

CULTURALLY DIVERSE ARTS PROGRAMS

A Guide to Planning & Presentation

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University of British Columbia

in Association with:

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Artistic Director, Harrison Festival Society

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Finally, I extend my thanks to participants of the 2005 North American Folk Alliance Conference in Montreal who attended a specific workshop where a draft of this guide was presented.

I INTRODUCTION

Over the past year, the Harrison Festival Society, with funding assistance from Canadian Heritage, and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, has been engaged in carrying out a project entitled “Community Connections: Networking with Diverse Communities from a Cultural Perspective”. One of the objectives of the project included the development of a “Best Practices Guide” for use by arts organizations in their programming and audience development.

Across Canada, there are many arts organizations that have done pioneering work with diverse cultural communities to present a rich range of arts programs and performances that reflect the cultural diversity of our country. These have included a variety of music, dance, songs, theatre, plays, poetry, visual arts, and other art forms. Some arts presenters in British Columbia, and elsewhere in Canada, have attempted to increase cultural diversity content in their programming. Some have given up because of poor results or complete failure. Others, sadly, for a variety of reasons, are not committed to this goal. Still others, who are willing and even eager to include cultural diversity in their programming, lack the requisite knowledge, skills, or support to do so.

The arts are a powerful medium for effectively acknowledging and celebrating our rich cultural diversity. The demographic reality of our country is that a wide range of diverse cultural groups make up our population. Canada has acknowledged this diversity in its laws, such as the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Canadian Multiculturalism Act. But, legislation alone does not build a multicultural society. The arts can be both an educational and entertaining medium to embrace and appreciate our rich, diverse, cultural resources.

We trust that this guide will assist arts organizations and their program planning staff to enhance and further develop the work they are currently doing. We hope the guide will also provide information to encourage others who are keen to plan and present arts programming that is reflective of the range of cultural diversity in their local communities.

The guide is offered as a modest set of suggestions for organizations and planners involved in arts programming. The focus is on ideas and approaches for involving and incorporating the cultural diversity of local communities in arts programs, presentations and performances.

It must be stressed that the guide is not a “cookbook” with a set of recipes for planning and developing culturally diverse programming. Rather, it is a sharing of ideas that others have found to be useful and helpful. We all know that program planning and development occurs in a context that is naturally unpredictable. Creative programming is characteristically organic, holistic, and fluid. Unanticipated events can occur suddenly and situations can change dramatically. So, programs evolve in a context of unique circumstances, uncertainty, and serendipity. These must be acknowledged in the process of using this guide.

II METHODOLOGY

The approach used in the development of this guide involved the following:

- Collection and analysis of invited case studies;
- Focus group consultation meetings with members of two specific cultural communities in the Fraser Valley, the Aboriginal and Indo-Canadian communities; and reflections on lessons learned from efforts to reach out to these two communities;
- Feedback on preliminary draft of the guide from workshop participants and case study authors;
- Literature review and website search.

1. CASE STUDIES

Several resource people who have made significant contributions to the arts community in terms of audience development and diverse cultural programming were invited to prepare case studies describing and analysing a program that they considered relevant to this guide. Resource people who agreed to participate were given an outline indicating the various areas and items that we wished them to address in preparing their case study. A sample of the outline is included in Appendix A.

Eight case studies were submitted, and all of them were analysed by three readers. In searching the data from the case studies, readers selected content that described tasks, activities, values, principles, process, etc., which, from the point of view of the case study author, worked well or not as well as expected. This content included material that the case study authors found to be helpful to them in terms of lessons learned, or principles that they deemed relevant for other program developers. (For case studies, see Appendix B)

The selected content from the case studies was organized into categories and analyzed for the ideas or principles being conveyed.

2. DATA FROM CULTURAL COMMUNITIES

Two types of data were obtained from this component of the project. First, ideas and suggestions regarding culturally diverse arts programs were collected from the two cultural communities. Second, project staff kept notes of activities and meetings related to the work with these two communities and reflected on their experiences. Staff then submitted their recorded reflections and lessons learned for inclusion as part of the data for the guide.

3. FEEDBACK ON PRELIMINARY DRAFT

A draft of the guide was presented to participants at a workshop of the 2005 North American Folk Alliance Conference in Montreal that focussed on the topic of culturally diverse programming. Suggestions and comments from the workshop participants and case study authors were considered as data for the guide and included where it was deemed relevant and appropriate.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

A search of the literature dealing with culturally diverse arts programming was conducted. This search revealed that a wealth of material and relevant case studies are available on the internet. A wide range of arts organizations in Australia, England, and North America have carried out studies and developed very useful material on this topic. Some of these information sources and related literature are cited in the References section of the Guide.

III BEST PRACTICES

This section contains ideas about best practices by the author of this guide as well as ideas taken from the case studies in Appendix B. Although the content is divided into separate categories and presented under different headings, many of the ideas can actually overlap between categories. For example, ideas listed under the category “Getting to know your Community” relate very closely to ideas presented in other categories such as “ Program Planning” or “Program Promotion”. Thus, separating the content does not indicate that these are exclusive ideas or discrete components of a linear process. Rather, they are aspects of an organic and holistic journey.

As identified earlier, these are ideas that have worked for others, and should be followed not as prescriptions for success, but as suggestions that you might consider for your particular situation.

1. GOVERNMENT FUNDING AGENCIES

For cultural diversity in arts programming to become a reality, funding agencies, especially government ministries and departments, must work in close partnership with arts organizations to achieve this common goal. Government funding agencies and arts organizations have a mutual responsibility to ensure that cultural diversity and inclusiveness are reflected in arts programming. To this end, the role of government funding agencies is crucial. Therefore, they need to:

- Acknowledge that the funding role goes beyond allocation of resources. Valuing and celebrating diversity requires that government work in partnership with arts organizations, which in turn work in partnership with local communities. In doing so, government and arts organizations would be setting an example of partnership that could be developed with local ethno-cultural communities.
- Identify the range of arts organizations in the country and their capacity to deliver effective culturally diverse arts programs.
- Support those arts organizations that have demonstrated a capacity to present culturally diverse programs.
- Assist and facilitate the capacity development of organizations that have the potential to deliver effective culturally diverse programs.
- Act as a resource bank and provide information to relevant organizations about examples of best practices in culturally diverse arts programming.

- Provide resources and development support, as appropriate, for engaging and involving local cultural communities, for example, support for outreach worker.
- Streamline the application for funding process, including procedures and time lines so that they do not cause extra burden on applying organizations. Guidelines need to be simplified. Applicants currently find federal application guidelines for funding particularly difficult and the expectations unclear. The reporting requirements are also burdensome and a strain on resources.
- Organizations with a proven track record should be rewarded by providing them with multi-year funding.
- Program officers of government funding agencies need to spend more time “in the field” to get a first-hand picture of programs and presentations. The reality of mounting a large arts event is difficult to convey through written grant applications.
- Convene opportunities that bring arts organizations and local community members together for sharing experiences and learning from each other.
- Provide resources for community development training for artistic directors and program staff, as needed.

Excerpts from Invited Case Studies:

Adequate planning and research time continues to be a challenge. We feel we have put in place some mechanisms to ensure we have time to plan and research but those are two areas that are often under-resourced or allowed for within the demands of running a not-for-profit arts organization. (Firehall Arts Centre)

It’s sad that after investing considerable time and resources in building good relationships and successful programs, we have to leave those people and that history behind to create new initiatives with new communities for the coming summer. It’s a waste of what some call the “social capital” that is developed in doing this work. What should be a very valuable resource for everyone concerned is effectively put in a cultural compost heap. It’s a tremendous loss, because until we are able to take those second steps, we are going to be stuck at the first step every year. Having developed trust, shared understandings and language and with a history of success together, what might we do next? What could happen beyond the structures (and the limitations) inherent in Festival production? In the absence of new resources, we aren’t likely to ever find out. (Roma Project)

Community outreach work is very intensive, and has to be fluid. It’s not something you can work off the side of your desk. This in itself is problematic, as most people who do this type of work are already taxed to the maximum with all the other things they have to attend to. Resources are

already scarce, and although this type of work is perhaps the most rewarding, it is also the most difficult and needs the utmost attention. I think as artistic directors, it is the most important work that we do. (Harrison Festival Society)

To do this work well – with integrity, in a truly collaborative fashion - requires a greater time commitment than standard music business booking procedures. (Roma Project)

We don't have the staff and the resources to take these new relationships and the momentum of these Festival program initiatives into the rest of the year beyond the park. (Roma Project)

2. ARTS ORGANIZATIONS

a) Philosophy and Values

- Arts organizations which purport to work towards the presentation of diverse cultural programming must be grounded in a philosophy and a set of values that respect and celebrate diversity.
- Organizational commitment to the incorporation of diversity must be reflected in the organization's mission statement, as well as its vision, policies, and goals.
- Staff responsible for program planning, development, and implementation should also have the philosophy, commitment, and vision identified above.
- Values of respect, trust, and honesty must characterize and define every aspect of the work with diverse cultural communities and their members.
- Programmers must ensure that the artistic integrity of performers invited from the local cultural community is valued and appreciated. In organizing and presenting events, no artist or performer should be presented in a manner that devalues them or their cultural group.
- The artistic integrity of an event should not be judged on criteria that is rooted in the dominant culture alone.

Excerpts from Invited Case Studies:

... the relationship building process...has been based primarily on honesty, respect and the willingness to reveal what we don't know. We have made mistakes and have offended some but we have always owned those mistakes and have not been afraid to "be human". The issue of trust is a big part of successful relationship building and the Firehall has attempted to honor any commitments undertaken within partnerships and within our productions. (Firehall Arts Centre)

The key ingredients for a successful partnership are honesty, trust and respect. (Harrison Festival Society)

Trust has to be built. Respect and reliability have to be demonstrated. Each participant has to learn a little of each other's language – literally and figuratively – and about each other's rituals. Misunderstandings are inevitable and need to be cleared up carefully and completely. (Roma Project)

We have found that over the years, we have built trust within the community of artists from culturally diverse and First Nations backgrounds and this trust has aided us in reaching beyond the producing of the work to audiences who support it. (Firehall Arts Centre)

But it was a necessary part of making clear these women were welcome. It was not enough to have a few workshops that functioned as ghettos for Lesbian women. We needed to make clear that the special reality of Lesbian women was as legitimate a topic as the special reality confronted by women of colour, union activists or any other minority group whose struggles and "issues" were producing art of merit. (Something About the Women—Folk Music and Feminism)

b) Organizational Structure and Culture

It is important that the organizational structure reflect the espoused values of respect for diversity. The credibility of the organization requires that the composition of the Board, staff, and volunteers reflect, to the extent that is feasible, the cultural profile of the local community. Although it is difficult for an organization to be fully reflective of the wide diversity that exists in its local community, there must be evidence that the organization is constantly reaching out to communities that are not currently involved.

- The Board, staff, and volunteers of the organization must practise what is being preached; they must "Walk the Talk". The cultural diversity within the organization and its capacity in linguistic diversity is of critical importance.
- The physical environment and ambience at offices, work places, and other facilities of the organization must convey the message that cultural diversity is valued and welcomed.
- Be aware that each event (festivals, concerts series) have a unique "event culture". Staff, audience, and the majority of performers are aware of this "culture". It is likely that when members of cultural communities are invited to these events for first time they will not be aware of the event's "culture"; therefore, it is necessary to prepare them for what they will encounter at the event.

Excerpts from Invited Case Studies:

Do make sure you can explain your “presenting culture” to people who have probably never been to your events. Your organization has its own rituals, limitations, procedures and peculiarities which are largely transparent when one is immersed in them all the time. (Roma Project)

...when people were not forthcoming with donations at the end of a piece they had stopped to enjoy, the artists became rather insistent that they should put something in the hat. It was resolved by having Julia and several other members of the local community discussing the issue with the musicians, including the differences between Canadian and European busking traditions. This meant that there were fewer ruffled feathers through the rest of the weekend, but also less busking. (Roma Project)

c) Process, Practices, Vision

- Engage the Board, staff, and volunteers in a visioning exercise to develop an organizational vision of culturally diverse arts programs in your local community.
- Engage ethno-cultural communities to collectively develop a community vision of culturally diverse programs for your local community.
- Merge the organizational vision with the community vision. This helps to build partnerships and co-ownership of the visioning process.
- Ensure that, at every stage of your work with cultural communities, the process, practices and procedures reflect a respect for diversity.
- Acknowledge that the process of genuinely working with people takes time, and that the process is organic and creative.

Excerpts from Invited Case Studies:

It is a profoundly human process. It is about sitting and talking and most importantly listening to people. In doing so, one discovers that “difference” is much more than skin deep. Everything from the way we understand and experience time to the ways in which disagreements can (or can’t) be expressed can vary wildly from one community to another. Getting to know each other, establishing trust and creating together takes the time it needs to take, but if one is prepared to proceed with commitment, openness and humility it’s my experience that one can create transformative cultural experiences and have an amazing time doing it. (Roma Project)

It is an incredibly creative process, which I think necessarily means that it is a very intuitive process. This may be why it has been very challenging for me to write about it while trying to follow the guidelines for this case study. In all honesty, I don’t know what “cultural resources

and assets” are. I don’t know how a needs assessment fits in to creating a program or even what it is, actually. I don’t remember any of the people involved in the project using words like “strategies” or “resource mobilization”. (Roma Project)

These terms speak to an approach informed by social sciences and the corporate world, neither of which work in the same way or to the same ends as art. I think the only “strategies” one needs is a genuine curiosity and a sincere desire to work together as equals and creative partners. (Roma Project)

In this case, I just showed up at a café with a notion about a possibility. I heard some great music and had the sense that there was something special going on. Then I started talking to people and asking questions and it seemed like all roads led to Julia Lovell. We started to talk and the sparks started to fly and away we went. It all evolved moment to moment and week by week until the final elements came together just days before the groups arrived in Vancouver and the Festival began. (Roma Project)

(d) Artistic Directors

- Work with your board, staff and volunteers to develop a culturally competent organization in all aspects of its structure and process.
- Be aware of current developments in the arts community, and culturally diverse arts programming, locally, nationally, and internationally.
- Become aware of the diverse cultural assets and resources in your community. Immerse yourself in the local community; learn about and experience its diversity.
- Maintain contact and network with peers in the arts community at the local, national, and international level. Share your experiences and learn from your colleagues.
- Attend relevant conferences and workshops focussing on culturally diverse arts programs.
- Participate in activities and programs that contribute to your continuing education and on-going professional development.
- Be adventurous and creative in attempts to present new and innovative programs.
- Do not be afraid to take risks, but realize that when you push the envelope and buck your organizational traditions, difficulties may emerge that you will have to address.
- Work in such a way as to be responsive and accountable to the diversity in your local community.

- Recognize the value of keeping a daily log and making notes of lessons learned. Others have found this a very useful learning process.

Excerpts from Invited Case Studies:

As artistic director and co-coordinator of the Vancouver Folk Music Festival Society I determined just about everything we did- the good and the bad, the wildly successful and the dismal failures. (Something About the Women—Folk Music and Feminism)

I think I did four important things in defining the artistic content and organizational culture of the Vancouver Folk Music Festival. I made what came to be called “world music” and “cultural diversity” a centerpiece of its programming. I used the festival as a platform for socialist ideas in general and anti-imperialist solidarity in particular. I broke the notion that individual “star” performers were the key, replacing them with thematic programs based on geography or style. Lastly, because that is what I want to write about, I brought “women’s music” into the festival and our other activities. In hindsight this is probably the most enduring of the four. (Something About the Women—Folk Music and Feminism)

3. GETTING TO KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY

Presenting culturally diverse programs will not be authentic and sustainable unless you take the time and effort to know your local community and develop working relationships with its members.

You must differentiate between knowing about the community and knowing the community. The former pertains to your knowledge of the facts and information about the community; the latter includes your awareness of community demographics and information, as well as your connections and interpersonal relationships with people in the community.

How you work with your community depends on your concept of it and your attitude towards it. You must believe in your community and see it as a resource.

a) Community Research and Analysis

- Develop a demographic profile of your local community, focussing on the range and extent of its diverse cultural groups.
- Develop a bank of your local community’s cultural resources, talents, and assets in the arts. This would include its leaders, elders, churches, temples, organizations, poets, artists, singers, teachers, drummers, dancers, arts classes, artisans, craftspeople, storytellers, performers, comedians, actors, playwrights, producers, and so on.

- Develop a list of the culturally diverse programs and celebratory events in the community.
- Develop a list of established and emerging artists and performers in your local community.
- Learn about the community through the following:

Analysis of information in public documents available from government and non-government agencies and organizations. This would include documents from the federal, provincial, and municipal governments, as well as local libraries, which contain demographic information about local and regional communities.

Direct observation of, and participation in, activities and events in your community.

Electronic and print media news and reports focussing on demographic information about local communities and different cultural groups.

Interviews with, and surveys of, key leaders and resource people in local cultural communities.

Information that is available from local agencies and organizations, and their staff. This would include information from religious leaders, service clubs, cultural organizations, schools, sports groups, community service agencies, volunteer organizations, and so on.

Excerpts from Invited Case Studies:

While our research was not thorough, we were aware of the production activity on Canadian stages and were, also, aware of artists from cultural minority backgrounds who had completed their theatre training but were having considerable difficulty finding employment within the professional theatre. (Firehall Arts Centre)

Do your research; find out about the community you are working with - history, issues they might be addressing, cultural differences, proper protocol, politics, etc. (Harrison Festival Society)

We have found that when we have not undertaken the research required, discussed the project with others who have knowledge of similar work, determined the correct context for the production and promotion of the work and not laid in place the overall plan for execution, that that is when barriers are difficult to hurdle and the work often suffers. (Firehall Arts Centre)

But there are no perfect projects, and no amount of research or consultation will create one. The main thing is to begin. From there the results are dependant on how well one listens, how effectively everyone involved can assimilate the knowledge of “the other” and bring their own experience and creativity to bear on the situation, including the limitations of time and budget. Like any other creative process it is very dependant on intuition and, it must be said, luck. With a little research and a lot of luck, one might be introduced to a leader in a community who is respected and who will listen to you long enough to get the sense that (a) you are sincere in your desire (b) you are bringing something to the table to share and (c) it sounds like an interesting possibility. (Roma Project)

Show up at local community events. (Tibetan Cultural Festival)

b) Developing Contacts

- Start with the people you already know in the cultural community who can refer you to others with the knowledge and skills that you are seeking.
- Use contacts that you already have in one cultural community who may be willing to reach out to members in their own community and refer them to you. Sometimes these contacts that you already have will be willing to serve as liaisons, guides, or volunteers in your outreach efforts to establish contacts in their communities.
- Be sensitive to cultural protocols in reaching out to communities, for example, in seeking the assistance of Chiefs and Elders in Aboriginal communities.
- Pay attention to the existence of factions or divisions in cultural communities, and do not become involved in taking sides, or favouring particular factions.
- Do not rush the process; respect the community members accessibility and availability.
- Appreciate the time, effort, and ideas that your contacts offer, and let them know that you value their assistance. Demonstrate your gratitude in ways that you and they find meaningful and appropriate. This can include gifts to elders, dinner meetings, or complimentary invitations to particular events.
- Identify some key contacts in the community through people from that community whom you already know. Also, identify key contacts from other sources such as documents, newspapers, memberships in local community organizations, e.g. social, economic, political, cultural, religious organizations, community service agencies.

- Use these initial contacts to become aware of others who are regarded as key leaders in the community—either by the particular ethno-cultural group, or the larger general community, or both.
- Seek the help of your initial contacts in developing a larger list of community leaders, those who have particular information about the artistic talents in their community, and the artists themselves.
- Reach out to the community contacts through personal telephone calls, e-mails, and face-to-face informal meetings.
- Get to know them; don't see your outreach as a superficial or abstract process. Show that your outreach is not a selfish initiative for your personal or agency gain. Show that you are interested in mutual benefits for your program and theirs.
- Share your objectives regarding culturally diverse programming, and ensure that they understand the objectives. Seek their assistance in paving the way for you to make your initial contact with the people whom they have recommended as further resource people.
- Send the recommended individuals written information about your culturally diverse program objectives and the specific types of assistance and consultation that you are seeking from them.
- As far as possible, together with your initial contacts, meet with the recommended individuals in informal face-to-face sessions to explain your objectives, and invite their participation and consultation.
- Be genuine, caring, open, honest, and respectful. Show that you genuinely care about them and their family, including their children and their community.

Excerpts from Invited Case Studies:

We found that the best approach to a specific community was often through the artists themselves or through someone from within a specific community who held respect and had a strong interest in the arts. (Firehall Arts Centre)

Most of my outreach contacts came through one primary person. I was lucky to know an Indian lady who was instrumental in starting a program called “Friends of South Asia at the ROM (Royal Ontario Museum)”. She was involved in raising millions of dollars to start a South Asian art wing at the ROM and she had mobilized hundreds of South Asians to donate and visit the South Asian exhibits at the ROM. With her, I hit the jackpot for information for outreach – she was my primary contact. (Kiran Ahluwalia)

Spend lots of time getting to know the different possible players within each cultural community. Give yourself at least 6 months to a year getting to know the people before even starting to plan an event with them. Give yourself another year to carry out the planning and implementation. (Tibetan Cultural Festival)

Find a champion for the project who shares similar values with you, and who is respected with members of the target community. Find out from your champion who really makes the decisions, or influences them. (Tibetan Cultural Festival)

Find a “champion” who is supportive of the project to help represent you and your organization in the community; someone who can point you in the right direction. Must be a person who is respected by the community. Be aware of which parts of the community this person speaks for. No one person can represent an entire community. (Harrison Festival Society)

As I began to confront the fact that I was now booking my first festival, I also began to investigate where Ferron had come from. I met with her. She introduced me to other women who were connected to the women’s music scene. I bought magazines and records. Like any good folklorist, I went to gatherings where I was one of very few outsiders- outsiders being defined as men. (Something About the Women—Folk Music and Feminism)

4. PROGRAM PLANNING

Program planning is grounded in the values and visions of the organization and the community. Your community’s vision of diverse cultural arts programming is the reference point for your program planning activities and efforts.

Refer to, and use, findings and feedback from your previous program evaluations and your consultations with diverse cultural communities.

a) Consulting, Developing Relationships, Building Partnerships

- Make effective use of your contacts as resource people in the program planning process.
- Demonstrate cultural sensitivity in all aspects of program planning and development.
- Keep contact people regularly informed about your planning process, and up-date them on progress.
- Ensure that adequate follow-up work with contact people is carried out.

- Consider the use of advisory groups from each cultural community. Involve them in a partnership, not a token way.
- Give out pertinent and adequate information about your organization and programs.
- Invite members of different cultural communities to visit your organization and to observe your programs.
- Avoid setting unrealistic expectations about presenting programs from specific cultural communities.
- Maintain credibility and demonstrate competence in the consultation and relationship building process with cultural communities.
- Use focus groups, as appropriate, to get feedback on specific program components.

At consultation meetings:

Involve your board and staff members in the consultation sessions. This will demonstrate the genuine commitment of the organization to your goals related to diversity.

As far as is feasible, hold consultation meetings on cultural community turf, in locations and facilities familiar to them.

Have handouts describing your organization and examples of possible partnerships with cultural communities. Give them something tangible, such as a previous program and brochure. This could help them to further understand the kind of programming that your organization presents.

Where appropriate, it would be respectful to invite both partners or spouses to your consultation meetings.

Be aware of the status of the guests in terms of who are seen as elders or community leaders; also, who are representing particular groups within the larger community; and the various divisions within the larger community.

Emphasize that your objective is not to appropriate or replace their own arts programs. Stress that planning will proceed only if they see it as useful to them, and if there is consensus on the goals and objectives of the program.

Show that you are willing to hear their ideas and that, together with them, you want to find ways to offer what is meaningful to them and the local community.

Convey the kinds of resources that you are willing and able to offer.

Do not rush the process of initiating contact, providing information, and inviting people's participation. Be respectful of their time and their commitments to other pressing activities and events in their own cultural communities and the larger community, for example, summer games, federal elections, weddings, berry picking, other festivals, etc.

Be sensitive to what they see as "sacred" and "private" to their community.

Encourage them to give feedback on what might be seen as incentives for participation, and what would make them feel welcomed and included at events.

Thank guests for coming and giving up their precious time to meet with you.

Work in such a way that there is ownership on their part of the planning and implementation process.

Give them your contact address and phone number. Also, let them know that they can contact you at their convenience for further information or clarification.

Invite them for a tour of your area and facilities.

Invite them to volunteer to work with you on ideas they have presented in order to explore implementation of those ideas.

After the meeting:

Send formal thank you letters.

Let them know of upcoming programs.

Include them on your program and upcoming events list.

Follow-up with any commitments that have been made.

The following is a case example of outreach and consultation that we carried out as part of this project in our efforts to involve Aboriginal and Indo-Canadian cultural communities in the Fraser Valley region of British Columbia:

In the first round of consultations:

Members of the Aboriginal and Indo-Canadian communities were invited to a lunch reception during the July 2004 Harrison Festival of the Arts in Harrison.

We wanted the invited guests to attend and observe the Festival on-site as it was happening.

All those attending were given guest passes for the day and for the evening concert. Board and staff members were on hand to serve as hosts and guides.

Information was given about Harrison Festival Society and brochures describing its programs were handed out. Objectives of the “Networking with Diverse Cultural Communities” project were outlined and explained.

Over lunch, Board and staff members mingled with the guests in small groups to further explain the objectives of the project and to get their ideas and feedback.

At the end of the session, we informed attendees that we would be contacting them again for follow-up sessions.

In the second round of consultations:

We met separately with each of the two cultural communities. In each case, we held a dinner meeting as part of the consultation. Board and staff members attended both meetings. We found that having a dinner meeting as part of the consultation process with the cultural community was extremely productive. Sharing a meal together in a group context and engaging in informal casual conversations over dinner is an excellent way to get to know people and to build a relationship with them.

We held the meeting with the Indo-Canadian community at a banquet hall owned and operated by a member of the Indo-Canadian community, and in the geographic area where most members of this community live. The menu, consisting of a range of Indian dishes, was catered by the banquet hall owner.

