

The Workshops

Confronting Racism & Transforming Power in Community Arts

Hamilton

Planning Team:

Maxine Carter, Rene Wetselaar, Zainab Amadahy, Allan Loft, Sylvi del Pilar, Monique Manatch

Co-Facilitator:

Maxine Carter

Presenters:

Maxine Carter, Allan Loft, Klyde Broox, Yar Tarakay

Hosted By:

Workers Art and Heritage Centre
Healthy Aboriginal Men's Drumming Group



This workshop was, as its title suggests, very contentious. Despite the poor turnout and some tensions around the topics raised, some profound discussions and deep learning took place.

The thanksgiving address conducted by Traditional Anishawbe Elder, Walter Cooke, reminded us that this world is like the medicine bowl. The different medicines inside the bowl all have their particular properties and role and that the mixing and commingling of these elements is what makes the best medicine. He reminded us about the importance of balance within the medicine bowl.

Klyde Broox made an offer to organize a diverse arts event. He held such an event in February 2007. Maxine Carter also expressed an interest in continuing the dialogue within the community. CAO should follow up on this event and whether CAO can support any further initiatives.



Building Diversity in the Niagara Region

St. Catharines

Planning Team: Elizabeth Chitty
Co-Facilitator: Elizabeth Chitty
Hosted By: St. Catharines Arts Council

We began this workshop with an embodied exercise that I later entitled the “Ritual/Story exercise. Participants moved from simple gestures: learning from me (as leader), mastering the gesture as a community and finding themselves in the midst of a ritual and finally arriving at a story.

In this instance the workshop participants were excited to experience this simple exercise as a way of grounding the experience of unity in diversity.

As a follow up we examined through presentation and discussion the history of the multiculturalism policy and how it impacts on and compares to diversity policies of today.

A discussion about the legacy of colonialism and its lasting impact ensued.

A Diversity Committee was struck in the Niagara Region. CAO should follow up and find out what has been accomplished so far and how they can support the work of this committee.

Bridging Cultural Spaces

Kitchener, Waterloo

Planning Team: Sher DiCiccio, Majdi Bou Matar, Linda Levesque
Co-Facilitator: Majdi Bou Matar
Presenters: Majdi Bou Matar, Rene Meshake, Lauris Da Costa, Isabel Cisterna
Hosted By: The MT Space

An investigation into shared community values and needs revealed that a shared community value such as “cross community collaboration, authenticity of voice or preservation of the arts and culture for future generations” could often also be categorized as a need. However, a community need such as “connections & opportunities for entering into a fuller participation in this culture” or “erasing the need for the word multicultural” is not always a shared community value.

Workshop participants were interested in continuing the dialogue and interested in finding new models for cross-collaboration. MT Space, Neruda Productions, The Caribbe-



Painting by Rene Meshake, Guelph Ontario

an Canadian Society and the Kitchener Waterloo Community Arts Council Button Factory, City of KW were all interested in moving forward with new models of cross-cultural participation. CAO should follow up to see what might come next.

Building an Arts Community

Moose Factory

Planning Team: Paul and Fred Rickard, Denise Bolduc

Co-facilitator: Denise Bolduc

Hosted By: The Weeneebeg Aboriginal Film & Video Festival

The main purpose was to explore diverse partnerships with stakeholders outside the arts sector. Representatives from Health and Welfare, Education, Band offices, media, tourism, economic development and federal and provincial funding bodies were personally invited to discuss cross-over needs, how the arts could serve these needs and how they might serve the arts.



CAO should foster its partnership with Weeneebeg. It should try to have a presence at the next festival and offer annual community development workshops on different themes. CAO could also identify key festivals around the province and offer workshops at each.

Building and Bridging: A Community Development Workshop

Windsor

Planning Team: Leslie McCurdy, Nancy Allen, Laura Gould, Mary Baruth

Co-facilitator: Leslie McCurdy, Nancy Allen

Hosted By: Northstar Community Centre

In this workshop the question put forward in the opening presentation: "Can some form of critical/transformed multiculturalism provide Canadians with a new vision of collective identity?" opened a lively discussion about diversity, multiculturalism and the role of power.

