



**LEADING FROM BESIDE**  
**COMMUNITY-ENGAGED ARTS**  
**IN RECREATION**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Applied Research Project explores the productive intersections of thought and practice linking community-engaged arts, leisure and recreation in the context of municipal recreation programming. Cyndy Chwelos, Recreation Studies Faculty at Langara College and Marie Lopes, Programmer in Arts, Culture and Engagement at Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, worked together to explore current critical writings in these fields and to link theory and practice in a discussion of current artists' projects taking place in Vancouver Park Board community centres. They present case studies examining community-engaged dance in Vancouver community centres, consider opportunities, barriers and tensions in making space for community-engaged arts in recreation, and offer recreation programmers guidelines and support in taking the first steps to work with artists on community-engaged arts projects. This research paper supports a professional development workshop at the 2016 British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association Conference (BCRPA), and a major and conference on community-engaged dance at the Roundhouse Community Arts and Recreation Centre in September 2016, presented in collaboration with Made in BC: Dance on Tour. The September conference, titled *Leading from Beside: Community-Engaged Dance in Vancouver* includes panel discussions, community dialogue and participatory workshops for recreation practitioners, community members, students, and artists.

## INTRODUCTION AND PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

### BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Our understanding of community cultural development—literally building community by making art together—is rapidly changing as more and more professional artists look for opportunities to work in community with participants of all ages, cultures, abilities, and arts experience. Community-engaged artists 'lead from beside', cooperating with participants to make art. The Canada Council for the Arts, our longest standing federal funding agency for arts and culture, acknowledges this work as important for all Canadians. The Council has dedicated funding for this growing practice, supporting "Activities and projects [that] are joint undertakings in which the process of collaborating is equally important to the art created, and where there is shared decision-making and ownership of project results."<sup>(1)</sup>

Community-engaged arts projects happen in community centres, parks, pools, and on city streets as well as in traditional arts venues such as theatres and galleries. As professional artists and community collaborate, important creative and personal relationships emerge that foster imagination, community connection, and a deeper sense of self. This work has the capacity to unlock unexpected potential which is surprising and delightful; horizons expand as participants find pleasure and satisfaction in creative community life.

These outcomes link community-engaged arts absolutely to the broad goals of community recreation and leisure. For example, in its mandate, the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation recognizes that the arts are essential to a vital, creative and balanced city, and they work to actively facilitate participation in, and access to, the arts for all. The Park Board holds a vision of a city where the arts are integral to everyday life—where community cultural development processes strengthen civil society, where parks and community centres reflect the cultural vitality of the community, and where people are able to learn and express creativity in ways that build healthy communities.

As more and more community-engaged arts takes place in a recreation context, this applied research project proposes to expand the understanding of the fruitful connection in arts, recreation and leisure through practical case studies, a review of critical literature in both fields, and a conference and exhibition that bring together students, artists, recreation practitioners, and administrators to focus on the benefits of this work.

We propose to investigate the landscape of the existing discussion and take concrete steps toward expanding community cultural development processes in ways that benefit the communities we serve and practitioners in the field. In this paper, the writers are arts programmers teaching and working in community recreation settings. Our understanding of this area of work comes from that perspective. As arts programmer in the Vancouver recreation system, we are committed to embedding artists' projects in this rich context. We believe that the arts matter a great deal in the pursuit of wellbeing; that participation in the arts can increase a personal sense of satisfaction, build community, and deepen a sense of belonging.

## PROPOSED OBJECTIVES AND DELIVERABLES

- Link theory with practice by viewing diverse community-engaged dance projects taking place across the Vancouver Park Board through the lens of discourse in leisure recreation and community-engaged arts.
- Create a research paper that explores productive intersections in leisure, recreation, and community-engaged arts practice. This will include a review of current critical writings on community-engaged arts in the context of leisure and recreation, and case studies marrying theory and practice, focused on community-engaged dance. We will seek to publish this paper.
- Discuss the history and evolution of community-engaged arts practices and their value to community cultural development in a recreation context. Provide tools, resources, and inspiration for community-engaged art practice in a recreation context.
- Link research to three case studies of diverse community-engaged dance projects across the Vancouver Park Board to guide and inspire future program development, service delivery, and communication.
- Explore the possibilities for productive intersections between fee-for-service models in recreation facilities and community-engaged arts practices in the same environment. Identify and address barriers to inspire integration of these two models.
- Develop and deliver a conference in collaboration with Made in BC, focused on community-engaged dance for recreation practitioners, artists, students, and participants interested in the possibilities of community cultural development in the context of recreation.
- Develop and mount an exhibition documenting and exploring community-engaged dance in Vancouver.
- Share research through presentations at BCRPA 2016 annual symposium, and the Vancouver Park Board Senior Management Team and Vancouver Park Board Commissioners.
- Incorporate research findings, exhibition tour, and participation in a dance workshop into Langara College's course RECR 2260 in 2016, and in future coursework.