Similarly for the Aboriginal community, the meeting was held at the Aboriginal Resource Centre on the Chilliwack Campus of the University College of the Fraser Valley. This Centre is staffed by members of the Aboriginal community. The meal, featuring salmon and other dishes, was provided by a caterer from the Aboriginal community. We arranged to open the meeting with drum and prayer by a member of the Aboriginal community. We sat in a circle, and used the talking circle process, as needed, to ensure that everyone had a chance to give their ideas. We closed the meeting with song and drum by the same person who opened the meeting.

At each of the meetings:

Cultural community members were encouraged to bring their spouse or members of their family to the dinner meeting.

We invited consultation on available artists and performers in their community, possible programs, advertising, marketing and promotion, barriers for attendance, and the like.

Staff and board members of Harrison Festival Society attended at both meetings.

Relevant materials were given to each person. These included previous Festival program, current newsletter, agenda for the meeting, and outline of topics for consultation.

We invited them to serve on an Advisory Committee for planning culturally diverse programs and many willingly offered to participate.

We took notes of the meeting, which were later sent to all the attendees.

As noted in another guide (Australia Council for the Arts, pp.30-31), consultation sessions can be used to provide feedback on the following:

- barriers to participation;
- testing new ideas for performances;
- the significance of prices;
- leisure preferences;
- how people choose a performance;
- what audiences enjoy;
- how satisfied audiences are with current programs and existing facilities, and how this experience can be improved;
- how to increase the frequency of audience attendance;
- how to attract more first-time audiences;
- how effective publicity materials are;
- if new performances were added, would they increase audiences or ‘cannibalise’ existing audiences?

(Australia Council for the Arts, pp.30-31)

Excerpts from Invited Case Studies:

It can take a long time to build a relationship, and sometimes it's best to start with baby steps. It's all about practicing good values. (Harrison Festival Society)

Consistently provide follow-up and ongoing contact throughout the project. (Harrison Festival Society)

...we undertook outreach to various communities to locate theatre artists interested in participating in the apprenticeship program, to determine what scripts were available and/or under development, and what other groups were pursuing similar goals. (Firehall Arts Centre)

Make sure there is personal contact; sharing a meal is a good way to build relationships. (Harrison Festival Society)

My networking was the most successful. Getting my primary contact on board — getting her to send emails about the concert to her email list really helped a lot. Getting other contacts from her and calling them and getting their support was also helpful. (Kiran Ahluwalia)

One of our committee members is First Nations (Cree). She acts as host and guide for visiting First Nations folks. (Discovery Coast Music Festival)

Engage volunteers from all sectors of the community – school teachers, business folk, First Nations, long term residents and new. (Discovery Coast Music Festival)

We built relationships with the women's milieu in other ways. We invited the local women's bookstore to set up in our market area. We rented a food booth to a women's organic food co-op. We made it clear in every way we could that we saw a total commonality of interest between the women's movement and the folk music festival. (Something About the Women—Folk Music and Feminism)

b) Involving Cultural Communities

- Communicate your organizational goals and objectives for diverse cultural arts programming. Build relationships and partnerships to achieve goals and objectives that are mutually beneficial to your organization, the cultural communities, and the wider society.
- Consult with cultural contacts on ways to involve members of their communities.
- Commission members of the cultural community for specific tasks, such as logo design, posters, etc.

- Identify barriers to involvement or participation by specific cultural communities. Work together with these communities on ways to address the identified barriers. These can include barriers such as lack of transportation, financial resources, or lack of information about your organization and its programs.
- Invite members of diverse cultural communities to attend programs as your guests.
- Recruit volunteers from specific cultural communities to serve in different roles in your organization and at events.
- Recruit volunteers to promote programs in their media outlets, to observe programs and write about them.
- Hire members of particular cultural communities as staff to plan and present programs.
- Host specific events such as receptions, or dinner meetings to consult with communities.

Excerpts from Invited Case Studies:

Ask members of the particular cultural community what they would like to see in terms of shows. Who would they like to see in terms of music, dance, etc. If they are not familiar with the Canadian musicians of diverse background — lend them CD's and ask if they would like to see that band in their town/city. (Kiran Ahluwalia)

Capture their attention with presentation that is comfortable/familiar to them. Tweak their imagination, gradually introduce unknown and diverse performances while maintaining a segment of the show that is preferred. (Discovery Coast Music Festival)

A large majority of Nuxalk families do not own a car; develop a bus service to site. (Discovery Coast Music Festival)

Engage the children and mom and pop will follow. Have an exciting children's program. (Discovery Coast Music Festival)

Mix your volunteer base for the event with members of the target community, and with volunteers at large (such as your own organization's volunteer base). (Tibetan Cultural Festival)

Hire as many members of the target community as you can to be part of your event, especially on the artistic side. (Tibetan Cultural Festival)

...we undertook outreach to all of the First Nations communities closely linked to areas of the province in which we were touring. We attempted, when connections had not already been made, to connect local community presenters with the local First Nations communities. (Firehall Arts Centre)

In St. Catharines the promoter spent time in the lobby before the concert, in the intermission and after the concert meeting with the ‘new faces’ in her venue. This was a great idea for the promoter to develop relationships with the South Asian community. After the concert there was a small reception. (Kiran Ahluwalia)

In our first year, a local Nuxalk artist was commissioned to produce our logo. (Discovery Coast Music Festival)

We engage Nuxalk volunteers over the weekend. (Discovery Coast Music Festival)

An aboriginal artist, Sheldon Williams was contracted to design the poster and program cover. He chose a traditional native design of a hummingbird hovering over a rose. The hummingbird is not a symbol associated with any one tribe or clan, but as Sheldon explained, “it is believed that during a time of pain and sorrow, if a hummingbird appears, healing will soon follow after”. It was such a strong image, that black and red t-shirts were printed up for the cast and crew, and were available for sale at each performance. A special “Harrison Festival” edition of the script was also published for sale. (Harrison Festival Society)

Be aware of other events impacting the community - i.e. harvest time, fishing season, other planned community cultural events, weddings, funerals, etc. Be aware of how and to what extent these events impact the community. (Harrison Festival Society)

I formally handed the workshop over to Hal, explaining that when we started, for the first three days, it had been me running everything, in consultation with him. Then, as I was sure they had noticed, we started to do things together two days ago. Now, Hal would take over and work in consultation with me. I explained about the difference between my work and approach and Hal’s image — the one we had activated into dance two days earlier. He asked them to go back into the image and for people from the audience to come and stand with character they felt in solidarity with. Then he asked them to let go of the emotional content for now and to focus on externals: what were they, how did they move, what sounds did they make. They worked and deepened the movements with their eyes closed, going through a stage of just standing and waving their arms in the air to really using their whole bodies to “be” what they represented —tall grass in storm, a volcano, fire, smoke, etc. This took some time but after an hour it was obvious that characters were emerging who would be able to interact in dance forms that are traditionally recognizable to the Gitksan but also new. (Headlines Theatre Company)

c) **Choosing Communities**

There are many factors to consider when deciding which particular cultural communities you should choose to work with in planning and presenting programs. Factors can include elements such as:

- the size of the cultural community
- the socio-economic and political profile of the community
- the readiness of the community to participate
- the image of the particular cultural community in the wider community
- the importance of presenting programs from this community
- the issues facing the community
- available resources within the community
- available external resources

Arts organizations can often play a critical role in taking bold steps in choosing to reach out and work with cultural communities that have been regularly excluded. Arts organizations have an ethical and professional responsibility to reach out to communities that are marginalized and under-represented.

As noted by Urban Theater Projects, an Australian theater company, their 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 mythologised 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.

(Australia Council for the Arts, p.40)

Excerpts from Invited Case Studies:

This workshop is a wonderful experiment and has come together in a beautiful way. In 1987 Headlines embarked on a 4-year project with the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs called NO'XYA' (Our Footprints). The play was an articulation from the Gitksan and

Wet'suwet'en perspective, of First Nations' relationship to ancestral land and did its small part to pave the way for the now famous Delgamuxw vs. the Queen land claim case. Integral to that project was Hal Blackwater, a core group member, choreographer and cast member. NO' XYA' performed in Vancouver and toured BC in 1987, toured coast to coast in Canada in 1988 and into Maori communities in New Zealand in 1990. My relationship with Hal, his family and the Gitksan has remained strong over the years.

Part of the excitement of this project is that through the years of early contact with Europeans and the Residential School experience that that led to the dances and Feast system of the Gitksan had been made illegal. People were severely punished for practicing their Culture and so it went "underground". The old dances remain but it has been a very long time since new dance was made. This is an opportunity to do that and for the dances to grow directly out of relevant issues in the Dancers' lives. Once again using the Dance to tell the community's stories. (Headlines Theatre Company)

The Vancouver Folk Music Festival was held for the first time in August of 1978. It saw a respectable attendance of about 10,000 folks over three days. The second edition was held in July of 1979. Attendance went up to over 16,000. The artistic director of the first two editions was Mitch Podolak, founder of the Winnipeg Folk Festival. I was the festival co-coordinator. Mitch booked the acts; I ran the organization. After its second edition the festival became independent of the Heritage Festival Society, which spawned it, Mitch left the scene. I was left with both the organizational and artistic responsibilities. In 1978 there was no programming devoted to women or their music. In 1979, partially as a result of my pressure, there was a workshop with a title composed of the women's symbol, a plus sign, musical notes and an equal sign pointing to a clenched fist. The message- women plus music equals political activity was unambiguous. (Something About the Women—Folk Music and Feminism)

The unleashing of women's music on the festival was not without a few hiccups. The boys would have to make room in the tree house for the girls! Two of the artists at the festival in 1980 learned it the hard way. The Red Clay Ramblers were the first to taste the lash, in their case at the hands of fellow artists. (Something About the Women—Folk Music and Feminism)

Folk music, like all mainstream popular music had been a male preserve. That is why the women's music audience and artists had created their own networks. We were challenging that and some were uncomfortable. (Something About the Women—Folk Music and Feminism)

All in all it was an easy integration and it brought many benefits. The combination of political music; world music and women's music brought together an audience of the most enlightened individuals. It gave me a mandate to program the most innovative, challenging and sometimes outrageous music. It also cemented the audience's loyalty to the event. There was no other festival quite like Vancouver and it created a fan base that was unshakeable. They knew where they were going to be on the third weekend of July every year. (Something About the Women—Folk Music and Feminism)

5. PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

a) Ethno-Specific Presentations

- Determine the programs and events that are popular with, and valued by, specific cultural communities.
- Consider the impact of the program on the specific cultural community, as well as the wider community.
- Check out programs that have been previously successful in the specific cultural community.
- Start with programs that you and the specific cultural community agree on presenting.
- Assess the educational and entertainment value to the wider community.
- Acknowledge the expertise and wisdom of the cultural community in designing and presenting programs.
- Respect their cultural traditions and protocols.

Excerpts from Invited Case Studies:

Don't assume this project will mean that members of that community will flock to your event. The odds are that community you are working with already has a very rich cultural life of its own. They don't need you to present their culture for them, but your existing audience probably does. That said, the more creative and engaging a project you create together, the more interest there will be in attending. (Roma Project)

There are some aspects of the life of any community that are deservedly private – ie – they need and want time together to be themselves, away from “the other”. In this project, and in others since, it has become clear that this is an important part of any trans-community initiatives. There has to be respect for need and it may well mean that some resources need to be dedicated to it. It is part of the balance of the initiative, whereby community members bring much to the Festival and the Festival in turn can bring some special to the community beyond representing them on its stages. It is a part of the work that cultural organizations can and should do. (Roma Project)

b) Joint Presentations

- Work in collaboration with the particular cultural community to plan and present programs.

Work in a genuine partnership that respects the knowledge, skills and ideas of the cultural community.

- Be open to new ways of planning and presenting programs.
- Offer, but not impose, your knowledge, skills and the resources of your organization to mount and present joint programs.
- Do not appropriate presentations from the cultural community.
- Ensure that program quality is not compromised or sacrificed.
- Be adventurous and consider taking risks collaboratively with the cultural community.
- Be mindful that creative collaborations can emerge from a melding of cultures.

Excerpts from Invited Case Studies:

A “Call for Auditions” was circulated to the theatre community and faxed to an extensive First Nations contact list. The cast consisted of eight women. There were five students, two quite young, three in their mid teens, and three Roman Catholic nuns ages 25 - 60. The announcement also included a search for backstage and video crews. The rehearsals were to be held in the Aboriginal Resource Centre at UCFV’s [University College of the Fraser Valley] Chilliwack campus. Several people showed up for the audition nights. There was a very informal First Nations youth theatre group in the area, who had been informally getting together because of their interest in theatre. They had no background or formal training. One of the parents saw the audition notice, and brought a few of the young people from this group. There was also a lot of personal contact work involved in finding people to audition, which met with some success. Those who did not get parts were encouraged to be part of the back stage crew, and happily all accepted. As it turned out, all five student roles were filled with first time First Nations actors (ages 17-23). Two of the nun characters were also filled by First Nations actors. A woman cast as a nun had played a student in the first production in 1993. The youngest nun character was played by an eighteen year old who came out to the auditions because her father went to residential school in Mission, and would not speak about his experience. She thought that being in the play would give her a better understanding of her father. One woman who came to the auditions wanted to work behind the scenes rather than in front of an audience. She was a victim of the residential school experience herself, and thought it would be a good step on her journey of healing. (Harrison Festival Society)

The play was presented a total of eight times. Four evening performances, one Sunday afternoon matinee, two matinees for students and a special evening performance to actually film the play. The matinee performances were intended for school groups to attend and were scheduled for

11:00 am after contacting several schools to find out what the best time would be. Schools from the Fraser Cascade, Abbotsford, Mission and Chilliwack school districts bussed their students to the show. Several independent band run schools also attended. A special price of \$5 was offered. We found that many seniors and elders from the aboriginal community wanted to attend the student performances during the week. We certainly welcomed them explaining who the audience would be, and kept the price the same. (Harrison Festival Society)

One of the more successful experimental initiatives was initiating a collaboration between a Vancouver-based non-Tibetan DJ with two of the guest traditional Tibetan singers. They communicated before the event by email, and CD's. They then met a few days before the event they were going to perform in together, and they hit it off right away. Their event, at a nightclub in downtown Vancouver, was a sold-out hit. The success of the collaboration was based purely on the open-mindedness of the artists involved. It could not have been designed or forced in any way. (Tibetan Cultural Festival)

There is a strong movement among young followers of electronic music for cultural bridging, and therefore an opportunity for programmers to bring traditional ethnic musicians together with globally-spiritually-minded DJ's. This also develops the younger audience, and brings people of different age groups together. (Tibetan Cultural Festival)

I learned more about their traditions and they in turn learned about the traditions and rituals of our festival and together we created the program. What we created together went far beyond the simple model of three musical groups performing at the Festival. (Roma Project)

c) Multicultural Presentations

Multicultural programs are defined here as programs and presentations that involve presenters and performers from different cultural groups participating in a given program on the same stage together. Examples could include drumming, dancing, storytelling, or music.

Our outreach and consultations with cultural communities indicate that different cultural communities can come together to present a range of programs involving families, including children and youth.

- Look for opportunities to present multicultural programs by consulting with the different cultural groups in your local community. There are examples of cultural communities that have come together to participate in celebratory events, such as the Chinese community involving the Aboriginal community in their New Year celebrations in Vancouver.
- Be aware of intercultural events in your community that could have potential and prospects for multicultural presentations.

- Explore possibilities for multicultural programs with the different cultural groups in your local community.
- Do not sacrifice program integrity in the name of presenting a multicultural performance.

Excerpts from Invited Case Studies:

I proposed that we expand the festival to include the First Nations from our region. This was agreed upon with the Tibetan community, and so we named the hoped-for event: The Tibetan and First Nations Cultural Festival: Cultural Survival in the 21st Century: Myth and Reality...our next step was to invite the First Nations community to participate. Our goal was to have key individuals from the local First Nations community join us in the initial planning stage, and have them also host some of the events in their own venues. (Tibetan Cultural Festival)

With only three months left before the planned date of the festival, I decided to let go of the First Nations component of the Festival. We could easily have just hired a few performing arts groups and visual artists to partake in some of our events, but this was not the goal. The goal was to create real dialogue between the mainstream culture, the Tibetan people, and the First Nations people... (Tibetan Cultural Festival)

d) Cultural Sensitivity in Presentations

- Ensure that cultural traditions and customs are observed in the delivery of programs.
- Ensure that important protocols and rituals are respected in the presentations of programs.
- Be sensitive to the importance of the venue.
- Involve the cultural community leaders in roles that no one else should perform, for example, use of Elders to conduct prayers and ceremonies related to opening and closing events.
- Pay attention to the needs of the performers in terms of the stage set-up and equipment arrangements.
- Be knowledgeable about the calendar of religious holidays and events.
- Use members of the cultural community to introduce, or assist in the introduction of, presentations or performers to avoid potential fumbles and faux pas.

- Remember that the cultural community has capable resource people who can be engaged in a variety of roles, including introductions, front-of-house duties, and technical tasks.

Excerpts from Invited Case Studies:

The producer also contacted the BC Provincial Residential School Project who were on hand at each performance. A display of their materials was set up in the lobby, and counsellors were on hand in case there were any disclosures. (Harrison Festival Society)

*In 2002, we undertook the production of an adaptation of Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*. We chose to set the work in a small B.C. community and up date the work by casting a woman in the lead role. The majority of the actors were of First Nations or Métis heritage. Student groups came from as far as the Mount Currie/Pemberton band and although most knew little about Ibsen, they were introduced to the themes of the work and its relevance by a dynamic cast, whose heritage reflected theirs. (Firehall Arts Centre)*

In some of our work, cultural traditions are used on stage. An example of this would be the use of smudging or healing medicines or traditional spiritual honoring during performance. When these suggested practices are written into a script, we always take the approach of determining with the playwright whether it is a necessary part of the story. We, then, will discuss with the cast how best to implement or suggest this action. Further, we often bring elders into the rehearsal room to talk with the company around potentially contentious issues in an attempt to avoid offending cast and audience members but, also, as a sign of respect for those very cultural traditions and deities. (Firehall Arts Centre)

Both of these plays showed scenes of prayers to ancestors and not only did we want to convey accuracy in our portrayal but wanted to ensure that we were not exposing private practices and traditions in a non-respectful manner. (Firehall Arts Centre)

As an initiative of the cast and crew, an elder was invited to smudge and cleanse the space before the work began. She also smudged the cast and crew. (Harrison Festival Society)

On opening night, the Chehalis Chief along with a young dance group from their community welcomed people to their traditional territory, and opened the evening with a prayer. The opening reception, catered by a local First nations caterer after the performance, was a wonderful event. The attendance by so many local chiefs and elders was an honour for the organization. Elders and chiefs were introduced, and the program included a few words from the director, producer and playwright. (Harrison Festival Society)

A salmon feast hosted by the Nuxalk community was organized to welcome the Maori group to Bella Coola. (Discovery Coast Music Festival)

Employing local singers/drummers to perform Welcome Ceremony at festival. (Discovery Coast Music Festival)

The other two promoters were not present at the concerts. For each concert an usher introduced the band. My ensemble is introduced as 'Kiran Ahluwalia' and I announce the rest of the musicians myself. Neither of the ushers were able to pronounce my name correctly. I don't think you can present music, hope to make relationships and connections with a community and then mispronounce the very thing you present to them. (Kiran Ahluwalia)

The first concert was on a Thursday night. This was problematic for the South Asian community because they generally do not go out late on the weekdays since they have to get up early the next day for work. We would have had more success in St. Catharines with the South Asian community if the concert had been on Saturday. (Kiran Ahluwalia)

6. PROGRAM PROMOTION AND AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Similar to the ideas suggested under program planning, efforts relating to program promotion and increasing attendance at events begin at the very early stages of consulting, relationship building, and program planning with cultural communities. How you consult, how you plan, and whom you involve are essential ingredients of marketing and audience development. A partnership approach in program planning and development uses the resources and ideas within the cultural communities themselves for program promotion and audience development. The cultural community is the best resource for advertising and attracting audiences.

Remember, if the program is planned **for** the cultural community, then the onus is on the sponsoring organization to carry out the promotion and attract the audience. If the program is produced **in partnership with** the cultural community, and it has a feeling of ownership, its members will be more interested in making the program a success.

Some best practices include the following:

- Consult with, and engage, members of the cultural community in program promotion.
- Have direct contact with cultural organizations, and use them for program promotion.
- Make deliberate and extensive use of volunteers from the particular community in a variety of roles, including ushers, hosts, stage crew, sales, media stories, etc.
- Advertise in local community newspapers and specific cultural community newspapers, using pictures and languages that are understood by the communities.

- Advertise in electronic and print media, as well as community newsletters.
- Use specific cultural television and radio programs for interviews and press releases.
- Promote through direct mail, e-mail, phone calls, word of mouth.
- Publicize through schools, community organizations, public agencies, libraries, business places.
- Make announcements at churches, temples, and community events.
- Use posters, flyers, banners, billboards, and so on.
- Use door-to-door distribution, and drop off flyers and promotional material to homes in selected areas.
- Acknowledge recommendation and word-of-mouth as key promotion methods for all types of potential attendees.
- Use the program booklet to feature selected articles to explain and advertise certain programs.
- Use local writers to develop a story about performers and their talents.
- Hire a publicist or personnel from the cultural community, or use volunteers, if available, from the cultural community.
- Organize and host pre-and post events with performers, such as receptions or dinner meetings.
- Offer complimentary tickets to selected people from the community; and consider inviting them personally and formally to special performances.
- Consider the transportation needs and financial situation of people whom you wish to attract to events. Consider offering group transportation, transportation subsidies, free admission, or group rates for certain events.
- Invite media to attend events and present reports and stories in their print and electronic coverage of the program.

a) **Marketing**

Arts organizations that aim to attract different cultural communities must be prepared to engage a variety of communication channels and strategies that may not be part of the regular repertoire of these organizations.

Described below is one example of a successful marketing strategy by the Royal National Theatre in London, England, in its effort to reach the South Asian community.

The focus of our strategy was to establish an advisory group of South Asian community leaders / opinion formers who would act as ambassadors on behalf of the National and help to promote the show in their communities. Some members gave us valuable contacts and others acted as footsoldiers - distributing print (with a newsletter translated into four South Asian Languages) in their local area. We also recruited a team of welcomers speaking at least two South Asian languages who would be strategically positioned Front of House during the run in order to offer assistance in Hindi, Punjabi, Gujarati, Bengali and Urdu. The majority of these welcomers were recruited from our student mailing list – the response from members with South Asian language skills was very encouraging.

We wanted to complement the work of the advisory group with print distribution in key areas with large South Asian populations (eg. Balham, , Hounslow, Southall Tooting and Wembley) and we used a distribution company (London Calling) to source a completely new network of outlets. We also distributed print via all 31 Hindu temples in London. In addition to this we targeted a large number of South Asian groups and organizations with an invitation to a special performance of the show supported by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. This on-going support allows us to heavily subsidise tickets in order to encourage access to the National for people who might usually feel excluded. Regular prices range from £10.00 - £32.00: this is reduced to £1.00 - £5.00 on Hamlyn nights. We also offered a £10.00 night for first time attenders (part of our regular audience development strategy) and a student night with cheap tickets and a post-show reception with the cast.

Direct Mail

In addition to South Asian groups and organisations we also sent direct mail to 10,000 ticket buyers on our database. The response from the mailing list had already been very encouraging so we targeted non-members who had booked to see at least one of the following: *The Darker Face of the Earth* (Rita Dove), *The Waiting Room* (Tanika Gupta, directed by Indhu Rubasingham), *The Island* (Market Theatre, Johannesburg), *Haroun and the Sea of the Stories* (Salman Rushdie), *Romeo and Juliet* (ensemble 2000), *Mnemonc* (Comlicite) and *The Oresteia* (Aeschylus, directed by Katie Mitchell).

Advertising

We used a combination of national and local media – taking note of the Advisory Group’s recommendations – and advertised in the following publications: Asian Times, Eastern Eye, Guardian, Observer, Time Out, Independent, What’s On and Evening Standard. Although there was no paid advertising on radio or television, we did run a competition on Radio Asia and the show has also been covered by interviews and filmed extracts on ZEE TV and Channel East.

Front-of-House

All FOH departments have been briefed on our audience development strategy for The Ramayana and a number of ushers, box office and catering staff have had awareness training with Hardish. There’s been a great deal of enthusiasm to approach things in a slightly different way and to this end the catering department have offered South Asian menu options in a number of outlets, the events department have commissioned Kuljit Bhamra to compose music to be played FOH; and we have also launched a Festival of Lights project with a lantern exhibition in the Olivier foyer. Using The Ramayana as the theme for this pilot scheme, the National has collaborated with Emergency Exit Arts and two Lambeth schools to produce three dimensional artwork celebrating London’s cultural diversity.

