people. Drawing on the work of Halbwachs, social historian Paul Connerton claims that collective and individual memory is thoroughly interconnected. In his widely quoted book, *How Societies Remember*, Connerton argues that memory is sustained through the transmission of embodied cultural practices in, and as, tradition through ritual performances.<sup>10</sup> However, for more than two millennia, people have relied on disembodied, material sources as evidence of past practices. Such vestiges have been considered more legitimate to reconstruct the past if they involve language, which is the case with written source materials. In this way, the past often gets limited to inscribed source materials, sometimes called inscriptions, rather than embodied memories.

Inscriptions have the possibility of multiple interpretations, however, which can be used as a political strategy. Social historian, Michel Foucault (1929 - 1984), states that victors of a social struggle use their political power to suppress an adversary's version of historical events in favour of their own. This can cause collective memory and continuous tradition to be diminished or dissolved.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm argues that tradition as a form of social memory can be deliberately changed to suit the needs of the day, or even invented to highlight or enhance the importance of a certain institution. In *The Invention Of Tradition*, he

states that a colonial power would often invent a ‘tradition’, which they could use to legitimize their own position through acceptance as a part of an ‘ancient’ practice.<sup>12</sup>

When applying these ideas to my research, what concerns me is how assertions of how social memory can preclude individual and collective perceptions of memory and how performance can enable the expression of counter hegemonic experiences. This is an issue that has been taken up by dance scholar Graziela Rodrigues whose work explores ways of liberating dancers to express their individual memories through movement. She sees formalized dance technique as a hegemonic form of social memory that can stifle and control dancers. She aims to push dancers to ignore movement ideals, to avoid emptiness and dissatisfaction they bring, in order to find their own ways of moving. In this way, Rodrigues suggests, dance artists can assert their own individual memories as counter hegemonic forces through performance.<sup>13</sup>

Overall, given that memory changes over time and is central to human self-perception, identity formation among diasporic postmodern performers can be quite flexible as they accrue varied life experiences in their new home. In the face of a multitude of divergent cultural identities these performers can rely on embodied memories, and over time, construct intercultural identities for themselves as a means of adaptation. They actively shape their own identity rather than clinging to the one given to them at birth, by using interpretation as a political strategy. My research suggests that this is a highly conscious process that questions the hegemonic social construction of memory.

## **Case Study**

### *The MT Space*

The Multicultural Theatre Space (The MT Space) in Kitchener uses memory consciously and bodily to create performance that challenges hegemonic representations of identities — of the performers involved as well as Canadian identity in general. In this section, I delineate the four major aspects of The MT Space that create the conditions for diasporic perform-

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ers to use memory to challenge stereotypes. First I contextualize the performers as diasporic and intercultural individuals, engaging with issues of post-coloniality, globalization and politics of multiculturalism. Second and third, I assert that it is through body-based practices and collective creative collaboration that the performers access their individual embodied memories and negotiate cultural differences. Last I discuss that it is through a conscious use of memory that these diasporic intercultural performers create counter hegemonic stories that will further re/define them and their culture/ethnicity/community. To begin, I describe The MT Space in further detail and explain my relationship with this group, as well as my research process overall.

Founded in 2004 by Lebanese immigrant Majdi Bou-Matar, The MT Space is a physical theatre company based in Kitchener, Ontario, whose mandate is to explore cultural intersections among performers with different backgrounds and styles of practice. Its goal is to develop hybrid forms of performance that will intervene in definitions of Canadian identity. The

PHOTO BY ANDREW WRIGHT - POINT AND SHOT IMAGERY



Badih AbouChakra, Trevor Copp, Jessalyn Broadfoot and Pam Patel in MT Space's production *Body 13*



abbreviation of the company’s name is MT Space, and it references the homophone “empty”, suggesting a space that needs to be filled — in this case with culturally diverse artists. The company does not have a permanent group of performers; it often recruits from artists with whom it has previously worked on a project-by-project basis according to the performers’ suitability to the show’s content. However, this does not mean that performers are selected according to their cultural background, but based instead on their skill and interest in expressing it through physicality. Cultural origin is often not a prerequisite, but it is always central to the creation process at The MT Space, according to Bou-Matar’s major research paper.<sup>14</sup> Besides casting veteran performers, the company occasionally holds open auditions, continually looking for new performers for future projects.

Since 2006, I have been collaborating with The MT Space’s program called Theatre for Social Change on two shows about the barriers that prevent immigrants and cultural minorities from accessing the Canadian Mental Health System, including the system’s limited response to cultural



PHOTO BY DOMINIC GUERTIN

Pam Patel, Brad Cook, Nada Humsi, Trevor Copp, Tawiah McCarthy, Badih AbouChakra and Jessalyn Broadfoot in MT Space’s Body 13

diversity. The productions from this program are usually short twenty-minute plays commissioned by an organization that intends to use performance as a vehicle to discuss specific social and political issues of their choosing. Examples of these productions are ‘Volunteering, Eh!’ (immigrant youth and volunteerism), ‘Across the Veil’ (criminalization and Muslimism), ‘The Other End Of The Line I and II’ (multiculturalism and mental health), and ‘Me Here, Me Happy!’ (immigration and employment issues).

Besides collaborating as a creative performer on such pieces, my research also involved informal interviews and surveys with performers, as well as analysis of performance reviews, scripts and other written materials. In addition, I had the opportunity to watch other The MT Space productions and related rehearsals. Further, I observed and participated in the everyday life of the artists, as I toured to ten cities with some of them. Sometimes I stayed in some of their houses when I was performing and/or rehearsing in Kitchener. All of these experiences helped me to understand how these performers rely on their memories in order to exchange technical skills and collaboratively create cross-culturally.

Based on my experiences since 2006 as a performer, I know that The MT Space creative process usually starts with the performers using their personal experiences to improvise in relation to a specified issue, like mental health, for example. Later, the ideas generated are discussed among the artists involved, as they work toward a deeper understanding of the issues and possible resolutions to conflicts that arise. Based on this process a director composes the scene, and later, some text and music are added by other artists. With ‘The Other End Of The Line I’ production, Bou-Matar counted on the collaboration of local musicians to contribute to the rhythmic and sonorous content of the show and also on graduate students from the School of English and Theatre Studies at University of Guelph to create the final script. In my experience, this whole process is intense, usually about two weeks of eight hours each day. ‘The Other End Of The Line I’ was created during nine days of work from nine AM to five PM. According to informal interviews and surveys with the artists involved in other productions outside the Theatre for Social Change program, the creative process for other The MT Space productions follows these same premises and shares a commitment to social change.

*Diasporic Intercultural Performer*

As described earlier, memory is the way in which we perceive new ideas through accessing old information that is already stored in our bodies, and it is also the way in which we perceive old information through the influence of new ideas that we have acquired since then. I also have explained that this network of connections between ‘old’ and ‘new’ information is an always-changing phenomenon that constantly shapes our experiences and therefore, our identities. Now, I contextualize the performers I am researching as diasporic and intercultural in order to understand how they are interrelating ‘old’ and ‘new’— past and present — through performance. In this way they construct collective memories and through them, a sense of belonging for themselves in order to confront hegemonic perceptions of themselves.

In this paper I am defining intercultural diasporic performers as immigrant artists who have left their homeland in search of a better life and career opportunities and settled in an urban region rich with cultural diversity. In the case of The MT Space, most performers are fairly new immigrants living in Southern Ontario coming from countries other than Canada. Only a few are from other Canadian provinces outside Ontario or from economically rich countries such as United States and England. Nevertheless, there is always a shared experience of searching for better opportunities in a new homeland.

To understand how diasporic performers in Southern Ontario are relying on their memories to change preconceptions of their identity, I will address how post-colonization and globalization processes might have affected their ways of perceiving present and past. Here, I draw on Stuart Hall’s socio-cultural theory of diasporic identity that immigrant people are ‘heterogeneous composites’ that are ‘constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference’. Further, he identifies three major locations in the diaspora: the homeland as the ‘site of the repressed’; the European as the ‘site of colonialist and hegemonic construction of knowledges’; and the “New World” as the ‘site of cultural confrontation and points of new becomings’.<sup>15</sup> Hall’s theories help us understand why diasporic performers might remember their homeland as a

site of hegemonic repression and view their new home as a space where they can and should re-construct who they are.

Besides coming from repressive hegemonic social systems, either global or local, diasporic performers come from distinct cultures all over the world. These diversely cultured bodies meet in the same site/studio to create a performance together by dialoguing and trading memories, which will help define new intercultural identities for themselves. Educator Greg Tanaka defines interculturalism as a way to recognize diversity and to dialogue and build connections with the people around you, by talking about not only the ways in which we are different, but also the ways in which we are the same.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, The MT Space performers, when in the process of creation, deal not only with cultural confrontations, but also find cross-cultural affinities, often in their shared rejection of hegemonic models.

Through intercultural practices that recognize and dialogue across difference, the performers from The MT Space find a way to construct a shared sense of belonging within a wider hegemonic system. Typically, this means they find a way to confront preconceived hegemonic constructions of their identities through creating for themselves an alternative collective memory that will define them as they choose. One of the key features of The MT Space is what makes this possible. Here performers do more than just animate the theatrical material of others; they create the very material they perform — which will be discussed in more depth in a later section. This means that this organization's unique collective creation process, which involves all the performers, ultimately generates new shared memories and thus identities, as well as a powerful sense of connection to and ownership of the material.

### ***Body-Based Practice***

I now discuss how body-based practices that draw upon memory can create intercultural postmodern performance. Based on my experiences with The MT Space, and on statements collected through surveys and informal interviews, I will suggest that performers from The MT Space are using their bodies to reference both individual and collective memories and share cultural practices. Among diasporic performers, the body can be a

**“ABRE A CORTINA DO PASSADO”**



Musicians Gerima Harvey and Priyanka Sinha accompany a performance of “Other End of the Line”

strategic means of cross-cultural communication, given how many different languages they speak. Furthermore, I will argue that although the body can be the medium of socially constructed notions of selfhood, since it is where difference is socially perceived, it can also be the arena in which such ideas can be contested.

As discussed before, embodied memory encompasses non-discursive aspects of culture that are unconsciously received and conveyed, but can be consciously contested and transformed. In *The MT Space*, when performers are asked to create a play they are familiarized with a theme – and before any discussion happens, or a script is settled – they are encouraged to draw upon their own embodied memories and improvise movements in relation to the theme selected. For example, one of the scenes created for ‘*The Other End of The Line I*’ was based on an improvisational exercise that involved each of us pretending to call a mental health professional. The director then asked each performer to explore how the rhythm and intensity of their native verbal language could inform the rest of their body. In the end, we discovered our own way of moving and used it to construct a character and situation distinct from the other performers.

Sometimes still in the early stages, performers are encouraged to kinetically learn other performers’ movement ideas, which are rooted in an individual’s embodied memories, and to evolve and develop them further, until ultimately making them their own. This could be the case when a performer needs to be replaced, as they are asked to learn the sequence of movements created by the other, but to also infuse it with their own style and perspective. This focus on embodied memory allows the performers to be inspired by – and/or to use – their own language of movement and gesture to communicate with other performers and to learn the movement languages of others. This strategy facilitates the creation of culturally hybrid movement sequences that are used to convey a collaboratively created story based on pre-selected themes.

In my experience, this whole process opens an opportunity for dialogue between cultures. By trading movement steeped in memory, it is as if a performer is welcomed to critically question what a culturally different bodily practice would mean to them today, which ultimately re-contextualizes and re-signifies this practice. By exploring ways to infuse different cultur-

ally specific movement with individual perspectives, the performers eventually find their own collective way to tell stories through performance, which in the end contests socially constructed models of self. Specifically how the performers create counter-hegemonic ideas and identities at The MT Space will be discussed in a later section.

### ***Collaborative Creation***

I have already discussed that, because experiences can be shared to some degree between individuals, collective memories can emerge through shared experiences and help to define a society. Here I will discuss that it is through collective creative collaboration that performers access their individual embodied memories and negotiate cultural differences. This process, I explain, enables performers to share experiences that eventually construct new collective memories.

In the words of the director Bou-Matar, “in The MT Space a play is *created* rather than *rehearsed*”. This statement refers to the fact that unlike in other theatre companies, members of The MT Space are more interested in creating a performance together rather than reassembling or rehearsing a preconceived play/script.<sup>17</sup> A statement by one of the performers also evidences this fact:

At the MT Space I experienced a new style which is to improvise the whole play through rehearsals, rather than reading a ready text and recite it we start from an idea and we keep exploring the physicality to express it. We build up our scenes one after the other. The last thing is to fix the rehearsals in a text as a script.

As mentioned, based on a chosen issue, theme, or topic, performers improvise initial ideas for potential scenes, while the director, musicians, writers, and designers all work together. The director can be working on how to develop and push the scenes to their maximum potential and on how to weave all of them together. At the same time, musicians can be working on the rhythm of the scenes, improvising together with the performers as they explore ideas. This is suggested through the statement of

a musician regarding her experience with the creation process in The MT Space:

My creative role for these shows has been to contribute to the emotional context of scenes through the ‘feel’ of my vocal improvisation in conjunction with the acting. I see myself as infusing a certain depth of character to these shows through selective vocal stylings (which require a level of understanding of the content of these shows) and matching them with the emotional tone/tempo of the show.

In this same way, the writers can be taking notes of the lines improvised by the performers to further compile a script. The designers can be developing ideas for the set, props, costume and lights based on what the process suggests.

Another important collaboration comes from the community, as they are often invited to participate by giving feedback on the issues being portrayed during the creative process. Sometimes this is accomplished by an announcement on The MT Space website that invites the community concerned with a particular issue, such as the current spread of terrorism or with its unjust association with Arab and Islamic cultures, to get involved. In one case, the public was asked to help co-write a letter to the suicide-bomber that killed Syrian-American filmmaker Mustafa Akkad. This letter was used for the construction of an imagined dialogue for the play ‘The Last 15 Seconds’. Community engagement was also a goal in ‘Exit Strategy’; Bou-Matar explains:

[...] the choice of this play was very much grounded in the company’s relationship to its community. The play was originally conceived to be developed in progress with the help of members in the community. This, to me, was essential in developing community support for The MT Space in general and *Exit Strategy* in particular.<sup>18</sup>

I have also witnessed the presence of mental health practitioners during the creative process of ‘The Other End Of The Line’, who gave us considerable feedback about the mental health system in Canada.



The process discussed above is less a mosaic of separate contributions by individuals based on their own expertise/knowledge, and more a product of their collective collaboration. The process encompasses multiple networks of individual memories. Because these participants are interacting with each other during the creation process, they become familiar with each others' experiences, and therefore can identify with and/or make analogies with their own experiences. As an example, one of performers from The MT Space states:

[Theatre] is essential to human connection and relationships [...] It is almost like a formalized version of community. When society feels disconnected (which these days is most of the time), they pay to see theatre... or movies, or something that will connect them to humanity in the eyes of another.

This process of collaboration also generates a lot of tensions owing to cultural and political differences and power differentials that arise. Ultimately this enhances the sense of community across these differences because it is through sharing experiences and negotiating differences that performers create a collective memory through performance that articulates this new intercultural diasporic community, as will be discussed in the final section.

### **Counter Hegemonic Practice**

In this closing section, I discuss the use of embodied memory as a potential tool for political action through performance. I argue that it is through a critical and conscious use of memory that performers at The MT Space empower themselves to construct alternative counter-hegemonic identities. This is based on the statements of performing artists from The MT Space, such as,

'Memory' is a collection of thoughts, emotions and connections stored in my mind that get retrieved and aid me during a creative process. I then use these as a cue with my conscious thought and make a choice that seems appropriate in the present context.

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PHOTO BY FRANK CHEN

Pam Patel and Trevor Copp in MT Space's *The Last 15 Seconds*

In addition, based on theories coming from critical education and performance studies, I suggest that performers can draw upon their unconscious by conscious means to create performances that react against hegemonic models.

The assertion of alternative identities, which is what I am suggesting happens in The MT Space performances, calls into question normative models; and, questioning is a crucial part of critical consciousness, a process that examines the embedded assumptions behind ideas. According to postmodern philosophers, it is through understanding how body is inscribed by culture, mediates power, and expresses resistance to normalizing practices, that we free ourselves from objective truth and universalizing narratives. Based on these assumptions, dance educator Isabel Marques states:

By questioning “who, how, what, when” dance takes place in our lives, and in the world we should be able to seek and find other answers, to work on other assumptions, to get rid of universal pre-determined set responses about dance knowledge. I suggest that problematizing in a dance class refers to “mapping” old paths and drawing new roads to think, do, and make dance. By mapping and re-mapping we should also be able to “reshape” ourselves in relation to others.<sup>19</sup>

Here, Marques draws upon Paulo Freire’s ‘critical pedagogy’, which pursues students’ abilities to think critically, and to recognize the relationship between their individual experiences and the social contexts in which they are embedded.

I see The MT Space invested in a creation method that resembles Freire’s critical pedagogy principles. This is because performers in The MT Space are given the opportunity to create the performance, not just passively embody the work of others. In effect, this creates a more realistic impression by fully portraying a reality; and, it provides an opportunity to actually intervene in this reality. Not to my surprise, when asked about the reason they do theatre, or to describe their creative process, the artists at The MT Space answered:

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[Performance] is essential for revealing issues that otherwise would be censored in society. Theatre is power. I think in this modern society it has been wrongly categorized into this thing of entertainment for the elite, or merely just art for “appreciation”.

[...] my work at The MT Space is highly driven by such politics. To me, choosing a play is always motivated by the social and the political conditions of the immediate community(ies) the play is trying to constitute. The process was designed to respond to, and to engage these culturally-diverse communities from its early stages. Discussions with various community groups and social service organizations about shedding light on the refugee experience started long before the idea of the play was originally conceived.

These statements highlight that these artists aim to reshape inherited, colonial, dominant and static forms of identity.

The MT Space’s creation process enables the performer to access past experiences in order to become conscious of them and develop an autobiographical character that will speak for their own identity in the present. This performance company does not silence resistance to socio-constructed habits, but instead critically articulates several distinct cultures and individual perspectives. These articulations are made so these performers and the audience can move forward to comprehend reality through relativism, by understanding that conceptions of truth and moral values are not absolute, but relative to the persons or groups holding them. One of the performers in comparing the experience with The MT Space with other of more ‘conventional’ theatre, states:

In all training for physical theatre [including The MT Space] I felt that I had a greater degree of safety and freedom to perform. There was no right or wrong answer, just exploration, development and explaining your reasoning for your choices. Any training I received [...] in what I deem “conventional” styles of theatre were often in a critical environment, being told I’m not believable enough, or not doing some action correctly. I feel rather negatively toward these acting methods/training as a result. I believe these acting details that [these] [m]ethod acting try to teach are subconscious things that actors do, and instead of trying to attach labels to them, we should focus

on just opening ourselves up so that we become more generous, open and vulnerable on the stage.

This statement shows how this artist when practicing with The MT Space, feels closer to a reality, which is hers and not socially constructed for her based on dualities of right and wrong. I view this critical articulation as very related to current postmodern awareness in performing arts, because the artists involved are not interested in a single representation of reality, but in its apprehension by artists, who deconstruct it, and respond back to it by re-shaping this reality through performance.

I perceive the creation process at The MT Space as counter hegemonic because it understands the body as a zone of critical praxis. It recognizes the primacy of embodied memory in the creation of knowledge, and as generative of discourse. This understanding is essential when dealing with stereotypes and pursuing a critical perspective on social hierarchies in an age of globalization.

By collectively exploring bodily memories, The MT Space searches for diverse perspectives of bodily memories often forgotten, corrupted or repressed. It brings these memories together in order to place them in dialogue. By doing so, the performers situate themselves in relation to hegemonic influences and understand more deeply the nature of their own culture. The MT Space’s performers re-member and critically question in order to re-identify the self and find a new home through the flesh.

## **Conclusion**

Based on what has been discussed in this paper, I summarise that diasporic performers as all human beings, are the combination of their experiences. Their varied memories of these experiences accompany them into the performance studio. Although memory is individual in nature, it can also be shared as people undergo similar experiences, or experiences mediated by the same factors. The interaction of differently cultured bodies in a politicized space, like The MT Space, builds a community and overtime develops a collective memory. Those with political power can, however, homogenize personal experiences if they insist in showing only

one perspective. What makes the work of The MT Space unique is that it honors both the diversity of the perspectives present and their collectivity by not forcing a normative, standardized homogeneous view.

In other contexts, hegemonic forces can impose stereotypes on performances by showing practitioners and audiences a single version of the reality portrayed and a single model for the perfect body, movement, and technique over and over again. Single perspectives often support stereotypes in performance, which devalue difference and can conceal prejudice. The problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that their incompleteness is concealed, and that they devalue differences.

Performance can be used to dispossess and to malign identities through manipulating the way people remember, but it can also be used to empower and to foster autonomy, especially when rejecting a single model of truth. One way to accomplish this is through intercultural postmodern performance that uses embodied memory to enable diasporic performers to consciously use their bodies as an active inscribing agent of their own cultural, political, and social positioning. Such performances can engage with and challenge normative representations of these facets of identity. In this way, intercultural performance can facilitate diasporic performers' creation of collective memories, which can transcend particular cultural memories and work towards cross-cultural connections.

The MT Space's work suggests that diasporic intercultural performers can find their own identity through engaging with different people and cultural practices when critically asking what the appropriation of a foreign bodily practice means to them. For this reason, intercultural performance has enormous potential to open dialogue between cultures when critically re-signifying itself in a different social context.

Intercultural postmodern performance, like The MT Space's work, provides an essential platform to give voice to the important cultural, political, and aesthetic questions of our time. These performers are contributing to the current debates on how cultural identities have been negotiated and embodied. In conclusion, I would like to invite all performers to "abrir a cortina do passado" (open the curtains of the past) and bring to the proscenium the importance of embodied memories for the construction of a collective identity.

## DECONSTRUCTING DANCE

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CHARMAINE HEADLEY

I thought it poignant that the topic for this audience building workshop questioned how our choreographic works fit into Canadian culture today. Then I asked myself what is Canadian Culture? From a dance perspective are we using historical data from the 16<sup>th</sup> Century onward that covers the influence of the French and British colonists, who brought their culture to Canada? Or are we looking deeper into Canadian culture where dance was, and is entrenched in the culture of the First People of Canada? To avoid the perplexity of this question I decided to frame this paper around the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century to present, discussing the culture of Contemporary Canada in the past 25 years.

As one of the co-founding Artistic Directors of COBA (Collective Of Black Artists) I have been part of the evolution of contemporary Canadian dance culture. Founded in 1993 by four aspiring, newly graduated dancers of African descent, looking for performance opportunities, COBA quickly developed from a project-based collective to a performance company under the directorship of BaKari E. Lindsay and me, Charmaine Headley. Dedicated to preserving and presenting the highest calibre of Traditional West African and Caribbean Indigenous dance, as well as creating innovative dance works that reflect our Canadian realities, the leaders mapped “Black Dance” in Canadian culture for the past eighteen years through educational forums and programming in schools and community centres;

dialoguing with funding bodies; workshops and classes, as well as self-presenting an annual home season.

The next question arising is: “What is Black Dance?” Is it dance created by and performed by people of African descent; or is it dance representing the cultural and regional stories and realities of people from and of the African Diaspora, regardless of the ethnicity of the performer? As a multicultural city, how relevant are these stories, and where do they fit within the Canadian culture? As “new Canadians” we recognise our ethnic origins, our heritage through our traditional works. We also acknowledge and embrace our positioning within the fabric of this land through our contemporary creations. If we look at the broad spectrum of dance, from ballet, to hip-hop including traditional works from many cultures, not only in contemporary Canada, but worldwide everyone is creating and performing dances, crossing the “categorised divides” of genres, cultures, and ethnicities. So there is an obvious melting pot of forms, influences, and people.

The influences in my creations are as diverse as the make-up of Toronto. I think, like all choreographers of contemporary works, one’s lived experience speaks through their creativity. The scope of modern and/or contemporary dance is broad. Historically many have drawn on experiences from other cultures; I draw on my lived experiences in dance. My initial dance training started in Barbados where I was exposed to Jazz, modern, ballet, Cuban, Caribbean and African dance. Moving to Toronto to further my dance studies at the School of the Toronto Dance Theatre, I was entrenched in Graham for three years. Over the years I have worked with and studied under master teachers and griots who have dedicated their life to the dissemination of Africanist dance. Therefore vocabulary used within my works can be gleaned from any of these mentioned experiences. Because of the artistic richness of this city we become recognised by our developed styles, but, is it necessary to categorize or classify dance outside of traditional forms? Contemporary dance is an umbrella that fits forms pushed to the physical limits and innovation of existential experiences.

Whether the intended work takes a narrative or abstract form, I first establish what I want to convey and the intent. From this point I work from visualised pictures/scenes, somewhat like slides, mentally evoked



by the theme. My works have a worldview approach thematically, and therefore connects to everyone regardless of their ethnicity or “cultural” background. BaKari E. Lindsay says that his recent contemporary works are the extreme physicality of his tradition, innovating and moving his art forward into the 21st Century. We all tell stories, relay messages, and paint moving pictures through our choreographies while we get our messages across through our art. Through our traditional works Toronto has been introduced to dance from the Sene-Gambia region of West Africa — Mali, Gambia, Guinea and Senegal. These ballets covered themes/stories, of triumphs over illness, death, despair; celebrations of weddings, births and homecomings; as well as initiations into man and woman hood ... similar to those of the European ballets.

There is nothing new under the sun ... as we capture the essence of any theme abstractly or through narratives ... We present our ballets and tell our stories in performance. Like the blood coursing through our veins ... It is all one colour ... establishing the universality of themes. It is our responsibility as community players, artists and presenters alike to dispel myths of inaccessibility or a need for previous knowledge to “understand” works embodying cultural themes. As members of the dance community it is integral that we educate and share with anyone who is curious or interested in dance ... from any aesthetic.

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PHOTO BY NZEGWHUA ANDERSON



Company in Doun Doun Dance



PHOTO BY DAVID HOU

Company in Kumina

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PHOTO BY CARL REID

Company in Rythmes

## BETWEEN GENERATIONS

### Towards Understanding the Difference in Realities and Aspirations of the First and Second Generation of Culturally Diverse Artists

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KEVIN A. ORMSBY

*The crucial distinction for me is not the difference between fact and fiction, but the distinction between fact and truth. Because facts can exist without human intelligence but truth cannot. ~ Toni Morrison*

Herein lies the truth in the form of lived experiences capable of forging an intellectual understanding of similarities, differences, and ultimately: Change. When the opportunity to write an article on this subject arose, I slowly realized that the issues involved in the aspirations of first and second generation of culturally diverse dance artists were multifaceted and bore a direct relationship to the hegemonic ideals of Dance that have brought about this discussion at the Canada dance Festival. “Although the emergence culturally distinct groups and individuals reflects the need for contemporary recognition, the terms and conditions upon which recognition is negotiated are difficult and often unsatisfactory.” (Elizabeth Gertsakis, *An Inconstant Politics: Thinking about the traditional and the contemporary*, pg 2). These unsatisfactory and difficult issues such as race, racism, and the notion of culture — while central to this discussion are not the focus of this paper. These issues do, however, influence how we (culturally diverse artists) participate in our art form in Canada. It is important to relate this discussion to Canadian reality, so that we can clearly understand the complexities of this discussion.

This is necessary because, at times we are included and in other occasions excluded in our relationship with the Arts culture of Canada.

Interestingly enough, in the Canadian context, culture is often illusive and perceived as something else, entirely. Regionalism and ethnicity are key factors in this experience. What is Canadian culture, when the ethnicity of its people is as diverse as its geography? This, hopefully, brings us closer to the idea of culturally diverse dance in relationship to the larger, overall picture of Canadian culture. Who are the “mainstream” artists in the Canadian context? Are they culturally diverse artists? How does this “mainstream” influence the perceptions of, and values placed on, culturally diverse artists? This is an institutional reality in the Canadian psyche: Culturally diverse dance practitioners are seen as separate from the “mainstream” and therefore, relegated to an existence on the periphery of the Arts in Canada — essentially flirting with non-existence. Within this artistic milieu, the sub-culture of culturally diverse artists also has its leadership structures — which are informed by the Canadian artistic environment. I can speak only for the genre of contemporary black dance in which I perform. I do feel, however, that these sentiments are echoed, at least to some degree, by other culturally specific styles of dance — because of our interaction with the Arts in Canada.

### **Similarities in the Experiences of Both Generations**

This is where I choose to begin unearthing correlations. While I do believe there are both similarities and differences between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generations of culturally diverse artists, both share the necessity of having to work at least twice as hard, to make dance a means of their survival, by comparison with most companies who function in the “white” dance genre. Do note that “white”, like “black” dance are oversimplified labels for the many trajectories involved in various dance presentations. Three similarities are, nevertheless, ever present and directly influence how culturally diverse artists, regardless of generation, interact with the Arts as a Canadian cultural phenomenon. They are, marginally, based on a lack of aesthetic understanding of diverse art forms, their funding and infrastructure. “Culture’ refers specifically to the practices and institutions that



PHOTO BY CHRISTOPHER CUSHMAN

Right to Left: Byron Beckford, Gabriella Parson and Kerry-Ann Wright

make meaningful, practices and institutions where aesthetic understanding is communicated.” (Raymond Williams, *Culture*, London, Fontana, 1981) Here, Williams’ intention is to help us understand how culture — through what we do and the institutions we operate — creates meanings that influence how value is placed on cultural products like the Arts. Everyone who performs outside the cultural “norm” is marginalized, based on the assumption that culturally diverse art is solely cultural and therefore has little or no artistic value in the broader perception of Canadian culture. This understanding and reality have influenced, significantly, how culturally diverse artists experience the Arts in Canada.

The value systems (good artistic work, consistency in the field of practice, audience building etc.) placed on culturally diverse artists are sometimes based on what the creators of these values perceive as culturally specific dance. More often than not, these values have little or nothing to do with the realities of culturally diverse companies. This, in turn, leads to limited or no recognition — much less any understanding — of what they do, or present. As may well be imagined, this directly and most often adversely, affects funding for culturally diverse companies who often receive critiques based on traditional standards of consistency. Unfortunately, culturally diverse artists have myriad, varied relationships with the companies with whom they dance. Traditionally, consistency is viewed as being related to the existence of stable organizations — which, in turn, assume the presence of infrastructure, capital and facilities (theatres, studios, offices). For culturally diverse artists, however, consistency is often an issue, because the security of renting facilities is a rare luxury, indeed. Without stable facilities, therefore, how can organizations build consistency in its artists? Stability leads to clear understandings of technical approach, presentation and artistic product — all of which have a direct bearing on how culturally diverse artists and organizations have been, are now and ultimately will be, able to influence the Canadian cultural fabric and more importantly, change the way their art-form is perceived by the bodies that regulate policies, funding and implementation.



## Differences in Aspirations Between the Generations

The similarities in the plights of culturally diverse artists relate to how the generations interact and work with each other and this is the second focus of this paper. Are there differences in how artists aspire to operate in the genre of culturally specific dance? It is my dream that from the issues mentioned here, the generations will recognise the necessity of working together for the overall strengthening of the influence of our art-form on the fabric of Canadian culture. This being said there are, nonetheless, significant differences in the aspirations and ideals of the two generations. These differences are based, first of all, on their artistic experiences within the Canadian society; and secondly, on differing understandings of what is required for this art form to progress. Who comprise the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generations of culturally diverse dance artistes? I see the first generation as the founders, some dancers and choreographers of the companies that, in turn, comprise the artistic map of diverse dance presentations. The second generation consists of those dancers and currently-emerging choreographers, teachers et al., who joined and danced with, the aforementioned companies and helped to build their reputations.

There are clear differences in how the generations experience the Arts in Canada, based on artistic development and their acceptance — or not — by the “mainstream”. These differences are consistently focused upon and thereby, contribute to the ever increasing division between the generations. First-generation artists have related differently to the leading Arts institutions and consequently, believe their struggle for acceptance, respect and appreciation is based on racial grounds — after all, their companies emerged at a time when Arts Councils required a branding based more on cultural specificity. The second generation has lived an experience in the Arts where the focus of Councils changed: they became more accepting of variants in the perception and association of culturally diverse companies. The 2<sup>nd</sup> generation “have also grown up in a much more demographically varied environment than previous generations. Despite some common bonds of shared experience, demographic differences in areas such as gender, class, culture, ethno-cultural background, physical ability, and sexual orientation may be driving different attitudes and behaviours

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PHOTO BY CHRISTOPHER CUSHMAN

Kevin A. Ormsby

in terms of engagement with arts.” (Next Generation of Artistic Leaders and Arts Audience Dialogues, Canada Arts Council, 2007, pg 2) Second generation artists tend to be born here, have experienced living in Canada as Canadians or, as immigrants who came to Canada at an early age. I myself came to Canada at 15 and have practiced my art form in North America ever since. Ask yourselves, at what age did the first generation of culturally diverse artists come to Canada?

How were Canada and the Arts different then? How has this difference influenced their perception of the Arts and how they relate to operating with Arts organizations? Those answers will, undoubtedly, have a direct bearing on how each generation interacts with the Arts in Canada. Dual realities are problematic. When do we, as culturally diverse artists, see our work as culturally specific and when do we not? As a second generation artist, my work is always Canadian: It relates to, and is fuelled by, my interaction with the society in which I live — not that from which I came. I feel that first-generation artists find most of their sources in experiences outside the Canadian context — which, in my mind, further distances their work from a Canadian cultural reality. Many, I am sure, will disagree.

### **Retention and the Breakdown in Communication**

One of the main problems arising in the community is that of access to resources. Spaces are small, limited in number and in some cases, can accommodate only the programs run by their organizations. While most companies are still fighting for resources to be equitable for their Art, the first generation is also dealing with what I call retention. Retention is two-fold: (a) Because of the way they interact with the Arts in Canada, they are holding on to those traditions that inspire their art and companies. (b) They have worked hard to create companies based on cultural aesthetics that were born of the countries and cultures from whence they originated. Aesthetics, however, are constantly changing in contemporary societies. Retention, then, emerges as a mechanism for ensuring the survival of 1<sup>st</sup> generation companies, their founders, artistes and organizations. The idea of retaining identity through dance is very interesting as it is the basis of culturally specific dance and the method through which traditions brought

across oceans and other borders are maintained. But when do these traditions become the basis for change? When does the 1<sup>st</sup> generation involve the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation in these discussions?

There is a breakdown in communication between generations. I find that, generally, the 1<sup>st</sup> generation is, for the most part, reluctant to listen to the opinions of the 2<sup>nd</sup> when it comes to influencing change within their organizations. It's almost as if we have not matched up to their level of artistic experience. In an interview with a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation artist, she expressed her concern for the void in communication when she said, "this void was diminishing the progress of recognition for culturally diverse dance forms, because there was no sense of unity based on common, shared ideals". She alluded to the use of some 2<sup>nd</sup> generation dancers as "pimping" leading to insufficient overall significant gains for the dancers or the art form they practice. She elaborated, saying, many dancers — due to limited outlets for future opportunities and resources in the field — are left with four options: One, staying in this cycle with little or no possibility of upward mobility; Two, forming project-based companies in an already saturated field; Three, teaching; or Four, never dancing again." (Interviewed February 11<sup>th</sup> 2009)

In the "Black" dance genre, we find many companies doing similar work, yet, they work and create in vacuums — influencing only a few, select audiences. Black Canadian dance is not flourishing in mainstream Canadian dance and remains a regional phenomenon. Why? 2<sup>nd</sup> generation artists are often 'locked out' of most discussions about possibilities for the survival of 1<sup>st</sup> generation companies. Questions are rarely asked of us as to how to push the art form forward. The 2<sup>nd</sup> generation have many ideas, as well as the education and artistic experience to generate influence. Ironically, many 2<sup>nd</sup> generation artists started, or had initial training with, companies built by the 1<sup>st</sup> generation. There are some ego-based elements of entitlement, earned notoriety and just plain hard work at play here, and to write this paper without acknowledging this would not push any discussion forward. Many 1<sup>st</sup> generation leaders feel that the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation has not accumulated enough experience, expertise or credibility — nor have they worked as hard as they have, in the field. Experience does not necessarily imply either hard work or expertise. The discussions of Nigel Gibson in *Fanon: The Postcolonial Imagination* sets a precedent

in looking at how leaders are created out of necessity, but might not be totally equipped to lead. Hence, when they do lead, they often do so based on their experiences, not their understanding. Experiences are normally exclusive to an individual. Understandings, however, are inclusive. Gibson quotes Franz Fanon as saying that “development is always problematic but is a long — term human endeavour, involving a mass of people in discussion” (pg 13) It is the apparent unwillingness of 1<sup>st</sup> generation artists to include the 2<sup>nd</sup> generations in discussions about the development of culturally diverse organizations and the art form, that foster the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation’s disillusionment.

### **Reciprocal Learning and Development**

It is worth understanding that the 1<sup>st</sup> generation is still fighting for what they believe in: To see what they have created become a viable art form and ultimately, achieving some Canadian cultural recognition. In the process towards such recognition, however, they are seriously alienating those very same artists that have supported their existence: The 2<sup>nd</sup> generation. A second generation Artistic Director of a smaller company made poignant contributions to this topic, as she attempted to understand both sides of this discussion. She claims that “there needs to be a demystifying of both the artistic and organizational process. No one of the 1<sup>st</sup> generation”, she finds, “is asking important questions about how to move the art form forward in a collective, unified manner. Evaluation of work and its contribution — both to the wider Canadian milieu as well as culturally specific locales — needs to be considered. She comments that, because of the volatile start of most of their companies, the 1<sup>st</sup> generation has worked itself into isolation.

Interestingly, she sees the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation as a group from which the 1<sup>st</sup> generation can harvest suggestions on how to help to ease the growing pains of their companies, as they move into maturity. “The degradation of social responsibility in our communities can no longer continue, if culturally diverse dance is to survive. The future of so many companies — both 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation — depends on cooperation.” (Interviewed February 9<sup>th</sup> 2009) She mentions a powerful concept of reciprocal learning and cooperation as a means to future survival. Clearly, “today and in the future,

relationships, between generations will require new kinds of cooperation to address the economic and social needs coming down the pipeline. New, knowledge-sharing net works must recognize and support the value of working alongside, together, in partnership and with respect for different kinds of experiences — with a mind open to transition on intergenerational terms” (Meagan Andrews, “Intergenerational Ethics”, *Dance Current*, Volume 11, Issue 1, Pg 38).

### **Towards Professional Development**

While the first generations are fighting for accessibility of their companies into the mainstream ideology of dance they are, in most cases, neglecting to nurture the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation — many of whom are now choreographers and teachers of culturally diverse forms. Some kind of reconciliation is needed, since 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generations see the idea of culturally specific dance in different ways. There is limited access for the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation to choreograph, work, etc. within the infrastructures of the 1<sup>st</sup> generation. This inaccessibility is a further alienation of artistic possibilities for both generations. Also, as a dance reviewer for a Toronto-based entertainment magazine, I often hear, and have experienced first-hand, other choreographers coming to mount ballets on companies of the 1<sup>st</sup> generation while 2<sup>nd</sup> generation choreographers execute the steps, stand in the wings, sit in the audience and wait, sometimes impatiently, for that moment when their work can be performed by the dancers and companies with whom, and in which, they have already worked. When will the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation be deemed suitable to choreograph for the companies of 1<sup>st</sup> generation artists? In complete consideration and understanding, I am sensitive to the fact that the 1<sup>st</sup> generation “face ethical questions: when to let loose, what to let go, how to transition, how to share their expertise, how to preserve their legacy, what to do next. Through mentoring, boomers are investing in the future of their profession by developing the talents of prospective young artists and administrative leaders” (Meagan Andrews, “Intergenerational Ethics”, *Dance Current*, Volume 11, Issue 1, Pg 38). In this quote, Andrews provides key considerations for assessing the problems of intergenerational aspirations and realities as she demonstrates the complex issues facing the 1<sup>st</sup> generation.

Mentorship is one rather pertinent suggestion that I am not sure 1<sup>st</sup> generation directors have fully considered. Mentorship offers many possibilities for both 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation artists to achieve mutual benefits. The reality is that, through such possibilities, companies can go on and, perhaps, one day be run or directed by a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation artist that was mentored. Two of the most pivotal examples in my mind is Judith Jamison and the Alvin Ailey Company and our own Karen Kain with the National Ballet of Canada. In fact, without dwelling too much on an American reality, Complexions Director, Desmond Richardson in an April 2006 *LA Times* interview with Lewis Segal stated that “Alvin was very keen on fostering new voices in choreography, in and out of his company.” The sense of accomplishment one receives from an artistic opportunity, or support from more established leaders, is invaluable and a testament to mentorship.

### **Dancing Tradition or Into Contemporaneity**

On the other hand, there are ideological beliefs around the role of tradition and modernity at play. Many companies were formed with the idea of cultural tradition and retention in mind. They have been performing dance forms typical of the countries from which their leaders migrated or, with which they share ancestral connections. Consequently, the 1<sup>st</sup> generation still interacts with the Arts in Canadian society from the standpoint of this reality. It is, after all, the basis of their experience. Choreographic works, technical approach methodology and invention etc. — all have variants in comparison to 2<sup>nd</sup> generation artists. Most 1<sup>st</sup> generation choreographers I have seen work from traditional movements and concepts, then — if necessary — combine other, contemporary elements in their work. How, then, do you include the thoughts of the second generation, with their different cultural experiences and ideas of culture, who may not be able, fully, to relate to the traditional elements?

As a second generation artist, I see cultural retention as a somewhat static understanding of culture — which I see as constantly changing. I see it as relating to my Canadian experience: artistically rich and diverse, involving less tradition and more contemporaneity. The 1<sup>st</sup> generation is still defining cultural meaning for diverse dance by often drawing inspira-

tion from an historic culture that exists outside the Canadian reality. This is often in direct relationship to how they experienced Canada as a new immigrant. 2<sup>nd</sup> generation artists who were born here, or came to Canada at younger ages than their 1<sup>st</sup> generation counterparts have experienced the Arts, for the most part, as they grew through it in Canada, not in other countries. Many create works, or think of works, in social contexts rather than traditional ones. Tradition can become a barrier in cultural development, because the traditions being presented have, themselves, undergone change. What denotes traditional dance when cultures and traditions are constantly evolving? Should not cultural presentations seek to embrace this evolution as well?

### **Conclusion**

There are indeed many complex issues involved in a discussion of the aspirations of first and second generation artists of culturally diverse dance. The wide array of situations relates to the political and social environment of dance in Canada: Race, racism, our ideals surrounding cultural influence, how we (culturally diverse artists) participate in dance, in Canada. Culturally diverse dance practitioners are seen as separate from the mainstream and as such, unwillingly exist on the periphery of the Arts in Canada. We seem, therefore, constantly to be flirting with impending extinction – to become, in other words, an endangered species. Culturally diverse artists, regardless of generation, face marginality because of a lack of understanding of diverse art forms. For this void to be rectified, culturally diverse dance requires stable organizations where the development of clear concepts of technical approaches, presentation and consistent artistic products can be realized. Within this artistic milieu of culturally diverse dance, there are intergenerational inconsistencies that have emerged as a cause for concern. The aforementioned marginalities relate significantly to the intergenerational differences being experienced.

It is fair to note that, the differences in the aspirations and ideals of first and second generation artists are based on artistic experiences. The 1<sup>st</sup> generation, as I have mentioned, are the founders, Artistic Directors, some dancers and choreographers of the companies that present diverse



dance. The second generation comprise mainly dancers, emerging choreographers, and teachers etc. who previously worked, or in some cases still work, in the companies created by the 1<sup>st</sup> generation. There is a sentiment that the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation has accumulated insufficient expertise or credibility, as compared with the 1<sup>st</sup> generation. I argue that experience does not necessarily imply either hard work or expertise. Because the 1<sup>st</sup> generation is still in a continual fight for viability of the art form they represent, an alienation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation is being experienced. There are limited opportunities for the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation to choreograph, work, etc. within the infrastructures of the 1<sup>st</sup> generation. This inaccessibility is increasing the alienation between both generations and thereby, continually limiting their (mutual) artistic possibilities.

Mentorship and increased nurturing through effective communication with the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation have been put forward as a way of initiating reciprocal development for both generations. Such possibilities may enable companies to become more viable, recognized and perhaps, run or directed by 2<sup>nd</sup> generation artists that have received mentorship from the 1<sup>st</sup> generation. The ideological beliefs around the role of the traditional in culturally diverse dance needs to be addressed by both generations. Only then will the role of tradition in culturally diverse dance transcend tradition for its own sake, and evolve into a more balanced mix with contemporary ideologies of dance presentation. The traditional, I have argued as a 2<sup>nd</sup> generation artist, supports a static understanding — one that may very well be impeding the advance of culturally diverse dance into contemporary Canadian artistic culture.

### **Afterthought**

What is culturally diverse dance? All dance created is culturally specific, based on who is creating, dancing or viewing the art form. Aren't we all drawing from diverse dance forms in our artistic presentations? Shouldn't the production of dance as art be more important than who is producing the art or where its impetus or movement vocabulary originates? My challenge is that we take a stand and choose to see dance as a reflection of society — which is as multifaceted as the varied techniques that make the

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dance. I am a Black dance artist. However, as a Black artist, I differ from Black artists in the United States and even those in the Caribbean. I am an artist, a Canadian Black artist. Please note and understand the order of my words. I am, foremost, an artist, influenced by the society in which I live and practice my Art. That society is Canada. The differences and similarities I have presented here are intended as a tool for understanding the complex issues between generations, which influence the reality of culturally diverse artists. Generations are still in flux, constantly evolving, still seeking equitable forms of representation for the work they do, not just in regional locales, but across this vast country we call Home. If one is able to see their form of dance presentation actually influencing the cultural product of a country, then one will feel both a sense of fulfillment and accomplishment second to none.

Difference must be not merely tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic. Only then does the necessity for interdependency become unthreatening...within the interdependency of mutual differences lies the security which enables us to descend into the chaos of knowledge and return with true visions of our future, along with the concomitant power to effect those changes which can bring that future into being. ~ **Audre Lorde**

PHOTO BY CHRISTOPHER CUSHMAN



Kashe promo - the company 2010

# HOW TO INCREASE YOUR AUDIENCE SIZE BY 300% OVERNIGHT

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HELEN YUNG

*If I were junk mail, I would appear in your inbox with variations on the following subject lines:*

*“How to increase your audience size by 300% overnight!”*

*“Make \$100K a year without going to the office!”*

*“Audience diversification! Audience engagement! Results guaranteed!”*

*“HEY! R U THERE?”*

*I am not junk mail but when I was invited to speak at Magnetic North Theatre Festival several years ago on “Presenting Paradigms in Globalized Canada,” I had considered making a number of such far-fetched-sounding promises at the outset of my (brief) talk. I had been asked to speak on “cultural mediation,” and its connection to a new campaign rippling across Canada, known as Culture Days. A national voluntary campaign to promote public participation in arts and culture, Culture Days was making its debut that September 2010, in over 300 communities across the country. At the time, I was the community engagement manager for Culture Days, half of a team of two hired by a volunteer steering committee tasked to beg, borrow and inspire a groundswell of self-organized participation in every province and territory.*



I remember when CPAMO launched with its first multi-year support from the Trillium Foundation. We were out in Scarborough, in a university auditorium. I was live tweeting the plenary session, or else I would have found a wall and knocked my head repeatedly on it. Over and over again, we heard artists and festival directors affirm that audiences love opportunities to dialogue around the art. Audiences want to participate and be involved. This is how we build audiences.

The affirmation was wonderful, but frustrating: My research at Culture Days had aggregated similar information. Knowing as we do that audiences love and enjoy these outreach, educational, audience development, participatory activities, why do we still so often insist on maintaining them as peripheral, ancillary add-ons to our main cultural programs? (To be clear, my frustration was with myself, and rampant conformity within the system, not with the speakers or CPAMO.)



Culture Days 2011 in public spaces

## HOW TO INCREASE YOUR AUDIENCE SIZE BY 300% OVERNIGHT

People make and read content on cellphones, drift on the Internet, shop online and in brick-and-mortar stores, garden, cook and dine out like gourmards, blog, make videos and trouble to photo-document all these forms of self-expression. This is culture. This is how the general population expresses its values, fears, hopes and dreams daily. The whole world, indeed even we arts workers all participate in a vibrant popular culture that seems often unconnected with our Arts and Culture.

A joint initiative between civic leaders, cultural institutions, arts councils, and government, Culture Days was established as an annual national campaign to revitalize relations between the daily lives of Canadians and the arts and cultural scene in our communities.

The Culture Days vision places the typically peripheral outreach, educational, audience development, and participatory arts programs at centre, declaring these interactions the focus and delight of the event. These types of interaction, which include workshops, live demonstrations, artist talks, lectures, classes, guided tours, open rehearsals, Q&As, hands-on experiences, and collaborative art projects, are



PHOTO BY DAN HARPER (MANITOBA)

A Random Act of Culture – 500 volunteer “movers and shakers” dance in unison to Queen’s “We Will Rock You” at the Winnipeg Blue Bomber half-time show during Culture Days 2011

what francophone Canadians call “*la médiation culturelle*” or “cultural mediation.”

As a fairly new term and concept that has made its way over from France, cultural mediation is unfamiliar to most anglophone Canadians.<sup>1</sup> In essence, cultural mediation is a newly-defined (but already often-practiced) field of work devoted to mediating (negotiating, facilitating, creatively supporting) the relationship that the public has with Culture.<sup>2</sup> Much more literature in English can be found on cultural democratization and cultural democracy — two areas of work which cultural mediation gathers under its expansive tent.

Historically, the field of cultural mediation was primarily about cultural democratization — *creating access to cultural products or artifacts*. Museums and galleries offering free admission to the public is an example of a cultural democratization initiative. Free admission means more people are able to access the cultural artifacts housed inside these cultural institutions. Access, however, is defined in the broadest of terms; cultural democratization initiatives need not be limited to reducing economic

PHOTO BY TOM KUO (ONTARIO)



Artist Helen Yung explains to young people how Gulliver the puppet’s voice is created using a computer

barriers. Artist talks or mini lectures, for example, are other examples of cultural democratization projects that help demystify the art and reduce perceived *knowledge* barriers.

Over time, the term cultural mediation broadened to include efforts aimed at fostering cultural democracy. At bottom, *cultural democracy* is about who gets to create or produce Culture. Community arts and participatory arts are projects that foster *cultural democracy*, wherein citizens are encouraged to participate in and express themselves.

In sum, cultural mediation refers to a great range of practices, which are more frequently known in anglophone Canada as outreach, audience development, participatory arts and community arts.