## RESEARCH AND SUPPORT

The focus of this research project is to explore the ways in which community-engaged arts projects can productively achieve many of the philosophical and concrete goals of leisure and recreation programming in community centres and recreation spaces. In order to explore these issues, researchers:

- Conducted a review of current literature on community-engaged arts practices seeking connections and resonances with current writings on recreation and leisure theory;
- Linked theory and practice by connecting research to three case studies of successful community-engaged dance projects across Vancouver; and
- Conducted interviews with professional artists involved in community-engaged work, recreation programmers who have hosted and facilitated community-engaged projects in their centres and facilities, and community participants who are both longstanding and new participants in community-engaged arts projects.

A review of literature, practice, and participant interviews revealed both useful points of synchronicity in bringing community-engaged arts into community recreation settings as well as challenges and points of tension that are both practical and philosophical. Exploring these tensions in the course of the research enabled the researchers to outline realistic, mindful approaches to this work for artists and programmers as a set of principles and sensitivities rather than a 'how to' guide unable to support emergent creative outcomes

This research paper showcases community-engaged dance as well as providing practical professional development in bringing community-engaged arts projects into recreation settings.

## MANIFESTO

(help wanted ad in the *Village Voice* for Liz Lerman's *Hallelujah Project*, October, 1999)

Performers wanted for a project from January 1, 2000 to December 15, 2002.

You will be performing often, on main concert stages, in hotels, classrooms, churches, on hillsides, beside oceans, next to and with accomplished dancers and also with rabbis, neighbours, dogs and their trainers, gardeners, history.

You will be teaching from movement ideas you already know. You will be thrown into situations that require new concepts, new vocabulary, new relationships.

You will ask lots of questions. You will be asking more questions. You might often be bewildered.

You will do a lot of planning, for yourself and for the multitude of collaborations which will unfold.

Often you will throw out the plans but not the thinking.

You will work very hard. You will have a living wage. You will have health insurance.

If it is important for you to have time to make a dance of your own, in your own manner, in your own voice, it will be produced along with that of your colleagues.

You will be challenged to develop movement, share it, watch it change, lose control, gain control, be acknowledged for your efforts.

You will train your body in both familiar and unorthodox ways. You will help train other bodies. You will help structure the formal and informal means by which this daily miracle happens.

You will get to engage in stories that matter to strangers, to yourself, to the people you dance and travel with. Sometimes you will hate all of this interaction and yearn for a refuge alone. The studios are yours.

You will get to help build and rebuild and build again a 23 year old dance organization that is always in transition.

You will speak your mind. You will be delighted by your condition and exasperated by the responsibility.

Real Work. Real Reward.

Liz Lerman, *Hiking the Horizontal: Field Notes from a Choreographer*. 2011.



## FOOLISH OPERATIONS: DANCING THE PARENTING

In 2011, Julie Lebel, dance artist and mother of one-year-old twins, invited parents and their babies and toddlers to co-create dance with her at Creekside Community Centre. They began with a question: What would dance creation look like in a world where we accept that small children are doing exactly what they should be doing—all the time? In a martial arts studio space (which had padded floors), they explored the physical lives of babies and toddlers as the basis of dance, with movement work founded in cradling, bouncing, chasing, rolling, crawling, unsteady standing, repetition... Within a year, the group was creating and performing choreography that saw parents completely absorbed in the creative possibilities of dance and in a new kind of collaborative relationship with their own children. Over four years they grew from eight to 50 participants and the project expanded to Trout Lake Community Centre.

The *Dancing the Parenting* dance group performs and leads workshops in preschools, dance and education conferences, and children's festivals. In their work growth, change and development are inevitable—linked to life itself; as the children grow, Julie Lebel is establishing a new group of parents and babies, while building another project exploring dancing with now school-aged children and their parents.

*Dancing the Parenting*: <https://vimeo.com/140091711> (Brian Lye).

## TROUT LAKE COMMUNITY CENTRE

In 2012, artist Anthony Shrag set up a studio—a desk—in the lobby of Trout Lake Community Centre in East Vancouver. Initially, community members engaged with him by bumping into him, trying to work out what he was doing in the lobby. Anthony slowly sank into community life through conversations, provocations and activities. Over one year, Anthony and community members undertook a diverse group of creative projects including a concert for dogs in the off-leash area of Trout Lake Park, a community centre sleep-in for International Nap Day, a Guinness World record attempt to make the world's biggest circle of people holding hands (in this case, all the way around Trout Lake) and a community video documentary, *Are There Trout in Trout Lake?* Their work together played an important role in returning Trout Lake Community Centre to the heart of its neighbourhood after the centre had been closed for the 2010 Olympics and related construction and renovation.