(Johnson, no date, pp. 34-35)

Excerpts from Invited Case Studies:

The majority of the actors were of First Nations or Métis heritage. We conveyed this in our publicity and outreach materials and were delighted when the audience was significantly made up of individuals with aboriginal heritage as well as dedicated Ibsen-ites. (Firehall Arts Centre)

... with our production of David Henry Wang’s Golden Child, we again undertook outreach through the Chinese Canadian community, placing ads in Chinese newspapers as well as sending out translated press releases and outreach through the Asian Heritage society. Our promotional materials provided the translation of the title to Chinese and showed a picture of a turn of the century Vancouver Chinese family. (Firehall Arts Centre)

For the program book I commissioned two articles on women’s music- one by Holly Near and the other by Betsy Rose and Cathy Winter (they are attached). On the poster each year we had a laundry list of the various types of music making up folk music- Blues, Gospel, etc. In 1980 I had added Feminist to the list. It was official! (Something About the Women—Folk Music and Feminism)

...with careful, respectful outreach initiatives we have been able to build audiences for theatre productions and presentations reflective of specific communities. This outreach has taken the

form of direct mail, phone communications, advertisements in specific community papers and newsletters as well as some cases through the hiring of outreach personnel from the community to which we hope to build a connection. (Firehall Arts Centre)

All contacts on our compiled First Nations list received information, and a special group rate for aboriginal groups was offered. As I had a previous connection with the Fraser Valley Treaty Advisory Committee made up of mayors and councillors from the valley's municipalities and regional district, two complimentary tickets were offered to each representative. Complimentary tickets were also offered to Fraser Valley MLA's and MP's. They were also enticed to attend the opening reception evening where they may have had a "photo op" along with some excellent food. (Harrison Festival Society)

...the most successful result in getting the project known in the communities was by word of mouth. (Harrison Festival Society)

The third promoter gave away 100 free tickets to Immigrant Aid centres located in Brampton. These tickets were given away to new immigrants free of charge. Most of the new immigrant audience members were South Asian — some were non-South Asian. (Kiran Ahluwalia)

The Tibetan community, being very small, does not have its own newspaper, but TCS (Tibetan Cultural Society) had a newsletter that was mailed out regularly. This served as an important vehicle to reach the Tibetan community that was not already involved in the project. The CTC (Tibetan Cultural Committee) also had an active email list, website, and newsletter which also helped publicize our events. We also reached out to university campus organizations that were also involved in Tibetan social and political issues, as well as Buddhist organizations around the Vancouver area. (Tibetan Cultural Festival)

We hired a publicist to promote to media and the general public, and she was very successful in getting many local and national radio interviews, as well as articles in the print media. (Tibetan Cultural Festival)

We advertise in the Nuxalk bimonthly flyer, distributed to every Nuxalk household. (Discovery Coast Music Festival)

We commissioned an article for our program book by a leading Roma musical authority (recommended to us by the community) that would explain some of the music. With it, we would include an article by Julia, writing as a member of the Western Canadian Romani Alliance, explaining the genesis of the term "gypsy" and explaining why many would prefer to be known as the "Roma". (Roma Project)

We also worked closely with a local writer to develop a story that discussed the music coming to the Festival in the context of the lives of the Roma in Europe and Vancouver. This eventually became the cover story for "Festival" issue of the Georgia Straight, taking the history of the Roma, their lives in Vancouver and the music we were presenting to an audience of hundreds of thousands of people. (Roma Project)

Our only special strategy aimed at encouraging people from the Roma community to come was the word of mouth that always happens in tightly-knit community when something special is happening. We involved about 25 members of the community directly in the creation and presentation of the program, and it was our hope that their friends and families might want to support them and enjoy the program. (Roma Project)

The high profile coverage in the [Georgia] Straight, plus the articles in our program book meant that the audience was listening “with bigger ears”. They were more informed about the music and about the lives of the people bringing it to the stages at the Festival. (Roma Project)

Booking local performers is essential, and does draw new audience and fills slow times during the event. Important to engage local performers. Careful to maintain balance of local and out-of-town. (Discovery Coast Music Festival)

b) Identifying and Addressing Barriers

It is important to acknowledge that there are various barriers that prevent members of culturally diverse communities from attending “mainstream” arts events. If you are serious about audience development, existing barriers must be identified and addressed. The following two examples provide excellent information on barriers and their removal.

Example 1: Australia Council for the Arts

Access Barriers

A range of access barriers can exist for the group who are interested but not participating. These barriers are identified and explained [below].

- Lack of Information or Knowledge
- Timing
- Cost to the Audience
- Venue
- Signage and Bilingual Materials
- Staff

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 assess your capacity and resources to address these 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 a 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.

(Australia Council for the Arts, pp. 45-48)

Example 2: Arts Council of England

Factors deterring arts attendance

Several factors appeared to limit attendance at (mainstream) arts and cultural institutions:

- *Lack of time and money:* these were commonly mentioned, however often people were motivated to make time and spend money on other sorts of events or leisure activities. Many admitted that even with more time and money they would be unlikely to attend mainstream arts events. People did not want to “waste” their money on something they would not enjoy and attending unfamiliar events involved an element of risk.
- *Availability/location:* this varied from area to area but seemed more of an issue for respondents in outer London than in cities such as Birmingham or Bradford.
- *Lack of information:* many did not know what arts events were available in their local areas and arts events were perceived to have relatively little publicity. Lowest awareness levels were found amongst people who socialised primarily within their ethnic community or spoke little or no English.

- *Language*: was a barrier for some, especially some of the older Chinese and Asian respondents who had little or no English. For them events in mother tongue languages often had a particular resonance.
- *Social barriers*: these were especially important for younger people and women. Not having friends or family who were interested in attending arts events could be an obstacle as could their disinterest or more active discouragement. Some Asian women went to arts events with all female groups of friends but nevertheless felt that their husbands' lack of interest was an obstacle to their own attendance. For the Pakistani women in this study community disapproval was an issue.
- *Feeling out of place*: young people, those from working class backgrounds, and Black people in particular assumed that they would look and feel out of place in mainstream arts venues. In society more generally some respondents, particularly Black African and Caribbean men, had experienced racist exclusion. Publicity materials generated by arts venues/organisations sometimes reinforced the view that ethnic minorities would not be found either among artists or audiences.
- *Lack of understanding*: many felt specialist knowledge was needed to “decode” and fully appreciate the arts.
- *Irrelevance*: Classical music, opera, ballet and much theatre, the perceived manifestations of “arts”, were assumed to have little to do with the lives of ordinary people and to be difficult to relate to.
- *The audience experience*: some felt the audience experience would be passive and unengaging; this was particularly the case with young people. Favoured leisure activities often involved an element of social interaction and participation.

(Jermyn & Desai, 2000)

Excerpts from Invited Case Studies:

It is extremely hard to get the Indian and Pakistani middle age group out to a mainstream venue in downtown Toronto. They feel like it is not “their” venue. (Kiran Ahluwalia)

Maintaining an affordable ticket price. Public acceptance of a ticket price is a dominant issue in audience development. This has been a learning process for the public. Experiencing the festival, and increased quality has lessened the public's concern over paying to see live performance. (Discovery Coast Festival)

Also the timing of the events was important for them: the weekend was much more popular than anything that happened during the week. (Tibetan Cultural Festival)

Through our Community Ticket Program, we make more than 1,000 tickets per day available to people who face financial and other challenges that might make the Festival inaccessible to them, including residents from group homes, women's shelters and care facilities. We make our site accessible to people with various disabilities with a wide range of services, including sign language interpreters, special ticket options and parking assistance. (Roma Project)

c) Strategies to Create and Maintain Interest

Once you have been successful in reaching out and involving a particular cultural community, it is important to continue efforts and activities aimed at maintaining its continuing interest and involvement. A one-shot approach and subsequent retreat can be interpreted as abandonment. Even worse, it can be viewed as exploitation of the cultural community in order to serve the vested interests of the arts organization. Genuine commitment requires that continuing contact and relationships be maintained and nurtured. It is important to cultivate and nourish interpersonal relationships with members of cultural communities. To ensure that they are continually informed about events and program plans, maintain regular and open communication, both on a personal face-to-face basis and through other means, such as email, telephone, newsletters, etc.

According to *The World is Your Audience*, some methods “for maintaining interest include:”

- maintaining social networks
- encouraging ongoing participation
- developing outreach programs
- introducing incentive programs
- developing educational programs

(Australia Council for the Arts, p. 75)

Excerpts from Invited Case Studies:

Opening night was sold out, with near capacity on the second night. All matinee performances were well attended, and the audiences for each show were at least 70% aboriginal people. We also had a wonderful response to our invitation to aboriginal groups and others to attend the special performance to film the show. We spread the word that there would be free admission on this night, but that a few conditions would apply. (Harrison Festival Society)

The most beneficial interest generator for the non-South Asian market was the CBC — our publicist set up interviews on various CBC radio programs. The most beneficial activity for sustaining interest in the South Asian market were the TV ads and emails sent on email lists. (Kiran Ahluwalia)

Poster and program cover art contest at all schools. (Discovery Coast Music Festival)

When necessary, translate written materials into the target community's language. (Tibetan Cultural Festival)

One of our most important audiences is our volunteers. We involve more than a thousand people as volunteers at our Festival who come from all kinds of communities in Vancouver. Generations of families, ESL students, doctors, lesbians and seniors all work together to create a highly functional weekend for the artists, the patrons and each other. (Roma Project)

7. PROGRAM EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK

It is extremely important that program evaluation not only be carried out, but that the findings and feedback be used to enhance and improve future program planning and development. Program evaluation should focus on the quality and effectiveness of the actual program, performance, or event in areas such as entertainment and educational value or impact.

Evaluation must also include other related factors that affect audience response to programs, such as admission costs, location and venue, dates in the year, day of the week, time of day, seating arrangements, facilities, stage set-up, sound systems, available amenities, and the like.

There should be a high priority on “Who is not attending?” and “Who is not here?” Efforts should be made to determine why people from particular cultural communities are not present, and the reasons for this should be addressed. For example, do members of the community know about the events? And, if they do know, but are not attending, what are the barriers? The idea is not to force or manipulate attendance, but to facilitate it where members of the community would like to attend. Also, where there is attendance by members of particular cultural communities, it is equally important that steps be taken to encourage continued participation from these communities.

A useful practice is collection of baseline data and relevant statistical information to note participation trends from year to year as a result of outreach efforts to cultural communities. This should be accompanied by the setting of goals and targets for audience development in subsequent years.

Finally, in considering culturally diverse arts program, evaluation should focus on areas such as program relevance, accessibility and affordability, audience satisfaction with program, and ideas for program improvement.

Some methods for evaluating events include the following:

- On-site audience surveys using members of diverse cultural groups as interviewers
- Post-event interviews with members of diverse cultural communities
- Focus group discussion immediately post event with audience members
- Informal feedback at receptions immediately post event
- Photographs and videotape scans of audience
- One-on-one discussion with performers and audience members
- Use of review panels or critics to observe events and provide feedback
- Use of cultural community members as event jurors to observe events and give feedback
- Systematic and organized observation of audience responses to performances and performers
- Records of sales of program souvenirs, CDs, and other products

Excerpts from the Case Studies:

...the best way to find out how effective a program is through one-on-one discussion with community leaders, artists and audience members. (Firehall Arts Centre)

...the most valuable and precious record of the entire experience was the interviews with audience members. The number of people who came to the show because they had been in residential school or were touched daily by someone who had, illustrates what a huge impact this has had on aboriginal people right here at home. The father who had not ever talked about his experience to his family, came twice to see his daughter perform. I spoke with him personally, and his tears told me what a powerful effect the experience had on him. (Harrison Festival Society)

Our “strategies and initiatives in obtaining feedback” were very straight-forward. Together with some of our community partners in the project, we watched the performances by the artists and observed the audiences’ reactions to them. We stayed in constant contact throughout the weekend to make sure that the participants’ needs were being met and their questions about our systems could be answered. We noted the large number of people attempting to participate in the palmas during the performance of Los Canosteros on the evening stage Sunday. The CD sales by each of the groups were substantial, which gave another kind of substance to our observations of the audience’s reactions to the live performances. (Roma Project)

8. ISSUES AFFECTING PROGRAM DELIVERY

There are a number of issues that affect the planning, development, and delivery of culturally diverse arts programming. These include the following:

- Lack of available resources for outreach and development work with cultural communities;
- Lack of acknowledgement by funding organizations of the time involved in doing outreach and community development work as part of the program planning process, and a corresponding allocation of resources for program staff to give this work the time and effort it needs;
- The difficult personal situations of emerging actors and performers, including insufficient personal financial resources, remote geographic location, lack of transportation and other related supports or opportunities;
- Insufficient knowledge and skills on the part of program staff for carrying out the community outreach and development work; and the lack of training opportunities to acquire these;
- Lack of information on the part of different cultural groups about the arts programs in their community, and their lack of knowledge about the willingness of arts organizations to become more inclusive in their arts programs and presentations.

Excerpts from Invited Case Studies:

Adequate planning and research time continues to be a challenge...have to put in place some mechanisms to ensure we have time to plan and research but those are two areas that are often under-resourced or allowed for within the demands on running an not-for-profit arts organization. (Firehall Arts Centre)

It's sad that after investing considerable time and resources in building good relationships and successful programs, we have to leave those people and that history behind to create new initiatives with new communities for the coming summer. It's a waste of what some call the "social capital" that is developed in doing this work. What should be a very valuable resource for everyone concerned is effectively put in a cultural compost heap. It's a tremendous loss, because until we are able to take those second steps, we are going to be stuck at the first step every year. Having developed trust, shared understandings and language and with a history of success together, what might we do next? What could happen beyond the structures (and the limitations) inherent in Festival production? In the absence of new resources, we aren't likely to ever find out. (Roma Project)

This [community outreach work] in itself is problematic, as most people who do this type of work are already taxed to the maximum with all the other things they have to attend to. Resources are already scarce, and although this type of work is perhaps the most rewarding, it is also the most difficult and needs the utmost attention. I think as artistic directors, it is the most important work that we do. (Harrison Festival Society)

To do this work well – with integrity, in a truly collaborative fashion - requires a greater time commitment than standard music business booking procedures. (Roma Project)

There were many challenges with the cast. Geography was a big issue; three of the actors (and their cousin as one of three stage managers) lived in Hope, a half hour drive. None of them had a drivers licence, so one of the parents had to bring them to rehearsal each time. One young women lived on the Seabird Reserve in Agassiz, and had to arrange for rides. One lived in Chehalis, about a 45 minute drive from Chilliwack. She had her own car, but had an accident that left her without a vehicle. (Harrison Festival Society)

9. SOME GUIDING PRINCIPLES (INCLUDING DO'S AND DON'TS)

- Put the values of respect, honesty, trust, flexibility, openness, and caring into practice in your work with cultural communities.
- Your perception and attitude of the cultural community is fundamental to your work with it. Consider, and relate to, the cultural community as a rich resource, and as an essential and equal partner in the development of diverse cultural arts programs.
- Be patient, trust the process, and persevere, even in the face of opposition and discouragement.
- Give the outreach work to cultural communities the time and effort that it deserves. Do not rush or short-circuit the process in order to meet your organizational time-frame or deadlines.
- Use your uncertainty and lack of knowledge about cultural communities as a positive factor to genuinely respect the knowledge and skills of members of the cultural community; and to learn from them. Be honest about your lack of knowledge.
- Respect the differences between diverse cultural groups and within specific cultural groups. Do not assume that methods and strategies of outreach or collaboration that work in one cultural group will work in others.
- Develop a vision of what you would like to see in the “best case scenario” regarding culturally diverse programs in your local community. At the same time, be aware that

visions evolve during the process of working with your contacts and members of cultural communities.

- While the outreach work requires adequate preparation and analysis of a variety of factors, it is of paramount importance to acknowledge that creative program planning is an organic process that flourishes when you embrace situational circumstances and the exigencies of serendipity.
- Do not plan for cultural communities. Use a community development approach in working with cultural communities where the process involves planning with the community not for it. This should be the approach no matter what community you are working with.
- Focus on process as well as the end product in planning the program.
- Do not appropriate, replace, or take over events that specific ethno-cultural communities wish to keep within their own community.
- Do not impose your culture and program traditions on the events presented by other cultural communities.
- Do not co-opt, but work in collaboration with, the leadership of local cultural communities in the process of planning and developing culturally diverse arts programming.
- * Do not exploit cultural communities for your own organizational gain and public relations value.
- Do not give up, even if support and encouragement is not immediately forthcoming from the cultural community.
- Do not blame the cultural community or its members because they are not responsive to your ideas, time line, or your ways and traditions in presenting programs.
- Do not create false expectations for program possibilities.
- Ensure that your organization and front-of-house staff are adequately prepared and oriented to welcome and host members of diverse cultural communities.
- Ensure that the signage at events is culturally appropriate in terms of language and symbols.
- In the pursuit of social justice, take risks to present events that may be controversial or unpopular.

- Walk the Talk. Ensure that your organizational structure and culture in terms of Board, staff, and volunteer composition is reflective of the cultural diversity in your community. Continually take steps to enhance and develop these aspects of your organization. Remember that actions speak louder than words.
- Work in such a way as to be accountable to the diversity in your community.
- Ensure that your concept of the arts is not grounded in a mono-cultural perspective.

Excerpts from Invited Case Studies:

Be open to suggestions of working with performers and artists from diverse communities, while at the same time keeping your own artistic integrity and vision in tact. This can sometimes be tricky! (Harrison Festival Society)

Need to be flexible; the project often takes on a life of its own, and one needs to be very accommodating and adaptable. (Harrison Festival Society)

Have a good sense of humour! (Harrison Festival Society)

You must know and be passionate about your community to accept the challenges of developing an unknown event in a small community. (Discovery Coast Music Festival)

Have faith in your community. Know that despite the obstacles and limitations, the majority of the communities will acknowledge/appreciate the benefits of the event. (Discovery Coast Music Festival)

Be patient. Change takes time. (Discovery Coast Music Festival)

But it's also clear, in this initiative and in others we have created over the years that any given community does not need us to do "their programming". These communities usually have their own rich cultural life. If they are interested in any of the other programming, or in the festival format and ambience, they may decide to come. (Roma Project)

Patience, a tenacious spirit, and diplomacy are required when initiating an urban style event in a rural and First Nations community. (Discovery Coast Music Festival)

...respect your elders, keep an open mind, act with integrity, follow your gut instincts and don't say no just because you've never done it before and you don't know what will happen. (Firehall Arts Centre)

The lesson learned for me is that you need perseverance to succeed in bringing diverse cultures together. (Kiran Ahluwalia)

Start small, grow with the rate of interest, community support and budget. (Discovery Coast Music Festival)

Stick with it. The first few years feel formidable. Low attendance, fundraising challenges and learning production can undermine optimism and growth. (Discovery Coast Music Festival)

Be persistent, be a careful listener. Be open-minded. Don't let negative criticism deflate your efforts. Small communities can be hardest on them and have some kind of inherent difficulty with change. (Discovery Coast Music Festival)

Do not assume that the official Ethnic Community Association is the best partner or resource to reach a specific community or to act as a partner or resource for a specific event. (Tibetan Cultural Festival)

Ensure that members or organizations within the community that you have decided to work with make it clear what their objectives and desired outcomes are. It may not be what you think they want, or what their organization charter might say on paper. (Tibetan Cultural Festival)

Don't expect things to move quickly, or commitments to always be carried out. But be persistent in encouraging [people] to carry out commitments. (Tibetan Cultural Festival)

Do your homework. Take the time to read, listen and otherwise learn about the history and the contemporary reality of the people in the community you want to work with. (Roma Project)

Don't start with a completed concept of the project. If this is your starting point, it is impossible for others to become creative partners. No matter how much research you have done, you are still functionally illiterate in the living culture and the possibilities of the community. The more open you are to learning and collaborating, the better and more meaningful the project will be for everyone, including you. (Roma Project)

IV CONCLUSION

It is our view that planning and development of culturally diverse arts programming that engages the talents in local communities will be of benefit not only to the sponsoring organizations, but also to the participating cultural communities and the society at large. Indeed, there are many challenges that must be addressed in the pursuit of this goal. Thus, it is imperative that arts organizations come together collectively with cultural communities to advocate for resources, policies, and practices that are sensitive to the achievement of objectives relating to cultural diversity in arts programming.

It must be acknowledged that, as a nation, we do not have a proud history in the presentation of our public arts and culture that is representative and reflective of the cultural diversity of our country. As Henry et al. (1998) has noted, Canada's mainstream cultural institutions contribute in different ways to the marginalization of minority cultures:

These cultural institutions define great works of art, literary classics, and world-class music. They determine who is selected to direct, produce, or perform in artistic productions and where these productions will be presented, which authors are deemed worthy of publication; which artists' works are given public exhibitions in the major galleries; whose music is played in concert halls; whose music gets recorded and played on mainstream radio; and whose voices and images become part of television programming. They reflect the funding policies and practices of government agencies and private foundations and the ethno-racial representativeness of those who work in cultural organizations in the public and private sectors. (pp. 265-266)

Contemporary arts organizations have an opportunity and a responsibility to radically change this. There are many examples of efforts in this direction, but we need to do much more before we can claim to have a public culture that is truly reflective of the rich cultural diversity that is the core of this country. Canada has been described as one on the most multicultural countries in the world. A challenge for arts organizations is the reflection of multiculturalism as a defining characteristic of our national arts and culture.

It is our hope that this guide will be viewed as a work in progress. We urge arts organizations and the different cultural groups with whom they work to use what is helpful; and to share what they have learned from their own experiences.

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Additional Resources

- <http://www.pubs.artusa.org> "Americans for the Arts"
- <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk> "Arts Council England"
- <http://www.artsmarketing.org> "Arts Marketing"
- <http://operaamerica.org/parc/> "Performing Arts Research Coalition"
- <http://www.fuel4arts.com> "Audience and Market Development Division, Australia Council for the Arts"

APPENDIX A

OUTLINE FOR CASE STUDIES

The following outline for the case studies is offered only as a guide. In preparing your particular case study, you may find that some components of this outline are relevant, while others may not be applicable for your case. Please feel free to include whatever you find useful and appropriate.

We would like you to think of ideas and information that would be helpful to arts organizations (and others) that are committed to including and involving diverse cultural communities in their programming and audience development. It would be helpful, therefore, to consider including content about all stages of the planning, development, implementation, and evaluation process.

OUTLINE COMPONENTS

Background information

- Existing community conditions.
- The context which gave rise to the idea of the particular program or initiative.
- The problem, situation, or need.
- Rationale for the program or initiative.

Generation of the idea for the program

- How did this come about? Who were involved?
- What research or needs assessments were carried out? What methods were used?
- What types of consultation or networking occurred? What approaches worked well, and not so well?
- What range of diverse groups were involved at this stage?

Description of the program

- What was the program?
- What were its purposes and objectives? What were you hoping to achieve?

Program planning

- What involvement was there from diverse cultural communities?
- What cultural protocols were followed in terms of outreach to establish contacts and arrange meetings with leaders or other members of particular cultural groups?
- What approaches and strategies were useful in finding and using cultural guides, advisors, or interpreters?

Resource mobilization and building community support

- What efforts were taken?
- What activities and initiatives were helpful in sustaining interest and support from cultural communities?

Program development and implementation

- What methods were used to build relationships and rapport with cultural communities?
- What difficulties were encountered?
- What specific strategies and approaches were most successful in developing collaborative partnerships with specific cultural communities?
- How were cultural resources and assets researched and used in actual programming?
- What specific cultural resources were most useful?

Program promotion

- What communication methods were most effective in raising awareness and developing interest among diverse cultural communities?
- What communication methods were most culturally appropriate and relevant for the particular cultural groups in your case study?

Audience development

- What strategies were used to increase participation of diverse cultural communities?
- What public relations, media, and sponsorship activities and strategies were used?
- What worked well, and not so well? Any reasons for those that did not work well?
- What on-site amenities facilitated the involvement of diverse cultural communities?

Program quality

- What helped to make the program interesting, appealing, and enjoyable for diverse cultural communities?
- What factors tended to lessen the quality and effectiveness of the program?

Program evaluation and feedback

- What strategies and initiatives were effective in obtaining feedback about the program from cultural communities?

Summary of lessons learned

- What are the lessons learned from this program? What are some do's and don'ts?
- What were some of the difficulties faced and how were they addressed?
- What difficulties were not addressed and still remain as challenges?

Concluding comments

- Recommendations that might be helpful to others planning similar programs or events.

Biographical information

- Some information about the author of the case study, including areas of experience and interest.

APPENDIX B

INVITED CASE STUDIES

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**Community Connections:
Networking with Diverse Communities
from a Cultural Perspective**

**Three Concerts in Southern Ontario
A Case Study**

Prepared by:
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October, 2004

Three Concerts in Southern Ontario

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

General

I'm writing about a set of 3 concerts that happened in the Greater Toronto Area in February of this year - 2004. The first concert was in a town approximately 2 hours from Toronto by car. The second concert was approximately 45 minutes from Toronto, and the third concert was also 45 minutes from Toronto.

The three concerts happened within a span of 4 days. The first concert was on a Thursday night, the second on Saturday night and the third on Sunday night.

All three concerts were part of each theatre's season or series so each theatre had a supposed built-in audience. The ticket price for all three concerts was quite high ranging from \$28 to \$32.

Existing community conditions

In the first town there are a few Indian and Pakistani families. There is one Hindu temple that I am aware of and I'm not sure if there is a mosque or temples of other religions found in South Asia. (The term South Asia includes India and Pakistan).

I'm not sure of the entertainment scene in this town, but I would assume that there are few choices for theatre concerts. The second town also has limited choices for theatre style concerts. All three towns are however close enough to Toronto to be able to consider all the numerous choices in entertainment that Toronto offers.

Context which gave rise to the program

The presenter from the first town wanted to do a series of Indian programming in order to attract members of the South Asian community into the theatre. My concert was part of a three-concert program. The two other acts were Indian dance.

The other two presenters 'probably' had the same idea of attracting South Asians into their venue. I was the only South Asian performer in their season this year.

The Problem

I sing Indian vocal music. My audience is not entirely Indian. My audience is a mixture of people of all cultures and ages. I have had concerts in mainstream venues like Toronto's Glenn Gould studio in the CBC broadcast center in Toronto and the du Maurier Theatre in Toronto's Harbourfront. The majority of the audience at these venues has been non-South Asian. If I have a concert in the suburbs of Toronto the majority of the audience will be South Asian.

The first problem is the usual problem of how we get the word out about the concert and how to sell out the concert.

The bigger problem is how to get both non-South Asians and South Asians to come to one venue to watch the concert. It is extremely hard to get the Indian and Pakistani middle age group out to a mainstream venue in downtown Toronto. They feel like it is not “their” venue. Although an extremely small number of South Asians across Canada listen to CBC Radio, the far majority of Indians and Pakistanis do not relate to CBC Radio or the Glenn Gould theatre inside the CBC building. Many of the South Asians living in the suburbs do not even know where Toronto’s Harbourfront is let alone the du Maurier theatre.

On the other hand, the non-South Asian segment of my audience feel more comfortable going to a mainstream venue. They are reluctant to go to a theatre in the suburbs. The general feeling is that anything out of Toronto city is too far to travel.

So the problem is how can I combine both audiences in one room so that there is not a ghetto of only one type of audience.

GENERATION OF THE IDEA OF THE PROGRAM

From what I know the initiative for these three concerts started with the first presenter. She saw my ensemble showcase in Montreal at a conference called CINARS. There she met my agent and expressed interest in booking me. I believe she also got in touch with the other two presenters. They also agreed to book me and I had a small three day tour in my home territory.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

All three concerts were part of each theatre’s season or series so each theatre had a supposed built-in audience.

PROGRAM PLANNING

Involvement from diverse cultural communities

To my knowledge there were no members from diverse communities involved in the program planning.

Cultural Protocols followed for outreach

The first presenter asked for my help in doing outreach work with the Indian and Pakistani community. I personally decided to do outreach for the two other towns.

