alt theatre
cultural diversity and the stage

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COMMUNITY ARTS AND (DE)COLONIZATION: PART TWO

Columpa BOBB | Sid BOBB | Liam COO | Penny COUCHIE | Sam EGAN
Iehente FOOTE | Damara JACOBS-MORRIS | Ange LOFT | Lee MARACLE | Eliza KNOCKWOOD
Bruce SINCLAIR | Annie SMITH | Savannah WALLING

FROM THE HEART OF A CITY

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alt.theatre
cultural diversity and the stage
Vol. 12 No. 4

alt.theatre: cultural diversity and the stage is Canada's only professional journal examining intersections between politics, cultural plurality, social activism, and the stage.

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THEATRE

"Change the World, One Play at a Time"

COVER PHOTO
© Liam Coo. Julia Hune-Brown and other artists travelling on Train of Thought perform a piece created during a workshop of Talking Treaties —a multi-year arts project exploring Toronto treaty history—at Jumblies Theatre's studio the Ground Floor in June 2015.

We acknowledge the support of the Canada Council for the Arts, which last year invested $157 million to bring the arts to Canadians throughout the country.

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IEHENTE FOOTE

is a Mohawk woman from Kahnawake, Quebec: Bear clan. She has been involved with theatre and the arts for eleven years. She has directed, created, and produced many children and young adult productions in Kahnawake and Montreal. She also has worked on various film and television sets as a production assistant, as well as doing costumes.

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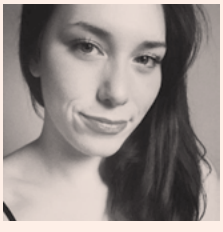

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What Is a "Community Arts Tour"?:
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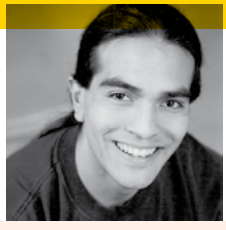

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is the author of a number of critically acclaimed literary works, including the novels *Ravensong*, *Bobbi Lee*, *Daughters Are Forever*, and *Will's Garden*; the poetry collection *Bent Box*; and the non-fiction work *I Am Woman*. She is the co-editor of a number of anthologies including the award-winning publication *My Home As I Remember*. She is widely published in anthologies and scholarly journals worldwide, and is a member of the Sto:Loh nation.

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is a community-engaged and dance theatre arts leader of Anishinaabe ancestry from Nipissing First Nation. Currently, Penny is co-founder and co-artistic director of Aanmitaagzi, a community-engaged multidisciplinary arts company in her home community. Primarily a dancer, actor, teacher, and choreographer, Penny holds an Honours BA in Aboriginal Studies and Drama from the University of Toronto and is a graduate of the School of Toronto Dance Theatre.

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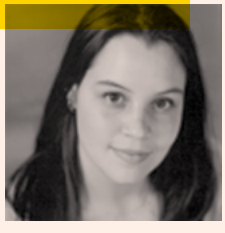

DAMARA JACOBS-MORRIS

is a proud member of the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation), proud of her African American / Scottish roots. Dedicated to community-based arts programming within her First Nation community and other Indigenous groups, she's worked for UBC's Museum of Anthropology and the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, coordinated TRACKS: 7th Canadian Community Play and Art Symposium (Vancouver/Coast Salish Territories), and is now development and communication manager at the Potlatch Fund (Seattle, US).

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is a theatre practitioner, researcher, and educator. Her research and practice interests include Aboriginal theatre, community plays, new play development, and audience-involved spectatorship. Annie was the artistic director of *Chasing the Dream: The Grand Prairie Century Play*, an outdoor processional theatre event to celebrate Grande Prairie's 100th Anniversary in June 2014. She was a participant in the Train of Thought journey in 2015. Nations people, but all people.

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is a media/digital artist, photographer, and graphic/web designer. He has worked in a variety of creative positions including freelance designer, studio technician, commissioned artist, stone mason, chef, and any job that puts him behind a camera. He has curated and exhibited in group and solo shows in galleries and festivals both in Toronto and Montreal. Currently Liam is working as the media and communications coordinator for Jumblies Theatre.

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BRUCE SINCLAIR

is a Metis theatre artist, teacher, and student of the nehiyawewin (Cree) and Michif languages, currently based at Big Island Lake Cree Nation in Saskatchewan. Bruce's new artistic entity *miyoteh performance* will develop and produce works based on working with elders, the nehiyawewin language, and collaborations with diverse communities, including a current collabration with nehiyaw, Arabic, and Jewish artists on storytelling vs. the tragedy of suicide.

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is a Mi'kmaq woman from Abegweit First Nation. She is an active member of the Aboriginal Women's Association of PEI, chair of the Rock Barra Artist Retreat Co-op, and former vice president of the Island Media Arts Cooperative of PEI. She is currently producing a film called *All My Relations* about personal and collective healing not only for First Nations people, but all people.

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Editorial

ALT.ERNATIVE DIRECTIONS

BY NIKKI SHAFFEEULLAH

This issue is the second in *alt.theatre*'s two-part project, "Community Arts and "(De)Colonization." In these issues, we are exploring questions and themes coming out of Train of Thought, the national travelling community arts project that took place in May and June 2015. This two-month journey, involving hundreds of artists, consisted of an evolving group of travellers moving from west coast to east coast, visiting each other's communities and witnessing and exploring the variety of ways we are—and could be—using art to build connections between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

Train of Thought began on May 8, 2015. This was the day of my twenty-ninth birthday, and, for me, the project came at an apt time. As a teenager, my growing interests were organized in silos: theatrical creation and anti-racist activism. As a student and emerging artist in my late teens and early twenties, I began to discover some of the ways in which art and politics are connected: the role of art in representing identities and experiences, in socialization, and in reinforcing/subverting power structures; the histories of and ongoing equity movements in the professional performing arts world, the dynamic range of ways theatre and other art forms can be intentionally practiced as community-building and socially engaged processes.

Throughout my twenties much of my artistic creation and community arts facilitation was rooted in questions of migration and diaspora—my ancestors are from India, and were brought over to Guyana to work in indentured servitude to the British in the 1800s; my parents and many in their generation came to Toronto in the 1980s to flee the civil turmoil that followed the political decolonization of Guyana; my immediate family moved away from the Guyanese-Canadian community of East Scarborough to the then-predominately white town of Whitby, Ontario, in 1995. So, as an emerging art-maker preoccupied with cultural stories, I wanted to know what was lost to people in my communities here in Canada, what had been lost elsewhere, and what was just lost on me.

As my twenties came to a close, I was struck by the work of many Indigenous artists and others working in solidarity with Indigenous artists. They inspired me to apply to my own work an understanding that artists from colonized cultures living in diaspora in Canada were in fact also settlers on colonized land.

And so, when a series of events led me to Train of Thought, I was deeply grateful for the opportunity to be involved. On a personal level I found it fitting that after spending much of the past decade using art to explore diasporic legacies of colonization, I would start the last year of my twenties with a project that challenged me to confront the ongoing legacy of colonialism on the land on which I was born and live.

This narrative I was crafting about how the timing of Train of Thought intersected with my own artistic and political journey became deeper (and a bit spookier) a few days before the start of the project, when my aunt shared a post on Facebook that recalled a bit of West Indian history. It explained that May 8th was the anniversary of the day in 1838 when Indian indentured servants arrived in Guyana.[1] I was intrigued by this coincidence—not just that I happened to share my birthday with a monumental day in my family's migratory history, but that I learned of this history the same week of the date in question, and in the same year that I was to embark on a giant project exploring histories of indigeniety and migration that I had already chosen to imbue with personal resonance. I researched a bit more and I learned that one of the two boats that these migrants came over on was called The Whitby—the same name as the Ontario town where my immigrant family now lived.

I share this story with you because to me it encapsulates what I believe was the essence of Train of Thought: it was intentionally underdefined in its construction. That lack of definition allowed it to take different shapes as the tour progressed, reflecting the will, aesthetics, and values of the hosts at a given stop, and requiring participants to decide what the journey was to be for them—rejecting, celebrating, and creating elements as needed.

Personal stories sit at the intersections of activism, politics, and the performing arts. I believe it is impossible to enter into conversations about (de)colonization and (re)conciliation (and other complex concepts qualified with parentheses) without situating oneself within these wider narratives. This issue of *alt.theatre* dives into many of the personal reflections coming out of Train of Thought. Sam Egan, operations coordinator at Jumblies Theatre and a member of the core producing team of Train of Thought, ruminates on the idea of constructing a "community arts *tour*" and what the place for touring can be in the genre of community-engaged practice that has its history in localism. Iehente Foote and Ange Loft, both multidisciplinary artists from Kahnawake Mohawk Territory, discuss their aspirations and plans for developing a large-scale play with their community that will work to uncover some of the buried histories and stories there. In "Unpacking our Understanding of 'Conduct' on Train of Thought," a group of some of the land's most influential community-engaged artists—Savannah Walling, Sid Bobb, Columpa Bobb, Penny Couchie, Lee Maracle, and Damara Jacobs-Morris—engage in a conversation about what they believe is the place of traditional protocols in artistic work and intercultural settings. Bruce Sinclair reflects on his personal experience on the art of hosting, and Eliza Knockwood offers thoughts on how she wove art, the environment, and intercultural relationship-building into her engagement with Train of Thought.

© Image by Liam Coo, Helah Cooper, and Parker Dirks

I've had the privilege of serving as editor-in-chief of *alt.theatre* since volume 10.1, and have been grateful for the opportunity to curate this space for personal stories and other investigations into the intersections of cultural plurality, social activism, politics, and the stage, in collaboration with a fantastic team of editors, designers, and administrators, and an inspiring roster of contributors. I am now moving away from the role in order to focus on other artistic and community projects, and am pleased to introduce to you *alt.theatre*'s new editor-in-chief, Michelle MacArthur. Michelle brings with her extensive editorial experience and a commitment to equity and diversity in her research and teaching practices. Her doctoral work focused on feminist theatre in English and French Canada; more recently, she was the lead researcher for the Equity in Theatre initiative, a national campaign aimed at redressing inequities in Canadian theatre. This year she is also joining the University of Windsor's School of Dramatic Art as an assistant professor. Michelle has written for *alt.theatre* multiple times and we are eager to see what she will bring in her new role at the helm.

I look forward to staying involved with *alt.theatre* as a member of the editorial board, and I continue to believe in the importance of this journal. While I'm heartened to see theatres, arts service organizations, funding bodies, and arts journals increasingly develop their capacity and skills around issues of equity, projects like *alt.theatre* persist as indispensible sites for centring—and celebrating—people, communities, experiences, and stories that have been for so long relegated to the margins. Thank you for continuing to be a part of this work.