Putting these cultural mediation activities front and centre, the Culture Days vision is spectacular and transformative: Imagine three days when people across the country will find arts and cultural activities available to them everywhere — for free, just around the corner. *If you don't go find it, they will come find you — in the streets or perhaps even at your place of work.* Not only are these activities artistic and cultural, but they are in-



PHOTOS BY TOM KUO (ONTARIO)

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PHOTO BY HELEN YUNG (ONTARIO)

A young man reads an oversized story about a cat - "Wallpaper" by Helen Yung.



teractive and participatory. As an audience-participant, you are promised a friendly, welcoming environment where you will not be bored but engaged. Literally. You will be invited to sing, dance, play, read, act, experiment, explore, design, consider, question, and share.

The question remains, however, if cultural mediation is, in fact, another name for outreach, audience development, participatory arts and community arts — *things that we already do* — what difference does Culture Days make? Why should we care about Culture Days? What can it mean for us?

First, as I've said before, Culture Days takes those outreach, audience development, community engagement, and participatory projects that are typically peripheral add-ons for most organizations, and makes it the focal point of this coast-to-coast-to-coast event. The whole weekend program for Culture Days consists of *only* cultural mediation activities.

What this means for individual artists and cultural workers is that the Culture Days weekend is about real-life interactions with the public. Meeting with the public in small, intimate gatherings to share your studio, your artistic processes, show people what you do and where you do it, and to invite them to speak their minds, enter into an exchange with you — these 1-to-1 interactions create value through communication.

Culture Days is not about another grant, another project, another thing that generates paperwork or requires meetings. Get back to basics.

During Culture Days, take your art to the park, to the streets, to the mall, or into public transit, and dare to have a conversation with a stranger about it.



If you don't want or can't bring your artwork, consider sharing your practice — your knowledge, your approach, your process.

If you're not an artist yourself, create a conversation around your favourite works, or an artist you find interesting.

If you're not a talker, be creative and find some other way to share your gifts with strangers and invite strangers to share their responses with you.

Pick a place that puts you immediately in contact with a public, if an unsuspecting one (so you won't need a marketing budget, and so you really do meet strangers), and make some kind of art thing happen there with them.

While the Culture Days vision is described in the media, for brevity's sake, as a massive arts and culture party, the reality is that the most meaningful, transformative part of Culture Days will happen in thousands, eventually millions of small magical moments on the ground. The heart of Culture Days lies in the 1-to-1 interactions between artists and the public.

When I think of Culture Days, I see light bulbs above people's heads. Thousands of light bulbs lighting up in thought bubbles floating over the people engaged in these 1-to-1 interactions. These light bulbs represent many connections: "oh, I like this," or "oh, I miss this," or "oh here it is!" or "oh what about this?" ...and as well, "oh I never thought..." or "oh wait 'til I tell \_\_\_\_ about this," or just plain old — "oh wow."

Rather than let the event slide by, as artists and culture-makers, take the weekend to do something unexpected. Even if you already do cultural mediation (outreach, audience development, arts education, community arts, or participatory projects) think of what you haven't done and do that.

Consider this:



"Open in Case of a Modern Emergency" messages and small light sculptures - part of a set of marginalia created by artist Helen Yung for Dreamwalker Dance Company's "The Whole Shebang"

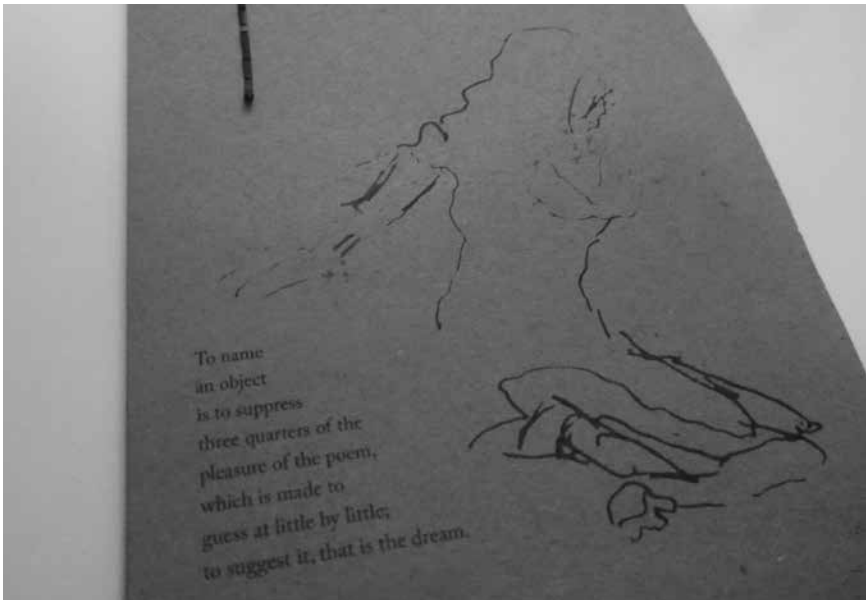
## HOW TO INCREASE YOUR AUDIENCE SIZE BY 300% OVERNIGHT

- *If you really did want new audiences, you would have them by now. Suppose that this were true.*
- *You know where they are. You know where they live, work, and play. Why haven't they seen your work yet?*

In other words:

- Who is this new audience? (Identify them very specifically: where do they live, what do they do, how do they survive, what interests them. List everything you know about them.)
- Why do you want them? (Be honest.)
- What is it about the way you work that prevents you from interacting with this group? (Be brave.)

The greatest barrier to successfully attracting the new audiences that we (claim to) want, I think, is ignorance. We don't know the people that



Marginalia created by artist Helen Yung for "When Aquamarine," a dance duet by Andrea Nann.  
Text by Mallarmé.

we (claim to) want to bring in. Often we don't know who, specifically, we're talking to, in terms of new audiences, and therefore we don't know who didn't show up or why.

This is where my (not really) infamous mall idea comes in.

Research published by the International Council of Shopping Centers estimate that 92% of Canadians over the age of 12 have visited a shopping mall in the past 30 days.<sup>3</sup>

That's a staggering number: 92% of Canadians. OK, in truth, that's dated data from the early 2000s, before online shopping became more prevalent but I still think I am on to something here. There are far more Canadians of diverse socio-economic-cultural backgrounds going to the mall than going to the theatre. (Or the gallery, museum, etc.)

And so, here is my soap-box rally: Let's go to the mall. Whether it's for Culture Days or on any other day, let's go to the mall.

If Art needs audiences and we believe in Art for all, then Art stands to benefit from more artists and arts workers making more trips to the shopping mall.

The easiest way to learn about new potential audiences (AKA people you don't know) is to simply go where they are. You don't need a consultant. You don't need a grant. You don't need permission. Just go where they are, and be the SOHBs (Sensitive Observers of Human Behaviour) that you have trained to be.

This is not a metaphor or a thought experiment. This is a prescription, a mission, a manifesto, a self-help exercise, a set of suggestions I earnestly urge you to follow.

Take a page from the social media playbook: Don't expect people to come to you. (Known as the "build it and they will come" mentality. Hubris.) Go to where they already congregate. Join the conversation. Be authentic. This means, among other things:

- Listen, listen, listen. Listen before you participate. And when you do participate, start small, listen some more, adjust your participation, and keep listening.
- Be a good guest. Don't walk into someone else's party, get on a chair, and invite everyone to leave this party to come to

yours. Be a good guest. Enjoy, appreciate, contribute, follow up afterwards with thanks.

- Make friends. You might not like everyone, but if you don't like anyone, why would you want any of them to come to your party anyway? Why should they be interested in you? What makes you think they should come where you are, show up to appreciate what you do, what you're about, if you can't, if you won't show up to where they are and learn to appreciate them on their terms, on their turf?

Going to the mall is about going back to the original social medium — good old-fashioned *talking to people in real life*. Have conversations with strangers. Observe people's behaviours and interactions. Take notes. Glean insights. In anthropology and marketing, this is called ethnography.

It must be stressed — you really need to talk to people. Don't just talk to them in your head; go have a conversation with mall-goers for real. If that's not enough, pick a spot and try improvising a bit of theatre. Intervene on the lives of strangers with your art. Use your tools as an artist to have a meaningful exchange with the strangers around you. Go home. Go back to the mall the next day, the next week, every week. Listen, watch, chat, and try some more.

Keep listening and keep watching. Do this, and share with one another the results of what happened, what you noticed, how you reacted, and how the mall-goers reacted to you. In other words, do something akin to what Peter Brooks did, famously, in the 1970s: Take your art into the Sahara desert, into Africa, into unknown lands, into the suburbs (where most malls are located) to people who have never heard of you, to people who are used to living without you and whatever it is that you're selling. Cross the waters, stay and be persistent with your efforts. Watch your art, your training, your ego, your ideals, your assumptions, your paradigm fall apart. Be thrilled.

Create your art (and presentation practices) anew in this blinding context of (in)difference.



## PLURALISM IN THE ARTS IN CANADA — A CHANGE IS GONNA COME!

It's been two years since I first presented this idea at Magnetic North and declared the suburbs the terrain of the new avant-garde. In all honesty, I still have not followed my own shopping mall prescription. And my reasons might not be so different from yours...

- I don't like the mall. The air is bad.
- Fluorescent mall lighting gives me a headache. Plus it's bad for my skin.
- I don't need to buy more stuff.
- The mall is far away and public transit takes effort.
- The mall is boring. People are boring. And lonely. If we start chatting, I will have to listen and they might not stop talking. Their stories might make me feel bad. Or I might yawn. That would be rude.
- It'll be embarrassing.
- Nobody cares.
- I will be uncomfortable.



PHOTO BY GABOR GASZTONYI (BRITISH COLUMBIA)

A cake for Culture Days 2011.

- I will make other people feel uncomfortable.
- What will I say? What will I do? How will they react?

It's a jumbled, confused list. And as I go on listing reasons for not doing the very thing I've advised you to do, the truth becomes ever more clear: These objections are precisely the reasons to do it.

At bottom, these objections more or less relate back to one objection: I foresee discomfort. I am scared and feel anxious. The freedom is troubling. It may be very awkward. What if I suck?

To which, I can only berate myself in words borrowed from another writer: "Are you a woman, or a mouse?"<sup>3</sup>

Laziness, cowardice, and conformity are the three flipsides of courage.

Are you a theatre radical, a pioneer, a bold, gutsy artist, or did you train yourself all these years to peter out when it is, in fact, your time? Am I here to make art for my friends only, or do I make art that is vital, that must be witnessed by thousands of people?

The thing is, going to the mall isn't just about getting new audiences. If the prospect scares you and me, it's because deep down we both know it will change our practice. Surely for the better?

The shock, the vulnerability — it will make my work and how I work more interesting, leaner, bolder, and more street-savvy, which is to say, more popular.

Or, at the very least, I will make new friends. And you can usually guilt friends into coming to see your work.

I am determined to take my own advice. This year, I am going to the mall more often.





# CULTURE OF COLLABORATION

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SHAHIN SAYADI

## Introduction

**S**o there's no new money — I am sure you have heard. There's no new money for most of us, but there are so many new artists. We have a choice — you have a choice:

- You can close ranks, hold on to what you have, focus on protecting your assets and resources, cut the fat, do more “audience friendly” work, lobby harder for more funding.

Or

- You can learn to share, multiply your resources, open up to new artists, new ways of working, new voices, new audiences, a bright, colourful future.

Collaboration is the future, it is the only effective way to address shrinking funding and expanding artistic opportunities. Collaboration makes sense — we all have different resources, different skills, different perspectives and when we combine these with a spirit of equality, openness and

respect, we can multiply the talents and abilities of our respective organizations.

To be blunt: you have the space, the equipment, the human and financial resources, the marketing reach and corporate support; and artists like me bring our work, our way of working, the artists that we work with and the audiences that are drawn to our work — we bring change, growth, innovation.

Within the context of rectifying the eurocentricity of professional Canadian performing arts, collaboration is the only way to ensure that our diverse society is reflected on our stages. Did you know that not one culturally diverse theatre company owns its own venue? Did you know that OneLight Theatre is the only culturally diverse professional arts organization east of Montreal? Did you know that at yesterday's CAPACOA Presenter's Session there was not one person of colour? It is not enough to "talk the talk", we must now "walk the walk" of cultural diversity.

This issue is bigger than giving artists a chance to get on mainstream stages; this is about the effect of failing to represent huge portions of Canadian society and experiences in the performing arts. Make no mistake, while some culturally diverse individuals will embrace the status quo and integrate into the "mainstream" artistic ecology, many will not. In denying culturally diverse individuals the basic rights of freedom of expression — which encompasses the right to speak and to listen — we are perpetuating segregation and silencing.

The face of Canada has changed and is continuing to diversify, our stages have not. People need to see themselves, their stories, their voices on stage. Not only does this legitimate their experiences as valued, important, and Canadian, it also serves as a starting point for dialogue, exchange and understanding. Collaboration is a vital way by which we can address the imbalance in our professional arts.

### **My Work and Experiences**

It's not just a difference in colour, or language, or music, my approach to theatre is, at it's very core, philosophically different from the Western style that is central to mainstream Canadian performing arts. The Western

form of story-telling, and thus the Western form of creating work, is about the result, the conclusion. Conversely, the Eastern form and creation model is about the journey.

My approach to theatre is grounded in the Eastern philosophy that shaped my worldview. Process is central to my work and the resources that I need to develop theatre: space, time, access to technical equipment, and, of course, a team of talented artists, designers and technicians, is more than a luxury, it is the core of my artistic vision. I cannot make theatre if I cannot respect the process of bringing the performance from its inception to the stage.

I am the Artistic Director of OneLight Theatre, which was founded in 2002. We are based in Halifax and, occasionally, tour shows nationally and internationally. Our mandate is to develop and produce theatre by employing my personal philosophy of theatre development. We are not mandated to produce Iranian theatre, or multi-cultural theatre, or theatre that explores the experiences of the Canadian identity. Just theatre, my way. Sometimes we do Shakespeare, sometimes Annouil, sometimes Beyzaie.

What makes my work culturally diverse is not the skin colour of the artists on stage, or the nationality of the playwright, what makes my work culturally diverse is that it is founded on a non-Western philosophical approach to art and creation. Still, my work is Canadian, and Nova Scotian, and Haligonian.

Take for example OneLight Theatre's production, *The Veil*, an original adaptation of Masoud Behnoud's novel, *Khanoom*. This play tells the story of a young woman, born into the palace harem of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Iran, who travels to the West, spends several decades in Europe before returning to her homeland. The theme of this play was perspective. Among other things, we explored the often hidden voice of Eastern women in the early 20th century. Imagine — the Russian revolution, Weimar Germany, World War I and II — through the eyes of a Persian woman.

This play was very well received by a very diverse audiences. I feel that one of the reasons for its appeal was that it turned the traditional approach of inter-cultural relationships on its head — in *The Veil*, Eastern culture was the norm and Western culture was the exotic other. As the Queen

Mother said in the play: “Persians are not Parisians — *we* will never be like *them*.” Eastern experience was the norm and Western life was the outsider “other.” Audiences are not afforded this perspective very often in our professional performing arts.

In 2005 and 2006 I was also the Artistic Producer of Nova Scotia’s annual multicultural festival. The circus of the “other”. This event is widely presented as an opportunity to celebrate the diversity of Nova Scotia. To bring together the cultures and heritages that make up the fabric of our community. In reality, for three days white people get to come and see exotic performances and taste new foods and for three days the multi-cultural population gets to see their artists, music, and dance in public, on stage, privileged. It is exceptional because it is the exception. What happens to these artists for the rest of the year?

From this experience (and others) came Prismatic, a national multi-arts festival that showcases and celebrates the work of Canada’s leading Aboriginal and culturally diverse artists. The most recent Prismatic took place in Halifax last month. We had over 20 performances and exhibitions, featuring the work of nearly 100 artists from across Canada in dance, theatre, music, spoken word, visual arts, film and photography. Prismatic drew a total audience of over 5,000 people.

In addition to this there was a three day conference: *Canadian Art: Charting the Self Determination of Aboriginal and Culturally Diverse Artists in Canada through Exploring, Understanding and Re-Imagining*. Almost 100 people came, from seven provinces and one territory. It was the first time in almost 20 years that Aboriginal and culturally diverse artists have come together to discuss our shared experiences and to develop strategies to work together — both professionally and in terms of advocacy.

Prismatic is OneLight Theatre’s way of ensuring that the work of culturally diverse artists is not relegated to multi-cultural festivals, black heritage months, and anti-racism events. Prismatic is shining a light on the very talented, cutting edge work of Canada’s next generation of cultural leaders.

And as much as these artists embody artistic excellence, as much as they represent the future of Canadian arts and culture, they struggle. Even the most established organizations within our community struggle on a

daily basis to have our voices heard and to have meaningful dialogue and engagement with our colleagues in “mainstream” performing arts. Sometimes we feel like you just don’t get it.

This is not about colour-blind casting or outreach. This is about re-dressing the power imbalance, as represented by the ability of mainstream organizations to control access to resources and to define what is Canadian art. It is unacceptable that after seeing *The Veil*, the artistic producer of a national theatre festival wrote me a note that said “Your people must be so proud.” It is unacceptable that in 2010 I was the only person of colour at the recent national meeting of the Performing Arts Alliance — comprising nearly 100 people from across Canada. It is time for real change; and real change means that those with power are going to have to share it with the rest of us.

### **Successful Collaboration**

The most obvious way to share power is to facilitate meaningful collaboration between mainstream and culturally diverse organizations. Successful collaboration has, as its starting point, a shared desire to maximize the resources that each company brings to the table. Collaboration is not charity, it is not an after thought, it is not outreach, it is not mentoring. Collaboration is the joining of equals. If you do not see me as your artistic and professional colleague, collaboration will not work.

Good collaboration is the realization of equitable resource sharing; it gives effect to the social contract that arts organizations make with each other and our communities. We are all publicly funded groups and, as such, we are the trustees of the financial, physical and human resources of our organizations. Collaboration is about providing access to these resources, without limitations or hidden agendas. Ideally, collaboration is about a mutual exchange with the opportunity for growth and development on both sides.

Programs and initiatives that isolate and exoticize culturally diverse artists are a disservice to artists. Without equitable access to our main-stage venues and the resources that they contain, these artists are marked as second-class performers, good enough for culturally-specific events and

second stages, but not for “real” venues. Artists who produce culturally diverse content often find it difficult to be recognized as professional artists in their own right and this is perpetuated by relegating their work to second-class spaces.

Collaboration that fails to bring culturally diverse artists together with mainstream organizations on an equitable basis, does a disservice to the venue. As the artistic director of OneLight Theatre, I develop productions with a team of talented performers, musicians, designers, technicians, and administrators — we explore new technologies, bring new voices to the stage, we experiment with form and content and with language and movement, we take risks, we make mistakes, we make magic. Your organization will benefit as much as mine from a collaborative experience.

## **Conclusion**

I challenge you to re-evaluate your concept of and approach to collaboration. Think of it in terms of giving effect to a social contract to share resources equitably amongst artists in your community, think of it in terms of redistributing power between organizations, think of it in terms of mutual benefit, growth and development, and, importantly, think about it in terms of recognizing that all Canadians need to be seen and heard in our cultural community.

It is 2010. This is not a new discussion. It is time to effect real change. If Canada’s mainstream arts organizations are not seen to be making change possible, significant portions of our population — artists, audiences and sponsors — will turn away from the mainstream and we will work to build our own cultural empires. I don’t think that this is the best solution for Canada, but it will be the only option that is available if we do not gain equitable access to the resources that are held by Canada’s major mainstream arts organizations.

# REFLECTIONS ON EQUITY IN COMMUNITY ARTS RESEARCH

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LEAH BURNS & SKYE LOUIS

## **Abstract**

The Arts and Equity Project was a year-long initiative of the Neighbourhood Arts Network (NAN), a Toronto-based organization that cultivates connections and learning opportunities for people working in community-engaged arts. The project involved interviews and conversations with practitioners; a series of participatory workshops; and the development of a toolkit that shared five key equity principles as well as examples of local community arts organizations putting equity into practice.

This article is written from the perspectives of the two NAN staff members that facilitated the project: Skye Louis (Neighbourhood Arts Network Coordinator) and Leah Burns (Arts & Equity Project Coordinator). We take the five equity principles that emerged from the research and apply them to a critical reflection on the project itself and their roles within it.

## **Introduction**

Sustaining challenging dialogue and sharing critical reflections on practice are essential components of equity in community arts research. This article came about as a result of our on-going discussions about the work we

were doing for the Neighbourhood Arts Network's Arts & Equity Project. Through a series of interviews, consultations and workshops with local arts and social service sector practitioners, the project surfaced a rich and exciting dialogue about how equity intersects with everyday community-engaged practices. Our analysis and reflections on this work helped us to identify five key equity principles that were consistently highlighted by the people who talked with us, worked with us and took part in the process. The five equity principles are: 1) Flexibility and Adaptability, 2) Reflexivity and Relationships, 3) Relevance and Representation, 4) Embeddedness, and 5) Sustainability.

Our aim was to engage in research and create resources that were accessible and practical. Delving into ideas and theorizing — both collectively with project participants and with each other as co-researchers — has been an important part of the process. However, making the research useful within the everyday contexts of practitioners required not only the exploration of ideas, but also their application. The resources we created included both the equity principles and examples that demonstrated how local organizations were putting these principles of equity into practice.

In light of this we felt that it was only appropriate to consider how the Arts and Equity Project itself embodied the five principles of equity that it had surfaced. What kind of example were we setting with this research? How did we take equity into account in relation to our own roles and work? These were questions that we continuously explored with one another, with a handful of colleagues, or with family, friends and partners throughout the project. We reflected on our experiences and then used those reflections to renew, revise, and reframe our process — applying learning as we went.

Our objective with this article is to share some of that behind-the-scenes discussion.

Using a combination of conventional essay writing, story-telling and personal reflections, we begin by examining our motivations. We then explore how the five principles apply to our experience of this community arts research project, and finally we provide a brief summary of what we have learned and our intended next steps for continuing the conversation.



## Motivations

*What motivates you to work with NAN for the community arts sector?*

*What is the Neighbourhood Arts Network's motivation for exploring Arts and Equity?*

### **Skye:**

For me, being part of NAN is very humbling in a great way because there are so many people with so much experience ... it's just really inspiring to be working with people like that, who have so much to offer ... to speak with them and learn from them. And also to see how much variety of experience there is ... One of the things I love about Toronto is that there's so much depth and complexity to how people can go about doing things and how they see things.

One of the very first networking sessions that we had, we were talking to people about what kind of training is out there, and what kinds of training they need. I was talking to someone from Art Starts, and she pointed out that some of that really specific training is missing. She talked about the idea of vicarious trauma and how that had come up for her, and how this was a really important idea for her in the work she was doing; it was an idea she had never been introduced to because it's seen as more of a social work idea. But it was something that she was experiencing because she was dealing with communities and community members who were going through really difficult things. That's one example where artists are dealing with these questions, but they don't have the training for it. It would just be so much easier for artists if we could connect them to that training...and that's why we exist. That's why NAN exists. So we can provide exactly that training, that very specific training that is at the intersection of arts and community engagement. So part of the project was motivated by that, and by trying to understand — what are those questions, those elements of training, where are those gaps? Even just that conversation about vicari-

## PLURALISM IN THE ARTS IN CANADA – A CHANGE IS GONNA COME!

ous trauma showed that she and Art Starts had dealt with that problem; they had gone out and talked to crisis response at the City of Toronto, and they had gotten training, they had found resources that worked for them. So the idea is not just talking to people about their challenges, but also asking how they are handling them. Because so many of these groups are doing that — they're figuring things out themselves. It's not that we need to learn everything and teach it to them. It's that we need to just help people share. There are so many groups that are doing their own thing, and much of it can be shared and can be useful to other people. So the motivation was really to discover, "What are all of those hidden sources of knowledge that other people have, and what is the wisdom that they have collected?"

There are all these situations and questions that come up for artists working in community engagement, and they're not necessarily formally trained in that. And we've found that there are people working in social services that are using the arts but are not necessarily trained in the arts. So there's this really interesting thing happening where there are these two sectors that are starting to bridge but we don't necessarily know that much about each other. And we have a lot that we could learn from each other. With NAN, we are set up to provide opportunities for professional development.

### **Leah:**

Being able to be part of NAN and the Arts and Equity project was really exciting for me because NAN — and this really has a lot to do with Skye and her personality and dedication — is connected to what is happening in the field, following different people and different organizations' practices... what is going on, what people are doing right now. As someone who had been situated in an academic context for quite a few years, even though I have experience as an artist in communities, I really felt "out of it", too removed. For me the most motivating thing is supporting other people. I think that is a really worthy goal and in the academic context even though I may be studying community-engaged

practice or equity, it often doesn't feel like I am living it. So I have all this opportunity to dig for information and explore ideas but who is it for? Who am I doing that exploration with? I believe that learning is about relationships: with ideas, with people, with issues and contexts, and my best learning comes through sharing. NAN really focuses on sharing and creating opportunities for learning through interaction.

I was visiting a community arts class at York University when I initially learned about the Neighbourhood Arts Network. Skye had been invited to introduce NAN to the students and talk a bit about NAN's mandate and activities. At one point in her talk she said, "At NAN we are really interested in a diversity of excellence." When we had a chance for questions I followed up on this statement. I wanted to know more about what she meant or how NAN defined it. Was it about rethinking evaluation or how you determine quality in arts production? Was it a response to how community art is sometimes diminished within more conventional fine arts contexts as a kind of "low art" with less aesthetic value? I remember that she smiled and responded with something like, "Well these are the kinds of conversations we are working at. We don't have a definition but we want to get people to talk about it." I really appreciated that response. It was about openness, finding ways to collaboratively explore questions rather than delivering predetermined answers. That seems to me to be what is at the heart of community-engaged arts practices: not going in with everything already figured out, or with one-size fits all ideas. Which is also crucial in working towards equity. Fairness isn't about sameness or one universal solution or approach; it's more about a range of approaches or definitions suited to each context or individual. So that day I went home and joined NAN's on-line network. I looked through all the postings and stories, joined the list-serve, and created my own profile. And then the next time I saw Skye was at a NAN workshop called "Bridging the Gap." The focus was on making connections between arts initiatives that were happening in the inner suburbs and in the downtown core. What really impressed me about the workshop was the quality of conversation. It was well attended and the people there were all really hungry to connect and talk about the topic. It was also facilitated in a

way that encouraged everyone attending not just to talk about existing barriers but also to brainstorm possible ways of addressing these barriers. I was motivated to work at NAN on the Arts & Equity Project because as someone with experience in the field I knew that often, what I craved the most and didn't get enough of, was time and opportunity to reflect on my experiences and to learn from others. So I wanted to support that. I also knew that equity issues came up again and again working in many contexts and especially in community settings that demand accountability and sensitivity. So NAN seemed well suited to this kind of project because ultimately it is about dialogue and getting people together somehow, talking, working, and sharing, in an open way.

### Applying the 5 Principles

*How does the Arts & Equity project embody the five equity principles?*

*What are your own reflections about how you did or did not engage each principle?*

#### *Flexibility and Adaptability*

*The streetcar jerks to a halt and they trip out of the side doors onto the pavement. A block later they stand looking at the parking lot in front of a low-level brick building. "Well, we're pretty early, so we've got time. Want to get a tea or coffee? I think we should be able to find a place around the corner on Queen Street." "Sounds good, I could use some caffeine and I wouldn't mind warming up a bit." Fifteen minutes later, taking their time, they casually retrace their steps to their original destination. "Have you been here before," Leah asks Skye, "to Manifesto's office I mean? I couldn't find the address on their website." "Yes but it's been a while," Skye says opening the door, "It's a shared space so it houses quite a few organizations." They enter and walk along the hall keeping an eye out for a sign. "Hmm...I think things have moved around." They search a bit more and eventually knock on a door. "Manifesto? No. I think they were here but they moved?" "They*

*moved?!” Skye exclaims and pulls out her phone. After a bit of finagling they manage to track down Manifesto’s new number and call. “Hi, it’s Skye. Yes, Leah and I still want to meet, but we’re at your old location. Hah, I know! Ok, yes. Do we have a pen?” Skye looks at Leah. She nods and grabs one out of her bag with an old receipt to write on. “Yes, ok, just off Spadina ... Oh, you are so close! We could have walked there. So sorry, we’ll be there in the next 15 minutes or so. Does that still work? Great!”*

In addition to exploring how we integrated the principle of flexibility and adaptability it is also important to acknowledge how this principle was extended to us on the part of our project participants and collaborators. Expecting the unexpected is a familiar part of community engagement. We aimed to work as much as possible in ways that could fit into and be shaped around the schedules and interests of the practitioners who participated in the project; but things didn’t always work out as planned. Because of prior relationships with NAN and/or a commitment to the topic project participants were often very flexible (For example: sticking with workshops that went over time and meetings that were rescheduled or longer than planned). We benefitted from the fact that many community-engaged practitioners were used to adapting and accommodating, and we learned that we needed to be as aware of our own limits and capacities as we were of those of our participants. Sometimes this required rethinking timelines and expected outcomes we had set for ourselves.

Maintaining flexibility and adaptability has also required us to be open to what people were telling us, and to maintain the willingness and ability to move beyond the original scope of the project. For instance, we asked people what tools they wanted or new areas they would like to explore but it became clear that what they needed was support with the work they were already doing. It was important to engage in a great deal of critical reflection in order to ensure that the project both stayed on track towards its original goals, and was able to adapt its form to meet the needs that were identified through the research.

Another example of being receptive and acting on what we learned was our choice to change the original research title, ‘Engaging Diverse Com-

munities.’ Participant responses encouraged us to rethink the title and the tokenistic connotations of the word ‘diverse’. Diversity may often be used as a blanket term that people assume can be equated with inclusiveness. Many participants pointed out that just because an organization, or a discipline, or a country may be diverse doesn’t mean that it is equitable. In Canada we sometimes use the mosaic of diversity metaphor to plaster over systemic barriers which are harder to see. We eventually changed the title to ‘Arts & Equity’, which better reflects the project’s focus; it explicitly identifies a social justice orientation.

**Skye:**

We started just by talking to people. It was interesting, the way the project was set up. Because we had to write a grant for it, we had to describe the project and you know — be fairly specific about it: these are the workshops we are going to do, these are the topics. We had to give some shape to it. What they wanted to see was not just one-off workshops, but something like an arc where we were actually linking all these workshops together into something bigger ending up with something like a series. We had to frame it in a way that had this logical progression. So we came up with this idea of structuring it based on the stages in a cycle you might go through when working on a project or a program: planning, outreach, engagement, and evaluation. We used those themes as our structure to talk to all these different groups about the work they were doing. But what we actually found was that the kinds of things people needed help with were not necessarily the kinds of things we had set up in that original structure.

So that was one example where we had set up this framework but people started to tell us, “Actually, this is what’s really important to us” — it was amazing how consistent that was. A lot of different people were telling us the same thing. Not really focusing on stages but more on questions that touched on or overlapped throughout all parts and moments in a process. There were questions that came up again and again such as evaluation and sustainability — keeping projects going,

keeping them funded. Flexibility and adaptability, and the importance of relevance and representation were continuously mentioned as important. That's what came out of the initial interviews, and we pulled those elements out as themes. That was really interesting stuff, and it was much more interesting than the questions we had come up with going into it. What was really surprising was that these things were so basic. It's not necessarily this really complicated thing that people need help with. They may just need help with doing something like evaluation for their programs. There's a lot of knowledge about that and it's not that difficult to communicate but many of the people we are working with just don't have access to that information [or they don't have time to access it].

We had this structure that we had created for the grant. And what we really wanted to do was not what we had originally said we were going to do. We wanted to fulfill those obligations but also be responsive to what people were telling us. It was this balancing act where we set up this framework and then the framework was totally limiting so we had to figure out how to get around it. Even explaining the project to people was difficult because it was an iterative process and such a mouthful. It was hard in the midst of the project to explain what it was, because we didn't really know — I had ideas of where it could go, but it was hard to know where it would end up and what would come out of it.

The fact that the project took place over a year — not super long, but long enough — enabled us to do it in stages where we would hear from people and then develop something in response to what they told us — and then we would do that again. So we would hear from people in the interviews and then we would put together a workshop where we would address some of the things that came up and each workshop informed the next workshop in a similar way.

### *Reflexivity and Relationships*

*It is a warmish, gray day on the back patio at Jimmy's café. Andrew stretches back in his chair. "I think this is really important and it's a*

*conversation that people want to have. Considering the ethics of a community arts process — how does it impact a community? What do artists need to think about? I suppose this all seems familiar to people from a research background,” he says, looking over at Leah. “Well a familiar topic, yes...” she replies, “But it’s always an interesting conversation. You always learn something new. Different contexts and perspectives bring out different ideas and issues. Its always a conversation worth pursuing.” She gestures toward Skye sitting quietly on a chair opposite. “What do you think?” Skye looks pensive, “Well it’s basically connected to critical reflection, isn’t it?” Turning to Andrew, she continues, “That came up as an important theme in the interviews; that and relationships. Reflecting on your own position and your practice and building relationships were things that people identified as key to equity.” Leah nods, “Right — that came up in every single interview. And equity is an ethical issue. The arts aren’t immune to ethical considerations, even when they are personal expressions.” She brushes some crumbs off the table and adds, “But that’s another whole debate that can get pretty tricky.” Andrew leans forward, “Tricky yes, but we need spaces for that. Opportunities to talk about that awkward stuff — what people think, how they are addressing it. Those conversations need to happen.”*

Building relationships with and between community artists and cultural workers is one of NAN’s primary goals. Creating opportunities to talk about ideas and issues together has been the most effective way of doing this. Since the organization’s inception, feedback from NAN members has emphasized how valuable collectively reflecting on practice is.

These group reflections help to raise and respond to concerns, and two key concerns are the need to better integrate critical reflection into personal and organizational practices and the need to expand and strengthen partnerships.

The Arts and Equity project built on many of NAN’s existing relationships and aimed to foster more connections with social service sector organizations who often incorporate arts into their programming or who practice forms of community engagement and utilize professional development resources/practices that could benefit community arts workers and participants.



### **Skye:**

The first workshop was around the idea of critical reflection and motivations for the work. A lot of people were constantly saying why are you here? What are your motivations for doing this? Where are you coming from? And then out of that all these other questions came out. So through the workshops we began building this community of dialogue around it and that was really amazing to see. Because there were different people coming to each workshop but there were also people who were coming back again and again. So by the fourth workshop we were able to get really deeply into some really interesting discussion because there was that continuity. What struck me again and again about the project that was really valuable was that it really felt collective. The workshops — people were really talking and... The first two workshops were more structured and the feedback that we got was that people wanted more space for discussion. There was so much great discussion that we went over time because we didn't want to cut it off. In the third and the fourth workshop we made more space for discussion because that was so valuable. What was so great was that it wasn't just one person at the front of the room, teaching to everybody else. There were multiple directions for the flow of information, so we were all learning from each other.

It's been interesting because the project has connected us to people who we wouldn't have been connected to otherwise. People from the YMCA, etc., were coming to the workshops and weren't necessarily connected to NAN. So it's created a lot of interesting crossover for us. So we were thinking ok we're going to connect to people from social service agencies that have this training and we'll bring them in to share it. But what's happened is that people from social service agencies were coming to the workshops and what's happening is we are developing personal relationships with them and they are developing relationships with other artists who are there. So when we're talking about connecting the two sectors, that's really the most valuable thing we can do, to help people have contacts and get to know people in that field. That

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was a super, super valuable thing — even if we didn't come up with the toolkit, that would be a really valuable thing — and has been. It's been really amazing to see the relationships developing throughout the project and we now have this responsibility to continue those relationships and we have the responsibility to continue connecting with the people who we've brought together. We can't just say, "Ok, project's done — stop thinking about this, stop talking about it." It's really important to me as coordinator to find a way to connect the work we're doing to the work we've been doing for the last year. This pushes me to find a way to shape some of the workshops and things that we have coming up in the next year — not just to shape the workshops but to shape the priorities for the network. Because this is what people are telling us is important to them, and that's really amazing and we should make space for it. For me, by creating these relationships with people and by starting this conversation, we have some kind of responsibility to bring that back to the organization and to shape the strategic directions of the organization as a whole.

### **Leah:**

In addition to making space for research participants to engage in critical reflection it was also really important for us to critically consider ourselves. What did we bring? How did who we are inform the project process? As the person hired to be the project coordinator I had extensive experience as an artist and administrator in community arts practices in Toronto, Vancouver, and Australia. I also had a background in research within both academic and community contexts. My studies as a graduate student in Toronto have focused on community-engaged arts and I have always emphasized my practice and connections to the field as integral to my learning in the university. My connection to the University of Toronto made it possible for us to secure audio-visual equipment and a free space in which to hold the workshops and to meet on a regular basis. The fact that I had been studying community art practice and community arts education also helped to inform my understanding of the field and has given me the opportunity to critically reflect on practice in a sustained way. It is a privileged position that is

often not as readily available to community artists and cultural workers outside of the university. And at the same time it is also a challenging position because it requires a lot of isolation and self-motivation that can be difficult to sustain or to find meaning in especially if you like to work collaboratively.

My background provided certain kinds of access but it also imposed certain limitations. Unlike Skye, I didn't grow up in Toronto. In fact I moved here to go to graduate school in 2000 and I feel that as a result some of my experience of the city has been circumscribed by post-secondary contexts. There is some irony in going to university to reflect on community collaboration and the arts because the structure of the university in many ways creates barriers to that kind of work. I don't completely identify with Toronto as my hometown. I mean I have lived here now for 12 years but I don't connect the city with large parts of my lived history. What it means to grow up in this neighbourhood, say, or the dynamics of being a student from this high school rather than that high school. I have learned probably as much or more about the city from listening to other people's stories as I have from my own experiences within it. And my Toronto networks, built as an adult already working in a particular field, are narrower than they might be if had I lived here growing up. So, all that to say, my own identity is something I am reflecting on all the time.

My whiteness is another issue, another layer of privilege that both facilitates and limits my ability to support others or address equity — so important, but not talked about enough. During the initial stages of the project as I was just beginning to make connections and talk to people, my whiteness often felt like a suit or a bubble that shielded me and silenced or diluted difficult questions about race and representation and my role as an equity project coordinator. This is where the reflexivity piece is so important, critically reflecting on self. It is my responsibility to pierce that bubble, posing the difficult questions myself, and not waiting to address them only if I am challenged. But figuring out how to do that appropriately, so that I am not somehow painting myself as heroic simply for acknowledging my privilege or assuming that awareness equals understanding, is an on-going learning process. It's not

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about how do I use my agency or power for good but how do I work to redistribute power so it is not so inequitable, so that agency is more accessible to everyone? During the project it was important to pursue those conversations with people over time during workshops, interviews and meetings, not all at once as if they could be named and thus vanquished. Moving this conversation into different settings is challenging and that's where the arts sector can often really benefit from partnerships with people working in other disciplines like education, health, social services and social change initiatives, where the discussion is often more explicit and where there are often more resources for learning about and addressing the barriers that privilege can pose. From my perspective we often come at equity backwards assuming that non-dominant identities, social locations or approaches raise the specter of barriers; but really, it is privilege that has built those barriers, that has entrenched them, and created systems that privilege dominant ways of being, knowing and working.

### *Relevance and Representation*

Questions around representation often ask: Who is at the table? Whose voices are missing, and why? When exploring issues of equity, we naturally strive to bring a broad range of voices and experiences to the table. Throughout the project, it was evident that many folks were missing from the conversation; because the project was managed by NAN and the Toronto Arts Foundation (TAF) it was NAN and TAF's existing networks and connections that came to the table first. Whoever is at the centre begins to define the conversation. How do we ensure broad representation without being tokenistic? How can we represent everyone fairly? How do we expand the conversation and make a safe space for the voices that are underrepresented? These are ongoing questions that do not always have simple answers.

Some groups may not be at the table because they are wrestling with crises that are the result of years of systemic inequity. It's not enough for us to identify who is missing from the table — we need to find a way to bring the table to them. Two of the important ideas that came out of the interviews were that when creating projects or initiatives the best way to

“outreach” or include groups that you have not yet connected with were: first to reflect on who you and your organization are (identities, perceptions, methods of working, motivations) and second to invest time in developing relationships, mutual understanding and knowledge prior to implementing a project. Spend time in and with the communities that you want to include. They need to get to know you just as much as you need to get to know them. Do they want to be a part of your table? Would they ask you to theirs? What conditions are necessary to create a safe and inclusive climate so that when people are there they feel they can and want to participate?

We used consultation as a major strategy to guide the development of the research. The original interviews were aligned with several pre-determined categories, and to some extent this shaped the interview questions and responses. The workshops allowed us to zero in more closely on the more relevant issues, and created a second opportunity to consult with community members. Because the interviews and workshops took place over the course of several months, it allowed us to develop the project in an iterative way — moving in closer and closer to the most relevant topics in consultation with participants.

### **Leah:**

Thinking about relevance and representation in the project obviously what comes up is who was a part of it, who participated, whose perspectives were included. But Skye and I talked about how it wasn't just a question of “who was there and what was discussed” it was also “how were they engaged”. I have written about the need for more inclusive representation in the arts and research before and for me an essential part of it is creating spaces where diverse voices are invited not just to join the conversation but also to question and redefine it. I think we did a lot of work trying to get to that kind of space within the interviews, workshops, and the development of the toolkits.

The interview process was not rigidly structured so, although there were some thematic questions, the interviews were more like conversations.

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It was important to make space so that the people we were speaking to could pursue directions or ideas that emerged for them in relation to the themes. As an interviewer I really wanted to follow their lead and learn from their body of knowledge and interpretations. What was relevant to them? How did the issues we were exploring emerge in their experience? Did they have suggestions for the research project and the kinds of outcomes that would be useful?

It might sound like you wouldn't need to prepare very much for this kind of interview but I found it was actually really important to get ready. I would do research on each organization in advance to get a sense of context, programs, mandate but I didn't assume that this would give me a complete picture. Getting ready was also about making sure that I was present and alert so that I could listen really well. Having some background information helped me to be able to follow the flow of people's responses and it helped me to ask questions more effectively. And by effectively I mean, choosing questions that were relevant to that organization, the person, the topic as it was being fleshed out in that moment. So it was about being prepared but being willing to let go, being aware and attentive, and doing what is right for that conversation. You might have a framework of questions created in advance but they really operate more as a starting point or as touchstones to reconnect with as you move through a discussion.

And it's not just about what questions to ask — it's also about how you ask them. It reminds me of what one person said in an interview, something like, it's not just what you say you are going to do but how you go about doing it, your actions, how you represent yourself, etc. This kind of attentiveness was also really essential in facilitating the workshops. It can be much harder to do that effectively in workshops when there are multiple people involved from different organizations who may be leading different parts of it. You don't usually have a chance to do a run-through in advance so it can be difficult to consider pacing. We weren't always sure where people were coming from (their experience, or roles or connections to the topics), how many people would come, or what their expectations would be. I guess I think the workshops were

most effective when we tried to do less presenting and left more space for participation so the relevance could emerge out of the contributions of the participants, giving them the chance to share and discuss their representations of how the topics came up in their experiences.

### *Embeddedness*

*“Where exactly are we going?” Amy asks from the backseat. “Near Keele and Finch; Upfront Theatre’s letting us use their space for the workshop,” Margo replied over her shoulder. “Thanks for driving Andrew,” she said twisting back to face front, “No one could accuse us of not carpooling with five people and mounds of supplies squished in.” “Is it easy to get to? Will people know where to go?” Skye asks. “You know, I hope so,” Margo says, “The idea is to try and host these arts council grant writing workshops in different parts of the city so that it isn’t always privileging the downtown. You know, bring services to people instead of always expecting them to have to travel to them. Embedding, like the arts hubs are trying to do... use spaces that are accessible that people already use.” “I am feeling pretty embedded myself back here,” Leah comments bumping into both Skye and Amy as she shifts in her seat, “man, its hot. Sorry if I am sweating on you guys. But that has me thinking.” Tilting her head awkwardly to the side, she looks at Skye, “Where do you think we should hold the workshops for NAN?” “Good question,” Skye muses, “Space is always an issue. Maybe we should ask for suggestions at this meeting — what do you think?”*

### **Skye:**

What is your relationship to the community? Are you a part of it, are you outside of it?

The issue of embeddedness comes up a lot with communities that get external labels applied to them. They are described as “underserved, at-risk, vulnerable, or priority neighbourhoods.” All of these terms that get used and thrown around — in the same way that diversity gets thrown around and is used to describe people, these terms get thrown around to describe neighbourhoods (often more than one, lumped

together). So why people choose to work in a specific neighbourhood or what their motivations are for working in a particular neighbourhood are questions that come up a lot. What are your relationships to the people that you are working with? What always comes up is the idea of 'helicoptering in'. That's where people have these projects and they say, "Ok, we are going to bring it to this neighbourhood." And they may not really have a lot of existing ties or relationships in the neighbourhood and they just kind of bring something in and drop it down. And it may not even be relevant to the people in the community, but they haven't found that out because they haven't taken the time to develop relationships and understand some of the concerns and what initiatives are already happening.

NAN's interesting because it's a community of communities and we are in many ways a service organization. So even for me, trying to organize professional development workshops, I'm drawing on past experiences or on conversations with people. It's really important for me to consult with people on the ground—otherwise it feels disingenuous.

That's been really obvious with this grant — we kind of hypothesized what was needed and then what we found was really different than what we had imagined. We're lucky that we're embedded enough that we have these groups of people who will come to our events and tell us what they need. We're embedded in the arts community but at the same time we're removed because we're not always working 'on the ground'.

### **Leah:**

Well a big part of embeddedness is about connecting to what is already there; you are trying to weave into existing threads to strengthen the fabric. That can mean working in places that people already frequent, being physically embedded, and from a community arts standpoint in many parts of Toronto it can be really difficult to find spaces like that which are accessible and affordable and not completely booked. For the Arts and Equity project, because participants were from all over the city we tried to go to them as much as possible for meetings and



interviews and for the workshops we decided on the OISE building (part of the University of Toronto) at St. George and Bloor because it is right above St. George subway station which connects both the North-South and East-West lines. As a student I could also get us sponsored by one of the research centres there which gave us free access. And the space we used, The Peace Lounge, has a long history as a hub for community meetings and grassroots social change movements.

I think we also really aimed to embed what we were doing through connections, content and format by identifying and talking to people in community arts in Toronto who are already thinking about or enacting equity. The content of the workshops and the toolkit really aimed to highlight their work and the format was also created to fit in with people's practices. We wanted the workshops and toolkit to address what participants were doing right now so that as resources they would be easy to use and would help to support existing as well as emerging initiatives. There was a lot of back and forth: talking to people about what they thought was needed, coming up with possibilities and then getting feedback and input to help shape them, trying things out and then seeking responses and suggestions for improvement and integrating those. So we wanted what was coming out of the project to be easily embedded in the field but what also happens is that the field, peoples' ideas, knowledge and approaches end up really becoming embedded within the project outcomes or products as well. It's a reciprocal relationship.

### *Sustainability*

*"The Bathurst streetcar is an enigma," Leah sighs as she lowers her bag to the floor, "I stand in the station never knowing when it's going to arrive. Those little schedules on the signposts seem to have no relationship to its actual movements. Well... I imagine that's the way Charles and Ryan feel about these document drafts we are supposed to have into them." She peeks around the large wooden bookshelf that screens Skye's desk. "Oh... Oops! Skye are you in the middle of something?" Skye is hunched forward distractedly staring at her computer screen. She quickly types something*

*out on her keyboard and hits enter. "Sorry, sorry," she says hazily and wheels around. She sits back in her chair and exhales deeply, "It's just so busy right now. I'm trying to manage so many things that it's hard to keep up." "Yes, you're exhausted. I'm exhausted," Leah nods, "It's a lot to take on with limited time and resources. And part of the problem is when you are so invested it's hard to let go or find a balance." Skye shrugs, "I mean it's all important and really exciting but... I feel like we're just scratching the surface and I'm wondering how we can keep it going without losing momentum. At the same time, I need a break." "Mmmhmm... is this pace or workload reasonable," Leah replies flopping into a chair and smiling, "What's the compromise? Is a project, or an organization for that matter, really sustainable if the people keeping it going are overworked? And how do you define overwork or balance?" "Yes..." Skye muses, looking up at the ceiling, "Oh, the Bathurst streetcar. Sometimes it moves pretty smoothly, sometimes it's so tilted and just... never ending." "A metaphor for working in community-engaged non-profits?" Leah quips. "Maybe it's better to get out and walk," Skye chuckles.*

**Skye:**

Sustainability is really related to those ideas of relationships. Throughout the project we've built all these relationships and we've started all these conversations. All of our workshops were at capacity — by the end, we had a waiting list. Just because we said, "We're going to do four workshops and that's what we have the capacity to do", doesn't mean that the work is over. So how do we sustain this conversation beyond the close of this project, beyond the publication of the toolkit? That was something we had talked about — when we put the proposal forward for the grant, we had talked about how we might support the continuation of some kind of network around this topic, but we weren't really sure where that would go. So it's really cool to be in a position now — a year and a half since we wrote that proposal — and to say, "Yeah, there is that momentum." And that's really exciting, because we didn't know if there would be. So it's been really gratifying to see that that's happening. And really encouraging because we know that it's not just coming

from us — it's coming from all of these people who — we're just bringing them together. And they're really bringing that push and that drive to continue the conversation and to continue sharing.

With sustainability there's also this question of exhaustion. I look around at the people who are coming to these workshops and I'm so grateful that they come. Because I know these people and I know how busy they are. They're leaders of their organizations and they can barely afford the 2 hours to come down, but they do it. It's gratifying to see people coming because we know that it's useful to them and we know they wouldn't make the time if it wasn't useful. So that's really great to see. But at the same time it's hard, because NAN was set up to build capacity. And that's supposed to help address questions of sustainability, so that you can have better staffing and you can have better training, so that your staff are less stressed and everybody is more able to continue the work that they are doing. At the same time, this year has been totally exhausting and I'm just so tired. So how to continue working without burning out? It's so ironic because I'm supposed to be supporting all of these people who are all burned out, and I'm burning out too. So how to recognize that and take stock and look at what we're doing and find ways to stop that from happening? It's a systemic problem to do with nonprofits and funding models. It's an ongoing question, and it's huge. Funding even gets cut and people exhaust themselves trying to continue to deliver the same services because they are so committed. One of the biggest questions people have is around funding and how do we keep these things going.