Approaches in finding cultural guides, advisors, interpreters

Since I speak three Indian/Pakistani languages there was no need for an interpreter. Also, the majority of the South Asian community that would come to a concert of mine would be able to speak English.

Most of my outreach contacts came through one primary person. I was lucky to know an Indian lady who was instrumental in starting a program called “Friends of South Asia at the ROM

(Royal Ontario Museum)”. Since she was no longer working for them she was able to help me freely. I knew her because she had booked me twice for programming at the ROM. She was involved in raising millions of dollars to start a South Asian art wing at the ROM and she had mobilized hundreds of South Asians to donate and visit the South Asian exhibits at the ROM. With her, I hit the jackpot for information for outreach – she was my primary contact.

I asked her for contacts and she had specific people to talk to in each community.

RESOURCE MOBILIZATION AND BUILDING COMMUNITY SUPPORT

What efforts were taken.

From my primary contact I phoned 7 people in the first town and 4 in the second. I told each one of them who I was (some had already heard of me and some hadn’t). I asked them for their help in spreading the word about the concert. I also asked them for suggestions of where I could put up posters, who had email lists and what other contacts that they recommended.

From these secondary contacts I found a person who was active in the local Hindu temple. He offered to announce the show at the temple and to put up a few posters.

In the second town, I found a few contacts who agreed to spread the word via phone. My primary contact had an extensive email list for people living in the GTA (Greater Toronto Area). We sent a total of 3 emails to her email list. The first email included a bio of myself – a press release written by my manager and an announcement of the concert — listing all three dates. This email was part of a ‘what’s happening around town’ listing of South Asian events. A few weeks later I was nominated for a JUNO in the world music category. My manager wrote another press release and this time my primary contact sent an email to her list exclusively about the JUNO nomination and also listing all the three concerts. The subject heading of the email referred to the nomination and was drafted like a flashy new bulletin. This was a very successful email after which ticket sales went up at the second concert.

Helpful activities in sustaining interest and support from cultural communities.

Many of the South Asian members of my audience watch weekend South Asian programming on various TV channels that broadcast out of Toronto. The older crowd read the Toronto Star or Globe. The younger segment may look at publications like Toronto’s NOW magazine for information on what’s happening in town.

The most helpful thing for sustaining interest in the South Asian community were television advertisements on South Asian TV shows that run on Saturdays and Sundays. The first Presenter applied for an ‘outreach’ grant from the Ontario Arts Council (OAC). I funded the making of a 30 second advertisement that included information on all three concerts. With the OAC funding we ran ads on many South Asian television shows for four weeks leading up to the concert dates.

These ads were supplemented with securing interviews on some of the TV shows and with South Asian print media.

With OAC funding the presenters also placed ads in the Toronto Star. This reached both the South Asian and the non-South Asian market.

The most beneficial interest generator for the non-South Asian market was the CBC — our publicist set up interviews on various CBC radio programs. The most beneficial activity for sustaining interest in the South Asian market were the TV ads and emails sent on email lists.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

What methods were used to build relationships and rapport with cultural communities?

The first presenter offered a discount on group tickets. This was supposed to be an incentive to get people to mobilize their friends to come to the concert. In our particular concert I don't think anyone availed of this discount.

What difficulties were encountered?

The second concert sold out a week before the concert date. So there were no difficulties for the second town. The audience was majority South Asian with a few non-South Asians.

Since the third town is only 20 minutes from the second we tried to encourage people to buy tickets for the third concert instead. What I discovered was there was a negative stigma attached to the third place.

A friend of mine met me after the second concert and told me that he tried to get tickets for his wife and kids but the concert was sold out. I asked him why he hadn't considered the third concert date which was the very next day. He felt that the third venue was not prestigious. Speaking with other people I got the impression that within the (west end) South Asian community, this theatre was not considered to be a 'good' place to go. (This theatre is an old cinema hall that has been converted into a theater for concerts. It is not in particularly good shape and has not been renovated recently. I recall the sound engineer telling me that it was going to be named a historical building.)

The first concert was on a Thursday night. This was problematic for the South Asian community because they generally do not go out late on the weekdays since they have to get up early the next day for work. We would have had more success here with the South Asian community if the concert had been on Saturday.

What specific strategies and approaches were most successful in developing collaborative partnerships with specific cultural communities?

My networking was the most successful. Getting my primary contact on board — getting her to send emails about the concert to her email list really helped a lot.

Getting other contacts from her and calling them and getting their support was also helpful.

What specific cultural resources were most useful.

The South Asian television interviews but most importantly the TV ads.

PROGRAM PROMOTION

What communication methods were most effective in raising awareness and developing interest among diverse cultural communities.

Making personal phone calls, sending information on popular email lists, South Asian television advertising.

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

What strategies were used to increase participation of diverse cultural communities.

The third promoter gave away 100 free tickets to Immigrant Aid centers located in their town. These tickets were given away to new immigrants free of charge. Most of the new immigrant audience members were South Asian — some were non-South Asian.

Not all the people with the 100 free tickets showed up. I imagine on a wintery, snow stormy Sunday night many new Canadians would not have the transportation to get to the hall. I can't say if this strategy worked well or not but I mention it just as something which we tried as outreach.

What on-site amenities facilitated the involvement of diverse cultural communities.

The first promoter spent time in the lobby before the concert, in the intermission and after the concert meeting with the 'new faces' in her venue. This was a great idea for the promoter to develop relationships with the South Asian community. After the concert there was a small reception. They served some wine and soft drinks. This was a good way to have long term subscription members to mingle with new audience members and to basically welcome new audience members into the venue.

PROGRAM QUALITY

What helped to make the program interesting, appealing and enjoyable for diverse cultural communities.

The first promoter made a special set design for the event. The set was quite simple. Many huge pieces of white fabric were hung from above the stage. The fabric all started at one point and was spread out like a fan as it fell to the ground. Lights behind the fabric changed to make the fabric look pink and blue etc. Apart from mega rock concerts and musicals, music concerts rarely have set design so this was a great gesture that definitely made the stage and event seem special.

The introduction for our group was given by the promoter (artistic director) herself. She relayed her personal experience on listening to my music the first time she had heard me in Montreal. This helped to start off the event on a special note and reached people at an emotional level. The promoter is not South Asian but she was able to communicate to the South Asian members of the audience that she appreciated South Asian music.

What factors tended to lessen the quality and effectiveness of the program.

The other two promoters were not present at the concert. For each concert an usher introduced the band. My ensemble is introduced as ‘Kiran Ahluwalia’ and I announce the rest of my musicians myself. Neither of the ushers were able to pronounce my name correctly. I don’t think you can present music, hope to make relationships and connections with a community and then mispronounce the very thing you present to them.

The second concert hall had cabaret style seating. Sight lines were poor for audience members in the back. The hall was sold out and was over crowded (but that may not be a bad thing).

PROGRAM EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK

The second venue, 250 seats, was sold out. The audience was majority South Asian with a few of non-South Asians. It was a success.

The first venue, 500 seats, was 50% sold. There was a majority non-South Asian audience but many new people who had never been to this theatre came from the South Asian community.

The third, 500 seats, was also half full. The audience was a mix of South Asians and non-South Asians.

What strategies and initiatives were effective in obtaining feedback about the program from cultural communities.

The first promoter spoke personally with audience members at the after concert reception — this was a good way to build relationships, make new members feel welcome and get feedback.

I, myself spoke to people directly after the concert and other ‘known’ audience members many days after the concert.

SUMMARY OF LESSONS LEARNED.

What are the lessons learned from this program? What are some do's and don'ts

The first promoter worked the hardest to do outreach in order to bring a culturally diverse audience to her venue, however, her venue did not get sold out. She was very pleased with the turn out but she sold 50% of a 500 seat hall. The other two promoters were not as successful in getting new folks into their hall.

The lesson learned for me is that you need perseverance to succeed in bringing diverse cultures together. The first promoter filled 50% of her hall but through her efforts we sold out the second town. She could easily have an attitude that says — “I tried hard to get the community out but they didn't come so I give up”. But that's not the attitude that's going to succeed in getting culturally diverse audiences. Promoters and musicians have to try different strategies and figure out over the mid to long term what will work. The best strategies may not be apparent in the short term.

What difficulties were not addressed and still remain as challenges.

For me as a musician one of the biggest difficulties is to get the proper stage plot that we need to perform. We need a riser big enough to seat 4 musicians and their instruments, and high enough to be above the monitors in front of us.

We perform our music sitting down and if we are not on a riser then the monitors block the view of our instruments and part of us as well. Basically 2 foot high risers (16 by 8 inches) are the optimal way for us to perform in order for good sight lines between the musicians and for all audience members.

However, sometimes it is extremely hard to get promoters to realize this and to do something about it in order to accommodate us. The promoters in this particular tour were culturally sensitive enough to accommodate us. I mention this point as something that is an on going battle between other promoters.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Recommendations that might be helpful to others planning similar programs or events.

Ask members of the particular cultural community what they would like to see in terms of shows. Who would they like to see in terms of music, dance, etc. If they are not familiar with the Canadian musicians of diverse backgrounds — lend them CD's and ask if they would like to see that band in their town/city.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Kiran Ahluwalia is a performer of ghazals (poetic sung verse) and Punjabi folk songs. Kiran was born in India and raised in Toronto. The Indo-Canadian community was relatively small back then, and cultural events and concerts were held in people's homes. Like many children of immigrants, Kiran went to dance and music classes of her country of origin and "got the itch" performing in the homes of friends and family.

As a young woman with an education and a good job, she realized the one thing she must do is pursue a music career. Kiran quit her job in 1990 and went to India to immerse herself in the rigorous life of a full time music student. She studied classical music in Bombay, and then traveled to Hyderabad to study ghazals with Vithal Rao, one of the last living court musicians of the Nizam (King) of Hyderabad. Kiran's family is from Punjab, and in the mid '90s, she was able to study first hand the folk songs of her ancestral region.

After ten years of bouncing between studies in India and performing in Canada and the United States, she returned to Toronto to make her own music in 2000. Kiran's first recording *Kashish - Attraction*, released in 2001, garnered critical acclaim and a Juno nomination. Her second release, *Beyond Boundaries*, won the 2004 Juno award for Best World Music recording.

Kiran not only continues the 1000 year tradition as an interpreter of ghazals, she is a composer who uses the words of Indo and Pakistani Canadian poets and her original music to create compositions that are firmly rooted in the tradition while taking a modern turn.

**Community Connections:
Networking with Diverse Communities
from a Cultural Perspective**

The Tibetan Cultural Festival — A Case Study

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August, 2004

Tibetan Cultural Festival Vancouver

Genesis of the Festival

The idea for the Tibetan Cultural Festival came about through informal discussions between myself and an Anglo-Canadian acquaintance, Mati Bernabei who was very involved in the greater Vancouver Tibetan community. She had traveled to Tibet, and also married a Tibetan sacred art painter. Mati was also vice-president of the Canada-Tibet Committee, a political action group dedicated to raising awareness about the oppression of Tibetans and their culture in Tibet by the Chinese occupying forces. Mati served as my liaison with the Tibetan community throughout the project, with the visiting Tibetan artists, and also helped organize most of the volunteer activities. She was a key player in making the festival happen, both in terms of contacts as well as with many of the logistics, such as homestays for visiting artists. My role would be as general administrator, taking care of technical and production logistics, financial management, applying for funding, and promotion.

In the past the Tibetan community and their non-Tibetan supporters had organized small-scale events and cultural festivals in Vancouver, primarily with local artists and volunteers. With Caravan's involvement as a professional presenter, we were proposing the possibility for the Tibetan community to be involved in a much larger and multi-disciplinary festival that would reach a much wider general public. We would be inviting artists from around the world to partake in the event, and apply to foundations and government bodies for funding. The Tibetan community would receive a number of benefits from a collaboration with Caravan:

- wider exposure to the general public and media of their social and political struggles in Tibet and in their exiled community around the world
- the opportunity to take workshops in traditional Tibetan arts with visiting artists
- sharing their culture with non-Tibetans in greater Vancouver, and creating personal bridges between Tibetans and non-Tibetans
- not have to worry about the general organization of the festival, nor the general finances and fundraising

Since Caravan's mandate was to build bridges between cultures, and also show the similarities between them, I proposed that we expand the festival to include the First Nations from our region. This was agreed upon with the Tibetan community, and so we named the hoped-for event:

The Tibetan and First Nations Cultural Festival: Cultural Survival in the 21st Century: Myth and Reality

The idea was to show the commonalities of cultural experience, and cultural expression between Tibetans in exile, and First Nations people in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. The main goal was to break down stereotypes about both cultures that are current in mainstream society, as well as to give voice to their concerns about cultural survival as colonized peoples. The goal was also to bring the two communities together to share their culture with each other.

Invitation to the First Nations Community

With the involvement and commitment of the Tibetan community and organizations achieved, our next step was to invite the First Nations community to participate. Our goal was to have key individuals from the local First Nations community join us in the initial planning stage, and have them also host some of the events in their own venues. I contacted local organizers who had worked with First Nations artists and band chiefs in the past. One person acted as a direct intermediary, passing on a proposal for collaboration that I had written. I also directly called various performing arts groups, band chiefs, and First Nations venue programmers at the Aboriginal Friendship Centre in East Vancouver. If I was able to reach people directly, they sounded quite interested, and asked me to send them information in writing, or they said they would take the idea to their Board (Committee, or other group body). But nobody would get back to me, except for one performing arts group that often gets hired for festivals and corporate functions. The Aboriginal Friendship Centre was a key partner that we tried to include, as they hosted weekly drumming and dancing sessions, and were an active programmer within their community. Without going into detail about all the efforts we made to connect with the Board and the programming coordinator (this would be another Case Study in of itself), in the end we failed to garner any real interest from them to be involved, or even to have them rent their hall to us for a weekend exhibit and workshop space.

With only three months left before the planned date of the festival, I decided to let go of the First Nations component of the Festival. We could easily have just hired a few performing arts groups and visual artists to partake in some of our events, but this was not the goal. The goal was to create real dialogue between the mainstream culture, the Tibetan people, and the First Nations people, in order to better understand each other, and learn from each other's social, political and spiritual struggles. Since we had failed to obtain significant partnering with any First Nations person or organization, we decided this time around just to do a Tibetan Cultural Festival, and hope to involve the First Nations people in the following year.

Partners in the Tibetan Cultural Festival

- ***The Tibetan Cultural Society***

The Tibetan community in the Greater Vancouver area numbers only about 150 people. They are represented by a non-political group called the Tibetan Cultural Society (TCS), whose main mandate is to organize events that bring the local Tibetan community together, and also link up with other Tibetan organizations around North America for special events and sharing of information about the situation in Tibet. The organization also liaises with non-Tibetan organizations in the Vancouver area when there are Tibet-related events that take place, such as the visit of Tibetan monks, or the Dalai Lama. TCS is led by a volunteer board of about 6 to 8 people. They do not operate out of any specific physical space; they meet at people's homes, and organize their events at rented venues.

- ***The Canada-Tibet Committee***

The organization that Mati was involved in was the more political, Canada-Tibet Committee (CTC). This organization was composed of much more driven and well-organized members than TCS, both Tibetan and non-Tibetan (mostly Canadian born people of various ethnic

backgrounds), and their mandate was to be as public as possible with raising the public's awareness about the struggles of the Tibetan people under Chinese occupation, and speak about human rights issues related to this occupation.

- ***Britannia Secondary School and Community Centre***

Another key partner in this project was Val Dare, world music educator at Britannia Secondary School, on Commercial Drive, in the multicultural heart of east-side Vancouver. Val was key in obtaining funds from the BC Teachers Federation to pay for artist residencies for a full week at Britannia School. The local and guest Tibetans gave talks and workshops in various courses from history and social studies, to cooking and music.

Val also helped obtain sponsorship from the Britannia Cultural Centre to use various spaces for public workshops, and to use the auditorium for the main performing arts event.

- ***Commercial Drive Retail Businesses***

Mati and I obtained the participation of various venues along Commercial Drive, including a Turkish café (to host talks and a slide show), and two art galleries (to display Tibetan arts and crafts).

Programming

The main challenge initially was to ensure everyone wanted to work together and that the agendas and possible outcomes were clear.

Because Mati had been involved in supporting the political cause of Tibetans for over 10 years, she was highly respected in the Tibetan community. She could be very direct with them in a way that I could not if there were any issues or problems that needed to be resolved. She could also push them to make decisions, or commitments related to the festival. However, she faced many challenges to push things along in a timely fashion, both with the local community, and with the visiting artists from abroad.

The programming structure was initially put forward by myself. I suggested that there be a variety of different types of events, including live high-quality performance in a theatre, some free public lecture-workshops, social and political talks with an experienced speaker, a film and/or slide-shows, visual art exhibits, and a variety of hands-on workshops.

Through the contacts within the Tibetan community, and through members of the Canada-Tibet Committee, the elements of the festival were put together. Our main cultural contact was a Tibetan performing artist who lives in Saskatchewan. He helped identify and contact exiled Tibetan artists and speakers from around the world, including India, the Netherlands, and the United States. Only one of the artists had any real celebrity in non-Tibetan circles: a New-Agey Tibetan flute player, who was also an ex-monk that gave spirituality workshops.

A Victoria-based organization would share in travel costs with us, as they also wanted to invite the guest artists for a weekend Tibetan event in their city.

One of the more successful experimental initiatives was initiating a collaboration between a Vancouver-based non-Tibetan DJ with two of the guest traditional Tibetan singers. They communicated before the event by email, and CD's. They then met a few days before the event they were going to perform in together, and they hit it off right away. Their event, at a nightclub in downtown Vancouver, was a sold-out hit. The success of the collaboration was based purely on the open-mindedness of the artists involved. It could not have been designed or forced in any way.

There is a strong movement among young followers of electronic music for cultural bridging, and therefore an opportunity for programmers to bring traditional ethnic musicians together with globally-spiritually-minded DJ's. This also develops the younger audience, and brings people of different age groups together.

Financial and Human Resources

The main funding for this event came from the Department of Canadian Heritage, through their newly-created Arts Presentation Canada Program. Our budget was approximately \$36,000. We also received funding from the Hamber Foundation, and from the BC Teachers' Federation for the school activities. Venue in-kind sponsorship was obtained from the Britannia Cultural Centre and Secondary School.

Paid staff for this event included myself as project administrator, a publicist, and a graphic designer. All other work was voluntary, with a large load taken by Mati Bernabei, liaising with international artists, and the local community, and managing all the volunteer tasks in the Tibetan community.

Financially, the project broke even, thanks to the grant from Canadian Heritage. All our events were by donation or free, except for a few workshops (which were paid directly to the artists), and the main performing arts event. This event fell short of our projections by 50%. Because we were presenting traditional village music and dance, as opposed to the more popular Chanting Monks (a separate event which sold out a 1300-seat venue 6 weeks later!), the general public was not drawn to our event as we had expected. The venue, being inside a School Auditorium, may have also discouraged the public to attend.

On a human level, the large load taken on by Mati was far beyond the call of duty of a volunteer (a high-school teacher with a full-time job!), and so we were lucky to have her involvement. Without her involvement, we would have been overwhelmed with the tasks of managing all the logistics of the festival. Perhaps the Tibetan community allowed Mati to take over as she is a proactive doer. It is possible that they would have been more involved in the end had Mati not been around to keep things moving at a proper pace.

That being said, we were able to accomplish a lot, and present a professional series of events throughout the 10 days of the festival.

Promotion and publicity

The Tibetan community, being very small, does not have its own newspaper, but TCS had a newsletter that was mailed out regularly. This served as an important vehicle to reach the Tibetan community that was not already involved in the project. The CTC also had an active email list, website, and newsletter which also helped publicize our events. We also reached out to university campus organizations that were also involved in Tibetan social and political issues, as well as Buddhist organizations around the Vancouver area.

The Tibetan community did not seem so interested in coming out to the talks put on with a Tibetan author/academic on the social and political issues facing Tibetans today. However they were very excited about attending the performing arts events. Because of the small size of the Tibetan community, it was not really a challenge to make them aware of the activities going on. Also timing of the events was important for them: the weekend was much more popular than anything that happened during the week, as most of the Tibetans work during the week and live in the suburbs, and don't feel drawn to come into the city for an event at night after work.

We hired a publicist to promote to media and the general public, and she was very successful in getting many local and national radio interviews, as well as articles in the print media. The radio interview with a guest Tibetan author and political academic on the nationally-broadcast Bill Richardson show on CBC was an especially important success for this festival.

The goal of breaking down the myths about Tibetans, was also a challenge in terms of promotion. We wanted to present Tibetans as they really are, and not just as the mythologized Buddhist peace-loving monks in saffron robes that the public seems enamored with. This made our events a bit less sexy to the public, but more real to those who attended.

Positive Outcomes

There were many highlights to the Tibetan Festival, including

- A well-received school program at Britannia Elementary and Secondary School, coordinated by Valerie Dare, reaching 800 students in 33 class presentations.
- Presentation of the diversity of Tibetan culture: visual arts, slide-shows, photography, folk music and dance, spirituality, history and contemporary politics. Activities ranged from the entertaining, to the provocative, to the uplifting. Over 2000 members of the Greater Vancouver public attended one or more of the Festival events. Media coverage in press and radio also provided the general public with insights into Tibetan culture and the present human rights political situation.
- The local Tibetan community held workshops with the visiting artists in order to learn their own music and dance traditions, an opportunity they rarely have to connect with and preserve their culture here in the Vancouver area.
- Many organizations came together, some for the first time, to contribute to, as well as receive benefits from the activities of the Festival. These collaborations provided learning experiences for all involved, both in organizational skills, as well as in cross-cultural relations. There was a general sense of positive feeling from all involved, despite some of the organizational challenges.

Challenges

The main challenge was how to develop a continuing relationship with the target community after the event is over so that it is possible to build on the connections and the work that was done. In the case of TCS, their board of directors decided that they did not want to repeat their involvement in another festival for two reasons: They were playing host to a North-American wide Tibetan gathering in Vancouver the following summer, and didn't want to spread their resources too thinly. Also, the Dalai Lama's visit was expected the following year, which would also take up their time in the planning of that. From my perspective, it seemed that those members of the TCS board that were not very involved in the planning or the activities of the festival were also not interested in doing another festival together. The president of TCS and his family, who were much more involved, wanted to do another festival, even if TCS was not officially partnered with it.

CTC executive felt that the festival did not go far enough politically, and didn't feel it was worth their efforts to be involved again with the festival. Both Mati and I disagreed with their assessment, as every event had an implicit or explicit political component. All the Tibetan performers would take time in their shows to talk about the situation of Tibet and the threat to Tibetan culture. And we had a Tibetan speaker who was very political who gave 3 talks, and who also was interviewed nationally on CBC radio during the festival. Different expectations, different perceptions.

Lessons Learned

- Spend lots of time getting to know the different possible players within each cultural community. Give yourself at least 6 months to a year getting to know the people before even starting to plan an event with them. Give yourself another year to carry out the planning and implementation.
- Find a champion for the project who shares similar values with you, and who is respected with members of the target community.
- Do not assume that the official Ethnic Community Association is the best partner or resource to reach a specific community or to act as a partner or resource for a specific event
- Ensure that members or organizations within the community that you have decided to work with make it clear what their objectives and desired outcomes are. It may not be what you think they want, or what their organization charter might say on paper.
- Show up at local community events.
- Find out from your champion who really makes the decisions, or influences them.
- Don't expect things to move quickly, or commitments to always be carried out. But be persistent in encouraging to carry out commitments.
- Mix your volunteer base for the event with members of the target community, and with volunteers at large (such as your own organization's volunteer base).
- Make clear the financial risks and benefits, if there are any, early on. Explain the value of paying professionals to support and help coordinate the volunteer components of the event.
- When necessary, translate written materials into the target community's language.

- Understand that the main goal of new immigrants is just taking care of daily needs, fitting in, finding work, raising children, sending money back to family in their country of origin. Being involved in cultural events is a secondary, though possibly important, activity. Second-generation members of the community, especially youth and young adults, are more likely to want to be active and involved and partner with cultural presenters.
- Hire as many members of the target community as you can to be part of your event, especially on the artistic side.
- Create an event that combines traditional elements and contemporary ones in a creative and entertaining way.

About the Author

This case study is written from the first-person perspective of the Artistic Managing Director of Caravan World Rhythms, Robert Benaroya. Caravan World Rhythms Society is a non-profit arts organization dedicated to presenting high-quality Canadian and international world music and dance performances and festivals, as well as educational lectures and workshops. One of the mandates of Caravan is to break down barriers between cultural groups, as well as bringing people together through the performing arts. Caravan presents about 15 to 20 events each year in the greater Vancouver area, as well as on the Sunshine Coast. (website: www.caravanbc.org)

Robert has a Turkish-Lebanese-Spanish-Jewish background, and was born and raised in a bilingual English-French home in Montreal. Before embarking upon work in the performing arts, Robert briefly explored a career in International Development work, which included researching and writing Case Studies on Business, Politics, and the Ecological Environment in Pakistan.

**Community Connections:
Networking with Diverse Communities
from a Cultural Perspective**

**Something About The Women:
Folk Music and Feminism
A Case Study**

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Something About The Women - Folk Music and Feminism

By Way of Introduction

This modest effort is part memoir, part anecdote, autobiography and history. It is collage, pastiche and fragmentary. It is assembled from my memory, a few files of flyers for shows and program books of the Vancouver Folk Music Festival. I am writing it in the first person because it is something I did. As artistic director and co-coordinator of the Vancouver Folk Music Festival Society I determined just about everything we did - the good and the bad, the wildly successful and the dismal failures. All of it is filtered through a quarter century of experience, remembering and forgetting. Let the reader beware!

I think I did four important things in defining the artistic content and organizational culture of the Vancouver Folk Music Festival. I made what came to be called “world music” and “cultural diversity” a centerpiece of its programming. I used the festival as a platform for socialist ideas in general and anti-imperialist solidarity in particular. I broke the notion that individual “star” performers were the key, replacing them with thematic programs based on geography or style. Lastly, because that is what I want to write about, I brought “women’s music” into the festival and our other activities. In hindsight this is probably the most enduring of the four.