The afternoon session, which included a very dedicated group of young people from the newly formed Youth Arts Council, was more of a practical discussion around key issues such as youth engagement, building an arts community, and articulating an arts vision. In the end a manifesto about culture in Windsor was developed.

It seemed like there was a lot of energy and a will to continue to grow a new vision for the arts in Windsor—especially with the momentum of the youth arts council. CAO should most definitely follow up on some of the very specific arts community building ideas coming from this workshop. There was also a general feeling of isolation in the community—that the rest of Ontario ignores Windsor. "Everything stops at London". CAO should consider holding the next forum in Windsor drawing on the seemingly absent Aboriginal presence in the region. The issue of losing the Windsor Indian Friendship Centre

should be addressed as a concern that affects not only the Aboriginal community in Windsor but the wider community. For example, if the tragic loss of the Capital Theatre (something that seemed to impact everyone in the room) is discussed in relation to the tragic loss of the Indian Friendship Centre, this might provide an avenue of mutual support and understanding between the Aboriginal and settler communities in Windsor.

Cultivating Creative Partnerships

Thunder Bay

Planning Team: Sharon Godwin, Lila Cano, Marilyn McIntosh, Alice Sabourin,
Alia Abaya, Amy Bartlett

Co-Facilitator: Alice Sabourin

Presenters: Moses Beaver, Derek Khani, Ted-Ray Kirton, Mushkowzeikewewak Singers

Hosted by: Thunder Bay Art Gallery

This workshop opened with a welcome and thanksgiving ceremony led by the Mushkowzeikewewak Singers using hand drums, a smudge bowl and unified voices. A response by Derek Khani and TedRay Kirton on the Djembe drums prompted a spontaneous offering of tobacco by Yvonne Heinbuch and Beatrice Maado from the Mushkowzeikewewak Singers. The ceremony of the giving was well received and in this giving and receiving—this welcome and arrival, I felt the shift in the room and a new tone of promise was set for this workshop and for the workshop series.

CAO should follow up to see how Thunder Bay Art Gallery's Arts Access program was influenced by the workshop. CAO should also follow up on some of the best practice organizations (i.e. CAHEP) and initiatives (Multicultural Youth Council) that model the goals of this project. CAO should also follow up on the status of the development of the arts space for Thunder Bay Aboriginal Arts and Heritage and see how they can support the project through Advocacy.

Dreaming our Cultural Spaces

Sioux Lookout

Planning Team: Donna Giles, Laurel Wood,
Jenny Morrow

Presenters: Garnet Angekoneb, Hana
Beitl, Laurel Wood, Charles Williams

Hosted By: Nishnawbe-Gamik Friendship
Centre

This circle was made up of an extremely dedicated group of community leaders and artists. The workshop began with a smudge by community Elder Charles Williams who reminded us to listen



Painting by Larry Beardy

with our hearts as well as our minds. We entered a very involved process of defining community values and moved into sharing some of the successful community building arts projects—especially those that transcended the cultural divide.

We ended the workshop dreaming of a cultural space that has no associations to colonial space, no associations to a friendship centre, and no association to a church.

Shortly after the workshop Donna Giles and Hana Beitzl leased a space to be used as a cultural space and gallery for the community.

This initiative should be followed up to see how and if they were able to achieve their “dream” and what community consultation process they have engaged in. CAO could be a resource for planning further workshops.

Imagining Change: Creating Dialogue

Kenora

Planning Team: Don Kavanaugh
Hosted By: Northwest Angle #37

This workshop began with a discussion about the arts in Kenora and the surrounding area. It was agreed that the general community needed to see the value of the arts beyond tourism. There was a will to find ways of bringing communities together through the arts and to expand the audience—i.e. engaging the youth and producing cross disciplinary events. Partnerships were beginning to happen to encourage community involvement in the arts but they haven't always been sustained. There seemed to be a huge gap in understanding about the impact of colonialism. More time needs to be spent exploring how to address the issues that seem to live just beneath the surface in this particular region.