Train of Thought was produced by Jumblies Theatre in collaboration with hundreds of artists and over ninety organizations, including From the Heart, Vancouver Moving Theatre, Vancouver Parks Board, Round House Community Centre, Runaway Moon Theatre, Splatsin First Nation, Ground Zero Productions, Rising Sun Theatre Society, Common Weal Community Arts, ACI Manitoba, Urban Indigenous Theatre, the Ortona Armoury Arts Building, Arts Hub, Kenora Association For Community Living, Community Arts and Heritage Education Project, Municipality of Sioux Lookout, Myths and Mirrors Community Arts, Thinking Rock Community Arts, Mississaugi First Nation, Debajehmujig Storymakers, Aanmitaagzi, White Water Gallery, AlgomaTrad, Jumblies Theatre, Arts4All, MABELLEarts, Making Room, Community Arts Guild, Cedar Ridge Creative Centre, Arts Council Windsor and Region, Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation, Makers and Shakers Society, Canada's Magnetic North Festival, Ottawa Valley Creative Arts Open Studio, Kahnawake Mohawk Territory, Concordia University Theatre and Development Program, Contactivity Seniors Centre, NDG Senior Citizens Council, RECCA, Art Hives / Ruches d'Art, Halifax Circus, The Deanery Project, Abegweit First Nation, Rock Barra Retreat, and others. It was supported by the Canada Council for the Arts, Ontario Arts Council, Toronto Arts Council, Ontario Trillium Foundation, The J.W. McConnell Foundation, Inspirit Foundation, Metcalf Foundation, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, VIA Rail Canada, B.C. Arts Council and other local and provincial funders.

The route, roughly (since some stops happened simultaneously), was[2] as follows: Victoria, unceded Coast Salish territories → Vancouver, unceded Coast Salish territories → Enderby and Splatsin First Nation, unceded Secwepemc territories → Edmonton/amiskaciwaskahikan, Treaty 6 territory → Saskatoon/saskwatoon, Treaty 6 territory → Winnipeg, Treaty 1 territory → Kenora, Treaty 3 territory → Sioux Lookout and Lac Seul First Nation, Treaty 3 territory → Thunder Bay, Robinson Superior Treaty → Nipissing First Nation and North Bay, Robinson Huron Treaty → Wikwemikong First Nation and Manitowaning, unceded Anishinabek territory → Blind River and Mississaugi First Nation, Robinson Huron Treaty → Sudbury, Robinson Huron Treaty → Toronto, Treaty 13 territory → Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation → Six Nations of the Grand River → Windsor → Kingston, Upper Canada Treaties → Ottawa, unceded Algonquin territories → Killaloe and Pikwakanagan First Nation → Kahnawake Mohawk Territory → Montreal/Tiotia:ke, Mohawk Territory → unceded Wabanaki territories → Halifax/K'jipuktuk, unceded Mi'kmaq territories → Ship Harbour, unceded Mi'kmaq territories → Abegweit First Nation → Rock Barra, unceded Mi'kmaq territories

NOTES

1 Although Indian Arrivals Day is now formally observed in Guyana on May 5, it is widely acknowledged that the historical date on which indentured servants arrived in Guyana from India was May 8, 1838.

2 In listing the stops of the Train of Thought route, I have used a combination of colonial place names, Indigenous territory names, and treaty names for places where treaties have been made. I acknowledge that this list is imperfect in its organization. I thank the many teachers, elders, and community members who have helped me in my education of Indigenous place names and of treaty history, in particular those who were part of Train of Thought. I thank Sasha Tate-Howarth for her great assistance in charting these learnings onto this Train of Thought stop list.

Buried Histories and Giant Puppets: Creating a Community Play in Kahnawake

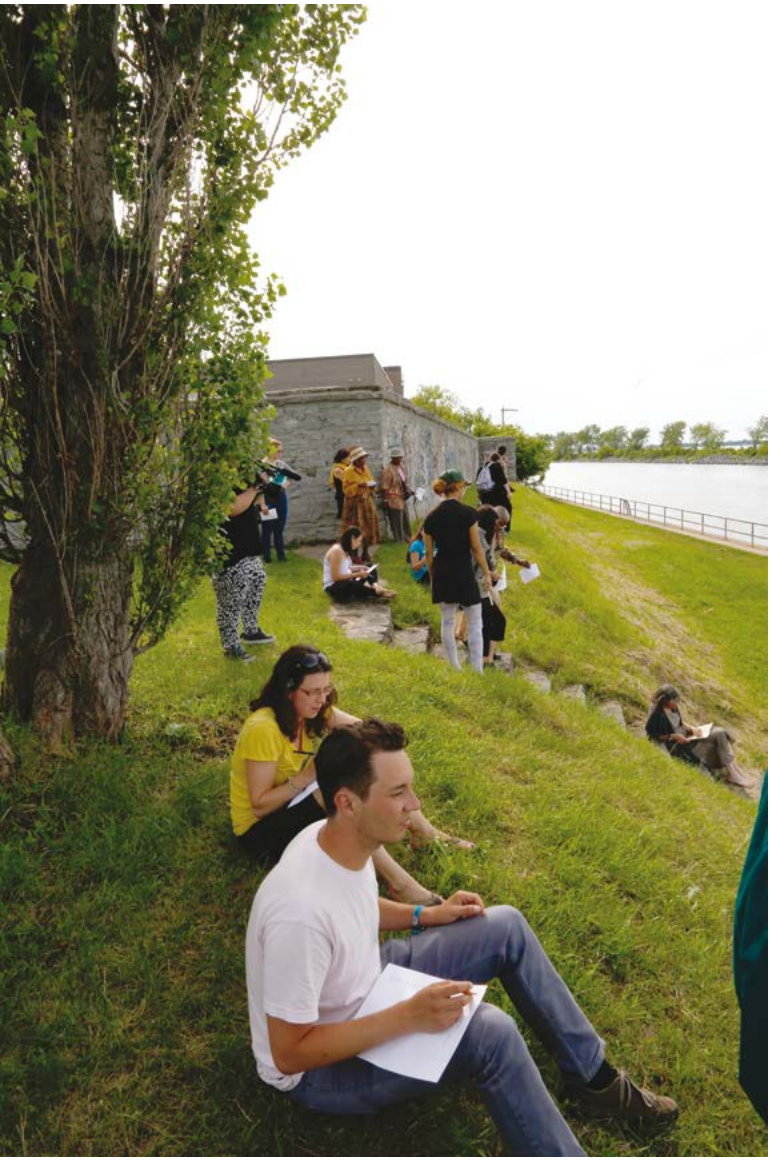
BY
IEHENTE FOOTE

with ANGE LOFT

— Prologue

It all began in Kahnawake, many moons ago. The story of Ange and me began the day I walked into Turtle Island Theatre. Who could've known that we'd still be working together so many years later? I started my theatre career at the ripe age of 11, and it's now funny to think about how I had not wanted to go at all. I was the typical shy outcast who you'd expect to gravitate to theatre and the like, but I only realized I loved it when I saw that everyone could have a role—even ones who weren't on stage. I was sold.

Ange was one of the directors at Turtle Island Theatre when we met. She always had these wild and out-of-the-box ideas that looked amazing—squeezing in an avant-garde musical number, creating a forest on stage. Ange is always



© Liam Coo. Travellers reflect on the land, environment, and histories of Kahnawake Mohawk Territory during a workshop on Train of Thought.

ready to try something different and be bold. That's the way you have to be if you're a theatre child in Kahnawake. Many community members have experienced theatre in Kahnawake, whether they've seen one show or are veteran performers, and there's a lot to be learned from that. It isn't always remembered this way, but theatre is a vital asset in our culture. We've passed down stories through generations; storytelling is in our blood.

Ange and I have worked on many projects in the past, including the recent and groundbreaking show *K-Town Underground* where we worked with community members to bring Mohawk legends to life on stage. The show contained giant fireball heads and strange creatures, and these elements all came from the community itself. *That* is what is truly amazing. People who aren't usually in with the "theatre crowd" came and created these masterpieces in a short time. Why? Because everyone is a storyteller, even when they don't say a word. It's how you create, it's how you move, it's in the details, and it's the stroke of your paintbrush on a cigarette-box sculpture.

I really don't want it only to be children who are involved. I want older women and people with trucks—all ages.

In the summer of 2015, Ange and I, along with hundreds of other artists, were part of the national community arts tour, Train of Thought. Ange had planned the stop in Kahnawake to showcase projects that the Train of Thought travellers were a part of, as well as to bring the community together to spark some interest and ideas for doing a community play in Kahnawake. Ange has since put wheels in motion for a multi-year arts project she will lead with community members that will culminate in a Kahnawake Community Play.

As a person actively involved with the Kahnawake community, I am eager to see what we create, and to see *who* comes to create and share histories of Kahnawake and Turtle Island. More importantly, I want it to continue, and hope that, given the buried histories here, this project helps us to discover what really happened in Kahnawake.

When Ange first approached me with the idea of the community play, it was already destined to reach her vision of giant puppets, boats, trucks, and landscapes. It has been a few years since we did *K-Town Underground*, but I am positive there will be more interest from the community in theatre-making, in storytelling, and in digging up the truth in light of (not so) recent issues that are constant reminders.

— Interview

IEHENTE FOOTE What inspired the idea for doing a community play in Kahnawake?

ANGE LOFT It was a really long time ago–it was seeing pictures and film from Bread and Puppet Theatre in Vermont when I was in university. Then I wanted to make big things, to figure out how and what you do with puppets. Really huge puppets, puppets made for specific stories and communities; I was really into the landscape stuff. Seeing something come over a hill, it was like, "I really wanna do that."

Then I started working with Clay and Paper. I found them right away and learned how to make the big things. I really wanted to make something, but I had to have the visuals first. I went to the Smithsonian for an opportunity—an artist leadership opportunity—with the National Museum of the American Indian. I went looking in their archives. Specifically I was looking at stuff around the Sault Ste. Marie land base because at the time it was a big issue. The land claim issue in Kahnawake—about the giant chunk of land that now has all the suburbs on it—I wanted to see who really *was* around that area, because Kahnawake wasn't there until the 1700s. I wanted to see what was at Kahnawake underground.

Throughout the next three years working on this play, we're gonna gain momentum, gain speed, gain people. I really want to make sure there's something for them to do, or multiple things to do that accumulate towards something that's really big.

Then I dug up all those weird photos. Then there was the time I realized that most of the material in the archives was beaded whimsies that were made for tourists to come visit Kahnawake. And I thought that was really weird because it didn't seem enough, like there was no material culture before. It's just really strange that there seems to be a giant chunk missing in Kahnawake's archaeological history, and now I want to find out about it. I want to do more research in town and see where it takes me—Upstate New York, it seems like. It seems like universities, archives, and churches in Upstate New York have most of the simple base stuff, or it's gone off to places like the Louvre or the Vatican. Yep, so I'm chasing information.

I F So what process—or however you want to call how you go about doing things—what are you thinking the process of the community play will be?

A L Well, so far I know I want to get eight people from Kahnawake who are already involved in community or creation, or people who have any interest in history. I wanna get these eight people together and do a little discussion about what the community play form could look like—give some presentations and examples of that.

Then we'll get into sort of a mini-Artfare Essentials[1]: showing people how to start a community art project by jumping off of their visual art, or whatever their personal practices are. There's a part in Artfare about generative material creation. You have a set of themes, and you have a set goal, which is to more or less make things that generate research material. You make an activity that jumps off of certain themes, and then you actually facilitate it with the group. We'll be spending a good chunk of the time trying out each other's research activities just within the small group.