Each of these four contributions had an impact on the festival in a variety of ways and not just on what was on stage. Three of them- the socialist politics, the world music/cultural diversity and the women’s music entailed building relationships with other organizations of one sort or another. These relationships determined the allocation of the festival’s resources outside the festival and coloured the image and impact of the festival. They determined who went to the festival, what they saw when they got there, what they ate and who they shared the festival “space” with. To one degree or another they still do, even though I have not been involved with the festival for a decade. That is why picking one of the four is not just an exercise in history but an analysis of why the festival is what it is today. People are who they are both because of things they do and did and because of choices their ancestors made that determine certain genetic traits and sociological placement.

My Jewish grandparents successfully fled Czarist Russia to escape persecution for who they were. My parents were cultured people who loved music and among the music they loved was folk music. They were also communists who took me to many concerts where music was played and sung to change the world and not simply for entertainment. My own political activism took me to Chile in the early seventies where I was able to see the integration of folk music into the political process as well as learning about the wealth of traditional music of Latin America. That same activism lead me to share a house in Toronto with a number of women who were instrumental in the revival of the feminist movement in the seventies. The small revolutionary Trotskyist organization I was a member of in the late seventies in Vancouver (Revolutionary Workers League for the interested) placed feminism in general and the women’s movement in particular, at the center of its activities. I knew a number of women of a type most men did not know; I thought deeply about issues of women’s oppression. This was not because I was such a good boy; it was because the women I worked with, socialized and slept with for a decade were

fighting for their own freedom as women. They dragged their men along until we began to share their struggles. When I became the artistic director of the Vancouver Folk Music Festival, I brought all this with me. I never thought of building a wall between my politics and my work, between my professional and private life. I saw the festival as an opportunity to put my ideas into practice, to put on stage artists who were articulating the things I believed in and things I thought needed to be heard, whether I agreed with them or not. One of those things was something called women's music.

Women's Music

Blues was one of the first forms of American popular music to feature strong independent women and lyrics that celebrated these attributes as virtues. Twenties celebrities Bessie Smith and Gertrude Ma' Rainey were among them. The latter broke new ground with her Prove It On Me Blues with its intimation of a sexual preference other than straight- "Went out last night with some of my friends/They's most of 'em women cause I don't like men". In the thirties folk music was transformed by radical women from Kentucky- Florence Reese, Sara Ogan Gunning and Aunt Molly Jackson who cried defiance with her "I am a union woman as proud as I can be/I do not like the bosses and the bosses don't like me". In the early fifties there began to be a consciousness of what was called "male chauvinism" in the communist left in North America. The link between early folk singers and this milieu produced some of the first songs to question women's traditional roles. Malvina Reynolds, who gained fame as the writer of Little Boxes and What Have They Done To The Rain?, also penned We Don't Need The Men and other feminist ditties. She crossed over from the leftwing folk scene into the embryonic women's music scene as did Ronnie Gilbert of the Weavers and Canadian Vera Johnson. As the women's movement took shape in the late sixties and the gay liberation movement opened the door for "out" lesbian artists to express themselves, women began to organize and publish magazines and soon, to get access to the airwaves, through campus and community radio stations. This opened the door for music to be heard beyond the confines of small coffee houses and served to further the consolidation of a music that drew from many styles, had many points of view but was united in its commitment to fighting for women's freedom from patriarchal oppression. Women both discovered their foremothers like the blues and folk singers mentioned above and started to create new songs about their political and personal lives.

The term women's music came into use in the early seventies. Like a lot of things that are identified with the "sixties", the women's movement and cultural spin-offs like women's music really only began to take shape in the following decade. Alix Dobkin, one of the earliest performers of women's music in general and explicitly lesbian music in particular started her career as a folk singer in the early sixties. By the early seventies, 1972 is a good date; she had decided to perform only for audiences of women. Her recordings, Lavender Jane Loves Women and Living With Lesbians, are regarded as two of the earliest efforts in the genre. In 1974 Dobkin and flutist, Kay Gardener, started a magazine called Paid My Dues- A Quarterly Journal of Women and Music. They launched management, record and publishing companies. All these efforts were under the rubric of the Women's Music Network. They also published a discography of recordings by women that listed over 2000 titles from every genre. That same year a group of women, offended at the exclusion of women artists from an Illinois folk festival, organized the first National Women's Music Festival in Champaign, Illinois. The following year, 1975, saw the

launching of Olivia Records with the release of Meg Christian's I Know You Know. An industry had been created- parallel to the mainstream music industry but not of it- with record companies, radio shows, festivals, magazines, clubs, booking agents and all the other attributes required to support the artists who had decided to identify themselves with this new genre and to serve its audience.

Looking through Paid My Dues and other publications of the time, it is clear that there was no unanimous definition of women's music. It is also clear that it was bursting forth everywhere. Much like folk music; if you defined yourself as a performer of women's music, you were. The Performing Woman, a directory of "professional women musicians" published in the United States, listed over 200 of them. Many of them were simply women looking for other women to make music with; there was no mention of any other agenda. Many others were interested in something more. There were few Canadian entries- four to be exact. C.J. Buffalo was a Victoria percussionist "interested in forming Lesbian Feminist band with committed musicians". Heather Bishop of Woodmore, Manitoba described herself as being able to take the audience from "a heart rending blues number through traditional country to contemporary folk". Toronto's Tiki Mercury-Clarke advertised her expertise in "all musical idioms, all with jazz, gospel and blues overtones". Finally Judy Cohen of Montreal offered "traditional music from French Canada, Spain, the Balkans..." She was also in a women's medieval performing group. Just these four cover enough ground to give a sense that there was musical diversity among the women who were attracted to this new genre. There was also a peaceful (mainly) coexistence between those who wanted to make music with and for other women and those who had a political agenda, between straight women and the emerging Lesbian music proponents who included many, if not most, of the best known songwriters of the newly named genre.

The Folk Music Festival

The Vancouver Folk Music Festival was held for the first time in August of 1978. It saw a respectable attendance of about 10,000 folks over three days. The second edition was held in July of 1979. Attendance went up to over 16,000. The artistic director of the first two editions was Mitch Podolak, founder of the Winnipeg Folk Festival. I was the festival co-coordinator. Mitch booked the acts; I ran the organization. After its second edition, the festival became independent of the Heritage Festival Society which spawned it and Mitch left the scene. I was left with both the organizational and artistic responsibilities.

In 1978 there was no programming devoted to women or their music. In 1979, partially as a result of my pressure, there was a workshop with a title composed of the women's symbol, a plus sign, musical notes and an equal sign pointing to a clenched fist. The message- women plus music equals political activity was unambiguous. Four women were featured- Faith Petric, a veteran folk singer whose performing history went back to benefits for Republican Spain in the thirties; Frankie Armstrong, a singer of traditional English songs who had been in the forefront of uncovering neo-feminist folk songs and singing new songs from the British feminist movement; Heather Bishop- one of the four Canadian artists listed in The Performing Woman and Ferron, a Vancouver singer-songwriter who was a relative newcomer and who had emerged from the Vancouver women identified music scene that was centred at a women only coffee house called Full Circle. Mitch had turned Ferron down in 1978 and a group of women had come to see me

about it, threatening a women's boycott of the festival. A year later Mitch had "allowed" me to choose one act- I chose Ferron. I'm not sure if I did it to spite Mitch or because I heard something new and important in her music.

The workshop was a revelation. Heather sang a song she had written- Mom, I've Met a Girl- about a woman telling her parents she was a Lesbian. It was met with gales of laughter and hooting applause. Ferron sang a poetic masterpiece that someone told me was about a woman who had been raped- Testimony. As she sang the chorus- "By my life, be we women..." Many in the audience sang along, as if singing a hymn. As she finished the audience was swept up in a storm of clapping. I had never really heard anything like it.

As I began to confront the fact that I was now booking my first festival, I also began to investigate where Ferron had come from. I met with her. She introduced me to other women who were connected to the women's music scene. I bought magazines and records. Like any good folklorist, I went to gatherings where I was one of very few outsiders- outsiders being defined as men. Much of what I heard, I thought was second rate; like any political-social movement, the women's movement had generated artists who were fine for a rally but not for the stage of a professional arts festival. Some of what I heard was stunningly good. Holly Near had just put out a recording, her first as an "out" Lesbian, called Imagine My Surprise. I called her up and asked her if she had played at any folk festivals. She told me no- she hadn't been invited. I invited her. She accepted. Her record company- Redwood- had just put out the second recording of Sweet Honey in the Rock, an Afro-American a cappella vocal ensemble. They had been at folk festivals but had recently joined the women's music scene. I hired them. I invited Ferron back. I heard a duo from the North Eastern United States- Betsy Rose and Cathy Winter and added them to the list. I went to a concert of a very new Canadian singer- Connie Kaldor. Check! A trio of feminist bluegrass pickers got in touch and Robin Flower, Nancy Vogl and Laurie Lewis were on the list. Rosalie Sorrels, another of the veteran folkies who was also strongly identified with the women's movement, told me of a trio she was working with- herself, Terry Garthwaite and poet Bobby Louise Hawkins. Holly, Ferron, Betsy and Cathy, Robin and Nancy, Terry Garthwaite and some of Sweet Honey were all either "out" Lesbians or well known as such to the "gals". They were also wonderful artists who covered the waterfront stylistically. In the intro to the program book I wrote " We think that a festival should evolve, explore new areas of music that fall within the general framework of folk music. This year there is a strong emphasis on what has been called "women's music". In our view, much of the most exciting music being made today falls into this category." For the program book I commissioned two articles on women's music- one by Holly Near and the other by Betsy Rose and Cathy Winter (they are attached). On the poster each year we had a laundry list of the various types of music making up folk music- Blues, Gospel, etc. In 1980 I had added Feminist to the list. It was official!

On Friday night I put Betsy and Cathy on second and Ferron on fifth. Terry, Rosalie and Bobby Louise opened Saturday night's concert, Connie Kaldor followed Rambling Jack Elliot mid show and Sweet Honey in the Rock closed the show. Sunday featured Holly Near in the key second from last spot. That meant that one in five of the artists on the evening concert or "main" stage were somehow identified as women's' music. It was a strong statement. Equally strong were the workshops during the day. Workshops were thematic round robin affairs that featured a bunch of

artists swapping songs around a subject or style. I opened the day at 10:00 am with a 90 minute workshop called Still Aint Satisfied- the title taken from a well known women's music song. The audience area was packed solid with women. Later on I flaunted a workshop with a title taken from a very male bluegrass song- A Good Woman's Love. Packing the stage with Lesbian artists for the second time drove home the point- this was no accident! We were making a statement. The fact that women who were clearly part of the women's music milieu were in a variety of other workshops, rubbing shoulders and trading licks with some of folk music's best, brought it home- these women could sing, write and pick as good as anybody else in folk music. For the women's audience it was a triumph- "their" artists were contenders. For the mainstream folk audience it was a glorious introduction to artists they had mainly never heard of. For the organizers it was a delight both artistically and at the box office. We had discovered an untapped market for folk music!

The unleashing of women's music on the festival was not without a few hiccups. The boys would have to make room in the tree house for the girls! Two of the artists at the festival in 1980 learned it the hard way. The Red Clay Ramblers were the first to taste the lash, in their case at the hands of fellow artists. On the Saturday night this stellar old time string ensemble from North Carolina had performed two slots before Sweet Honey in the Rock. Their talented songwriter, Mike Craver, had sung a song called Thoroughly African Man- a sort of Noel Coward song about skipping through the jungle, full of stereotypical references to Africa. During their set one of the members of Sweet Honey made a derogatory remark about what such a fellow might know about Africa. There was applause. The next night Robin Williamson, of Incredible String Band fame, told one of his stories of growing up in Scotland. Recalling his pubescent years he mentioned a lass of the town who "had a set of tits on her that could knock over a line of parked cars" or words to that effect. While it was met with some laughs, they were drowned out by a chorus of boos from a largish crowd of women sitting together near the front of the crowd. Too sensitive to take it and keep going, Robin stopped and engaged them in conversation, starting his defense of his tale with "Ladies...". Wrong! The boos resumed and Robin continued... "I've never been called sexist before..." More cat calls. These women were in no mood to hear stories about women with big breasts. They had been there and were tired of it. Robin finished his set, came off stage and burst into tears. These were relatively minor events but they circulated as rumours of Lesbian intolerance. Folk music, like all mainstream popular music had been a male preserve. That is why the women's music audience and artists had created their own networks. We were challenging that and some were uncomfortable. There were some women who thought we were subverting women's music by presenting it at the festival, while others- men and women- felt that the festival had been hijacked by sodomites!

In 1980 and future years some of the women who had come to see their heroines took their shirts off. It was a way of claiming the festival site as their space. There might have been a few hundred in a crowd of almost ten thousand but it offended some. A Parks Board official demanded I do something about it. I suggested that HE call the police if the law was being broken. I heard no more about it. There was some necking here and there and there were some complaints about it. We did nothing. I felt that there was enough repression of gays and lesbians in the world that a little tolerance wouldn't harm anyone. In a sense we implemented the cry of AIDS activists a few years later- "We're Queer, We're Here- Get Used To It! And the audience did.

All in all it was an easy integration and it brought many benefits. The combination of political music; world music and women's music brought together an audience of the most enlightened individuals. It gave me a mandate to program the most innovative, challenging and sometimes outrageous music. It also cemented the audience's loyalty to the event. There was no other festival quite like Vancouver and it created a fan base that was unshakeable. They knew where they were going to be on the third weekend of July every year. Much of that base was women-Lesbian woman, feminist women. They bought tickets all down the west coast into California. They joined our volunteer organization in droves. When, in 1982, we replaced paid security with volunteers, the majority of the security committee were women... those women. We built relationships with the women's milieu in other ways. We invited the local women's bookstore to set up in our market area. We rented a food booth to a women's organic food co-op. We made it clear in every way we could that we saw a total commonality of interest between the women's movement and the folk music festival.

The L Word

It is worth discussing briefly the whole question of women's music and Lesbian sexuality. This is a topic that merits a different article and I am not the one qualified to write it. That said the early eighties was a time when significant numbers of women were "coming out" as Lesbians. This was happening all around me. It was significant. Two of the women on the festival board of directors who had been in relationships with men were now in relationships with women. The same was true of several women who were working for the festival. It was in the air and in the music. As I have mentioned above, many of the finest artists in women's music were Lesbians. They wrote about it, they sang about it; they talked about it on stage. To say that what folks did at home was their own business was just not enough. Today when marriage between same sex partners is legal in BC it is much less of an issue. Twenty-five years ago it was news. Part of integrating the growing number of women who identified themselves as Lesbians into the festival entailed not only accepting and respecting that fact but also publicly acknowledging it. Putting Meg Christian in a workshop of love songs along with straight artists who may have been uncomfortable for some of the latter. But it was a necessary part of making clear these women were welcome. It was not enough to have a few workshops that functioned as ghettos for Lesbian women. We needed to make clear that the special reality of Lesbian women was as legitimate a topic as the special reality confronted by women of colour, union activists or any other minority group whose struggles and "issues" were producing art of merit. Integrating women who were writing and singing about abortion rights, equal pay for work of equal value and other campaigns of the women's movement into the festival was easier than integrating someone who was writing about a crush on a gym teacher or the sheer joy of having found a lover who happened to be of the same sex. The former topics were in the tradition of the protest song; the latter was something new for most of the men and many of the women at the festival. When men began singing about loving other men, it made some audience members even more uncomfortable. But the women had, as usual, paved the way.

Only The Beginning

The 1980 festival was only the beginning. In August, just a few weeks after the festival, we produced Ferron's first major concert. The venue was a long way from the Full Circle Coffee House. We used the 650 seat Queen Elizabeth Playhouse. Word was spreading about the direction we were taking even before the festival. There was no real women's music production collective or individual in Vancouver. There had been but they had stopped producing. We filled that gap. In September of 1980 we produced a concert for Meg Christian, one of the best known women's music artists. She performed at the 1981 festival. A month or so later we had Sweet Honey in the Rock at the Vancouver East Cultural Centre for two nights. In March of 1981 we produced two concerts to celebrate International Women's Day- one with Heather Bishop and one with Betsy Rose and Cathy Winter on successive evenings. We had already held a concert with Holly Near in a one thousand seat auditorium in February. We became very quickly the major presenter of women's music in Vancouver. The women's music organizations in the rest of the country and the US were only too happy to work with an organization run by a man. Over the years we invited most of the best known and many obscure women's music artists to the festival- Holly and Meg, then Chris (Williamson), Kate Clinton, Judy Small, Deborah Silverstein, Lucie Blue Tremblay, Teresa Trull and even Alix Dobkin, who performed in front of her first mixed audience in many years at the festival. Part of this was due to a quota system I set for myself. Each year more than half of the artists at the festival had to be new to the festival and half had to be either women or mixed groups of men and women. It did not mean that half the artists at the festival were women but it did mean that there were a large number of women at the festival- more than at any other similar event. As a result I was always on the lookout for talented young women artists and we were able to introduce a new generation of women's artists to the audience, artists like Michelle Shocked, Phranc, The Topp Twins, Veda Hille and Ani DiFranco. In 1992 sitting on a workshop stage with women's music veterans Heather Bishop, Cris Williamson and Rhiannon, at a workshop called "The F Word... And Proud Of It! Ani broke down for a minute as she realized she was on stage with women she had looked to as models. She was being welcomed into the club of women who had built a feminist music sensibility. I watched it and felt proud that we had accomplished something very good with the decision I had made in 1980. I watched the torch being passed and the struggle for a truly humane people's music being continued. In 2004, a decade after leaving the festival and twenty-five years after the 1980 event, I went for the first time in a few years. The presence of women everywhere was noticeable- on the stage as artists and crew, on the grounds as audience and volunteers. Some of them are the children of those women who were there in 1980; the presence of so many women now is no big deal.

It is hard to assess the impact of something like the integration of women's music into a mainstream music event, even a marginal mainstream event like the Vancouver Folk Music Festival. It made a difference to some artists. It inspired other festivals to go in similar directions. In 1982 Mitch Podolak hired a number of women's music artists for the Winnipeg Folk Festival. In a small way I suppose it contributed to the fact that it is easier to be a woman artist in music today than it was in 1980 and easier to be a Lesbian. Some years ago a woman wrote to the festival about her experience hearing these women. She described how they made her realize who and what she was - not crazy or a freak, but a woman identified woman. I think she said it saved her life. Not bad for a concert in a park.

Biographical Information

Gary Cristall is completing his 27th year as a full time worker in the creative music mines. For 17 years, beginning with its founding in 1978, he ran the Vancouver Folk Music Festival Society. In that capacity he programmed a bunch of festivals and produced hundreds of concerts. He also created a record distribution company (Festival Records) and a record label (Aural Tradition). In addition to his work for the festival and its ancillary activities, he spent 4 years on a part time basis developing the program for and then producing, the Folklife Pavilion for Expo 86, Vancouver's world's fair. He did some radio series for the CBC, and had a regular show on the local community station.

In 1994 he left Vancouver for Ottawa where he spent 6 years working in the Touring Office, and then the Music Section of the Canada Council for the Arts.

In the summer of 2000 he returned to Vancouver to write a book about folk music in English Canada and to work with artists whose music he loves.

**Community Connections:
Networking with Diverse Communities
from a Cultural Perspective**

**‘Theatre for Living’ Workshop
with the
Gitxsan First Nation
A Case Study**

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May, 1998

‘Theatre For Living’ Workshop with the Gitxsan First Nation

Background Information

Headlines Theatre Company

The Company was founded in 1981 by a group of politically active artists. Since then it has produced many hundreds of projects and has become a world leader in community specific, issue-oriented theatre, winning numerous awards. While we call our community work THEATRE FOR LIVING, it is based on Brazilian Director Augusto Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed

This workshop is a wonderful experiment and has come together in a beautiful way. In 1987 Headlines embarked on a 4 year project with the Gitxsan and Wet’suwet’en Hereditary Chiefs called NO‘ XYA‘ (Our Footprints). The play was an articulation from the Gitxsan and Wet’suwet’en perspective, of First Nations’ relationship to ancestral land and did its small part to pave the way for the now famous Delgamuxw vs the Queen land claim case. Integral to that project was Hal Blackwater, a core group member, choreographer and cast member. NO‘ XYA‘ performed in Vancouver and toured BC in 1987, toured coast to coast in Canada in 1988 and into Maori communities in New Zealand in 1990. My relationship with Hal, his family and the Gitxsan has remained strong over the years.

So, in 1998 when the Supreme Court of Canada overturned a controversial ruling by the BC Court and found in favor of the Gitxsan and Wet’suwet’en, I called Kispiox to speak with Hal and his family to share in the good news. In the course of that conversation Hal mentioned that he thought it was time for another theatre project. He had been working for a few years developing a Youth Dance Group in Kispiox, which performed traditional Gitxsan dances. This led us to this innovative idea.

Generation of the Idea

We would do a THEATRE FOR LIVING workshop with the youth, but instead of streaming the images created into a theatre piece, we would divert the journey and work with them to create new Dance about issues in their lives. These dances would then be performed in the Territory.

Through the years of early contact with Europeans and the Residential School experience the dances and Feast system of the Gitxsan had been made illegal. People were severely punished for practicing their Culture and so it went “underground”. Part of the excitement of this project was that although the old dances remain, it has been a very long time since new Dance was made.

This is an opportunity to do that and for the dances to grow directly out of relevant issues in the Dancers’ lives. Once again using the Dance to tell the community’s stories.

It is in this spirit that I have driven the 1,400 km from Vancouver to Hazelton and that we begin a six-day process tomorrow. I had a meeting tonight with Hal and Doreen, who have done the organizing work and raised the funds, and the counselors who will be present in the workshop.

We talked about the process, about the counselors doing the games to be part of the group building but not the exercises so they can keep some distance on the issues arising. Also made a tentative plan to have a “normal” first day and then, as we start to investigate images, tie the images into Gitksan Dance vocabulary — sounds, motion, animals — all connected to the emotional reality of the moment.

The Workshop

May 15, 1998

There are 24 participants and 4 counselors. The organizing work has been very good. A wide age range from very young (8 years) to a woman in her 70's. Lots of energy.

We decided not to narrow down a focus too early, but for this day just to ask for images of “a time when you were made to think, feel or do something other than you wanted”. We wanted the participants to really define the territory that they wanted to explore and felt this was the best way to do it. We were right, but it also caused confusion. We got lots of images of violence — which has led us to the violence focus, but also got images of playing basketball, playing baseball and a very powerful image of a funeral. It was difficult to explain to the youth that an image of a pitcher pitching, a catcher catching, a batter batting and an umpire umpiring was not an image of oppression, even though the batter might feel bad when she strikes out. All the players are there because they want to be there and are engaged in the activity (baseball) together and willingly. It is true that someone will lose but that doesn't mean they are oppressed. Likewise, a powerful image of a funeral. The death at a young age of a person's child or niece is tragic, certainly, but is it a moment of oppression? Who is the Oppressor? God? Fate? It is unfair and we want to rail against the injustice but is it oppression? It might be the product of under which the death happened that was clear oppression. In this case it was a true industrial accident. There is no “oppressor” or “oppressed.” This took sometime to explain and we will only know tomorrow if it sunk in.

The Image of the Funeral was very recent and caused deep weeping in the room. This is not a bad thing in and of itself, but it was one of the first images offered and, I think, scared the participants. Many of them literally ran away — although I have to say that those who stayed were very supportive of the person and really hung in there. We will see what happens tomorrow.

We all know that there is a lot of abuse in this community and that participants are bound to be dealing with issues of breaking long held silences and the ramifications of that. It will be important to allow them some distance on the characters so they can not only make images, but have the confidence of activating them into Dance for the public.

I was very impressed with a very young boy today — 8 years old – who seems to have great wisdom beyond his years.

Tomorrow we are going to focus on issues of violence explicitly, taking the cue from the many violent images that came out of the workshop today. Although it was intense and sometimes

confusing people seemed to leave today grateful and enthusiastic about tomorrow. Certainly this was expressed by the counselors in our debriefing after the session.

May 16, 1998

This was a very dense and intense day. I decided to repeat some of the activity of yesterday, as I felt that the group didn't really finish the day with a grasp of what the work was. This proved to be a good decision. They needed to feel comfortable with what we are doing in order to be able to explore.

We progressed well in clap exchange and glass bottle. Almost everyone did glass bottle, which was a big trust breakthrough. They were very pleased with themselves.

Knots was very difficult and there are profound reasons, I think. The first time we did the game the group made three intertwined circles. There was very little they could do. Even so, few tried. They just stood there while a small number of the group tried to solve the problem. We stopped and re-made the knot. Again, they made three intertwined circles. The odds against this are huge, as they are randomly reaching across the group with their eyes closed! Again, it was a small core that was trying to solve the problem. I mentioned this and once they all started to move the game progressed. In discussion with the counselors later we agreed that this was a realistic mirror of the community. There are small cores of "do-ers" who run around solving problems. A lot of the community, though, just want things fixed, but are not willing to really do anything so that will happen. Interesting how this manifests in the game.

Animals was wonderful. I don't find the opportunity to do this game very often anymore, but in this workshop it seemed very appropriate. The Gitxsan dances are often based in animals. Hal provided a list of 12 animals (male and female = 24) that are indigenous to the area. Each participant picked an animal out of a hat. They started asleep and then had to find their mate and court each other. When they were all partnered, pair by pair, I asked them to show us their mating rituals. Many of the group shone at this and there was great focus and laughter. Another success for them, and a step to being in the moment in image work.

I decided to make images through the Groups of 4 exercises again, as I thought moving to another exercise would confuse some of the group. This was a good decision. We also decided to ask specifically for images of violence. There were some very strong images, although only about half of the participants made images in their groups and one of the groups made no images. In the midst of making these images the counselors got very busy. People in each group went into crisis. For some, simply the acknowledgment that these issues are in their lives was a major step. Making the image was very challenging.

During activation of the images I discovered a new activation technique. "the Orchestra of Emotion". Once the image was activated, I asked each character to make the sound of the emotion they felt. Then, standing in a line, I conducted them like an orchestra — the connections of one sound to another, the dissonance, how the sounds of the image are like music was wonderful, and will be of value to the dance group.

We took photos of all the images we worked and will go back to them late in the workshop, seeking motion, dance characters, etc. We have entered a realm of very strong and focused images of violence.