CAO should follow up with Don to see how they can support the work he's doing in the communities in Sioux Narrows and beyond. The Neechee Friendship centre was also keen to participate in more community building initiatives and should be the site for any further workshops in Kenora.

Community Art: Empowering Change from the Inside Out

Sault Ste Marie

Planning Team: Noni Boyle, Jude Ortiz
Hosted By: Sault Ste Marie Indian Friendship Centre

The gathering was made up of community artists and community members from both Garden River Reserve and Serpent River Reserve and members of the Sault Ste Marie Arts Council and Algoma University. This workshop began by addressing the question ‘What is community arts and why is it important to our communities?’ The group identified key areas of importance for the arts with respect to community development. A discussion about the legacy of colo-

nialism revealed some lingering feelings that the unacknowledged sins of the past will continue to haunt us if we don't deal with them head on.

CAO should follow up with the representatives from the Garden River Reserve to support their initiative to build more arts programming into their community. The Community and Family Care worker at the Batchewana Band was also interested but wasn't able to attend the workshop. CAO should follow up with a report written by Jude Ortiz from Algoma University about the impact of the arts in Sault Ste Marie. Bernadette Shawanda runs Great Lakes Cultural Camps—a wonderful example of an integrated arts and community development project. CAO should visit this camp.

Cultivating Partnerships & Dreaming Cultural Spaces

Muskoka/Midland/Parry Sound

Planning Team: Jack Contin, Erin Chapelle, Gayle Dempsey
Co-Facilitator: Jack Contin

Presenters: Erin Chapelle, Gayle Dempsey, Lynn McGuigan, Lyla
Commandant, Glenn Copeland, Shirley Hay, Bev Hanna
Hosted By: Wahta First Nations Cultural Centre

The main focus of this workshop was to network, share resources and learn from each other about the shared values and needs in each community. A new arts council was in the process of being founded so members of that group took the opportunity to learn from some of the [staff?] in attendance from the more established arts councils.

Although there is a shared vision about the value of the arts in the region there are still heavy dividing lines between the community of settlers, the cottage community and the Aboriginal community in the area. Nipissing University is currently evaluating their programs to be more inclusive. A discussion came up about how to expand their programming to be more relevant to the community.

CAO should follow up with the development of the new arts council to see if they are meeting their goal of being inclusive—i.e. board and staff as well as programming. Another regional meeting was tentatively scheduled for February to be hosted by Charles W Stockey Centre & Bobby Orr Hall of Fame in Parry Sound. Gayle Dempsey is about to embark on a regional project similar to WT. CAO should follow up on this and see how they might assist. CAO could also follow up and with the new space and programming at Nipissing University to see how they implemented some of the ideas.

Decolonizing Your Art

Hamilton CAO

Forum

Planning Team: Zainab Amadahy, Diane Roberts
Hosted By: Workers Art & Heritage Centre, CAO Forum

The main focus of this workshop was to define group root cultural practices and to explore ways of viewing the interaction and tensions around defining one's own culture in a pluralistic society.

Through negotiation and compromise, participants learned to negotiate for themselves the meaning and practice of root cultural practices, weaving together their individual practices into one group practice. The amalgamation of individual practices into one group practice demonstrated the building of a cultural community. Some of the participants had difficulty identifying their 'root' cultures. Interestingly enough, those who had the most difficulty identified themselves as having no culture—being part of the dominant culture.

External pressures were 'imposed' by me as animator. No speaking—just use gesture and your objects. Displacing individuals from their groups caused some tension for the individuals and for the groups that "lost" their community member and for groups that had to find a way to "integrate" new community members.

"When you cannot use the language and tools your familiar to you to assert yourself, the safety of the group, knowing you have to create something together allowed people to trust-making it easier to follow because we knew the intentions of the others were about finding what worked for the group. This binds us together. In doing the gestures in silence, there was comfort in doing it together."

