



Bridging Cultural Spaces

Kitchener, Waterloo

Planning Team: Sher DiCiccio, Majdi Bou Matar, Linda Levesque

Co-facilitators: Rene Meshake, Majdi Bou Matar

i. Participants

Brian Scott	City of Kitchener
Sivakumar	Tamil Cultural Association
Sher DiCiccio	Waterloo Region Arts Council
Mai Al Nabhan	Region of Waterloo Cultural Heritage Planner
Richard & Nicole Quesnel	Lost and Found Theatre
Dado Segota	YMCA-Youth Worker Cross Cultural & Community Services
Paddy Gillard-Bentley	Flush Ink Productions
Bushra Junaid	Ontario Arts Council
Janice Lambrakos	Ontario Arts Council
Devon Mordell	Kitchener Waterloo Art Gallery Arts Access
Sarah Anderson	Individual Artist
Salome Perez	Painter
Claire Nabrotzky	Grand Philharmonic Choir
Barbara Arthur	Grand Philharmonic Choir
Noreen Stenacher	Region of Waterloo Social Services
Rene Meshake	Visual & Performer
Lauris DaCosta	Pres. Caribbean Canadian Association
Isabel Cisterna	Neruda Productions Café Cabaret
Majdi Bou-Matar	Artistic Director, MT Space



ii. Workshop Outline (tab)

Weaving Tapestries: A Community Building Workshop

Thursday March 29th 12-6pm

MT Space, Kitchener Waterloo

Goals:

- Strengthen and promote diverse voices within the Kitchener/Waterloo 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 Aboriginal and diverse cultural organisations.
- Address the systemic barriers associated with Multiculturalist agendas (i.e. Exotic inclusion, mainstream funding barriers, systemic racism).
- Map the inclusive organizations and use them as a model for community development.

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?



Schedule

12:00-12:30pm

Meet and Greet Introductions and lunch

12:30-1:30pm

Opening Ceremony Call and presentation on the transformational power of the arts from an aboriginal perspective

RENE ANDRE MESHAKÉ is an Ojibwe author-illustrator of *Blueberry Rapids*, spoken-word performer, storyteller, singer-songwriter, and filmmaker based in Guelph, Ontario. He is a graduate of Sheridan College (Graphic Design Diploma) and Humber School for Writers. By the seamless fusion of Ojibwe and English words in his poetry and spoken word performances, he's been able to communicate his spiritual heritage to the contemporary world. Rene has performed to audiences of all ages with his strong, expressive, and entertaining presentations.

1:30pm

Unpacking the Context and Meaning of Diversity

Participatory exercise and discussion that addresses the roots of the term "diversity" and addresses individual roles and responsibilities

Led by Diane Roberts

2:15pm

Mapping the Region: When does it work?

- What are the shining examples of bridging community space(s) (Individual & Org reps speaking to this)
- Explore and the successful projects and list the elements that make them work



Mapping the Region Part II: When doesn't it work?

- What is Aboriginal Art? What is immigrant art? What barriers arise when we label ourselves?
- How can celebrating folk culture limit the development of contemporary culture?
- What prevents cross-cultural participation in mainstream events?

4:00pm-4:15pm Break

4:15pm Small Groups

What organizational changes need to be made to bridge community space(s)?

- Small Group Discussion using Self Assessment Tools
- Case Study

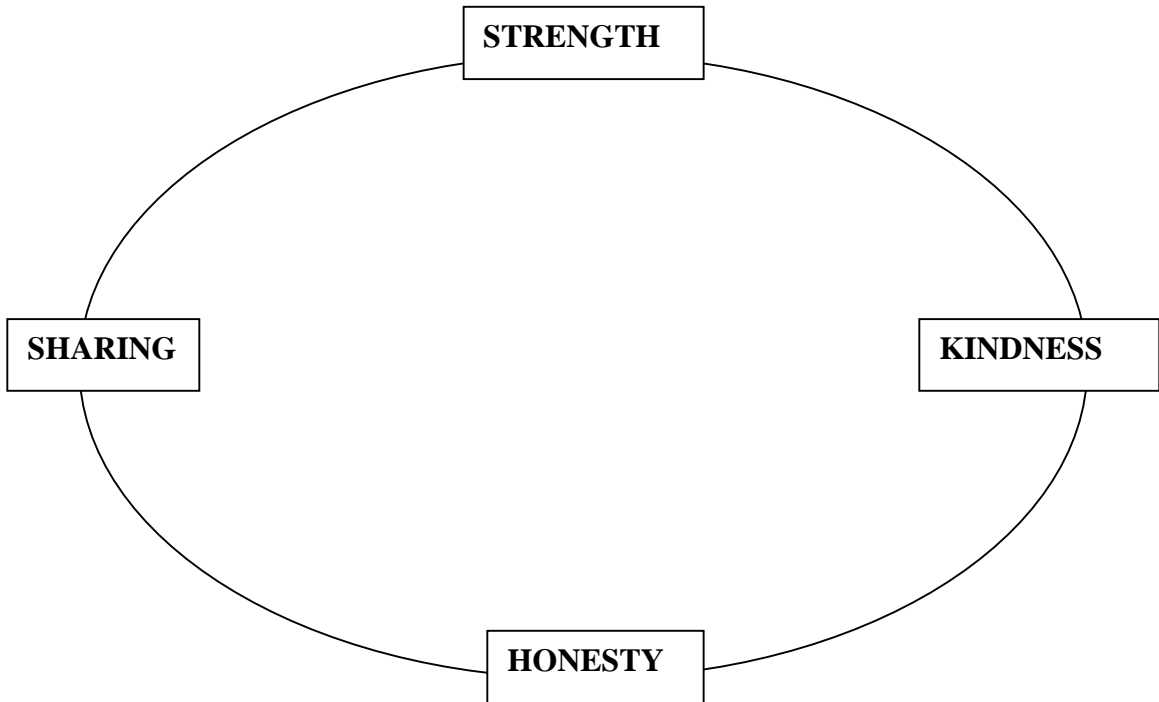
5:00pm

Reassemble, Consolidate Small Group and Evaluation



iii. Workshop Highlights

Rene Meshake, Ojibway Artist, Writer and Performer, opened the session by addressing how arts transforms space. He spoke from personal experience addressing the importance of Anishnawbe Cultural Values.





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.

The idea of multiculturalism/diversity was heavily debated as some felt that these terms have no meaning.

“Before people would talk about ethnicity, minority, multiculturalism but now we’re into diversity which is the new fashionable word”

A new way of seeing was proposed: Erase the need for the word multiculturalism in order to take it to the next step.

- “You have the French culture and the English culture and then all the other ethnic groups summed up together as multicultural: THE culture and the multi-culture.”
- “You have to take us as part of the culture”