We'll also work with artist Walter Scott, who will be in for two workshops. With him we'll do two comic workshops: one of them on contemporary Kahnawake experience, and then one of them jumping off of historically based research that will be hanging out at the cultural centre—Kanien'kehá:ka Onkwawén:na Raotitióhkwa Language and Cultural Centre. They have a really good archive of photos, books, and some recordings too. We have two days split between visiting the archives and making art-based research activities to share with everybody.

© Liam Coo. Iehente Foote (foreground) and Ange Loft deliver a presentation in Kahnawake during Train of Thought.

Finally, it ends with inviting the community to a public sharing. We're inviting specific people who have info from Kahnawake. I don't mind if they're younger, historians . . . people who can speak to some of the really cool research topics we find. We will present back some photos or some snippets of a story and see if they have anything else to add from the oral history side of things. And that's it for that phase, really.

Eventually in the following year we will try to get the group back together and see if we can get a few more people involved. Then we'll keep developing songs, keep making, and maybe get into some design stuff—since we'll have this kind of comic framework, the whole thing is kinda neat. Bold. Hard lines. Kinda gives a cool design, you know, good design ideas. That's one of the things I find challenging sometimes, is wanting to see things outside that actually are really *cool looking*. One of the challenges with these big puppets is that they aren't aesthetically my style, so I kind of want to see what happens when we start to make puppets in like, really groovy fashions. Like last time we made the show in Kahnawake we made the puppets out of cigarette boxes, because that's what was around, but the aesthetic was cool and everything was fluorescent, angular and funky, yeah.

Then later, we're talking three years later, we'll turn it into something kind of like a drop-in day camp, something that invites

community to come in and participate. Hopefully by then we'll have a partnership with Turtle Island Theatre Company, and hopefully by then they'll have a new space. I would love to see this as a side focus for a summer program; but, as much as possible, I really don't want it only to be children who are involved. I want older women and people with trucks—all ages. We have to make sure people are able to move stuff, to make things and have real construction ability.

I F I think that's the awesome thing in Kahnawake: people have a bunch of skills but they just don't have an outlet to use them; they don't know what they can do. I think that would be really great to see.

A L It takes a lot to build puppet frameworks and stuff, but it's easy.

I F I know you do a lot of different projects and not in any conventional way; can you tell us about some other projects that you've done that are similar to this?

A L Hmm, the two that stand out are Thinking Rock's The Rivers Speak Project, a huge multi-year, multi-arts project where they're collecting stories of the river. There's a kinda big river that's in Algoma region, goes through Thessalon and Blind River. There's this one particular river they were talking about, it's between the Mississagi First Nation and this community called Blind River. I was working with them helping to create a puppet of this big water serpent, the horned serpent in some of their legends on that side. It was really cool because we had older women from the both communities sitting down together, cutting out scales, talking, and bringing in photo books to spark inspiration. They had a little individual recording section and informal story telling circles . . . The way they managed to get this information was just bonkers. It was a huge amount of information. It's all going up next year in the summer. So that's another example of a multi-year project. Some points of contention showed up in those pieces. There were different perspectives on issues—definitely some cultural stuff, like people who had never been on a reserve. It was surprising to see a group from the reserve working in the town; it was a good experience.

Then the other one was in Nipissing First Nation at Aanmitaagzi[2] when they did *Dances of Resistance*, a dance-based performance. It included stories, little narrative snippets, and walked people through this huge field out by a high school—through a baseball diamond, through a bunch of small places with site-specific installations. That was really fun. On that job I got to design and help people pull together various community designs. They already run so many design projects, so it was my job to unify the aesthetic and also co-youth-manage. They had a bunch of summer students and a lot of them were on the design team, so I had to continually find design tasks for everybody, which is kind of a big part of this whole process—program planning and finding spots for people that want to jump in all the time. Throughout the next three years working on this play, we're gonna gain momentum, gain speed, gain people. I really want to make sure there's something for them to do, or multiple things to do that accumulate towards something that's really big.

K-town Underground—that weird show we made—was validating because so many people participated who I didn't know were going to come, and then the community actually came to see it and it was like not who I was expecting . . . People came who actually are politically active in Kahnawake. It was a different crew than a regular theatre performance; it made me think that there's something there—that there's something to telling stories about Kahnawake. There's something that I wanna link to an interest in community, history, language, and cultural aspects of stuff, but also to theatrical creation. They've been divided in Kahnawake for quite a while, where the theatre people were doing Western creation without necessarily too much community or local writer content. So now I'm trying to validate that side of things: like, there are cool stories here. What do you want to do with it?

I F Well, I really like that you found out that we're missing a huge chunk of history and archaeological finds; I find that very intriguing, and now I'm extra excited to do this project. I also really like doing strange things with bodies and movement, so incorporating that into all art is really a good idea, and I know you'd probably be down for that. When we did *K-town Underground*, there were a few theatre people and a few people from the general community, who were amazing to work with, and different age groups. A few years have passed since we did it and I think people are more aware of other issues, so I think other people will be interested in contributing—actually doing it and attending. So I can't wait to see what happens in the end, when we're finished.

A L I've been doing all this research on Kateri[3] too—all of this bizarre history, with the funky religion, with these dark weird funky religious practices, and that divide. Even walking on different sides of the street from each other. My father remembers a time where the Catholics would walk on one side of the highway, and the Protestants on the other. This was in the late fifties so it's really close, and that's what's bonkers. This memory is still super alive, and everyone's only 70.

— Afterword

Our history is rich. Although the ways of documenting stories and objects sometimes seem invisible, our custom of oral history and storytelling lasts through generations. Many people have questions about Kahnawake, some don't want to know, and some are scared to find out. Developing this community play through the next few years of artistic exploration will help us begin to find answers. I myself can't wait to start the process this June, and dive into the archives alongside Ange and other community members to dig up the buried truths that we walk on.

NOTES

1 Artfare Essentials is Jumblies Theatre's immersive week-long introductory program that explores art that engages with and creates community,

2 Aanmitaagzi is a multidisciplinary professional artist-run company serving artists and community members from Nipissing First Nation and the surrounding area, linked to provincial and national networks, led by co-Artistic Directors Penny Couchie and Sid Bobb.

3 Kateri Tekakwitha, the "Lily of the Mohawks," was the first Native American to be canonized by the Catholic Church. She is the inspiration behind Ange Loft's wearable art line, Cult of Kateri: Armor and Accessories.

© Liam Coo. Braiden Houle, Lee Maracle, Iehente Foote, and Mackenzie Konecny celebrating at Aanmitaagzi's Big Medicine Studio after the production of *Beneath Us!* during the Train of Thought stop in Nipissing First Nation.

UNPACKING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF "CONDUCT"

BY
SAVANNAH WALLING

with SID BOBB, COLUMPA BOBB, PENNY COUCHIE, AND LEE MARACLE
With CONTRIBUTIONS BY DAMARA JACOBS-MORRIS

> “My grandfather said to me, we introduce ourselves so we know where things come from, not to separate us, but to find out ways we can link together.”
>
> – AARON NELSON-MOODY, TRACKS SYMPOSIUM

© Tom Quirk. Christie Lee Charles talks about the history of the land in Stanley Park, Vancouver, Coast Salish territories during TRACKS Symposium.

In May 2015, most of the contributors to this article travelled across Canada on Train of Thought. We are artists associated with two arts organizations who co-produced events specifically created for the Train of Thought national tour: Aanmitaagzi from Nipissing First Nation (Ontario) and Vancouver Moving Theatre from Vancouver / Coast Salish Territories (B.C.) The once-in-a-lifetime journey carried wonders and gifts; it also carried difficulties and missteps. This article has prompted us to sift through dense territory as we seek out ways we can link together. We've begun unpacking some of what transpired, sharing with each other the why's and ways Vancouver Moving Theatre (and their partners) moved toward engaging with protocol(s), while Aanmitaagzi chose to disengage from formal protocol.

The words of the article are woven together from a variety of sources—including a phone conversation between Savannah Walling, Sid and Columpa Bobb, Penny Couchie, and Lee Maracle; video interviews by Train of Thought documentarian Don Bouzek; and written communication from Damara Jacobs-Morris.

— Protocol and Good Relations

SAVANNAH We raced so swiftly on Train of Thought, surfing from activity to activity, we rarely had space to reflect on recurring problems or challenges. In my understanding this was a journey of reconciliation and collaboration through participatory art-making between First Nations and settler/immigrant artists and communities.

COLUMPA Activity took precedence over the inner actions of the goals and objectives. Everywhere we went, people had different ideas about what Train of Thought was. Somehow I missed the memo about this trip being about "coming out of the shadows of colonization," and I kind of felt bad at that point. It was really interesting to have that as our launching pad. But everywhere we've been, the hosts have a different idea of what Train of Thought is. I couldn't answer any of the questions about how we come out from under the shadows of colonization, because it's not in the past. It's hard to, when you're in the throes of something.

SID The intention expressed to me was communities coming together to see what each of us is doing, to share what we're doing, to engage with each other as artists involved in or related to community arts. Part of my excitement was wanting to reflect and share our collective barometers of where we imagined the country is.

SAVANNAH Most of the questions and issues arising throughout the journey, we never had time to unpack on the road. Divergent perspectives on "Protocol," "Conduct," and "Process" emerged again and again. Multiple understanding and teachings were swimming around the subject of protocol, often co-existing. I've heard protocol referred to as a body of laws, part of governance and relationship to the land, and government-to-government relationships.

COLUMPA The understanding I have of protocol is that it's used during times of strife. We invoke our HIGHEST discipline and our STRICTEST structures, so that we don't kill each other during negotiated and mediated truces. What they call high protocol is between two houses of two nations who want to kill each other. The protocol keeps us disciplined and structured so that we can see our ways through the strife and come out on the other side with open hands, which means in friendship. Now if we're invoking high protocol between friends, my first question is "Why are we doing that?" Why should we want to work through this friendship to come to something else?

SAVANNAH I've also heard "protocol(s)" used to describe ways of approaching your work (how you take care of the people, the space, and the art); ways of practising different disciplines (theatre, music, cooking, etc.); ways of showing respect; agreements on ways to work and collaborate. I've heard of implicit, informal, and formal protocols. I'm told that Coast Salish protocol governs the right to perform certain songs and dances, the way they occur and the passing of inherited usage-rights to lands and waterways. I'm learning, in conversation with my co-writers, that protocol can be hurtful if used as a barrier, to gate-keep, to exclude, or to disenfranchise children from their birthright. It can be hurtful if protocol takes precedence over individuals, replaces policy, or is used to take away rights and freedoms or to pressure people into doing something that doesn't feel right. It can open the door to dysfunction, elitism, and exclusionary, divisive practices. Harms happen through bad intention, through ignorance, carelessness, or haste. Negotiating protocols can involve misunderstandings and missteps. However, in the "paradox of the misstep" (a phrase by Will Weigler), tensions arising when moments of different understandings or intentions rub up against each other can also act as generative catalysts. What is foundational is relationship building. So is taking the time to build relationships.