*Circle of Trout* <https://vimeo.com/145622088> (Brian Lye, Anthony Shrag).

*Are There Trout in Trout Lake?* <https://vimeo.com/45190325> (Brian Lye, Anthony Shrag).







## LE GRAND CONTINENTAL

In 2014, Montreal choreographer Sylvain Énard brought his dance project, *Le Grand Continental*, to Vancouver. In community spaces across Vancouver, participants of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities worked with Vancouver dancer/choreographers Lara Barclay, Anna Kraulis, and Caroline Liffmann under Sylvain's direction, in order to learn 30 minutes of challenging choreography combining line dance, swing, salsa, and more with fluid contemporary dance. Dance technique took a back seat; they focused on memory strategies, peer support, stamina, physical fitness and care, moving as a group, confidence, commitment to expression, supporting each other, and finding joy. 75 community dancers presented *Le Grand Continental* on the Queen Elizabeth Theatre Plaza as a part of the PuSh International Performing Arts Festival in January 2015. Once a group of strangers, now a community of dancers, the 'Grand Continentals' continue to work together. Led by Grand Continental participants, Mark Haney (a classical musician turned community dancer) and dance artist Caroline Liffmann, they develop new projects of their own for Summer Solstice celebrations in Vancouver's Mountainview Cemetery.

Vancouver Sun: Dancing *Le Grand Continental*:  
<http://www.vancouversun.com/entertainment/Video+Dancing+Grand+Continental/10759340/story.html>  
(Vancouver Sun).

Between the Lines, the making of Vancouver's *Le Grand Continental*:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=atVJuYPrzH0> (PuSh).

## COMMUNITY-ENGAGED ARTS: DEFINITIONS AND BACKGROUND

Projects like *Dancing the Parenting*, *Are There Trout in Trout Lake?*, and *Le Grand Continental* are already taking place across the Vancouver Park Board; there could be many, many more of them. These community-engaged arts projects are unique in that they take place in recreation environments rather than arts settings such as dance schools or arts centres. This makes sense, as community-engaged arts, leisure, and recreation share many foundational principles and goals. With a focus on community-engaged dance, this paper will explore what makes community-engaged arts projects and community recreation centres an excellent fit.

There is no single, right way to make community-engaged art (CEA). It takes many forms, existing in a spectrum rather than a hierarchy. For the most part, successful projects in the Vancouver Park Board recreation system fall into three broad models (Finkelpearl pp 4-7, McGauley 23):

- Cooperative creation: in which an artist creates a 'scaffold' for non-artists to contribute from their own experience to develop a cooperative creation. These projects crack open the daily life of the working artist for non-artists, through processes of experimentation, discussion, research, and improvisation guided by the artist but generated by community members. They unpack the artists' path, from concepts and questions to the production of work that is exhibited, presented, or performed. (This approach describes Julie Lebel's *Dancing the Parenting* and Anthony Shrag's work at Trout Lake Community Centre.)
- Scripted encounters: in which artists create a project, and participation in the project brings community members to a new understanding of creative expression, themselves, and others. (This approach describes Sylvain Emard's project, *Le Grand Continental*.)
- Exploring cultural tradition: in which artists work with non-artists to explore cultural traditions that may not be their own (see page 29).

CEA practices are cooperative, participatory, and about exploration, creation, and relationship building rather than technical skills development, although skill development in arts disciplines and thinking almost always happen through the practice. The process of creation is as important, if not more important, than the final product. Engagement, improvisation, risk, dialogue, reflection, disruption, revelation, compromise, cooperation are the 'art' in this work. This way of thinking about art is at odds with popular understandings of the work of art as the finished 'masterpiece'—the symphony, painting or play. As art historian Grant Kester observes, in community-engaged art, "there isn't a point at which we can arrest the process, set it apart and say—'here. This part is the art'." (Finkelpearl 123). Focus shifts from art as a finished object/performance to art as the articulation of ideas and relationships enabled by sharing a creative process. While participants play many roles, in community-engaged arts they are always working together.

"...if engagement, dialogue and relationship are articulated as the aesthetic goals, the aesthetic necessarily includes both process and product, they are indistinguishable from each other. Collaboration is not the goal in itself; neither is the creation of a product. The goal is to collaborate to create art together. The art is shaped by the relationship and the relationship is shaped by the art. The artistic outcome is a representation if you will, of relationships." (McGauley 7).