After activations on the images I asked if anyone could make the Image of the Images. A participant made a simple but lovely image of young people, middle-aged people and elders just “being”. I tried to activate the image and hardly anyone knew what to do, what to say, what he or she were thinking. This led to a very interesting conversation that links up to what happened earlier in the day in knots. The image-maker had a desire for things to be a certain way. She made the image. But the people in the image didn’t share her desire or even her knowledge of her desire. They had no clue, and so when it came time to act, they just stood there. They were honest, and again, this was a sad but true reflection of a central dynamic in the community.

Near the end of the day the young people asked if they could make an image. It was of many of them standing around a dead grandmother, who they never got to know well. The implications of this image were profound. The grandmother is their link to their culture. They put her into a chair “dead”. She looked passed out. Images of alcohol were present (we discussed this later) but not raised in the moment. It strikes me that there is material for a powerful dance here — of a grandmother who represents the Culture and of the Youths’ struggle and regret at the severance of their connection to her. They have knowledge of her and so they understand — but the time is late — what do they do — how much do they have to re-invent?

In the final circle it was obvious that the lights are going on as to what the possibility is here in this week, and many more spoke today than yesterday.

May 17, 1998

This was a complex, wonderful and frustrating day. Many people created very honest images and improvisations. Some moments were painfully honest. Still, some of the teenage participants, who keep coming back every day, were so disruptive that they started blocking people’s ability to work.

This is so complicated. I really believe that these young people do want to be there. They are deeply hurt and must sense that something important is unfolding. They will not stop talking, giggling and running around the room, though, even when other people are working very hard to express something and really need the focused support of everyone else. I have tried to talk with them many times, asking if there is something I can do, something they want, if something is bothering them, the counselors have met with them as a group and individually. Nothing. Nothing is wrong — but the behavior stays the same and is getting on other people’s nerves and stopping them from jumping in.

I have never kicked anyone out of a workshop and I am not going to start now. One young girl left this afternoon, after talking with a counselor. He was questioning her behavior and she mentioned to him that it was her friends who were bugging her and she had to do what they wanted — they were her friends after all. Rather than say no to them she said no to herself by

removing herself. I understand her dilemma. It is very sad that she has left. We are going to talk with her about coming back.

The Intestine was a big deal for many of them but they did it and expressed how wonderful it was to be able to trust people in the group. There is not a lot of trust in the lives of many of the participants.

Magnetic Image yielded three strong and very different images. The first was of a mother about to hit her young son for not cleaning his room. Her daughter is standing not knowing what to do and another daughter is grabbing the mother's arm to try to stop her. In activation a terrible thing became clear that wove it through many of the images and, really, is in a lot of this workshop. We were doing a mini-Forum on this image and someone replaced one of the daughters. She and the mother got into an argument about how the mother is always lashing out. While this was going on, the son cleaned up the whole room in silence. No one in the scene really noticed. Even though he was doing what he was told, the fighting continued.

The second image had three young people in the foreground fighting. Behind them were three adults, each isolated, each in their own pain. The image screamed isolation. When we activated the image none of the characters seemed to be able to do anything. No matter what we did, each one remained in her own world, wishing things were different but not doing anything, while the young people continued to beat the crap out of each other. On top of this when I asked the group what they were seeing, no one mentioned this. They saw each isolation but not the larger picture. When I pointed this out to them — that the larger image seemed to represent the larger community and that their reaction to it was also part of the image there was deep, deep silence.

Finally someone wanted to re-sculpt part of the image. The realism of this action involved taking the kids and having them pull the mother in different directions. Not a happy picture — the mother going from the fry pan into the fire, as it were, but at least she was no longer isolated and, perhaps on the path to suicide. This, I know, is not a “solution” but is a reality.

The third image was a fragmented symbol about a journey from pain to healing. Hal commented on this, that the image had an energy flow. This inspired me to ask the people in it to reposition themselves in a line. Then I asked the group to start filling in the steps between the shapes that were already presented. This started slowly but as the pieces started to fit together more and more people jumped in. In the end we had created a very profound image of the steps that create self-doubt and hatred, how that turns into abusive behavior, how that turns into despair and then self-questioning, perhaps more despair, reaching out, sharing and then strength again. Writing this it sounds kind of corny but doing it was not. The people in the workshop talked about how just taking this extended image around in the community would have a very strong and positive effect on people.

A number of the participants spoke about the power of the Magnetic Image exercise. About how even though they see each other every day, they never imagined that they shared emotions, concerns and experiences the way they do. The links that were made in the exercise will remain and will change the relationships in this community.

The work today was deeply moving. In the final circle I felt that I needed to thank these people — regardless of my connections here, who are strong, I am an outsider — a White outsider — and always will be. The trust and co-operation that had to happen today touched me deeply.

May 18, 1998

We did tremendous work today, into uncharted territory. All in four hours instead of eight — we have started short days because school is back in now.

The girl who left came back today and brought me a beautiful hand done drawing and a note. It was eloquent and self-aware and spoke of the work opening her heart and that that was frightening. In the note she asked if she could return. I told her how much her gift meant to me and that, of course, it would be wonderful if she came back. This also pleased many in the group.

As is usual the Fall, falling off a table backwards into participants' arms, was a very big deal for the group. Many did it and there was much celebrating and discussion of the distance we have traveled together.

We found titles for the photographs of all the images we have taken. This took some time but was very worthwhile. Now that the Images have been made and activated, by asking the group to come to consensus on an evocative title for each Image, we have to analyze it, share as a large group our insights into it, and agree on some things about it.

Having done the titling, we moved into the grand experiment of this workshop— very nervous, because I have never done anything like this before. We (Hal and I) were just making it up on the spot.

Before the workshop started today Hal and I had met and brainstormed some things — basically me asking him what would be of value for us to find and then coming up with a mechanism to find those things. Rhythms, sounds, the essence of the thing, movement, flow.

We started with the first image, asking the original participants to recreate it from the photo. Then I asked them to close their eyes and do a silent, internal monologue, allowing that to turn into a sound — no language — and then let that sound come out. After doing that for awhile, to allow the sound to take on a rhythm and then to allow that rhythm to reach into their bodies, but still to stay rooted in their shapes. This took some time of them focusing and really reaching deep within themselves. Then we asked them to articulate what “essence” they are in this image. A human? An insect? An animal? A bird or fish? An element of the weather? A plant? A smell? They would know. Then, keeping this in mind, I asked them to go back to the image, to the sound (silent, though, just in their heads) and to let the sound drive the rhythm, which would then move their bodies, eyes, closed, through space and into Dance. The results were spectacular. Chilling. People spoke of their hairs standing up, of goose bumps, of deep communicated emotion and clear stories.

The first image, called “Cycle of Healing” created keening sounds, the wind, rain, all as recognizable forms that move through space.

The second image called “Abusive Love” created a mother Moose yearning for her lost child and a lost spirit (the mother? the child? childhood itself?) and also a flower in the forest, crushed by the energy created by the mourning mother. This has deep meaning as the word for child in Gitksan also means “flower”.....a very connected dance appeared that we could SEE being performed.

It feels like we have plugged into something much larger than ourselves —many people spoke of this — we were stunned by the results. We have five more Images to do tomorrow.

May 19, 1998

This proved to be our most difficult day. Hal and I both thought all the “hard stuff” was over. We were wrong.

Hal’s father came in to start today. He is very knowledgeable about the origins of Godson songs and dances and talked to the group for about half an hour. There were lots of questions. Then we did an energizer and did the Fall again, so the people who had not done it yesterday would have a chance to do it today. This was a good decision and many did, and felt very good about that.

The energy in the room today was really ragged and we never managed to smooth it out. Part of the difference, I think, is that the participants all came from a full day of school and work today. It didn’t seem to matter what we did, focus was always a problem. We had to really “police” some of the kids and this was very disheartening.

Then we got into the images. We worked three images today — all of them very strong. They seemed to happen with chaos around them and yet there were lots of tears. Lots of processing. I have questions for myself about some of the work.

The second was an image that came from the youth. They are standing around a grandmother who has died. It just took forever to bring them into focus. I kept asking them if they really wanted to do this, they kept saying yes, but they couldn’t stop laughing. Nervous. Finally, instead of them standing around her, which meant they had to be close to each other and this was making them laugh, I altered the image and had them sit on the floor around her with enough space between them so they could have privacy. They shut their eyes. I talked them through an internal monologue, into making sound, into movement all with their eyes closed.

The woman playing the grandmother rose up in the middle and started very slow walking. Eventually the kids rose and gathered in a clump. On the surface nothing much happened. When I went to the kids it looked like they were all crying with their backs to us. I moved around and found that, in fact, they were laughing and whispering to each other about who should go hug whom so it would look good. No one else saw this. From behind it had looked quite real.

The conversation that came out of the activation was very deep and appreciative of the very hard work that had been done. Many understandings flowed from the movement. The loss, the spirit of the grandmother moving just past the kids once they had come together sharing their grief mirrored a Gitksan belief. As the conversation unfolded I realized that to the people watching it

had been real, and that the fact that I knew it had been fake didn't matter. It was an image and an image is artifice — artifice of truth but not real. The kids had done a performance, and a very effective one at that. Did it matter that they hadn't really felt it as long as the audience had?

The next image was extremely violent. A woman standing with her fists on a young girl's chest and face, with two very young kids holding each other in fear on the floor. Same process, except when we got to the movement part I asked the participants to open their eyes and play the scene, having found a rhythmic pattern of movement. It was brutal. The woman was a "mad dog" (she said later) and the beating she was giving her daughter, pounding her fist into her face was relentless. She said that in the middle of it she wanted to stop but couldn't, she got lost in it. It was mesmerizing and really ugly all at the same time. It was mechanized, somehow, and as she pounded, the girl went deeper and deeper into the floor.

The participants have made these images. They have a strong desire to perform them. In the final circle the girl who was at the centre of the image talked about how it was a good thing to show that image and many spoke about the power of the day. I realized that as young as some of the participants are, they know what they are doing. I have to remember that as frightening as some of this is, I need to truly respect them by creating the space for them to make the theatre/dance that they want. This is one of the reasons there are community counselors in the workshop.

May 20, 1998

I started this day with a focus game and a final trust game. The group energy was, again, fractured but there.

I formally handed the workshop over to Hal, explaining that when we started, for the first three days, it had been me running everything, in consultation with him. Then, as I was sure they had noticed, we started to do things together two days ago. Now, Hal would take over and work in consultation with me. I explained about the difference between my work and approach and Hal's. image — the one we had activated into dance two days earlier. He asked them to go back into the image and for people from the audience to come and stand with character they felt in solidarity with. Then he asked them to let go of the emotional content for now and to focus on externals: what were they, how did they move, what sounds did they make. They worked and deepened the movements with their eyes closed, going through a stage of just standing and waving their arms in the air to really using their whole bodies to "be" what they represented — tall grass in storm, a volcano, fire, smoke, etc. This took some time but after an hour it was obvious that characters were emerging who would be able to interact in dance forms that are traditionally recognizable to the Gitksan but also new.

Hal explained that this was just a "taste" of the work they were going to do. His own realization during the hour being that he needs to work one on one with people.

A reporter from the local paper was in this morning, with the permission of the group. She watched the games and this session with Hal and then, when we took a break, sat down with four of the group, a really young person, a teenager, an Elder and a counselor. They talked for about

20 minutes. This will form the basis of an article featuring the dance group in the local paper. The exposure will be exciting and valuable for them.

After the break we gathered back together and let them split up into groups any way they pleased and gave them the task of making a short “anything” to express themselves at the end of the workshop. I told them it was OK, if they wanted to, to use the skills they had learned in any way, to say anything, including making fun of the counselors or me. Great laughter from this. They had 15 minutes. Hal and I left.

There were two groups. The first did a ritual of letting go of energy. A tight circle with energy spouting out its centre like a fountain. Then a warm greeting to me and Hal.

The second did a long song in Gitksan that kept sliding into rock and roll, to great hilarity in the group. At the end the Elder in the room, who had been singing with the rest danced up to me, took my hand and danced me around the room — also, of course to much laughter.

It was very good to do these skits after all the heaviness of the last few days. Then we played their favorite game; Fox in the Hole, for an exhausting 15 minutes!

In the final circle more spoke than ever before, but still not all. At least they were quieter. During this time the girl who I had been concerned about spoke at length for the first time in the week, saying yesterday had been hard but she woke up this morning feeling so different than she had been feeling for so long. The heaviness was gone from her, she said, and she felt happy for the first time in a long time. This was wonderful to hear.

We entered party mode with lots of food. People filled their plates and stuffed their faces with cookies, fruit, popcorn, crackers and lunchmeat etc. and then it was time for presentations.

We had made Certificates of Achievement for all of the participants and Thank You Certificates for the counselors. Hal did a wonderful job of introducing each participant and speaking briefly of the journey he observed in them, in positive ways, during the week. Each one got a certificate and a small honorarium. I made the introductions for the counselors. The energy in the room was wonderful, people appreciating all the hard work that had been done. Many of the kids spoke, short heartfelt speeches, some doing this for the very first time. In a culture that is based in oral traditions, traditions that were forced underground for many years, the speeches from kids who are always silent had great meaning, both for the rest of the group and the handful of respected adults who had come to witness our ceremony.

There were wonderful presentations to Hal and me, many speeches and then lots and lots of sporadic good-bye hugs from everyone — even those who had gone through the whole week without saying anything, except the articulation of their concern, their power and their desire through their presence everyday of the workshop.

After the workshop the parents of one participant came to me expressing the changes they were seeing in their son. They wanted me to tell them what he had done in the workshop. I explained

to them that I thought it was best if they were patient. That they would learn this from him through his actions and the things he chose to share with them. I explained that it wasn't that I was being secretive, but that I knew that the things I interpreted him do were not the same as what actually happened to him, and so if I explained them the image they got of what really happened would be false —interpreted through me — and set up interpretations of their own that would be false, leading to false expectation. Wouldn't it be better to eliminate me and allow the time for this conversation to happen naturally, through word and deed with their son? They thoughtfully agreed.

I expect there will be lots of tiny miracles out of this workshop. I wish it were possible to know what they all are. Of course that is unrealistic. A desire, nonetheless.

August 23, 1998

I got a triumphant call from Hal last night. The Anspayaxw Community School opened officially and to mark the opening Dancers of the Mist (the name of the Youth Dance Group) performed new Gitksan Dance for the first time in over 100 years. This is a truly historic event. These dances came directly out of the participant's lives. I am in the middle of a THEATRE FOR LIVING training session at the moment and couldn't be there for this wonderful event, but Hal explained one of the dances to me:

It starts from the images in our workshop and links the violence in the participants' lives to the violence on the land — the rape of Gitksan territory. The dancers are a moose, flowers, the wind and a grouse.

Hal mentioned that the dances were received with true enthusiasm from the community and not a little awe that these young people were expressing themselves in such creative, clear and courageous ways.

Knowing I couldn't be there, I had a plaque made and sent up to present to the Group, which will hang in the entry to the school, commemorating their courage in opening the school with these new dances.

Biographical Information

David Diamond

Artistic and Managing Director/Joker

Since 1981 David has directed over 300 community specific theatre projects on issues such as racism, gender roles, violence, addiction, self-esteem, First Nations' Residential Schools, globalization, language reclamation and many, many others. David has directed workshops throughout BC, Canada and the USA, as well as in Namibia, New Zealand, Germany, Austria, Italy, Singapore and Finland. He has also been involved in the writing and/or directing of all Headlines' main stage plays, including NO'XYA' (our Footprints), Out of the Silence, Mamu, Squeegee, Corporate U, THIRSTY, Don't Say a Word and the Legislative Theatre project, Practicing Democracy. David has pioneered the development of live, interactive Forum Television and web casting.

David Diamond is a 1975 graduate of the University of Alberta with a BFA in acting. He worked as a professional actor in theatre, television and film throughout western Canada until 1981 when he co-founded Headlines' Theatre. He is the originator of Headlines' THEATRE FOR LIVING workshops based on Brazilian Director Augusto Boal's groundbreaking Theatre of the Oppressed.

In 1996 David was the first individual recipient of the City of Vancouver's Cultural Harmony Award. In 2001 he received an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from the University College of the Fraser Valley. In 2004 Don't Say a Word was honored with the Red Cross "Power of Humanity Award" and Practicing Democracy was honored by the Vancouver Professional Theatre community with Jessie Richardson Awards for "Significant achievement in demonstrating the power of theatre in the community" and "Outstanding Production".

**Community Connections:
Networking with Diverse Communities
from a Cultural Perspective**

The Roma Project — A Case Study

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The Roma Project

Background Information

The Roma project was developed as a part of the 21st annual Vancouver Folk Music Festival in 1998. It was part of my third program as artistic director. While the Festival had a great relationship with a substantial core audience based on adventurous programming, this project and the other elements of the program that year were created under the cloud of a major lawsuit by a long-time creditor of the Festival. This action had frozen all of the society's assets and the organization was involved in lengthy court proceedings and financial negotiations during the creation of this project.

Working together with other festivals and presenters is a key part of the creative process of our festival. Our Festival was one of the founding members of a national touring collective. Together with Harbourfront Centre (Toronto), the Winnipeg Folk Music Festival and the Calgary Folk Festival, we created an active year-round dialogue and met annually to share information on artists in our regions and to cooperate in the development of national tours for Canadian and international artists. The sharing of information about musical passions and possibilities informs the presentation of artists who would be prohibitively expensive for any festival to do alone, even if the group could be convinced to undertake long journeys for a single performance. By working together, we can create tours that are highly cost-effective for all concerned while creating the optimal situation for the artists.

The idea for the Roma Project at our Festival began during discussions with my peers at several other Canadian roots music festivals in the autumn of 1997. It was clear in our discussions that we shared an interest in presenting two groups of Roma (Gypsy) artists the following summer - Taraf de Haidouks from Romania and a new group named Karshilama from Turkey. The Taraf were one of the featured groups in the ground-breaking documentary *Lacho Drom*, which illustrated the musical journey of the Roma from India to the New World. Karshilama had been brought to our attention by Canadian singer Brenna MaCrimmon. Brenna had been a part of several projects in Toronto at Harbourfront Centre and she was currently working with the group in Istanbul.

With these two groups in mind, I began to consider the possibilities for a Roma project for the Festival. I had developed some thematic programming for the 20th annual Festival, including a major First Nations project, global guitar styles and topical songs, and it had proven to be quite successful. The themes gave a sense of order to search for new artists, created more substantial media possibilities and helped provide programming continuity over the weekend while exposing our audience to a glimpse of the diversity inherent in any tradition.

Our Festival had always included local artists, presenting them to a major audience every year. If there was to be a Roma theme at the 21st annual, I wanted to include a Vancouver group working in the Roma tradition. I heard some good talk about one named Los Canosteros. They were flamenco artists, musicians, and singer and dancers who had developed a regular audience at a very funky bistro called the Kino Café. When I set out for the Kino that night, I had no idea of the journey that was beginning.

Generation of the idea for the program

I went to the Kino Café to hear Los Canosteros and they were stunning. The group included both artists born into the tradition and artists who had studied it seriously for years. Led by a powerful singer, backed by strong instrumentalists and several dancers on a small stage in small packed room, the connection with audience was very strong. As the evening continued, people from the audience got up and danced solos, older men got up to do a song and many people were doing the palmas (rhythmic clapping) and shouting encouragement to each new participant.

It was not a typical night out in Vancouver. Later that night I learned that the regular performances by Los Canosteros at the Kino had made it a cultural hub for the Roma community. In due course, I met lead singer Lolo Innes-Torres and was in turn introduced to Julia Lovell. Both were highly respected members of the local community as well as international political activists, with a profound knowledge of their history that infused their community work with passion and understanding.

Before going to the café that night, I had done some research on the history of the Roma. It opened my eyes to the racism and brutal violence they faced over the centuries, which was only increasing in “the new Europe”, but I was not prepared for just how powerfully I would be affected by my discussions that night and on many subsequent occasions with Julia, Lolo and other members of the community. Lolo had grown up in Spain. It was there he learned to sing, but it was also there that he was harassed, arrested and tortured for his political activism on behalf of his people. Julia and her father shared their stories about their lives and the lives of their friends in Vancouver, which included harassment by skinheads, racist graffiti sprayed on their homes, tire slashing and death threats. It was not the Vancouver I thought I knew, and their stories gave our discussions a powerful emotional charge. They gave me a history book by a Roma author and suggested a number of other texts to help me learn more about their history and their lives. At the same time, they were very excited about discussing possibilities for a presentation at the Festival and by the fact two groups of Roma musicians would be coming from Romania and Turkey. They explained that as a people with no homeland, the opportunities to meet others from the diaspora were both rare and treasured.

In the 6 months that followed, there were many conversations, via phone and e-mail and whenever possible we would get together, usually at the Kino Café. Enthusiasm and possibilities were tempered by fiscal realities. I learned more about their traditions and they in turn learned about the traditions and rituals of our festival and together we created the program. What we created together went far beyond the simple model of three musical groups performing at the Festival.

Description of the program

Together, we developed a program that reached deep into the roots of the Roma community in Vancouver, wove its way into the fabric of the Festival weekend and ultimately reached far beyond the Festival's days in the park.

Performances by the three musical groups were both integrated and highlighted in the Festival schedule. We would present one each night on our evening stage, with Los Canosteros performing on the final night. There would be one major daytime session featuring all three groups that Lolo would host and facilitate. The Roma groups would also appear in a variety of other day sessions with other musicians from different traditions throughout the weekend, demonstrating the connections and differences in their music and others. The overall performance schedule for the weekend was developed in consultation

with Lolo to respect the tremendous strains that the flamenco style puts on the voice of the singer.

We commissioned an article for our program book by a leading Roma musical authority (recommended to us by the community) that would explain some of the music. With it, we would include an article by Julia, writing as a member of the Western Canadian Romani Alliance, explaining the genesis of the term “gypsy” and explaining why many would prefer to be known as the “Roma”.

As the level of trust and our collective enthusiasm continued to grow, we created a special two hour “up close and personal” presentation on our most intimate stage. Organized and presented by Julia, her father and other members of the community, this ultimately included almost twenty members of the local community, including some of whom had arrived in Canada only a few weeks earlier. They would share music, stories and other aspects of traditional culture from the diaspora. This required some special facilitation, including acquiring instruments for some of the participants who had brought very little with them to their new country.

We also worked closely with a local writer to develop a story that discussed the music coming to the Festival in the context of the lives of the Roma in Europe and Vancouver. This eventually became the cover story for “Festival” issue of the Georgia Straight, taking the history of the Roma, their lives in Vancouver and the music we were presenting to an audience of hundreds of thousands of people.

Julia had been in discussions with some documentary filmmakers prior to our first meeting who were making a film about the Roma and wanted to focus on Vancouver. Some of our subsequent meetings were filmed and we worked together to make sure they could capture much of what would happen before, during and after the weekend.

I introduced the artists and their representatives to Julia via e-mail. From the time the groups arrived in Vancouver until the day they left, they were always in the care of the community, who created dinners and afternoon sessions, some of which were also featured in the film. Scenes from performances and backstage at the Festival became a key part of the film, which was later broadcast across Canada and in Europe.

What had begun as a straight forward booking possibility had evolved into something extraordinary. There was no master plan or vision at the outset – simply curiosity and a desire to learn. Each subsequent step was a result of talking together – sharing glasses of wine and cups of tea and getting to know each other. As we talked, the program evolved in ways none of us could have dreamed of at the beginning. In the end, we created a cultural program that included some of the finest musicians in a tradition that is very much alive and kicking as well as some of the newest residents in our city who shared songs and stories that were so close to their lives that they had never shared them with anyone who wasn't Roma.

We gave our audience at least a little context to listen with by publishing some very powerful information by voices from the community about the history of a people who have been the subject of centuries of romanticizing and demonizing at the hands of others.

We took those stories to thousands of people at the Festival and to hundreds of thousands of people beyond it in the Georgia Straight. With the international broadcasts of the documentary, our story of Roma and non-Roma working together as partners, and the very powerful artistic results was carried to audiences across North America and Europe.

Program planning / Resource mobilization and building community support

Julia and her friends worked in the community to identify and organize possible participants for the community programming segment. This included identifying very special needs. Some of the community participants had only arrived in Canada a few weeks before. If they were going to be able to share their music, we would have to find them guitars and other instruments that they could use, as they had arrived in Canada with very little.

In consultation with other community members, Julia identified a writer she felt could write an introduction to the music of the Roma we would be presenting that would be respected by the Roma participants and able to explain it to our audience. She made the initial contact with him to create an article for the program book and our program book editor liased with him.

I liased with a local music writer to bring him up to date on the project and some of what I had learned about the Roma in Vancouver. He then was able to interest the editor at the Georgia Straight in a piece about the Roma and Los Canosteros.

Program promotion

This program was one of three major themes at the Festival, including Indigenous music and dance, and traditional culture from Newfoundland. It prominently featured in all of our Festival publicity materials, including 120,000 colour brochures and our promotional cassette distributed to local and regional media.

It was featured in all of my interviews and radio appearances about the Festival as well, and because we were working with our national partners, we were also able to get some national media attention for both Karshilama and the Taraf which helped build interest. The key element, as always, was word of mouth, particularly in the Roma community.

Audience development

Every year at our Festival, there are a lot of different kinds of outreach and all sorts of amenities aimed at diverse cultural communities. Through our Community Ticket Program, we make more than 1,000 tickets per day available to people who face financial and other challenges that might make the Festival inaccessible to them, including residents from group homes, women's shelters and care facilities. We make our site accessible to people with various disabilities with a wide range of services, including sign language interpreters, special ticket options and parking assistance.

One of our most important audiences is our volunteers. We involve more than a thousand people as volunteers at our Festival who come from all kinds of communities in Vancouver. Generations of families, ESL students, doctors, lesbians and seniors all work together to create a highly functional weekend for the artists, the patrons and each other. They work on average for about 1/3 of the Festival and are able to enjoy the music for the rest of the weekend.

These are features of our Festival every year, including this one and all of these have been created to send the broadest possible invitation to people in Vancouver and beyond. Our only special strategy aimed at encouraging people from the Roma community to come was the word of mouth that always happens in a tightly-knit community when something special is happening. We involved about 25

members of the community directly in the creation and presentation of the program, and it was our hope that their friends and families might want to support them and enjoy the program.