LEE What I think is a valuable conversation: "Did we establish good relations wherever we went?" And if we did not, if we don't feel like we did, then what were some of the troubles? For then it is about relationships—which is an Indigenous concern, whether it is something foreign or something familiar, to take care of our relationships.

— Vancouver Moving Theatre (VMT): Vancouver/Coast Salish Territories, B.C.

SAVANNAH Vancouver Moving Theatre co-produced with multiple partners TRACKS: the 7th Canadian Community Play & Art Symposium (In Vancouver and Enderby, B.C.) and—within the symposium—The Big House, a community gathering and cultural feast.[1] From day one, the symposium focused on collaborative community-engaged art that builds relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. From day one, the focus of The Big House was to honour founding Coast Salish, urban Aboriginal, and immigrant communities of Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. The symposium was born over ten months in one try. The Big House was born over five years via a series of community-engaged investigations. Both involved developmental processes new to us. Both involved a mix of new relationships and relationships of trust established over many years. Both were immensely affected by transformative events taking place in Vancouver. Its city council proclaimed June 2013–2014 as a Year of Reconciliation: a time to acknowledge the impact of Canada's residential schools upon our communities and begin the work of building new respectful relationships between Aboriginal peoples and the city. For three days in September 2013, Vancouver was host city to Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission: the

sixth of seven national events to educate Canadians about the history and legacy of residential schools. Nine months later, city council voted unanimously to acknowledge that Vancouver was founded on traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations: ancestral lands never ceded through treaty, war, or surrender. Council directed staff to work with representatives from the three nations to develop appropriate protocols to use in conducting city business that respects the traditions of welcome, blessing, and acknowledgement of the territory.

Residents are grappling with our history as Canadians and how to be part of healthier change. As Big House collaborator Paula Jardine said, "History is not just the past. The past is erupting all around us and showing it is very much present." How do communities repair damaged and broken relationships and forge new ones where none existed? Events such as the Talking Stick Festival's symposium on "protocol in the arts" are helping Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists to better understand these changes and ways we situate ourselves in the traditional territories. For over a decade, VMT has been collaborating with, presenting, and learning from Indigenous cultural presenters and artists: among others, Bob Baker, Mike and Mique'l Dangeli, Rosemary Georgeson, Renae Morriseau, Woodrow (Woody) Morrison, and Wes Nahanee. They are helping VMT learn about honouring indigenous cultural protocols and acknowledging the land on which we live and work. We have successes, missteps and new challenges.

As the partners embarked upon TRACKS symposium, we brought Renae Morisseau (Cree/Saulteaux) onto the organizing team and engaged Damara Jacobs-Morris (Squamish) as coordinator. We consulted with artists and cultural advisors from the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations to hear their response to our symposium plans and help us understand how local protocols should happen and respectful ways to incorporate other nations coming onto this territory. These questions were especially important to the producing partners given the history of our relationships with Coast Salish artists and presenters, and the reality that the City of Vancouver now has an intergovernmental relationship with these three local First Nations. From these conversations emerged an offer from Damara Jacobs-Morris to undertake a more formal approach: to enact Coast Salish protocol to open and close the symposium. The partners accepted this offer, which we understood would take us into new, uncharted territory and deepen existing relationships.

DAMARA: It was our honour to share with TRACKS Symposium delegates the ancient protocols of the Squamish peoples, who have similar cultural practices with the Tsleil-Waututh and Musqueam. As the local First Nations, we welcomed delegates to our shared unceded traditional territory. The Vancouver TRACKS Symposium Family after much negotiation decided to enact protocol instead of simply discussing it. Therefore the entire Vancouver portion of the symposium was treated as ceremonial Work. We followed the rigours of ceremony and in keeping with our tradition we called Witnesses. Being "called to Witness" is a great honour, for you become a part of the ceremony and carry the responsibility of being a record keeper. We respectfully asked that delegates honour our ways while on our territory as we were creating history through oral tradition. Throughout the symposium, the traditions of the Coast Salish peoples were honoured. During the opening ceremony, traditional speakers conducted an Acknowledgment of Place, Calling of Witnesses, and official welcome to visitors.

I was in charge of protocol. I acted as the family matriarch, and my family in this case is the steering committee (jil weaving, Marie Lopes, Renae Morriseau, Savannah Walling, and Terry Hunter). Through my role within my own community, Squamish Nation, I have been honoured with the teachings and assist in "running the floor." I hired the Traditional Speakers: Wesley Nahanee (Squamish), Gabriel George (Tsleil-Waututh), and Shane Pointe (Musqueam). All three of these men have been trained in our Longhouses. After discussion with them and given the spirit of the symposium, we decided this is the best way to enact our protocol.

SAVANNAH In contrast to this, we took a more informal approach with VMT's community feast. In the words of First Nations rapporteur Kwasuun Sarah Vedan, "The Big House (VMT), like local traditional Aboriginal "Big Houses," is a gathering place where Coast Salish Protocol and acknowledgement of the territories takes place; it is a place where special honour is given to guests and local individuals for work in the community; it is a time to listen to Elders, Artists, Teachers and other Leaders; it is a time to visit, laugh, learn, and network; extending one's neighbourhood reach."[2] The Big House involved rehearsed elements, unrehearsed ceremonial elements, planned elements and spontaneous elements. Its creation involved negotiating communication protocols, performance protocols, culinary protocols, cultural protocols (Coast Salish, urban Aboriginal, Ukrainian, Chinese), and social and cultural divides within the community. It took several tries to figure out a respectful inclusionary strategy within a context of limited seating. Each Big House feast was successful, but none was perfect and all came with learnings.

— Aanmitaagzi: Nipissing First Nation, Ontario (Treaty 9)

COLUMPA You can't colonize a faction of country: you colonize a whole country. We're all colonized. We all have colonized thinking. We're all institutionalized peoples inside this country. You cannot colonize a piece of a country. That's impossible. You can't remove entire nations from the rest of the citizenry for 150 years and not create an unconscious belief that we are to be removed. So when we talk about decolonization and reconciliation, reconciliation has to first happen with self. In order to do that, every colonized person in this country has to understand where they are situated inside the system of colonization, how they're being used, and how they're using others: as a colonized citizen of this young country.

In terms of protocol, there's a political issue here that is an internal issue for our peoples. That is a reconciliation that has to happen internally. We haven't had time to approach this philosophically with each other as nation, community, or family. This has not been a reality! So how can we, with any confidence or truth, tell others what protocol is and what it means between us—as native people and as native people with non-native people—when we haven't had an opportunity to talk about, re-learn, accept, amend, or even throw it away if need be? If we have to name it before we reclaim it, we'll never know. And all of us will move forward in broken cultural pursuits in a timeline dictated by colonial pressures.

© Tom Quirk. Round dance during Vancouver Moving Theatre's production of The Big House.

SID The initial experience I had with protocol was preparing to go to Vancouver. The framework I put it in for myself was "best practices." Leading up to arriving in Vancouver, there was a great focus on things related to protocol and reconciliation, but they were being put into a project and a time frame that really didn't have the space or capacity to meaningfully engage with those two things. It was definitely very meaningful to see my cousin at the TRACKS symposium and to hear our songs and dances. I brought my son. For him to be there and then to be sent off by the dancers and singers that came out to the train station was very meaningful.

SAVANNAH This was the TRACKS symposium leaving-taking ceremony. We invited cultural groups from the Musqueam, Tsleil-Waututh, and Squamish Nations and the Downtown Eastside to gather at the train station. Cultural speakers gathered at the Marker of Change Monument, to send the travellers off in a good way—with words, songs and dances—to feel supported in working to connect communities across Canada.

SID But there are gaps between contemporary practices. I come from a fractured family that is coming back together. We got to see my cousins dance [Gabriel George and the Children of Takaya]. To bring my son was a chance to situate him within his ancestral land, people, and art forms. This narrowed the divide between myself, my son, and our family and dances.

But there were also aspects that felt like little bombs were going off, and all these intentions and outcomes didn't always match. During the witnessing ceremony I felt alienated from my family and traditions as I watched other non-Aboriginals participating in a ceremony with my family. I was happy for the community, but the disconnect between myself and my family and culture was exacerbated and was a painful reminder of the alienation within my own life and community. I think there's a lot to be considered when carrying out this type of work.

COLUMPA Penny and Sid, the artistic directors of Aanmitaagzi, left the journey partway so that they could prepare for when Train of Thought arrived in their community. It was good that they were on Train of Thought first, because the project in Nipissing really was responding to the journey they'd been on with the rest of us. It was the first time where Train of Thought travellers had responded to the travelling in their home community.

SID When we were thinking about Train of Thought we had this opportunity to engage with the Dream Big Conference [organized by Clayton Windat]. We invited people into an exploration and investigation that we were doing with the community.

PENNY When we got to Nipissing and were bringing people here, I didn't focus on protocol. It was really important to both Sid and me that we sought out a forum for the greatest degree of inclusivity. Sometimes the avenue of protocol has barriers between nations and those who are disenfranchised. When we got here, there was real desire to say, Okay, this is what we are doing here, this is what we are doing in our family and place. This is what we do here in the studio: invite people

into an exchange of what we do here. And to play—there was a desire to play for a few days.

LEE I was telling Sid, "Oh, that looks like *our* story you guys are doing." And he says, "Well, it should, you told it to me." So it became a source of great pride and dignity. To be included from 3000 miles away in an art production with two nations of people and artists and a whole community that's Anishinaabe was so beautiful for me. I think it has to do with that we have an understanding and we talk about things and we gain a deeper understanding to make sure that the human soul and the human heart are always the first considered.

SAVANNAH The place I felt culturally "at home" on the trip was the experience at Aanmitaagzi. Although Penny and Sid did not use formal cultural practices in the traditional way, their clarity of intention and their process of inclusive, recurring circle conversations were close in spirit to The Big House. There was time and space to include the whole circle of travellers in a way that just wasn't possible on so much of the trip and became less and less possible the further east we went.

PENNY How much intelligence there is in a strong circle. Sometimes the first time the circle goes around . . . the surface. The second time goes to a deeper level. The penny drops and keeps dropping . . . and then continues with each round. You let questions hang in the air, let others answer, let an answer exist in the space, taking from our experiences, values, and ideas. You allow people to have their own world views and paradigms, connect heart and head. It's happened for hundreds of years.

SID When we came to North Bay, we tried to simplify the agenda and set up achievable goals. At this moment, I am not focused on historic cultural protocols. There's a lot of work that needs to be done internally, as an Aboriginal First Nation. There is a web that needs to be untangled: a history of exclusion, and a loss of our representative inclusiveness within our community. We had three days and we ate together, made together, and dreamed together and investigated and explored these ideas, then created an event that the audience could witness.

COLUMPA In two days we put up this show [*Beneath Us*[3]]—37 minutes of dance and theatre and puppetry. I think working that quickly is something every artist should do whether they work in community art or not, because it's a good reminder of how much time we waste doubting ourselves and others in any artistic practice. It was a brilliant piece of performance that day one was animated and day two was performed.

LEE In building [Aanmitaagzi], Sid and Penny had their elders' support in the family. I think that makes the young people really sovereign in their territories and sovereign in their relations with others, and able to make decisions like these. When the youth are supported by the elders to make all those decisions and be supported in those decisions, things go well.