There was a time when people danced and the crops grew. People danced and that is how they healed their children. They danced as a way to prepare for war. With so much on the line how did they decide who got to do the dancing? Who did they trust with the best part? Maybe it was given to the oldest person, the one with the most wisdom. Maybe they gave it to the fattest—the one with the most weight. It did matter...it still does. (Liz Lerman xviii)

In North America, the impetus for creating art with, for, and about community finds roots in many places. In the 1950s, Pop Art and Happenings countered the distance of art from everyday life and asked why the value of cultural practice lay only in the finished product displayed in a gallery, theatre, or concert hall. In her public lecture, *Paradigm Spinning and Visionary Criticism*, for the Harvard University Arts in Education Program, artist, critic, and art historian Suzi Gablik asserts:

There is an entrenched institutional framework for art that, as participants in culture we often take for granted. ...within this framework works of art are understood as static, existing mostly in museums and galleries and segregated from ordinary life and life.

Over the past 60 years, artists engaged with feminism, the civil rights movements, community development, and social activism challenged dominant power structures in culture asking: who decides what is art and for whom? Gablik continues: “There is a need for art that emphasizes our essential interconnectedness rather than our separateness. Art that evokes the feeling of belonging to a larger whole.



CEA, *All Bodies Dance*.

Thinkers and artists as diverse as Gablik, Guy Debord, Nicholas Bourriaud, Lucy Lippard, and Harrel Fletcher<sup>(2)</sup> have questioned the separation between artists and audience—makers and watchers—and critiqued the separation of art from everyday, community life.

“...this art practice is actually grounded in place and relationship, with all the attendant post-modern messiness that this implies. An invitation to relationship involves ethical issues; a commitment to place demands a sense of responsibility and accountability; these are concepts that can confuse our notions of ‘high artistic quality’ and present challenges for art funding institutions. Yet it is precisely in this messiness of human interaction that we find the art.” (McGauley 9)

Whether their work is labelled pop art, happenings, relational aesthetics, feminist, activist, social practice, or community-engaged art,<sup>(3)</sup> artists and communities that make work together look in different ways at creative practice that has human connection as its focus.

“It is about the value of art in daily life and the belief that art is for everyone, not just the elite. ... This work promotes agency in artists, it is made alongside and with its intended audience and necessitates being in the context of the world.” (Jen Delos Reyes, par. 1)

Outside the narratives of ‘the art world’, thinkers and anthropologists argue that the impetus to make art and make art together is part of human DNA. Scholar Ellen Dissanyake argues that the drive to ‘make and make special’ is a biological imperative—as fundamental as food, shelter, family, and community (Dissanayake pp 24-101). Succinctly, philosopher Alva Noë notes, “artists make stuff not because the stuff they make is special in itself, but because making stuff is special for us.” (Noë par 7)

CEA speaks to the re-integration of the arts into daily life in diverse ways that do not limit creative engagement to professional makers on the one side and audience members on the other. In his 2006 TED talk, British education advisor and advocate Kenneth Robinson argues that the roots of a disengagement with art in daily life lies in the mid-nineteenth century development of the western European education, employment, and social systems that still hold influence today, primarily designed to serve industrialization. Prioritizing useful skills for building a stable industrial workforce—reading, writing, math—drastically narrows the field of human experience to which we assign value. He argues that while efficient, western education compromises creativity, willingness to take risk, expansive problem solving, and thoughtful embodiment. What if, he muses, we had an education system where children danced every day the way they study math? In the same vein, in her keynote speech at the 2015 *Embody/In My Body* conference, dance artist/educator Patricia Reedy wonders, “what if each of us could learn to create dance the way we learn to write? Not every writer becomes Margaret Atwood. The goal is not necessarily to become Martha Graham but to learn to express yourself through the language of the body.”

In CEA projects, professional artists collaborate with community members who may not see themselves as artists, to create and present work in all arts disciplines. Together, community members become creators, producers, performers, and activated audiences as they make and share artwork exploring the things that matter to them. This work unfolds through many models for creation—from projects designed by artists to those that emerge from participants’ ideas and concerns.

## LEISURE/RECREATION THEORY: DEFINITIONS AND BACKGROUND

Recreation is the experience that results from freely chosen participation in physical, social, intellectual, creative and spiritual pursuits that enhance individual and community wellbeing. (Canadian Parks and Recreation 4)