But it's also clear, in this initiative and in others we have created over the years that any given community does not need us to do "their programming". These communities usually have their own rich cultural life. If they are interested in any of the other programming, or in the festival format and ambience, they may decide to come. My concern in doing this and other initiatives has more to do with audiences that are not at all familiar with the music, dance and stories of traditions other than their own. If we were able to follow up on an initial project together by taking the next steps of collaboration on another project, I think that it would be possible to stimulate another kind of interest in the work. (see "Summary of Lessons Learned")

I'd like to emphasize that some aspects of this project, particularly facilitating contact between the local community and the artists coming 'from away', were not primarily concerned with enticing more members of the community to come to the Festival. There are some aspects of the life of any community that are deservedly private – ie – they need and want time together to be themselves, away from "the other". In this project, and in others since, it has become clear that this is an important part of any trans-community initiatives. There has to be respect for need and it may well mean that some resources need to be dedicated to it. It is part of the balance of the initiative, whereby community members bring much to the Festival and the Festival in turn can bring something special to the community beyond representing them on its stages. It is a part of the work that cultural organizations can and should do.

Program quality

One of the defining characteristics of this program, and why everyone involved in creating it felt it was such a major success is that it evolved into something so multi-dimensional. In the end it reached into the heart of the community here and touched the lives of many thousands of people who did not even attend the Festival.

The high profile coverage in the Straight, plus the articles in our program book meant that the audience was listening "with bigger ears". They were more informed about the music and about the lives of the people bringing it to the stages at the Festival.

The music and the performances on our stages were brilliant. This is certainly due to the quality of the musicians involved, but it was clear to everyone that these performances were also infused with a level of emotion that was the result of all of the discussions and other activities that were a part of the project. The performances were intense and impassioned. The high degree of interaction (and anticipation) among all of the participating artists and community members brought an extra emotional intensity to the stage every time they played. A number of the performances ended with tears backstage as the artists were overcome by the intensity of the experience.

One of the interesting difficulties that came up during the staging of this project was the rather aggressive busking style of some of the members of the Taraf. Our audience is accustomed to paying one price for their ticket which entitles them to all of the music in the park. Members of the Taraf are accustomed to playing almost constantly, often in the streets and when they were not scheduled to perform onstage, they found places in the park and began to play. Audience members found this a wonderful addition to the weekend and often stopped to listen. For the musicians, this was tantamount to a contract and when people were not forthcoming with donations at the end of a piece they had stopped to enjoy, the artists

became rather insistent that they should put something in the hat.

It was resolved by having Julia and several other members of the local community discussing the issue with the musicians, including the differences between Canadian and European busking traditions. This meant that there were fewer ruffled feathers through the rest of the weekend, but also less busking.

The session with members of the Vancouver community saw them sharing songs, stories and customs including breaking bread with the audience that they never share beyond the community. Even the participants were surprised afterwards at how much they had chosen to share with the Festival audience. The participatory elements brought people closer to the artists and the culture. The teaching of the *palmas* gave audience members a real experience of just how sophisticated these rhythms are, and one of the most moving moments of the weekend was watching many members of the audience trying to do the *palmas* during Los Canosteros' evening stage performance.

Program evaluation and feedback

Our “strategies and initiatives in obtaining feedback” were very straight-forward. Together with some of our community partners in the project, we watched the performances by the artists and observed the audiences' reactions to them. We stayed in constant contact throughout the weekend to make sure that the participants' needs were being met and their questions about our systems could be answered. We noted the large number of people attempting to participate in the *palmas* during the performance of Los Canosteros on the evening stage Sunday. The CD sales by each of the groups were substantial, which gave another kind of substance to our observations of the audience's reactions to the live performances.

The emotional reactions of the artists during and after the performances also made it clear that they were deeply moved by each others' music and the chance to perform together. Members of the community in Vancouver had also organized a number of private social events for the visiting artists where it was clear that a bond had been formed.

In the scenes from the documentary film from the park and the private events that surrounded those days, it's clear that the program and the events that followed from it made a powerful impression on the participants. This was especially true for our key community partner Julia Lovell who wrote to me several weeks after the Festival, expressing her thanks for “some of the best days of my life”.

Summary of lessons learned

To do this work well – with integrity, in a truly collaborative fashion - requires a greater time commitment than standard music business booking procedures. That said, it opens the doors to performances and other experiences for everyone involved – artists, audiences and organizers – that can enrich and in some cases even transform the lives of the participants in ways that ‘business as usual’ never will.

It is a profoundly human process. It is about sitting and talking and most importantly listening to people. In doing so, one discovers that “difference” is much more than skin deep. Everything from the way we understand and experience time to the ways in which disagreements can (or can't) be expressed can vary wildly from one community to another. Getting to know each other, establishing trust and creating together takes the time it needs to take, but if one is prepared to proceed with

commitment, openness and humility it's my experience that one can create transformative cultural experiences and have an amazing time doing it.

It is an incredibly creative process, which I think necessarily means that it is a very intuitive process. This may be why it has been very challenging for me to write about it while trying to follow the guidelines for this case study. In all honesty, I don't know what "cultural resources and assets" are. I don't know how a needs assessment fits in to creating a program or even what it is, actually. I don't remember any of the people involved in the project using words like "strategies" or "resource mobilization".

These terms speak to an approach informed by social sciences and the corporate world, neither of which work in the same way or to the same ends as art. I think the only "strategies" one needs is a genuine curiosity and a sincere desire to work together as equals and creative partners.

In this case, I just showed up at a café with a notion about a possibility. I heard some great music and had the sense that there was something special going on. Then I started talking to people and asking questions and it seemed like all roads led to Julia Lovell. We started to talk and the sparks started to fly and away we went. It all evolved moment to moment and week by week until the final elements came together just days before the groups arrived in Vancouver and the Festival began.

Yet this project was profoundly meaningful for everyone who participated in it and it affected hundreds of thousands of people. It didn't involve everyone in the community. There were probably some people in the community who didn't like it for any number of reasons. It was on some levels limited by the resources and time available to us both during the planning and at the Festival. But there are no perfect projects, and no amount of research or consultation will create one. The main thing is to begin. From there the results are dependant on how well one listens, how effectively everyone involved can assimilate the knowledge of "the other" and bring their own experience and creativity to bear on the situation, including the limitations of time and budget. Like any other creative process it is very dependant on intuition and, it must be said, luck. With a little research and a lot of luck, one might be introduced to a leader in a community who is respected and who will listen to you long enough to get the sense that (a) you are sincere in your desire (b) you are bringing something to the table to share and (c) it sounds like an interesting possibility.

The key difficulty that this project ultimately presented (and which still has not been resolved years later) is our inability as an organization to follow up on initiatives like this one. If it is to be done well, the creation of a program like this one, or any programming initiative with a group that has not been a part of "traditional festival presenting culture" is very demanding for everyone concerned. Trust has to be built. Respect and reliability have to be demonstrated. Each participant has to learn a little of each other's language – literally and figuratively – and about each other's rituals. Misunderstandings are inevitable and need to be cleared up carefully and completely.

If everything has been done well, and the program is a success in the eyes of the participants, everyone is perfectly positioned to take further steps together with greater confidence and speed.

However as a festival, we need to be able to invite new groups and communities to the park each year. New programming initiatives are expected by artists, our audience, funding organizations and the media. We don't have the staff and the resources to take these new relationships and the momentum of these Festival program initiatives into the rest of the year beyond the park.

We can use what we have learned about the process – how to do this work and challenges to expect – but we are not able to sustain the connections to individuals and communities. It’s sad that after investing considerable time and resources in building good relationships and successful programs, we have to leave those people and that history behind to create new initiatives with new communities for the coming summer. It’s a waste of what some call the “social capital” that is developed in doing this work. What should be a very valuable resource for everyone concerned is effectively put in a cultural compost heap. It’s a tremendous loss, because until we are able to take those second steps, we are going to be stuck at the first step every year. Having developed trust, shared understandings and language and with a history of success together, what might we do next? What could happen beyond the structures (and the limitations) inherent in Festival production? In the absence of new resources, we aren’t likely to ever find out.

Concluding comments

This was a very important project for everyone involved. For the members of the Roma community in Vancouver, it marked the first time they had been invited to participate in one of the city's major cultural celebrations as co-producers. It allowed them to meet other Roma from the other side of the world. Our audience at the Festival was able to experience some extremely powerful cultural presentations as well as learn some of the stories behind the music, told in many cases by people who are their neighbours.

For me, it was a tremendous learning experience. I was very moved by the openness and generosity that Julia and all of the artists and people from the community brought to the process and to our stages. It continues to inform my work as a programmer today, serving as both a touchstone and a benchmark for new projects.

Some Do's and Don'ts...

DO your homework.

Take the time to read, listen and otherwise learn about the history and the contemporary reality of the people in the community you want to work with.

DON'T start with a completed concept of the project.

If this is your starting point, it is impossible for others to become creative partners. No matter how much research you have done, you are still functionally illiterate in the living culture and the possibilities of the community. The more open you are to learning and collaborating, the better and more meaningful the project will be for everyone, including you.

DO make sure you can explain your "presenting culture" to people who have probably never been to your events.

Your organization has its' own rituals, limitations, procedures and peculiarities which are largely transparent when one is immersed in them all the time.

DON'T assume this project will mean that members of that community will flock to your event.

The odds are that the community you are working with already has a very rich cultural life of its own. They don't need you to present their culture for them, but your existing audience probably does. That said, the more creative and engaging a project you create together, the more interest there will be in attending.

DON'T be afraid.

If you start with respect, an open heart and a sincere desire to learn and to collaborate, the rest will take care of itself.

Biographical information

Dugg Simpson is currently preparing his 10th program as Artistic Director of the Vancouver Folk Music Festival. Over the years, he has created many thematic programs and special presentations for the Festival, including multi-disciplinary programs with First Nations and Metis artists, traditional artists from Newfoundland and Cape Breton and extensive programming with emerging and senior artists from Quebec. He has commissioned three new works by Vancouver artists for the Festival's evening concert stage. "Verdant Stones" (1999) celebrated the continuing fusion of Asian and European cultures in Vancouver, involving more than 120 local musicians and dancers in a site-specific work that utilized the entire park as a stage. "Silver" (2002) was a new song cycle created by Veda Hille for the 25th anniversary Festival and in 2004, Shane Koyczan, Mike McGee and CR Avery created T.O.F.U., bringing new spoken word and music to centre stage for the first time at a major festival.

In 2001, he established The Collaboratory, an artist residency designed to allow virtuosos from different traditions and backgrounds to explore diversity and create new music together for presentation at the Festival. More than 60 musicians from classical, traditional and contemporary musical backgrounds have participated to date.

He was deeply involved in the local organizing committee for the 13th North American Folk Alliance Conference in Vancouver, which created the largest public programming component (more than 120 groups) in the organizations' history. He has served on the boards of the North American Folk Alliance, the Vancouver World Music Collective, Britannia World Music Society and was a founding board member of Folk Alliance Canada.

With Phyllis Stenson of the Harrison Festival of the Arts, he co-founded the Western Roots Artistic Directors (WRAD) which will hold its sixth annual meeting this fall. The programmers of two-dozen festivals across western and northern Canada meet to discuss issues of mutual professional concern and maintain a year-round dialogue on a dedicated list-serve.

In 2004, he created Future Routes, a forum about new possibilities for the Vancouver Folk Music Festival. At the heart of this event was a new kind of 'folk dialogue' that included artists, music business and other cultural professionals, volunteers, programmers and members of the audience.

He has spoken frequently at regional, national and international conferences on programming issues and is currently working on a book about independent music and production.

**Community Connections:
Networking with Diverse Communities
from a Cultural Perspective**

**The Firehall Arts Centre
Firehall Theatre Society
Cross-Cultural Theatre Company
A Case Study**

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November, 2004

The Firehall Arts Centre/Firehall Theatre Society Cross-Cultural Theatre Company

Background Information

In 1985, the Firehall Theatre Society/Firehall Arts Centre undertook to create Canadian professional theatre reflective of the rich cultural diversity of Canada. This initiative came from the desire to create a truly Canadian theatre, one in which all voices of Canada could be reflected and all audiences could recognize a truly Canadian artistic expression. At that time, few playwrights, actors, designers, administrators and theatre support workers came from minority backgrounds.

Generation of the Idea for the Program

It was determined by Firehall Artistic Producer and the Board of Directors of the Society at that time, that one of the best ways to encourage change was through (the doing of the work). It was decided to undertake an apprenticeship training program for theatre artists from minority backgrounds to allow for ongoing training in performance skills, as well as in the skills involved in producing and administering a theatre company and running an arts facility. While our research was not thorough, we were aware of the production activity on Canadian stages and were also aware of artists from cultural minority backgrounds who had completed their theatre training but were having considerable difficulty finding employment within the professional theatre. We did not undertake research with the numerous cultural communities at this time and plunged in with the belief that those who wish to pursue the arts as a vocation do so as artists and not as representatives of their cultural communities. In hindsight, I would suggest that consultation could have been valuable in building dialogue and understanding and should a program of this nature be implemented today, we would undertake a consultation process.

Description of the Program

The objective of the program was to create a Canadian theatre company with a multi-cultural, cross-cultural voice. The program had two focuses: the production and presentation of theatrical work that employed theatre artists from diverse cultural backgrounds, including playwrights, actors, designers, etc. and the creation of an apprenticeship program where theatre artists from diverse cultural backgrounds who had undertaken theatre training could continue to hone their skills and broaden their knowledge of theatre production.

Program Planning

As we developed the program, we undertook outreach to various communities to locate theatre artists interested in participating in the apprenticeship program, to determine what script(s) were available and/or under development, and what other groups were pursuing similar goals. Our first apprenticeship program involved theatre artists of a wide range of cultural heritages - Canadians with heritages including Chinese-Trinidadian, Japanese, Chinese, First Nations, African. It was truly through the individuals involved in this first apprenticeship program that we began to build our protocols around outreach and with their advice and input began to build many of the community relationships that we maintain today.

Our approaches were sometimes rebuffed but most often embraced. While we were seen by some as undertaking (a liberal do-gooder role) others accepted our honest intentions for what they were and began to support the work. We found that the best approach to a specific

community was often through the artists themselves or through someone from within a specific community who held respect and had a strong interest in the arts.

Resource Mobilization and Building Community Support

As this program commenced in 1985 and we are still actively producing and presenting theatre reflective of Canada's rich cultural diversity in 2004, we have undertaken many initiatives to achieve support from different communities. For example, for our provincial tour of Drew Hayden Taylor's *Only Drunks and Children Tell The Truth*, a piece that deals with a young First Nations woman who was taken from her family shortly after her birth re-discovering her First Nations roots, we undertook outreach to all of the First Nations communities closely linked to areas of the province in which we were touring. We attempted, when connections had not already been made, to connect local community presenters with the local First Nations communities. In some instances this was very successful and in others less so. The successful connections were made when the local community presenter understood the themes of the play and its meaning within a First Nation Community.

In 2002, we undertook the production of an adaptation of Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*. We chose to set the work in a small B.C. community and update the work by casting a woman in the lead role. The majority of the actors were of First Nations or Metis heritage. We conveyed this in our publicity and outreach materials and were delighted when the audience was significantly made up of individuals with aboriginal heritage as well as dedicated Ibsen-ites. Student groups came from as far as the Mount Currie/Pemberton band and although most knew little about Ibsen, they were introduced to the themes of the work and its relevance by a dynamic cast, whose heritage reflected theirs.

Program Development and Implementation

The Firehall's approach to relationship building has been based on the relationship building process that many learn as children. It has been based primarily on honesty, respect and the willingness to reveal what we don't know. We have made mistakes and have offended some but we have always owned those mistakes and have not been afraid to (be human). The issue of trust is a big part of successful relationship building and the Firehall has attempted to honor any commitments undertaken within partnerships and within our productions. We have found that over the years, we have built trust within the community of artists from culturally diverse and First Nations backgrounds and this trust has aided us in reaching beyond the producing of the work to audiences who support it.

Our programs to date have included production and presentation; the apprenticeship program which we undertook for five years until the program from which funding was obtained changed its guidelines and format, as well as informal and formal mentorships and artist-in-residency programs with artists from diverse cultural backgrounds. All of these programs have fed into our awareness of specific scripts as well as theatre and dance works that we consider for production and presentation. Partnerships have evolved as a result of either relationships with individuals or with organizations. Our presentation with *Headlines* of the Latino Theatre Group evolved as a result of our relationship with playwright Carmen Aguirre and with *Headlines* Artistic Director David Diamond.

The programming of presentations and the choices around script selection have been influenced greatly by the artists that we are in touch with on a day-to-day basis. In some of our work,

cultural traditions are used on stage. An example of this would be the use of smudging or healing medicines or traditional spiritual honoring during performance. When these suggested practices are written into a script, we always take the approach of determining with the playwright whether it is a necessary part of the story. We will then discuss with the cast how best to implement or suggest this action. Further, we often bring elders into the rehearsal room to talk with the company around potentially contentious issues in an attempt to avoid offending cast and audience members but, also, as a sign of respect for those very cultural traditions and dieties. This approach has been taken on the majority of our First Nations productions but was, also, considered in our rehearsal preparation for the production of Betty Quan(s Mother Tongue and David Henry Hwang(s Golden Child. Both of these plays showed scenes of prayers to ancestors and not only did we want to convey accuracy in our portrayal but wanted to ensure that we weren(t exposing private practices and traditions in a non-respectful manner. With Mother Tongue, we were dealing with a script that involved Cantonese, Sign Language and English, so we found that we needed to ensure our actors felt comfortable in three languages and that our outreach around the project included those aspects of the production.

Program Promotion

While we continue to utilize the mainstream media i.e the Vancouver Sun and the Georgia Straight, we have found that, with each production or presentation that we undertake, it is best to look within the community from which the work comes for opportunities to promote the work. For example: with our 2003 production of Mitch Miyagawa(s The Plum Tree, we undertook both written and telephone contact with organizations such as The Powell Street Festival, Tonnari Gumi, Japanese Canadian Citizen(s Assn., the Japanese Canadian National Museum as well as through in the Canadian Japanese community. We chose to utilize a photo taken of a young man from before the Second World from the Japanese Canadian National Museum Archives as our image for the production. Many members of the Japanese Canadian community attended bringing friends and family to the work.

Another example: with our production of David Henry Wang(s Golden Child, we again undertook outreach through the Chinese Canadian community, placing ads in Chinese newspapers as well as sending out translated press releases and outreach through the Asian Heritage society. Our promotional materials provided the translation of the title to Chinese and showed a picture of a turn of the century Vancouver Chinese family.

Audience Development

We have found that with careful and respectful outreach initiatives we have been able to build audiences for theatre productions and presentations reflective of specific communities. This outreach has taken the form of direct mail, phone communications, advertisements in specific community papers and newsletters as well as some cases through the hiring of outreach personnel from the community to which we hope to build a connection.

We have, also, found that a small number of audience members will cross over and attend a variety of programs while others will only come to see work that involves actors from or is written by someone from their own cultural heritage.

Unfortunately, while the mainstream press has recognized the Firehall for undertaking culturally diverse work, there still exists the belief within the major media that our work is only relevant to a small specific group of Canadians - those to whom it speaks directly. We continue to find this

somewhat astounding and lacking in foresight and as a result have determined that our most effective audience development tools are direct contact with organizations and individuals from communities who may be interested in the themes of the work. This is not always culturally specific outreach as themes of racism, empowerment, family dynamics and relationships, are universal and of interest to a broad range of communities.

Resource and study guides are not generally seen as audience development tools; however, we find that they are a very valuable way to increase understanding and awareness of the program being seen and as we encourage student groups to attend our work, they become a means to stimulate discussion and understanding beyond the theatre experience. And, we are pleased to say that we have had adult audience members tell us that their first theatre experience was at the Firehall as part of a student group in the (80's).

Program Quality

Maintaining a consistent level of quality and content in programming is always challenging with sometimes the most rewarding experiences coming from the less polished performances. That said, we do struggle to overcome the perception that if it is multi-cultural it must be good for you but not necessarily first rate quality. Different experiences and different cultural lenses lead to different interpretations and perceptions around artistic work. Our over-riding programming philosophy is based on trying to bring the most interesting stories of the time to the stage. In stating that, it must also be said that we take our commitment to providing opportunities for both established and emerging artists very seriously as well as our connection to audiences. We do try to program work that will provide opportunities for the artists we have worked with previously while attempting to provide opportunities for new voices. We also try to program work that will be of interest to our audiences, who come from a broad variety of cultural backgrounds and within each season attempt to program work that will be of interest to previous attenders.

The factors that tend to lessen the quality and effectiveness of each project that we undertake are generally in the planning and preparation stages. We have found that when we have not undertaken the research required, discussed the project with others who have knowledge of similar work, determined the correct context for the production and promotion of the work and not laid in place the overall plan for execution, that that is when barriers are difficult to hurdle and the work often suffers.

Program Evaluation and Feedback

We do not have a built in mechanism for evaluation and feedback on our production and presentation work other than audience surveys, critical reviews and attendance. We have received many testimonials, letters of thanks and a number of awards for our work; however, that is perhaps not the best statistical way to assess the success of the work. We do believe the work the Firehall undertakes has had an impact on the producing and presenting community, local Artistic Directors in what work they choose to program and who they cast as well as in the development or engagement of audiences.

Again, we have found the best way to find out how effective a program is through one-on-one discussion with community leaders, artists and audience members. While this is time consuming

it can often stimulate new partnerships, ideas for future programs as well as an understanding of why a particular outreach initiative did not work or why only certain parts of a broad cultural community may have chosen to attend.

Summary of Lessons Learned

The lessons that I have learned from the Firehall(s) desire to become an inclusive producer and presenter of work reflective of Canada(s) rich cultural heritage are many. They are, perhaps, also, the lessons I have learned from life - respect your elders, keep an open mind, act with integrity, follow your gut instincts and don't say no just because you've never done it before and you don't know what will happen; and don't say yes just because you've never done it before and you don't know what will happen.

The difficulties we have faced have often been caused by poor communication of our intentions and misunderstandings about the Firehall(s) goals and objectives. Often, these difficulties have arisen because of inadequate as well as uninformed planning. Adequate planning and research time continues to be a challenge for us as we continue to move forward in our work. We feel we have put in place some mechanisms to ensure we have time to plan and research but those are two areas that are often under-resourced or allowed for within the demands on running a not-for-profit arts organization.

Concluding comments

I can not over emphasize enough how important dialogue between artists and producers or artists and presenters is - it is so important that presenters and producers understand where the work is being created from. That said, it is also the obligation of the artist to understand or have an awareness of who may be interested in the work they are offering and what the needs of the producer/presenter are in undertaking the production.

Biographical Information

Donna Spencer Producer/Director

Donna Spencer is currently the Artistic Producer of the Firehall Arts Centre and was one of the Firehall's founding directors. Her many directing credits include Golden Child, An Enemy of the People, Respectable, Menopositive The Musical!, The Yoko Ono Project, Wawatay, The Unnatural and Accidental Women, Reading Hebron, Counter Offence, The Stone Angel, Mom Dad I'm Living With a White Girl, Only Drunks and Children Tell the Truth, fareWel, The Ecstasy of Rita Joe and many others.

She is an advocate for inclusivity in the performing arts and created one Canada's first culturally diverse theatre production programs at the Firehall in 1985. She is the winner of the Jesse Richardson Outstanding Direction Award for Reading Hebron and is the recipient of a Jessie Richardson Award for Multicultural Innovation in the Theatre and the City of Vancouver's 1999 Cultural Harmony Award. She was most recently honored with the 2003 Explorasian Heritage Award for Community Building and the 2003 Greater Vancouver Professional Theatre Alliance Career Achievement Award.

Ms. Spencer is, also, the Producer of the annual Dancing on the Edge Festival of Contemporary Dance, was the founding Chairperson of the Alliance for Arts and Culture and currently sits on the Board of Directors for the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres, the CanDance Network and the Leon and Thea Koerner Foundation Board.

**Community Connections:
Networking with Diverse Communities
from a Cultural Perspective**

Medicine — A Case Study

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Medicine

The Harrison Festival Society has a twenty year history of working in partnership with diverse communities, and in particular the aboriginal community. BC has one of the largest aboriginal populations in the country, and the numbers who call the Fraser Valley their traditional territory is significant. The Sto:lo Nation is comprised of 24 separate bands that vary in size and type of governance. Some partnerships with this community have been very positive, and some have not for a number of different reasons.

The most rewarding partnership for the Society was the production of a play titled *Medicine*. Produced in-house by the Festival Society, the play ran in March, 2001 during the week of International Racism Day. The play is about the life in a fictitious residential school in the 1950's and deals with themes of family, loss of culture and loss of language. The play was written by Chilliwack author LaVerne Adams, and won the 1991 CBC Playwrighting Prize.

For almost one hundred years, Indian residential schools dominated the lives of Native children. These children, as soon as or before they reached school age, were taken from their families, communities and traditions and put in residential schools. The residential schools, mainly run by religious orders, were supposed to (save(the Native children from the (uncivilized(traditions of their own communities and to mold them in the images of the white man. The schools went to great lengths to separate the children from all connections with their people, their language and their traditions.

There are two great tragedies related to the residential schools. The first is that children were taken from their traditional forms of education and put in a system which attempted to indoctrinate them into something they were not, while at the same time not giving them an adequate education relative to that received by non-Native children.

The second tragedy is that successive generations of Native children were removed from homes and families to spend their formative years in an alien, unnatural environment. These individuals were deprived of the family environment which provides the model for their later role as parents and community members. Many problems being experienced by Native communities today can be traced to this cause.

I first learned about *Medicine* in 1992 from LaVerne. I liked the play because the issues were not (black and white(or (good guys against bad guys(. Many of the nuns were also oppressed and not happy in their role. As Artistic Director of the Harrison Festival, I asked her if we could produce the play for the 1993 festival. We had never (produced(a play before, but the project was an exciting one for a number of reasons; it was a locally written production, was relevant to the communities in the Fraser Valley, and it dealt with a part of our local history that no one ever talked about. The residential school phenomena was perhaps one of the most overt acts of racism in Canada, and the Festival's mandate includes addressing such issues in a cultural context. Theatre is an extremely powerful medium to explore the complexities of humanity; it gives us a chance to see ourselves and how we live in the world.

The first production of *Medicine* was directed by John Carroll, and only ran for two nights. The three women whose stories provided the basis for the play attended, and were deeply moved to see their stories on stage. The impact on the audience, made up largely of aboriginal people was astounding, and many communities throughout the province wanted us to go on tour with the production. Because of very limited resources and the large time commitment required from the cast and crew, such a venture was impossible. But it stayed in my mind. As fear and ignorance began to escalate surrounding treaty negotiations here at home, it seemed a good time to remount the production.