COLUMPA It was very clear that we were using arts practices to build community between, through, and among us. And everybody felt like they belonged to Big Medicine studio by the end of it.

LEE Even the children.

COLUMPA So it was very clear [in putting up *Beneath Us*] "this is what art can do" . . . Although I enjoyed The Big House, it felt like the culmination of work they've been doing over time. Whereas here, we built the show, right? In Vancouver, it was the witnessing of the work that had already been done: a totally different process, but just as valuable. Cause it FELT good to see all the different kinds of people involved in the same ceremony: to see the Ukrainian people and the West Coast people and the Asian people and the settler-Euro people and to be brought to this fun, peaceful method of feasting. But it's a different process. We're witnessing the declaration of the work that's already been done, whereas in North Bay, we did the work together.

You know what I thought was a highlight during Train of Thought? There was a lot of talk about sharing, which to me was mostly how to be more respectful about using Aboriginal culture. The only two times we had cultural sharing from non-Indigenous people was the Vancouver event at The Big House and Kelty [McKerracher] sharing a story [from the Selkie people] in Toronto. In the entire journey across the country, it allowed me to see that there was a very skewed perception of sharing when it comes to Indigenous people working with non-Indigenous people. But it made me feel really good because I know it CAN happen, because it happened twice. And Kelty only did it because of conversations I had with her and she says, "You know, I've heard a lot of native stories but I haven't actually shared." Because I told her, "You know, I want to know your stories too. We're curious people. I don't know any Scottish stories. And I have Scottish blood in my ancestry!" So there's something disturbing about settler people not valuing their own selves, culturally speaking.

— Packing for a Future Train of Thought

COLUMPA [Indigenous people] haven't had a chance to talk to each other across the nation about protocol: Is it useful in this time? If so, how is it useful? To me, the most important thing is relationship-building: in building those relationships, we garner an inter-cultural understanding of one another, even if it's small. But if we're just concerned with the intellectual rules of engagement, we can't crack the surface of that small, yet significant heart knowledge we all bring to the table in our own way.

Before invoking activities of protocol, you need to learn the laws and governance principles of the place. Do you agree with them and want to follow them? You gotta know why you're doin' it. You gotta keep the steering wheel in your hands. If you intend to do these things, you need to know more about the context and history to know how this came about. The foundation needs to be laid as to why the ceremony is taking place so people can really understand its purpose and what a witness is: that it's a lifetime to recall in case someone goes asking. You always have different kinds of witnesses—so they will witness different things.

LEE The time to talk about protocols would be *before* leaving for something like Train of Thought. It would be a discussion between Canadians who are on the train and how they are going to be received and to receive First Nations people as they travel along on the journey. And they would

have to talk with a person from each of the communities. And the first question would be: Do we need to follow specific protocols? That literally means: Does that community consider us foreigners?

SID I often imagined what this trip would look like if an Indigenous organization headed up this project.

SAVANNAH One of the thoughts that came forward during Train of Thought emerged out of conversation with Columpa and Eliza Knockwood: the idea of a Canoe of Thought—Train of Thought being the inhalation, and the exhalation being a Canoe of Thought led by an Aboriginal organization.

COLUMPA I wanted to retrace our steps across the country, so that I could record the sounds of silence in all its geographical changes and images of the landscape. Eliza suggested the canoe.

SID The initial spirit of the project—bringing us together as community members, as artists, as organizations, as practitioners, as humans of this country—was absolutely incredible. Many of the initial goals of seeing each other, hearing from each other, working together—I think a lot of those were met, exceeded.

PENNY Like Sid, for me some of my most memorable times were when we were being received by someone, and when we were being sent off. We got to Edmonton and it was so late at night. And they were singing hand-drum songs outside when we pulled up. And offering us bread when we first came in: it was such a nice receiving. There were lots of those moments—it was in the way that you invite someone into your home. It was those moments that were so very great.

SID I am in a process of re-connecting to my family, to my communities, to my practice. In terms of a barometer, what it brought to light was that there is much work to do to reintegrate who we are into the way we live. And how to connect all this—community arts with some of these long-standing practices. I think as I move closer toward integrating these, the impacts will be far-reaching.

COLUMPA Regardless of all or any of the hardships and challenges that we faced, there was a connective tissue constructed between communities across the entire nation. And that is forever priceless and invaluable. And it's up to us individually to keep those tissues alive so that we can build on that and it will become what it becomes.

The legitimizing of community-engaged art happens because of this trip. It's huge and we should not take a break from this. I think there needs to be a revisiting of this journey by all participants; and it's going to take a long time.

The relationships we've been able to build with people along the way have been, I think, the most beautiful thing for me: to meet people across the country. I kind of want to calendar the next ten years, just based on people that I've met on Train of Thought, to come back together. If I seriously want to do community-engaged art, there are all these communities I can work with. It's gonna take a couple of decades before I can work with every one of them again. But the beauty in what the trip was is that we created this kind of living opportunity to connect, to re-connect.

SAVANNAH After the Vancouver stop ended and I was no longer acting as a host, I joined Train of Thought as a traveller, pondering on my new role. I came to realize that my task was to witness the journey: to watch and listen and carry in my heart the work taking place around me. My responsibility is to carry the messages back to my home community, and to be prepared—for the rest of my life—to recall and share what I've heard and seen.

LEE The thing that excited me is that this couldn't happen at any other time or place in history. All the groups that have now met would not have met at any other period of time than this one. So Train of Thought was the first foray into a new historical period.

COLUMPA Train of Thought: where Indigenous artists and companies stood in solidarity with non-Indigenous artists and companies. Each of us joined together to birth a community of our own; traveling side by side into communities across this great expanse of diverse land and water to meet and greet the creative and critically thinking people who make up a small and significant part of this nation of nations we call Canada. Change is automatic and constant. We can let it happen to us and be swallowed by its ebb and flow, or we can participate in the change occurring and direct the change, carve a path to the future we desire and need. Train of Thought chose the latter.

NOTES

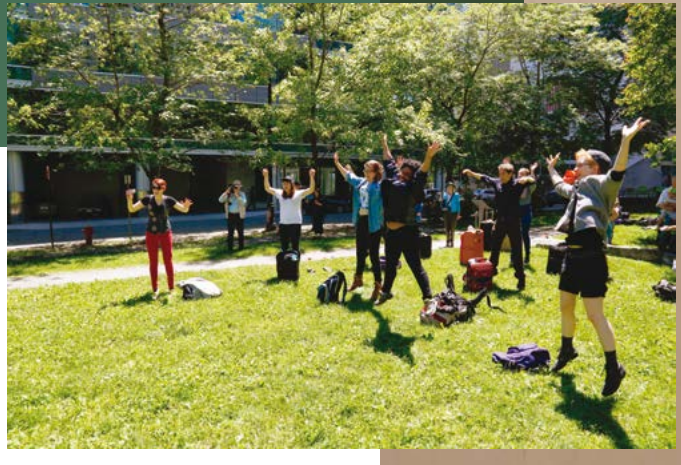
1 Tracks: 7th Canadian Community Play & Art Symposium (May 10-15, 2015) in Vancouver/Coast Salish Territories and Enderby, B.C./ Secwepemcúl'ecw) was produced by Vancouver Moving Theatre, Roundhouse Community Arts and Recreation Centre and Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation in collaboration with Runaway Moon Theatre B.C. and Jumblies Theatre (Ontario). *The Big House* (May 8-10, 2015) was produced by Vancouver Moving Theatre in cooperation with the Association of United Ukrainian Canadians, eight community partners, the TRACKS Symposium and Jumblies Theatre (Ontario).

2 Kwasuun Sarah Vedan, *Vital Journeys*, Report on TRACKS 7th Canadian Community Play & Art Symposium, 10-12 May 2015, Coast Salish Territories/Vancouver, p. 11.

3 *Beneath Us!* is a show that was developed and performed by 45 people, including members of Aanmitaagzi, the Nipissing North Bay community, the Dream Big Conference community, and the Train of Thought community. With the collaborative choreography of Penny Couchie and direction of Sid Bobb, *Beneath Us!* tells the story of the human and cedar contract, passed down from Sid, via his mother Lee, from the Salish soil and imagination, telling it the same, but different.

WHAT IS A "COMMUNITY ARTS TOUR"?

BY
BY SAM EGAN



© Liam Coo. *above* Sam Egan at a Train of Thought gathering in Pikwanagan First Nation. *left* Students of Concordia University's Theatre and Development program welcome Train of Thought to Montreal, Mohawk Territory.

In the past, the community-engaged artistic work of Jumblies Theatre—and that of many companies working in a similar mode—has often relied on long residencies allowing strong relationships to build between the company (and the artists it employs) and the community in which it resides. When successful, it is through these relationships that the artistic integrity of the project and value to its participants and community are ensured. The privilege of time was lost in our cross-country travelling project of 2015, Train of Thought, which by its nature could not dwell long in one place—as the tour stopped in over twenty locations in less than two months.

© Liam Coo. Train of Thought travellers welcome New Brunswick artists joining the tour in Moncton, Wabanaki territory.

My role in the production of Train of Thought began over the year previous to the tour, working as part of an ever-growing team wrestling with logistics of traversing a continent. I also joined the tour for most of its journey, trying to apply and adapt the plans we had crafted over the previous months. This was not always a propitious position from which to reflect on how Train of Thought engaged with the various artistic challenges posed by touring, but in hindsight it provides insight into Train of Thought's conception of touring as a valuable artistic method.

In the planning of the tour, its form was intentionally ill-defined; this allowed it to be reactive, moulded by its travellers and what they uncovered on the journey. This fluidity in form may explain why, before setting out, I was often stumped when faced with the question, "What is Train of Thought?" In a vain bid to disguise my own ignorance, I often made recourse to the response, "It's a community arts tour"; but this is an unsatisfying answer. Given Jumblies' typical style of work—durational and local—and the absence of much precedent for touring a project of this kind, the phrase is unilluminating. Now that Train of Thought has made its own difficult journey from collective fantasy to shared reality, we can better attempt to describe it, as well as my woolly appellation.

Intuitively, it seems unnecessary to uproot a community project from the place that inspired it in order to tour it like a more conventional play. The production on tour is diminished in comparison to its home stand. For the touring of a community arts project to be warranted, the journey itself should influence what is being produced. This is not such a remote idea: one of the many pleasures of Train of Thought was the opportunity to share ideas across a geographically dispersed community of artists working on projects with common ideas and practices. In conversations, these luminaries frequently proposed the idea that a good community project's final form is dictated by the process of its creation, or, as one of my fellow travellers phrased it, "If a project turns out how you imagined it before you started, you've done it wrong."

Train of Thought satisfied this requirement in a novel way: the journey itself was part of the artistic creation and would adapt and react as it unfolded. This extends beyond the ongoing art activities that occurred while in transit, and defines the act of touring as an artistic product that is designed and curated by the artists engaged in the tour. Such a definition is not merely semantic: identifying the acts of travelling, extending and receiving hospitality, and sharing experience as a group as part of the creative process of Train of Thought allowed the tour to critically engage its themes in a unique way.