In thinking about the connections between CEA and leisure theory, it is revealing to consider the motivations and practical applications that inspire programming in community recreation settings. Guided by the overarching value that recreation experiences are a source of 'wellbeing', recreation programmers draw upon key principles of practice to plan programs intended to provide rich, engaging opportunities that enhance and enrich the quality of daily life. The terms *leisure* and *recreation* are closely related—in the field they are often used interchangeably: recreational practitioners develop programs for the 'leisure experience'. Describing leisure is a challenge; what one person considers leisure (running, gardening, attending a lecture) another may regard as work. The working definition of leisure is at once simple and profound: "Leisure is activity that is done primarily for the experience itself." (Kelly 1982 p 7). Leisure activities are not connected to financial outcome, societal responsibility, or professional reputation. Motivated by personal interest, a leisure activity is undertaken for its own sake, where the experience itself is the goal. This is not to be taken lightly in a culture of education and work where, as Kenneth Robinson puts it, "People can spend a great deal of their lives doing things they aren't particularly interested in." It is during leisure, according to ancient Greek Philosophers, that we become most human by devoting time to self-development. The Greek term for leisure is 'scholea' the same root as school—leisure pursuits offer learning for its own sake. (Csikszentmihalyi, *Finding Flow* 12). As leisure theorist John R. Kelly reminds us, "The motivation for leisure is largely intrinsic. Leisure may combine reasons for participation, and anticipated benefits but central is that it is done primarily for the quality of the experience." Satisfaction, fulfillment, a desire to make these experiences a consistent part of life—in recreation, these are considered 'outcome benefits' (1982 p 4).

Programmers in a recreation system know from program evaluation that people report participating in recreational activities for "fun, enjoyment, fitness and health, social interaction, creative expression, a desire to connect with nature, relaxation, and to enhance their quality of life." (DeGraff 12). Programmers are 'charged' with developing and implementing programs that both offer experiences and enhance opportunities for outcome benefits. They do this by:

- offering a mix of courses, discussions groups, and workshops, one on one and in groups, open to feedback and suggestion from community members;
- ensuring a range of financial accessibility including, fee-for-service, partially subsidized and free programs;
- offering a diversity of community events and recreation services: from community barbecues and traditional holiday events (eg. Breakfast with Santa) to community information and health services (eg. earthquake preparedness);
- exercising diligence with regard to both the quality of instruction and high standards in facilities; and
- focusing on quality and safety in materials and equipment.

"We see programs not as ends in themselves; but rather, they are the means by which we aim to produce beneficial outcomes. Programmers do not produce recreation experiences and benefits, but instead produce opportunities for people to produce these experiences and benefits for themselves." (DeGraff 9). When people find a deep sense of satisfaction and personal fulfillment in a recreation experience, they look for more. Ideally, the community centre becomes a place that draws in longstanding and new participants with a mixture of new and long-standing programs and services.

The disciplines of psychology and sociology have examined how the leisure experience improves or meets a desired condition for individuals, groups and societies. In *Carpenter's Arts and Cultural Programming*, Mannell and Stynes identify the psychological benefits that recreation practitioners work to foster in community recreation:

- Development of the self, including self-actualization; identity affirmation; interpersonal and leadership skill development; cognitive; social; and emotional development in children; and spiritual development;

- Experiential learning, skill and knowledge acquisition, and environmental attitude change; and
- Short-term, transient experiential outcomes such as flow.

(Carpenter 18)

Regarding the recreation goal of wellbeing, research provides considerable evidence for positive health impact gained through participation in arts programming as a leisure activity. Some impressive claims in the current research include: the reduction of social isolation, improved perceived health, reduced chronic pain, learning new skills in self-expression and communication, developing definable skills in effective team work to achieve a common goal, an increased sense of creativity, growth in confidence and sense of identity, and increase in life satisfaction (Clift; Dwyer; Guetzkow; Heath; McCarthy).

A commissioned British Columbia Recreation and Parks Association (BCRPA) report from 2008 provides a useful overview of the evolution of the public recreation sector in BC, and an understanding of the roots of leisure programming. Organized community recreation had its roots in volunteer organizations—YMCA, YWCA, and sports clubs; recreation ‘happened’ in community halls, churches basements, parks, and playing fields. May Brown reaffirms that, as a movement, recreation was primarily interested in “the social good...providing spaces that were safe places to play, with emphasis on building a better community”(BCRPA video). Emphasis on purpose-built facilities and individual engagement evolved overtime. After WWII, recreation facilities such as arenas and pools were being built to support families in their neighbourhoods. By the 1970s, recreation policy was developing that saw a stronger and clearer role for the provincial government in leisure services. Government acknowledgement of the important role recreation plays in communities across British Columbia led to policy development, with program development left to communities (BCRPA 2). Fast-forward to 2016: recreation is a structured ‘sector’ of civic life that is facility-focused, community-based, and mixes government support and ‘user pay’ models. Recreation is professionalized, municipally funded, and governed by missions and mandates. The City of Vancouver’s Park Board Strategic Plan sees recreation professionals’ work as the effective delivery of programs and services, resource management, and community engagement. For a perspective on the development of community centres in Vancouver, please see Mark Vullimay (pp 41-72).<sup>4</sup>