### **Summary & Next Steps**

While NAN's vision and mandate focuses on access, work that specifically centres on equity is new territory for the organization. In order for this research to be sustainable, we need to further embed the notion of 'equity' in NAN's mandate and the work we do. We are accountable to the community we have developed through this project. In order to complete the project in a sustainable and responsible manner, we need to embed equity into

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our own vision and mandate, so that we can continue the work even after this project funding is gone. That relates to reflexivity as well —how has this project been a learning experience for us? How has it changed NAN as an organization? How will it affect the way we move forward in future?

The Arts and Equity research project has been a process of listening and building relationships, and creating a forum for sharing and expression of needs and challenges. But it's a long process, and in many ways it's just beginning. The iterative process that helped to develop the topics of research means that the 'end' of the project is also just the starting point for the next stage of learning and exploration. We want to create spaces that welcome further explorations and additional perspectives on equity issues in the arts. More than that, we want to continue to seek out, honor and support the ways in which these issues are already being taken up by individuals, communities and organizations throughout Toronto.

*A bank of six elevators forms the focal point of the lobby at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Each time Leah enters the space, brown tiled and lack luster, she thinks Mural, mosaic...something needs to visually cheer this place up. Cup of tea and paper bag in hand she waits for the "ding" that tells her which door to turn to. This elevator...going...up...Leah crowds on and anxiously watches the red digits flick to 7. The doors open. Her meeting is in the Peace Lounge at the end of the hall. And yes, Skye is there already, sitting at a table in front of the long bank of windows. "Skye! Hey, are you hungry?" Skye looks up. Raising her paper bag like a trophy, Leah adds, "I've got treats!" Skye smiles and turns to make space at the table beside her. They create a makeshift placemat of napkins and brown paper. Leah settles in, pulling a notebook and pen out of her backpack, ready to discuss the next workshop. "Okay, so where do you want to begin?" she asks. "Well I've got a list," Skye replies, "but really, I'm open."*

## WIND IN THE LEAVES COLLECTIVE

### A Photo Essay

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charles c. smith

**T**he “wind in the leaves collective” engages in the choreographic creation of movement and poetic syncretism to develop and perform collaborative work involving diverse artistic disciplines. The collective’s approach provides for a unique view into a dialogue amongst artists on contemporary issues where each artist will be able to collaborate, create and share. Each artist will bring her/his creativity to the collective’s work as an outlet for artistic exploration that is rarely seen in Toronto.

The collective’s inter-disciplinary approach allows for such engagement at several intersections, visceral, sensual, emotional, intellectual and spiritual. In this way, the collective seeks to be a multi-textured illustration of the concerns of our times and how these are expressed through diverse artistic mediums working collaboratively to connect to individuals and communities in a multicultural, multiracial society and a global community. The themes the collective is working on echo those of transnationalism, diaspora, globalization as well as the use/abuse of power and the marginalization that results from it and wounds both individual and collective psyches.

The passion and creativity the artists in the collective possess on the aforementioned issues connects them not only to the creative aspects of the work but also to the issues of social mobility and their own personal/historical connection to struggle, suffering, loss and hope whether in re-

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relationships within families or between dominant and subordinated communities historically and in our world today.

The collective tells the stories of leaves which, like people, become moved by the winds and who all have unique and interesting stories worth being told regardless of diverse identities, be it women, people with disabilities, ethno-cultural and racialized groups, immigrants and refugees, faith groups, the poor, Aboriginal peoples, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people. Inclusivity in practice we feel should exist in everything that we do as artists and human beings.

The collective is a group of artists from diverse disciplines working together to develop and present interdisciplinary performances using music, poetry, dance and various forms of visual art, e.g., photography, collage, moving images. The collective aims to provide several ways to present performances that engage artists from diverse backgrounds.



PHOTO BY CHRISTOPHER CUSHMAN

Kevin Ormsby, Miranda Liverpool and Charles C. Smith in 'Fleurette Africaine'

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PHOTO BY CHRISTOPHER CUSHMAN

Kevin Ormsby in 'Inner Organs'





PHOTO BY CHRISTOPHER CUSHMAN

Harvey Weisfeld and Amanda Paixao in "Resisting Slaughter"

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PHOTO BY CHRISTOPHER CUSHMAN



Kevin A. Ormsby and Miranda Liverpool in "Live IV"



PHOTO BY CHRISTOPHER CUSHMAN

Mikhail P. Morris and Miranda Liverpool in 'Conversation'. Background photo by Robin Styba

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PHOTO BY CHRISTOPHER CUSHMAN

The collective closing with 'Fleurette Africaine'



PHOTO BY CHRISTOPHER CUSHMAN

Artist talk back with (left to right): Melissa Noventa, Miranda Liverpool, Olga Barrios, Amanda Paixao, Charles C. Smith, Kevin A. Ormsby, Mikhail P. Morris and Harvey Weisfeld

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### **birchtown in flames**

by charles c. smith

just outside shelbourne      july 1784  
an 'extraordinary mob                      or riot -'  
unemployed disbanded soldiers      with guns  
found their way    to the other side  
drowning churches and houses      with torches  
herding men and women    children and dogs  
and leaving some                      sucking stones -  
the skies full of clouds                      smoke and stars  
caves became sepulchers      without light  
and blood ran into roots      like a downpour  
so that the wooded                      roads rushed red  
between these two towns -  
one full of transactions      like a crescent  
moon bartering    with night -  
the other caught up                      like a snake in a garter  
all of its venom      squeezed out at the teeth -  
one built on white lace      foodstuffs and rum  
anchoring boats    from the stretches of an early empire -  
the other veiled in emptiness                      taking each day  
like a prayer                      and trading all they had -  
both slammed hammers      into this port city  
while others                      gambled the differences  
between those who worked                      and what they were paid  
by the official surveyor      who too faced weapons that were suddenly unconcealed  
until the army                      sat in a war ship in the harbour  
and birchtown                      lay like a corpse decomposing in an open field -  
then the tally                      in stock and bodies  
all assets liabilities fatalities                      the tabulations seemingly endless  
claims and counters in courtrooms                      the early jurisprudence of this state -  
and as always                      after recording property and labour  
there was no time given      for other stories –

~ One of the poems performed by the 'wind in the leaves collective'

## NOTES - ARTICLES

### CHAPTER 1:

#### MERE "SONG AND DANCE": COMPLICATING THE MULTICULTURAL IMPERATIVE IN THE ARTS

1 *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, in *Canada Act 1982*, 1982, c. 11(uk).

2 *Canadian Multiculturalism Act, RSC 1985*, c. 24 (4<sup>th</sup> Supp.).

3 Denise Helly, "Le financement des associations ethniques par le programme du multiculturalisme canadien" (paper presented to the Institut national de recherche scientifique, Centre d'Urbanisation, Culture et Société, March 2004). Others have also criticized the policy of multiculturalism: George Elliott Clarke has noted that the program/policy of multiculturalism "avoids and occludes the discussion of racism." Himani Bannerji critiques the absence of any analysis of relations of power and argues that politics, identity, and history lead to the development and deployment of multiculturalism as a technique of governance of the state apparatus. See George Elliott Clarke, "Multiculturalism and Its (Usual) Discontents," *Canada Watch* (Fall 2009), p.3, available at <http://www.yorku.ca/robarts/projects/canada-watch/multicult/pdfs/Clarke.pdf>; and Himani Bannerji, *The Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism, Nationalism and Gender* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2000).

4 Philip has argued that while the concept of multiculturalism might have some validity, it is her view "that its original intent was to diffuse potential racial and ethnic problems." M. NourbeSe Philip, *Frontiers: Essays and Writings on Racism and Culture* (Stratford: The Mercury Press, 1992), p. 117. See also Carol Tator, Frances Henry, and Winton Mattis, *Challenging Racism in the Arts: Case Studies of Controversy and Conflict* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), p. 6, who discuss the construction of a new, transforming multiculturalism.

5 *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, s. 27.

6 For an analysis that attempts to reinvigorate

Section 27 by advocating an interpretive approach to the provision that emphasizes the multiple dimensions of other Charter rights, see Natasha Bakht, "Reinvigorating Section 27: An Intersectional Approach," *Journal of Law & Equality* 6, 2 (2009), pp.135–161.

7 In several recent controversies in Canada, the claims by minority groups for recognition of their diverse and deep commitments to their cultural/religious specificity have produced the reaction that multiculturalism has gone too far, indeed, that it threatens the core values of Canadian society. My own view of this reaction is that it sets up a false dichotomy where minority rights are pitted against Canadian values. Thus, a minority group typically seeking equality is demonized, while law and policies that continue to perpetuate inequality for many groups in Canadian society are simultaneously and uncritically put on a pedestal. The consequence of ridding ourselves of multiculturalism may mean to be left with the opposite, monoculturalism. This is not an approach that I would favour. A more satisfactory move forward is to engage with multiculturalism critically, that is, to be conscious of its flaws and to infuse within it an analysis that reveals its limits. This paper is an attempt to reveal some of these defects in the hopes of moving toward a truly critical multicultural dialogue. See for example, Vrinda Narain, "Critical Multiculturalism, Equal Citizenship and the Accommodation of Difference," in *Feminist Constitutionalism*, ed. Beverley Baines, Daphne Barak-Erez, and Tsvi Kahana (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming). On multiculturalism going too far see, Bakht "Reinvigorating Section 27: An Intersectional Approach."

8 Clarke notes that some multicultural dollars, even if only a pittance, went to fund literary anthologies by ethnocultural minorities. These canonbuilding initiatives established the Canadianness of a minority group while also permitting the authors to align themselves with the experiences of other minority intellectuals. Clarke,

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“Multiculturalism and Its (Usual) Discontents,” p. 4.

9 Dr. Rasesh Thakkar has described bharata natyam training in Canada as a “transfer of culture from generation to another generation, from one region to another region as to another country, and from another time to this modern day.” See Rasesh Thakkar, “Transfer of Culture through Arts — the South Asian Experience in North America,” in *Ethnicity, Identity, Migration — The South Asian Context*, ed. M. Israel and N. Wagle (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), p.223.

10 Philip, *Frontiers*, pp.116–117.

11 This perhaps also explains the persistent misuse of the word “traditional” in describing bharata natyam. Bharata natyam is actually a classical technique, much like ballet. Yet it is often referred to in the west as traditional dance, likely because some people have trouble envisioning it as a modern-day dance form complete with interpretive and choreographic potential.

12 Himani Bannerji et al., “A Conversation with Himani Bannerji: Multiculturalism is ... anti-racism,” *Kinesis* 8 (February 1997).

13 In 1963, when the Ontario Arts Council (oac) was created, it primarily funded ballet companies. In 1986, a Multicultural/Folk Arts Dance Grant was created, followed by a Culture Specific Dance Grant in 1990. After a consultation with artists on the topic of cultural diversity, Lina Fattah, the OAC’s Multicultural Coordinator, made recommendations to the oac. In particular, artists “felt that labels such as ‘multicultural’ or ‘ethnic’ stereotyped them and excluded them from participation in the general stream of Canadian art. They believed that definitions of what was artistic needed to be broadened greatly. In general, participating artists wanted to access regular oac programmes and not be slotted in ‘multicultural’ slots.” Katherine Cornell, “Defining Dance: Canadian Cultural Policy on Multicultural Dance,” in *Proceedings of the Meeting of Cultures in Dance History Conference*, ed. Daniel Tercio (Lisbon: Technical University of Lisbon, 1999).

14 Tator, Henry, and Mattis have stated, “We believe one measure of racism in a society is the extent to which cultural and racial differences mark one’s position and status as ‘other’ within the processes of cultural production.” Tator, Henry, and Mattis, *Challenging Racism in the Arts*, p. 5.

15 Philip has argued that Arts Councils have nurtured and fostered “big C” culture, which many interpret to mean “art.” In Ontario, this has meant that activities of the “Big Five” (the Canadian Opera Company, National Ballet, Stratford Festival, Shaw Festival, and Toronto Symphony) are assured arts funding. See Philip, *Frontiers*, pp.114–115.

16 Ibid., p. 116.

17 There is always confusion, both officially and popularly, as to whether Indigenous peoples fall within the multicultural paradigm. Aboriginal scholars have made compelling arguments for why they ought not to be lumped into a multiculturalism framework. See for example, Robert Paine, “Aboriginality, Multiculturalism, and Liberal Rights Philosophy,” *Ethnos* 64, no.3 (1999): 325.

18 Philip, *Frontiers*, p. 112.

19 The Canada Council for the Arts, for example, now accepts applications from dance professionals working in all dance world cultures and in a wide range of dance genres and specializations. Such genres include but are not limited to Aboriginal (Powwow for ms, Contemporary, Traditional/Regional, Métis, Inuit), African (Afro-Caribbean, Contemporary, Traditional) East Asian (Peking Opera, Traditional Chinese, Korean), South Asian (Bharata Natyam, Kathak, Odissi, Kathakali, Contemporary), Urban (Hiphop/Breakdance, Contemporary), Ballet (Classical, Contemporary, Neoclassical), and Contemporary (Aerial, Improvisation, Modern, Jazz, Other). An early instance of when arts funding was provided by a government agency on a basis other than its value as multicultural had the following effect: “For that glorious moment, Bharatanatyam of India had ceased to be ‘exotic’ or ‘ethnic’; it had become Canadian — a thing of Canadian pride and celebration.” See Thakkar, “Transfer of Culture through Arts,” p.227. On the different dance genres funded by the Canada Council see Canada Council for the Arts, “Grants to Dance Professionals,” available at <http://www.canadacouncil.ca/grants/dance/nc127245475245156250.htm>.

20 The more pernicious way in which funding organizations perpetuate the status quo is in their failure to represent the ethnic composition of the population on their staff, boards, committees, panels, and juries. “I am ... suggesting that there is a causal relationship between the composition of



the various boards and committees of these funding agencies and the underfunding of Black artists and groups." See Philip, *Frontiers*, pp.120–121.

21 Toronto's International Caravan was one of the most successful multicultural festivals in the country. Leon Kossar was described as a pioneer in celebrating Canadian cultural diversity, and co-founded the festival in 1968, which ran till 2004. See "Caravan founder changed the city" *The Toronto Star*, 8 August 2001, <http://www.thestar.com/obituary/atog/article/108439>, accessed November 14, 2009.

22 Carabram is Brampton's annual multicultural festival. The Carabram 2009 website states that "Carabram provides an opportunity for families to experience the rich culture, food, crafts, drink and entertainment of different ethnic groups in Brampton and the surrounding community attracting thousands to this event. . . . Come on out to Carabram, Brampton's Multicultural premiere Festival and enjoy the rich diversity of our great City, Brampton!" "Carabram.org: Brampton's Multicultural Festival" (2009), <http://www.carabram.org>.

23 A Google search of the term "bharata natyam" on October 1, 2008, revealed 394,000 hits.

24 Alistair Macaulay, "A Spirit of South Asia is Moving in Manhattan," *The New York Times*, August 21, 2008 (emphasis added).

25 Sanjoy Roy, "Dirt, Noise, Traffic: Contemporary Indian Dance in the Western City; Modernity, Ethnicity and Hybridity," in *Dance in the City*, ed. Helen Thomas (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1997).

26 See "Shobana Jeyasingh Dance Company" (2009), <http://www.shobanajeyasingh.co.uk>.

27 Founded in 1982, The Joyce Theater is considered one of the premiere performance venues for dance in the United States. The venue attracts an annual audience of more than 140,000. Since its inception, The Joyce has welcomed over 270 leading New York City-based, national, and international dance companies to its stage. See "Joyce Theater: Mission & History," available at <http://www.joyce.org/about/mission.php>.

28 "The hegemonic mapping of a (white) cultural identity on to a (British) national one thus produces a more complex experience for those non-whites than the simple idea of cultural difference suggests." Some have described this as a feeling of double consciousness or in/exclusion, being inside

and outside at the same time. Roy, "Dirt, Noise, Traffic," p. 72. See also Salman Rushdie, "Imaginary Homelands," in *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981–1991* (London: Granta Books, 1991), pp.15–16.

29 Shobana Jeyasingh Dance Company, *1996–1997 Tour*, Marketing Brochure (1996).

30 Jennifer Dunning, "When Folkways Point the Way to Innovation," *The New York Times*, 1 June 1997. I do not raise the success of the *Shobana Jeyasingh Dance Company* in Britain or the misapprehension of its work in North America to suggest that Britain has solved all issues as they relate to arts funding and representation of dance from racialized groups and nondominant artistic practices. On the contrary, anecdotal evidence from Indian dance artists in Britain suggests that they have ongoing concerns with arts presenters and the various funding agencies in the U.K. The scope of this paper however, does not permit a comparative analysis of the contextual differences between official and unofficial multiculturalism and its impact on the arts in these two countries.

31 Shobana Jeyasingh recounts an astonishing story of being interviewed on the radio in Britain about her choreography and then quite casually and seriously, being asked for a recipe for chicken tikka.

32 Tator, Henry, and Mattis, *Challenging Racism in the Arts*, p.6.

33 The definition of "obiter dictum" provided in Black's Law Dictionary is: "Words of an opinion entirely unnecessary for the decision of the case. . . . A remark made, or opinion expressed, by a judge, in his decision upon a cause, "by the way," that is, incidentally, or collaterally, and not directly upon the question before him, or upon a point not necessarily involved in the determination of the cause, or introduced by way of illustration, or analogy or argument. Such are not binding as precedent." *Black's Law Dictionary*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (St. Paul, Minn: Thompson West, 2004), "obiter dictum."

34 Paula Citron, "Indian Dance with a Modern Touch," *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), December 14, 2002.

35 Homi Bhabha, "The Third Space," in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. J. Rutherford (London: Routledge, 1994), p.208.

36 Philip has stated "there are very clear guide-

## PLURALISM IN THE ARTS IN CANADA – A CHANGE IS GONNA COME!

lines as to what 'multiculturalism' ought to mean in this society. If that aspect or interpretation is missing from the work in question, the artist will not be funded — even under a multicultural mandate.' Philip, *Frontiers*, p.127.

37 Roy, "Dirt, Noise, Traffic," p.71.

38 Shobana Jeyasingh "Getting Off the Orient Express," *Dance Theatre Journal* 8, 2 (1990), pp.34–37.

39 Roy, "Dirt, Noise, Traffic," p.82.

40 Philip, *Frontiers*, pp.115–116.

41 "Earnings by most Canadian artists are hovering at poverty levels and the situation is likely to worsen as the worldwide recession deepens, according to a statistical profile of the country's artists ... Aboriginal artists are especially poor earners ... on average, 30-per-cent lower than the average for all artists." James Adams, "Starving artists? That's not far from the mark," *Globe and Mail*, December 4, 2009. See also Hill Strategies Research Inc., *Arts Research Monitor* 9.6 — December 2010, [http://www.hillstrategies.com/docs/arm\\_vol9\\_no6.pdf](http://www.hillstrategies.com/docs/arm_vol9_no6.pdf).

42 Hill Strategies Research Inc., *Arts Research Monitor*, p.2.

43 Eva Mackey, *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), p.22.

### CHAPTER 3:

#### DIVERSIFYING THE BASE OF VALUED KNOWLEDGES: JAZZ, IMPROVISATION, AND THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF ARTS PRESENTATION

1. I borrow the phrase from George Lewis, from his keynote talk at "Partnering Diversity," The Canadian New Music Network Forum, Halifax, Nova Scotia. January 7-9, 2010.

### CHAPTER 5:

#### "ABRE A CORTINA DO PASSADO" EMBODIED MEMORY AND COUNTER HEGEMONIC PRACTICE IN POSTMODERN PERFORMANCE: A CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY OF DIASPORIC INTERCULTURAL PERFORMERS IN SOUTHERN ONTARIO

1 According to Sklar, movement knowledge is cultural, conceptual, emotional, and kinesthetic. For a longer discussion of this issue see Sklar, Deidre. "Five Premises for a Culturally Sensitive Approach to Dance".

2 Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Harvard UP, 1995. [1993].

3 According with information from the company website ([www.mtspace.ca](http://www.mtspace.ca)).

4 O'Brien, Dan. *An Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*. Polity, 2006. (pp. 141–151).

5 LeDoux, Joseph E. *Synaptic Self: How our Brains Become Who We Are*. New York: Viking, [2002].

6 Damasio, Antonio. *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason And The Human Brain*. New York: G.P. Putnam, [1994].

7 Halbwachs, Maurice. *The Collective Memory*. Francis J. Ditter, Jr., and Vida Yazdi Ditter (tran.). New York: Harper & Row, 1980 [Paris, 1950].

8 Bergson, Henri. *Matter and Memory*.

9 Rudolf von Laban in *The Mastery of Movement* (1980) observes that movement can be expressive and/or functional, relating the later as movement that have other function rather than express something.

10 Connerton, Paul. *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007 [1989].

11 For more on critical studies of social institutions see *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures At The Collège De France of humanist* (philosopher, sociologist, and historian), Michel Foucault (1926 - 1984).

12 Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger. *The Invention Of Tradition*. New York: University of Cambridge, 1983. [1983].

13 Graziela Estela. *Bailarino-Pesquisador-Intérprete: Processo de Formação*. Rio de Janeiro: Funarte, 1997. (pp.23).

14 Bou-Matar, Majdi. "Working with Different Communities to Build a Community of Difference: The Challenge of Canadian Inter-cultural Theatre". MA MRP. University of Guelph: 2008.

15 Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora". In: *Theorizing Diaspora: A Reader*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2003.

16 Tanaka, Gregory Kazuo. *The intercultural campus: transcending culture & power in American higher education*. Vol. 97. Counterpoints Series. New York: Peter Lang, 2003.

17 Bou-Matar, Majdi. "Working with Different Communities to Build a Community of Difference: The Challenge of Canadian Inter-cultural Theatre". MA MRP. University of Guelph: 2008.

18 See letter at [http://mtspace.ca/show\\_115s08.html](http://mtspace.ca/show_115s08.html).

19 Marques, Isabel. "I See a Kaleidoscope Dancing: Understanding, Criticizing and Recreating the World Around Us". In: *Ways of Knowing in Dance and Art*. Theatre Academy, 2007. (pp. 149).

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## PLURALISM IN THE ARTS IN CANADA – A CHANGE IS GONNA COME!

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Dedication:

For artists who have left their homeland and are in search of new meanings and experiences.

### **CHAPTER 7: BETWEEN GENERATIONS: TOWARDS UNDER- STANDING THE DIFFERENCE IN REALITIES AND ASPIRATIONS OF THE FIRST AND SEC- OND GENERATION OF CULTURALLY DIVERSE ARTISTS**

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### **CHAPTER 8: HOW TO INCREASE YOUR AUDIENCE SIZE BY 300% OVERNIGHT**

- 1 At best, I am a practitioner and a learner, not an academic or accredited cultural mediation expert; as such, I urge you to visit Culture pour tous' website ([Culturepourtous.ca](http://Culturepourtous.ca)) for primary sources on the subject.
- 2 Published by the International Council of Shopping Centers: <http://www.icsc.org/srch/rsrch/impactcanada/didyouknow.pdf>.
- 3 Annie Dillard, in *The Writing Life*, berating the soul for not being more courageous about rewrites.

**IMAA/NIMAC TOOLKIT: HOW TO PROMOTE THE PRESENCE OF MEDIA ARTISTS AND AUDIENCES FROM ETHNO-RACIAL AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES** | Prepared by the Independent Media Arts Alliance 2011 Diversity Committee: Liz Barron, Jennifer Dorner and Patrice James

## **CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE MEDIA ARTS**

The **Independent Media Arts Alliance** is a non-profit national arts service organization that promotes and advances the interests of a vibrant media arts community.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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### INTRODUCTION

In 1995, the Independent Media Arts Alliance (then called Independent Film and Video Alliance) published the “Cultural Equity Handbook”, written and researched by Ian Reid. In June 1994, the Alliance members passed a resolution for “a practical handbook to provide a role model to member groups to identify and problem solve around such issues as: access and systemic barriers in programs, services and memberships, policies and procedures for anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-homophobic, anti-classist and other pro-active processes towards full and equal representation.”

The handbook did not claim to be the final authority on the topic of equity. It was intended to be open-ended and interactive. It shared experiences of other artists, and arts groups, it suggested principles and policies, outreach strategies, and fundamental definitions amongst other relevant topics. In fact, the handbook hoped that the readers would become the next authors, after the theories and models were tested in the real world.

Now, nearly two decades later, the real world has given the IMAA ample time to reflect on the developments within the sector. And IMAA members have expressed interest in continuing the discussion. So, it is time to renew the handbook and re-open the dialogue about diversity within the media art world. In the spirit of the original handbook, this revised handbook includes experiences and recent examples of best practices from media arts organizations, up-to-date links and resources. It also includes some of the original material that has been updated from the 1995 handbook that remains relevant and important to promote. Like its predecessor, this toolkit can be seen as a work in progress and welcomes further contributions from the media arts community.

### About the IMAA

The Independent Media Arts Alliance is a non-profit national arts service organization that promotes and advances the interests of a vibrant media arts community. It was established in Yorkton, Saskatchewan in October 1980 as the Independent Film Alliance. Since then it has expanded to include over 80 independent film, video, audio and new media production, distribution, and exhibition organizations in all parts of Canada. The IMAA membership is divided into 6 regions: Atlantic, Pacific, Quebec, Ontario, Prairies and NIMAC (National Indigenous Media Arts Coalition).

### FOUNDING PRINCIPLES

Our groups are distinct from one another and we value these differences. Just as we, as individuals, are able to pool our resources to mutual advantage in organiza-

tions which protect and promote individual free expression, it is possible and desirable to unite film, video, audio and new media groups, each with its own character, in an alliance. The IMAA does not limit itself to one genre, ideology or aesthetic but furthers diversity of vision in artistic and social consciousness.

The IMAA believes that independent film, video, audio and new media are valuable and vital forms of expression of our respective cultures, which can uncover the prevailing illusions and expose the formulas that underlie the vast majority of commercial and institutional messages.

In 1992 the IMAA hosted a landmark conference on racial equity, “About Face, About Frame” in Banff. Following that Conference, the About Face, About Frame caucus took on an autonomous role to do research and lobbying for improved access and representation of ethno-racial people in the media.

Since that time, the IMAA has upheld a diversity committee which has functioned to ensure participation from under-represented groups in the functioning of the organization. In recent years the committee has worked to promote equity development within the membership at large resulting in this toolkit.

The IMAA has prioritized Indigenous concerns in its advocacy work over the past several years working closely with the National Indigenous Media Arts Coalition (NIMAC) which has existed as a caucus under the IMAA umbrella since 2005. In 2009, the IMAA Board of Directors conducted a strategic initiative to increase and strengthen the involvement of the Indigenous media arts community in the governance and affairs of the IMAA.

## **About the NIMAC**

NIMAC was formed to meet the needs of Indigenous media producers in Canada with the Independent Media Arts Alliance organization members, while at the same time providing opportunities for exhibition, presentation and dialogue, and fostering the development of Indigenous media artists as members of the IMAA. NIMAC achieves its purpose by partnering with IMAA member organizations for presentation, residencies and exhibition, as well as engaging in other complementary programming. NIMAC registered as a not for profit organization in 2010, with board members and is establishing committees for Bylaws, Fundraising and Policy and Procedures.

## **DEFINITIONS**

Cultural equity is a discourse that became more prevalent about two decades ago, and continues to evolve. Since 1995 many other terms have surfaced and concepts have developed under the same umbrella. Definitions seem to overlap onto several other coinciding terms and concepts.

## PLURALISM IN THE ARTS IN CANADA – A CHANGE IS GONNA COME!

Also, the federal government uses certain terms and definitions that have been around for decades and some individuals might feel uncomfortable about the use of some of these terms. For example “Ethnic” has been used to mean a variety of things. It is a politically sensitive term, in part, because of its derivation from the Greek word *ethnos*, or “heathen,” which continues to be felt in the negative connotation that it carries for many.

So, in the interests of clarity, we propose and present some basic definitions with the understanding that these are not formulated by the IMAA, rather this is a range of terms and concepts associated with cultural diversity taken from a variety of sources, listed on page 143.

**Aboriginal** – Refers to those persons who reported identifying with at least one Aboriginal group, i.e. North American Indian, Métis or Inuit, and/or those who reported being a Treaty Indian or a Registered Indian as defined by the Indian Act of Canada, and/or those who are members of an Indian Band or First Nation. At the Canada Council for the Arts, the term “Aboriginal” is used as an inclusive term referring to First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

**Active Listening** – The active process of hearing and understanding what someone is saying. To be a good listener, one must learn to empathize with the speaker(s) by trying to put oneself into another person’s place in order to understand his or her perspective(s) and stories.

**Classism** – Attitude, action, and institutional practices that subordinate one class to a dominant class.

**Cultural Equity** – Describes the goal of a movement by artist and organizers, to ensure a fair sharing of resources for artists and institutions focusing on non-European cultures. The goal of cultural-equity organizing is to redress and correct historic imbalances in favour of European-derived culture. Cultural equity is a broader term than racial equity. Cultural equity involves more than equity for people of various so-called “races”. We might also think of equity for men and women, people of different sexual orientations, the visible and visual minorities, disabled people, the rich and poor, people in different geographical regions. We are also aware of equity in terms of “communities within communities” (women’s groups, gay/lesbian/transgendered communities, etc.)

**Cultural Diversity** – A term used to describe the many cultures that are part of Canadian society. This term is replacing the term multiculturalism. Another similar term, but more encompassing is the term pluralism.



**Cultural Policy** – Describes the values and principles that guide any social entity in cultural affairs. Cultural policies are most often made by governments, from school boards to legislatures and the executives of cultural agencies, but also by many other institutions in the private sector, from corporations to community organizations.

**Discrimination (Opposite: Non-Discrimination)** – Distinction between individuals not based on legitimate terms; arbitrary bias for or against an individual or a group that fails to take true account of their characteristics or treat an individual or a group in a just and equitable manner. Discrimination can be based on age, birth, color, creed, disability, ethnic origin, familial status, gender, language, marital status, political or other opinion, public assistance, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

**Diversity** – The representation of multiple groups within a larger group, community, or area, such as a school or a workplace.

**Equality** – This human rights principle mandates the same treatment of persons. The notion of fairness and respect for the inherent dignity of all human beings, as specified in Article 1 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.”

**Equity** – The Oxford dictionary online defines “equity” as “quality of being fair and impartial: *equity of treatment*”.

**Ethnocentrism** – A practice of consciously or unconsciously privileging one’s own ethnic group over others that involves judging other groups by the values of one’s own group.

**Ethno-racial** – The terms *ethnicity* and *ethnic group* are derived from the Greek word *ethnos*, normally translated as “nation.” The terms refer currently to people thought to have common ancestry who share a distinctive culture.

**Examining Assumptions** – Process of deconstructing and analyzing the bases of ideas generally taken for granted in a given society or school of thought. An assumption is something taken for granted or accepted as true without proof, and can be a generalization based on limited or nonexistent experience. Identifying and considering the validity of assumptions are critical thinking skills.

**Immigrants** – People who are or who have ever been landed immigrants. Landed immigrants are people who have been permitted by immigration authorities to live in Canada permanently; some will have lived in Canada for a number of years, while others have arrived recently.

## PLURALISM IN THE ARTS IN CANADA – A CHANGE IS GONNA COME!

**Indigenous** – Refers to those persons who reported identifying with at least one Aboriginal group, i.e. North American Indian, Métis or Inuit.

**Non-Discrimination (Opposite: Discrimination)** – Non-discrimination is vital to the concept of equality. It ensures that no one is denied the protection of their human rights based on external factors. Such factors include age, birth, color, creed, disability, ethnic origin, familial status, gender, language, marital status, political or other opinion, public assistance, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. These categories, however, are only examples; they do not mean that discrimination is allowed on other grounds.

**March 21<sup>st</sup>** – is designated by the United Nations (UN) as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. It's a day observed all around the world to focus attention on the problems of racism and the need to promote racial harmony.

**Pluralism** – is a term used when smaller groups within a larger society maintain their unique cultural identities, and their values and practices are accepted by the wider culture.

**Prejudice** – An attitude, opinion, or feeling formed without adequate prior knowledge, thought, or reason. *Prejudice* can be prejudgment for or against any individual, group, or object. Any individual or group can hold *prejudice(s)* towards another individual, group, or object.

**Race** – Refers to classifications of humans into relatively large and distinct populations or groups often based on factors such as appearance based on heritable phenotypical characteristics or geographic ancestry, but also often influenced by and correlated with traits such as culture, ethnicity and socio-economic status.

**Racism** – An ideology of racial superiority and hierarchy based on discrimination.

**Self-Determination** – Political independence on the part of a group without control by people outside of that area.

**Sexism** – Attitudes, conditions, or behaviours that promote stereotyping and oppression based on sex and gender; *discrimination* based on sex or gender.

**Visible minorities** – The Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as “persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour”.

The visible minority population is derived from a census question regarding the respondent's ethnicity and race, including the following options that are classified as visible minorities: Chinese, South Asian, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Southeast Asian, Arab, West Asian, Japanese, Korean and Pacific Islander. Other responses could be specified in the space provided.

Definitions are in part derived from the 1995 Cultural Equity handbook, the online census dictionary, the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Oxford dictionary online, the community cultural development website and other human rights websites:

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### CONTEXT

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines cultural diversity as a reality of today. “There exists a wide range of distinct cultures, even if the contours delimiting a particular culture prove more difficult to establish than might at first sight appear. Moreover, awareness of this diversity has today become relatively commonplace, being facilitated by the globalization of exchanges and the greater receptiveness of societies to one another. While this greater awareness in no way guarantees the preservation of cultural diversity, it has helped to give the topic greater visibility.”<sup>1</sup>

Within the cultural diversity framework, this toolkit distinguishes ethno-racial communities from Indigenous cultures. It is important to note that ethno-racial refers to people who identify with a distinct cultural heritage whereas Indigenous people are the First Peoples of Canada. The history of Indigenous people must be considered in order to understand the current context in which Indigenous artists and organizations operate.

Canada has a horrific track record relative to its treatment of Indigenous people. The implementation of the most oppressive laws banning key customs—including potlaches, and other cultural ceremonies in addition to numerous atrocities with the sole purpose of destroying Indigenous culture has had a lasting and devastating impact on Indigenous people. In a report published in 2007 by the Aboriginal Arts Research Initiative at the Canada Council for the Arts, this history is outlined.

“In Canada, the process of colonization has had a profound and lasting impact on Aboriginal peoples, their land, their languages, their cultures and their art practices. Today, many artists consider contemporary art practices to be a process of decolonization, re- appropriation, reclaiming and healing.”<sup>2</sup>

The history of Canada’s treatment of immigrants is equally reprehensible made evident by immigration policy over the last century. In 1910, the Immigration Act allowed the government to prohibit landing of immigrants “belonging to any race deemed unsuited to the climate or requirements of Canada, or of immigrants of any specified class, occupation or character”.<sup>3</sup> In 1947, Prime Minister Mackenzie King made a statement in the House outlining Canada’s immigration policy. Regarding discrimination, he made it clear that Canada is “perfectly within her rights in selecting the persons whom we regard as desirable future citizens. Large-scale immigration from the orient would change the fundamental composition of the Canadian population”.<sup>4</sup>

As recently as February 1995, as part of the federal budget, the government imposed the Right of Landing Fee, which became known as the Head Tax. The fee of \$975 applied to all adults, including refugees, becoming permanent residents. In February 2000, the government rescinded the Right of Landing Fee for refugees, but maintained it for immigrants.

The history of the federal government privileging one cultural group over another has perpetuated discrimination by the broader Canadian population which has brought about greater challenges and obstacles for individuals from ethno-racial and Indigenous communities.

In 1986, the federal government recognized this to a certain extent and brought in the Employment Equity Act (EEA) which applies to employers under federal jurisdiction with one hundred or more employees (such as broadcasters and cable companies).

The purpose of the Act is:

To achieve equality in the workplace so that no person shall be denied employment opportunities or benefits for reasons unrelated to ability ... to correct the conditions of disadvantage in employment experienced by women, Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities and persons who are, because of their race or colour, in a visible minority in Canada ... employment equity means more than treating persons in the same way but also requires special measures and the accommodation of differences (section 2)

In 1992, Betty Julian prepared a report on cultural equity for the Toronto Arts Council in which she stated: “Cultural Equity ensures that all artists, arts organizations and artistic expressions are dealt with on a basis of fairness, respect for cultural difference and for the well being of all artists regardless of ethnicity, culture, gender, language, race and sex.” The author of this document would go further, and say that cultural equity also implies justice for the dispossessed, the voiceless, the outsider, the unrepresented.

A report published in 2005 by Hill Strategies and funded by the Canada Council for the Arts, Ontario Arts Council and the Department of Canadian Heritage; *Diversity in Canada's Arts Labour Force* analyzes 2001 census data concerning visible minority, Aboriginal and immigrant Canadians in the arts labour force. The results are disconcerting considering visible minority artists had average earnings of \$20,800. This figure represents an 11% earnings gap between visible minority artists and the total arts labour force (average earnings of \$23,500) Visible minority artists also have average earnings that are 34% less than the average earnings of all Canadian workers (\$31,800).<sup>5</sup>

In August 2009, the Canada Council for the Arts published a “Fact Sheet” on *Contemporary Aboriginal Arts in Canada*. Amongst many interesting facts related to cultural production within Aboriginal communities, it states that “Aboriginal artists have low average earnings (\$16,900), 28% lower than the average for all artists (\$23,500). The average earnings of Aboriginal artists reflect the low earnings for Aboriginal people in Canada’s overall labour force.”<sup>6</sup> In the media arts Rebecca Belmore and Zacharias Kanuk are listed as nationally and internationally acclaimed.

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In July 2009, the Canada Council for the Arts published a “Fact Sheet” on *Contemporary Inuit Arts in Canada*. It describes traditional Inuit culture and how the arctic environment provides inspiration and creativity. “Inuit have been using their surrounding materials to create art for millennia...Today, Inuit artists are reinventing old traditions and embracing forms of new media such as digital art and spoken word performances.”

It reports that Nunavut’s 250 artists represent 1.86% of the territory’s labour force — more than double the national average of 0.77%. It also states that the average earnings of artists in Nunavut are \$20,300, compared with average earnings in the cultural sector are \$33,200 and an average of \$38,000 for all Nunavut workers, a gap of 47%. Furthermore, one-half of these artists earn \$10,000 or less (median earnings of artists in Nunavut). In 2007, Statistics Canada defined the “poverty line” (or low-income cut off) for a single person living in a major city as \$21,666 (before tax). To put this information into context, it is important to note that the cost of living in the north is extremely high, almost 75% higher than the Canadian average.<sup>7</sup>

### CURRENT DIALOGUE

One of the questions posed to IMAA members was whether their organization actively dialogued about diversity, and if yes, what were some of the most prevalent issues discussed?

Discussions presented by several organizations have been about how to make appropriate inroads to the cultural communities and sustainable relationships with those communities so that they are fully engaged at all steps of the project from planning to curation, to marketing and promotion to ancillary events.

Another topic is how to overcome some of the challenges related to enforcing tolerance. It is not always overtly clear. These discussions can end up quite heated and difficult and remind the board and staff how important it is to hold diversity workshops even when it can make people extremely uncomfortable to be invited to attend.

One respondent noted that media artists are in and of themselves an under-represented segment of society so it is crucial to our work to encourage participation from members of marginalized communities and to continually find ways of presenting those works to the larger public.

Some organizations raised the issue of balance, being supportive of emerging and established artists in addition to having programming objectives and outreach projects that will bring works to specific groups and also bring new works and/or artists to them.

In some Québec organizations recurring topics that are discussed include the French language, religion, the status of women and integration within Québec so-

ciety. Organizations based in Montreal expressed how important it was for them to serve the largest possible number of creators and to offer services in English and French and to meet the needs of a diverse membership base.

Media arts have been embraced by Indigenous people in all parts of Canada. For example, today the film, television and new media industry is an exciting new sector in Nunavut's economy, and a vital part of the promotion of Inuit culture and language world-wide. Igloolik Isuma Productions is one example of this as their films extend the ancient art of storytelling into the digital age through video art and filmmaking, appropriating these technologies to present to the world a discourse from a distinctly Inuit point of view.<sup>8</sup>

For the National Indigenous Media Arts Coalition, an important question is how to increase opportunities for exhibition, promotion and critical writing on Indigenous media artists and how to actively support the artists. NIMAC works closely with the IMAA and participates on steering committees within IMAA events including its national conferences, meetings and festivals. In recent years, NIMAC has formed partnerships with the Winnipeg Film Group, AFSCOOP and Faucet Media Arts, and has established residencies with Oboro, and programming at PAVED.

NIMAC is continually seeking new opportunities to collaborate with galleries and media arts organizations across Canada. Current goals include developing a new media curatorial project that would present Indigenous media art within an IMAA member organization and to produce critical discourse on exhibitions/presentations within the member organization. So NIMAC's goals are twofold: more indigenous programming, and more critical discourse by indigenous curators on non-Indigenous media art.

There are a few strong examples of successful partnerships between media arts organizations and Indigenous communities.

Founded in 1980, Vtape is an international distribution, exhibition and resource centre with an emphasis on the contemporary media arts. Vtape is committed to supporting the work of Aboriginal artists and to connecting producers with international exhibitors. Since co-founding the Centre for Aboriginal Media in 1994, Vtape has continued to work closely with Aboriginal media artists and organizations, and collaborates annually with the imagineNATIVE Film and Media Arts Festival to present programs and publish catalogues. Recent examples include *The Double Entendre of Re-enactment*, curated by the AGO's Gerald McMaster; *CULTURE SHOCK*, curated by Steve Loft; *Aboriginal Screen Culture*, curated by award-winning artist Dana Claxton; and in fall 2010, Vtape hosted *The Evolution of Curatorial Consciousness*, a dynamic panel featuring Steve Loft, Jessica Bradley, Gerald McMaster, Daina Warren and Lisa Steele, dedicated to discussing the role of non-traditional Aboriginal media as an essential facet of contemporary

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art. Vtape also annually sponsors two major awards, one for \$1,000 to an emerging artist and another of \$1,000 for the best New Media project.

VIVO MEDIA ARTS CENTRE, incorporated in 1973 as the Satellite Video Exchange Society (SVES), is Vancouver's oldest media arts access centre. VIVO continues to fulfill its founding vision by directly supporting independent artists, community-based producers and activists to develop and exchange their skills in a supportive environment. VIVO is credited for founding an Indigenous community initiative entitled the First Nations Access Program (FNAP) that was started in 1991, eventually becoming the independently-run non-profit society known as the Indigenous Media Arts Group (IMAG).

### **EXCERPT FROM:**

#### **STITCHING THE FABRIC**

#### **Cultural and Community Development | by Tracey Jack**

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The process of creating community means coping with a continuous dynamic of change. If we examine our communities in today's multicultural society, we perceive that each of us is a participant in the continuous multicultural threads that form the social fabric of cultural diversity. Cultural development and the dilemma of inclusiveness in the 21<sup>st</sup> century continue to be a compromise between the variety of cultural groups and individuals within society.

In this essay I will speak from my professional experience as an indigenous arts administrator and draw upon knowledge from my community with the understanding that inclusiveness is our ultimate goal. My intent is to accentuate the need for an ongoing examination of the way in which community relations' work within the current art practice. Of particular concern is identifying and promoting good examples of arts practice. For Indigenous people, cultural development in communities means the opportunity to strengthen the fabric of our cultures within smaller communities through the development of tools to empower and share diversity.

Cultural diversity motivates equity and encourages growth within larger society through the acquisition of new and shared knowledge. Our goal is to assist in building a community of inclusiveness, one in which attitudes and actions foster mutual respect, allowing people of all backgrounds to fully participate in



cultural development transforming cultural difference into a process from which every one can benefit.

In my experience, the reality of cultural diversity and the question of inclusion for aboriginal communities is one of the greatest challenges the arts community faces today. One of the central challenges is that the culturally specific forms of aboriginal art don't often conform to classical western models.

Capacity building in the aboriginal community requires practical tools. Audience development in aboriginal communities often requires the development of presentation opportunities that fall outside the realm of mainstream recognition. For example, the western theatrical format of the three-act play does not easily encompass the aboriginal tradition of storytelling or other forms of traditional aboriginal theatrical practice. Within the scope of traditional Western theatre, it is easy to discount the diversity of formats contained in aboriginal expression and thus never challenge the scope of programming. The opportunity to build appreciation of aboriginal cultural expression is lost as a result of this lack of culturally diverse programming.

Two issues for audience development become readily apparent:

- A lack of capacity within aboriginal communities to present prospects.
- A lack of recognition from a largely Euro-centric arts audience.

Community cultural development requires the physical presence of tools to actively assist in the development of appreciation for arts of different cultural groups in BC, tools which foster general appreciation for other cultures in Canada.

Differences in communication within aboriginal communities are dependent upon a number of factors, including distinctions between cultural groups, their geographical remoteness and the level of community infrastructure present. Issues of protocol and sensitivity surrounding dissemination of information and communication depend on understanding the individual uniqueness of these different cultural communities.

There is no blanket solution to address these differences for what may be appropriate in an urban aboriginal community. In aboriginal communities, bulletins sent by local arts council rarely reach individual aboriginal artists.

Tools that will enable access to facilities, presentation and outreach are critically needed as are the crafting of practical and realistic linkages for collaboration and audience development through a multicultural communication strategy.

The active development and implementation of programs to foster peer mentoring and arts training within a variety of cultural communities is also a priority. Our challenge will be to interweave our work at all levels so that cultural development, supportive of diversity, is a continuously open ended learning process for all people.

### PRINCIPLES, POLICIES

In the 1995 handbook, a debate was outlined about whether it is beneficial to develop written policies and procedures related to equity as opposed to simply instituting equity activities and projects within organizations.

On the one hand, written policies can be used to back up idealized statements of intent. They can give security and power to individuals who want to challenge racist or prejudiced behaviour of others in a group.

In addition, written procedures can act as a plan or blueprint, and might help centres and organizations with the good will to initiate equity activities with little prior experience or awareness.

The group discussions involved in drawing up equity policies and procedures can help an organization sensitize itself to the issues involved.

On the other hand, it was felt in 1995 that complex procedural documents can cause alienation, tokenism or inertia. By plunging in, and developing a project – initiating a practical activity – a group can feel the energy of action, can immediately begin to feel some positive results and growth, can then have some real experience on which to hang a theoretical document.

To uncover the reality today, the IMAA recently asked members how their organizations incorporate culturally diverse practices, and whether or not they have written policies, etceteras. And as the debate outlined above indicates, there are many ways that this is happening, with a large emphasis on those who do actually have written policies in place.

Only a few IMAA member organizations indicated that they do not have formal written policies in place but is implicitly part of what they do and is manifested through dialogue with board and staff, programming, hiring practices and is at the heart of all activities. Developing partnerships with a variety of organizations that are culturally specific is common practice for many organizations. These partnerships are initiated from both parties and prove to be a mutually beneficial arrangement.

Many members do have a written statement in place. For example Ed Video in Guelph, Ontario includes the following as part of their mandate:

Our vision as an access centre includes specific measures that address barriers to media artists from communities under-represented in both mainstream media

and independent video production. These measures encompass both production and exhibition at the centre to address existing structures of racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, and elitism within the organization and the larger society.

And in practice Ed Video has a cultural outreach fund where people of visible minorities can apply for equipment and editing support for projects. They also provide a meeting and event space for a variety of groups working for human rights issues in the hopes that this exposure will in turn open the media arts door to new groups. This strategy has proven to be successful, for example a link has been established with a community of people with disabilities.

The Independent Filmmakers Co-operative of Ottawa (IFCO) located in Ottawa, Ontario has both an existing Cultural Equity Committee and as a result, a Cultural Equity Policy, which ensures the facilitation of Cultural Equity artistic training programs. This programming is designed to encourage increased involvement in filmmaking from members of Ottawa’s Multi-Ethnic and First Nation, Inuit, Métis communities.

Groupe Intervention Vidéo, based in Montréal, Québec, indicated that they endeavour to ensure that their collection of videos reflects diverse practices in media arts. “Our policy is to undertake tours and outreach projects throughout Montreal to women’s groups and centres. We actively prospect for videos to become part of our distribution collection. We attend festivals, year-end screenings and other events. GIV has an important collection of works from Latin America.”

Many organizations established over the past two decades asserted that policies on anti-racism, non discrimination, and inclusivity were drafted alongside their mission statements right from day one.

Agence TOPO based in Montreal, QC asserts in their mission statement: Agence TOPO est un centre d’artistes en nouveaux médias dont le mandat est de produire, de diffuser et de distribuer des œuvres multimédias qui explorent les nouvelles narrativités et les croisements interdisciplinaires et interculturels.

Other organizations have developed policies over time that have translated into programming initiatives, outreach and board and staff make-up, etc.

SAW video in Ottawa, Ontario advocates an open, welcome atmosphere through the posting of the following wording in their brochure and on their website:

SAW Video actively promotes access for all artists, regardless of age, class, gender, sexual orientation, race or ability.

### **Employment/Personnel Policies**

Many organizations reported that they have an “open door” policy and include text in their job calls inviting people from diverse backgrounds to apply. However, if

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representatives from minority and “equity” communities are not applying for jobs that are advertised, does this mean that there are no potential applicants from these communities or does it mean that the jobs were not advertised properly?

Were they advertised in community and neighbourhood newsletters online and/or in printed newspapers, in foreign language publications? Do people with disabilities apply for these jobs; is there access in the access centre?

Recruitment: advertising in the right places to seek out a diversity of applicants:

- community centres, neighbourhood newspapers and websites, list-serves;
- community and university radio stations;
- foreign language newspapers, publications;
- organizational newsletters;
- specific media outlets: Aboriginal Voices Radio, *Talking Stick Magazine*, *Take One Magazine*, *Reverse Magazine*, *Diaspora Magazine* etc;
- word-of-mouth, networking etc.

### Hiring Committees

- should include representatives of various cultural and Indigenous communities.

### Job interviews

- Questions to applicants should not be culturally biased;
- To find out an applicant’s skills, use scenario questions e.g. “How would you handle a situation like this?”;
- “Stress interview” techniques and trick questions may prove to be confrontational and alienating.

### Job descriptions, personnel and other policies

- giving employees guidelines, tools and a solid structure in which to work:
  - hours of work;
  - delegating authority with budget responsibilities/accountability;
  - budget estimates “from the ground up”, “based on experience in the trenches”;

- rules of conduct, especially with reference to racism, etc.;
- management policies, lines of communications;
- research e.g.–history of Canadian unions, anti censorship movement;
- grievance procedures;
- planning meetings;
- statement of principles: artistic vision, social obligations, etc.;
- anti censorship policies.

### **Outreach, Access Policies**

Community outreach and community involvement can be done with a cultural focus, to make a diversity of groups and individuals in your community aware of your existence, aware of the programs and activities you have to offer.