The importance of identifying the act of travelling as part of our creation is especially salient when considering the tour's central theme of cross-cultural relations and (re)conciliation. The process of touring is naturally rich with host-guest relationships through which we could reflect on this theme. We saw

Train of Thought satisfied this requirement in a novel way: THE JOURNEY ITSELF WAS PART OF THE ARTISTIC CREATION AND WOULD ADAPT AND REACT AS IT UNFOLDED. This extends beyond the ongoing art activities that occurred while in transit, and defines the act of touring as an artistic product that is designed and curated by the artists engaged in the tour.

this, for example, between, Jumblies Theatre and its partners: as the lead producer of the tour, Jumblies would provide a loose framework of what might occur at any given stop—ceremonies of arrival and departure, the sharing of food in a performative feast. The hosting partners freely interpreted and curated each stop, immersing travellers in these events on arrival. Another host-guest relation existed between local people and visitors: hosts acted as guides to their guests, sharing knowledge and understanding of their home and often going as far as to open their own homes to travellers. And, of course, there is the host-guest relationship between the First People of the land we traversed and those who have arrived more recently, whether through their own emigration or that of their ancestors. Navigating relationships between hosts and guests is not a simple task for all involved; travelling with or encountering Train of Thought provided the container for these relationships to develop and be explored in parallel with one another, with revelatory results.

In light of the proposed value and desirability of a "community arts tour," it is (relatively) uncontentious to say that for the moniker to be accurate, the tour must work with a community. The idea of what constitutes a community is not similarly uncontroversial; however, Train of Thought engaged, in different ways, groups that could be labelled as "communities," and each presents a challenge to what we might consider good community arts practice. First, there is the intentional community formed by the travellers and hosts who were most consistently involved in Train of Thought. From this perspective, artistic merit might be thought of as the way the tour provided travellers with an experience that extended beyond professional development or a networking opportunity: that is, how the shared experiences of travel and exploration built an ephemeral community. This is unusual for community arts, and perhaps is only available in the atypical situation of a tour. When a community arts project is resident in a single location, it is obliged to focus on the people who live currently in that place; when travelling, that obligation is inverted, providing an exciting and uncommon angle for the examination of what community is and could be. The rootlessness of a tour could risk diminishing the relevance of the work "produced." The political and social power of community arts lies in its ability to respond to extant communities and their own challenges; therefore, the value of the development of an internal community, as seemed to happen during Train of Thought, is somewhat limited to the extent to which its outcomes can be externalized.

NAVIGATING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN HOSTS AND GUESTS IS NOT A SIMPLE TASK FOR ALL INVOLVED; travelling with or encountering Train of Thought provided the container for these relationships to develop and be explored in parallel with one another, with revelatory results.

We planned to invite local participants to join the Train at every stop of the tour. It quickly became apparent that in order to make this invitation meaningful, it would have to be extended through Jumblies' local partners, who were at home in places unfamiliar to Jumblies and much of the travelling party. Each community prepared for the arrival of Train of Thought, and the form of the tour responded to the outcome of these preparations. From this point of view, a community arts tour can be seen as a succession of responses to a question proposed by the tour's creators. Indeed, Train of Thought defined a set of questions to explore—of the land, the people, and the possibilities for the future—which were deemed vital enough to warrant such a great undertaking.

This structure does offer challenges that the tour's designers and travellers must respond to. First, how can we meaningfully share ownership of a tour with local participants who will see it arrive and leave their home communities over the course of days? And second, how can the questions asked by the project be made relevant to a community that had no role in their curation? These issues are not unique to touring projects; community arts must often find the right balance between responsiveness to community and the creative will of the lead artists. It does seem, though, that the nature of touring exacerbates the challenge.

The continually evolving legacy of Train of Thought will go some way in demonstrating the value of the tour for the different communities it engaged. The central part of this legacy is the many relationships that grew out of the development and experience of the tour: between Jumblies and new partners, between travellers, between organizations and people in each place. In all cases, it seems improbable that these connections would have been forged in the absence of the tour. In seeding these relationships, Train of Thought becomes the earliest research phase of numerous projects across the country.

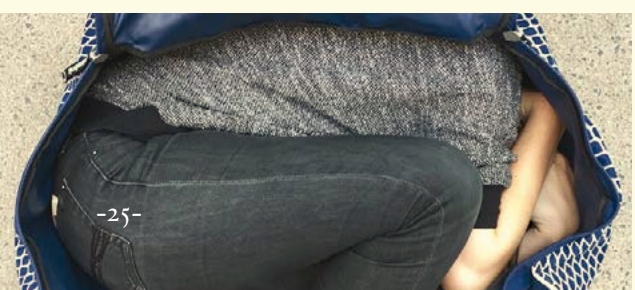
A final idea of community is contained within the proposition that all Train of Thought participants, and all possible participants, are joined in a common community. This is a potentially dangerous direction in which to travel for two reasons. First, it resembles the cultivation of national values and identity which have been, and continue to be, weapons of exclusion and oppression. We might imagine that on this scale a community arts tour can ask who the victims of this myth are and attempt to form relationships in spite of it. Beyond this, it is not the place of this kind of tour to arrogate the right to class and define its participants. Second, the idea of a common community risks detaching a project (whether a tour or otherwise) from localism, as it aims for a kind of universality. As discussed above, being grounded in what was local at each stop was vital in producing Train of Thought, and it seems, especially when touring across great distances, that if community art fails to do this, it risks becoming simply art with participation. However, it is possible to imagine circumstances in which this loss of localism is not a concern—and that it may even help to create a far-reaching community art that can act to reclaim art for people alienated from an increasingly rarefied "art world." Where this is the case, it should be welcomed.

If, in the planning stage of Train of Thought, the absence of a precedent for touring community arts projects made it a challenge to define a "community arts tour," with hindsight we can at least describe the term in the mould created by Train of Thought. Community art is foremost a method of creating meaningful, important art. In addition, and inherent to this production, is the lofty, thrilling, and always elusive goal of absolute inclusivity, and, often, the capacity for radical social change. A community arts tour is a corollary to this. The tour aspires to be a valuable creative product in and of itself, and one that realizes a number of other achievements along the way: forging new alliances across great distances and differences; seeding many new projects; showcasing the artwork of dozens of artists across various mediums and an entire country; providing a rare opportunity for emerging artists to work intensively with their well-established peers; creating a space to examine, share, and propagate vital ideas; and exploring the limitations, flaws, power, and value of the many definitions of community.

#TofTCanada: A Social Media Essay

BY LIAM COO

I am a media artist who often documents community theatre and arts. The handful of professional photographers and videographers that took part in Train of Thought, including myself, took over ten thousand photos and hundreds of hours of video.



FEATURING WORK BY NANI BELL GONAWABI - SHIFRA COOPER - IHENTE FOOTE - ALANA FORSLUND - BRAIDEN HOULE - ADRIENNE MARCUS RAJA - KELTY MCKERRACHER - NIKKI SHAFFEEULLAH AND THINKING ROCK COMMUNITY ARTS

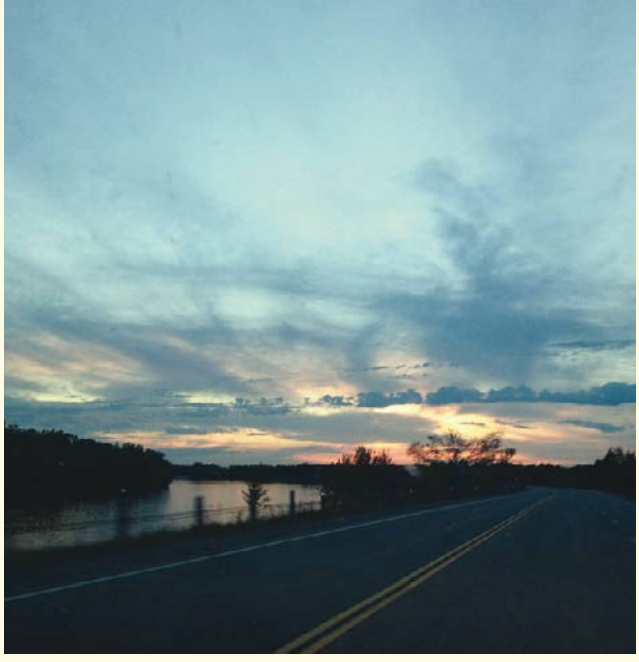
But it's not those documents that tell the most intimate stories of this unusual and constantly shifting community arts tour—it's the photos (and tweets and Facebook posts) that travellers shared on social media as they went.

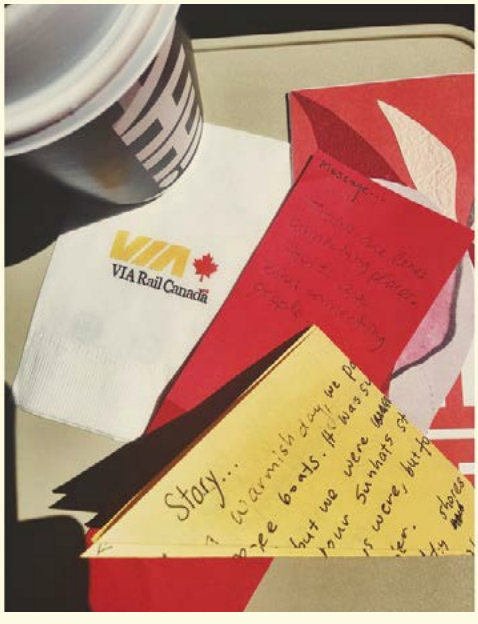
As we travelled, people on board and back home could scroll through their feeds and see what others were doing. As you experience these #TofTCanada images after the fact, you discover much more about the travellers themselves. These snapshots are a visualization of the connections we made through everything we learned and shared along the journey. You can begin to see how people connected—getting to know one another's styles and subjects intimately, emulating and responding to each other.

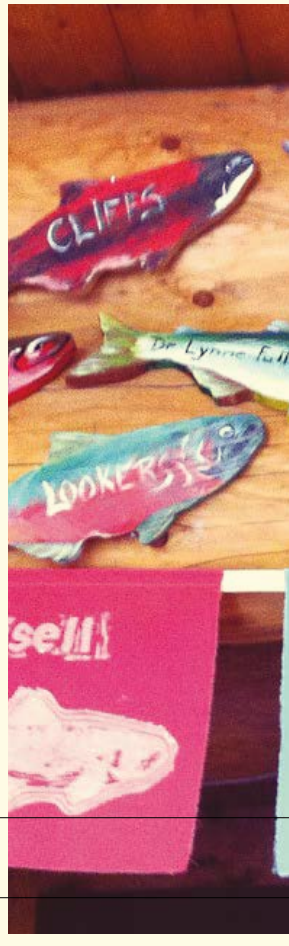
Over social media, we digitally performed a way of living. It was a long performance, with no breaks and a cast of over ninety artists, living and working together, talking about how we as artists could contribute to creating the country we wanted to live in.

Perhaps social media is the best way to document a community arts project. It facilitates a multiplicity of views and perspectives, requires subjects to engage directly in the creation process, and enables participants to hone stories in ways that are beautiful to them, crafting composition and choosing filters and hashtags.