The field of recreation has expanded and formalized to include professional organizations, councils, and associations who think deeply about their field of practice and operate as stewards of standards and agents for change. The Inter-provincial Sport and Recreations Council and the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association developed *A Framework for Recreation in Canada* in 2015, envisioning a Canada “in which everyone is engaged in meaningful, accessible recreation experiences” (Canadian Parks and Recreation). This framework identifies longstanding, well-researched (Carpenter; Kelly; Shannon; DeGraff) key principles that guide the recreation movement to achieve this ideal for the individual, the community, and society at large. These principles include:

- inclusion and access: reducing barriers and enabling equitable participation for all so as to increase access to resources, opportunities, and experiences;
- advocating for diversity and building community: connecting people, encouraging shared cultural knowledge, and fostering a sense of belonging in community;
- encouraging lifelong participation and active living on a physical, social, and spiritual level;
- recreation capacity: leadership, volunteerism, skill and knowledge development, and social capital;
- high quality recreation experiences that are relevant, engaging, and potentially transformative;
- built environment: facilities of high quality and industry standard, maintained and safe; and
- stewards of the natural environment: limited impact and increase use of parks—connecting people to nature.

In Vancouver, recreation programs in parks and community centres have become the life-blood of leisure services—they are the junction where theory meets practice, and overarching goals meet the daily lives of individuals; the connecting point where people, places, recreation and leisure services come together. Individuals come to participate in recreation in many ways, dependent upon many factors—identity, locale, life circumstances, and available opportunities all affect leisure choices. Similarly, the impetus for engaging in leisure activities varies greatly—pleasure, relaxation, and novelty all have a role to play. People come to recreation to connect, to express, to improve, to develop, and to have fun. They may be trying to combat loneliness, to increase physical health and stamina or, as Steve Musson observes, “to be motivated by the desire to do something for the sake of doing it. Perhaps one of the most important goals of high quality recreation programs is to help people discover ... their desire to do something just for the sake of doing it. There is a strong connection between intrinsic motivation and the quality of a person’s life. It is during intrinsically satisfying moments that people get a glimpse of what makes life worth living, and that glimpse is, quite simply, good recreation.” (Musson 3).

Where is the awareness of exploring ‘what makes life worth living’ found in daily life? Again, a simple key is the reality of ‘choice’. Recreation is not mandatory; it involves the freedom to explore interests, pursuits, and passion. In pursuing leisure activities, individuals learn new skills, join new social groups, or become receptive to new ideas and understandings. Attending or participating in a marathon quickly underlines that leisure does not necessarily mean ‘relaxing’—witness exertion, stamina, and persistence! Obsessive hobbyists fall into this category; perfecting the bloom of a sourdough starter for a slow rise, crusty bread, or learning a complex lace-making tatting technique.

The experience of being completely consumed by a leisure activity is a goal of participation in recreation. This state of engagement is the focus of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s (1997) *Flow Theory* which has gained popularity in the last 20 years among practitioners and thinkers who study commitment, engagement, and focus across a spectrum of human activity. Csikszentmihalyi describes *flow*:

... a state of consciousness where one becomes totally absorbed in what one is doing...flow is about focus...flow is (also) about a harmonious experience where mind and body are working together effortlessly, leaving the person feeling that something special has just occurred...flow does not depend on winning, it offers something more important than just successful outcome. This is because flow lifts experience from the ordinary to the optimal, and it is in those moments that we truly feel alive and in tune with what we are doing.” (Jackson)

Interviewing thousands of people about the periods of ‘flow’ in their lives, whether they were developing a business plan, hiking in the woods, or singing in a choir, the majority of respondents reported the same elements that contributed to their ‘flow’ experience:

- confidence in the personal skills needed to face a challenge—the work may be just outside your skill, but you are confident it is within your reach; a challenge that is ‘just about’ manageable;
- life gets concentrated. Individuals are lifted out of the everyday into a different reality; and
- attention and concentration are completely swept up in the present and in the process.

(Csikszentmihalyi, *Finding Flow* 29-33).

Developing programs that offer the possibility for this immersive and satisfying leisure experience is what guides recreation professionals—from the dance studio to the soccer fields, engaging experiences undertaken through leisure and recreation matter in people’s lives and foster self-discovery and personal growth. The range and variety of programming offered is key to the success of reaching and serving constituents.

## COMMUNITY CENTRE CLASSES AND COMMUNITY-ENGAGED ARTS— WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

In 2016, the core of programming in Vancouver community centres consisted of fee-for-service courses. In current practice, offering a range of art classes—Intro Watercolour, Adult Ballet, Level II Pottery, Belly Dance for Beginners, private music lessons—constitutes robust arts programming. Most courses follow traditional models for teacher-led instruction and focus on technique and skill development. They are offered seasonally, for a set period—typically 10-13 weeks. In a fee-for-service model, if enrolment does not meet the required financial minimum to cover costs and revenue, the course is cancelled, leaving disappointed community members to wait for another season, or search out another recreation facility where art class might be on offer.