Specific cultural communities can be contacted through strategic use of community media: neighbourhood newspapers, community cable programs, community/campus radio programs, social media, etc. Various cultural and interest groups are broadcasting on the community media. Solicit their co-operation in seeking out members of their audience.

Seek out and share in common cause; offer your resources and expertise as a way of contributing to community spirit and good will. There is a great element of elitism in many technical and creative aspects of media production. Recognizing this, production centres should develop access policies and procedures with an attitude of demystification.

Jargon and “in crowd” descriptions should be avoided. Equipment and procedures should be named and described in terms that can be logically comprehended by a wide variety of people.

Peer group workshops, such as training sessions for women only, have been shown to lower intimidation levels. Mentoring programs and other kinds of one-on-one training situations should be explored, especially in situations where language can be a barrier to learning.

### **Written Policies and Mission Statements**

Some of the IMAA member groups have found it positive and productive to draw up written policy and mission statements which express principles upon which equity activities can be built.

The IMAA itself expresses its commitment to equity in its statement of principles, as well as its membership guidelines:

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The IMAA members make a commitment to take anti-racist, anti-sexist and anti-homophobic positions in terms of hiring, distribution, production and representation. Also they respect and support the autonomy of Indigenous cultural representation.

IMAA is firmly committed to actively assuring full participation in the organization and in access to its resources to all people, regardless of gender, race, language, sexual orientation, age or ability. This commitment will be reflected throughout the organization in IMAA personnel, policies, practices, membership recruitment, recruitment of the board of directors, committees and positions of responsibility in the organization and in all other activities of the organization. It is the responsibility of the Board of Directors to ensure that members of the organization understand and adhere to this commitment in all of their activities pertaining to IMAA.

Some organizations have created Diversity Committees to oversee the commitment to equity. The IMAA's Diversity Committee has formulated this mandate:

The Diversity Committee ensures that the IMAA and its members represent the broadest possible range of media arts organizations and media artists. It is also committed to building diversity within media art audiences and community activities. In an ever-evolving media art field, diversity is not limited to the diversity of culture but includes region and practice.

### **Evaluation and Follow-up**

Evaluation is a vital mechanism for the successful implementation and development of an organization's diversity programs. The relative success or failure of a project can be ascertained by establishing goals and objectives when beginning the project, and then developing some measurable criteria that could be used to judge its outcome. This avoids the accusation of merely paying lip service to vague ideas and theories. All of the participants in a project should be asking the relevant questions:

- “What did we gain?”
- “How could things have been done better?”
- “What went wrong?”

The evaluation of previous activities should be used to plan future endeavours. Mechanisms of membership and community feedback should be established.

Statistics should be gathered and analyzed. Project and diversity co-ordinators could be assigned to give “equity reports” — at meetings, in newsletters and other publications.

The concept of *equity reports* as part of an organization's equity activities is worthy of informed discussion. The federal Employment Equity Act, for example, requires that organizations which come under its jurisdiction prepare a plan setting out their goals and also submit an annual report to assess progress made. Annual equity reports are also submitted to parliament by the Minister, giving aggregate results.

## **BEST PRACTICES**

The IMAA asked its members how their organizations have created opportunities for exploring others' differences, including ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc. We also asked what strategies are their organizations developing to address cultural inequities, and to create more inclusionary, diverse practices. Following is a summary of these answers grouped into specific headings with detailed examples.

### **Creating Partnerships**

A partnership in essence is a mutually beneficial agreement. One of the fundamental roles that a media arts organization can provide is its knowledge and expertise of the media arts. One organization reported that in providing a mentoring and educational role on the topic of media art, a partnering organization might be interested in exchanging their knowledge and expertise about issues of concern to their community. This mentoring exchange nurtures understanding, exploration and appreciation for each others' differences.

Another method for enkindling a relationship with another group is to support their efforts and objectives. This could be done by sponsoring an event, purchasing an ad in a program, offering use of space or equipment or assistance for one of their activities.

### **Programming**

For exhibitors, by selecting specific themes that incite exploration of one's culture, or difference or identity, an organization can include programming that welcomes a diversity of experiences. Some organizations reported working with curators whose expertise comes from a specific cultural framework and interest. Several organizations reported creating screening partnerships with other groups.

Our *Scene + Heard* is a collaborative commissioning project that pairs traditional oral storytellers from various world cultures and media artists. The resulting works are presented in a theatrical environment." *CineVic: Society of Independent Filmmakers*.

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However, it is important to consider that not all artists from specific under-represented groups create works about their experiences from that perspective. One organization indicated that they have adopted a new strategy to address cultural inequities in exhibitions presented at the centre. Rather than defining the exhibition as presented by a particular cultural group, artists from diverse backgrounds will be incorporated into all exhibitions regardless of themes.

One organization indicated that their programming director expressed trepidation in curating artwork based on cultural identity given that this might result in a focus on differences between people rather than the multitude of similarities that we all share.

In order to ensure that a great deal of submissions come from a diversity of groups regardless of the theme, an organization must enlarge its mailing list and advertise in the right places.

For the Independent Distributors, there currently exists discussion between them regarding specialization in certain genres or groups of artists whether it be gay/lesbian, women, educational, etc. Acquisition policies in many distribution organizations reflect the objective of representing a variety of cultural groups.

### **Creating Support Programs and Training Opportunities**

For production centres, creating support programs for particular groups is an excellent way of providing opportunities for artists who would otherwise find it challenging to produce media art works. Some production organizations reported providing fully subsidized workshop training for members from Multi-Ethnic, First Nation, Inuit, Métis communities in their regions. Others have organized programs for At Risk Youth.

Here is an example of a Call for Submissions:

The Cultural Outreach fund is a production support program aimed at providing opportunities for visible minority artists to express themselves creatively through video and media arts. Proposals are encouraged to arrive between October 1 and March 31st and will be assessed by an independent jury within one month of receipt of the proposal. The successful applicants have one year to complete their project. Eligible projects are those over which the artist has creative and editorial control. Any genre may be accepted (i.e. experimental, drama, documentary, video installation, and new media.). Artists crossing over from other disciplines (i.e. theatre, writing, visual arts, and dance) are also welcome. Support for the projects will be provided in the form of equipment assistance and editing time assistance, as well as the arrangement of a mentor to provide technical guidance.



The successful applicants receive:

- A one year producing membership;
- up to \$1,000 in access to equipment or workshops;
- payment of an artist fee and screening or exhibition in a member;
- event or programming within six months of completion of the project.

### **Other Strategies**

- Invite keynote speakers from related field and cultural group in order to draw attention to an event and attract audiences from diverse areas.
- Develop a mobile media art workshop initiative where an organization brings media art workshops to different communities.
- Create residency opportunities for artists from remote areas.
- When possible hire staff that can communicate in languages other than English or French.
- Improve informational materials in print and on websites to enable partner groups and artists to access information about programming activities and links to other networks.
- Establish a diversity committee that makes recommendations for the organization's action/strategic plan that identifies priority communities on which to focus its outreach.
- Work to make more artists aware of the need for closed captioning in their works.
- Make use of provincial/and or federal employment grant opportunities that support the hiring of visible minorities.
- Create internship programs for students/youth from diverse backgrounds. This could be in exchange for course credit or other form of remuneration.
- Develop a mechanism for monitoring attendance at events without being intrusive.

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**NAN TOOLKIT: A PROJECT OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD ARTS NETWORK** | Created by Skye Louis & Leah Burns

## **ARTS & EQUITY**

### **A Toolkit for Community-Engagement**

#### **NEIGHBOURHOOD ARTS NETWORK**

Since 2010, Toronto Arts Foundation's Neighbourhood Arts Network has been working to provide support to community-engaged artists and arts groups across Toronto through research and information sharing, professional development and networking events, advocacy, and promotion.

On a regular basis, the Neighbourhood Arts Network hosts community conversations on topics that are of interest to our members. These discussions help us to understand the barriers and challenges that artists and cultural workers are facing, and to explore innovative solutions. The Arts & Equity Project has emerged from needs and concerns identified by artists who are working to engage Toronto communities through the arts.

We believe that it's better to work together. By bringing people together and sharing knowledge, we are building capacity for artists and community organizations to do what they do best: enrich Toronto and transform it into a more vibrant, beautiful, liveable city.

To learn more about the Neighbourhood Arts Network and the inspiring work of community-engaged artists in Toronto, please visit [www.neighbourhoodartsnetwork.org](http://www.neighbourhoodartsnetwork.org)

#### **Why Community-Engaged Arts?**

The arts can be a powerful tool in building and sustaining successful neighbourhoods. Community-engaged arts practice is an approach to art making and com-

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community building that fosters collaborative relationships between artists and community members. Artists engage with communities throughout the development, creation and evaluation of arts projects and programs; community members are collaborators in the creative process. Mutual support, mentorship, learning and skill development are emphasized between artists and participants.

Community-engaged arts practices are situated within public contexts, community settings, and neighbourhood spaces. This kind of practice often extends beyond the boundaries of conventional arts venues and challenges conventional art forms and interpretations. The result can be a dynamic surge of creativity that changes how art is made, how communities are built, and how we live together.

Creative initiatives are taking place all over Toronto — in parks, apartment buildings, libraries, community centres, storefronts and street locations. These locally-rooted projects bring residents and artists together. The result is more vibrant communities, where community members strengthen relationships and skills, community spaces are revitalized, and communal investment in neighbourhoods is renewed. In order to honor and respect the values and contributions of participants, community-engaged arts practitioners must be sensitive and responsive to issues of access, equity and accountability.

### **THE ARTS & EQUITY PROJECT**

The Arts & Equity Project is a research and educational initiative of the Neighbourhood Arts Network, with support from Manifesto Community Projects. Launched in the spring of 2011, the project was made possible through the Ontario Ministry of Culture's Cultural Strategic Investment Fund. The Arts & Equity Project focuses on arts and community groups who are working to reduce barriers to community participation and collaboration. The project set out to learn from, document, and share the experiences of these groups.

#### **Interviews and Workshops**

The Arts & Equity project began through consultations and research interviews with arts and community groups, community-engaged artists, cultural workers, and community-based social service workers. We wanted to develop a better understanding of some of the challenges they are facing in relation to equity and professional development as well as the kinds of strategies they use to address these concerns. Based on what we learned we created a series of participatory workshops.

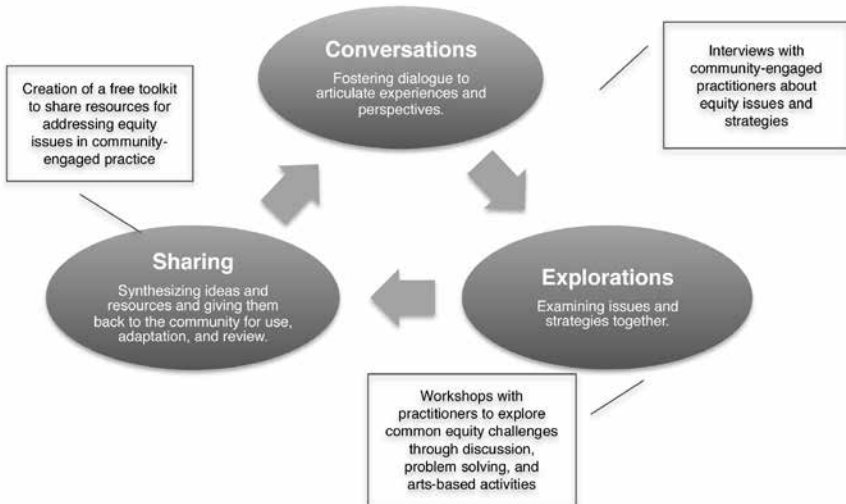
The workshops brought people together to examine community arts, equity, and engagement in a collaborative way. They were designed to address some of the common questions and concerns that practitioners identified during the consulta-

tions. The workshops provided a space for in-depth exploration (through discussion, problem-solving, and arts-based activities) of common challenges. They also enabled practitioners to develop stronger networks for peer-to-peer learning, support, and potential partnerships.

**Toolkit**

Utilizing learning generated through the interviews, consultations, and workshops, we developed this Arts and Equity toolkit. The toolkit includes three primary components: a reflective section that examines issues and provides a set of principles for working towards community arts equity; examples of equity in practice that zoom in on the work of a variety of local practitioners in relation to six priority issues; and a set of practical resources connected to each of the six priority issues. The toolkit aims both to provide a means of support to those who are working to build more inclusive and equitable communities and to act as a starting point for future dialogue about equity in the field.

**ARTS & EQUITY RESEARCH PROCESS**



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### Acknowledgements

This toolkit would not have been possible without the generosity of the artists, cultural workers, and community workers who shared their time, knowledge and insights with the Arts & Equity Project. Thank you to all of those who collaborated with us to explore issues of arts and equity through the consultations, interviews, and workshops. We look forward to continuing the journey and deepening this conversation in the future.

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## QUOTATIONS

We want to emphasize that this toolkit would not have been possible without the wealth of contributions, expertise and insight shared by the various artists, cultural workers, social service workers, individuals and organizations that participated in the Arts and Equity Project.

Within this document we sometimes include the voices of these participants using direct quotes. Although all participants gave permission for their words to be used, some participants requested that we maintain their privacy by keeping their identities confidential. To ensure this privacy we have chosen to keep the identities of *all* quoted participants confidential.

However we recognize that context and identity, or where someone is coming from, can be useful in helping readers to understand a quote or perspective; therefore, we have included basic roles alongside quotes such as: visual artist, community health worker, youth support worker, arts administrator, youth leader, educator, etc.

## EQUITY AS A LENS

How we see or understand the world, our perception, has a significant impact on our choices and actions. A lens is a tool that we look through and use to help us perceive, examine, and frequently represent our environment — eye glasses, microscopes, binoculars, cameras, books, movie screens, the internet, faith, policy, ideas — these are all potential lenses providing insight that may shape what we know and what we do. When we refer to equity as a lens we mean that equity can be a way of perceiving the world that allows us to shape our actions and representations so that they are more inclusive and socially just. In this project, equity as a lens has emerged as a set of principles that can help to inform approaches to *community-engaged arts practice*.

The focus of the Arts and Equity project, and of the Neighbourhood Arts Network in general, is creating opportunities for sharing and mutual support amongst community-engaged arts practitioners. Listening deeply, asking questions, and communicating stories are three key components of this work. To introduce how equity can act as a lens for envisioning more inclusive and socially just community-engaged arts practices, it helps to start by sharing a story.

On a hot and sticky summer afternoon in June 2011 Skye Louis, the Neighbourhood Arts Network coordinator, and Leah Burns, the recently hired project coordinator, sat down at the long oval table in the Toronto Arts Council boardroom to hash out

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an agenda and key questions for the EDC project. When this project began it was originally titled Engaging Diverse Communities (EDC). Its aim was “to strengthen relationships between the arts and social service sectors in order to build capacity for artists and cultural workers to increase access and reduce barriers to cultural participation for culturally diverse communities.

One of the first things that came up during that mid-summer meeting was: Who are we talking about when we say culturally diverse communities? The language we were using could be interpreted in many ways. Was culturally diverse really code for race or ethnicity? Could it include other kinds of culture such as queer culture, cultures of ability, class culture? Did it imply marginalized communities — was that why access and barriers might be an issue? How would the people we planned to interview and support feel about the term culturally diverse? How did this choice of language determine who we intended to contact for interviews, and how might it impact who did or did not respond or agree to participate?

We decided that we couldn't answer all of these questions on our own so we chose to make this the starting point for the interviews we conducted during the initial stage of the project. Our first questions for participants were: How do you feel about the term culturally diverse or cultural diversity? What do you think of the title Engaging Diverse Communities? The following quotes are some of their responses:

Cultural diversity is something that, from my experience ... can be embraced but at the same time I think it's a term that is easily manipulated ... institutional terms of cultural diversity might not necessarily be the same as [those of] the community ... Our society in Toronto is very culturally diverse; but, as you see, where power is concentrated, that may not be as culturally diverse [although the term] is used institutionally to set up our frameworks.

*~ Youth Support Worker*

Cultural diversity is a term that governments have embraced kind of like multiculturalism. The City of Toronto's motto is “Diversity is our Strength” which I think is true; but, I think the problematic part is that ... it can be watered down to talk about diversity [as] the mainstream, socially-acceptable senses of the term — food and music and festivals — which are great, but there is a lot more complexity to diversity ... there is racism and discrimination, which is not always addressed in that term ... I do think that it is the strength of our city; but, I think that the way it is portrayed or used does not always address what the reality is either.

*~ Youth Support Worker*



I think it is a term that people look at differently according to where they sit ... it is a very subjective term and it is very relative to who is saying it and the context.

*~ Youth Support Worker*

I am not a fan of the diversity terminology ... it doesn't really do very much to deal with substantive issues [which is] one of the reasons I prefer not to use the term... [I prefer] anti-discrimination, anti-racism ... The sad thing about the term diversity is it really has come to replace multiculturalism; it has come to replace race relations. So when we are talking about diversity we are talking about "the other" and so it's a masking because we are all diverse. So if you were really to do a project "Engaging Diverse Communities" you would have to be talking to all communities. I imagine you are really talking about communities who are some what outside the loop, marginal, don't have resources or have barriers to resources ... so it might be a bit more appropriate to name it in that way so that there is a clear message.

*~ Arts Researcher*

Its strange in the arts community they tend to use the terms culturally specific, culturally diverse, and I can't argue because they are all doing it ... but that really includes everyone. Everyone has cultural specificity. Everyone is culturally diverse in their own right, so ... "It leaves out the political?" ... yes, and I think that may often be intentional ... The language around diversity doesn't help for getting at structural and systemic barriers and in the arts it doesn't tend to get at the notion of form, which is really important, and it leaves the dominant group unnamed.

*~ Arts Researcher*

We quickly realized that our choice of language was really significant. It needed to be clearer and it needed to more effectively reflect the project goals: strengthening relationships, building capacity for inclusive community arts practice as well as naming and addressing barriers to equitable engagement in the arts. Our choice to use "Arts and Equity" as the new project title was a response to the feedback we received in the interviews.

Our selection of the word equity in our new project title was also informed by dialogue and terminology used within anti-oppression movements in both the arts and social service sectors (Kin Gagnon 2000; Robertson 2006; Williams 2002).

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Equity as a preferred term or goal has emerged in response to critiques of the concept of equality. Equality implies that everyone should be treated the same way and assumes that therefore they will have equal opportunities; however, this concept does not recognize existing and historical structures in social, political, and environmental contexts that reinforce unequal status based on difference. These structures have and continue to privilege certain groups and oppress others. Sameness does not equal fairness.

Although everyone who resides in Toronto contributes to the cultural diversity of the city some residents' cultures are privileged while other residents' cultures are marginalized. According to the City of Toronto's Roundtable on Access, Equity, and Human Rights: "Equity means equitable outcomes for all. It requires the removal of systemic barriers and accommodation of differences whereby individuals and groups can benefit equally. Different treatment, rather than treating everyone the same, is necessary to obtain equal results" (City of Toronto 2006).

So what does equity look like in the arts? The Arts and Cultural sector in Toronto and in Canada has been heavily influenced by and dependent on government policies and funding structures at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels. Many frameworks of government arts policy and programming were founded on Western European, upper middle class ideas about art forms and art's value. Despite a wealth of grassroots community-based art forms and traditions throughout the nation's history, the art forms and practices that have dominated in Canada have been based on Western conceptions of "high or fine" art. "Ethnic" or "folk" art forms were not supported or recognized as part of government arts agendas and aboriginal culture was actively suppressed. It is only within the past few decades that this has started to shift (Royal Commission 1951; Federal Cultural Policy Review 1988; Political and Social Affairs Division 1999).

The value and legitimacy of community-engaged arts has only recently been acknowledged within Canadian state and professional arts organizations in the form of funding programs, awards and staff dedicated to researching the field and managing resources that aim to foster it. (Canada Council 2006; McGauley 2006; Ontario Arts Council 1998; City of Toronto 2008). Nevertheless community-engaged arts practices have existed regardless even if unrecognized and unsupported. Most experienced community arts practitioners are self-taught. They may have developed their practice in response to a need or particular context within communities that they were connected to; they may have been part of longstanding, localized non-professional arts and cultural traditions; or they may have been artists seeking alternative venues and more collaborative processes for creative production that did not fit into conventional Western and/or studio/gallery-based approaches to arts practice. Much of their insight and skill has been developed "on the ground" as they worked, learning by doing.

Currently the conception of community arts as a field or discipline in Canada has resulted in the emergence of training programs or apprenticeship opportunities as well as university-based courses and certifications.<sup>1</sup> Although existing practitioners and organizations have supported this trend of professional development it does raise a number of tensions. Many children and youth who regularly participated in community-based arts programs over the past few decades are now beginning to take on leadership roles themselves. However, because community arts programming has often targeted under-served or marginalized communities, members of these communities may not be able to readily access programs that require tuition or that are located within educational institutions where they have traditionally been marginalized. This raises concerns about who is able to attain certification and whether this will have impact on perceived legitimacy, future work, or funding resources. Does professionalization compromise inclusiveness and the grassroots origins and intentions of community-engaged arts practice?

In response to the push for training many community arts organizations in Toronto have developed their own free mentorship and educational opportunities and are working to integrate this kind of learning and skill development within existing programming.<sup>2</sup> Practitioners have also identified professional development, time for critical reflection, peer support within the field, and learning from social service sector partners, as priorities for experienced as well as emerging community-engaged artists. The Arts and Equity project is one manifestation of a larger mandate on the part of Toronto's Neighbourhood Arts Network to foster the development and renewal of community-engaged arts in ways that honor the collaborative and inclusive qualities of the field.

We used the interviews conducted in the first stage of the Arts and Equity project to help inform a series of four workshops. The primary outcome of the workshops was the opportunity for practitioners to get together and share their experiences, strategies, and insights regarding key issues or barriers they face in their work and their communities. Taken together the interviews and workshops have helped us to identify five key principles that inform equitable approaches to community-engaged arts practice in Toronto right now. Many of the practitioners we learned from throughout this project demonstrate these principles in their practice. In the next section we discuss the five principles along with key terms and quotes from project participants.

We do not envision this lens as a prescription or the principles as a set of rules to abide by. What has been most valuable is the dialogue, the talk: telling, articulating, and reflecting on stories of experience together. Through this process relationships were started or deepened and things began to gel. It is this gelling of ideas that you will find represented in this toolkit. Not a rigid lens but, rather, a malleable one that is open to change and renegotiation. It needs to be refocused by each particular set of hands according to each specific context.

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As we moved from summer heat into the crisp coolness of autumn, the winter chill, and an unusually warm spring, we continued our reflections and discussions, at the table, on the elevator, in transit between meetings. By talking to each other, and continuing the conversation with colleagues and project participants, our sense of what this project needed to be about, began to take shape – a lens through which to consider equitable, community-engaged arts and strategies for enacting it.

### KEY TERMS

#### **Anti-oppression**

"[T]o acknowledge oppression in societies, economies, cultures & groups, and to remove or negate the influence of that oppression" (Wikipedia 2012).

"Advocating for change, acknowledging that inequitable practices and resource distribution/utilization create systemic barriers for different communities... the elimination of all forms of oppression in order to create and maintain a safe environment that facilitates open and respectful participation of staff, clients, volunteers, students, community and board members"  
(Access Alliance 2012).

#### **Capacity**

Capacity is the knowledge, skills and capabilities of an individual, group, or organization. "The actual or potential ability to perform, yield, or withstand... ability to engage" (Dictionary.com 2012).

#### **Community-Engaged Arts Practice**

Arts practice that emphasizes community participation in the planning, implementation and evaluation of arts processes, programs and projects.

#### **Cultural Diversity**

According to the United Nations Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, "Culture takes diverse forms across time and space. This diversity is embodied in the uniqueness and plurality of the identities of the groups and societies making up humankind... The defence of cultural diversity is an ethical imperative, inseparable from respect for human dignity. It implies a commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular the rights of persons belonging to minorities and those of indigenous peoples... Freedom of expression, media pluralism, multilingualism, equal access to art and to scientific and technological knowledge, including in digital form, and the possibility for all cultures to have access to the means of expression and dissemination are the guarantees of cultural diversity" (UNESCO 2007).

**Grassroots**

“Grassroots movements are often at the local level, driven by the politics of a community rather than orchestrated by traditional power structures” (Wikipedia 2012).

**Inclusive**

“Inclusive of the full range of human diversity with respect to ability, language, culture, gender, age and other forms of human difference. Equity and [inclusivity] ... aims to understand, identify, address, and eliminate the biases, barriers, and power dynamics that limit ... prospects for learning, growing, and fully contributing to society. Barriers may be related to gender, race, ethnic origin, religion, socio-economic background, physical or mental ability, sexual orientation, or other factors. It is now recognized that several factors may intersect to create additional barriers ... These barriers and biases, whether overt or subtle, intentional or unintentional, need to be identified and addressed” (“Equity and Inclusive Education” 2009).

**Marginalized and Marginalization**

“Individuals or groups that are marginalized are relegated to the fringe of society, out of the mainstream; made to be seen as unimportant” (Free Dictionary 2012). “To marginalize” is an active verb; it is something that is done by someone to someone else ... [relegating] certain individuals and social groups toward the edge of the societal boundary, away from the core of import...Marginalization is a process, not a label — a process of social de-valuation that serves to justify disproportional access to scarce societal resources.” (Dei & Rummens 2012)  
Marginalized individuals/groups may face a lack of access to material resources such as food and shelter; they may also be excluded from or have difficulty accessing public services, programs, and policies.

**Multiculturalism**

In Canada Multiculturalism was recognized by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982 and affirmed by the Canadian Multiculturalism Act in 1988 to ensure that every Canadian’s rights and heritage receive respect and protection by the government. Multiculturalism recognizes the experience and contributions of diverse cultural groups. One of the aims of multicultural education is to promote the understanding of and respect for cultural and racial diversity. (“Equity and Inclusive Education” 2009)

**Professional Development**

“Professional development refers to skills and knowledge attained for both personal growth and career development. Professional development encompasses all types of facilitated learning opportunities, ranging from college degrees and formal coursework, to conferences and workshops, or informal learning

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opportunities situated in practice” (Wikipedia 2012). The aim of professional development is to improve workers’ sense of understanding and ability so they may better fulfill the needs and goals of particular roles or responsibilities.

### **Social Service Sector**

The social service sector seeks to provide services to improve the quality of life and “wellbeing of an individual, group, or community, especially the disadvantaged, helping them deal with life challenges” (National Council of Social Service 2012) “[Social service] research is often focused on areas such as human development, social policy, public administration, program evaluation and international and community development” (Wikipedia 2012).

## **EQUITY PRINCIPLES**

In the following section we discuss five key principles that inform equitable approaches to community-engaged arts practice in Toronto right now. These principles have emerged out of the Neighbourhood Arts Network’s on-going dialogue with local community arts and social service sector practitioners who emphasize community engagement and collaboration. It is important to recognize that we do not envision these five as the only principles for equity. There are many other organizations that have also developed frameworks and ways of understanding equity. Working towards equity is a continuous process that constantly evolves according to each context, point-in-time, and group of people.

The five principles that we identify are shared across the practices of the artists and community-engaged practitioners who we worked with during the process of the Arts & Equity project. They include: Flexibility and Adaptability, Reflexivity and Relationships, Relevance and Representation, Embeddedness, and Sustainability. For each principle we provide:

<b>Discussion:</b>	What the principle is and how it relates to community-engaged practices.
<b>Question</b>	Points to reflect on about how the principle might apply to your practice.
<b>At a Glance</b>	A quick review of the main ideas and important terms connected to each principle.

Quotes from Arts and Equity interview and workshop participants are also incorporated throughout the discussion; their contributions help to provide insight into how each principle plays out in practice.

## FLEXIBILITY & ADAPTABILITY

You need to make sure that the people that you are asking to come to deliver a program understand how to engage...I think sometimes artists can get caught up... they want so much to be an artist, to have their art perfected that they forget ... they need to step back ... and there is going to be a lot of issues ... great things will come out, maybe things that they have never seen ... you are giving an opportunity to express some of the things [participants] are facing whether it be poverty...violence...lack of voice... whoever is coming in needs to understand cultural sensitivity in relation to the actual community... you need to have the skill set to be able to address it and leave room for it to be addressed. . . Art is about expression. Art is about issues that we are all facing and sometimes it's not pretty and working in the community, it's not always pretty... so empathy is necessary, patience, flexibility ...

*~ Anti-oppression Educator*

Flexibility & Adaptability is really an overarching principle that informs all of the other four principles of this lens. In order to be equitable when engaging communities it is necessary to be responsive. Unlike some conventional art practices where the creative impetus and process is driven by an individual artist's vision, community-engaged arts is frequently motivated in response to the concerns of a large and often diverse group of people. Therefore the inspiration, planning, implementation, and evaluation of projects and programs are developed in response to community needs/interests and in partnership with community members.

As stated earlier, equity is about accommodation of differences rather than sameness. Choosing and adapting art forms and creative processes so that they are appropriate for each community context and for the different individuals involved is essential. Artists and community workers may have a wealth of experience and skills but expertise about a community tends to come from the community itself. Asking community members to help determine what mediums they would like to use and what kind of structures, processes, and outcomes will fit their goals, work styles, needs, and responsibilities, is an effective starting point for an inclusive program.

Some of the most challenging programs are the ones where I didn't prepare the artists. It comes down to challenging the idea of excellence. We need to set [assumptions] by the door, and recognize that it's the collaborative that's generating the expertise.

*~ Visual Artist*

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Yet, even when a process has been developed inclusively, it is important to be flexible and to leave room for the unexpected. Flexibility means being nimble: developing the ability to be alert, sensitive to issues as they emerge, and able to respond quickly and resourcefully to accommodate them. Being flexible may also involve stretching our understanding and challenging our assumptions. Working towards equity requires openness to new ideas and interpretations of social, aesthetic, political and environmental conditions; and it calls for a willingness to perceive ourselves, our ideas, and our actions differently in relation to those we are working with.

### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

#### **Community Involvement**

How are community members involved in the planning, outreach, implementation, and evaluation of projects, programs, or organizations?

#### **Checking In**

What techniques are used to regularly check-in with colleagues and community members about needs, processes, and goals?

#### **Accommodation**

How are differences in ability, skill level, income, language, location, perspective, etc. accommodated to ensure that all potential participants are able to take part?

#### **Unexpected**

If unexpected issues or developments occur how will they be addressed or responded to?

#### **Training**

What kind of training or preparation might be needed to support facilitators and/or participants in negotiating change or being open to difference?



## AT A GLANCE: FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTABILITY

The principle of flexibility and adaptability focuses on being responsive to community needs, skills, interests, and contexts throughout the development, planning, implementation, and evaluation of projects, programs, and organizations.

### MAIN IDEAS

- **Flexibility of Thought and Structure**

Keeping an open mind and creating processes for thinking through or rethinking ideas together.

- **Prioritizing Community Contributions**

Adapting organizational structures, programs and processes to fit the community context and enabling community input throughout different stages and organizational levels.

- **Planning for Spontaneity**

Leaving room in plans for unforeseen developments and responding to issues as they arise.

- **Being Proactive**

Preparing facilitators and participants to accommodate differences and adapt to change.

### KEY TERMS

#### **Accommodation**

An adjustment made to policies, programs, guidelines, or practices, including adjustments to physical settings and various types of criteria, that enables individuals to benefit from and take part in the provision of services equally and to participate equally and perform to the best of their ability in the workplace or an educational setting. Accommodations are provided so that individuals are not disadvantaged or discriminated against on the basis of ability, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc. (“Equity and Inclusive Education” 2009)

#### **Aesthetic**

A particular theory or conception of beauty or art: a particular taste for or approach to what is pleasing to the senses and especially sight (Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2012).

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### **Assumption**

"A fact or statement (as a proposition, axiom, postulate, or notion) taken for granted" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2012). Negative assumptions about a particular mode of cultural expression or a specific community can reinforce existing inequities. Challenging these assumptions can be an important step towards building more equitable arts practices.

### **Expertise**

Expertise is "expert opinion or commentary". An expert is someone with 'special skill or knowledge derived from training or experience' (Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2012). Lived experience can lead to expertise in a specific community or culture.

## REFLEXIVITY & RELATIONSHIPS

There is a lot of evaluation of organizations; but, I think that there is a lot of personal evaluation that needs to happen ... especially when you are working in community, self is really important because you are bringing your self into it each day ... self reflection, self care ... being self reflective taking that time to think about ... how you are positioned in relation to the work that you are doing ... Why do you want to work and engage in diverse communities? ... What is your passion? What's your motivation? ... What is that all about?

*~ Anti-oppression Educator*

When working towards equity in community-engaged practices a common reflex is to begin by looking outwards and seeking to understand others: the community context and the different people within it. While getting to know the community you are working with is an essential and important step in this kind of practice, anti-oppression frameworks usually encourage practitioners to begin with themselves when they are aiming for equity. Reflexivity requires that practitioners be aware of and critically reflect on their own position within society and how that may shape their relationships with a community or with others. How do aspects of artists' and community workers' identities connect to power dynamics within society?

[A] piece that is critical from the front end is to recognize privilege. Allowing each person to recognize that they do have a certain degree of privilege. We do have privilege. I have privilege from a gender perspective. I may not have privilege from a race-based

[perspective] because I come from a racialized population in certain aspects. I have privilege as a heterosexual male. The program and whatever we do should help individuals to be able to recognize when they are at a position of privilege and when they are at a position of being marginalized, so that they can come at it from a full, holistic experience. So that they can become more compassionate with their understanding.

*~ Community Health Administrator*

Recognizing how one may embody or represent different kinds of power or agency and how that may impact the building of relationships with colleagues, community members, and other organizations is vital. What kind of access to knowledge and resources do you have and does this give you an advantage or disadvantage? What qualifies and/or motivates you to work in a particular role or with a particular group? How do you acknowledge and address unequal power dynamics within a relationship? What are the possibilities and limitations of your position in relation to other people? What kinds of accommodations might you need to make in order to form relationships that are more equitable? Getting to know ourselves and our organizations better, including how we are situated and perceived in our communities, can help to build our awareness and strengthen our interactions. It is also important to recognize that while we bring ourselves (skills, knowledge, sense of self) to a community we also further develop ourselves as we engage with community. Reciprocity is an integral component of equitable community-engagement. Reciprocity means that there is a back-and-forth sharing of resources and an ethic of mutual respect. Everyone involved both gives and receives something; it could be knowledge, materials, ideas, time, energy, space, or other contributions. In equitable community-engaged arts practice the contributions of the community are just as significant as those of the artists or arts organizations involved. Community knowledge and expertise are valued, sought out, acknowledged and integrated.

I don't think any census or Internet research or workshop would really help me understand a community. I think what would, is getting to know some key people ... trying to go for coffee with some community leaders and having a conversation with them ... asking them their experience and their questions and their advice and who they think I should get to know.

*~ City of Toronto Community Worker*

Developing mutual understanding and knowledge requires the building of relationships. Every single person we interviewed identified an investment in relationships as critical for equitable community engagement. This investment requires

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“lived experience of the community and connections with actual people”: face-to-face dialogue, being present by spending time in and with a community, asking questions, and listening. What skills, resources, and initiatives already exist in the community? What are the important rhythms, spaces, individuals and groups?

Depending on your experience, if you have general knowledge of different cultural communities, different types of communities... and an anti-oppression framework and have previous experience, that's helpful. But its people that really matter and the dynamics of every community are really, really different.

~ *City of Toronto Community Worker*

Commitment to equity in relationships requires time, transparency and teamwork. Relationships are built and strengthened over time; so, deeper community engagement involves more one than one single project or moment. Long-term investment may be required to develop community trust and build support for a program, an initiative, an individual, or an organization. Strong relationships also involve transparency, letting people in. Being transparent means allowing people to see and understand motives, organizational processes/structures, and power dynamics. It includes sharing information and being honest about what may or may not be achieved with existing skills and resources. It also requires teamwork. More can often be achieved by opening up, collaborating, seeking help/input, and sharing ownership with community members. For more on collaboration see: *Many Hands Make Light Work—Red Dress Productions and the Sherbourne Health Centre and the worksheet: Assessing Your Collaboration* in the Equity in Practice section of this toolkit.

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

#### **Identities, Motivations and Experiences**

- What are my motivations for engaging in this work?
- What access to knowledge and resources do I have? Does this give me an advantage or disadvantage? How can this affect my interactions with others?
- What kinds of experiences qualify me to play a particular role or be involved with a particular group?

#### **Relationships and Power Dynamics**

- What are the important rhythms, spaces, individuals and groups within the community? What are my relationships to the people, places, and ideas involved?

- How am I perceived by others? How does this affect the work I am engaged in?
- What are the possibilities and limitations of my position in relation to other people?
- How do I acknowledge and address unequal power dynamics within a relationship?
- What kinds of accommodations or changes do I need to make in order to form relationships that are more equitable?
- How much time is available for relationships to deepen and for trust to be built?

**Sharing, Reciprocity and Respect**

- Can my relationship with others be classified as either 'giving' or 'taking'? Or is there a two-way exchange of knowledge and resources?
- Do my actions demonstrate respect for the people and places I am working with?
- Who gets to be a part of decision-making? Who am I willing to share ownership with?

**Listening and Learning**

- What skills, resources, and initiatives already exist in the community?
- Am I seeking out existing community knowledge and expertise? How am I integrating my learning into the work as it moves forward?

**Transparency**

- Do I share my motivations, processes, and structures with others? How do I let others in on my processes and decisions?

### AT A GLANCE: REFLEXIVITY AND RELATIONSHIPS

The principle reflexivity and relationships starts with critical self-reflection; reflecting on how one's own position (identity, skills, motivation) fits with those we aim to work with. This reflection helps when working to build and maintain relationships. Equitable relationships require time, transparency, and teamwork.

#### MAIN IDEAS

- **Practicing Self-Reflection**

Critically reflecting on personal, professional, and organizational identity / social positions as well as how these factors inform relationships, perspectives, and participation.

- **Investing in Relationships**

Building time for developing relationships into vision, planning and goals. Being present by spending time in/with a community and by meeting people face-to-face.

- **Being Transparent**

Providing public access and facilitating the sharing of information about decision-making, available resources, goals, organizational structures and processes.

- **Emphasizing Collaboration**

Including active engagement of community members in design, planning, implementation and evaluation of programs.

#### KEY TERMS

##### **Privilege**

"The experience of freedoms, rights, benefits, advantages, access and/or opportunities afforded members of the dominant group in a society or in a given context, usually unrecognized and taken for granted by members of the majority group, while the same freedoms, rights, benefits, advantages access and/or opportunities are denied to members of the minority or disadvantaged groups" ("Racism101: Definitions" 2012).

##### **Racialized or Racialization**

"A group of people who may experience social inequities on the basis of race, colour, and/or ethnicity, and who may be subjected to differential treatment" [racialized]. "The process through which groups come to be seen as different, and may be subjected to differential and unequal treatment" [racialization] ("Equity and Inclusive Education" 2009).

**Reciprocity**

"[T]he social expectation that people will respond to each other in kind—returning benefits for benefits."

"An ethic of reciprocity works from the understanding that each individual has a right to just treatment, and a reciprocal responsibility to ensure justice for others" (Wikipedia 2012).

**Reflexivity**

Critically reflecting on one's own social position and identity in relation to the field / community / people that one is engaging with. Working to understand how social position may impact relationships, power dynamics and processes of engagement or interpretation. This can be applied to organizations as well as individuals.

**Transparency**

Removing all barriers to — and the facilitating of — free and easy public access to information about the conditions, agendas, power dynamics, finances and social processes that shape cultural organizations and influence cultural workers. Supporting the public to freely join, develop, and improve these processes. (Wikipedia 2012)

**RELEVANCE & REPRESENTATION**

Communities need to understand how they fit, how they benefit .... there is a lot of that feeling that, especially priority or underserved communities are being used ... how are the youth going to benefit, how are the adults going to benefit, you know ... it looks good for you, you are still ticking it off, but at the end of the day you are going to walk out of here and we are not getting the best out of it for us.

*~ Anti-oppression Educator*

Conventional Western fine arts practices have commonly been critiqued and parodied in North American popular media as elitist or irrelevant to everyday life. In response the fine arts community has worked hard to demonstrate how these practices do have value; however, it is also important to consider why this feeling of alienation from arts practice might exist. The spaces in which many of these arts disciplines are accessed often formalize and/or prescribe how people are allowed to interact with art. Arts professionals usually determine what art will appear and

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how it will appear. Invitations to participation or engagement often occur once these decisions have already been made. However the imperative to nurture more diverse audiences has challenged some of these institutions to rethink their approaches. A key concern in working to be more inclusive is that organizations need to commit to change over the long-term through increased relevance and representation rather than fulfilling diversity mandates through tokenistic projects or initiatives that only fleetingly or superficially represent non-dominant groups.

What often motivates participation or investment in any form of social or cultural engagement is a sense of connection and relevance. The goal of community-engaged arts practice is to make the arts more accessible and more relevant to more individuals and communities. It moves beyond the conception of diverse communities only as potential audiences and includes them as collaborators in the creation and presentation of artwork. Art that is relevant has meaning beyond a moment of encounter. The relevance may be found in the subject matter — speaking to or expressing people’s lived experiences. It may be embodied by a particular medium revealing a means of expression that resonates and inspires. Or relevance maybe found in the learning gleaned through the process of art making itself.

We are being a lot more intentional in the work that we do ... we are not doing art for the sake of doing art. We are doing art with a purpose, with a deeper meaning. We are attaching the social aspects to the art that we do, taking on a bit more in terms of the social service side of things, working with young people to address their everyday issues ... looking at not just the fact that a young person wants to come in and use our studio [but] what specifically do they want to do, why are they coming in ... what issues or challenges are they coming with? .... A lot of the young people that we are working with they don’t just want to come here to do arts programs. They are learning leadership; they are dealing with life skills issues ... careers, growth and development.

~ *Community Arts Administrator*

When artwork is relevant it meets the needs of those who engage with it; it is pertinent to their lives and it has social applicability. Relevance can often be better achieved by being attentive to inclusive representation. The field of inclusive education identifies multiple layers of representation: representation with regards to people (who), representation in terms of form, process and content (what), and representation with concern for setting or environment (where). The Ontario Ministry of Education’s guidelines for equity (2009) echoes these forms of representation when describing inclusive learning: “[people] are engaged in and empowered by what they are learning, supported by whom they are learning from, and welcome in the environment in which they are learning” (p. 12). Applying this con-



cept of inclusive representation to arts contexts can be useful for developing more equitable arts practices and organizations. For another example of how to support inclusivity and initiate change within arts contexts try exploring *CPAMO's toolkit: Evidence Based Strategies to Promote Pluralism in the Arts* <https://sites.google.com/site/cpamotoolkit/home>

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

### **Is the art form or artwork relevant?**

How does the art being pursued have meaning for community members? Does its relevance extend beyond the moment of engagement and connect with community or individual priorities and goals?

### **Who is represented?**

Are the people in leadership roles such as staff, facilitators, or artists representative of the groups that make up the communities they work with? Whose voices or perspectives are sought out and incorporated within decision-making processes?

### **What is represented?**

What forms of artwork are supported and pursued; do they represent a range of cultural origins and practices? What is the subject matter that the artwork explores; does it investigate issues or experiences that represent some communities more than others; is anyone privileged or excluded? How is the creative process constructed; what learning or engagement styles and preferences does it accommodate?

### **Where are the arts situated?**

Are the spaces in which arts practice is situated accessible in terms of differences in physical mobility? Does the environment reflect the perspectives and backgrounds of all community members? How are people expected to interact or engage within the space and does this honor different cultural traditions? Is it a space in which all contributors will feel comfortable or safe to participate?

### AT A GLANCE: RELEVANCE AND REPRESENTATION

The principle of relevance and representation is based on the premise that community-engaged art should have social value beyond art for art's sake. It also encourages arts practitioners and organizations to rethink the who, what, and where associated with art practice.

### MAIN IDEAS

- **Committing to Change**

Committing to change over the long-term through organizational and programmatic restructuring that more equitably distributes decision-making and authority. Making inclusion and non-dominant perspectives an integral component of program/project design over the long-term, not as a special event.

- **Meaningful Engagement**

Fostering engagement in or with art forms that have meaning and that connect to the lives of the people in the communities you work with. Creating opportunities for community members to be active participants in the creative process or experience.

- **People and Content**

Being attentive to who is represented in terms of the subject/content of artwork and in terms of who the creators or participants in art practice are. Increase staff, artists, and participants from non-dominant groups.

- **Form and Location**

Recognizing non-Western art forms as legitimate and vibrant/active methods of arts practice. Diversifying the location of arts practice by including different kinds of locations, different ways of organizing art practice in these spaces, as well as different modes of engaging participation in and with art. Ensuring that art forms and venues are accessible and honor the perspectives and traditions of non-dominant communities.

## EMBEDDEDNESS

Sometimes as organizations we ask so much of people without thinking ... yes, okay, we have a small budget, but we are asking them for their time ... what are we doing to engage them, what are we giving them for them to be there for an hour and a half ...

~ *Anti-oppression Educator*

A barrier to equitable access within cultural programs for communities is that they are often designed and implemented externally. It is not uncommon that people cite a lack of time, interest, cost, distance, conflicting responsibilities, or a need to prioritize, when questioned about reasons for not participating in cultural activities. They cannot fit it in. They see it as external to their lives and their communities. To embed means, “to cause to be an integral part of a surrounding whole” (source). Embeddedness requires that community-engaged practice be rooted within existing community contexts and initiatives. It encourages recognition of the conditions of people’s lives. Any worthy activity needs to demonstrate a consideration of community priorities and a clear benefit for community participation.

Embedding cultural programming may mean building on or connecting to community initiatives that already exist: social groups, support networks, arts and recreational activities, childcare, other community agencies. For examples of these kinds of connections see *Participatory Programming—Manifesto and Creatively Bridging Communities—Scarborough Arts in the Equity in Practice* section of this toolkit. It is important to realize that many communities that are marginalized by dominant cultural practices or circumstances are often very proactive. Members of these communities frequently develop their own means of expression and support. Learning about these initiatives and working in ways that can help communities to build on them rather than imposing programming based on external agendas is part of the principle of embeddedness. This might require rethinking approaches to planning and outreach.

I often think of outreach...as really gathering information...finding spots within the community where things are happening, formal and informal leadership...places where I could get information, where I could see things, where I would know the community in essence ... so if the community is one where you hangout and sit and talk then I hang out and sit and talk or I hang out and listen a lot ... Who are the key people...lets talk about an agenda...get them involved ... How might we work together? Do we need to do community consultations and if so how, when, who ... How will we build an element of participation in so people feel good about what they are contributing to

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... [so] they know that they have actually had a hand in it and not that they have been heard and somebody goes off and basically structures it the way he or she wants to.

*~ Arts Researcher*

Embeddedness may involve physically locating programs or projects within specific geographic communities and neighbourhoods so that they are easier to get to and so that the spaces are more familiar. Or it may mean utilizing on-line or virtual spaces and technologies that the community regularly accesses. People may feel more at ease participating in activities if they are at ease in their environment. Within this environment, cultural workers and organizations also need to understand themselves and their programming as part of a surrounding whole. For an excellent example of embedded community-engaged arts practice check out Urban Arts Toronto ([www.urbanartstoronto.org](http://www.urbanartstoronto.org)). Embeddedness requires a commitment to having a presence as part of a community beyond one's own projects and initiatives.

We are very active in the community. We participate in as much of what is happening in the community as possible ...We make sure we are present in any community consultations, any community events, anything that pretty much is happening, we're there. We have a table; we have staff present. If we cannot be there then our information is there... we connect with the local BIA's...the local farmers' market ...our local youth outreach workers ... its being connected to key people in the community.

*~ Community Arts Administrator*

Equitable community-engaged arts aims to weave itself into the fabric of community life as an integral thread rather than an add-on or a decoration. The principle of embeddedness works with the understanding that culture isn't always "out there" in a separate art space waiting to be offered and consumed; it already exists within people's everyday lives and interactions. Often what a community needs most is for their culture to be listened to, recognized, and supported.

### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER**

#### **Connecting to Community Assets and Priorities**

- What activities, assets, initiatives and means of expression already exist in the community?
- How does the activity relate to pre-existing community assets and initiatives?

**How is the activity woven into community life and existing cultural activities?**

- How are community priorities being integrated into the project?

**Location**

- Where are programs or activities taking place? Are they located in places that are familiar to those involved?

**Who feels welcome there?**

- Are they easy to access? What barriers might exist, and how might they be addressed?

**Participation**

- How is this work rooted in the community? Who is involved, and what are their relationships to the community? Who is making decisions?
- What are the benefits for community participation?

**AT A GLANCE: EMBEDDEDNESS**

The principle of embeddedness requires that community-engaged practice be rooted within existing community contexts and initiatives. Embedded practices recognize of the conditions of people’s lives and demonstrate a consideration of community priorities and a clear benefit for community participation.

**MAIN IDEAS**

- **Being Present**

Participating in community activities beyond your own projects and initiatives. Having a presence and increasing your knowledge by attending or getting involved in community events.

- **Connecting**

Building on or contributing to existing community initiatives and modes of expression rather than imposing externally derived projects and forms.

- **Locating**

Considering who community members are when choosing where to locate arts practices. Choosing spaces that are accessible to them and that they feel comfortable in. Finding potential locations by identifying spaces or hubs that community members already use.

- **Community Priorities & Conditions**

Learning from community members the kinds of conditions they are dealing with and what their priorities are. Developing programming in collaboration with the community that addresses these priorities and conditions.

### KEY TERMS

#### **Integral or integrated**

When something is integral it is an essential component, central rather than marginal. To achieve equity in the arts, communities that are currently marginalized need to become an integral part of the arts sector. To be integrated is to be part of a surrounding whole. Equitable community-engaged arts are integrated into communities so that they are embedded within or connected to the other parts of a community.

## SUSTAINABILITY

A lot of the programs that a lot of organizations run go to a particular school and then move to another spot ... [but] developing sustainability within the community, within the schools [is important] ... you want the children, the youth, the schools to gain something, you want there to be capacity building but it doesn't necessarily happen in one session ... its going to happen with building and creating that trust, a partnership that they can build ... if we do projects that are [short term] what are the outcomes? How do you track the results ... if there is no sustainability piece built in [for participants] to still be plugged in at the end of the day? How much are you bringing? What is the follow-up so that they can be sustained?

*~ Anti-oppression Educator*

Sustaining community-engaged arts practice is an on-going challenge. Sustainability is an equity principle because it requires a holistic perspective on community arts. A holistic approach takes into consideration the social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being of the people, communities, and organizations involved in community arts processes. Sustainability is about creating programming that can endure over time and that nourishes and supports the capacity of individuals, organizations and communities to engage in activities that have meaning for them and to set and achieve goals that benefit them.