I hope that by breaking these images out of the digital world and removing them from a linear feed, they can more freely express the experience of Train of Thought. They allow us to more deeply explore the interconnecting storylines and relationships that criss-cross the record of this project.







© Photos curated by Liam Coo

#river
#toronto
#TofTCanada
#ontario
#tree
#shadow
#REFLECTION

THE ART OF HOSTING IN AMIKWACIWÂSKAHIKAN AND SASKWATON

BY BRUCE SINCLAIR

I followed her to the station . . . with a suitcase in my hand . . .

Before I go too much further with my stealing of Mick Jagger's words, I would like to share a story about doing just what he did: saying goodbye to someone special at the station. But it wasn't just one special being—it was many; and I didn't just say goodbye to them, I also got to greet them—not just once, but twice. I met the Train of Thought journey in two prairie cities, amikwaciwâskahikan (aka Edmonton) and saskwaton (aka Saskatoon).

A year earlier, Ruth Howard of Jumblies Theatre shared her vision with me: a cross-country trek, on the rails and a few Greyhound buses, for a number of artists, including a significant representation of First Nations and Metis artists, a potpourri of community artists, youth, assorted directors, administrators, and dreamers. When I first heard the plan, I could hear the whistle blowing and was especially intrigued by the mix of artists who would be on the train and the excitement that would come with each stop—a kind of never-ending celebrity status. I so wanted to be on that train.

The other realization I had about the train was how the journey could be a kind of reclamation. Historically, the train headin' west spelled doom to the buffalo hunters and the buffalo, not to mention the demise of freedom of many of my relatives, particularly the Metis. There's also the fact that the major force behind the railroad, John A. McDonald, aka the Prime Minister, hanged Louis Riel, my people's hero. But *this* train was going the other way, carrying all kinds of relatives: artists and movers and shakers, including Indigenous descendants of those whom the train had displaced in the first place. These travellers were finding out first-hand about some history that still hasn't made it into the history books.

My job was to play host to the voyageurs in both of those prairie towns[1] and I relished the idea and the honour of being on a welcoming committee that, as it turned out, was overwhelmingly Indigenous. In amikwaciwâskahikan, Joseph Naytowhow, myself, and a group of local artists stood in rhythm in the crisp May air at the VIA Rail Station, munching on onion cakes and playing our hand drums, with Joseph chanting an honour song for those dazed and confused but happy artists who disembarked that dark night.

The following day we gathered at the Nina Haggerty Centre on 118th Avenue and jigged, flamenco danced, watched theatre and hip-hop magic, learned about the sexual mores of youth with the Native Youth Sexual Health Network, and ate East Indian cuisine from a local caterer. We never talked about oil or the Oilers.

The day after that, we gathered at the Ortona Armoury, an old style artist takeover building in the flats of the city, in a counter-colonial celebration: singing songs, playing skits, teaching stories, hearing incredible *nêhiyawêwin* (Cree) words, and eating cake in "honour" of Queen Victoria's birthday. That night featured an apoplectic artistic creation of what the future may bring: a grassroots, partially improvised performance sketch incorporating a Metis welcoming ceremony framed as an alternative to a citizenship ceremony, and featuring one of our Coast Salish travellers, Columpa Bobb, as the Queen, regaled in a cardboard costume creation assembled just the night before.

One highlight of the night was young artist Ouske Couchie-Bobb, son of Sid Bobb and Penny Couchie of Aanmitaagzi, a professional multidisciplinary arts company from Nipissing First Nation, Ontario. He played himself, a young child, in the midst of the aforementioned tale of the relentless future, sharing the stage with others, including his father Sid, and drove the scene so sweetly. The story became a magical dream of what could be when the red people overcome the country we now sometimes refer to as Canada.

I left the City of Champions and drove overland to saskwaton to prepare for another reception, hosted in partnership with Common Weal Community Arts of Prince Albert,

Saskatchewan. Common Weal's Artistic Director Judy McNaughton had raised funds to pay artists and share food and space on 20th Street, in the hood of one of my favourite places in the world. saskwaton is a place that many in the country are unaware of, still to this day, which kinda suits the locals fine. But it's also where a boom has been in place for a while, making the charming little city by the river into an economic destination. Some from the city have profited, but the rest face big-city curses like rising rents and paid parking and traffic jams that never existed in the past.

Despite the city's changing face, we gathered to celebrate the artists and community within. The Train of Thought travellers were joined by some students from my grade six/seven class of Big Island Cree Nation, who were exposed to new experiences and re-connected with friends who had since relocated to the big city. That afternoon, we all—travellers and students alike—sat in Friendship Park under the statue of Gabriel Dumont, learning *nêhiyawêwin* from Randy Morin and his class from Oskayak High School on Broadway Avenue. That evening, we had another red reception at the Youth Community Centre on Avenue One, where poets, spoken word artists, singers, drummers, and speakers shared what they had with the Train of Thought. We ate, talked, danced, and simply enjoyed ourselves, and the evening culminated in a procession to the nearby Optimist Park where the round dance singers did their thing and we danced in the fading light with the mosquitoes and artists from coast to coast.

When the train left the station, I went back to the bush at Big Island, teaching at the rez school and barely having time to remember the precious moments. But I felt good about the whole thing, and I wondered what would be the next experience for the travellers as they headed to Winnipeg, Sioux Lookout, North Bay, Hochelaga (Montreal), and more. I thought, even though I myself never felt the car shaking on the tracks, that the rail had somehow created a new society on steel wheels—that the stories could and would be told many times.

Now, I remember the words of another storyteller and prophet from another gathering: *mamawi kiyokewin*, which means, "We are in the dream now."

All my relations.

© Aaron Leon. Columpa Bobb performs *How Raven Stole the Sun* at the Youth Community Centre on Avenue One, during the Train of Thought stop in saskwaton/Saskatoon.

1 The amiskwaciwâskahikan (Edmonton) Train of Thought stop was co-hosted by Ground Zero Productions, Nikki Shaffeeullah, Brooke Leifso, and Bruce Sinclair. The saskwaton (Saskatoon) Train of Thought stop was co-hosted by Bruce Sinclair and Common Weal Community Arts.

CONNECT US ALL:
WATER AND CEREMONY ON EPEKWITK

BY
ELIZA STAR CHILD KNOCKWOOD

The Train of Thought tour of 2015 was an exceptional experience that allowed space for me to fulfill my inherent obligation, as an Ilnu woman, to protect, carry, and acknowledge the water and Mother Earth. My life journey with the water and Mother Earth has been very healing, life enhancing, and awakening—mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Sometimes the greatest of teachings comes from the quietest of places.

One of the most impactful moments for me during the tour was when I was sitting on a panel in Winnipeg and one of the participants asked what is the best way to make a documentary about First Nations people. It's a very important question, as we don't often pay attention to what the experience of a First Nations person is. My response was that First Nations and non-First Nations see through two different lenses; the First Nations' perception of our environment is different. As much as we want to create good relationships with each other—which happens, and it is happening today—we have to also understand that we do see through different lenses.

Acknowledging this is actually the greatest way for us to have good relations with each other. Often when you do projects like this you see the First Nations youth hanging together—it's natural for First Nations youth and non-First Nations youth to stay within their cultural comfort zones. They find a safety and comfort in being with each other. On Train of Thought, we started mixing together as artists: as performers, as people who have vision. That's where we saw the lenses start to match up. When we come together through art, the exchange and education begins.

Arts and culture go hand in hand for me: I am not one without the other; just as water and Mother Earth go hand in hand: I am not one without the other. I facilitated a water project throughout the Train of Thought journey, where we collected vials of water from every body of water we encountered across the land. I cherish the many memorable moments that were shared during the tour; our prayers, songs, ceremonies, and offering of healing medicines were filled with love, gratitude, and respect for the water and Mother Earth. Some of those words rang true through the songs I sang at every body of water that I connected with between the Pacific Ocean and the Atlantic Ocean.

During this time it was also important for me to safely drink from all those bodies of water; my desire was to make a more personal connection so I could speak more clearly for the water. It was a strengthening and awakening experience; the taste of the water was very telling. How I responded physically to the water was at times very emotional, especially when I could detect the impurities and threats it faced. We collected a total of twenty-six vials of water across the country. It was humbling to receive the many beautiful stories and teachings about each of these waters.

I hosted the Prince Edward Island stop on Train of Thought, which was the end stop. This was a time to reflect, to go over what this journey and experience had been for us. We had all had different experiences, according to our own interests, art forms, and abilities to grow, finding different ways to inspire our communities back home.

I first took everyone to my community of Epekwitk First Nation, where they were welcomed by our community and elders. We then headed to Rock Barra Artist Retreat, located on the eastern end of the island. There, we had the final Water Ceremony. In this ceremony, we acknowledged all the beautiful connections that we formed throughout our journey together. Each vial of water was representative of the love and care we shared—for one another, for ourselves, and for the water and Mother Earth that connect us all. In the ceremony, we gathered the twenty-six vials of water together in a single bowl, and returned it to the Atlantic Ocean.

To ignite positive change is to create healthy outcomes. I believe that the many artists I toured with are igniters of that positive change. May we always remember the courageous efforts that were made before us; each generation has an inherent responsibility to the water and Mother Earth. To honour that responsibility is to honour self and all life here and still to come.

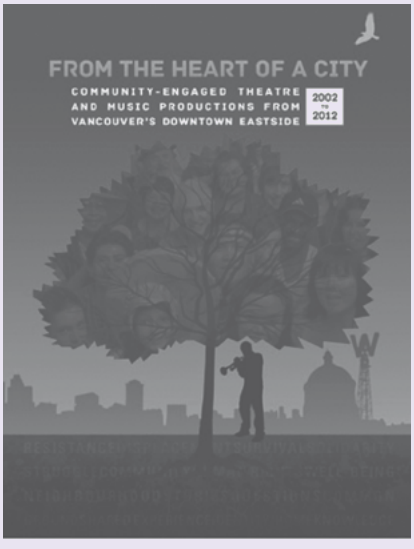
I am forever grateful to have met each and every one of my traveling artist companions; I will cherish all the moments we shared amidst the earth and water that connect us all.

We'lal'in M'sit Nogama (Thank you, all my relations)

© Aaron Leon. Travelling artists head to the beach at Rock Barra, PEI/Epekwitk for the water ceremony that closed Train of Thought.

BOOK REVIEW

BY
ANNIE SMITH



FROM THE HEART OF A CITY: COMMUNITY-ENGAGED THEATRE AND MUSIC PRODUCTIONS FROM VANCOUVER'S DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE, 2002–2013. EDITED BY SAVANNAH WALLING AND TERRY HUNTER. DESIGNED BY JOHN ENDO GREENAWAY. VANCOUVER: VANCOUVER MOVING THEATRE, 2015.

From the Heart of a City was published to coincide with the launching of three initiatives. The first two—TRACKS, the 7th Canadian Community Play & Art Symposium,[1] and the preceding Big House Community Gatherings and Cultural Feasts, co-produced by Vancouver Moving Theatre (VMT)—provided the foundational goals and protocols for the third initiative, Train of Thought, a seven-week, cross-Canada, west-to-east coast community arts journey.[2] The hope of all the contributing writers and the editors, Terry Hunter and Savannah Walling, is that the book will serve as a resource for their community of the Downtown Eastside in Vancouver, British Columbia, and for other communities and organizations that are already, or desire to be, committed to community-engaged arts.