Both fee-for-service courses and community-engaged arts projects offer immersive and satisfying leisure experiences for community members. A comparison between the two models of arts programming reveals shared goals and significant differences.

Interviews with community participants, artists, and programmers provide strong evidence of the value in providing both forms of arts programming. What are some key differences?



Zumba class.

*CEA, Carnegie Dancers.*



CLASSES	COMMUNITY ART ENGAGEMENT
Discipline based learning-focus on the individual and the artist as instructor	Focus on collaboration with the artist community members develop a project together .
Cost recovery: user fee covers instructor contract, centre revenue, and often a materials fee.	Mixed funding that minimizes fee-for-service including: municipal investment, Community Centre Association subsidy, and in-kind donation, grants for projects and artists (see Appendix XX).
Trained artists/instructors submit proposals and are hired to teach by the recreation programmers. Programmers also respond to community interest and seek instructors.	Professional artists with a social engagement practice collaborate with regional arts programmers. Artists may apply to a call for proposals, or programmers seek out artists in response to community interest.
Focus on individual growth, technique, and skill.	Focus on participatory engagement with community participants. A lead artist encourages social inclusion.
Timeline: 6-10 week sessions, offered seasonally, with a set curriculum.	Timeline: project-based—can range from, for example, three months to three years. Program is envisioned but outcome is not set and emerges from process.
Opportunity to ‘try’ a class—short term commitment, exercise freedom of choice. Range of classes developed for specific age groups. Emphasis on variety across programs.	Opportunity to commit to a creative process that unfolds over time with a group of interested community members alongside a professional artist. Range of projects across age groups and arts disciplines.
Follow trends in the field—offer new programs gaining popularity (e.g. belly dance, zumba, Pickleball).	Focused on foundational creative process that explores an artistic discipline resulting in a social and/or physical legacy.
Hosted in designated workshop room, dance studio—traditional settings. Utilizes facilities to normative use	Hosted in lobbies, parks, underutilized spaces. Sometimes, reinvents the conventional use (e.g. theatre project in a swimming pool).
Participants pay a fee to attend—some financial subsidy, aspires towards inclusion.	No fees reduces barriers to participation, focus on inclusion.
Emphasis placed on delivering a high quality recreation experience.	Emphasis placed on delivering a high quality recreation and arts experience.
Access to play, explore, and investigate with the imagination—enhanced wellbeing and self-discovery.	Access to play, explore, and investigate with the imagination—enhanced wellbeing and self-discovery.
Method-based: focused on technique and skill development—builds skills that promote & encourage a healthy self-esteem, identity construction.	Project-based: usually evolves out of an exchange between artist and community participants—inquiry based on issues and ideas that are meaningful to the group. Builds skills that promote & encourage a healthy self-esteem, identity construction.

While courses usually begin with a set curriculum and a fixed end in mind, community arts projects are more often emergent—they develop between the artist and participants. A participant in both forms of programming describes the difference: “I’ve taken dance classes—you show up and learn steps and technique ... its fun but in community dance the key piece is how it evolves from the participants and the lead artists. There’s such a give/ take in how everything develops. Its emerging and evolving as we go ... I like the contrast of doing both” (participant, *Ageless Dancers*).

A recreation programmer observes the beneficial contrast between expected products and emergent processes:

Classes...people come for a specific service, they want to learn a specific skill, they sign up for a number of weeks and there is a cost...CEA brings a totally different skill... something unique, something completely out of the box, or what an instructor wouldn’t propose, and they often bring in a whole new community, plus our community.

Participants and programmers articulate the benefits of both models: learning technique can increase skill and confidence to enhance the experience of a community-engaged project; community-engaged arts projects feed a desire for creative invention that courses and workshops don’t provide. “Taking classes...they’re more focused, more tech-



nique than creation. The more technique I have, the more vocabulary I have to create and improvise with. I see a lot of room for both.” (participant, *Roundhouse Community Dancers*)

CEA expands the traditional teacher-student relationship evident in most courses offered in community centres. Lead artists propose questions, explorations, and improvisational structures to prompt creation, reflection, and refinement as participants work in an open-ended process. In this way, the process focuses on, risk, attention, reflection, and communication rather than teacher-led learning in progressive steps, focused on acquiring technique. A parent describes this difference through her experience with the long running CEA project, *Dancing the Parenting*:

Mom and tot courses seem to be more about ‘lets have fun!’ *Dancing the Parenting* is about being present, learning how to be in our bodies, have an exchange between parents and your child and other children and other adults. ... Seeing another parent enjoying their own dance with their kids, other people’s kids, or on their own. We all get a more global sense of our impact in the community.