Understanding and accommodating the people involved in community arts practices in a holistic way calls for awareness of their physical, social, emotional/psychological, and spiritual needs. They are whole people within and beyond their particular role in relation to the community arts endeavor. Each person brings a life experience and a life context with them — they do not leave it behind even when an arts experience is transformational or when it aims to offer refuge. Creating environments that sustain people may involve provision of food, transportation, secure and accessible spaces. It may also involve learning about, acknowledging and accommodating a range of learning styles, living conditions, or life responsibilities beyond the community arts context.

Applying the principle of sustainability in relation to communities may entail sustaining a longer-term commitment to the community through on-going and evolving relationships and programming or projects. Rather than seeing a particular initiative as an isolated endeavor, it should be considered in relation to the impact it will have over time. How does the project contribute to the well-being of the community? What social, cultural, economic or environmental benefit will the community arts initiative support moving into the future?

Maintaining a holistic perspective is also helpful in the creation of sustainable organizations. In contemporary contexts environmentally friendly practices and products are often the first things associated with sustainability.

“Green” organizations and art forms often make use of materials that are biodegradable and emphasize reducing, reusing, and recycling. Organizational sustainability stresses rethinking and renewal as well. It might focus on rethinking how an organization is structured to sustain, motivate and nourish staff by supporting less hierarchical models and/or increased communication and feedback between staff at all levels as well as building professional development into staff roles and responsibilities. Rethinking may extend to finances and seeking out ways to diversify financial support through partnerships, resource sharing, cooperatives, or social enterprise.

The responsive nature of community-engaged arts practice means that organizational sustainability is also inherently tied to renewal — “a commitment to the on-going review, revision, and re-articulation of defining concepts and practices. This commitment supports the potential of emerging voices and provides flexibility so that those who are already deeply invested are able to renegotiate and renew their relationship to practice in response to new learning.” Evaluation and mentorship play an important role in renewing and sustaining community-engaged arts. Participatory and collaborative forms of evaluation can be used to assess and improve programming and organizations. *For an example of this kind of evaluation see Significant Change: Art Reach Toronto in the Equity in Practice section of this toolkit and check out the tools and resources section on evaluation.* Mentorship of

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emerging artists and cultural workers supports the on-going development of new visions and innovations. Mentorship is also an opportunity for experienced practitioners to share their skills and knowledge and to develop new insights, renewing their relationship and understanding of the field as it evolves. This kind of inclusive, mutual support sustains the people, communities and organizations involved in community arts practice.

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

#### **Life Experiences and Needs**

What are some of the physical, social, economic, emotional/psychological, and spiritual needs of the people involved? What experiences are people bringing with them? How do personal experiences shape community involvement and support of the activity? What needs to happen in order to accommodate a range of learning styles, living conditions, or life responsibilities?

#### **Contributions to Community**

How does the project contribute to the well-being of the community? What makes it worthwhile for community members to support an activity or initiative? What social, cultural, economic or environmental benefit will the community arts initiative support moving into the future?

#### **Relationships and Accountability**

What kind of trust is present in the relationships that exist? What factors might influence the level of trust that exists? Who is accountable for the outcomes of the activity? What is at stake if the project does not go as planned? What are the long-term impacts on facilitators? What are the long-term impacts on community members or community spaces?

#### **Sustaining Organizations**

What kinds of social, educational, or economic supports does the organization have access to? How are stakeholders involved in evaluation? How is feedback used to assess and improve programs and activities? What can we do to support our staff and volunteers? Do staff have adequate training for the work they are doing? How can we support staff through communication and feedback? What are the opportunities for professional development?



**AT A GLANCE: SUSTAINABILITY**

The principle of sustainability refers to practices that can endure and nourish individuals, communities, and organizations into the future. It takes into account the social, cultural, environmental, and economic well-being of all stakeholders.

**MAIN IDEAS**

- **Enduring**

Nourishing and supporting the long-term capacity of individuals, organizations, and communities to engage in activities that have meaning for them and set and achieve goals that benefit them.

- **Evolving**

Developing strategies for response to and implementation of change on an on-going basis in order to better address social and community needs as they evolve. This approach sustains and renews organizations, practices, relationships and the people engaged in community arts.

- **Aiming for Health**

Sustaining your organizations and initiatives by supporting the health of the communities they serve and the people (staff, artists, volunteers and community members) that contribute to them. Considering how you can support their social, cultural, environmental, economic and physical well-being.

- **Mutual Support**

Providing mentorship for emerging voices and encouraging continued development for experienced practitioners. Recognizing that sharing and learning can be a mutual exchange between new practitioners and experienced ones as well as between cultural workers and community members. Supporting and valuing one another will sustain commitment and keep practices vibrant.

**KEY TERMS**

**Holistic**

The concept that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts and therefore effective interpretation and engagement of a subject or context must consider all of its aspects / parts simultaneously. Holistic health care requires “care of the entire patient in all aspects” (The Free Dictionary 2012). A holistic approach means examining something in context rather than isolation, and taking into account that it both impacts and is impacted by its environment.

**Well-being**

“Well-being is most usefully thought of as the dynamic process that gives people a sense of how their lives are going, through the interaction between their social and material circumstances, activities and psychological resources or ‘mental capital’. Factors that both influence and constitute people’s well-being may include: a sense of individual vitality; undertaking activities which are meaningful, engaging, and which make them feel competent and autonomous; a stock of resources to help them cope when things go wrong and be resilient to changes beyond their immediate control; and a sense of relatedness to other people, so that in addition to the personal, internally focused elements, people’s social experiences — the degree to which they have supportive relationships and a sense of connection with others — form a vital aspect of well-being.” (The New Economics Foundation 2012)

**Social Enterprise**

Social Enterprise refers “to business ventures operated by non-profits, whether they are societies, charities, or co-operatives. These businesses sell goods or provide services in the market for the purpose of creating a blended return on investment, both financial and social. Their profits are returned to the business or to a social purpose, rather than maximizing profits to shareholders. Others use a broader definition that includes privately owned ventures that have a very strong blended financial and socially responsible return on investment.” (Enterprising Non Profits 2012)

## **EQUITY IN PRACTICE**

This section focuses on community arts and social service sector practitioners who participated in the Arts and Equity project. We feature 6 stories of community-based organizations in Toronto whose practices exemplify equity in practice. Each example demonstrates how a local organization tackles a particular equity issue. We provide the context, tell the story, identify key tools and strategies and explore the connection to equity. In this section we also briefly discuss Stress Management, an equity issue that was identified by practitioners as a learning priority. We explain why this issue requires further investigation and we provide links to local organizations, programs and resources that can support learning and skills development in Stress Management for artists and community workers.

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Image credits (clockwise): Erin Schachter; Erin Schachter; Douglas Hurst

## LISTENING FIRST—ART STARTS

**Context and Participants:** Art Starts is a neighbourhood-based cultural organization focused on community building through the arts. Programming involves Art Starts staff and board members, program participants, community members and community partners.

A key challenge for an organization embedded in multiple communities is maintaining communication both internally between program staff, administrative staff, and board members, and externally between Art Starts and community members in the neighbourhoods where programming takes place.

**Goals:** To understand existing community interests, needs, activities and assets; to build and maintain open lines of communication and feedback; to provide staff with opportunities for self-reflection.

**Funding:** Art Starts receives funding from a mixture of government operating and project grants, foundations, corporations, and private donors.

**In-Kind Support:** Art Starts receives in-kind support in the form of programming space from Toronto Community Housing Corporation, Toronto Public Libraries, the City of Toronto, and a variety of partnering organizations, in addition to donations of materials, and professional expertise through volunteer consultants at Management Advisory Services.

**Staff and Volunteers:** Art Starts maintains approximately 5 core staff, plus approximately 4 contract staff, 9 volunteer board members, and 53 program volunteers.

**At a Glance:** What began as a small storefront arts space in the Eglinton and Oakwood area in 1992 has expanded to ongoing programming in four neighbourhoods across Toronto. A critical element of the Art Starts approach is developing programs in partnership with community members in order to be responsive to local interests and needs. Working out of multiple locations and communities brings its own set of opportunities and challenges. In order to maintain programming that is relevant and responsive to community needs, Art Starts emphasizes communication, flexibility and adaptability.

**Narrative:** When starting to program in a new community, Art Starts begins by listening.

It's important to get feedback from the community, to know what types of art are relevant. Transparency is important — we are approachable and want to address the needs of the community. It's important not to be rigid about our plans—it's about setting expectations. We have our outcomes, and we have great facilitators....Staff come with a certain attitude of being open or flexible — which can be especially challenging among artists!

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Maintaining approachability, flexibility and transparency, and listening first helps Art Starts to design and develop arts programs that are reflective of and relevant to community needs and interests.

Relationship building is such a huge piece of what we do. Everything comes back to transparency — being really clear about ourselves and what we do in the community. We're coming in as outsiders, so we're being really really respectful that it's their space. We're being honest about our services and what we are able to provide. Being open to feedback, being approachable.

Through connecting with community leaders, and at drop-in sessions, local community needs and interests gradually begin to emerge.

We find out about the community beforehand by talking to community leaders. We hold drop-in art sessions....We might not always know what arts they're interested in, so we do workshops in different forms, showcase previous projects. It's a collaborative process of coming up with ideas....We also hold neighbourhood walks, where you're walking around the community, and stories come out of that. Then we take the info back. We've got this great roster of artists and a history of addressing community needs and interests creatively.

As the relationship between Art Starts and the community grows, the process becomes more of a conversation and ideas start to come up naturally. The programs that emerge from this process are relevant because they are initially addressing a need.

Internal communication is equally important. With programs in four neighbourhoods, there is potential for board members and administrative staff to become disconnected from the priorities and needs of program managers working 'on the ground' in neighbourhoods with varied and constantly changing needs. Regular check-ins with program managers help to identify the successful elements of programs, and how community needs may have evolved.

Self-reflection happens organically and collectively amongst the staff. We get together every two weeks and report to one another. This helps to set the direction of where we're going. I really like the performance reviews — it provides an opportunity to reflect and think about your goals. We are regularly visiting our programming sites and touching down about programs with the program managers. We talk about how needs have changed and what needs have come up, the success of the programs, and anything we can change. This happens at the end of every summer, the end of the year, and in the spring after winter programming is finished.

Annual performance reviews provide an important opportunity for staff to reflect on their work. They also create space for open communication where staff can express concerns or identify issues. It's also vital that the program director is aware of any issues and can communicate them to the board via the managing director.

It's really important for staff to feel like they're being heard and for them to be validated, and for communication to be open. If you're in the office, it can be hard to know what's going on on the ground, and it's really important for the board as well, because they are even further disconnected.

The Art Starts board has also created a committee structure to increase communication between staff and board. Five committees focus on fundraising, finance, human resources, governance, marketing, and communications. Each committee includes at least one staff member and one board member; this provides an opportunity for staff and board members to work together and communicate directly.



Art Starts Mural; Image Credit Joshua Barndt

**Key Strategies and Tools**

Programming that is responsive to community needs must be flexible and adaptable. By starting with drop-in programs and neighbourhood tours when entering a new community, Art Starts is able to build relationships and understand local needs before designing programs. The end result is a collaborative, creative response to community needs, interests, and concerns.

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Art Starts builds a culture of open communication by holding regular staff reviews that provide opportunities for staff to engage in self-reflection, raise concerns and observations, and share feedback. These reviews are used to shape decisions about future programming.

Art Starts encourages open lines of communication between staff and board members; the program director acts as a liaison and communicates program staff needs and concerns to the board. The organization's committee structure pairs staff and board members so that they are able to work together and communicate directly with one another.

### **Connection to Equity: Critical Reflection**

For artists working in community settings, critical reflection is a necessity. Equity starts with you. Critical reflection, or reflexivity, encourages practitioners to be more aware of themselves, their motivations, and their impact. The first part of an equitable, Community Arts Practice involves practitioners reflecting on who they are and how this connects to the processes, projects and communities they work with. Critical Reflection can provide a way of engaging with power dynamics and fostering a better understanding of the interface between the personal and the professional. Building safe, supportive spaces and processes for reflection within organizational structures and practices is vital for learning, growth and empowerment.



**PARTICIPATORY PROGRAMMING: MANIFESTO**

Manifesto Dance Council meeting; image credit Char Loro

**Goals:** Manifesto Community Projects is a youth-led non-profit organization working to 'unite, energize, cultivate and celebrate Toronto's vibrant, diverse youth arts community'. Manifesto provides a platform and resources to advance the growth of the arts as a tool for positive change across the Greater Toronto Area, Canada and abroad. Manifesto has recently developed a model for participatory programming, in the form of a Programming Council.

**Funding:** Ontario Trillium Foundation, Laidlaw Foundation, Ontario Arts Council.

**Challenges:** Managing council member expectations, what decisions require council buy-in, meeting facilitation, ongoing engagement (online and in person).

## PLURALISM IN THE ARTS IN CANADA – A CHANGE IS GONNA COME!

**Narrative:** The annual Manifesto Festival came about as a response to a community townhall meeting held at Toronto's City Hall in 2007. A group of young artists gathered to discuss issues they were facing, including a lack of adequate performance fees and platforms for exposure of emerging artists. The townhall meeting provided the opportunity to discuss solutions to these challenges as well as avenues for working together to help make these solutions a reality. From these townhalls, the idea of a multi-arts festival rooted in hip hop culture was conceived.

For almost three years, Manifesto received no operational funding, but the Manifesto team was able to organize what is now Canada's largest festival of urban music and art because of the immense community support and "love capital" that this event was founded on.

The fifth year of the Manifesto Festival provided the opportunity for 'beta-testing' a new Programming Council, an advisory group created to facilitate collaborative decision-making around festival programming.

Manifesto is very much 'by the community, for the community'. We are interested in artists at every level, so it's about creating accessibility. Our Programming Council model engages interested youth, community leaders and industry experts in programming decision-making. Each Programming Council discusses Manifesto's proposed programming for their discipline and reviews applications. For each discipline, the Programmer does initial assessments. For music, for example, we may get 400-500 submissions. The Music Programmer will whittle that down to 100 or 200 submissions, and then the Music Council will get together for 2 short days to listen to the music, get background information, and to discuss. The Programming Councils' advice is taken very seriously when programming decisions are made by the programmers and the core team. Final decision-making is based on scores from the councils; it's also about the right fit for the events.

The Programming Council model creates a mechanism for community members to shape festival programming decisions, as well as the format of the festival. Manifesto will eventually transition completely into the new model, with the majority of programming developed and curated by the Programming Councils. The makeup of the councils includes a broad range of experiences and approaches, with programming recommendations developed through thoughtful dialogue.

We want to empower each Programming Council to use the Manifesto platform and our resources — space, marketing, creative support, administrative support — to

program regular activities throughout the year. Manifesto has always aimed to be a conduit for the community and we feel that this new process of participatory and collaborative co-creation is the direction we would like to move towards.

Regular activities might range from a monthly movie night, to a speaker's series or weekly yoga classes. The Programming Director and the core Manifesto team vet the ideas from the Programming Councils, with decisions based on a set of criteria linked to the Manifesto mission and mandate and organizational capacity. One of the challenges of adapting to the new model is clarifying the role of the various players, and who has final decision-making power or which decisions require buy-in from the councils.

From industry experts to activists, elders to youth, we expect the programming coming from these councils to be inter-generational, of high integrity and quality, and inclusive of both emerging and established artists. Ultimately, it will be programming that reflects the community.

### **Key Strategies and Tools**

The Programming Council model is a key strategy for supporting an inclusive and accessible programming process for the festival and related activities, allowing Manifesto to involve multiple stakeholders in decision-making for programming.

Organizing councils by discipline encourages more informed programming recommendations. Councils use a mix of set criteria that apply to every council, and specific criteria for each discipline. Guidelines for Council Members are a key tool for clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the members, and where decision-making lies.

Simple intake forms for each discipline make it easier for artists to apply and have their work considered.

Online tools, including a private Facebook group allow council members to communicate online as a complement to in-person meetings and discussion.

### **Connection to Equity: Equitable Organizational Structures**

... We have the 7 grandfather teachings, the 7 principles. One of these is humility. In a wolf pack, you have leaders, but nobody can achieve anything without the support of the pack. ... When I go to a meeting, I frame the meeting by using circles instead of desks. I'm saying, let's all sit down at the same level and share in the collective.

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The structure of an organization can have a big impact on how accessible it is to new people and new ideas. Who is responsible for what? Who has input that shapes decision-making? Planning space for input and feedback along the way helps an organization to address the changing needs of its community

Many organizations, across all sectors, are structured according to hierarchies. People are organized into positions in an order from high to low where authority increases with each increase in rank. The higher the position the more power it holds. Hierarchy is often critiqued as reinforcing inequality and creating barriers to fair communication between those at the top and those at different points below them. Some alternative forms of organization include collectives or cooperatives where responsibilities, power, and decision-making are more evenly distributed between members.

The kind of structure that is most appropriate depends on the organizational context and goals. Who does the organization serve and how do they want to be involved? What are the organization's goals and objectives?

What are the social, financial or legal conditions that might impact the structure? Sometimes a more centralized leadership can be more effective if stakeholders are unable to invest time or are not interested in taking on a lot of responsibility for organizational management. In some cases legal requirements such as charitable status may make the establishment of certain kinds of roles and organizational structures mandatory.

However, no matter what the structure, a climate of openness and inclusion can support more equitable organizational practices. This kind of approach may entail: including and/or informing staff and stakeholders in relation to decision-making; defining roles and responsibilities collectively; sharing authority; recognizing and valuing the knowledge of each organizational position; engaging in reflexive internal evaluation processes; fostering and responding to dialogue amongst staff and stakeholders about organizational effectiveness.

## ***CREATIVELY BRIDGING COMMUNITIES—SCARBOROUGH ARTS***

**Lead Partners:** Scarborough Arts, Mural Routes, East Scarborough Storefront, Toronto Regional Conservation Authority, Jumblies Theatre, City of Toronto Cultural Services, The Amazing Place, and Live Green Toronto.

**Goals:** The Bridging Project artistically and symbolically unites residents on both sides of the bridge through collaborative art and community services.

**Context and Participants:** Prior to the Bridging Project activities, the bridge represented a safety concern and physical barrier dividing the community of Kingston Galloway/ Orton Park. Community workshops, a bridging mural and a multi-arts summer festival were a creative response to this community issue. Key participants included residents of the surrounding neighbourhood, local artists and arts groups, KGO Festival Market, Residents Rising, East Scarborough Storefront, Action for Neighbourhood Change, Scarborough Museum, Toronto Culture, Toronto Parks Forestry and Recreation, and Live Green Toronto.

**Timeline:** Planning and fundraising began one year before the festival. Regular planning with key partners began five months before and administration support was made possible two months in advance, after funding was confirmed in the spring.

**Challenges:** Ensuring that neighbourhood residents were involved in the festival planning and design, and that the festival was responsive to resident needs.

**Funding:** Canadian Heritage Festivals Grant, City of Toronto and Ontario Arts Council, Intact Insurance Foundation, TD Friends of the Environment.

**In-Kind Support:** East Scarborough Storefront, Action for Neighbourhood Change, Residents Rising, City of Toronto, Lead Partners (provided in-kind support in the form of a planning and steering committee, admin support and workshops)

**Staff and Volunteers:** Four staff and 70 volunteers; approximately 880 hours of staff time and 280 volunteer hours.

**Narrative:** The Bridging Project evolved from the concerns of residents of Kingston-Galloway/Orton Park that a six-lane traffic bridge on Lawrence Avenue was physically cutting the community in two. Many residents perceived the bridge as unsafe; some were unwilling or unable to cross the bridge and access services or participate in activities on the opposite side.

The Bridging Project represents a creative response to this community issue. Through collaborative and creative methods, The Bridging Project aimed to break down barriers and transform the bridge into a connector, bringing residents from different communities together. The project was a summer long initiative involv-

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The Bridging Project. image credits (clockwise): Scarborough Arts, Jen Fabico, Emilie Wong, Emilie Wong

ing community workshops, a public mural, and the Subtext festival. Subtext is a multi-arts festival with free community activities including performance, workshops, storytelling, aerosol art, tree planting and more. The festival was designed to activate and enhance the public space surrounding the bridge, linking the community above with the natural environment below.

As a local arts service organization, Scarborough Arts has a mandate to serve Scarborough and East Toronto, providing 'programs and services to promote and encourage development and involvement in the arts, for the benefit of artists and the community'. In the case of the Bridging Project, Scarborough Arts played the role of a catalyst, helping to bring multiple partners together, and securing funding for the project.

We are part of a small organization with a broad mandate, and we run multiple programs simultaneously. Because we're not embedded in the neighbourhood itself, we rely on our partners and partnerships to bring resident feedback and community steering elements to the project. We've got the creative connections, but not the day-to-day connections in the community.

Partnerships with local organizations, such as Residents Rising and KGO (Kingston-Galloway/Orton Park) Festival Market are a very important piece of the festival's success.

We see the necessity of handing off ownership of the project to local groups in whatever way possible. Scarborough Arts is there to secure funding, and we hope to be able to hand the programming over to different groups and organizations within the community. We want it to come from the residents, to be relevant, accessible, and responsive to what's taking place.

A major question for Scarborough Arts is how to transfer ownership to local residents while maintaining their own accountability in the project, and supporting its continuation.

Groups helicoptering into Kingston-Galloway/Orton Park is an ongoing issue and an ongoing challenge....we're working to strike a balance between sustainability and accountability.

**Key Strategies and Tools**

In this context, community partnerships were used to create a healthy foundation for the project. By working with local organizations that were already active in the neighbourhood, the Bridging Project built on existing community assets and relationships.

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Scarborough Arts uses partnership agreements to help define different partners' roles, responsibilities, and commitments to each other and to the projects/programming they are building. This takes the form of a concrete document that clearly outlines these details and that each partner organization signs. The terms are agreed on together so that the commitments from the different partners are realistic and reasonable — taking into account each partner's strengths, expertise, and available resources.

Evaluating organizational strengths and weaknesses helped workers at Scarborough Arts to identify the goals and priorities the organization excelled at and the goals and priorities they needed help with. As a result they were able to seek out support through local partners. These partnerships to help address the gaps or limitations of their organization and working together they are able to meet needs and provide programming more effectively to the extensive range of communities they serve.

### **Connection to Equity: Partnerships**

...Who do we want to work with? Why do we want to work with them? Why should they want to work with us? . . . Try to figure out . . . if you are going to have a meeting, what do you bring to the table? . . . Think about partnerships in different ways. It's not necessarily all about money. It could be resource sharing; it could be outreach, marketing; it could be feedback around some expertise that the other organization might have that you don't have ...

— *Anti-oppression Educator*

Working towards systemic change means working together, and building solid foundations for collaborative work can go a long way. Initiating, sustaining, and evaluating partnerships and processes of collaboration is an important part of community-engaged arts. When starting a new partnership it is helpful to be aware of the values and goals of each individual or organization involved, and to work together to establish a shared vision. The values and goals of an organization can have a big impact on the vibrancy and sustainability of a partnership.

A partnership agreement helps to make responsibilities and expectations clear, and establishes a timeline for the partnership. Like any living relationship, staying connected through on-going communication is critical as partnerships go through periods of growth and change.

Evaluation can help to identify the strengths and limitations of partner organizations. This process can guide decisions about who to partner with and what different partners are able to offer. Integrating on-going processes of evaluation within partnerships can help to identify problems before they reach a critical stage or highlight areas of success where the partnership could potentially develop further.



**MANY HANDS MAKE LIGHT WORK: RED DRESS PRODUCTIONS AND SHERBOURNE HEALTH CENTRE**



Image Credits: Red Dress Productions

**Lead Partners:** Red Dress Productions and Sherbourne Health Centre.

**Components:** A large scale mosaic (18'x 8') designed and constructed through a community collaborative process and installed on the exterior of the Sherbourne Health Centre.

**Goals:** To reflect the vibrant spirit of programs and activities at the Sherbourne Health Centre and the communities it serves, and to beautify the neighbourhood.

**Context and Participants:** The project involved over 300 SHC community members and produced an important opportunity for Individuals from a broad range of SHC programs to meet.

**Timeline:** Initial fundraising, planning and development took one year. Arts-based research consultations lasted an additional 3 months, and open studio sessions took place over 3 months, culminating in the unveiling and reception. The plaque recognizing contributions was installed 4 months after the unveiling.

**Narrative:** The Sherbourne Health Centre Mosaic was a project initiated by Red Dress Productions (RDP). As local residents of the area, RDP's founding artistic directors Anna Camilleri and Tristan Whiston were familiar with Sherbourne Health Centre's (SHC) programs and services, but felt that the SHC building did not reflect the vibrancy of its programs (a feeling that was strongly echoed by project contributors). RDP had previously led several collaborative public mosaic projects. They proposed a community-engaged public artwork idea to the SHC. With health centre support, RDP secured funding from the Toronto Arts Council and the Ontario Arts Council.

Project funding enabled RDP to hire a team of community art apprentices. The mural design process was developed through arts-based participatory research

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with community members (including centre clients, staff, and area residents). The mosaic itself was constructed through a collaborative open studio process. Design elements were carefully planned to reflect community ideas, themes, motifs and aesthetics while accommodating a range of abilities during construction of the mosaic.

**Funding:** Toronto Arts Council, Ontario Arts Council and SHC.

**In-Kind Support:** Both partners RDP & SHC contributed significant in-kind resources.

**Staff and Volunteers:** 2 lead artists, 2 associate artists, 4 community arts apprentices, 2 installation technicians, 10 member working group committee (RDP & SHC staff), over 300 contributors.

Keep doing this work in communities — it is revolutionary. It changes the world—it is what is meant by creating the world you want to live in.

— *Ambrose Kirby, SHC Mosaic Contributor*

### Key Strategies and Tools

Red Dress Productions uses arts-based research consultations to engage community collaborators in the design process for public art projects. Early consultations involved discussion, brainstorming and arts activities that encouraged collaborators to articulate and develop themes, concepts and imagery. The lead artists were then able to use these ideas and themes to inform the final design of the mosaic.

The actual fabrication of the mosaic took place through a series of open studio sessions over a three-month period. Collaborators were invited to construct the large-scale mosaic by contributing to building the artwork. Contributors were able to determine their level of involvement; some contributed to most open studio sessions, while others dropped in whenever possible. Because the workshops were open and engaged a broad range of people, it was important for the lead artist to create a mosaic design that would be accessible to a range of ages and abilities.

RDP works to build organizational capacity by hiring from within their pool of volunteer contributors and apprentices. For example, the current associate artists Katie Yealland and Chantelle Gobeil were formerly volunteer contributors with the 519 Community Mosaic Project, Flux. Former apprentices Jay Stewart and Heidi Cho are now in community artist positions.

By involving hundreds of community members in the design and construction process, Red Dress Productions facilitates public art installations with a deep level of community engagement and ownership.

*THE POWER OF STORIES—NORTH YORK COMMUNITY HOUSE*

Lead Partners: North York Community House and Seneca College

**Context and Participants:** The art and stories program was created through a partnership between immigration and settlement organization North York Community House and the Seneca College LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) Program. The program was designed to support soft-skill development for newcomer youth aged 18-29 through English Conversation Circles, critical reflection and digital storytelling.

**Goals:** A pilot program designed to explore the power of art and stories in an employment readiness context.

**Key Challenges:** Prioritizing soft-skills development in an employment context; creating a safe space to understand each other while allowing for self-expression; negotiating conceptions of 'art' as self-expression for everyone and not exclusive or elitist, and separate from everyday life; working with a population that is constantly in flux (permanent residents and convention refugees) as immigration statuses, housing, and life situations change.

**Funding:** United Way, Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

**In-Kind Support:** Seneca College, North York Community House.

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**Staff and Volunteers:** One Art and Story Worker, One Employment Readiness Worker, Peer Leaders, Program Managers

**Narrative:** The art and stories program is an innovative pilot program that uses art and stories to support personal development and employment readiness. Through a partnership with Seneca College, North York Community House developed the art and stories program.

Using a process of self-reflection and discussion, students in the NYCH/SC program were encouraged to define their employment goals and work towards a career plan.

We are working with young adults. Some of them moved here with their family and may not need to work right away. Some are wanting to go to school, and others are feeling pressure to think about a career path. There are people who say, 'I want to be a doctor, I want to go to med school.' But if you ask them why, they don't have an answer.

Employment readiness training often focuses on 'hard skills' such as reading level or knowledge of specific software programs. Improving 'soft skills' can be an equally important step in the employment search.

Most newcomer employment programs are hard skills oriented. There's a lack of attention to interpersonal or emotional skills. There's no chance to talk about pressures and skills like being on time and engaging in conversation.

The conversation circles supported the development of critical soft skills for employment readiness, such as punctuality and critical thinking. Through conversation practice, students were encouraged to reflect on their own experiences, motivations and personal goals. Using the medium of personal stories, students defined and articulated their own employment goals and developed a career plan.

We made 1-minute digital stories in response to the question, "What's your dream job?" Stories stick in people's heads more than lists. It was a process of self-reflection, asking, "What do I want to do?" They were writing career plans through storytelling.

Use of story in a settlement context can produce powerful results, increasing a social service organization's capacity to refer clients. By exploring their personal stories, clients at North York community house were able to identify different barriers they and their families were facing. Learning more about clients' contexts and needs enabled facilitators to pair clients and their relatives with other support services that the organization could provide.

We ran an arts-based program for tweens, and their parents started coming to other programs. We have a better capacity to refer people to services, because we are getting to know their stories.

The storytelling program was groundbreaking for North York Community House because it was the first time they had worked with an artist in a settlement context. This made the program a learning opportunity — not only for participating students from Seneca College, but also for North York Community House as a social service organization. Social service workers and clients had to stretch their understandings about what kind of practices could effectively engage and practically support effective settlement. Accepting that opportunities for creative expression may help to develop employment skills in other fields and that arts activities should be prioritized was daunting at first.

This is the first position for someone identified as an artist at this organization. When I was first hired, I surveyed my coworkers. I asked them, ‘Where do you see art in your program?’ Some of them said told me, ‘There is no place for art in my program. What does art have to do with settlement?’

There are tensions that arise for artists working in non-arts settings. Coworkers may have varying degrees of appreciation for and understanding of the role of art.

It’s challenging to be working in a settlement organization as an artist, where I might have trouble convincing our own staff of the process and impact. It’s related to the bigger culture of art and how art is understood. To some, art means just prettiness or luxury.

Negative attitudes towards art, its value, and who benefits from it can lead to a lack of buy-in and actually undermine support for arts-based programs.

There’s also a bias in funders and in our participants that art is only art and can be nothing else. People ask, ‘What does art have to do with me?’ This is an issue of accessibility.

### **Key Strategies and Tools**

Throughout the project, story was used as a tool to encourage self-reflection and self-awareness, as well as enhancing communication skills. Group discussion was engaged as a way to develop stronger interpersonal and communication skills, and to deepen understanding of various soft skills that relate to employment readiness.

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As participants developed their personal stories, they were required to reflect deeply on their own experiences and motivations. They were also given the opportunity to express their feelings and reservations about the challenges of moving to a new country, something that they might be less likely to do within more conventional settlement programming. Discussing and exploring these experiences can help to reduce anxiety and stress; sharing with others also helps to reduce isolation and foster networks — an important part of settlement processes.

Fostering client dialogue and storytelling also increased staff awareness and understanding of the individuals and communities they served. They were better able to respond to and address emerging needs and concerns.

### **Connection to Equity: Addressing Conflict and Discrimination**

Conflict can arise both internally (within an organization among colleagues or within one individual who may feel conflicted about their role) and externally (with individuals, groups, funders or partners that artists and community organizations work with). Rather than avoiding or masking conflict, it is important to provide support and education so that all people involved build skills that aim to maintain safe spaces while implementing strategies that help to untangle the complex conditions that shape conflict. Being proactive by building relationships and understanding the contexts and histories of the individuals, communities and spaces in we work with is a key step in the process.

There can be lots of challenges for artists working in a non-arts organization. A lack of understanding or buy-in from coworkers about the value of integrating arts practices when time and budgets are already stretched or insufficient organizational support (e.g. space, tools, and supplies) for the technical processes involved in art making are common barriers.

It is also difficult to evaluate arts programs on the same terms as non-arts programs. A ‘one-size fits all’ approach to evaluation in a multi-disciplinary service organization doesn’t necessarily work. For example, determining impact and program satisfaction by tracking attendance may work well with some sports related activities but not as well when it comes to arts programs that deeply engage a small group of individuals. Art programs “being evaluated on the same terms as drop-in basketball” may not fairly represent the qualities of the arts offerings.

Tensions may emerge among diverse colleagues working within different disciplines and providing different kinds of programming; budgetary constraints may require prioritizing certain programs and resources over others. Identifying both the intrinsic value of arts programming and how it can enhance skills and strengthen the effectiveness other kinds of social development programming can lead to more equitable evaluation and allocation of funds/resources.

Community arts facilitators may also have to address conflict and discrimination that emerges among arts participants and community members. In a place as diverse as Toronto people may be exposed to communities and identities that they are not familiar or immediately comfortable with. It is also possible that they may have experiences in other environments where cultural and political conflict between different groups was especially intense. Prior conflict or a lack of knowledge and awareness can often lead to assumptions about certain groups and may result in discriminatory expressions or even conflicts among participants.

The navigating the tension between creating a safe non-discriminatory space and facilitating self-expression can be particularly difficult if hurtful or oppressive statements are framed as 'self-expression'. It is important for program facilitators to develop skills that enable them to address and prevent conflicts and discrimination within community arts contexts. Partnering with social service organizations that have expertise or offer training in these areas can be a good strategy.

When a situation arises, how we deal with it could make or break the experience, or the client, or the staff and so we are trying to create the types of partnerships that would help us to support; because, we are not social workers ...[we are] developing partnerships with organizations that can address some of the concerns .... if we needed to refer a young person for supports that we can't provide we have the connections and are able to do so or we can bring [people] in to work in programs or individually ... knowing that we are limited in our scope ... we are an arts organization not a social service organization but we have to address those needs and those issues when they come up. So putting the process in place to be able to deal with that and at the same time looking at how we can equip our staff to at least deal with base line immediate needs ... professional development in terms of workshops .... dealing with hard to serve clients, dealing with difficult situations, for example UMAB training (understanding and managing aggressive behaviour), [we are] being proactive in dealing with those situations ....[we are] building skill development into programming with clients ahead of time to prevent those situations from developing down the line.

— *Community Arts Administrator*

Communication and conflict resolution skills are important for anyone who engages directly with groups of people. Many Toronto organizations offer training in conflict resolution, as well as more general sessions on diversity and equity, working in groups, facilitating dialogue, and developing safe spaces. In addition to conflict resolution, communication training can help prepare a facilitator for addressing issues of discrimination that may arise in workshops and programs. Providing training and creating safe spaces where discussion can occur is useful in helping to prevent conflict or oppression rather than just reacting to it.

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## **SIGNIFICANT CHANGE — EVALUATING ARTREACH TORONTO**

**Context and Participants:** ArtReach Toronto was established to engage socially excluded youth and support youth arts initiatives through grants, training, and professional development. Through consultation with members of Toronto’s Grassroots Youth Collaborative, ArtReach was created, based on a model that was ‘inclusive, accessible and...would provide a high level of support to applicants’.

At Artreach, youth voices are incorporated into multiple levels of the organization and its decision-making process. Through youth advisory groups and youth jury members, the organizational structure of Artreach encourages accountability, participation, and inclusivity.

Evaluation was integrated throughout the first five years of the Artreach program, with a major focus on evaluation during the fifth year. Using a variety of evaluation tools, including the Most Significant Change approach, Artreach was able to identify themes and stories that captured important elements of the program.

**Challenges:** Understanding and articulating the breadth and depth of impact of the Artreach program.

**Funding:** Funds for Artreach Toronto’s first five years were collaboratively generated by a group of 11 funders, consisting of national, regional and municipal arts funders.

**Staff and Volunteers:** Artreach Toronto employs one full-time staff person, one full time staff person, as well as part time staff, interns, and volunteers. The evaluation process was coordinated by one full-time external evaluator.

**Narrative:** At ArtReach, evaluation is an important part of a larger cycle of decision-making and program planning, and it takes place with input from a variety of stakeholders.

We hold strategic planning consultations in the community with youth and young artists and with our funders and other stakeholders. Every time we create a report we have site visits and talk to people who were funded but also those who weren’t. Feedback can be hard to hear but it’s important.

Feedback from program participants was gathered using a variety of tools. For Artreach, accessibility is a priority; careful choices about data-gathering tools can help to support accessibility.

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When you're deciding what tools to use, you really want to think about barriers to the community you are working with. If you are working with a group of people with low literacy, a paper survey might not be the way to go. You might choose to use a 'Speakers Corner' video booth to give people the opportunity to talk about your program in their own words.

ArtReach uses learning circles as a mechanism to connect with representatives of ArtReach-funded projects, and to gain insight into their experiences with the program.

We use very participatory evaluation approaches....We'll train a young person, they'll facilitate the session using an approach that's really empowering to young people.... We're bringing them together into this learning circle not just to learn from them — so to say, "What have been your experiences? [What was] your project's most successful moment, what brings you pride?", but also to say, "What have been your barriers and challenges?" That helps inform us.

The learning circles are designed to be useful and beneficial to youth participants. Instead of representing a one-way flow of information, they are a learning and sharing opportunity for everyone involved.

We'll couple [the learning circle] with an opportunity for networking so they're getting something out of it. We'll launch a new tool that we've developed in the workshop series, so it's really symbiotic. We're learning and sharing and you're learning and sharing, so no one's the teacher here. Everyone is sharing and getting something from it together. From those sessions we learn how to create a better funding program. It's evaluation, which you think is an accountability mechanism, but it helps us with our learning and with our planning.

A commitment to participatory and creative processes led to ArtReach choosing the Most Significant Change (MSC) technique as the major tool for their fifth year evaluation.

The MSC technique was used as a tool to help define and understand the impact of the ArtReach program. This approach helped ArtReach to identify common themes and to explore the program's deeper impacts, as identified by participants.

The MSC technique was applied to six ArtReach-funded projects. For each project, three evaluators were identified and trained. Each group of three evaluators consisted of one external stakeholder, one program participant, and one internal stakeholder. The 18 interviews were then transcribed, and analyzed for common themes. Some of the themes identified included: ethno cultural discoveries, sys-

temic and institutional change, trailblazing and taking risks, new community connections and increased networks, organizations gaining structure and stability, and increased validation, credibility, and confidence.

The next step in the evaluation process was to capture these themes in the form of stories, to be shared with community members, funders, and other stakeholders in the ArtReach program. These stories, and more details on the evaluation process, can be found in the ArtReach evaluation report, available from ArtReach Toronto.

### **Key Strategies and Tools**

ArtReach used specific tools and strategies to increase the accessibility of the program. Multiple data collection methods, including a ‘Speaker’s Corner’ video booth, were used to make feedback more accessible to participants with varying literacies. Allowing participants to use consistent nicknames created a safer space and allowed them to share feedback while maintaining privacy.

Gift certificates and prize draws were provided (in combination with numbers instead of names in order to preserve privacy) as non-monetary incentives for participation.

Implementing Learning Circles created an opportunity for ArtReach to learn from participants, as well as share valuable professional development training and tools with participants.

Word Clouds highlighted themes and commonalities during the evaluation process and made them visible.

The Most Significant Change Technique was used as a tool for involving multiple stakeholders in the evaluation process, to provide a professional development opportunity for participants, and to uncover the depth and complexity of the program’s impact. The MSC technique offered ArtReach a way to help understand systemic change in relation to a program. It focused on accessibility of the program at multiple levels, from decision making to evaluation and it considered how youth were included not just in relation to programming activities, but as part of the structure of the organization itself.

### **Connection to Equity: Evaluation**

Clarity around the basic elements of evaluation can help guide the evaluation process so that it is meaningful, productive and enriching. Identifying why you want to evaluate, what you want to learn from the evaluation, who will participate in it, and who will use it, can help to determine how to carry it out — what questions will you ask and how will you ask them.

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Evaluation is important at all levels of community-engaged practice. Checking in and assessing how things are going for the people involved and within communities and organizations can help to respond to needs as they emerge, build on strengths, and identify areas for change. All of these factors are necessary in efforts to build more equitable practices or organizations and to support individuals' awareness and skill development. Evaluation is essentially a learning process. In the field of education, rather than just assessing progress or performance at the end of a program, instructors and students assess in different ways throughout the process of learning. Assessment of/as/for learning is a common model within Canadian public education contexts — assessment of learning, assessment as learning, and assessment for learning.

The evaluation process can help to assess what has been achieved (assessment of learning). Evaluation processes can also be learning experiences that help to build skills and knowledge for those engaging in them (assessment as learning). Evaluation can also offer insight into areas that need to be taken into account, strengthened, or changed to improve practices (assessment for learning).

Evaluation of and for community-engaged practices should be integrated at multiple levels. One may do evaluation of and for organizations; staff/coordinators/artists; participants; audience/community; partners/funders. The key to equitable evaluation is that the process of assessment also makes space for the assessment as learning piece. Making evaluation participatory in ways that value, support and develop the perspectives, skills and understanding of those involved can make evaluation a positive and inspiring experience.

Quantitative evaluation focuses on tracking numbers, statistics, or information that can be measured (for example: attendance, number of participants, number of art works, number of people employed, benefits or skills accrued, etc.). It is useful for identifying patterns, for tracking information over longer periods of time, or for compiling information from large groups relatively quickly. Quantitative evaluation tends to emphasize macro understandings — zooming out for a big picture view, like an aerial photograph.

Qualitative evaluation focuses on the qualities of experiences or practices. It often works to record information that is not easily measured using collection methods such as interviews, observations, testimonials, visual documentation, etc. Qualitative Evaluation may focus in more on the micro or specific qualities and experiences of a particular context, project or individual — zooming for a close up, like a portrait.

Arts-based/Arts-Informed Evaluation is an approach that uses creative processes and art mediums as the method for exploring and representing evaluation questions. The excellence of community arts practices often resides in the processes and the experiences of practitioners and participants, a quality that can set

it apart from some more conventional forms of Western arts practice. Arts-based /Arts-Informed Evaluation is often able to get at qualities of experience that documentation of final products, numbers or literal reporting cannot easily convey. Combining it with these forms can enrich and deepen evaluations. *See ArtReach Toronto's Toolkit on Arts-based Evaluation and Arts for Children and Youth's handbook on Arts-informed evaluation to learn more about these models.*

### **Stress Management — A Learning Priority**

With heavy workloads, lack of time, inadequate compensation, and other contributing factors, working in communities can be a very stressful occupation. Due to their inclusive aims community-engaged art initiatives often include participants who are part of vulnerable populations and who face higher rates of stress and potential harm.

In addition, some arts processes can be very evocative — supporting personal as well as collective explorations and challenges. In order to support those participating in community arts initiatives it is important for cultural workers to be equipped to recognize and understand the causes of stress, and to have access to tools for stress management. It is equally important for cultural workers and organizations to take steps to prevent and address stress in artists, staff, and volunteers.

This learning priority for community arts and cultural workers can be supported through the development of partnerships with social service sector and health organizations that focus on well-being, stress reduction and crisis intervention. Some Toronto-based organizations that work in this area who have experience collaborating with arts groups and who have excellent on-line learning resources as well as workshops and training are: The Wellesley Institute (Check out their publications & resources webpage <http://www.wellesleyinstitute.com/publications/>); The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health — CAMH (See their Education and Resources web pages: <http://www.camh.net/education/index.html>); The University Health Network offers courses on mindfulness and stress reduction with some programs designed specifically for artists (Go to their website for more information: [http://www.uhn.ca/about\\_uhn/programs/pain\\_management/patientinfo/mindfulness.asp](http://www.uhn.ca/about_uhn/programs/pain_management/patientinfo/mindfulness.asp)); Frontline Partners with Youth Network maintains an on-line resources page with a searchable database (Try searching for resources by selecting both the Burnout/Vicarious Trauma/Frontline Issues and Crisis/Trauma options: [http://www.fpyn.ca/content/library\\_entry](http://www.fpyn.ca/content/library_entry)).

The Neighbourhood Arts Network is seeking examples of how community arts practitioners and organizations have addressed stress management and how they have integrated equitable practices for participant, staff and volunteer support/training.

### SUMMARY

The profile of community-engaged arts practice continues to grow within Toronto, Ontario, and Canada. The diverse range of art forms, approaches to engagement, and community contexts makes this field challenging and cutting-edge. Working with communities effectively requires flexibility, responsiveness, and a commitment to integrating change.

Community-engaged arts have emerged both out of grassroots communities and cultural traditions as well as from artists seeking alternative and more collaborative art forms and spaces. Community-engaged art has stimulated debate about the value and goals of arts practice within the arts field, generating important and revitalizing dialogue. Simultaneously, it has strengthened the connections between the arts and other sectors: social services, environmental initiatives, education, political and economic development.

Making the arts more accessible and relevant to more people advances the arts sector as a whole. Just as community arts or studio-based work requires constant creativity to meet the needs of each new project or context, meeting the needs of our changing society requires an on-going dedication to equity. There is no “right way” to be creative and there is no single recipe for equity; they are both continuous processes of learning and innovation.

Equity like creativity is not simple. It is easy to feel overwhelmed or blocked by change. The arts and equity project has demonstrated that to achieve equity, dialogue and critical reflection are necessary. Sharing our insights, experiences and asking difficult questions collectively can help us to be proactive. Equity is a gift, a goal, and a question that can benefit everyone and that can only be met if we work together.

### NEXT STEPS

This toolkit represents a snapshot of questions and ideas related to issues of equity and the arts. It is our hope that these resources and tools will be a helpful starting point for individuals, groups, and organizations that are working to reduce barriers and engage communities through the arts.

#### Join the Discussion

We invite you to join us as we continue to explore equity and the arts:

- By hosting a community conversation;
- By profiling innovative artistic approaches to issues of arts and equity;
- By sharing resources and materials on the Neighbourhood Arts Network site.

## NOTES

1 Examples of Post-secondary programs in Canada are: York University's Community Arts Practice Certificate <http://www.yorku.ca/fes/students/current/bes/certificates/cap.htm>; Emily Carr University of Art & Design offers courses in Community Projects and Social Practice & Community Engagement; Judith Marcuse Projects (JMP) and Simon Fraser University have partnered to establish the International Centre of Art for Social Change (ICASC) It has a thirteen week institute: *Exploring Arts for Social Change: Communities in Action*, [www.icasc.ca](http://www.icasc.ca).

2 Examples of Community-based training in Ontario: Jumblies Theatre offers an interdisciplinary program for learning, mentorship and exploration called Jumblies Studio <http://www.jumbliestheatre.org/now/studio.html>.

ArtReach Toronto offers the Grassroots Organizing and Leadership (GOAL) Youth Capacity Building Workshop Series, a free program with in-person and on-line resources <http://www.artreachtoronto.ca/toolkits/>.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This is a toolkit about change — a phenomenon as simple as the turning of leaves. Arts organizations, in fact arts communities locally, provincially, nationally and world-wide, seem to have turned their attention to what is popularly called ‘diversity’ and, in particular, how to connect to people who are no longer ‘strangers in our midst’ but engaging leaders of artistic expression in contemporary culture. Whether through what may be considered traditional, along with that which borrows from other expressions and is hybrid, representations of Canadian values and identity through the arts are increasingly diversified, suggesting a state that is never fixed but is, particularly when supported, always evolving, creating new ways of seeing and doing things, building new relationships or redefining old ones, learning from these experiences, and then moving on.

This toolkit is about change. It aims to address areas that arts organizations have been discussing through the CPAMO project, its Town Halls and workshops, and in other conversations, i.e., what is needed and what is being done to lead and build collaborations in bringing about different ways of seeing and understanding through the arts. It also looks at practices by art organizations that have found ways to successfully transform their organizations so that they are deeply engaged in change activities, particularly in building and sustaining relationships between arts organizations and Aboriginal and ethno-racial communities.

This toolkit gives concrete suggestions on how to go about implementing change work — it sets out to give information that can assist arts organizations, whether presenters and/or creators, to look at what they need to do to engage with our rapidly changing communities — and what they both need and can do together to bring the mutually desired change about. It looks to the central requirement

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of organizational leadership, particularly as it relates to risk, and then suggests a sequence of key activities with concrete suggestions and case studies of strategies that have been used by other arts organizations.

This toolkit is based on the premise that change is a good thing, a creative and engaging process, and a very rewarding one. The suggested strategies, concrete activities, case studies and annotated bibliography provide ample evidence of change work being not only possible, needed and desirable but, as well, leading to positive outcomes related to supporting a broad range of artistic expression, centering the arts within the day-to-day lives of communities, empowering and enabling communities and generating increased community involvement in arts organizations through increased audiences, retention of staff, board, sponsors and volunteers.

This toolkit is about change — a value as familiar to the arts ecology as creating, producing and presenting new work. In this sense, this toolkit fits naturally into the creative processes of arts communities and supports the arts ecology in expanding its horizons and including the voices of Aboriginal and ethno-racial communities as a central value and articulation of Canadian identity.

## **2. STRUCTURE OF THE TOOLKIT AND HOW TO USE IT**

**T**his toolkit is comprised of several sections. The first sections — “CPAMO’s Work” and “The Need” — provide a context for why this toolkit has been created and the need for it in the arts community. These two sections are then followed by a series of discussions related to the integral functions of an arts organization and what arts organizations, presenters and creators, might want to look at and do to implement equity and diversity initiatives in their work. These functions are organized in a sequential way to suggest what needs to be done first and how this will flow into other initiatives in other areas.

In this context, the section on “CPAMO’s Work” gives an overview of CPAMO’s activities since 2009 and how it has engaged artists and presenters in a growing dialogue on pluralism in the arts, its significance to each of them, what is being done to promote it and what artists and presenters might do together.

The section entitled “The Need” looks at current challenges in the arts ecology related to demographic changes, challenges facing Aboriginal and ethno-racial artists and the articulation of needs by presenters to engage with diversity and Aboriginal and ethno-racial artists and audiences in particular.

These two sections provide background information and set the stage for introducing various strategic approaches to bringing about positive and constructive change. They need not be read first, or at all, but are provided to tell the story from developments happening locally and through the context of the CPAMO experience.

In terms of strategic approaches, the sections in “Strategies and Practices” discuss key areas of an arts organization and are presented in an order of priorities. These priorities have been developed based on CPAMO’s work over the past two years, including research conducted for this toolkit. The strategies begin with the

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important element of “Organizational Commitment”. There is no movement on this or any other issue without the commitment of the organization, from its leadership in particular, to want to make change happen.