The collection takes its name from the first large-scale community-engaged collaborative play produced by VMT, in partnership with the Carnegie Community Centre, in 2003. *In the Heart of a City: The Downtown Eastside Community Play* was my first encounter with VMT's work in the Downtown Eastside and my first opportunity to see a community play, a relatively new form of theatre at the time that had been developed in the UK by the Colway Theatre Trust and Ann Jellico. During the years I lived in Vancouver as a graduate student, I was able to take in more of VMT's work, which has had a great impact on my own journey as a community-engaged artist and researcher. Indeed, VMT has fostered connections between theatre artists across Canada who have produced community plays. Their long involvement in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside has allowed them to develop a modus operandi that is shared in this book.

The prefacing material is particularly useful in understanding what the book is about. Edward Little, in the foreword, asserts, "it's an essential read for students of community arts, for emerging and established artists in the field and for potential community partners and funders" (p. xi). I can attest to this as I was able to use an earlier, unpublished draft of the book as a resource for my own community play project in Grande Prairie, Alberta, in 2013-14. On embarking on this monumental project, I was encouraged by the experiences of Walling and Hunter as trail blazers in this form. They were working

in an urban environment with many of the same issues that informed my desire to produce a community play: racial discrimination, new immigrants, unequal economic opportunity, lack of education. They were able to show how community arts projects could bridge ethnic groups and celebrate diverse abilities. In particular, the protocols to engage the Indigenous community were extremely useful.

Little notes some elements that are useful in understanding the stance of VMT as community-engaged artists. First he flips the term "artists in residence" to "resident artists." This is crucial to VMT's artistic work in the Downtown Eastside. They live there—they are not artists from away, disconnected from the community. Their community is their inspiration, their venue, their palette. A second element of their work is inclusivity and "shared authority." The text is rich with stories and creative input from many Downtown Eastside-involved artists, community partners, and project participants, whose perspectives are integral to the larger work of the company and the neighbourhood. Little also notes elements of the text that make it a comprehensive resource: its attention to historical context, the creative expressions of many contributors, and the reflective analysis of the editors and contributors. It is rich with strategies for community arts engagement and offers convincing testimony to the transformative power of art-in-community.

In his preface, Michael Clague, director of the Carnegie Centre when it commissioned VMT to create and take the lead in producing *In the Heart of a City* in 2003, outlines some principles of the community play movement, of which this play is a part:

- work respectfully with people and their communities;
- build local ownership of the enterprise;
- meticulously research [workshop and verify local material to ensure] authenticity;
- don't gloss over the darker side in personal and community life [. . .];
- challenge people to be their best [. . .];
- professional and community artists are a powerful partnership. (p. xiii)

Clague further delineates the purpose of community arts to "create sustainability for the people and the organizations involved" (p. xiii). This mandate is clearly realized in the work of VMT, and chronicled in the book's descriptions of the different theatre and music productions from 2002–2013 and the testimonies of artists, co-producers, and participants. The phenomenal growth of the annual Downtown Eastside Heart of the City Festival is an example of how community engaged arts can create sustainability in a community.

From the Heart of a City is an exceptionally well-organized book, designed with accessibility as a major incentive to readers. The book's layout reflects the three driving needs that inspired its production: to educate newcomers to the Downtown Eastside, to provide a resource for teachers of community-engaged arts creation in Canada, and to be a legacy for the next generation of artists. Section One, "Welcome," introduces the reader to VMT and the community of the Downtown Eastside. Section Two, "The Productions," provides in-depth accounts of ten productions, beginning in 2002, in which VMT has had a pivotal or supportive role. Section Three, "Practicing Community Engagement," extends the work of VMT into provincial, national, and international collaborations and contexts, with articles by artists, residents, and senior community arts practitioners from across Canada. Section Four, "The Art of Engagement," contains "how-to" articles from practitioners as well as a summary article by Savannah Walling about VMT's "tree of community art practice" in the Downtown Eastside.

Section One is a thorough introduction to VMT and the Downtown Eastside. It is Chapter Three, "Drawing Strength From Our Roots," that I found to be a most eloquent welcome to the text. Here, the book's designer, John Endo Greenaway, and editors Savannah Walling and Terry Hunter tell their personal stories of where they come from and who they have become because of their heritage and life experiences. This choice brings authority to the book and invites the readers to also reflect on who they are and their own heritage. As Hunter says: "It is within stories that we recognize ourselves" (p. 30). This invitation is an extension of the inclusivity of community-engaged arts to the reader to witness the experiences unfolded by participants, artists, and practitioners.

Part Two details the ten projects chosen by the editors to share the story of the development of community-engaged music and theatre productions in the Downtown Eastside through media quotes, directors' overviews, artist and participant reflections, poetry and song lyrics, posters and evocative photos. The chapter contributes to the visual feast with coloured themes in red, blue, gold, and black, a theatrically artistic production in itself. The colour and movement conveyed in the design of the book mirrors the colour and movement of the productions. The artistic scope of VMT's work and the community productions described cannot be conveyed by written text alone.

The first production by Savage God Theatre, *I Love The Downtown Eastside*, in 2002 was the culmination of D.E.M.O.C.R.A.C.E.[3] This project brought together professional artists and community members to celebrate the beauty and worth of the Downtown Eastside in a cabaret-style show. Both Hunter and Walling were members of the artistic and production team that helped develop the show, and this experience planted the seed that nourished VMT's future work.

The second production is truly the foundation of the all the succeeding projects detailed in Part Two. *In the Heart of a City: The Downtown Eastside Community Play*, commissioned by the Carnegie Community Centre to celebrate its 100th Anniversary, was a grueling and exhilarating project produced by VMT that involved over 80 performers, 2000 volunteers, and 60 full or part-time employees (including 25 professional artists). The year-long project was supported by over 50 organizations and included 11 story-gathering events, 43 workshops, 3 parades, 4 public readings, and 9 weeks for bringing together the production for 8 performances. The aftermath of this mammoth project led VMT and the Carnegie Community Centre to consider what they could do that would provide an on-going legacy that would sustain the continuing development of community artists and arts in the Downtown Eastside. The result is the annual Downtown Eastside Heart of the City Festival, which began in 2004,

the year following the community play. This festival has been the seed bed, home, and testing ground for many of the succeeding projects detailed in Part Two. These include *Condemned: The Carnegie Opera* (2006); *East End Blues and All That Jazz* (2006); *We're All in This Together: The Shadows Project: Addiction and Recovery* (2007); *The Returning Journey* (2007); *A Downtown Eastside Romeo and Juliet* (2008); *Bruce: The Musical* (2008); *Storyweaving* (2012); and *Bread and Salt* (2013). These productions are notable in that many of them were workshopped at the Downtown Eastside Heart of the City Festivals prior to full production. The productions often incorporated artistic forms that brought them to the attention of the wider theatre and music communities in Vancouver (opera, shadow theatre, clown), and involved professional and non-professional community artists working side by side. They celebrated different ethnic communities and people in the Downtown Eastside, elevating the people of the community through their art.

Section Three focuses on ripples that have spread from the Downtown Eastside community play. There is a more detailed history of the Downtown Eastside Heart of the City Festival and of three literary adaptation co-productions: Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, *The Idiot*, and *Bah! Humbug!* (a retelling of Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*). This section then moves to highlight community-based arts projects by Cathy Stubington and Runaway Moon Theatre in Enderby, British Columbia, and their co-production with VMT, *The Minotaur Dreams: The Downtown Eastside Labyrinth Project*. The section also explores the relationship between Jumblies Theatre in Toronto and the mentorship and involvement of Ruth Howard in the Arts for All and Artfare Institutes (2009-2014), leading to a discussion of the Community Play Movement across Canada and internationally. Six Canadian Community Play Exchange Symposiums are also discussed. As the book was launched at TRACKS, the 7th Community Play and Arts Symposium, it contributes to a growing lineage of community-based arts projects in Canada and demonstrates connections to international practices in community-based arts.

Part Four of the book addresses the nuts and bolts of putting community arts into practice in the Downtown Eastside. Practitioners present articles that offer specific advice for artists and community organizations who want to take on community arts projects, particularly when diverse communities are involved. A most valuable addition to this section is the conversation between Rosemary Georgeson and Savannah Walling, "Learning from our Mistakes: Building Relationships through the Arts with First Nations Communities." One becomes aware, throughout the text, that VMT is always mindful of the First People's territory, unceded Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh lands, upon which they live and work. The list of credits for each project highlights the Aboriginal person or group responsible for territorial acknowledgement. This follows the protocol of the Coast Salish First Peoples and is a common protocol across North America. Walling lists steps that can be followed in building relationships with Aboriginal communities,[4] including permissions, limits, and protocols. Taking time is a key requisite that is often not appreciated by non-Aboriginal artists and practitioners. I find this section of the text to be extremely useful. In reading Georgeson and Walling's conversation I am reminded of the many mistakes I have made in building relationships with Indigenous people through my own ignorance and misguided sense of superiority. As Georgeson attests,

> The Storyweaving project revealed the fruits of over ten years of relationship building and its positive impact. [. . .] [It] was proof that we can learn from our mistakes, from each other, through listening to needs, and last of all, by taking time to build these relationships, honouring and respecting the people that help bring this art form to light. (p. 190)

A final reflection on this text, which lives up to all its promises, is the firm guidance of Savannah Walling as editor and lead writer. Her care-filled treatment of all the contributors and in framing the triumphs and struggles of community-engaged art shows a deep wealth of knowledge, respect, and compassion for the people she and Terry Hunter have worked with in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. The field of community-engaged theatre has lacked adequate representation in theatre studies in Canada, possibly because of the dearth of published records or analyses of the work in the Canadian context. Despite international conferences and books published, particularly in the UK, discussion of community-engaged arts projects has remained local and colloquial. *From the Heart of a City* makes available valuable insights and is a welcome resource and inspiration to continue the work.

NOTES

1 TRACKS: the 7th Canadian Community Play & Art Symposium, hosted in Vancouver/Coast Salish Territories and Enderby BC/Secwepemul'ecw Territories, May 10 to 15, 2015, was co-produced by Vancouver Moving Theatre, the Roundhouse Community Arts and Recreation Centre, and the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, in collaboration with Runaway Moon Theatre (BC) and Jumblies Theatre (ON).

2 www.trainofthought.co Train of Thought was led by Ontario's Jumblies Theatre in collaboration with over 90 partners across Canada. The initiative grew out of discussions between community-engaged artists who are featured in the book, particularly Ted Little, Cathy Stubington, Ruth Howard, Dale Hamilton, Rachel van Fossen, Terry Hunter, and Savannah Walling.

3 D.E.M.O.C.R.A.C.E. stands for Downtown Eastside Moves on Capacity Raising through Arts and Cultural Experience.

4 These steps are identified by Duncan McCue, who is Anishnaabe and an adjunct professor at the UBC School of Journalism. They can be found at the website: www.riic.ca.

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