



**Confronting Racism & Transforming Power
in Community Arts**

Hamilton

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

Co-Facilitators: Maxine Carter, Allan Loft, Klyde Broox, Yar Tarakay

i. Participants

Laura Lee Therrien	
Honey Novick	Creative Vocalization Studio
Walter Cooke	Aboriginal Health Centre
Diane Denny-Reape & Thomas	Healthy Aboriginal Men's (HAM) Circle/Hamilton Reape Regional Indian Centre
Charlotte Davenport	Art of Healing
Silvia Galvez	St. Joseph Women Immigrant Centre
Klyde Broox	Dub Poets Collective
Al Loft	Healthy Aboriginal Men's Circle
Mike Irvine	Artist
Monique Manatch	Indigenous Cultures Media Innovations (ICMI)
Asma A Mahmood	Canadian Community Arts Initiative/Masala Mehndi Masti festival/Mosaic Festival/creative80studio
Brad Blizzard	HAM Circle
Paul Bouchard	Flute, HAM Circle

ii. Workshop Outline



Weaving Tapestries Hamilton

Confronting Racism & Transforming Power in Community Arts

Workers Art and Heritage Centre

10-6pm

Goals:

- strengthen and promote the diverse voices in the Hamilton area community arts community by confronting the legacy of colonialism and the prevailing barrier of racism
- promote a culture of exchange rather than a culture of competition among diverse artists and organisations
- address the systemic barriers associated with Multiculturalist agendas (i.e. Exotic inclusion, mainstream funding barriers, systemic racism)
- address the importance of the Arts for Social Change—how arts shape the community (beyond mainstream association of art as an extra curricular activity)

Questions to Consider: (as a community)

- Who has benefited from racism and who keeps benefiting from it?
- What is your ideal vision of an accessible arts organization?
- What are the barriers that prevent you from getting there?
- What do you need to do to move from where you are now to your ideal?
- What are you doing to confront racism in your organization/work?
- What are the challenges you've faced in confronting racism in your organization/work?
- How could your organization move from where it is now to an anti-racist, accessible space?



- What have you done as an organization to obstruct access? How has that affected others?

Confronting Racism & Transforming Power in Community Arts
Workers Art and Heritage Centre Hamilton Ontario
November 24th 2006 10:00am-6:00pm

10:15 **Opening Ceremony: Call and Response**
Call to Welcome (Thanksgiving Address)
Healthy Aboriginal Men's Circle of Hamilton

A Response from Chinese Drum

10:30 Arrival Ceremony conducted by Diane leading the group

Morning Sessions:

11:00 **SETTING THE CONTEXT: Walter Cook, Traditional Elder**
Who are we and why are we here? Creating a context for sharing
and giving and receiving

11:15 **NAMING RACISM: Maxine Carter, Access and Equity Office**
City Hall
Giving Voice to the legacy of Colonialism in the Arts

11:30 **WEAVING A LEGACY: Allan Loft, Program Coordinator**
Healthy Aboriginal Men's Circle
An Aboriginal Perspective on Community Art Making



- 11:45 GIVING VOICE AND CREATING SPACE:
St. Joseph's Immigrant Women's Centre: **Silvia Galvez de Guerra with Jennifer Aggus, I-WORK! Group Facilitator/FI Program Coordinator**
- 12:00 "MUTINY OF THE SUBALTERN": **Klyde Broox, Dub Poet's Collective**
- 12:15 ABORIGINAL YOUTH AND COMMUNITY ARTS: **Monique Manatch, Indigenous Culture and Media Innovations**
- 12:30 ARTS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE: NOT IN MY BACKYARD
Looking at Six Nations Crisis and an Arts Respons(e)ibility
- 12:45 WHAT IS IMMIGRANT ART? **Yar Taraky, Immigrant Culture and Arts Association**
- 1:00 SOUP'S ON!!! A Brown Bag Lunch Affair, Networking
Afternoon Session
- 1:45 CALL TO RETURN: **Zainab Amadahy**
- 2:00 DISCUSSION GROUPS: Consider Questions posed by the
Speakers
- 3:15 REPORT BACK from Discussion Groups



4:15 NEXT STEPS: Where do we go from here? Recommendations and/or Action Steps

5:15 EVALUATION OF WORKSHOP & Closing Ceremony

iii. Highlights

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 opening, 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.

After the smudge we set about the task of confronting Racism. Maxine Carter gave a very rousing and illuminating survey of the history of Racism in Hamilton. This caused a lot of tension between those who expected a more tepid approach and those who were ready to take on the issues.

Excerpts and Ideas:

“I honestly think that as long as we hide from things there will never be freedom [from discrimination]”



”That’s the problem with the discourse in Canada on race. Things are forced under the carpet because people like this lady say “I’m not here for that. I’m here to hear—let’s hold hands and ‘oh Canada...’ I’m not here for that. I’m here to try and provoke a new level of awareness toward people like me who have been hurt by racism. “

“Because if we’re going to be warriors, why not be warriors of peace? When we smudged, we smudged from the bowl. We asked the creator to open up our eyes so that we can see things in a better light. So that we can see not only our narrow-minded ways this way down the road but from this direction here and this direction here and from this direction here...And to see through all the energies that come up from the ground and to see through the eyes of the creator and to see with our hearts the 7th direction. So that we can open up our eyes and to see what we are trying to achieve and not to lose sight of the goal. Because we could put up fences and walls all we want but I thought what we were trying to do here is take them down.”

“I’ve learned so much in reading about Aboriginal thought and Aboriginal social work how important silence is. And as a white woman it’s part of my job to shut the hell up. ...silence is as important a part in the conversation as talking is.”

“...I am definitely an unapologetic anti-racist. And beyond being an anti-racist I would like to feel that I’m developing into a counter-racist. Which I guess is my main point here ...it is great to be anti but it is better to be counter. And by counter I mean, having alternatives. So it’s not just saying ‘knock down this racist system and bam bam bam’ but what are we going to put in its place? And that I think that is where we should be heading.”

“...having heard everything I felt that one important element we are missing in looking at the artists we heard—is that it’s extremely important for us to think of the work of Aboriginal artists or immigrant artists, native artists—to think of their work in a



contemporary way. These are living, breathing, structures which are in a process of happening, of progressing from one point to another.”