Given some of the common challenges faced by arts organizations locally and in other parts of the world, organizational commitment might best be followed by reaching out to engage communities. The strategies and processes of Community Engagement are varied but each is premised on the notion that the arts, and arts organizations, need to be an integral part of community life as expressed in ways communities organize themselves and share resources as well as network with each other, particularly to ensure valuable information is actively circulated within communities, providing individuals with invaluable knowledge about what is available to them and how they can access and participate in these opportunities. This section suggests the critical importance for arts organizations, particularly presenters, to become part of that process and become active participants in community life rather than using traditional approaches of marketing and communications and waiting for people to come to see a show.

Successfully carried out processes of community engagement will undoubtedly open doors for arts organizations to pursue other elements of the toolkit. For example, having a higher profile in diverse communities can lead to engaging community members and artists in Programming Decisions and Curatorial Development of the arts organization. This requires processes of empowerment, information sharing and learning about the histories, traditions and contemporary arts practices of Aboriginal and ethno-racial communities. It also requires demystifying the process of presentation and the challenges, opportunities and constraints the presenting field must work with to support the arts. Empowering and sharing with communities in this way can build their confidence and trust in the arts organization which, in turn, can lead to Audience Development and ensuring individuals from diverse communities are aware of Employment and other service opportunities within the arts organization, e.g., volunteering, assisting in an advisory capacity and/or participating on the board of directors.

In essence, one section leads to the other. However, it is very possible that creative and spontaneous things might happen and arts organizations need to be open to these and to bring them in to the change process. Oftentimes these developments can really ignite the change process as when the artists, presenters and communities are in agreement on needed areas of change and are open with each other about how to change and what each will commit to the process.

The material in this toolkit is presented in several ways. In each of these sections, there are summaries of some case studies and references to others. These highlight what arts organizations have done and/or are doing to address the issue under consideration. As there are many examples, the toolkit summarizes only

a few for each section and makes reference to others. To try and summarize all researched examples would make this toolkit unwieldy and too lengthy. It would also take away the need for initiative from arts organizations and communities to dig in on their own in order to gain greater ownership and understanding of approaches to change work. For ease of reference, given the common use of the terms 'equity and diversity' in most of the case studies, these terms are used in most cases instead of pluralism.

One part of this toolkit is a comprehensive annotated bibliography which is online (<http://www.policyalternatives.ca/>). The bibliography is included in order to provide artists and arts organizations with sites to look up other examples of change work. This is important because no toolkit contains all of the answers to any or every organization. Each organization interested in and committed to the process of change needs to do its own work in order to gain the benefits of the change process. In this regard, the annotated bibliography is a source that can be used to find additional examples of change strategies that might be as relevant as the case studies summarized in each section.

In using this toolkit as a reference, it must be kept in mind that no community is homogenous; there is diversity within each. Further, there may be particular protocols when working with Aboriginal artists and communities. Given this, the suggested activities and case studies will need to be interpreted to fit with the circumstance of each arts organization and the relationships it is attempting to develop or enhance. To do this it is best to make direct connections with groups within these communities. The section on Community Engagement addresses this. At the same time, the Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council either have offices dedicated to these issues or staff that are very knowledgeable about access points to diverse communities. CPAMO also has this expertise amongst its resources as well as the Aboriginal and ethno-racial artists and arts organizations working with it.

### **3. CPAMO'S WORK**

**C**ultural Pluralism in the Arts Movement Ontario (formerly Cultural Pluralism in the Performing Arts Movement Ontario) is an Ontario-based movement of artists, arts organizations, presenters, associations, and other members who are committed to advancing cultural pluralism in the arts. Advancing cultural pluralism in the arts is a broad, complex objective. Many challenges and barriers continue to stand in the way of Aboriginal and ethno-racial artists and their creative expressions.

Since 2009, Cultural Pluralism in the Arts Movement Ontario (CPAMO) has partnered with Community Cultural Impresarios (CCI) to prioritize the building of constructive working relationships between Ontario performing arts presenters (CCI's members), and Aboriginal and ethno-racial performers.

Through presentations, workshops, performances and dialogue, CPAMO has helped CCI and its members to build their capacities, cultural competencies and understanding of pluralism in performing arts practices. CCI presenters understand that adopting culturally pluralistic approaches is essential for them to better serve and engage the increasingly diverse audiences in their community. Over the last three years, CCI's members have learned about the diverse cultural values, histories and practices of Aboriginal and ethno-racial performing artists. They were provided with practical guidance on successfully integrating culturally diverse values and principles in their operations, planning, audience development, marketing, programming and decision-making processes. A summative toolkit has been created for presenters to refer back to as they move forward with implementing the knowledge, values and new approaches they have learned to embrace cultural pluralism in the arts.



Looking ahead, CPAMO seeks to support new relationships between presenters and artists and to help build new ones with the public. CPAMO has broadened its work to include artists from diverse disciplines, e.g., visual arts and literature, and has developed new partnerships within the arts creation, arts services and presenting field (for the purposes of this project, galleries will be considered as presenters).

Throughout 2010 and 2011, CPAMO has held several sessions aimed at bringing presenters together with ethno-racial and Aboriginal performing arts companies. Working with its Roundtable members, the staff and board of CCI and CCI members across the GTA as well as in Ottawa, Peterborough and Kitchener-Waterloo, CPAMO has convened the following forums:

i. **September 2009.** Ontario Contact presentation. CPAMO's Project Lead, Charles C. Smith, made a presentation at the 2009 Contact. This workshop drew close to 40 presenters and stimulated dialogue and information sharing on demographic changes, diversity in artistic standards and traditions, interesting initiatives being implemented to address these challenges and opportunities to do so in partnership through the CPAMO/CCI project.

ii. **November 2010.** This was a session with presenters and CPAMO Roundtable members to plan CPAMO's first Town Hall on Pluralism in Performing Arts which was later held at the University of Toronto Scarborough Campus on January 29 and 30, 2010;

iii. **January 29/30, 2010.** CPAMO held its first Town Hall on Pluralism in Performing Arts at the University of Toronto Scarborough Campus. This event was co-sponsored by the University's Cultural Pluralism in the Arts Program and close to 100 individuals attended. This Town Hall included two dance performances by Kevin Ormsby of Kashedance and Sampradaya Dance Creations, a panel session, a keynote address delivered by Sara Diamond, President of the Ontario College of Art and Design and workshops.

iv. **June 16, 2010.** CPAMO partnered with the Kitchener-Waterloo Region Coalition of Performing Artists (COPA) and Magnetic North to convene a Town Hall that included a plenary and two workshops addressing pluralism in theatre. There were over 150 people who attended these sessions;

v. **June 29, 2010.** CPAMO initiated its first of a series of six workshops on Audience Development and Working with Ethno-Racial and Aboriginal Communities. Held at Hart House at the University of Toronto, this event examined demographic changes taking place across Ontario and the implications these changes are having for connecting with communities. Close to 80 people attended this workshop;

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vi. **September 22, 2010.** In partnership with COPA of Kitchener-Waterloo, CPAMO convened a performance event as part of Culture Days in Ontario. This event featured local musicians, poets and theatre artists and was held at the Conrad Centre for Performing Arts. Over 80 people attended this event;

vii. **November 7, 2010.** CPAMO held its third Town Hall in partnership with CAPACOA. This Town Hall included dance performances by the Collective of Black Artists, Ipsita Nova and Kaha:wi Dance Theatre. Governor-General Award-winning poet George Eliot Clarke provided a keynote address and two workshops were held with presentations in these workshops provided by Shahin Sayadi (Artistic Director One Light Theatre, Halifax), Jeanne Holmes (Chair, CanDance Network) and Sandra Laronde (Artistic Director, Red Sky Performance) which was CPAMO's second workshop on audience development.

viii. **November 22, 2010.** CPAMO convened its third workshop on audience development. This workshop focused on the history of colonization and important developments in the history of Aboriginal artists, e.g., the important work of Daphne Odjig, Thomson Highway, Alannis Obansawin and others whose practice was both advocacy for art created by Aboriginal peoples and resistance to colonization. The session also discussed strategies on partnering with Aboriginal artists and arts organizations with examples: from Harbourfront Cultural Centre and Planet IndigenUS, a multi-disciplinary arts festival coordinated through a partnership between Harbourfront and the Woodlands Cultural Centre located on Six Nations; Soundstreams work with the Thomson Highway opera, Pimweeotin, and the Ottawa Art Gallery's ongoing commitment to present Aboriginal art through development of long term relationships and collaboration with Aboriginal artists and arts organizations. In addition, there was also a presentation on information gathering practices of immigrant, ethno-racial and Aboriginal communities.

ix. **January 28, 2011.** CPAMO convened its fourth workshop on audience development. Held at Markham Theatre, this full day session built on the previous ones and provided an opportunity for presenters and performers to discuss common issues and concerns related to staging performances by Aboriginal and ethno-racial artists. This workshop involved presentations by general managers of performing arts venues who discussed what presenters need to do to set up a season's schedule, the criteria and methods they use to select performances and how performers can build a relationship with presenters. A number of performers also made presentations on how their

companies create their work, the influences (traditional, modern, contemporary) on their work and how it fits into Canadian culture today.

x. **March 24, 2011.** CPAMO's fifth in a series of workshops focusing on audience development was held in partnership with the University of Toronto Scarborough Campus Cultural Pluralism in the Arts Program. It focused on audience engagement studies, results and ongoing work in building audiences from diverse communities, particularly Aboriginal and ethno-racial. The session involved presentations by Creative Trust, Creative Mosaics (Scarborough Arts Council), the Neighbourhood Arts Network (Toronto), CCI/CPAMO, Kashedance and Menaka Thakker.

xi. **Regular meetings with Roundtable.** The CPAMO Roundtable meets quarterly and has contributed to the development and implementation of CPAMO Town Halls and workshops. Serving as advisors, facilitators, workshop leaders and performers, the Roundtable members have offered a significant gesture to engaging with presenters. Their quarterly meetings have given them the opportunity to focus on collective and individual opportunities and growth.

xii. **Values and Benefits Initiative.** In partnership with CCI, CPAMO is developing a sample study of Aboriginal and ethno-racial audiences. Working with Sampradaya Dance Creations, Kaha:wi Dance Theatre, the Arts and Events Planning Office of the University of Toronto Scarborough Campus, Modern Times Theatre and danceImmersion, CCI will educate CPAMO volunteers who will then interview audience members from each of these arts organizations. Following the interviews, the data will be analyzed and a creative summit held with each of these organizations to discuss the sample's findings and next steps.

xii. **Newsletters and List-serve.** CPAMO has put out eleven newsletters as a service to the over 300 individuals on its List-serve. These newsletters provide information on CPAMO activities, activities of Aboriginal and ethno-racial performing arts companies, research on contemporary issues and links to talks and lectures related to pluralism in society and in the arts.

Funding for these initiatives have been provided through various sources including: Canada Council's Equity Office, the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the Ontario Arts Council, the University of Toronto Scarborough Campus Cultural Pluralism in the Arts Program and the Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Culture.

As a result, there seems to be a number of overall results from CPAMO's work. These include:

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- What began as an idea has now become part of significant discussions at regional and national networks, i.e., CAPACOA, Magnetic North, University of Toronto Scarborough Campus, the Conrad Centre for Performing Arts in Kitchener-Waterloo, Markham Theatre;
- CPAMO has gained credibility with Aboriginal and ethno-racial artists and arts organizations, increasing the number who associate as members of the Roundtable or make presentations in workshops and/or as performers;
- CPAMO's workshops have provided a common space for presenters and performers to share knowledge and experience, network and build relationships;
- CPAMO's workshops have touched on a number of common issues for presenters and performers and the ensuing dialogue and knowledge shared between them seems to be leading to relationship-building;
- CPAMO has held events and been part of other events across Ontario, i.e., Kitchener-Waterloo, Markham, Toronto, Ottawa, University of Toronto Scarborough Campus. With reasonable attendance at each of these events, it suggests that there is considerable interest amongst presenters and performers to engage in the process CPAMO provides;
- CPAMO events have been reasonably well-attended:
  - 80 at the first Town Hall at the University of Toronto Scarborough Campus;
  - 150 at the June, 2010 Magnetic North Town Hall;
  - 80 at the June 29, 2010 demographic changes/audience development workshop;
  - 80 at the September Culture Days performance in Kitchener-Waterloo co-sponsored with COPA;
  - 50 at the November 7, 2010 Town Hall and audience development workshops held a CAPACOA's annual meeting;
  - 40 at the third workshop focusing on Aboriginal arts, partnering with Aboriginal arts organizations, and developing strategies to get information into rapidly growing Aboriginal and ethno-racial communities;
  - 42 at the 4<sup>th</sup> workshop on audience development held on January 28, 2011 at Markham Theatre.

These numbers indicate a clear interest in CPAMO's work, especially considering that many participants return session after session.

## **4. THE NEED**

There are several ‘needs’ this project addresses. They are related to:

- the rapidly changing demographics across Ontario;
- the growth of Aboriginal and ethno-racial artists and the economic challenges they face;
- the challenges in developing audiences from Aboriginal and ethno-racial communities; and
- the interests of presenters to engage with Aboriginal and ethno-racial artists and communities.

Each of these is discussed below.

### **DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES IN ONTARIO**

Supported by StatsCan Census data, Ontario is recognized for its diverse communities including Aboriginal peoples and peoples with diverse first languages, religious beliefs, cultural values, racial backgrounds, nationalities and distinct histories. Resulting from the growth of Aboriginal populations as well as vibrant immigration patterns, the composition of Ontario has changed dramatically over the past two decades and will continue this way into the foreseeable future.

For example, in 2006, 19.1% of the Ontario population was comprised of individuals from racialized (i.e., visible minority) communities and this is by far the most significant population centre for these communities comprising over 2.2 million peoples and representing 54% of all racialized peoples in Canada.

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The most significant communities within this demographic are the South Asian (554,870), Chinese (481,505) and Black (411,095)<sup>1</sup>. Aboriginal peoples comprised 3.3% of Canada's population with Ontario as the place where most of these individuals reside (188,315)<sup>2</sup>.

In some areas, these demographic shifts have brought about remarkable changes to the social, economic, political and cultural landscape of the province. Along with these changes, however, have emerged many challenges related to engaging these communities in all aspects of public life, including performing arts.

As is noted in the Ontario Art's Council's *Strategic Plan 2008-2013*:

Today Ontario with 13 million people, is Canada's most populous and culturally diverse province and home to vibrant ... Aboriginal communities. Half of all immigrants to Canada between 2001 and 2006 settled in Ontario. In the 2006 Census, Ontarians reported more than 200 ethnic origins, and 2.7 million Ontarians identified themselves as visible minorities. Almost a quarter of a million people in Ontario are Aboriginal. 62% live in urban areas.<sup>3</sup>

The research of the Ontario Trillium Foundation provides details related to this diverse population<sup>4</sup>. Based on census data for 2001 and 2006, the OTF notes that:

- Between 2001 and 2006, the non-English/non-French mother tongue speaking population grew 13% from 2,672,085 to 3,134,045, almost triple the province's total population growth of 6.6%<sup>5</sup>;
- Aboriginal communities increased by 28.8% during this same period, growing from 188,315 to 242,490, and now comprising 2% of the Ontario population<sup>6</sup>;
- Ontario has a higher proportion of ethno racial peoples than any other province or territory in Canada with 2,745,200 peoples comprising 22.8% of the provincial population;
- More than 50% of the country's ethno-racial communities live in Ontario with the South Asian, Asian and African descent groups forming the most numerous of these communities, and with South Asians for the first time forming the largest of these groups<sup>7</sup>;
- More than 25% of the province's peoples are foreign-born, far higher than the national average (19.8%), with 17% of this population arriving in Ontario between 2001 and 2006 or 580,740 people;
- Save for the present time, the 1990s were Ontario's highest intake of immigrants historically;
- At the current time, projections for future immigration indicate that

the levels for new arrivals may result in even higher settlement numbers between 2001 and 2010<sup>8</sup>.

These province-wide changes are mirrored and lived in local communities, each of which has its own particulars to work with. This is something the CCI communities seem to recognize. Whether Markham, Richmond Hill, Brampton, Oakville, Mississauga, Kitchener-Waterloo, Guelph, Ottawa, Kingston or Peterborough, each of these communities has and is experiencing significant shifts in their local populations. Increased numbers of South Asians, Asians, Aboriginal peoples and those of African descent, are evident across Ontario. These changes have mostly taken place in the past twenty years largely as a result of the upward ceiling placed on immigration to such levels as 250,000 per year, most of who settle in Ontario.

Based on recent census data, it is clear that the communities noted above are experiencing some version of this right now. Each has felt the varying changes to their local neighbourhoods, giving each a different texture but a common challenge. Some of these changes within the aforementioned communities include<sup>9</sup>:

**Markham:** This community has grown by 25.4% from 2001 to 2006, from 208,615 to 261,573, and with:

- 152,440 reporting a first language other than English or French;
- immigrants comprising 147,400 or over 50% of the total population whereas this group was at 68,845 before 1991 and grew by 58,680 between 1991 and 2000 and then again by 18,875 between 2001 and 2006 for a total of over 77,000 peoples over a 15 year period;
- the Aboriginal community comprising 405 of the total population in 2006 while racialized groups comprised 170,535 or over 50% of the total population with the most significant numbers in the Chinese (89,300) and South Asian (44,9,95) communities.

**Oakville:** This community has grown by 6.6% from 2001 to 2006, from 144,738 to 165,613 and with:

- 41,595 reporting a first language other than English or French;
- immigrants comprising 50,250 of the total population whereas this group was at 31,710 before 1991 and grew by 11,270 between 1991 and 2000 and then again by 6,820 between 2001 and 2006 for a total of over 18,540 peoples over a 15 year period;
- the Aboriginal community comprising 665 of the total population in 2006 while racialized groups comprised 30,315 of the total population

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with the most significant numbers in the South Asian (9,945), Chinese (5,260) and Black (3,535) communities.

**Kingston:** This community has grown by 2.6% from 2001 to 2006, from 114,195 to 117,207, and with:

- 12,755 reporting a first language other than English or French;
- immigrants comprising 16,205 of the total population whereas this group was at 11,600 before 1991 and grew by 2,550 between 1991 and 2000 and then again by 2,050 between 2001 and 2006 for a total of over 4,600 peoples over a 15 year period;
- the Aboriginal community comprising 2,360 of the total population in 2006 while racialized groups comprised 8,150 of the total population.

**Guelph:** This community has grown by 8.3% from 2001 to 2006, from 106,170 to 114,943, and with:

- 22,545 reporting a first language other than English or French;
- immigrants comprising 24,110 of the total population whereas this group was at 14,570 before 1991 and grew by 5,715 between 1991 and 2000 and then again by 3,820 between 2001 and 2006 for a total of over 9,535 peoples over a 15 year period;
- the Aboriginal community comprising 1,290 of the total population in 2006 while racialized groups comprised 15,800 of the total population.

**Brampton:** This community has experienced population changes at many levels with a 33.3% population increase from 2001 to 2006, from 325,428 to 433,896 persons and with:

- 190,610 reporting a first language other than English or French;
- immigrants comprising 206,190 of the total population whereas this group was at 94,675 before 1991 and grew by 68,620 between 1991 and 2000 and then again by 42,890 between 2001 and 2006 for a total of over 110,000 peoples over a 15 year period;
- the Aboriginal community comprising 2,665 of the total population in 2006 while racialized groups comprised 246,150 or over 50% of the total population with particularly strong numbers in the South Asian (136,750) and Black (53,340) communities.



**Richmond Hill:** This community has increased by 23.2% between 2001 and 2006, from 132,030 to 162,704 and with:

- 89,060 reporting a first language other than English or French;
- immigrants comprising 83,335 or over 50% of the total population whereas this group was at 37,095 before 1991 and growing by 33,875 between 1991 and 2000 and then again by 12,360 between 2001 and 2006 for a total of over 46,000 peoples over a 15 year period;
- the Aboriginal community comprising 315 of the total population in 2006 while racialized groups comprised 73,885 or just less than 50% of the total population with particularly high numbers in the Chinese (34,615), South Asian (11,320) and West Asian/Arab (13,050) communities.

**Ottawa:** This community has increased by 4.9% between 2001 and 2006, from 774,072 to 812,129 persons and with:

- 173,145 reporting a first language other than English or French;
- immigrants comprising 178,545 of the total population whereas this group was at 96,200 before 1991 and growing by 52,690 between 1991 and 2000 and then again by 29,650 between 2001 and 2006 for a total of over 126,000 peoples over a 15 year period;
- the Aboriginal community comprises 12,250 of the total population in 2006 while racialized groups comprised 161,720 of the total population with particularly high numbers in the Black (30,070), Chinese (30,760), South Asian (26,510) and Arab (24,105) communities.

**Mississauga:** This community has experienced an increase of 9.1% between 2001 and 2006, from 612,925 to 668,549 peoples. Of this population:

- 333,495 reported a first language other than English or French;
- immigrants comprised 343,250 of the total population whereas this group was at 157,560 before 1991 and grew by 110,875 between 1991 and 2000 and then again by 74,805 between 2001 and 2006;
- the Aboriginal community comprises 2,475 of the total population in 2006 while racialized groups comprised 326,425 or just less than 50% of the total population with particularly strong numbers in the South Asian (134,750), Chinese (46,120) and Black (41,365) communities.

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**Kitchener and Waterloo:** This community has experienced an increase of 9% between 2001 and 2006, from 438,515 to 478,121 and with:

- 111,035 reporting a first language other than English or French;
- immigrants comprising 105,375 of the total population whereas this group was at 63,395 before 1991 and growing by 24,955 between 1991 and 2000 and then again by 17,020 between 2001 and 2006;
- the Aboriginal community comprising 4,810 of the total population in 2006 while racialized groups comprised 61,980 of the total population with particularly high numbers in the South Asian (16,415), Black (9,510) and Chinese (9,200) communities.

**Peterborough:** This community has grown by 4.8% between 2001 and 2006, from 71,446 to 74,898. Of this population:

- 4,735 reported a first language other than English or French;
- immigrants comprised 7,340 of the total population whereas this group was at 5,705 before 1991;
- the Aboriginal community comprises 1,690 of the total population in 2006 while racialized groups comprised 2,625.

Most scenarios suggest that these changes will only accelerate over time and the proportion of Aboriginal, immigrant and racialized communities will continue to increase at rates faster than their European counterparts. Some areas across Ontario have already witnessed changes in the numerical majority of their communities and most of this has come about during the last twenty years, a short period of time<sup>10</sup>. Coming to accept and work with this is inevitable.

For example:

- in 2017, racialized peoples will likely be between 19% and 23% of the Canadian population and that racialized communities in the country's largest urban centres (e.g., the Greater Toronto Area, Vancouver and Richmond B.C.) will be more than 50% of the population. Further, Aboriginal peoples are likely to comprise 4.1% of the Canadian population<sup>11</sup>;
- racialized peoples will likely comprise between 29-32% of the Canadian population by 2021 or between 11.4 to 14.4 million people. This population will also have more youth under the age of 15 (36%) and South Asians and Asians will be the largest of all racialized groups;

- Arabs and West Asians are projected to grow the fastest between 2006 and 2031, increasing from 806,000 to 1.1 million Arabs and 457,000 to 592,000 for West Asians between 2006 and 2031;
- Muslims are anticipated to increase to being 50% of those who self-identify as non-Christian and those whose Mother Tongue is neither English or French will increase to between 29% and 32% by 2031, up from 10% in 1981;
- 96% of racialized peoples would live in urban areas in 2031 with 72% of these residing in Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal;
- 55% of those living in urban centres are anticipated to be immigrants in 2031 with Toronto and Vancouver expected to reach 78% and 70% respectively;
- 60% of those living in Toronto and Vancouver will likely be racialized peoples in 2031 and they will likely be 31% of those residing in Montreal<sup>12</sup>.

These figures indicate an apparently irreversible trend in terms of the growth of the Canadian and Ontario population over the next two decades. These changes will have significant impact socially and culturally and will require those in the arts to analyze and assess the significance of these demographic changes as they relate to artistic expression, funding policies and financial commitments, peer assessment and criteria and other elements of the arts ecology.

In terms of the performing arts, it is questionable as to how presenters will change what they do to engage these growing communities even though such a change initiative is a fairly important topic amongst these organizations. It is, after all, a movement into something that is not known and that somehow challenges all involved to engage in a critical self- and organizational assessment and, based on that, a realignment of their personal and organizational behaviours and values.

## **ABORIGINAL AND ETHNO-RACIAL ARTISTS**

As might be expected, similar to the increased percentage of the population comprised of Aboriginal peoples and ethno racial groups, there has been a significant increase in the artists, particularly performing artists, within these communities. This is especially evident for ethno racial artists, including racialized<sup>13</sup> and immigrant groups. Based on analysis of the 2001 census, Hill Strategies Diversity in Canada's Arts Labour Force<sup>14</sup> suggests many revealing pieces of information, including:

- racialized artists combined for 8.9% of all Canadian artists, Aboriginal peoples combined for 2.5% of all Canadian artists and immigrants combined for 20% of all Canadian artists;

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- Ontario accounts for 50% of the racialized and immigrant artists in Canada with the overwhelming number of these artists living in metropolitan areas while Aboriginal artists tend to live outside metropolitan areas<sup>15</sup>;
- corresponding with increases in immigrant settlement, racialized and immigrant artists grew ‘strongly’ between 1991 and 2001 by 74% and 31% respectively<sup>16</sup>;
- the most common disciplines for racialized artists include musicians and singers, producers, directors, choreographers, writers and actors<sup>17</sup>;
- between 1991 and 2001, the number of racialized artists more than doubled in such areas as actors, dancers, producers, directors, choreographers and related occupations, exceeding the increase by artists in all other groups<sup>18</sup>;
- Ontario is home to 50% of all racialized artists and these artists comprise 11% of the province’s artists<sup>19</sup>;
- between 1991 and 2001, there was a ‘slight widening’ in earnings between racialized and other artists (9.8% to 11.3%), however, this small disparity is notably increased in such professions as acting (-21%), dancing (-14%), as well as amongst musicians and singers (-18%), and producers/directors/choreographers (-20%)<sup>20</sup>;
- racialized artists in Ontario have the highest average earnings when compared to their counterparts in other provinces but still lag 15% behind all other artists in the province<sup>21</sup>;
- across Canada, while most Aboriginal artists are involved in crafts, there are numerous artists involved in performing arts as musicians and singers, writers, producers, directors and choreographers<sup>22</sup>;
- Ontario is home to 20% of all Aboriginal artists comprising 1.2% of all Ontario artists<sup>23</sup>;
- Aboriginal artists earned on average 28% less than all other artists in Canada with actors, dancers and other performers making 13% less, and, producers, directors, choreographers making 30% less<sup>24</sup>;
- while Aboriginal artists have their highest earnings in Ontario, these artists make 21% less than the average earnings of all other Ontario artists<sup>25</sup>;
- the largest number of immigrant artists arrived in Canada between 1991 and 2001 with the most common areas of creative expression in musicians and singers (20%), writers (20%), and producers, directors and choreographers (19%) with actors amongst this group more than doubling<sup>26</sup>;
- Ontario is home to 49% of all immigrant artists<sup>27</sup>;

- Immigrant artists' earnings are 1.4% less than the average for all other artists. However, between 1991 and 2001, their earnings increased 13% which is 50% less than the average increase for all other Canadian artists.<sup>28</sup>

Hill provides additional data on these artists<sup>29</sup>. In a report based on the 2006 Census, it is noted that:

- there were 140,040 artists in Canada with: 105,345 whose first language is English or 75% of all artists; 24,585 whose first language is French or 18% of all artists; 8,630 whose first language is a non-official language or 6% of all artists. Of these, 5,555 are English-language minorities residing in Quebec (4%) and 1,755 French-language minorities residing outside of Quebec (1.3%)<sup>30</sup>;
- English language artists made \$22,776 per year compared with French artists who made \$24,520, Non-official language artists who made \$17,373, English-language minorities who made \$26,069 and French-language minorities who made \$22,738<sup>31</sup>;
- there were 3,295 Aboriginal artists (2.4% of all artists), 14,910 racialized artists (11%) and 28,355 immigrant artists (20%). Respectively, these artists earnings were \$15,883, \$18,796 and 20,877<sup>32</sup>.

In terms of changes in artists' income from the 2001 to the 2006 Census, Hill notes that while all artists' income fell 14%, Aboriginal artists' income fell by 16% and income for immigrant and racialized artists each fell by 20%<sup>33</sup>.

Further, regarding specific disciplines and in order of the highest number:

- racialized artists are predominantly active as musicians and singers, artisans/craftpersons, producers/directors/choreographers, writers, visual artists, actors and dancers<sup>34</sup>;
- Aboriginal peoples are predominantly active as artisans/craftpersons, visual artists, actors and performers, producers/directors/choreographers, musicians and singers, and writers<sup>35</sup>;
- immigrant artists are predominantly active as musicians and singers, artisans/craftpersons, writers, visual artists, producers/directors/choreographers, actors, other performers, and conductors/composers/arrangers<sup>36</sup>.

Unfortunately, the Hill Strategies report does not correlate racialized and immigrant artists. However, judging from the immigrant settlement patterns noted

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earlier, it is quite likely that many immigrant artists are also racialized. What is also very notable is the dramatic increase in the number of Aboriginal, racialized and immigrant artists since 1991. While this has contributed to the diversity of Canadian artists, particularly those in Ontario, and has likely provided a broader span of cultural forms, histories and artistic standards and values to audiences, it is also likely that the significant disparities in earnings for Aboriginal, racialized and immigrant artists are attributable to them being less employed than other artists.

This is particularly notable in the areas of performing arts and may be attributable to a number of factors, including the relative newness of these artists as well as the diverse cultural forms and values they bring to the arts that are different than the Eurocentric values and practices of other Canadian artists. In fact, the latter may be directly related to the lesser rate of earnings of Aboriginal, racialized and immigrant artists since their forms of expressions and stories (including myths, iconography, references, techniques, etc.) may draw on the rich histories and traditions of their own cultures and not be based on Eurocentric norms. Many in the arts' field, including presenters, may see this as being not appropriate for 'their audiences'.

The obvious challenge here is for the arts community generally, and presenters particularly, to begin to understand that it is not possible to use traditional Western modes to assess the merits of diverse artistic forms and expressions from Aboriginal and ethno-racial communities<sup>37</sup>. Long-standing 'standards of excellence only' need to be re-assessed against the measure of a critical capacity, one that considers the 'standpoint' of presenters, i.e., their relationship to the production of knowledge and their adherence to a selective tradition that honours the notion that universal values in the arts derive from the European systems against which others are then measured. Such an approach cuts short any dialogue about the values and selective traditions of Aboriginal and ethno-racial groups and their importance in influencing the creative expressions of artists from these communities.

### ABORIGINAL AND ETHNO-RACIAL AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT IN THE ARTS

Malatest suggests that "(a)rts organizations are constantly looking to broaden, deepen and diversify their audiences. The focus on audience development has intensified in recent years as the competition for leisure time has increased and as the changing ethnic and cultural mosaic has caused professionals to re-evaluate the nature of the public and their target demographic."<sup>38</sup>

According to Hills Strategies, Canadians spent \$1.426 billion on live performing arts in 2008 compared with \$1.216 billion on movie admissions, \$0.645 billion on sports events and \$0.519 billion on museum admissions. This data indicates that

37% of Canadian households spent money on live performing arts compared to 55% on movies, 29% on museums and 17% on sports events<sup>39</sup>.

Before the Hills report was released, the CCA had already noted the following:

- A 2001 Decima research study indicated that 86% of Canadians were interested in seeing arts from different cultures and that, in 2004, 44% of Canadians attended a live performance or exhibit of diverse cultures;
- A 2001 Environics survey suggested that 75% of Canadians of 'ethnic minority backgrounds' were interested in arts activities expressing their own cultures; and
- A 2003 Ethnic Diversity Survey conducted by 63% (6.5 million people) indicated that maintaining ethnic customs and traditions was important<sup>40</sup>.

Cultural and Human Resources Canada has identified a number of concerns amongst presenters related to audience development and engagement. These are:

- an aging population as both opportunity and challenge as this cohort may have both time and disposable income but require attention to be on top of their interests in the arts;
- accessibility for persons with disabilities who may require a range of accommodations in order to engage in arts activities;
- challenges resulting from shrinking attendance of 'baby boomers' and the relative lack of engagement/development of younger audiences and the impact this will have on the market for live entertainment; and
- changes in audience/community demographics and the implications this has for the evolution of new genres, challenging presenters to maintain core audiences while building new ones<sup>41</sup>.

Hill's report on Factors in Canadians' Cultural Activities<sup>42</sup> indicates the following:

- 80% of those who read at least one book in 2005 also attended a 'cultural/heritage performance' and 76% attended a 'heritage activity'<sup>43</sup>;
- 28% of those who attended a performance of cultural/heritage music, theatre or dance were more likely to read a book than other Canadians and that those who speak languages other than English or French at home were 20% less likely to read a book in 2005<sup>44</sup>;
- 41% of the population 15 years of age and older attended a professional performance in 2005. In this context:

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- attendance increases with income with 59% of those earning \$100,000 or more doing so compared to 29% of those with incomes of \$20,000 or less; and
- attendance rates are higher for Canadian born, 43%, v. 36% for those born elsewhere. Of this latter figure, 46% were European v. 28% for other countries.

While Hill's report provides much rich data, it does not set out information comprehensively in terms of Aboriginal and equity group communities. However, looking at the data provided earlier in this report on the socio-economic characteristics of these communities, some of the data provided in this report can be inferred to include these communities. For example, another Hill's report states that:

- 37% of Canadian household spent \$293.00 in 2008<sup>45</sup>;
- households with incomes below \$25,000.00 spend money on live performing arts as well as on museum attendance and movies<sup>46</sup>;
- consumer spending on performing arts increased by 49% between 2001 and 2008;
- the educational level of the household influences the amount of money spent on performing arts, i.e., those with 14% for those without a high school education compared to 50% of those with a university education;
- households in which there are persons with disabilities is significantly lower than others, i.e., 24% compared to 39%<sup>47</sup>;
- the most significant areas of consumer spending in the arts are in the following disciplines: live performing arts \$293 per household (4.86 million) or \$1.426 billion cumulative; books \$224 per household (6.21 million households) or \$1.403 billion cumulative; movie theatre admissions \$169 per household (7.18 million households) or \$1.216 billion cumulative; works of art, carvings, etc., \$372 per household (2.50 million households) or \$0.935 billion; museums and heritage activities \$133 per household (3.88 million households) or \$0.519 billion cumulative;
- rural communities have reported household spending of \$212 (430,325 households) or \$91 million. This changes for communities with under 100,000 where each household spends \$224 (854,000 households) or \$192 million<sup>48</sup>;
- demographic factors that seem to have a 'substantial impact' on performing arts and gallery attendance include education, income, residential location (urban) and activity limitations (disabilities). The



same factors also have an impact on movie theatre attendance along with country of origin and language barriers<sup>49</sup>.

In reviewing this data, to get a sense of Aboriginal and equity group contributions, it is useful to consider that it is likely equal to the proportion of these groups in the Canadian population. In other words, based on the two sets of data, we might infer that these groups participate equally in the categories in which they are captured in the socio-demographic information provided earlier on. As such, we might assume that there are more Aboriginal and equity group members who are in the lower categories of socio-economic achievements and, at the same time, some of these same communities are more highly educated than the average Canadian.

A more recent report released by Creative Trust provides data on audience interest in performing arts by a range of arts organizations from diverse communities<sup>50</sup>. Indicating very low percentages for audience attendance to performances of racialized arts organizations, this report appears to support the perspective noted immediately above. Based on an audience survey, it appears that the percentage of respondents who attend such performances are 8% for Ballet Creole, 6% for CanAsian Dance Festival, 5% for Fujiwara Dance Inventions, 4% for inDANCE, 9% for Nathaniel Dett Chorale and 9% for Theatre francais de Toronto. Aside from Princess Productions (3%), Kaeja d'Dance (6%) and Tapestry New Music (8%), these percentages for racialized and Francophone arts organizations are less than half of the lowest attendance figures, e.g., Dancemakers (17%) and far below the attendance figures for other organizations, e.g., Factory Theatre (41%), Tarragon Theatre (50%), Theatre Passe Muraille (37%)<sup>51</sup>.

Further, the Creative Trust report also indicates low interest amongst respondents for performances staged by racialized arts organizations with only 11% indicating interest in learning about cultures 'other than my own' and 7% for celebrating and observing 'my own culture'<sup>52</sup>.

## **IMPETUS FOR CHANGE IN PRESENTER VENUES**

A recent Canadian Conference for the Arts report begins with a telling statement. It states:

The pioneer generation of Canadian cultural managers will begin reaching retirement age within the next decade...Coming along behind this generation is a smaller cohort of Canadians, one which is highly educated, technologically savvy, and culturally diverse...<sup>53</sup>

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Similar to this, several recent studies focus on the professional development needs and interests of presenters across Canada<sup>54</sup>. Each of these studies indicate the interest and need of presenters to increase their awareness and understanding of diversity and to develop the competencies to support these areas in programming, community engagement/audience development, staffing and volunteer recruitment.

For example, Richman *et al* identified that Atlantic presenters indicated that marketing/audience development, and, artistic/curatorial vision/knowledge were the two top priorities<sup>55</sup>. Within this context, presenters indicated that:

- the highest level of participation in professional development activities were for sessions addressing ‘cultural diversity outreach’<sup>56</sup>;
- “audience development is an area self-identified as having less than adequate skill...”<sup>57</sup>

Data from this and other studies suggest that:

- changing demographic conditions are a major environmental factor, particularly the interests and expectations of an increasingly culturally diverse population<sup>58</sup>;
- the cultural workforce ‘must become more representative of Canada’s culturally diverse population;
- the aging population is both an opportunity and a challenge. “Greying” consumers are a target audience with ‘time and money’ to participate in cultural activities. However, some presenters have noted decreased attendance by this cohort and have been interested in looking at newer possibilities;
- changes in audience demographics have implications for the engagement of new genres.

It is in this context that presenters have given more attention to diversity, pluralism and multiculturalism. Some of this change is simply transactional, i.e., rentals by entrepreneurs from diverse backgrounds bringing in international acts from Asia, Latin America, South Asia, Africa. The other involves the direct interest of the presenter to engage with all of its communities and to open up a conversation within its communities, one that involves the full expression of all peoples.

## **5. THE STRATEGIES AND PRACTICES**

### **Cultural Diversity in a Global Economy**

In today's knowledge-based economy, global trends such as trade liberalization, convergence, technological developments and industry consolidation offer great opportunities for growth but also pose fundamental challenges, such as:

- i) ensuring that all cultures have the means to express their voices and opinions in a changing world;
- ii) achieving a balance between participating fully in the global environment while nurturing national and local identities;
- iii) ensuring that fair and equitable sharing of opportunities and benefits for all.

The challenges call for the respect and embracement of the concept of cultural diversity, which refers to the variety of human experience and achievement. It is a broad concept based on interconnectivity of people despite linguistic, cultural, social, economic and regional differences, but which also includes the pluralism of ideas, access and participation, and freedom of expression and choice. In a global world, our diversity expresses who we are and represents our creative capital. It is an important resource, since sustainable growth is predicated on the ability to generate ideas and innovate. Cultural diversity is a resource essential to human development, social cohesion and prosperity of societies. (*Canadian Content in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, p.4)

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Given the issues discussed above, it seems clear that the development and implementation of a pluralism initiative requires both an organizational commitment and a realistically planned out approach to set and achieve objectives aimed at transforming the organization. Usually such an approach requires each organization to assess its current situation, identifying its strengths and needs, and then charting a course of action that builds on strengths and addresses needs in a clear and programmatic fashion, i.e., with goals and timeframes for accomplishment and opportunities for assessment and evaluation.

The strategies discussed below address such an approach by looking at the key functions of an arts organization and posing several suggested strategies that can be used. These strategies are highlighted by a summary of some ‘evidence-based practices’ and reference to others from the attached bibliography.

In particular, these strategies address the following areas:

- 1. Organizational Commitment**
- 2. Community Engagement**
- 3. Programming and Curatorial Development**
- 4. Audience Development**
- 5. Employment and Professional Development**

Each of these is discussed below. As noted in the section on how to use this toolkit, some of these suggested activities are linked with other areas. For example, success in community engagement may lead to successes in employment and audience development as individuals from Aboriginal and ethno-racial communities become more aware of the arts’ organization and are able to become actively engaged in developing the organization’s relationship with diverse communities through involvement in programming, arts education and other organizational activities.

### I. ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

If you only read one section of this report, this is the one to read, because the single most important finding of the ‘Not for the Likes of You’ project is that: successful organizations model internally what they wish to express externally. (Morton Smith, p.13)

*You have to be the change you wish to see in the world.* ~ Mahatma Ghandi

For commentary on organizational leadership, see PowerPoint presentation for key note address presented at CPAMO Town Hall on January 29, 2010 by Sara Diamond, President Ontario College of Art and Design

<http://cpamo.posterous.com/opening-the-gate>.

Actions in this area show the organization's leadership and involve individuals and artists from diverse communities in the organization's decision-making. There are five key areas to address here. These are: (a) Looking At Who You Are; (b) Identifying challenges; (c) Communicating Commitment; (d) Policies and Procedures; (e) Workplace Norms.

### **A. Looking At Who You Are**

Starting the implementation process is critical so the organization should set this as a high priority and put the resources in place to plan for and achieve results. This could include:

- Determining how best to explore equity and diversity issues in the organization in an inclusive way;
- Looking at how many individuals from diverse communities work in the organization and their status within it, e.g., board members, volunteers, programmers, marketing specialists, financial specialists, front of house staff;
- Looking at how individuals from diverse communities participate in work both inside and outside the organization, e.g., involved in organizational discussions/decision-making, networking with Aboriginal and ethno-racial communities, visiting schools;
- Assessing best ways of gaining input by individuals from diverse communities within the organization on the organization's goals and actions, e.g., as advisors, board members, in focus groups and consultations;
- Placing a high priority on integrating equity and diversity into the organization's plans, particularly in such areas as community engagement, programming, audience development and employment;

Making sure all equity and diversity plans are clear, well-communicated across the organization and community, and have specific goals, objectives, timeframes, deliverables and positive outcomes.

One of the major findings of the project was that organizations who are really successful have multi-disciplinary thinking and behavior at the core of their operations — it's a key way in which they model inclusiveness.

The most concrete expression of this is the creation of multi-disciplinary teams that bring together people from across the organization.

Those who use them know that multi-disciplinary teams aren't just meetings with a representative from each function, whose job it is to 'fight their corner'.

They're something more profound — they're creative, they solve problems and, above all, they make things happen.

For example: At Tyne and Wear Museums access issues used to be the responsibility of the education department. Now there is an access working group — a multi-disciplinary team which people volunteer to be part of, with remit to look at access issues from all perspectives. This has increased awareness and the pool of ideas on how to improve access. (Morton Smith *Not for the Likes of You*, p.19-20)

For commentary on organizational leadership, see "Plowing the Road: Enhancing Opportunities for Pluralism in Performing Arts in Ontario".

<http://cpamo.posterous.com/c-smith-plowing-the-road>

### B. Identifying Challenges

It is important to identify the challenges faced by individuals from Aboriginal and ethno-racial communities to participation. This could include looking at:

- Their number in the organization as staff, volunteers, board members, audience;
- Turnover of individuals from these communities as staff, volunteers, board members;
- The number of shows in a season that are created by Aboriginal and ethno-racial communities;
- The type of performances/exhibits attended by Aboriginal and ethno-racial communities;
- Participation of individuals from diverse communities in key organizational activities, e.g., community engagement, program development, marketing, outreach, arts education, internal committees and external organizations;
- Participation of diverse groups at entry level positions, eg., front of house;
- Attendance and interest of diverse communities to performances offered by arts organizations.

For commentary regarding the importance of organizational commitment and representation on boards of directors, see the paper presented by Shahin Sayadi, Artistic Director One Light Theatre, at the CPAMO Town Hall co-sponsored with CAPACOA on Nov. 7, 2011.

*<http://cpamo.posterous.com/cppamo-town-hall-at-capacoa-annual-meeting-re>*

### C. Communicating Commitment

Transparency (an open agenda), inclusiveness and follow up are key to communicating equity and diversity initiatives. The organization's general manager, artistic director, and board should develop a system so that timely information is shared. This can be done by:

- Indicating that all communications about equity and diversity are sponsored by the artistic director, general manager and board;
- Having communications inclusive of and sensitive to individuals from diverse communities, e.g., in images (if used), and subjects;
- Using diverse strategies to communicate commitment to equity and diversity, particularly expectations and results within the organization and externally, eg., website, emails, social media, involvement in community activities;
- If the organization is large enough, establishing an equity and diversity committee with representatives of individuals and artists from diverse communities and from across the organization, headed by a committed champion;
- Having equity and diversity as an agenda item at key meetings and retreats.

### Organisations That Have Repositioned Understand the Power of Language

In your copy and other communications with potential audiences, you take seriously the need to speak to people on their own terms. The main ways you do this are:

You interrogate your own assumptions about what you're writing and saying. You don't just get someone in marketing to write copy and send it straight to print. Instead:

- you ask around for other people's views;

- you make sure several team members read what you've written;
- you don't always have the same person doing the writing;
- you involve people in other departments (in your own organizations and/or in the venues you tour to) in commenting on what's been written;
- you sometimes get them to have a go at writing it, too, to bring a fresh perspective to the whole exercise; and
- last but not least, you get audience members to comment in customer (or potential customer) circles and the like.

(Morton Smith *Not for the Likes of You*, p.41)

#### **D. Policies and Procedures**

Policies are needed at times to guide organizations in their development and implementation of actions to promote equity and diversity. The main components of such policies should:

- State commitment and have definitions consistent with human rights, addressing non-discrimination/harassment and promoting equity and diversity;
- Set up a group of advisors from highly respected artists within the community, particularly from Aboriginal and ethno-racial communities, to support implementation and assist with community involvement;
- Set clear expectations of what is meant, how things will be done, how people i.e., staff, board and community members, particularly ethno-racial and Aboriginal community members, can become involved;
- Through the organization's equity and diversity committee, provide regular communications inside and outside the organization;
- Establish proactive policies and procedures to ensure equity and diversity initiatives are supported;
- Provide ongoing education and training for all within the organization on equity and diversity policies and procedures to ensure they are clearly communicated and understood.



In sum, it's as Morton Smith indicates in *Not for the Likes of You*:

...key themes kept recurring in terms of positive leadership behavior:

- a clear vision, communicated to all;
- active listening;
- creating the right systems and structures;
- setting high standards;
- managing risks and mistakes;
- using a range of leadership styles;
- using the whole person;
- ensuring strong support; and
- sticking at it. (p.13)

For commentary on boards of directors, see *Diversity in Governance: A Toolkit for Nonprofit Boards*, Maytree

## E. Workplace Norms

Do you ever think about the unspoken workplace norms and cultural practices and their influence? This can include examining:

- Celebrating days of cultural and/or religious significance within the organization;
- How individuals and artists from diverse communities accomplish their work, eg., the support they receive, access to resources;
- The scheduling of performances/exhibits by Aboriginal and ethno-racial artists, e.g., are they done only during months that celebrate Black History, Asian and/or Aboriginal heritage;
- Which artists receive residences and/or are commissioned for new work;
- Which artists are invited to assist in curatorial development or as artistic directors, general managers, board chair?
- How issues of diversity are discussed at meetings, e.g., of the organization's committees, educational sessions and retreats;
- How staff, board members, volunteers and artists from diverse communities interact with each other;
- The types of work styles that are valued in the organization, eg., do they value diverse cultural traditions?;
- Whether or not organizations recognize and/or celebrate days of significance to Aboriginal and ethno-racial communities and, if so, how involved are these communities in this.

The most important component of audience development is a spirit of collaboration among every department of the arts institution — a willingness to invest the time, labor and resources needed to be successful. The spirit begins at the top, with the management team, board of directors, department heads, etc. Every department and every employee must have a vested interest in the vision and, once united, advance single-mindedly toward that goal. If an institutional leader commits to diversifying audiences because he or she loves the idea (or simply to appeal to a funder) but is not willing to commit staff, creativity or a plan to that process, the objective will fail.

Donna Walker-Kuhne, *Invitation to the Party* (p.5)

## **II. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

### **Marketing Cultural Diversity Networks Pilot Project**

The second pilot project identified through the Marketing Cultural Diversity research study was begun in 1998. Arts Queensland engaged the services of Australian Arts Enterprise to call together and coordinate four network groups.

The facilitator's role was to help each group find a common goal, identify relevant issues and develop strategies to address the issues. The networks included:

- **Network One** – Production Companies and Arts Services Organizations. The goal of this group was to create strategies for developing audiences by building long-term relationships with culturally diverse communities.
- **Network Two** – Culturally Diverse Arts Organizations. The goal was to create strategies for developing audiences by building long-term relationships with mainstream arts organizations and the broader community.
- **Network Three** – Artists and Artists' Collectives. Common issues were identified rather than goals, including the need to improve publicly skills and resources, lack of coverage in mainstream and ethnic media, lack of awareness of funding resources and guidelines, division within ethnic communities and therefore small support base and the need to develop wider audiences beyond specific communities. *A Different Drummer* (p.16)

For some guidance on working directly with Aboriginal peoples, see *Best Practices In Aboriginal Community Development: A Literature Review and Wise Practices Approach*, by Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux and Brian Calliou

While other elements of this toolkit are important for the overall change within the organization, engaging communities in an inclusive and empowering process is at the foundation of any movement forward. Having arts organization participate as one of many within the community, within a network of community-based services in education, childcare, immigrant settlement, and friendship houses and, further, working with community leaders in business and media, engaged arts organizations find themselves in the centre of various groups. And just as each of the other groups share and learn about each other, passing important information on to members of their communities, arts organizations can be a provider of information and a beneficiary of the benefits of increasing access to information about the arts and how to participate in them.

For this reason, following organizational leadership, community engagement is arguably the second most important value and activity arts organizations, particularly presenters, need to consider. Success in engaging diverse communities in participatory processes that value their experience and input is key to opening doors to other components of this toolkit.

The suggested activities below look at ways Aboriginal and ethno-racial communities might be enabled to participate in arts organizations in meaningful ways.