Creating an educational video of the play this time around would leave a legacy to the community and could be an accessible way to tell the story. It would certainly be easier than taking the production on the road so others could see it. Aboriginal people have started the process of healing, and through understanding we can all lend support as they begin their difficult journey.

It took two years to raise the money for the project. Funds were received from Direct Access-BC Gaming and the BC Multiculturalism Ministry (which, under the present government no longer exists). The organization was also successful in obtaining a Job Creation grant through HRDC which helped our resources considerably. We had put together quite an extensive proposal the previous year to the BC Millennium Fund, but the project was not something they had in mind to use the funds for, and was declined.

The first thing we needed to do was find a Director. As luck would have it, Ian Fenwick, founder and twenty year department head for the Theatre Department of the University College of the Fraser Valley, was taking educational leave for the first time. Part of his professional development was to focus on community theatre as a tool for social development. Ian is a very experienced and well respected director in the BC theatre community, and we were really excited by the prospect of having him involved in the project. The Harrison Festival has a long history of working with Ian and the Theatre Department for over twenty years. As the Festival Society is a (presenting) organization, and not a (producer), Ian was a very valuable resource in outlining our role and responsibilities.

We were able to hire an Intern Director from the Metis community on the Job Creation project who also acted as the Stage Manager. The Wardrobe Manager and Head Set Builder were also part of the Job Creation project, and we were fortunate to find people who had experience in theatre. Ian hired a set designer, light and sound designers and a costume designer. I am using the word (hired) very loosely; we did have money to pay an honorarium, but everyone including Ian would be more accurately described as volunteers. A UCFV employee who was also involved in the theatre, took on the video work. She had attended a BC film school in Vancouver, and was anxious to put her skills to use. The playwright, LaVerne, was also contracted to write a study guide to accompany the video.

A (Call for Auditions) was circulated to the theatre community and faxed to an extensive First Nations contact list. The cast consisted of eight women. There were five students, two quite young, three in their mid teens, and three Roman Catholic nuns ages 25 - 60. The announcement also included a search for backstage and video crews. The rehearsals were to be held in the

Aboriginal Resource Centre at UCFV(s Chilliwack campus. Several people showed up for the audition nights. There was a very informal First Nations youth theatre group in the area, who had been informally getting together because of their interest in theatre. They had no background or formal training. One of the parents saw the audition notice, and brought a few of the young people from this group. There was also a lot of personal contact work involved in finding people to audition, which met with some success.

Those who did not get parts were encouraged to be part of the back stage crew, and happily all accepted. As it turned out, all five student roles were filled with first time First Nations actors (17-23). Two of the nun characters were also filled by First Nations actors. A woman cast as a nun had played a student in the first production in 1993. The youngest nun character was played by an eighteen year old who came out to the auditions because her father went to residential school in Mission, and would not speak about his experience. She thought that being in the play would give her a better understanding of her father. One woman who came to the auditions wanted to work behind the scenes rather than in front of an audience. She was a victim of the residential school experience herself, and thought it would be a good step on her journey of healing.

There were many challenges with the cast. Geography was a big issue; three of the actors (and their cousin as one of three stage managers) lived in Hope, a half hour drive away. None of them had a drivers licence, so one of the parents had to bring them to rehearsal each time. One young woman lived on the Seabird Reserve in Agassiz, and had to arrange for rides. One lived in Chehalis, about a 45 minute drive from Chilliwack. She had her own car, but had an accident that left her without a vehicle. As this was the first time that most had had any experience in theatre, there was a problem explaining the importance of the commitment required, and the importance of attending every rehearsal. One student left her foster family mid-rehearsal to move back into an unsupportive family environment where she was assaulted, and had to move again. Another student also left home, without any real home to go to. Some did not always have a phone or a way to be contacted. There was a very violent death in one actor(s family, which put the entire First Nations community in mourning for some time, and rehearsals needed to be postponed.

It was also very interesting to observe Ian as director in these situations. Ian was used to having a large institutional structure behind him with much bigger budgets and resources. It had also been many years since he had worked with teenagers. He had also not worked that much with the aboriginal community where cultural differences need the utmost attention. Ian demands professionalism, and the productions he had directed for the last twenty years had been in a teacher/student relationship, where students were being graded. This was quite a different experience. His commitment to the project and the sense that this was an important piece of work that would have an impact on the community kept things in perspective. The end results were amazing - a top-calibre production that Ian could be very proud of, and a huge leap forward in his own personal growth. The one thing that perhaps helped surmount all the difficulties more than anything, was that two of the older women, one of the nuns and one of the assistant stage managers, took on an authoritarian role as (elders(to the younger girls. This pulled everything together in a very positive way.

Meanwhile, back in the producer(s) role, a number of initiatives and tasks were being done. Weekly production meetings, monitoring the budget, researching film rights, legalities, permission for music, waivers, issuing contracts, paying the bills and writing grant reports were just a few. Finding volunteers to assist with set construction, costume building, ushers, front of house, light and sound operators, concession, hair, make-up, etc. was also a huge job. Then there was finding someone to design the poster and program cover, organizing an opening night reception, publicity, press releases, lobby displays and more. All of this was on top of an already full time job for the Festival(s) three permanent employees. We still had other grant deadlines, the day to day administration, other year round shows to work on, and a ten-day festival to pull together for the summer.

The theatre piece was presented (in the round) with four stage exits. We needed a total of three stage managers to work the (circle) back stage. The props list was huge, and there was a lot of food involved complicating everything. The blocking for each exit was a tricky chore. The rehearsals moved to the Harrison venue where the play was being presented about three weeks before show time. As an initiative of the cast and crew, an elder was invited to smudge and cleanse the space before the work began. She also smudged the cast and crew.

The set, rehearsals in the space, tech set up and all the other things that go on before opening night ran as smoothly as could be expected for such a large production. The dress and tech rehearsals were absolutely amazing, and Ian had done a wonderful job of pulling everything together. The cast and crew had the sense that they were an integral part of some very important work, and it showed through time and time again in their performances.

An aboriginal artist, Sheldon Williams was contracted to design the poster and program cover. He chose a traditional native design of a hummingbird hovering over a rose. The hummingbird is not a symbol associated with any one tribe or clan, but as Sheldon explained, (it is believed that during a time of pain and sorrow, if a hummingbird appears, healing will soon follow after). It was such a strong image, that black and red t-shirts were printed up for the cast and crew, and were available for sale at each performance. A special (Harrison Festival) edition of the script was also published for sale.

The play was presented a total of eight times. Four evening performances, one Sunday afternoon matinee, two matinees for students and a special evening performance to actually film the play. The matinee performances were intended for school groups to attend and were scheduled for 11:00am after contacting several schools to find out what the best time would be. Schools from the Fraser Cascade, Abbotsford, Mission and Chilliwack school districts bussed their students to the show. Several independent band run schools also attended. A special price of \$5 was offered. We found that many seniors and elders from the aboriginal community wanted to attend the student performances during the week. We certainly welcomed them explaining who the audience would be, and kept the price the same.

The producer also contacted the BC Provincial Residential School Project who were on hand at each performance. A display of their materials was set up in the lobby, and counsellors were on hand in case there were any disclosures.

The event was widely publicized by the Fraser Valley media. Editorial coverage began while the play was still in rehearsal, and was often accompanied by a photo. All contacts on our compiled First Nations list received information, and a special group rate for aboriginal groups was offered.

As I had a previous connection with the Fraser Valley Treaty Advisory Committee made up of mayors and councillors from the valley(s municipalities and regional district, two complimentary tickets were offered to each representative. If anyone needed this type of education and awareness, it was this committee. There had been no cross-cultural or sensitivity training provided to the members of this committee (funded by the provincial and federal governments) yet they were to play an important role in treaty negotiations. Complimentary tickets were also offered to Fraser Valley MLA(s and MP(s. They were also enticed to attend the opening reception evening where they may have had a (photo op(along with some excellent food. No one took us up on our offer, except for the Mayor of Harrison and one Treaty Advisory rep who would have bought a ticket anyway.

However, the response to the play by the aboriginal community and the general public was overwhelming. Although the production received some very good publicity in Fraser Valley papers, the most successful result in getting the project known in the communities was by word of mouth. Opening night was sold out, with near capacity on the second night. All matinee performances were well attended, and the audiences for each show were at least 70% aboriginal people.

We also had a wonderful response to our invitation to aboriginal groups and others to attend the special performance to film the show. We spread the word that there would be free admission on this night, but that a few conditions would apply. The blocking was a bit different, as there was only seating on three instead of four sides so that the camera crews could set up. There would be a bit of a longer break between scene changes. Everyone would have to wear dark clothing, and it was imperative that there was no rustling, eating, loud noises, talking, etc. during the performance. We did not know what to expect for an audience. We were pleasantly surprised at the wonderful turn out of mostly aboriginal people, and they had done what we asked. It was quite something to see the audience all in black or dark clothing ready for the play to begin! Although it was not planned, this special performance allowed access for those who may have not been able to afford the price of a ticket.

On opening night, the Chehalis Chief along with a young dance group from their community welcomed people to their traditional territory, and opened the evening with a prayer. The opening reception, catered by a local First nations caterer after the performance, was a wonderful event. The attendance by so many local chiefs and elders was an honour for the organization.

Elders and chiefs were introduced, and the program included a few words from the director, producer and playwright. All cast and crew were of course present. Their great sense of pride in their achievement that night, for me, made the whole project worthwhile. I was also very moved by their sincere appreciation of the wide and unconditional support shown by their communities.

Throughout the project, various aspects of everything concerning the play was filmed. There were interviews with cast, crew, director, producer and playwright. Rehearsals, production meetings, circle talks, etc. were all filmed at some point or other. But what is the most valuable and precious record of the entire experience was the interviews with audience members. The number of people who came to the show because they had been in residential school or were touched daily by someone who had, illustrates what a huge impact this has had on aboriginal people right here at home. The father who had never talked about his experience to his family, came twice to see his daughter perform. I spoke with him personally, and his tears told me what a powerful effect the experience had on him. Many non-aboriginal people were also deeply moved. Some had no idea that the history of residential schools in the Fraser Valley was still so very much in the present or that a number of issues that aboriginal people are struggling with today are directly a result of the residential school experience.

If I had known at the time about the demand on the time of so many people, the resources required, the very steep learning curve, and how many people it was going to take to pull it off, I probably would have never started the journey. But, I can look back now and honestly say without a doubt that in my twenty plus years of working in the arts with various communities, that this was the most rewarding experience. There have been many rewards along the way, but none have touched me in quite this way. It is experiences like this one that keep me and others doing this kind of work.

Summary of Lessons Learned

- do your research; find out about the community you are working with - history, issues they might be addressing, cultural differences, proper protocol, politics, etc.
- make sure there is personal contact; sharing a meal is a good way to build relationships.
- find a “champion” who is supportive of the project to help represent you and your organization in the community; someone who can point you in the right direction. Must be a person who is respected by the community. Be aware of which parts of the community this person speaks for. No one person can represent an entire community.
- be aware of other events impacting the community - i.e. harvest time, fishing season, other planned community cultural events, weddings, funerals, etc. Be aware of how and to what extent these events impact the community.
- consistently provide follow-up and ongoing contact throughout the project.
- be open to suggestions of working with performers and artists from diverse communities, while at the same time keeping your own artistic integrity and vision in tact. This can sometimes be tricky!

- need to be flexible; the project often takes on a life of its own, and one needs to be very accommodating and adaptable.
- must, above all, be a good listener, and don't be bound by your own set of expectations.
- have a good sense of humour!

Concluding Comments

I think above all, the key ingredients for a successful partnership are honesty, trust and respect. I have made many mistakes along the way, but with a willingness to learn, approaching things honestly and a commitment to making things work, we have experienced some very successful partnerships. It can take a long time to build a relationship, and sometimes it's best to start with baby steps. It's all about practicing good values. Community outreach work is very intensive, and has to be fluid. It is not something you can work off the side of your desk. This in itself is problematic, as most people who do this type of work are already taxed to the maximum with all the other things they have to attend to. Resources are already scarce, and although this type of work is perhaps the most rewarding, it is also the most difficult and needs the utmost attention. I think as artistic directors, it is the most important work that we do.

Biography

Phyllis Stenson has been the artistic director for the Harrison Festival for twenty-one years. The ten day event has featured minority cultures in this small town of Harrison Hot Springs since its inception, and has addressed human rights issues such as racism, the disappeared, women's issues, genocide and gay rights. The event features music, dance, theatre, visual arts, lectures and workshops with many events free to the public. The organization also presents 15 to 20 concerts and theatre productions during the year.

Phyllis has conducted several workshops on community partnerships and cultural diversity. She is a founder of the Western Artistic Directors of Roots Music Festivals and is a director for the BC Touring Council. She has served on several advisory committees and has been a juror for the BC Arts Council and Canada Council. She has also been a juror for the Juno Awards (Best Roots and Traditional Group) several times.

She is committed to community social development issues.

**Community Connections:
Networking with Diverse Communities
from a Cultural Perspective**

Discovery Coast Music Festival — A Case Study

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The Discovery Coast Music Festival

Background Information

The Bella Coola Valley

Located on the central coast of British Columbia, the Bella Coola Valley lies at the head of the scenic fiord of North Bentick Arm. Shaped by glacial rivers and the Coastal Mountain range, the valley floor extends for 50km to rise 1230 km through an impressive mountain pass to the wild Chilcotin Plateau. Surrounded by snow capped mountains, salmon streams and rivers, with abundant wildlife, our area is an outdoor enthusiasts dream-come-true.

The population of the Bella Coola Valley is approximately 3,000, made up of Native (Nuxalk Nation) and Non-Native people. Isolated at the terminus of the rugged, partly graveled Highway 20, with grades up to 18% Bella Coola is over 500km from the nearest municipality. The valley shares this coastal and inland landscape with many diverse communities. Coastal villages, fishing resorts, logging towns, ranching outposts and over a dozen Aboriginal Nations collectively portray our expansive neighborhood. The Discovery Coast Music Festival celebrates this eclectic network of communities and brings the world to it in the form of music, song and dance.

Bella Coola is a fishing and logging community presently in economic transition as a result of a massive downturn in its resource based economy.

- Commercial fishing has drastically declined.
- In 2001 the last remaining forest company – Interfor-pulled out its operations.
- Closure of the Forest Service Office, a major employer, with over 50 employees earning high paying wages.
- Closure of Human Resource Office – 2 paid positions.
- Subsequent decline in enrollment in schools.
- Loss of teaching positions.
- Over 100 homes for sale.
- Closure of Hardware department in Co Op after over 50 years in operation.
- The consequences of these events have been all encompassing to the community.
- The Bella Coola Valley Arts Council canceled their concert series due to decreasing attendance and subsequent financial losses.
- No live performances in existence for the community, except for once a year school based touring groups.

Despite these setbacks the community was determined to adjust to new economic opportunities. One of the long-term economic goals of our community is to increase the tourism industry. With our rich cultural heritage, natural majestic beauty, boundless outdoor activities, and with BC Ferries coming to Bella Coola (from May to late September), tourism is becoming a viable economic venture. The Discovery Coast Music Festival is an important contributor to this renewal. We wanted to create a valuable tourist event that articulated a vision of a community committed to betterment.

Generation of the idea for the program

Early in 1998 a group of dedicated volunteers got together with a common interest of music. Irene Marck, a recent resident to Bella Coola acting as a booking agent for Moe and the Moana Hunters, a Maori group from her native land, New Zealand, wanted to book the group in Bella Coola and create a simple event around their performance. The show was a hit and including primarily local and regional performers, inspired continued development of a Festival concept.

At the initial stages garnering volunteers and community members to work on production was a prevailing issue. In a community, facing the exodus of productive members and low employment volunteer organizations are the first to suffer a brain and brawn drain. Folks are forced to focus on economic stability in their lives and put community work on the back burner. For the next three years, just 3 people with a handful of helpers kept the vision alive.

- Every step of the way was a learning process for these 3 folks.
- Members shared a wealth of skills but none had specific experience in event production.
- Festival developed a rhythm with workers capability, time/commitment restraints and budget.
- Networking or professional development, non-existent. Little input or assistance from government run arts organizations or even the knowledge that any help was available.
- Fundraising a challenge with minimal corporate presence and local businesses under constant pressure to donate to each and every community event.
- Continued to bolster interest thru word of mouth, local paper, and bulletin boards to community members to join in small group of festival volunteers.
- A challenge to find 3-5 directors to take on responsibility, most of the financial and production burden placed on directors.
- Monthly meetings formed over 16 committees designated specific production duties.
- Although we consulted with Nuxalk community members, invited them to participate few became involved. First Nations volunteers are rare in Non-native events. This could be a result of:
 - Low income with resulting social and educational circumstances
 - Low level of education
 - Limited experience in the performing arts
 - Volunteerism is dedicated to First nations activities
- Most of the volunteers were middle class, white and mid-forties.
- Booked at least 2 or more First Nations acts annually to draw Aboriginal crowd.

Description of the Program

The Discovery Coast Music Festival is a multi-cultural performing arts event held in the community of Bella Coola. It is a 2 day celebration of music song and dance.

Mission Statement

To create a venue for people of all walks of life to come together, to relax and to enjoy a diverse array of live performing arts. The Festival is a gathering place where people of Bella Coola, neighbouring communities and visitors celebrate their uniqueness and commonality. It is an opportunity to discover and share each other's history, culture and landscape.

Mandate of the Discovery Coast Music Festival

- To showcase entertainment of a multicultural nature, for all ages of people, in an alcohol and drug free surrounding.
- To include and encourage local youth to participate in the Festival.
- To assist the economic development of the community by creating a colourful and engaging tourist attraction.
- To foster optimism and hope in a community that is faced with economic and cultural challenges.

Develop an event that stimulates the cultural and economic welfare of the community.

- Give the community a sense of possibility, change and growth, impart a feeling of optimism and hope in the midst of economic transition.
- Showcase live performance in a community devoid of live concerts.
- Introduce first time experiences in music. Challenge the audience's perception of music by presenting an eclectic array of music from across Canada.
- Bring both Natives and Non-Natives together in a celebration of culture and music.
- Present First Nations performance.
- Create a family-based event, no alcohol, children's site and entertainment.

Program Planning

In the first year of development 2 of the 3 directors were First Nations. In the years following, very few Nuxalk people were involved in the Festival. In our sixth year we are seeing a marked increase in interest and involvement with the Nuxalk.

Methods of outreach or networking between cultures within a small community differ from that in urban centers. The Nuxalk now make up more than half the population in the Bella Coola Valley. The closeness of a small community like Bella Coola, the daily interaction, knowing your neighbors has the advantage of readily feeling the pulse of the community, both native and Non-Native. The Nuxalk while definitely a unique cultural group, have co-existed among other segments of the population since settlers arrived. Employment in our resource based economy; fishing and logging allied both Native and Non-Native. In contrast to larger centers where First Nations contact is more segregated or watered down, the folk of Bella Coola shop, walk, play and work together. This intimacy allows a more casual, familiar link and subsequent understanding of each communities needs. Despite this familiarity there is an acknowledged separateness resulting from cultural and economic factors. This dissociation demands that we take extra effort to engage our Nuxalk neighbors.

- In our first year, a local Nuxalk artist was commissioned to produce our logo
- Every festival is opened with Nuxalk singers/drummers in a welcome ceremony
- A salmon feast hosted by the Nuxalk community was organized to welcome the Maori group to Bella Coola
- We engage Nuxalk volunteers over the weekend
- Each year we present First Nations performance, local, regional and national
- One of our committee members is First Nations (Cree). She acts as host and guide for visiting First Nations folks
- We advertise in the Nuxalk bimonthly flyer, distributed to every Nuxalk household
- Network and fundraise with the Nuxalk economic officer

Resource mobilization and building community support

A number of factors hamper interest and support in small, rural, isolated communities with the added burden of economic instability.

- Small population base to draw an audience from
- High unemployment
- Health and social barriers
- Diverse tastes in music
- Limited musical experience and knowledge
- Conservative and inexperienced festival goers
- Change is a hard transition for rural communities. A sense of hesitancy to engage in new events
- Apathy, acceptance of the norm that the community is lulled into believing that little cultural events occur

Patience, a tenacious spirit, and diplomacy are required when initiating an urban style event in a rural and First Nations community.

- Engage volunteers from all sectors of the community – school teachers, business folk, First Nations, long term residents and new.
- Fundraise activities with local Band council.
- Learn what type of music/performance the local First Nations enjoy, book a relevant act and capture their interest in the Festival style event.
- Get a member of the band council on board.
- Garner support from local Arts Council, local businesses, government and economic development officers.

Program Promotion/Audience Development

- Know your community – economic and social attributes
- Networking with local private Nuxalk schools
- Distribution of free tickets in final report cards to all kindergarten-grade 3 students

- Maintaining an affordable ticket price. Public acceptance of a ticket price is a dominant issue in audience development. This has been a learning process for the public. Experiencing the festival, and increased quality has lessened the public's concern over paying to see live performance. Reasons for criticism of ticketing may be:
 - Low-income population
 - Rural isolated communities have limited experience with ticket pricing
 - Little knowledge of festival production expenses and required gate contribution
 - Most community events are free
 - A population that does not prioritize the benefits of cultural events
- Poster and program cover art contest at all schools
- Advertising and articles in Nuxalk flyer – distributed to all Nuxalk homes
- Fundraising activities – dances, garage sales, table at Nuxalk May Queen Day
- Sponsorship by Nuxalk Nation and Oweekeno, Kitsoo and Nuxalk Tribal Council
- Employing local singers/drummers to perform Welcome Ceremony at festival
- Having a small, diverse community to draw your audience from you must know your community's music taste. You simply can't put on a show for one segment of the population. You must draw all their interests and meld it together in one cohesive package
- Capture their attention with presentation that is comfortable/familiar to them
- Tweak their imagination, gradually introduce unknown and diverse performances while maintaining a segment of the show that is preferred
- Contracting a commercial headliner definitely draws the First Nations community and conservative or inexperienced music listeners in the community.
 - Inexperienced festivalgoers. No experience with festival format, presentation of diverse musical genres. Concertgoers.
 - Majority of First Nations in rural areas are hard rock/country/tribute fans – most listened to radio station on reserve in CFNR – Terrace First Nations Radio, which plays primarily, rock.
 - Little knowledge of roots, world and traditional First Nations Music.
- Contracted First Nations performers, both traditional and contemporary
 - Hasn't been as successful at drawing the First Nations population
 - Since conception we have booked 2-3 First Nations performers annually
 - Traditional First Nations performance not as effective in drawing First Nations audience as commercial rock/pop performers.
 - Non-traditional or contemporary First Nations appear to be more popular than traditional acts. Despite this, traditional performance will remain a necessary component but must be used with discretion.
- A large majority of Nuxalk families do not own a car; develop a bus service to site.
- Engage the children and mom and pop will follow. Have an exciting children's program.
- Present the local students bands and music camp groups

Program Quality

- A healthy budget to afford quality performers. In the first years our budget was too small to contract a full, rich and engaging line-up
- Again – know your community and what style of music they would pay to see
- We needed an eclectic line-up but relatively mainstream, especially in the first years.
- Something for everyone. Young, old, conservative, and imaginative, challenging.
- A strong commercial headliner to attract convert goers.
- Book a choice act. “Elvis Tribute Artists”, a hit with First nations folk, captured more First nations audience than any of the previous years, traditional First Nations performers or roots performers. Hook the audience on their own grounds, happy with the experience, they are open to other diverse and unknown performances.
- Booking local performers is essential, and does draw new audience and fills slow times during the event. Important to engage local performers. careful to maintain balance of local and out-of town.
- Contracting performers that excel at audience rapport. our audience, shy and inexperienced. Performers with a comedic sense, and ability to draw the audience into the show win over the audience and make for a satisfying experience and repeat attendances.

For example

- Connie Caldor picked up on our Norwegian heritage and played on that to successfully engage the audience.
- First Nations performers use reserve life comedy to touch common ground
- In our community serious, dark performances didn’t fare well

Program Evaluation/Feedback

- Word of mouth
- Questionnaires

Summary of Lessons Learned

- **KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY.** Should be long term resident of your community, having worked and participated in a diverse array of community ventures. Be intuitive about your community character, interests, skills and beliefs.
- Start small, grow with the rate of interest, community support and budget.
- Stick with it. The first few years feel formidable. Low attendance, fundraising challenges and learning production can undermine optimism and growth.
- Be persistent, be a careful listener. Be open-minded. Don’t let negative criticism deflate your efforts. Small communities can be hardest on them and have some kind of inherent difficulty with change.
- Develop a vision of your community’s festival
- Recruit positive and energetic co-workers

- Network, network, network – talk to other directors, fundraisers, agencies, art councils etc. get lots of info on agents and performances. Being a member of WRAD has been one of the most crucial steps in developing a successful festival
- Go to other music festivals
- Work towards developing a paid coordinator position to ensure continued development
- Recruit First Nations volunteers and committee members
- Know and appreciate a diverse selection of musical genres.

Concluding Comments

- You must KNOW and BE PASSIONATE ABOUT YOUR COMMUNITY to accept the challenges of developing an unknown event in a small community.
- BE PATIENT. Change takes time.
- HAVE FAITH in your community. Know that despite the obstacles and limitations, the majority of the communities will acknowledge/appreciate the benefits of the event.
- Acknowledge and understand First nations issues. Identify their barriers, needs abilities and interests in a festival event.
- Remember that despite the diversity of your community, all of the members share a collective interest and enthusiasm for the health and welfare of the community as a whole.

Biographical Information

Monica Tutt has resided in the BC coastal town of Bella Coola for the past 25 years. She is married to a musician and sound engineer and they have one child.

She has been with the Discovery Coast Festival since its inception in 1998 and has been the Festival's director for 5 of the 6 years. She is presently the Festival's part-time coordinator, the only paid position in the organization.

Monica has wide experience with small businesses, including seven years as a restaurateur and running a home-based gardening businesses.

She has coordinated and developed a number of community projects and events, such as conferences, healing circles, Fit fest and Seniors Drop-in Center.

She enjoys music of all styles and genres and is passionate about community development and health issues.