## **INVOLVEMENT IN ART'S ORGANIZATION ACTIVITIES**

Arts organizations are usually run by a general manager, artistic director or programmer, and marketing/communications staff as well as committees that may be set up for specific purposes. It is important to engage communities in the decision-making of an arts organizations beyond being on the organization's board of directors. Arts organizations can do this by:

### ***Identifying Artists and Individuals from Diverse Communities to Work With***

- Making connections with and supporting the roles of 'cultural ambassadors', 'community connectors' who can assist the arts organizations in developing relationships with diverse communities;
- Establishing criteria and a recruitment process, including interviewing, to select community 'connectors', 'ambassadors' and artists from diverse communities;
- Promoting an accessible and transparent process in recruiting and selecting community 'connectors', 'ambassadors' and artists from diverse communities;
- Being clear regarding the desired roles and functions, (e.g., outreach, curatorial development, audience development) in the relationship

## PLURALISM IN THE ARTS IN CANADA — A CHANGE IS GONNA COME!

between presenters, community ‘connectors’, ‘ambassadors’ and artists from diverse communities;

- Setting aside the time and resources needed to develop constructive, mutually beneficial relationships between presenters, community ‘connectors’, ‘ambassadors’ and artists from diverse communities;
- Developing strategic alliances and partnerships with other like-minded arts organizations/artists and individuals from diverse communities to address common issues and look at ways of sharing resources, expertise, results;
- Connecting with diverse communities through their own organizations and networks to develop long-term relationships;
- Connecting directly with Aboriginal and ethno-racial media and businesses;
- Working with Aboriginal and ethno-racial artists to increase understanding of diverse cultural histories, traditions, ways of engaging in the arts, and contemporary expressions;
- Appointing artists and key individuals from diverse communities to the organization’s key committees;
- Engaging diverse communities in creating and promoting a season’s program;
- Working with diverse communities to support their interest in arts and cultural activities and enabling them to use the arts organization’s facilities during dark hours for rehearsals and performances;
- Setting up an advisory committee or group to work with the arts organization in its efforts to connect and build relationships with diverse communities.

### **Communicating with NESB Audiences — Points to Consider (p.66 and 67)**

- Determine what the relevant media options are for the target group(s) through consultation with the relevant ethnic community organizations. Find out if there are any specialist media consultants working with the target groups.
- Contact media outlets and establish operating details, prices, requirements, and reach.
- Identify informal media opportunities and the materials required for these, such as multilingual flyers or other promotional material.
- Develop a communications strategy including:

- Budget;
- Internal and external resource identification (people and skills);
- Production time;
- Implementation, including distribution;
- Evaluation measures specific to the media decision.

For example: West Yorkshire Playhouse created a new show, written by a local playwright, about a particular street in one of Leeds' more deprived inner city areas. As well as the local angle, the show benefitted from pre-opening workshops with local colleges and youth groups and contained bad language, drug taking, was extremely funny and the Playhouse wouldn't normally attract an audience from that area, and getting an audience for new writing is never easy, the show attracted large audiences, significant numbers of whom came from the post code areas in question – and mingled on the night with subscribers and other traditional members of the audience. (Morton Smith *Not for the Likes of You*, p.33-34)

For commentary on community engagement and partnerships, see CPAMO Workshop #2, Partnering with Aboriginal Peoples

<http://cpamo.posterous.com/workshop-2-presentations>

## **EXCHANGING KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS — PRESENTING AND CURATORIAL DEVELOPMENT**

Actions to exchange knowledge and skills provide opportunities for presenters, artists and community members to learn from an experienced presenter, artist and community activist. Presenters can impart what they know to artists and individuals from diverse communities as part of enhancing their knowledge of the presenting field and issues presenters work with on a daily basis. Artists from diverse communities can educate presenters regarding their form of expression, its history, traditions and contemporary modes of expression. Activists, community connectors and community ambassadors can engage with presenters and artists regarding ways to connect with diverse communities and to build relationships.

The learning relationship is critical to building long-term relationships between all parties and can be done by:

- Establishing a program that ensures supportive and nurturing relationships are provided to presenters, artists and individuals from diverse communities;

## PLURALISM IN THE ARTS IN CANADA — A CHANGE IS GONNA COME!

- Establishing residencies and arts education programs for artists from diverse communities to work directly with presenters;
- Encouraging and supporting senior staff, artists and individuals from diverse communities to be actively engaged;
- Providing education and training to those who will be involved so that they have clear expectations of the relationship and of their responsibilities to each other, their organizations and diverse communities;
- Ensuring all education and training include equity and diversity considerations;
- Acknowledging and providing credit to those involved.

In working with a presenter, individuals and artists from diverse communities may need to know how to balance the differing values of the organization, its practices and their own communities' culture and traditions. As noted earlier, arts organizations have both standard and hidden workplace norms and assumptions. Individuals and artists from diverse communities need to know what these are so that they can respect them and, also, influence their change. At the same time, presenters may need to learn the same from the artists, arts organizations and diverse communities they engage with. These activities can be done by:

- Including such education as part of the exchange of knowledge and skills;
- Providing opportunities for individuals and artists from diverse communities to discuss their cultural background and values and what they may add to the organization;
- Having senior presenter staff provide individuals and artists from diverse communities with an orientation to the organization's history and, through this, support discussions on the organization's future directions;
- Having the organization's key committees meet with individuals and artists from diverse communities to discuss the art's organization culture and how individuals can contribute to its growth and development.

For comments on the relationship between community engagement, programming and audience development, see paper presented by Ajay Heble, Artistic Director of the Guelph Jazz Festival, at the CPAMO Town Hall of January 28-29, 2010 (*Opening the Gate: Town Hall on Pluralism in Performing Arts*, pp.21-25).

<https://sites.google.com/site/cppamo/reports-and-resources-1/workshop-3>

See the work of MT Space and Neruda Productions regarding immigrant and ethno-racial youth (<http://www.volunteeringeh.com/>). See also the work of Puente Theatre in engaging immigrants in play development ([http://www.puentetheatre.ca/theatre\\_forum\\_plays](http://www.puentetheatre.ca/theatre_forum_plays)). As well, see the work in Quebec on cultural mediation [http://www.culturepourtous.ca/forum/2009/PDF/comptereendu\\_eng.pdf](http://www.culturepourtous.ca/forum/2009/PDF/comptereendu_eng.pdf)

### **Urban Theatre Projects' Production of *Going Home* — Developing Contacts with a Community**

In 1995 Death Defying Theatre (now renamed Urban Theatre Projects), a community theatre based at Casula, in Sydney's west, decided to work with the Maori and Polynesian communities in their area.

The reasons for choosing to work with Maori and Polynesian people in the community were:

- The Maori and Polynesian communities are relatively recent arrivals and growing quickly;
- These groups are both mythologized and under-represented in the arts;
- These groups (along with other small groups in the community, such as the Kurds) have particular difficulties accessing cultural resources and government arts funding;
- No-one was targeting arts programs to this audience and their story was not being told.

Once the Company came up with the idea of creating some sort of theatre event with Maori and Pacific Island people, they put the idea to a local Polynesian youth worker. He thought it was very relevant and had a resonance with his own life story. The youth worker became an enthusiastic community advocate for the production. The theatre then talked to a range of other people, including artists, community workers from Polynesian groups, and the community at large. This process enabled the Company to devise an outline of the themes of the production and a process to explore these themes. They then applied for funding from the Australia Council and also from Creative New Zealand — the latter for funding of a residency for a Maori writer to work on the project.

This project was conceived as a community project with community members having an opportunity to tell their stories, write, perform and play music for the show. The Company employed a director, writer, co-musical directors and a designer. A public meeting was then held in the Sydney suburb of Fairfield

to inform the community as to what the theatre and the production was all about. This meeting was of crucial importance in getting community involvement, working out the topics for the production, getting priceless community information about where to hold the production, on what nights (e.g. don't do anything on Sunday because people go to Church), and what type of theatre training was required. Public workshops were then held over a 14-week period to turn the life stories into the show.

Once the writer and the director were employed, a steering group of community representatives was set up to guide the production. A community liaison worker was employed, a young Samoan social worker, who very effectively linked up with Polynesian community organizations and churches, ensuring that the production received good 'word of mouth'.

At the same time, the Company contacted several Polynesian community arts organizations with the idea of incorporating their existing material into the show. However, for a variety of reasons these community arts groups did not perform en masse in the show, although individual performers became involved. Some of these groups (such as Cook Island drummers) were professional performers. The Company's salary budget had been allocated to the project artists who ran workshops and pulled the production together, so these groups could not be paid. However, setting aside payment for such professional groups was an idea well worth considering for future productions.

The production involved 43 community members as performers and another 20 people who contributed their stories to the script, and to the production design. A feature was the wide age range from 11 to 60 years. While the show set out to draw upon and showcase cultural traditions (such as the haka, poi and Samoan dance), a lot of the young community performers, without prompting, wanted to blend traditional cultural forms with newer forms such as hip hop. Thus a 'fusion' product was developed out of the experiences of the participants.

This experience shows that it is beneficial to:

- Involve the community in the production;
- Look to the migrant group's source country for funding, skills and knowledge (in this case New Zealand);
- Gain the endorsement of key community figures;
- Use community members to tap into networks and include 'street' knowledge of how a community functions and then how to position your production;
- Be flexible and prepared for a fusion product to emerge from such an initiative.



### Queensland Museum and Chinese Community Pilot Project

One of the first pilot projects for the Marketing Cultural Diversity Project was developed out of the research study conducted in 1997. The Chinese community was chosen as a focus for the pilot project as they are the largest ethnic group in South East Queensland and have a high level of community involvement. The Queensland Museum had already embarked upon a few strategies to develop this audience, such as hiring two officers who spoke Cantonese and Mandarin, so a marketing framework was developed to establish and build a long-term relationship between these two parties. The strategies outlined in the framework identified short and long-term actions to fostering mutually beneficial working relationships. To date, the project has hosted the following events and programs:

- **Launch** – the project was officially launched by the Minister for the Arts during the opening of the 1998 Brisbane Festival. Chinese community leaders were invited to a full evening program: an official welcome at the Queensland Museum, a joint performance by Expressions Dance Company and City Contemporary Dance Company of Hong Kong at the Conservatorium Theatre, a post-performance reception at Rydges Hotel South Bank, and the Opening Night Party of Energex Brisbane Festival at the Queensland Performing Arts Centre (QPAC).
- **Chinese Community Reference Group** – a reference group was formed including high-profile members from all factions of the Chinese community and Museum staff, including the Curator Cross-Cultural Studies. This group acts as an advisory panel and provides a networking role within the communities and encourages members to visit and participate in Museum activities.
- **East Meets West** – a quarterly program was initiated, which invites high-profile Chinese masters to conduct workshops and demonstrations in activities such as tai chi, calligraphy, Chinese art, bonsai, origami (originally a Chinese tradition).
- **Spiritual Treasure from China** – an exhibition of arts and crafts from Beijing and Shanghai was negotiated with the People’s Republic of China and opened in the Queensland Museum on 10 August, 2000. Official guests contributing to the launching ceremony included the Governor of Queensland, the Cultural Attaché to the Chinese Ambassador in Australia, the Minister for the Arts, a delegation of 35 official guests from China and members of the Board of the Queensland Museum.
- **Guest speaking invitation** – ICOM MPR – Japan – the Assistant Director of the Queensland Museum was invited to speak at an International

Council of Museums Conference in Japan on the development and implementation of the Pilot Project.

- Prominent Person's Invitation to visit China- the Australian Chinese Friendship Society has issued an invitation for a member of the Museum to be part of this visit.

Under planning and discussion are the following projects:

- **Bequest of Chinese shop** – select members of the Chinese community will be invited to view the recent bequest received by the Museum of an old Chinese-operated shop in Queensland, and to attend various catalogues and conservation works-in-progress for this unique collection.
- **Taoist Temple Conservation** – the Museum is exploring the possibility of providing volunteer training of members of the Taoist Temple in Brisbane to undergo basic conservation training in order to maintain the Temple's incredible antiques.

### **Superleague Bulldogs — Researching the Community**

Superleague Bulldogs, a Rugby League football club based in the Canterbury/Bankstown region of Sydney presents a multicultural day with a multicultural arts event before the main game.

The aim of this program is to use arts as a means of promoting sport to the local community.

At an organizational review held in 1992-93, it was agreed that the Club was doing well in all its activities, except attendance. A strategy to boost attendance was developed. The short-term goal of this strategy was to get more people from non-English speaking backgrounds to the game. The long-term strategy was to generate a long-term commitment to the game amongst second and third-generation migrants. To address this situation, the club decided to find out the characteristics of their local community, using Australian Bureau of Statistics demographic data. The results of this analysis were staggering: 44% of the local population had at least one parent from a non-English speaking background. (This proportion is now estimated to be 50%.) It was decided to target the top five migrant groups in Canterbury/Bankstown.

The Bulldogs then contacted the local councils to find out who the key people and key structures (such as the church in the Greek community) were in the target communities.

The next stage was to undertake qualitative research by talking to people from these communities. The end result of this research was that attitudinal barriers to Rugby League could be overcome if non-English speaking background groups could be encouraged to participate in 'owning' an event.

The way to do this was by holding multicultural days, whereby the five groups in each local government area were invited to devise and stage (with the help of a producer) a half-hour multicultural arts entertainment before the game. The communication strategy consisted of umbrella television advertisements targeting parents. It also relied on using community contacts and the main media outlet for each ethnic group. A successful strategy was to send players out to the 11 or 12 schools which had the highest concentration of non-English speaking background students to give talks and to hand out free tickets.

The initiative was very successful. The first multicultural day set a ground record and subsequent days have enjoyed a well above-average attendance. The only problem was the constant pressure to keep the arts production fresh and inspiring. In 1997, contributions were sought from second and third-generation non-English speaking background people and this generated a production which fused elements of their respective cultures with aspects of mainstream culture.

The lessons learned:

- It is essential to develop and follow a systematic, long-term plan. This requires commitment and patience, as well as significant resources.
- The community must be invited to work with your organization to gain a sense of ownership.
- It is vital to keep productions fresh and appealing.

This case study gives a clear indication of how strategic planning, research and targeted communication strategies can ensure that a non-English speaking background arts production is a success. It also illustrates an imaginative way in which NESB cultural performances can be used to broaden the appeal of mainstream events, in this case, Rugby League.

### III. PROGRAMMING AND CURATORIAL DEVELOPMENT

#### **What is a Cultural Diversity Programming Lens?**

- A lens enables people to see. The purpose of a cultural diversity lens is to raise awareness and open minds to new ways of thinking. The lens

thereby opens the way to new solutions and activities.

- It is a supplementary tool which can be used to evaluate whether programmes, policies, proposals and practices promote and safeguard cultural diversity and therefore enhance work efficiency.
- It is a check-list or a list of criteria and questions supplemented by indicators (e.g., in the context of the cultural diversity programming lens, take into account statistical — quantitative — and proxy indicators as well as other means of verification.)
- It can be used at all stages of a programme: planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluating. For example, the lens can be used to plan a project, and then re-used...during the monitoring stage to compare the plans with the outcomes...
- It is ideally created in a participatory manner by those who use it. There is no perfect lens. Each programme can develop its own lens.

*The Cultural Diversity Programming Lens: a toolkit (p.6)*

Developing culturally diverse artworks for mainstream audiences is an exciting challenge and a chance to develop new hybrid art forms and extend the reach of both ethnic and mainstream arts organizations. From *Developing mainstream audiences* (p.72)

Many of you also involve audiences in your decision-making processes, which has multiple advantages:

- It informs staff;
- It motivates staff;
- It improves the level and range of input to decision-making;
- It generates real audience involvement in and commitment to the outcomes;
- It creates ambassadors in the community; and
- (last but by no means least) it commits you to deliver.

For example: Macrobert (arts centre) decided directly to involve children and young people in the redesign and repositioning of the place. To achieve this they recruited 'Young Consultants' aged 8-14 from the surrounding area who worked with them over a period of several years to give their views on all aspects of the operation from the building to the artistic programme to the price of sweets. And they acted on those views, too, with the result that the building

and programme are uniquely attractive to and welcoming for kids and their families.

For example: Tyne & Wear Museums have a dedicated gallery called 'The People's Gallery' that is programmed entirely by and for local community. Museum staff are closely involved in its operations, but their role is not to lead but to serve the wishes and implement the decisions of community members. (Morton Smith *Not for the Likes of You*, p.31)

For commentary about programming and curatorial issues, see papers presented by Natasha Bahkt, Michael Greyeyes and Kevin Ormsby, and final report prepared by Andrea Rowe for the 2009 Canada Dance Festival's Dancing Through Cultures.

<http://www.canadadance.ca/pages/index.php/past-festivals/get-involved/>

Bringing in new audiences is much valued by arts organizations and is often a consideration in presenting a season's shows. Connecting with communities and developing productions that they might be interested in can be very intense and arts organizations will need a proactive approach to plan for these changes and to attract the talent that will assist them. To do this effectively, arts organizations need artists from diverse communities that will retain their current clients while, at the same time, accessing new clients from diverse communities. This can be done by:

- Adopting a fulsome concept of the role of the arts as one of many elements within a community and, as such, arts organizations have much to learn from and share with a range of community stakeholders amongst diverse artists as well as areas related to business, media, community agencies, advocacy organizations, immigrant settlement and Aboriginal centres;
- Identifying barriers that limit the participation of artists from diverse communities from performing/exhibiting, eg., unawareness of cultural form, concern about audience interest;
- Ensuring artists and individuals from diverse communities are involved in program development, e.g., creating new works, reviewing season's programs;
- Ensuring artists from diverse communities are aware of what it takes to develop relationships with presenters and receive the information they need to be successful in promoting their work;
- Enabling diverse artists and community groups to use the presenter's space during 'dark hours', e.g., during the day and/or other times

- when the presenting venue is available;
- Taking steps to ensure traditional audiences are receptive to the inclusion of performances/exhibits by artists from diverse communities;

### Identifying and Removing Barriers — Points to Consider

- Undertake appropriate consultation and research to identify the types and nature of barriers to targeted audience participation.
  - If these barriers relate to physical or cultural access issues, you must first assess your capacity and resources to address them in terms of:
    - Information and communication;
    - Venue and staging;
    - Staffing;
    - Cost.
  - If they relate to product type, you must assess your resources and ability to develop product which will attract these audiences and increase participation.
  - If they relate to lack of interest, you must be able to determine the long-term benefit of working with the target groups to develop interest and, through that interest, participation. (*The world is your audience*, p.48)
- 
- Making equity and diversity a key criteria in programming development and decision-making and that this is communicated to diverse community networks, artist and arts organization to attract artists;
  - Providing concrete support to artists from diverse communities who may experience disrespectful and discriminatory treatment;
  - Supporting program development activities that target non-traditional sources and within diverse communities;
  - Working with community connectors, animators, ambassadors to develop relationships with individuals in diverse communities;
  - Making connections and learning from other organizations, both inside and outside of the arts communities, that have developed ways of engaging artists and individuals from diverse communities in programming and education about diverse histories, traditions and contemporary expressions;
  - Working with community members and supporting them to become ambassadors for the arts organization, taking the issue into community to raise awareness and engage in dialogue;

- Working with other presenters to co-commission and tour work developed by artists from diverse communities;
- Working with other presenters to promote the work of artists from diverse communities, e.g., through marketing, touring, block booking, public education and other ways to create community awareness;
- Examining how programs will create access points for diverse communities, e.g., addressing possible language barriers, looking at diverse community characteristics and interests, providing ways for diverse communities to participate.

Jermyn and Desai (2000) noted that “Many people from ethnic minorities are watching or participating in arts activities that they do not necessarily define first and foremost as ‘arts’ or do not feel society more generally would define as such.” Taking note of what they and other researchers have shown, the present survey embraced a broad definition of the arts. For example, there were questions about respondents’ attendance at ‘community events’ and ‘culturally specific festivals’, as well as the inclusion of world music and culturally-specific types of dance in a breakdown of artforms.

The little we know from research into arts attendance and participation of Black and minority ethnic people and their attitudes towards the arts generates some questions we may want to ask as we read and interpret the findings of this report.

- How do Black, Asian and Chinese people view the role of the arts in the cultural life of their communities?...
- How do Black and minority ethnic people view the contribution of arts from different cultures to cultural life in England?...
- Are some Black and minority ethnic groups more likely to attend the arts than others?...
- Do different types of arts events or artforms appeal to different Black and ethnic minority people?...
- Would Black and ethnic minority people like to attend more? What are the barriers? Are they specific to Black and minority ethnic groups?...
- Is gender a factor in attendance, participation or attitudes?...
- Is age important?...

*Focus on cultural diversity: the arts in England (p.24)*

The most commonly used strategies for developing products for mainstream audiences are commissioning works and developing collaborators.

The point at which to start on this process is to develop links between target communities and their artists. From there a range of working relationships can be developed. Developing mainstream audiences (p.72).

For commentary on developing programs and working with artists and individuals from diverse communities, see CPAMO Workshop #3 held on January 28 at Markham Theatre. <http://cpamo.posterous.com/workshop-3-presentations>

This session involved presentations by:

### **Panel 1: Working With Presenters to Support Diversity in Performances and Audiences: Interests and Expectations**

- Ken Coulter, Theatre Manager, Oakville Theatre;
- Cheryl Ewing, Event Manager, Ontario Contact;
- Costin Manu, Manager, Marketing, Programming and Development, Rose Theatre;
- Jen Dodd, Managing Director and Camille Turner, Artist and Curator, Subtle Technologies;
- Mimi Beck, Curator and Ann Marie Williams, Program Manager, CanDance Network
- Eric Lariviere, General Manager, Markham Theatre.

### **Panel 2: What Presenters Need to Know About the Development of Performances by Aboriginal and Ethno-racial Artists**

- Sandra Laronde, Artistic Director, Red Sky Performance;
- Lata Pada, Artistic Director, Sampradaya Dance;
- Brainard Blyden-Taylor, Artistic Director, Nathaniel Dette Chorale;
- Julia Chan, Artistic Director, Diasporic Dialogues;
- Charmaine Headley, Artistic Director, Collective of Black Artists (COBA).

We formed an advisory board to guide our strategy. All the members of this board had strong connections to the black community, and marketing/group sales experience. Equally important was that they were committed, smart and creative. Our goals:

- Form a task force charged with the responsibility of promoting and selling *Harlem Song*;



- Create an unprecedented level of multicultural awareness, involvement and patronage for the show;
- Maximize ticket sales by enlisting support from local organizations in fund-raising and audience development;
- Develop partnerships with the community, encouraging people who live and work in Harlem to invest time and resources in the production;
- Invite and engage individuals from Latino and African American; communities to support, promote and sell tickets for *Harlem Song*;
- We met monthly. We began each meeting by generating ideas about how best to promote the show...

We made the *Harlem Song* website as informative, educational and collaborative as possible. The producers and web designer...did a thorough job, providing links, history and the study guide. Earlier on in the campaign, I met with members of the Harlem Strategic Cultural Collaboration (HSCC), a member-based entity comprising of the largest and oldest Harlem arts organizations... Each organization identified a way to promote the production, because each recognized *Harlem Song's* value to the community. In turn, we included links to each member organization on our website. We donated a dollar of every ticket sold to the HSCC to support the Harlem community...

Donna Walker-Kuhne, *Invitation to the Party* (p.118 and p.123)

### Reasons for and Barriers to Attending Arts and Cultural Events

People were asked about their reasons for attending events and whether they would like to go to more.

- Wanting to see a 'specific performer or event' was mentioned by 28% of people of mixed ethnicity, 27% of Black or British Black respondents; 13% of Asian or British Asian respondents and 10% of Chinese and other ethnic groups;
- Those identifying themselves as Pakistani or Bangladeshi were the most likely to say that one of their reasons for attending was as part of a social event; 35% gave this as a reason.

The majority of respondents in ethnic groups said that they would be interested in attending more — either more events, or more frequently. The proportions saying this were:

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- 85% of Black or British Black respondents;
- 82% of the mixed ethnicity group;
- 71% of those from Chinese and other ethnic groups;
- 70% of Asian or British Asian respondents;
- and 62% of the white sample.

People were also asked what prevented them from attending (more). The most common reason was 'lack of time', mentioned by, for example, 65% of people of mixed ethnicity and 61% of Asian or British Asians.

- People of mixed ethnicity (45%) and Chinese and other ethnic groups (42%) were most likely to cite cost as a barrier,
- Respondents who described themselves as Black African (10%) or Pakistani or Bangladeshi (8%) were most likely to say that concerns about feeling 'uncomfortable or out of place' prevented them attending.

Focus on cultural diversity: the arts in England — attendance, participation and attitudes (pp.8-9).

For commentary on programming and curatorial development, see keynote presentation by George Elliot Clarke at CPAMO Town Hall of November 7, 2010 co-sponsored by CAPACOA .

<http://cpamo.posterous.com/cppamo-town-hall-at-capacoa-annual-meeting-re>

See also presentations by Sara Roque, Aboriginal Officer Ontario Arts Council, and Andrea Fatona, former Curator of Contemporary Art at Ottawa Art Gallery, at CPAMO Workshop #2.

<http://cpamo.posterous.com/workshop-2-presentations>

### **DoppioTeatro — Working with the Community to Develop Appropriate Work for Non-English Speaking Audiences**

DoppioTeatro is an Adelaide-based performance group which began by creating a new professional bilingual theatre form. When the community first started thinking about appropriate product for non-English speaking background audiences, it staged the mainstream theatre productions of Pirandello and Dario Fo. However, these did not meet the immediate needs of the audience.

DoppioTeatro changed direction, realising that everyone in the potential audience had gone through the migration process and that this process was a great leveller of class, language and regional barriers amongst migrants. It realised

that each community had specific experiences and ways of operating and that work needed to be subtly tailored to engage with the unique experiences of each community.

DoppioTeatro then decided to develop close and intimate links with the community, using existing community structures, organizations, and churches. This enabled the ensemble to gain access to individuals in the community and start collecting oral histories. From this information, DoppioTeatro could develop productions based on the migrant experience. The guiding principles for DoppioTeatro is that they were 'process driven' rather than 'product driven'. The group considers that the 'product model', lacking a process for working with people, does not engage the audience.

This process resulted in a palpable change in audience responsiveness. It quickly became evident that the arrow was hitting the right target — the right product was being developed for the audience. Another approach used by DoppioTeatro to address the issue of heterogeneity of the audience was the use of dialects in their products, so an audience became unified not only by a common story (that of the migration experience), but also by a common language.

This model of working with a community has proved to be a useful template for audience development with other non-English speaking groups. This model has shown that:

- Process is very important in working with the non-English speaking (or in fact any) community;
- The use of appropriate dialects is a useful way of breaking down barriers between an arts organization and the non-English speaking background community.

### **Nexus — Using Community Networks to Develop an Arts Product**

Nexus, a multi-disciplinary arts organization based in Adelaide, wanted to develop non-English speaking background audiences for innovative, 'cutting edge' new works. When an Australian-based Croatian promoter suggested that Nexus sponsor a mainstream Croatian artist, Nexus felt this was outside its artistic guidelines. However, it made an agreement with the Croatian community that if they raised funds, Nexus would provide co-ordination, support and publicity. The goal for Nexus was to develop and strengthen relationships with the Croatian community. Links were made with the community and the visit got good.

publicity and promotion in the mainstream and Croatian media. The community attended the launch in large numbers.

While some Croatian people have joined Nexus as individual members, there has not been a wholesale increase in Croatian attendance. The large attendance at the launch was perhaps in response to the attraction of a community social event rather than an arts event.

This example demonstrates that the effect of a one-off promotion related to an arts product can be short-lived while audience retention requires a long-term commitment to a process of working with the community.

**The Moti Roti Company (UK) — Developing Appropriate Product for Non-English Speaking Audiences**

Moti Roti company's film and theatre production Moti Roti, PuttliChunni, was commissioned by the London International Festival of Theatre (LIFT) and the Theatre Royal Stratford East, London, in 1993. This production involved a combination of film and drama performed by a cast of 10 Asian actors. The idea was to stage a popular (as opposed to classical) production designed to attract Asian audiences who had never been to the theatre. The production was based on Indian cinema, which is similar to Western 'soap operas'. This tour took place between March and June, 1994.

The audience development strategy aimed to:

- Inform the Asian community about Moti Roti;
- Determine the most effective way to get this community to come and see Moti Roti.

The overall aim of the strategy was to introduce a new community to the theatre, which the venues could build upon in the future.

This initiative highlights what is important:

- Choose the appropriate product.

Attempting to attract Asian audiences with non-Asian product may be a very different and much harder task than programming ethno-specific material.

Pursuing the former course of action is very difficult and does not take into account the needs and interests of the potential audience.

- Get into networks.

There are many ethno-specific distribution channels, which can be used to access Asian communities, e.g.

- Asian media, particularly radio stations;
- Key community figureheads with powerful and widespread influence.

Developing networks requires time and the willingness to invest in legwork, 'meeting and greeting' and complimentary tickets. Arts organizations need to meet, court and maintain a relationship with key individuals, inviting them to events, wherever possible and appropriate.

- Go out into the communities.

It is important to distribute fliers and other print material in ethno-specific (Asian in this case) areas; flier posting is important for Asian communities. It is extremely beneficial to find out what important events and festivals are happening in the community and to use these to promote the event. It is wise to sell tickets through ethno-specific outlets since ethnic communities may have their own ticket-selling and purchasing conventions. Advance booking may be unlikely.

- Prepare the organization, especially front-of-house staff.

It is important that the staff understand the communities involved. New customers from ethnic groups may not be familiar with venue terms used on signs, tickets and programs. Food and drink conventions may be different. Other customer service requirements may be different. It is important to realise the difference between providing for needs and expectations, and being patronizing.

- Find out where to start building links.

It is good to start with people from the particular target group(s) in the organization itself, and reach out to include the neighbourhood, the community and academics studying cultural minorities.

This case study is drawn from Shad Ali's presentation ("Marketing Consultant, It Ain't Ethnic") to "A Symposium on Audience Development" Breakout Session 3, 19-20 November 1994.

#### IV. AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

An effective audience development initiative begins with a vision — a dream — and a plan. The more specific and detailed the blueprint you create, the more effective you are going to be. Take a minute and think about this: What is your vision? Is it personal or institutional? What do you need to make it happen? With whom do you share this vision?

The answer to the last question is critical, not only for theatre companies but for all of today's arts institutions. Indeed, it is the basis of a central philosophy of the ground-breaking Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund publication, *Opening the Door to the Entire Community: How Museums Are Using Permanent Collections to Engage Audiences*. The report ... was the result of a 7-year, \$32 million initiative dedicated to audience-building strategies at 29 museums ... Complete institutional investment in community engagement became a mandate of the study. Many of the executive directors and managing directors echoed this sentiment. The report states:

Chartering a new course for audience development can't just be the passion of a museum's director or its marketing or education department. It requires the commitment of the entire institution to conduct business in new ways that reach far beyond the walls of the museum.

Donna Walker-Kuhne, *Invitation to the Party* (p.5)

You think about audiences first — you make sure the audience is considered from the very start and at every subsequent stage in the development of new work, new buildings and new initiatives.

For example: When Manchester Art Gallery repositioned, they wanted their focus on 'audiences first' to be really clear to everyone, inside and outside the organization.

One of the ways they underlined their commitment was to redesign the logo around images of visitors — of varying shapes and sizes — and to use this as consistently as possible in everything they do.

For example: Farnham Maltings decided to rethink totally the way they approach audiences — instead of thinking "Here's the building, what shall we put on in it?" they began to say to themselves: "Here are the people of Farnham. It's our role to encourage their creativity, so what's the best possible way we can do that (regardless of the building)."

Morton Smith, *Not for the Likes of You* (p.25)

As noted above, there are several challenges to developing audiences from Aboriginal and ethno-racial communities. Ideally, some of the activities involved in articulating and acting on organizational commitment and community engagement will enhance an organization's profile in Aboriginal and ethno-racial communities. This can serve as a good entry point for the beginning of audience development activities.

Activities needed to develop audiences include:

- Integrating activities to reach diverse communities in marketing and audience development activities;
- Examining community demographics and developing resource lists of community leaders and organizations;
- Convening interviews and focus groups with individuals from diverse communities to discuss their interests in the arts as well as access points and barriers;
- Building relationships with diverse communities through connections with community leaders and organizations;
- Identifying and working with partners, including arts organizations in diverse communities;
- Investing in and making a commitment to a short-, medium- and long-term approach to developing audiences from diverse communities, e.g., putting the proper resources (financial and human) into place;
- Educating artists/audiences/staff about diverse communities and strategies to build audiences amongst them;
- Conducting periodic reviews and analysis on activities and implementing follow-up based on the results;
- Promoting group sales within diverse communities and providing appropriate discounts to begin to build interest amongst diverse communities;
- Seeking insights from community leaders, organizations and artists about community-based approaches that have worked in other areas;
- Setting up an audience development committee with internal/external persons working together;
- Using outreach as a way to gather data on communities and potential audiences, e.g., the size and functions of communities, places community members frequent, organizations that bring communities together;
- Identifying the characteristics of diverse communities in terms of their geographic residence, period of time within that area (e.g., are they newcomers? How long has the community been there?), economic capacity and educational level, languages spoken in the home and elsewhere;
- Working with others to conduct market research of diverse communities and use methodologies that are relevant to diverse communities;

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- Involving audiences in the work of the arts organization, e.g., as volunteers, board members, staff;
- Developing programs that are of interest to diverse communities and make links with communities to share what you want to do;
- Identifying and using the communities' languages and means of communicating.

Audience development requires a strategic plan that is holistically integrated into the fabric of your arts institution. The strategic plan must be grounded in the history of the institution, as well as the history of the audiences you are seeking to attract. It must be based on an understanding of and a willing openness to multiple cultures. More important than “filling seats” or meeting the “bottom line”, the purpose of executing a strategic audience development plan is to build a long-lasting foundation for your institution grounded in the very communities you are opening your doors to serve. (Donna Walker-Kuhne, *Invitation to the Party*, p.7)

Audience development is a specialized form of marketing that requires more than just the mastery of traditional marketing techniques, such as direct mail, series subscription drives, membership drives or advertising and press campaigns. Audience development is the merging of marketing techniques with relationship-building skills, because in order to have a lasting impact on your prospective audience, the relationship must be both personal and institutional. Your mission is to make a connection with your audiences' hearts by demonstrating the value of incorporating the arts into their lives. Once that connection is made, the idea of experiencing and supporting the arts and culture becomes organic, enabling the establishment of a long-term relationship. (Donna Walker-Kuhne, *Invitation to the Party*, p.11)

My staff and I knew that group sales would be an important component of our mission at the Public (Theatre). However, we also knew that we would not be able to generate those sales by calling community groups that knew nothing about our work. They needed to get to know us, and we needed to get to know them. Based on my prior experience with DTH (Dance Theatre of Harlem), I knew that in order for group sales campaigns to be successful, they must be organic — they must evolve through sustained relationships and community engagement...

Group sales is the strongest tool you have for generating and developing audiences, as well as for establishing a strong earned-income base. Inviting groups builds audiences in large numbers instead of one by one. They can also be nurtured to become “friends”, donors or members of your arts organization. (Donna Walker-Kuhne, *Invitation to the Party*, p.81)



### Evaluating New Audiences — Points to Consider

- Determine a method to establish the value and potential of individual non-English speaking background communities through:
  - Accessing existing cultural behavioural data;
  - Undertaking direct qualitative research with the target group;
  - Consider the information gained with reference to artwork preference, programming requirements and communication requirements.
- Make an organizational decision establishing one or more non-English speaking background community (ies) as audience development target(s).
- Include these targets within your organization's programming and budgeting.

*The world is your audience* (p.31)

For commentary and demographic tables, see CPAMO Workshops # 1 for presentations by Sandeep Agrawal, Myer Seimiatycki, Shugang Wong  
<http://cpamo.posterous.com/workshop-1-presentations>

For commentary and data related to getting information to new immigrants, see CPAMO Workshop #2 presentation by Nadia Caidi  
<http://cpamo.posterous.com/workshop-2-presentations>

For example: Wolverhampton Art Gallery:

- conducts a major audience survey every 3-4 years;
- commissions focus groups for major projects where they talk to key potential target groups;
- issues 'Your views' cards to at least 100 people at every exhibition and collates the results to provide instant snapshots of audiences;
- holds an evaluation meeting after each exhibit with front of house staff to get their feedback on audiences; and
- collaborates with other venues in the region through Birmingham Arts Marketing to pool audience data.

For example: The Peacock Theatre in Woking writes to all new attendees at the end of every week, asking for their feedback on all aspects of their experience at the theatre. And they act on the results. (Morton Smith *Not for the Likes of You*, p.30)

**The Royal Easter Show — Benefits of Culturally Diverse Marketing**

In the early 1990s, the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW began looking for ways to reverse the falling attendances. The Society realised that, faced by competition from other venues, it needed to keep pace with Sydney's increasing and changing population. In response to these changes, a culturally diverse marketing campaign was developed.

The main strategy of this campaign was to develop relationships with ethnic media and run publicity programs informing ethnic communities about what the Show was and what it had to offer to them. This relatively inexpensive culturally diverse marketing campaign costing a mere \$20,000 generated a huge increase in attendance by non-English speaking background people and in increase in gate-takings of over half a million dollars.

**Cultural Diversity Market Research Strategy**

Twenty-five organizations involved in the Marketing Cultural Diversity Network were invited to make submissions and four organizations eventually participated in the project in 1999. Seven postgraduate students...conducted the research as field placements and assessment for the course. The students were linked with a client organization and acted as consultants under the supervision of the teaching personnel, responding to the client's particular marketing needs...

Over the course of ten weeks, the students conducted market research and developed marketing strategies and a marketing plan for the client or for a program/product of the organization. The plans were based on the research data and analysis, and included performance indicators and a budget for the recommended strategies. The information gathered and the plans developed were shared by all members of the Marketing Cultural Diversity Network and contributed to their overall understanding of Marketing Cultural Diversity.

In summary, the market research found that: (a) culturally diverse audiences will attend performances from other cultures other than their own; (b) they require organisations to demonstrate inclusivity and sensitivity in developing marketing strategies; (c) relationships can be built and maintained, particularly to culturally diverse audiences that are university-educated... (d) organizational positioning, planning and management add strength to marketing activity. (*A Different Drummer*, p.12)

For comments on audience development, see CPAMO Workshop #4 on Values and Benefits with presentations by Jini Stolk, Executive Director of Creative Trust, Skye Louis, Project Coordinator of the Neighbourhood Arts Network, Anahita Azrahimi and Cheryl Ewing, CPAMO and CCI, Kevin Ormsby, Kashedance, and Menaka Thakker, Menaka Thakker Dance.

<http://cpamo.posterous.com/workshop-4-presentations>

All of the audience development initiatives have resulted in The Public's (Theatre) establishing solid, creative partnerships with more than 1,000 organizations and innumerable individuals within New York, New Jersey and Connecticut...area. As word spread, many organizations were aggressive about initiating a partnership themselves.

We created partnerships with organizations established in their communities; the partnerships were mutually beneficial and yielded a multitude of programs. It was important not only to make contact with these partner organizations, but also to stay in touch, The personal relationships had to be nurtured.

The greatest lesson I learned while working at the Public is that successful audience development is a sustained effort. It takes time. We began working on these programs in 1993, but only started to really experience the fruits of our labor ten years later. People are now coming back to the theatre on their own, spontaneously, without the groups that first brought them to our front door.

Donna Walker-Kuhne, *Invitation to the Party* (p.91)

### **Vancouver Opera Company — Using Ethnicity as an Indicator When Developing a Community Profile**

In 1990, the Vancouver Opera Company conducted research into potential audience development opportunities within the Chinese, East Indian, Japanese, German and Italian communities. The result of the research was to recognise that the German and Italian communities would provide the best short-term audience opportunities because they were familiar with European music, and would require relatively straightforward marketing efforts. However, the Chinese community was the city's fastest growing ethnic group and there was also a high potential for growth as increasing numbers of Hong Kong Chinese applied to migrate to Canada.

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The Vancouver Opera Company took advice on building a relationship with the Chinese community, developed a long-term strategy and implemented it with success.

The strategy took a culturally diverse perspective with implications for all operational aspects of the Company. Firstly, relationships were established with Chinese community groups. Research revealed that two operas, *Madam Butterfly*, and *Carmen* were particular favourites with the community and incentives were provided to community groups to attend those operas. Further activities included trying to get community members to become members of the Opera and the appointment of a representative from the Chinese community to the Board of the Vancouver Opera Company.

Community networking also encouraged a substantial number of volunteers from the Chinese community to work with the company with sub-titles in English and assist in cross-cultural communication.

This case study was sourced by the Audience Development and Advocacy Division of the Australia Council, and was obtained from Opera Australia.

### AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT MODELS

#### **Arts About Manchester: Arts Ambassadors Unit<sup>1</sup>**

A pioneering example of a large-scale consortium targeting new Black and Asian audiences

**Artform:** Dance, theatre, comedy, poetry, festivals, visual arts, music, fashion, broadcast multimedia and new technology

**Target audience:** African, Caribbean, South Asian and Chinese people

**Project funds:** Arts Council England, New Audiences programme, Arts for Everyone

**Partners:** Arts About Manchester (an audience development agency) and arts venues across Greater Manchester

#### **Project history and aim**

The Arts Ambassadors Unit (AAU) was a three-year project that sought to develop audiences for creative events from the African, Caribbean, South Asian and Chinese communities of Greater Manchester to build audiences generally for work produced by artists and cultural practitioners from these communities.

At the start of the project in 1998, research showed there was a very low take-up of mainstream provision by Black, Asian and Chinese audiences.

### **Working methods**

The AAU offered unprecedented project support and resources to venues, agencies and creative practitioners alike, pioneering innovative ways of working practice:

- sharing cultural intelligence on issues relating to Black target markets including needs of cultural groups and strategic print distribution points
- investing in training initiatives for current and future cultural workers
- establishing significant creative networks and partnerships across the local creative industries
- investing in the development of local product to stimulate new programming opportunities
- developing new media methods of showcasing and promoting Black creative product
- encouraging participation in arts activity wherever possible
- undertaking intensive Black audience database development

A key element of the project was its focus on supporting the emergence of local Black creative practice, helping artists to establish a more significant stance within the current regional arts, cultural and technological industries.

Practitioners and cultural workers were given the opportunity to promote their activities via AAU projects such as the *bamBOO!* cultural magazine, listings and the cutting-edge radio programme *Divergence*.

### **Costs**

The project cost was approximately £274,000 over three years, plus a further £5,000 towards research and evaluation.

### **Achievements**

Between summer 1998 and spring 2001, the AAU:

- employed 42 ambassadors and workers on 1,698 working days
- supported the development of 11 new arts projects and commissions, and a major season of Black dance
- involved 33 venues and agencies in a variety of ways in the marketing of 112 different Black arts events, including 44 participative projects
- trained 40 young Black people in arts marketing and facilitated their placements in arts organizations

- captured 7,774 names and addresses for a database of people interested in Black arts events
- produced 62,000 listings brochures
- compiled four issues of a new cultural magazine profiling no less than 83 (mainly local) artists
- produced eight hours of radio broadcast

A recorded 31,000 people attended and participated in AAU-supported projects. An audience survey in 2000 demonstrated that overall representation of Black audiences had increased from 3% to %, with certain venues achieving up to 30% representation at that time. Research showed that 43% of attendees cited ambassadors as their primary influence.

### **Challenges**

Inevitably, with a project this size, there were challenges. These included:

- recruiting ambassadors with appropriate knowledge of specific artforms. This was overcome by working with emerging Black and Asian artists, who were interested in building marketing skills to benefit their own work
- there were issues early on about lack of available product for programming. This was overcome by allocating some AAU resources to develop product by local artists and by providing resources for marketing materials, which enabled greater confidence about under-resourced activities recouping money through ticket sales
- retaining ambassadors — the good ones often got jobs in the sector. This was eased by creating longer-term opportunities where possible, usually within a venue, and providing the best-possible training opportunities

### **Legacy and continuation**

The work of the AAU was about informing wider audience development practices and 'joining-up' with other strategies and programmes, so that it ceased to be seen as the 'Black initiative' within arts About Manchester (AAM) and took its place as part of their core programme of audience development activity.

The AAU made a significant difference to the development of Black audiences and audiences for Black work. The project was especially successful in reaching young people and generated goodwill and credibility with key partners. The work of the unit created a detailed body of knowledge, insight and expertise about how to target and reach communities.

There is now a much improved partnership infrastructure and an explosion of provision for arts and young Black people at key venues. New resources, both knowledge-based and practical, are now available to support venues and partners, as is a network of trained workers to support outreach and marketing programmes.

AAM has created a new part-time post of cultural diversity project manager, which has so far focused on working with large-scale providers and building more detailed audience information that moves beyond analyzing Black and Asian audiences as a homogeneous group. Such research has been undertaken by ambassadors and data collectors at supported events.

AAM is now focusing on working with mainstream venues to use the learning from AAU in planning, programming and marketing, and to establish structures for communicating with attendee panels and user advisory groups.

Arts Council England, North West has also allocated funding from the Arts Council's New Audiences programme towards definition of the legacy for AAU in Greater Manchester and has tested the transferability and sustainability of ambassador activity in Merseyside and East Lancashire.

Contact for further information: [www.aam.org.uk](http://www.aam.org.uk)

### **Birmingham Arts Marketing: Networking Project<sup>2</sup>**

An example of a large-scale consortium targeting new Black and Asian audiences

**Artform:** Visual arts, museums, theatre

**Target audience:** People of South Asian, African or Caribbean origin

**Partners:** Birmingham Arts Marketing (BAM) and seven arts organisations, ranging from mainstream classical music venues to multi-artform arts centres, and from a non-venue-based South Asian arts development agency to regional museums and galleries

**Project funds:** Arts Council England, West Midlands, New Audiences programme

#### **Project history and aim**

This three-year networking project began in November 1999 and initially sought to test the effectiveness of network marketing and word-of-mouth approaches within specific communities. It also aimed to increase audience attendances among the identified communities. However, early on, it was agreed that in order

for this project to benefit arts organisations on a long-term basis, it was important to focus on recruitment and establishing and developing relationships.

Objectives were modified in keeping with emerging findings and there were changes in the number and type of partner over the course of the project's duration. Objectives now also focus on increasing access, building enduring relationships between communities and arts organisations, and effecting real organizational change for long-term integration of Black audiences.

### **Working methods**

The ambassadors, led by a project coordinator, are people of South Asian, African or Caribbean origin with a brief of networking within their community to raise the profile of a specific arts organization and encourage an active engagement of South Asian, African or Caribbean communities with that arts organization.

The ambassadors work with a voluntary panel of community representatives and with the arts organization to facilitate greater understanding of the needs and aspirations of the target community, to promote the arts organisations to their community and to encourage attendance at arts events.

### **Set-up**

The project took seven months to set up: two months for recruitment of project coordinator and six arts ambassadors, and five months for selection of arts venues and organisations, creation of panels and development of arts ambassador relationships

### **Costs**

The annual project budget is £72,282.

### **Achievements**

The project has:

- successfully built relationships between nine arts organisations and specific Black and ethnic minority communities
- extended to involve three regional galleries and museums
- involved more than 200 individual community volunteers at more than 100 arts events
- initiated several dedicated cultural diversity events
- increased the involvement of Black artists and audiences in mainstream programming and mainstream arts organisations in culturally specific events such as Black History Month
- brought cultural diversity issues to local, regional and national attention through involvement in conferences, seminars and debates



- appointed two panel members to the board of directors of Sampad (one of the participating arts organisations)

In addition, a mini-survey for the targeted family weekend, Through the Door, which accompanied the Dayanita Singh exhibition at the Ikon Gallery, indicated that the event had been successful in attracting 56% first-time attenders and 43% South Asian visitors. A family day at Symphony Hall attracted 26% first-time visitors and around 17% Black and Asian attenders.

### **Legacy and contribution**

Birmingham Arts Marketing is now developing a database of all the community organisations that have been contacted as a result of the networking project. This is seen as a positive legacy which strengthens the 'network'.

The impact on partner organisations is difficult to measure in the short term and there is still much work to be done. It is hoped that as organisations become more experienced, they will rely less on BAM's support to continue the work with African, Caribbean and Asian communities and will incorporate the project's techniques as part of their core audience development work.

If significant long-term resources and continued commitment from participation organisations can be secured for the future, the potential for positive impact is enormous.

Contact for further information

[www.artsnet.org.uk/pages/birminghamartsmarketing.html/](http://www.artsnet.org.uk/pages/birminghamartsmarketing.html/)

### **Ambassador Theatre Group: District Sales Assistants<sup>3</sup>**

A pioneering example of a highly successful field promotion and sales team

**Artform:** Performing arts

**Target audience:** New groups (people who are in groups of 10 or more) and schools and audiences who are new to a particular artform

**Project funds:** Commercially earned income

#### **Project history and aim**

The Ambassador Theatre Group (ATG) pioneered one of the first ambassador schemes some 10 years ago in its first regional venue, the New Victoria Theatre, Woking, Surrey, under the title of District Sales Assistance scheme. It was then a new theatre and a need was recognized for workers out in the field: district sales

assistants (DSAs). Since then, the scheme has gone from strength to strength, and forms a key part of the ATG's audience development strategy.

Now all ATG regional venues have successful DSA schemes in place. This initiative plays a crucial role in enabling the ATG to develop audiences, particularly in areas where no professional theatre has existed before, or where there is a need to cultivate audiences from areas currently fallow.

The DSA teams are effectively a field sales force, with set monthly targets and a remit to encourage new groups and schools to visit the theatre, raise the theatre's profile within their catchment and act as the theatre's ears and voice, providing a vital channel of feedback at a local level.

**Working methods**

Each theatre has a team of seven to 10 DSAs, who live in key areas of the theatre's catchment. The DSAs are employed for nine hours per week. Their profile tends to be women returning to work, with previous experience in sales, marketing, PR or customer services and a strong interest in theatre.

The DSAs contact new groups for theatre visits by phone and email, facilitated by tools such as first-visit discounts, personally escorted tours backstage or 'money-can't-buy' opportunities such as meeting the stars. They act as theatre sales ambassadors in their area and offer a personal service to their group contacts.

The DSAs attend monthly meetings with the marketing manager and the rest of the marketing team to review activity, exchange information and ideas, and present their monthly reports to ensure clear and informed lines of communication and performance monitoring. The ATG also employs a DSA training coordinator, whose remit includes training new DSA teams in new venues, a mentoring role and updating the DSA's training.

DSAs feed into education and outreach projects as well as generating corporate leads for development. They are also used, where possible, for longer stints of telesales activity for children's shows, musicals, pantos, etc and for following up direct mail campaigns. This provides the marketing department with a valuable and flexible resource.

It is important for the DSAs to have a good support network within the venue, i.e. a group coordinator at the box office, to process their sales and deal with any routine queries they may have.

**Achievements**

The DSAs have been very useful in taking the ATG strategy further. The project

is cost-effective and almost self-financing. In larger venues, DSAs generate between £200,000 and £300,000 per venue in group sales every year, and account for over 25% of all group visits across ATG regional venues. Approximately 35,000 visits per regional venue per year are achieved through the DSA network.

The DSAs have been excellent in encouraging groups to cross over from 'safe' product like musicals to a more demanding artform, such as dance or opera, because their contacts are willing to trust them.

DSAs have also provided useful feedback on transport difficulties, printed materials and new venues which are competing for attenders. An added benefit has been that the targeted groups themselves become advocates.

### **Legacy and continuation**

The ATG has recently launched a West End sales ambassadors scheme across its 10 London venues to pilot the scheme in London and test if the successful regional model can be adapted successfully to generate increased theatre audiences in the capital.

### **Acting on Diversity<sup>4</sup>**

#### ***John E. McGrath describes how Contact in Manchester has changed to embrace diversity***

Contact's core audience is young adults ages 13-30. Within this remit, we are committed to reflecting — in our artists, participants, staff, audiences and board — the rich cultural diversity of contemporary Manchester. Year round, Contact brings together a wealth of emerging companies, international work, new writing, events, showcases and debate to explore today's lives and passions.

#### **Starting Points**

In re-opening Contact after a lottery re-build in 1999, we sought to address the 'invisible barriers' to entering a theatre building. We worked with young people to identify the rules and words that feel unfamiliar and unwelcoming in theatre — funny terms like 'stalls' or 'matinee', laws about seat numbers and what you can and can't bring into the space. We play music everywhere, all of the time — even outside the entrance, and employ young staff from a range of backgrounds to say hello to people as they enter. We let people wander into most areas of the building and asked local celebrities to do voiceovers for our lift. Not surprisingly, by breaking down barriers for young people, we also became a popular venue for a range of communities who felt unwelcome in

stiff, traditional environments. We also engage in a range of outreach programmes with those communities, but the key was making them feel at home — welcomed and listened to — when they arrived.

### **Maintaining Involvement**

Engaging with communities is relatively easy. It simply involves well designed projects led by creative, skillful artists. What's more complex is maintaining people's involvement, ensuring that they move on from a specific initiative and into the daily fabric of the organisation. This can be achieved by a shift of power — at board, staff and artist levels — so that newly engaged communities feel that they have a real input into decision making.

Our quarterly Open Contact forums provide an opportunity for anyone to give feedback to staff from Artistic Director to Marketing Assistant, find out more about what's happening and sign up for future projects. They can also join one of our Action Contact groups in programming, technical theatre, management or marketing. These groups take on projects within departments and contribute to decisions at all levels. Each has a leader chosen by other young people through an interview and is supervised by department staff. Action Contact group leaders meet weekly to discuss the program, make plans, meet the Artistic Director and Chair of the Board, feed into Contact's three year plan, develop plans for recruitment and outreach and undertake training from staff and external professionals. They send two representatives to board meetings.

Our theatre is a meeting place for people from many backgrounds that you might not meet elsewhere. The ability to have a good time together has been essential to our success: we are not afraid of conflict or disagreement, but we like best of all to throw a party. Contact is a social as well as a creative environment so a night at the theatre doesn't begin and end with a play. The bar and foyers are a hub where anything can happen (at the moment we have a real garden installed in the upper foyer, where all sorts of people are hanging out and sparking impromptu performances).

We cannot do this work in isolation. Partners such as leading Black touring company Nitro, and the innovative community-based South Asian company Peshkar, have been absolutely essential to our success in reaching Black and Asian communities. In a diverse society, we need a diversity of creative voices. These partnerships are long-term and they cover everything from co-producing work to running training programs together.

If I were doing this again, I would insist on spending more time recruiting a diverse staff team prior to the re-opening of the building. We employed staff in

a rush to address fairly traditional job descriptions. They did a great job, but next time I would probably be more radical in how roles are defined. Practitioners from marginalised communities often have a particularly wide range of skills, because they have frequently had to be one-person bands in the past. This breadth of knowledge often doesn't come through in recruiting for jobs which have a narrow, traditional focus.

Diversity means difference — different opinions, different ideas, different ways of working. If you're going to embrace diversity, you will have to be ready to change — not just once but every day.

### **I'm an Artist, Not an Audience Developer<sup>5</sup>**

Kristine Landon-Smith points out the challenges she faces when her touring company is asked to develop culturally diverse audiences.

Tamasha is a national touring company that produces work about the Asian diaspora. We tour on the small and middle scales and produce one or two shows a year alongside a Developing Artists programme which offers professional development to writers, actors, directors and designers of Asian origin. We also have an education programme which seeks to assist teachers at secondary level in their delivery of an intracultural curriculum in drama.

We aim to achieve a culturally diverse audience, however the reality is that our audiences our [sic] show specific and often speak to very particular groups within the Asian diaspora. For example, *House of the Sun* (Theatre Royal Stratford East 1990) drew a large Hindu Sindhi community, *East is East* (Birmingham Rep, Royal Court and Stratford East) achieved our most culturally diverse audience with 60% being non Asian, *Balti Kings* (Birmingham Rep and Lyric Hammersmith 1999) drew an equal mix of Muslim Punjabis and non Asian audiences. *Strictly Dandia* in London (Lyric Hammersmith 2004-5) played to a mostly Gujarati audience.

We know how to get these audiences but do we know how to keep them? Our work speaks directly to very particular groups of people at a moment in time so we can't guarantee that these groups will return for the next show. Whilst we can draw new groups of people to theatre buildings, we too have difficulty in holding that audience. So I prefer to say that Tamasha's product attracts new audiences at different times to theatre spaces but we are not a company that magically draws culturally diverse audiences and keeps them for five to 10 years.

When people see new audiences, they get excited. This is where it begins to

get dangerous — Tamasha becomes popular because of its ability to ‘develop audiences’ (which, as I’ve explained, is not what we do). As an artist, to score so highly as an audience developer means that to the people who are trying to develop their audiences the ‘art’ can become of secondary importance. So relationships become strained and on occasions the artist is only invited in when the particular audience they are bringing in has value. The artistic product seems to hold less interest.

So what do we want? As an artist, I want the importance of the work to precede the importance of the audience. I love bringing new audiences to theatre spaces. I’m not passionate about making them come back again and again: let them come when they want to, when they feel they will see something that really speaks to them. The implication of this of course is that there needs to be more product that reflects the experiences of people from all walks of life. And when the product is there, the easiest thing is to find the audience. It’s common sense — you simply go out and talk to the target group, get them excited about the work and they’ll come in their droves. Sure it’s time-consuming, but it’s the only way.

### **Chasing a Chinese Audience<sup>6</sup>**

#### ***Sarah Champion discusses her organisation’s approach to developing artists and audiences***

Chinese Arts Centre was established in 1986 by a group of British Chinese artists who were frustrated that their work was rarely seen. Also, at this time, the funding systems were keen to support ‘Black Arts’ but Chinese artists have never seen themselves as part of this movement and so, once again, felt excluded. Unfortunately this situation is only slowly changing and so there is still a need for Chinese Arts Centre to exist.

We act as the national agency to promote contemporary Chinese art and interpret Chinese culture. The majority of our work is with visual arts. We have a changing exhibition programme, tour exhibitions, host an artist residency scheme, run a national education programme, organise conferences, seminars and training events and act as an agency for performers.

We are frequently asked by arts organisations to provide support to enable them to engage a Chinese audience. The constant cry is that the Chinese audience is ‘invisible’, ‘quiet’, ‘difficult to pin down’. These cultural stereotypes are more a reflection on the organisations [sic] frustration that there are no quick solutions than an accurate description of the community.

The first question we ask such organisations is why they want to reach a Chinese audience. More often than not they haven't given it much thought, it is a knee jerk, funding box-ticking exercise. However, it is often because they have programmed a Chinese event and so think the Chinese population is their natural audience. Both are painful and frustrating to deal with, but both have the same long-term and time-consuming solution.

The only way to get a Chinese audience, or any specific audience group, is for the organisation to make a sincere commitment to serving that community. Firstly this means asking the community what they would like to see and do. Secondly, do it. Thirdly, and most importantly, keep doing it and keep asking if you are doing it right.

Audiences are not stupid, they respond to a genuine attempt to woo them and shun the quick hit. Most arts organisations programme a Chinese event around Chinese New Year — don't they realise that Chinese people would like to spend that evening with their families, or, if they run restaurants, they will be working? Better to use this event to attract a mainstream audience to Chinese arts, rather than preaching to the converted who would rather be somewhere else. In a survey of Chinese arts attenders carried out by Arts About Manchester, 70% found out about events by word of mouth. This is a huge proportion and demonstrates that to attract a Chinese audience, you need to recognize it will take time and you should programme a whole series of events to get the word out there. One simple way to 'fast track' audience building is to employ Chinese ambassadors who will go out into the community and talk to people about your events. Another approach, scarily obvious but so rarely done, would be to employ Chinese people.

It's not the audience who needs to change; it's the arts organisation. Why should an audience come to you if you are not providing them with a service they desire? Swallow your pride, you need to go out and ask them for help.

### **Implications for Audience Development Practice<sup>7</sup>**

***It's really about getting the basics right across the whole organisation, says Caroline Griffin***

Over recent years, arts organisations have put a significant amount of effort into developing new Black and minority ethnic audiences. They have used various approaches and the majority of the effort has been, at least to some degree, experimental. While it is clear that we are in the early stages of developing our

skills in this area, we have already achieved significant successes. It is a good time to look back and take stock of the types of approach that are successful and likely to inform future work.

The task of developing new audiences often falls squarely at the feet of marketers who usually make a rapid response by reviewing their marketing practice and looking for new techniques.

One of the first things we discover is that it is not enough to say that we are trying to generate a 'culturally diverse' audience. Neither is it appropriate to assume that the audience of a piece of work is 'Asian' or 'Black'. The reality is that marketing to Black and minority ethnic audiences follows the same principles as any marketing activity. Potential audiences should be identified not solely by their ethnicity but also by other defining characteristics, such as social circumstance, income, geographical location, educational attainment, history of attendance and so on. We must then work out which benefits of the work we are promoting (that is, reasons why someone will want to get involved with the work, not just facts about it) best match the needs and wants of those audiences.

As Mel Larsen has outlined, some of the tools for such sophisticated segmentation are still in their infancy. It is hard to locate target audiences using traditional profiling methods. It is also very difficult to assess the ethnicity of an audience on the basis of postcode analysis or even with audience surveys. This makes judging success difficult. However, these tools are being developed all the time and, just because it's hard, it doesn't mean that appropriate market segmentation is less important when marketing to any other audience.

Knowing the target group thoroughly will help programmers and marketers make decisions about such issues as:

- which benefits are most persuasive
- language and tone of voice for print
- appropriate imagery
- the phrasing of information about the venue
- the timing of shows
- potential audience size
- ticket pricing, where applicable

As our experience has grown, organisations have begun to accept that marketing is only part of the solution. Marketing only works when the product is appropriate, accessible and attractive. In the arts, this means that sustainable development of Black and minority ethnic audiences is linked to the



programming of work by Black and minority ethnic artists. This is not the whole story but why would people want to get involved with an organisation where ideas and representations they can identify with are conspicuous only by their absence on the walls of the gallery or on the stage?

Arts organisations have found that programming culturally-specific work is often the quickest and most reliable way of getting a new audience from a particular ethnic background.

However many organisations don't just aim to develop specific audiences for a particular event. Instead, they would like to encourage a broader audience across the whole programme — a diverse audience in its correct sense. This is a more complex programming issue and is usually only successful when the organisation considers how to appeal to a broad constituency across all its activities including management systems and practices; ticket sales, stewarding, catering and bar operations; and education and outreach activities.

A barrier frequently cited in the now substantial body of research into barriers to attendance is the perception that organisations don't welcome people from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds. A scarcity of Black and minority ethnic staff and artists is usually seen as proof of such a lack of welcome.

Ambassadors along with other types of community liaison schemes have been particularly useful in supporting the development of deep relationships between arts organizations and the new audience. These roles have been effective because they provide an essential two-way channel for communication between organisation and audience. Experience shows that these roles only succeed when the organisation listens to, understands and acts upon information it receives.

It is clear that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to developing Black and minority ethnic audiences. Each organisation needs to tailor an approach that takes into account its own aims, the characteristics of the potential new audience and their attitudes and desires.

However there are some critical success factors that should form the basis for any audience development activity. An organisation needs to:

- be genuine about its desire to develop new audiences
- set audience development objectives that are authentic and are complementary to its artistic, social, and financial objectives
- participate in meaningful dialogue with the target audience

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- be open to change, both in its organisational culture and artistic programme
- recognize that new audiences consist of individuals with marketers developing relationships based on the identification of appropriate benefits and the careful targeting of communications
- All the approaches discussed depend upon a whole-hearted, long-term commitment by the whole organisation to developing Black and minority ethnic audiences.

### What are 'Marketing' and 'Audience Development'?<sup>8</sup>

#### PRINCIPLES

##### The Marketing Mix

The 'Marketing Mix' consists of the four Ps ('place', 'product', 'price', 'promotion') with the additional factor of 'service'. Use them as a checklist when developing marketing strategies to achieve set goals and try to address as many of the following areas as possible:

**Place/Venue:** Accessibility, venue awareness, barriers to attendance (for example, distance), outreach programs and public places

**Price:** Price matching, discounts (for example, early bird, group, family, subscriptions, student rush), value

**Service:** Customer service, information service, catering for special needs (for example, language)

**Product:** Product development

**Programming:** Special events, features, product packaging (for example, dinner and show, shop vouchers)

**Promotion/Communication:** Awareness, information, education, public relations, cultural protocol, sales promotions, advertising

## Communicating Your Story<sup>9</sup>

### STRATEGIES

- Develop personal relationships with your target market to assist in the communication of your company's philosophy and programs, as well as to distinguish your organisation or product in the community.
- Target culturally diverse organisations for special promotions such as group bookings, discounts and festivals.
- Send event and product information to culturally diverse organisations for inclusion in their community newsletters and distribute promotional material in places where culturally diverse young people gather.
- Utilise marketing and promotional messages that are universal yet relevant to different cultures and be culturally sensitive when promoting activities and include appropriate disclaimers.

## Making inclusiveness Your Business<sup>10</sup>

By being inclusive in your marketing, you may gain a whole new audience or customer base, develop new relationships and advocates for your art or organisation and at the same time broaden your opportunities for creative growth.

### STRATEGIES

- Include mainstream and culturally diverse media outlets in your publicity campaigns and send culturally diverse organisations (and vice versa) your event information for inclusion in their community newsletters.
- Utilise the Queensland Multicultural Resource Directory (Queensland Multicultural Resource Directory, Multicultural Affairs Queensland, Dept. of the Premier and Cabinet, annual publication).
- Target other organisations with a possible interest in your cultural and arts activity for special promotions such as group bookings, discounts and festivals, and build relationships with community leaders through invitations to events.
- Find and foster advocates within culturally diverse communities who match the audience profile of your organisation.
- Utilise marketing and promotional messages that are universal yet relevant to diverse cultures. Be culturally sensitive when promoting activities and include appropriate disclaimers.

**Working the Media<sup>11</sup>**

**STRATEGIES**

- Create opportunities for ethnic and mainstream media representatives to speak to you and your colleagues in your network and discuss outlets and cultural diversity policies with them. Be persistent in contacting them, give them plenty of notice and follow through with phone calls.
- Explore all possible avenues, including news broadcast, documentaries, biographies, newsletters and other publications. Community sources are excellent, as are regional and national sources if your event has a special attraction.
- Go directly to the editors and send them tickets to your performances, invitations to openings or even product samples.
- Link your story with a major current event or address a current issue with intelligent debate. When appropriate, competitions and give-aways are good ways to ensure your message gets broadcast (especially on community radio) and to attract audiences.

**Analysing the Benefits of Marketing Cultural Diversity<sup>12</sup>**

**STRATEGIES**

- Evaluate your strategies by asking yourself the important question of whether your efforts were worthwhile, enriching and educational.
- Try a simple cost/benefit analysis by applying a dollar-per-new-customer formula to your strategy. But remember that long-term evaluation is more meaningful.
- Maintain your databases at all times and keep track of the diversity of your database to gauge the effectiveness of your Marketing Cultural Diversity strategies. Develop and manage a joint database with others (especially those that are within 5 km of you) that share similar audience profiles to achieve efficiencies in resource and information sharing.
- Add all new customers or important contacts gained from Marketing Cultural Diversity strategies to your general database, so they will receive information about all subsequent promotions and events.

### **Case Study 17: Collaboration Between Arts from non-English Speaking Background Artists and a Mainstream Arts Event<sup>13</sup>**

Since 1993, the Ethnic Communities Council of New South Wales has organised programs of readings of the work of new writers from non-English speaking backgrounds as part of the mainstream event, the Sydney Writers Festival. This event started when an open invitation and a grant was received by Carnivale, then a part of the Sydney Festival, to organise these readings. The NSW Ethnic Communities Council (ECC) started by contacting community-based organisations (such as the Community Arts Association and the Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre to organise a mailing list of writers and a meeting. At the meeting two things became clear: that the writers themselves did not want to organise the forum and that there was no infrastructure around to organise such an event. The Arts and Cultural Sub-Committee of the ECC then took on this role.

The readings in 1993 included “Geography of Memory” and a set of humorous readings called “Brother of the Onion”. This latter reading was very well attended and caught the imagination of audiences. It received very good press coverage from the *Sydney Morning Herald* and since then the program has grown. The 1994 program was called “In-laws and Out-laws”; the 1995 program was “My Life in Subtitles” and 1996 featured a program of short stories and slides titled “The Private Life of Photographs”. The 1997 program was a retrospective “Geography of Memory” — a published anthology of the best works since 1993 involving 20 writers. The NSW Ministry of the Arts funded these programs by the Writers Festival itself, the Australia Council and through donations.

From the original mailing lists a substantial database of writers of non-English speaking background has been developed. It is heartening that many of the new writers have gone on to be represented in other forums.

This initiative has demonstrated that it is important to:

- create a mechanism linking artists with their audience, and provide an incubator if required;
- identify a product suitable for the targeted audience;
- use humour in promoting non-English speaking arts products and productions to a mainstream audience.

Contact: Barry Gamba, Arts Officer, Ethnic Communities Council of New South Wales, 221 cope Street, Waterloo, NSW 2017

Ph: (02) 9319 0288. Fax: (02) 9319 4229

### Identifying and Addressing Barriers<sup>14</sup>

Several strategies can be used to positively change perceptions and to arouse initial interest, such as:

- promoting festivals and arts events in mainstream publications. An example of this is the promotion of the Chinese New Year in the *Sydney Morning Herald* "Good Living" section: cultural events were promoted along with cutting-edge fashion and food in a publication that has a good readership in a potential target group;
- staging non-English speaking background productions within mainstream festivals or events so as to blend the unknown into the familiar;
- including relevant information explaining the significance of culture-specific symbols used in the production, explaining the storyline and the culturally significant events the production is celebrating;
- using promotion and packaging tools such as 'two for one' or half-price tickets productions, and obtaining a good review in the mainstream press arts pages.

### Case Study 22: Balai Ensemble Dance Theatre — Using Traditional Asian Artforms to Explore Life in a Culturally Diverse Australia<sup>15</sup>

Balai Ensemble Dance Theatre is a culturally diverse dance theatre group which creates original works involving live music.

'Balai', meaning 'meeting place', was originally formed with the intention that artists of diverse cultures solely from the Asia-Pacific region could come together to exchange knowledge, skills and ideas on traditional and contemporary performance styles. Since 1992, Balai has evolved into a vehicle for Sydney Asian and non-Asian performing artists to learn about different Asian cultures. Through a collaborative process, Balai has been employing traditional Asian stories and legends to explore the complexities of living in a culturally diverse Australia.

Balai Ensemble aims for a general 'mainstream' audience, rather than a specific ethnic audience — the group wanted to illustrate and comment upon social issues affecting Australia as a whole. This approach obviously appeals to a mainstream audience — Balai estimates its audience to be 60% mainstream and 40% from a mixed non-English speaking backgrounds [sic].

Balai Ensemble has performed at Belvoir Street Asian Festival, Government House, Performance Space, Powerhouse Museum, the Australian Museum and a range of small theatres.

For more insights on audience development, see *Adjust Your View: developing multicultural audiences for the arts* — a toolkit, by Fotis Kapetopoulos, Australia Council for the Arts, 2009, particular Section 4 which contains case studies of:

1. the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and its efforts to engage an Asian audience for Western classical music (p.31)
2. the Melbourne Art's Centre and its efforts to develop partnerships with diverse communities (p.37)
3. Sydney Carnivale Multicultural Arts Festival (p.47)
4. *Abrazando La Diversidad/Embracing Diversity: Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego* (p.61)
5. Theater Zuidpelin's Multicultural Program Committee (p.66)

## V. EMPLOYMENT AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

...All of my experiences have told me that people who feel excluded need to see a mirror of themselves extending the invitation. I think we should be cautious not to ghettoize within organizations, so that audience development professionals are perceived able to only market effectively within target communities. The point is to diversity the experience, not just the audience. This was my task at the Public (Theatre): to institutionalize the experience of diversity by claiming it within every department of the organization. Donna Walker-Kuhne, *Invitation to the Party* (p.157)

Many arts organizations seek to represent the communities they are within and want to involve and arts organizations should strive as much as possible to ensure the make-up of their staff reflect the diversity of the community as well as address the particular challenges individuals from Aboriginal and ethno-racial communities face. To do this successfully requires taking action to both invite such individuals into the organization and to ensure the organization is prepared to support their involvement as staff. This can include: (1) Promoting Employment Opportunities; (2) Having Fair Interview Practices; (3) Providing Developmental Opportunities; (4) Mentoring and Coaching; (5) Accommodations for Persons with Disabilities and Diverse Faiths.

### 1. Promoting Employment Opportunities

Attracting new staff is a challenge. This is particularly important in communities that are diverse. For this reason, organizations should consider it a high priority to hire individuals from diverse communities, particularly Aboriginal and ethno-racial communities. This can be done by:

- Establishing strategies to attract such individuals and using networks within diverse communities to assist;
- Highlighting the organization's commitment to equity and diversity in recruitment and promotional materials;
- Informing potential recruits of the organization's commitment to equity and diversity;
- Involving individuals from diverse communities in the recruitment process, e.g., as part of the interview team;
- Looking at the number of individuals from diverse communities working in the organization and setting equity and diversity recruitment goals;
- Participating in arts administration programs to connect with students from diverse communities;
- Looking at the turnover rates for individuals from diverse communities at various stages of their career;
- Reviewing workforce availability data to determine the numbers of artists from diverse communities and using this to compare with the organization's own representation of artists from diverse communities; and
- Conducting an employment systems review.

### 2. Interviewing Practices

The successful completion of an interview is often the path by which artists make their way into an art's organization. As such, the interview process must be fair, based on bona fide occupational requirements and an instrument to measure the required competencies of all candidates. This can be done by:

- Having non-biased written interview questions to ensure standard approaches are used and that equity and diversity issues are included in them;
- Having agreed upon job descriptions and selection criteria with interview questions related to the job requirements, and the same set of questions used for all candidates;
- Basing eligibility on bona fide occupational requirements and not on personal characteristics;
- Providing clear descriptions of the organization's expectations and clarifying the decision-making process for candidate selection;



- Using an interview format that probes cognitive and behavioural competencies so as to assess broader range of candidates' capacities;
- Educating those involved in interviewing on these matters;
- Promoting and providing reasonable accommodation for those who may require it, i.e., persons with disabilities and of diverse faiths;
- Involving individuals from diverse communities in the interview process;
- Ensuring interviews provide enough time for all candidates to bring forward their strengths; and
- Having individuals involved on interview panels arrive at decisions independently, e.g., reviewing candidates' interviews separately before discussing the results of individual scoring.

### **Hire a Broad Range of Types of People**

A critical way in which you model access internally is to match the make-up of your staff to that of the audience you wish to attract – at all levels, and on a permanent basis... You also try to employ people from the local community in which you're situated. You know that they understand first hand the needs and wishes of the audience and can engage with them on their own terms.

For example: The Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archeology reframed the way that they thought about ancient Egypt — 'if your ancestry is African, Sudanese or Egyptian, this is your heritage'. With a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund they then employed African and Egyptian outreach workers to go out to schools and communities to teach and inform about ancient Egypt from this perspective.

Morton Smith *Not for the Likes of You* (p.24)

### **3. Professional Development**

One of the key indicators of equity and diversity is for arts organizations to have the faces, voices and cultures of individuals from diverse communities, particularly Aboriginal and ethno-racial communities, as an integral part of the organization's decision-making processes. Here it is useful to look at how an organization supports individuals from diverse communities in career development as well as participation in the organization's decision-making processes. It is also helpful if the arts organization provides its staff with opportunities to learn about, understand and become involved in the organization's equity and diversity strategies and implementation plans. This can be done by:

- Providing development opportunities to individuals from diverse communities to assist them in their growth within the organization;

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- Involving individuals from diverse communities in the organization's community and public engagement activities, e.g., networking with diverse communities and involvement in marketing activities;
- Enabling individuals from diverse communities to have access to a range of work within the organization;
- Developing standard performance evaluations with clear criteria on equity and diversity and communicating these across the organization;
- Having senior staff mentor new recruits from diverse communities, particularly those from Aboriginal and ethno-racial communities;
- Including equity and diversity criteria as part of performance reviews, eg., having the knowledge and experience to work with artists and individuals from diverse communities;
- Convening exit interviews with individuals from diverse communities, including consideration of equity and diversity issues;
- Developing and implementing an education/training strategy that is inclusive of equity and diversity principles and involves artists from diverse communities;
- Ensuring all education/training about equity and diversity initiatives are endorsed by the artistic director, general manager and board;
- Convening focused education and training sessions for the organization's leadership to assist them in guiding the organization's equity and diversity initiatives;
- Considering alternative ways to provide education/training, eg., self-directed through use of technology, newsletters, workshops, seminars, etc.;
- Sponsoring or co-sponsoring with other organizations networking sessions for artists from diverse communities; and
- Ensuring all other education/training includes equity and diversity issues.

**For example:** Stevenage Museum has a policy that every staff member works on the main desk front of house on a Saturday once every so often, on a rotating basis, and they tell us it is an invaluable way of keeping everyone in touch with audience reality, as well as improving relationships between staff back- and front-of-house. (Morton Smith *Not for the Likes of You*, p.31)

### 5. Mentoring

Mentoring provides opportunities for newly hired staff to learn from a senior staff in the organization. In mentoring relationships, knowledge and skills are shared from one member of the organization to another. This may be of assistance to in-

dividuals from diverse communities who may need to learn how to balance the differing values of the organization, its practices and their own communities' culture and traditions. As noted earlier, arts organizations have both standard and hidden workplace norms and assumptions. Individuals from diverse communities need to know what these are so that they can respect them and, also, influence their change. Arts organizations can support this by:

- Offering mentoring to support new staff from diverse communities in learning about the organizations;
- Setting selection criteria for those to be mentored with equity and diversity considerations included;
- Supporting senior staff to be mentors and providing training to mentors and those to be mentored so that they have clear expectations of the relationship and of their responsibilities to each other and the organization;
- Ensuring all education and training for mentors and those to be mentored include equity and diversity considerations;
- Acknowledging and providing credit to mentors and those mentored;
- Providing opportunities for individuals from diverse communities to discuss their cultural background and values and what they may add to the organization;
- Having senior staff provide individuals from diverse communities with an orientation to the organization's history and the organization's future directions.

## **6. Accommodation For Persons with Disabilities and Individuals of Diverse Faiths and Creeds**

Most workplaces employ persons with disabilities and individuals who observe diverse faiths and creeds. It is important for arts organizations to acknowledge the growing numbers of individuals in these communities and to consider best ways to ensure they are attracted to and retained in the workplace. This can be done by:

- Having a specific policy, procedures and communications strategy addressing the organization's accommodation practices and the responsibilities of both the organization and its artists;
- Indicating the organization's commitment to provide needed accommodations and providing appropriate accommodations if needed;
- Once employed, talking with individuals from diverse communities to understand their accommodation requirements and how these should be provided;

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- Communicating across the organization the importance of accommodations for individuals from diverse communities and the contributions these individuals make to the organization;
- Looking at the organization's policies, structures and practices to ensure they are barrier-free and promote accessibility for persons with disabilities or those who observe diverse faiths and creeds;
- Conducting physical accessibility audits of the organization to ensure it accommodates persons with disabilities, eg., mobility, visual, hearing;
- Analyzing the organization's honouring of statutory holy days that are based on one faith and ensuring the organization is committed to honouring holy days of individuals from diverse communities.

## **6. NEXT STEPS: ASSESSING RESULTS**

**O**nce the arts organization makes a commitment to implementing an equity and diversity initiative, it is important that its leaders are accountable to ensuring the initiative runs well and achieves its intended results. In implementing an equity and diversity strategy, it is important to use the principles and approaches that support a learning organizational approach. This requires setting clear indicators, timelines, transparency and mechanisms of accountability. This can be done by:

- Establishing assessment criteria and processes with individuals and artists from diverse communities;
- Monitoring progress on equity and diversity goals and communicating results to all members of the organization and to individuals and artists from diverse communities;
- Sharing information on assessment processes and results with other presenters, artists and individuals from diverse communities;
- Ensuring the organization's leaders have equity and diversity goals and are held accountable for their implementation;
- Recognizing accomplishments of individuals and artists from diverse groups and promoting them across the organization.

Considering these and other strategies will help the organization in planning its strategies and examining the inter-relationships between various initiatives. They will also assist the organization in benchmarking its initiatives as well as identifying and communicating its success.



## NOTES

### 4. THE NEED

1 See *Ontario Ministry of Finance Census 2001 Highlights: FactSheet 6: Visible Minorities and Ethnicity in Ontario*, 1-2.

2 Ibid at 5.

3 OAC 2008 at.

4 *Your Communities in Profile: Ontario 2008*.

5 Ibid 18.

6 Ibid 20.

7 Ibid 22.

8 Ibid 24.

9 The statistics used in this section of the report are all derived from Statistics Canada, 2006

Community Profiles. See also Ontario Ministry of Finance *Census 2001 Highlights: FactSheet 6: Visible Minorities and Ethnicity in Ontario*.

10 See Alain Belanger and Eric Caron Malenfant *Ethnocultural Diversity in Canada: Prospects for 2017*, and, Krishna Pendakur *Visible Minorities in Canada's Workplaces: A Perspective on the 2017 Projection*.

11 See *Arts Fact Sheet Series: Cultural Diversity — Our Regenerative Strength in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Sharon Fernandez, May 2006, unpaginated

12 *Projections of the Diversity of the Canadian Population, 2006 to 2031*, Statistics Canada 2010 at 1-2.

13 The term racialized refers to 'people of colour', e.g., South Asians, Asians, persons of African descent, Latinos.

14 *Statistical Insights on the arts, Vol. 3 No.3*, February 2005.

15 Executive Summary 1-3.

16 Ibid 4.

17 Full report 3.

18 Ibid 3-4.

19 Ibid 4.

20 Ibid 7.

21 Ibid 8.

22 Ibid 10.

23 Ibid 11.

24 Ibid 2-13.

25 Ibid 14.

26 Ibid 16.

27 Ibid 18.

28 Ibid 19.

29 See *A Statistical Profile of Artists in Canada — Based on the 2006 Census*, Hill Strategies, 2009

30 Ibid at 18.

31 Ibid at 19.

32 Ibid at 20-21.

33 Ibid at 36.

34 See *Diversity in Canada's Arts Labour Force*, Kelly Hill, 2005 at 4.

35 Ibid at 11.

36 Ibid at 17.

37 For a more in-depth discussion on this issue, see Cornell West *The New Cultural Politics of Difference*, Homi Bhabha *The Location of Culture*, Frances Henry and Carol Tator *Challenging Racism in the Arts*, Althea Prince *The Writers' Conference*, Michael M. Ames *Cannibals and Glass Boxes*, Natasha Bakht, *Mere Song and Dance*, Michael Greyeyes *Notions of Indian-ness*, Kevin A. Ormsby *Between Generations: Towards Understanding the Difference in Realities and Aspirations of the First and Second Generation of Culturally Diverse Artists*, Little Pear Garden Theatre Collective *Demystifying Chinese Aesthetics*, Mennaka Thakker Dance Company and Kalanidhi Fine Arts of Canada *Contemporary Choreography in Indian Dance*.

38 See *Trends in the Arts and Arts Funding*, R.A. Malatest & Associates, Alberta Foundation for the Arts, 2007 at 25.

39 *Patterns of Performing Arts Spending in Canada in 2008*, Hill Strategies at 3.

40 See *Arts Fact Sheet Series: Cultural Diversity — Our Regenerative Strength in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Sharon Fernandez, May 2006, unpaginated.

41 *Training Gaps Analysis: Presenters*, kisuared, Cultural Human Resources Council, 2007 at 19.

42 See *Factors in Canadians' Cultural Activities: Demographics and Cultural Crossovers Involved in Book Reading, Performing Arts Attendance, Art Gallery Attendance and Movie-Going*, Hill Strategies, 2008.

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- 43 Ibid at 7.
- 44 Ibid at 9.
- 45 See *Patterns in Performing Arts Spending in Canada in 2008*, Kelly Hill, Hill Strategies, 2011 at 1.
- 46 Ibid at 2.
- 47 Ibid at 4.
- 48 Ibid at 17.
- 49 See "Art the arts elitist? New report shows that cultural experiences are more important than demographic factors", Kelly Hill, Hill Strategies, 2008 at 2.
- 50 See *Audience Engagement Survey*, 2010.
- 51 Ibid at 8.
- 52 Ibid at 15.
- 53 *Creative Management in the Arts and Heritage: Sustaining and Renewing Professional Management for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Canadian Conference for the Arts, 2003 at .7
- 54 See *Atlantic Presenters Association Professional Development Needs Assessment & Strategy*, B. Richman et al, March 2009; *Session Report: Aboriginal Arts Leadership & Management Program Design Session*, and, *Final Report: Aboriginal Arts Administration Forum*, France Trepanier, Canada's Centre for Aboriginal Leadership and Management/Banff Centre 2009 and 2008; *Training Gaps Analysis: Presenters*, kisuared, Cultural Human Resources Council, 2007; *Cultural HR Study 2010*, Cultural Human Resources Council and the Conference Board of Canada, December.
- 55 See *Atlantic Presenters Association Professional Development Needs Assessment & Strategy*, B. Richman et al, March 2009 at 4.
- 56 Ibid at 18.
- 57 Ibid at 24. See also *29 Rating of Professional Development Priorities*.
- 58 *Creative Management in the Arts and Heritage: Sustaining and Renewing Professional Management for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Canadian Conference for the Arts, 2003 at 17.
- 5 *Navigating Difference: Chapter 5*", pp. 111-112.
- 6 *Navigating Difference: Chapter 5*", pp. 141-142.
- 7 *Navigating Difference: Chapter 5*", pp. 133-135.
- 8 *Beat a Different Drum: A Handbook for Cultural Diversity in the Arts*. p. 6.
- 9 *Beat a Different Drum: A Handbook for Cultural Diversity in the Arts*. p. 18.
- 10 *Beat a Different Drum: A Handbook for Cultural Diversity in the Arts*. p. 8.
- 11 *Beat a Different Drum: A Handbook for Cultural Diversity in the Arts*. p. 19.
- 12 *Beat a Different Drum: A Handbook for Cultural Diversity in the Arts*. p. 22.
- 13 *The World is Your Audience*. p. 61.
- 14 *The World is Your Audience*. p. 70.
- 15 *The World is Your Audience*. p. 74.

### 5. THE STRATEGIES AND THE PRACTICES

- 1 Arts Council England. *A Practical Guide to Working with Arts Ambassadors*.(2003) pp. 65-69.
- 2 Arts Council England. *A Practical Guide to Working with Arts Ambassadors*.(2003) pp. 69-72.
- 3 Arts Council England. *A Practical Guide to Working with Arts Ambassadors*.(2003) pp. 89-91.
- 4 "Navigating Difference: Chapter 5", pp. 104-105.



## BIOGRAPHIES



**Natasha Bakht** is an Indian contemporary dancer and choreographer who trained in bharatanatyam under Toronto's Menaka Thakkar. She toured extensively with Thakkar's company and the UK-based Shobana Jeyasingh Dance Company. Her own choreography has been twice nominated for Dora Awards in 2003 and 2010. Natasha is also an associate professor at the University of Ottawa's Faculty of Law. Her research interests are in the intersecting area of religious freedom and women's equality.

**Angela Britto** is currently a doctoral student in the English Department at the University of Pennsylvania. She has a background in arts administration, community outreach and research for a variety of initiatives by people of colour in the arts in Toronto, including a project as program assistant for CPAMO. These experiences have informed her research interests which include postcolonial literatures, Afro-Asian political solidarities, and Black and South Asian diasporic interactions and representations in contemporary cultural productions. She now looks forward to learning about and getting involved in the vibrant arts communities of Philadelphia.

**Leah Burns** is an artist, researcher and educator who works both individually and in collaboration with communities. She is affiliated with the Centre for Arts-Informed Research at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. Leah has collaborated with communities and arts organizations across Canada and in Australia. Her work focuses on interdisciplinary explorations of social and environmental issues with an emphasis on equity.

**George Elliot Clarke** was born in Windsor, Nova Scotia in 1960, a seventh-generation Canadian of African-American and Mi'kmaq Amerindian heritage. He earned a B.A. honours in English from the University of Waterloo (1984), an M.A. in English from Dalhousie University (1989) and a Ph.D. in English from Queen's University (1993). Before joining the academic profession Clarke was employed in a variety of jobs: parliamentary aide (House of Commons, Ottawa, 1987-91), newspaper editor in Halifax and then Waterloo, social worker

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in Halifax (1985-86) and legislative researcher (Provincial Parliament, Toronto, 1982-83). He still writes a column for the Halifax Herald and is a freelance contributor to numerous publications. As a writer George Elliott Clarke has published in a variety of genres: verse collections, *Saltwater Spirituals and Deeper Blues* (1983), and *Lush Dreams, Blue Exile* (1994), a verse-novel, *Whydah Falls* (1990 & 2000), two verse plays, *Whydah Falls: The Play* (1999 & 2000), and *Beatrice Chancy* (1999). His opera *Beatrice Chancy*, with music by James Rolfe, has had four stage productions and a broadcast on CBC television. This powerful opera about slavery in the Nova Scotia of the early 1800s won great reviews and enthusiastic audiences. He wrote the screenplay for the feature film, *One Heart Broken Into Song* (Dir. Clement Virgo, 1999). The verse play, *Whydah Falls*, was staged in Venice in Italian (2002). Clarke continues to publish poetry with *Provençal Songs* (1993 & 1997), *Gold Indigoes* (2000), *Blue* (2001) and *Illuminated Verse* (2005). His *Execution Poems* (2001) won the Governor General's Award for Poetry. Clarke has been instrumental in promoting the work of writers of African descent, especially those of Nova Scotia. In 2002 he published, *Odysseys Home: Mapping African-Canadian Literature*. See the bibliography for a list which includes his poetry, edited books, criticism in postcolonial literature and other academic publications.



**Charmaine Headley** is co-founding Artistic Director of COBA, Collective of Black Artists and a champion of Africanist dance. Through her work as an artist, choreographer, teacher and mentor, she advocates for the recognition and inclusion of the contributions of ethno-cultural dance practices in Canadian dance history and culture today and pushes for a broadened societal appreciation of these art forms. A graduate of the School of Toronto Dance Theatre and a strong believer in the healing power of dance, Headley holds an honours diploma in Gerontology/Activation Coordination and has created a movement-based program for seniors for her Master's thesis at York University. Charmaine is presently pursuing her PhD studies at OISE, University of Toronto.



**Ajay Heble** is a Professor at the School of English and Theatre Studies, University of Guelph. He is the author or editor of several books, including *Landing On The Wrong Note: Jazz, Dissonance, and Critical Practice*, *The Other Side of Nowhere: Jazz, Improvisation, and Communities in Dialogue*, and *Rebel Musics: Human Rights, Resistant Sounds, and the Politics of Music Making*. Heble is also a founding

editor of the scholarly online peer-reviewed journal, *Critical Studies in Improvisation/Études critiques en improvisation*. As the founder and artistic director of the Guelph Jazz Festival, Ajay has jolted the citizens of Guelph into an appreciation of improvised and avant-garde music and delighted aficionados from around the world with his innovative and daring programming. Under his visionary leadership, the Festival — a three-time recipient of the Lieutenant Governor's Award of the Arts (1997, 2000, 2001) — has achieved a rock-solid international reputation as one of the world's most inspired and provocative musical events. Ajay is also a pianist, and his first CD, a live concert recording of improvised music with percussionist Jesse Stewart, has been released on the IntrepidEar label. Ajay is currently Project Director for Improvisation, Community, and Social Practice, a large-scale, multi-year, multi-institutional research initiative funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada's prestigious MCRI program. Involving an international research team of 35 scholars from 20 different institutions, the project seeks to make interventions in our understanding of how research is done and how its results are implemented and disseminated, both within and beyond the academy.



**Di Luo** graduated in 2011 with a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Toronto's Specialist Arts Management program. She is currently pursuing post-graduate studies in contemporary Chinese art at the Sotheby's Institute of Art in London, England.



**Kevin A. Ormsby** works independently as an Arts Marketing Consultant, dance teacher, choreographer, movement coach and is the Artistic Director of KasheDance — a dance company hinging on the traditions of modern dance, ballet and the Diaspora. He is the Dance Animateur at the Living Arts Centre (Mississauga), a member of Wind in the Leaves Collective and was a dancer with Garth Fagan Dance (NY) and has worked as the Assistant Artistic Director as well as the Marketing and Outreach Coordinator of Ballet Creole, danced with Canboulay Dance Theatre, Caribbean Dance Theatre among others. A passionate advocate of Dance Education, writing and outreach, he has presented papers at Visualizing/Performing Africa Conference at Ohio University (2007), Canada Dance Festival (2009) and the Rex

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Nettleford Arts Conference (2011). He has sat on panels for the Canada Dance Assembly, Cultural Pluralism in the Performing Arts Ontario (CPPAMO), The Dancer Transition Resource Center (DTRC), written for Expose Entertainment Magazine, the Dance Current and was a Artist in Residence at the University of the West Indies' Philip Sherlock Centre for the Creative Arts. He is Co-chair of the Performing Arts Committee of the Jamaica 50<sup>th</sup> Celebrations Steering Committee and a Board Member of Prologue to the Performing Arts and Nia Centre for the Arts. Kevin has also sat on the Ontario Arts Council's Dance Initiatives Jury (2008), Artists in Education Panel (2009), Multi Arts and Integrated Arts juries (2012), Toronto Arts Council's Dance Jury (2010) and is on the Toronto Arts Council's Community Arts Programs Committee (2010 - 2013).



**Amanda Paixão** has given her life over to dance, as a performer, choreographer, teacher and researcher. She holds a MA in Dance from York University in Toronto and a BA in Dance from University of Campinas (UNICAMP) in Brazil where she also received a second undergraduate degree to teach Arts in Elementary and Secondary schools. As a choreographer and performer Amanda has presented her stage work in Brazil, Portugal, Spain and Canada. Her artistic interests are situated in translating one's life experience into performance helping the audience reflect on their own. She is fascinated by the creative power within marginal cultures. For this reason, she has led workshops, performed and choreographed in a variety of contexts in Brazil, from a NGO combating poverty to a native community, psychiatric hospital, disability center, elderly institution, and recycling association. After taking specialization courses in Modern Educational Dance at Federal University of Viçosa in Brazil, Amanda was a contract professor at two Post-Secondary institutions in Brazil. In Toronto since 2005, Amanda has been working as a performer at the Multicultural Theatre Space (Kitchener-ON) and the Newton Moraes Dance Theatre in which she also works as a teaching assistant sporadically. Amanda is a collaborator from Wind in the Leaves Collective, to which she performs and choreographs Charles C. Smith's poems. She also is part of Conexão Samambaia an International Trans-Aesthetic and Cultural Exchange Residence Program from School of Music and Performing Arts of Federal University of Goiânia, in Brazil. More recently Amanda has been venturing into the Brazilian music scenery in Toronto. She plays and sings with Maracatu Mar Aberto, and Maria Bonita & The Band. Since

2010, Amanda is pursuing a Ph.D. in Dance Studies at York University where she is also works as a Teaching Assistant. Her research questions investigate how bodily memory and the experience of absence converge in Canadian performers with Diaspora connections.

**Shahin Sayadi** was born and raised in Abadan, Iran and arrived in Montreal wearing shorts and a t-shirt on February 1, 1986. Notwithstanding the bitter cold, decided to stay. Shahin is the founder and Artistic Director of Halifax's Onelight Theatre. He has been responsible for the development and staging of nine original productions since 2002 and has several new works in development that are scheduled to debut in 2011 and 2012. Shahin, along with the Onelight team, has also hosted several Conferences that explored cultural diversity and the arts in Canada. The Canadian Theatre Identity Crisis: Challenging Eurocentricity Through Aboriginal Myth and Ritual (2005) and Prismatic (2008) which looked at the experiences of culturally diverse artists who live and work outside of Canada's major urban centres. October 10-17 Onelight Theatre is hosting Prismatic 2010, a national multi-art festival and conference in venues across Halifax. Shahin is actively involved in local and national arts organizations, including the PACT (Professional Association of Canadian Theatres) Board of Directors, the Ad Hoc Assembly — an organization of Canada's Aboriginal and culturally diverse theatre companies, and the Legacy Centre for the Arts in Halifax, NS. Shahin is a lifelong fan of Bruce Lee.



**Charles C. Smith** is a published poet, playwright and essayist. He won second prize for his play *Last Days for the Desperate* from Black Theatre Canada. He has edited three collections of poetry, has one published book (*Partial Lives*) and his poetry has appeared in numerous journals and magazines, including *Poetry Canada Review*, *the Quille and Quire*, *Descant*, *Dandelion*, *the Amethyst Review*, *Bywords*, *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, *Prairie Fire*, *Fiddlehead*, *Canadian Forum*, *Acta Victoriana* and others. He recently received a grant from the Ontario Arts Council's Writers Reserve Grants Program and is currently working on several multidisciplinary performance pieces with the wind in the leaves collective which has received grants from TD Bank and the Toronto Arts Council for the development and performance of "Fleurette Africaine". This involves such artists as Kevin Ormsby (dance), Amanda Paixao (dance), Jasmyn Fyffe (dance), Harvey Weisfeld (guitar), Robin Styba (photography), and Anahita Azraimi (video). In addition to his

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work in the arts, Charles is currently a Lecturer in cultural theory and cultural pluralism in the arts, at the University of Toronto Scarborough. He is a member to the Canadian Court Challenges Program Equality Rights Panel and a Research Associate with the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. He has also recently served as the Equity Advisor to the Canadian Bar Association. His book on racial profiling *Conflict, Crisis and Accountability: Law Enforcement and Racial Profiling in Canada* was released in October, 2007 by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. He has also edited 'Anti-Racism in Education: Missing in Action' published by the CCPA in 2010 and *Feminism, Law, Inclusion: Intersectionality in Action* edited with Gayle MacDonald and Rachel Osborne. He has contributed a chapter (Racial Profiling Then and Now) to a book on racial profiling compiled and authored by Carol Tator and Frances Henry "Racial Profiling in Canada". He has also contributed a chapter to a book *Interrogating Race and Racism* edited by Vijay Agnew for U. of T. Press and he was commissioned by the Ontario Hate Crimes Community Working Group to prepare a report for its consideration in 2006. His report is entitled *Hate Crime Victimization and Links Between Hate Bias, Violence and Racism*.



**Naomi Wang** is a recent graduate from the University of Toronto and currently holds the position of Assistant Curator at the Singapore Art Museum, specializing in contemporary Myanmar, Cambodian and Laotian art.

**Skye Louis** has interests ranging from community resource sharing to plants, printmaking, public space and *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. Skye has been coordinating the Toronto Arts Foundation's Neighbourhood Arts Network since 2010, and has also worked with Mural Routes, Scarborough Arts Council, Om Laila Bellydance, Anchor Archive Zine Library, and Inkstorm Screenprinting Collective. Skye holds a Bachelor's Degree in Studio Art from the University of Guelph and a Master's Degree in Information Management from Dalhousie University.



**Tim Whalley** serves as Executive Director of Scarborough Arts, a not-for-profit community arts organization that has brought artists to the community and the community to the arts since 1978. He holds a Masters in Museum Studies from the University of Toronto and has worked for museums, galleries and not-for-profit organizations across Canada. His independent curatorial and art projects have been featured at the Toronto Free Gallery, the Drake Hotel, the Market Gallery and Pages Art Window and he has taught at the University of Western Ontario — Continuing Studies. Tim serves on the Advisory Committee of Doris McCarthy Gallery — University of Toronto and was previously on the Board of Directors at *Fuse Magazine*.



**Helen Yung** makes installations, interactions and interventions. In her work, Helen combines storytelling, scenography, relational aesthetics, sound, technology, and experiences like humour, delight and surprise. She is also a cultural consultant; her specialties include cultural diversity and community engagement. Putting her art where her consulting (or the need) is, Helen plans to make interdisciplinary art for the suburban shopping centre. You can follow her foibles at [www.helenyung.com](http://www.helenyung.com) or on Twitter @helenyung.



Cultural Pluralism in the Arts Movement Ontario (CPAMO) is a movement of Aboriginal and ethno-racial artists working with presenters to empower the performing arts communities of Ontario. CPAMO seeks to open opportunities for Aboriginal and ethno-racial performers to engage with presenters across Ontario and to enable presenters to develop constructive relationships with Aboriginal and ethno-racial performers.





*As Artistic Director of Sampradaya Dance Creations, I have been active in planning and presenting at CPAMO sessions. I've also had the privilege to have my company perform at the first CPAMO Town Hall. CPAMO is an important project, one which has breathed life into the dialogue between Aboriginal and ethno-racial artists and presenters. It is clearly a sign of the future and an important marker in the rapidly changing world of the performing arts. This book, then, is an important contribution - both because it chronicles a contemporary dialogue and points in the direction the performing arts must go. Yes, as the title of the book suggests, 'a change is gonna come'.*

Lata Pada C. M. | Artistic Director | Sampradaya Dance Creations

*At long last! For the last five years, the Cultural Pluralism in the Arts Movement in Ontario (CPAMO) has worked closely with a select group of presenters within the Community Cultural Impresarios (CCI) – Ontario Presenting Network. This collaboration created a context in which artists (particularly Aboriginal, people of colour, immigrants and others) have been able to meet with and speak directly to presenters about inclusive community building. At the same time, presenters have been able to speak about the challenges they face, risks they take, and successes they achieve in bringing diverse cultural expression to their stages. The CPAMO process has opened and needs to continue to keep this dialogue alive.*

Warren Garrett | Executive Director | CCI