Artists find important differences in the perceptions and connections that develop when teaching a fee-for-service class or facilitating cooperative creation in a CEA project. There is also a different sense of connection and accomplishment. Dance artist Naomi Brand observes:

Dance is taught in this weird contradictory way: you’re in a room full of people but doing your own thing ... staring at yourself in the mirror. The relationship is with you and yourself in a mirror and with a teacher ... [with CEA] you are asking people for a different kind of investment ... we are working towards making a product together, where everybody is overflowing with positivity and we only get there by making this ‘thing’ together. Classes don’t have that.

Artists, programmers and participants all perceive the fee-for-service model as linked to certain expectations. Participants generally come with an end point in mind: to learn a new skill or expand on an existing body of knowledge, to practice, to improve. Dance artist Julie Lebel, who teaches in both models, expands on this:

When people pay for their classes I deliver a model they are more used to ... In the [CEA] model ... I have the permission to use the time in a more exploratory way. We have more time and go to the edge—we might try something that really doesn’t work. That experimental place is important in dance, rather than feeling pressured to be more concrete ... to provide a product or a service.

Removing a financial exchange also impacts the atmosphere of the workshops, underlining the idea that participants are sharing in a creative process rather than paying a fee to learn something.

Typically, CEA projects are offered free to participants and are supported through grants or municipal funding programs such as the Vancouver Park Board’s Artist in Communities (AIC) that sees the Park Board match funds provided by a Community Centre Association or organization. (See Case Studies for other examples of co-funding, pp 30-45). This difference in funding is important in how work is perceived. Participants pay for a product in fee-for-service courses; in CEA projects, they elect to participate in a process where they have no financial stake.

In a fee-for-service model, recreation programmers have little time to actually engage with the community members who enroll. It is not unusual for a programmer to oversee 200+ courses per season. Programmers may drop in to evaluate an instructor or problem-solve, but typically, once classes are running, the programmer is arms-length. Evaluation forms, casual anecdotal feedback, and robust enrolment itself constitute assessment for the benefit of a class. The role of the programmer is quite different in a CEA project. Programmers often become ‘a part’ of the project, they may find themselves managing collegial connections, facilitating unusual use of space, bolstering numbers, and inspiring community confidence by actually participating themselves. Physically present, working with the artist and community members, they witness the participants’ experience. It can be an inspiring reminder of why they chose to work in recreation; they observe community connection and the growth of wellbeing. As one recreation programmer states, “In my course and workshops I feel like I am coordinating different aspects, but in the CEA projects, I felt more like a connector, I was there to connect the artist with our programs, our local schools, our program committee and to set that artist up to do their exploration ... their process.”

Whether a recreation programmer is implementing a CEA project or weekly art classes, they are responsible for man-

aging the program from conception to completion. Because each CEA project is unique, unexpected, responsive to space and community, and often largely experimental, it does not flourish with arms-length administration.

Offered side-by-side, courses and CEA projects offer opportunities to go wide and deep; delving into an artistic practice on the one hand, exploring the breadth of different practices on the other. The shorter, less invested experience of a class brings an introduction to new skills. The longer, deeper investment of a CEA project brings the opportunity to experiment in a less hierarchical learning environment and to cooperate in a creative process. Technique focused coursework builds vocabulary for creation in artist-led projects. There is a rich potential for courses and CEA projects to co-exist and work effectively in concert in the recreation sector.

## COMMUNITY-ENGAGED ARTS AND RECREATION SPACES

Community centre environments are ideally suited to art-making that seeks to embed creativity in the everyday. Because projects develop over long periods of time with an emphasis on experimentation, they don't fit easily into traditional gallery or theatre settings where there is intense focus on presentation—the concert, the show, the exhibition. The community centre offers space for artists and community members to come to know each other, develop working process and then create and refine work as it emerges, rather than rushing to master and present a predetermined final product. Projects can unfold over many months, or several years. This open, free, exploratory process lowers barriers for participants who are interested, but may not feel ready to think of themselves as art-makers.

Recreation spaces have the capacity to host the meeting of different worlds: dance in swimming pools, easels on elevators, theatre in corridors. Places that people know well show unexpected faces when put to unusual uses. The founding history of the community centre as a neighbourhood gathering place creates an intertidal zone where public meeting place and arts space can meet, offering flexibility for projects that run the gamut from casual (open-mike jazz in a lobby) to formal (performance in a theatre). Community spaces offer artists new models where space and circumstances become an active part of the work and there is little or no separation between presenters and audience members. Centre users encounter art in progress—making, rehearsing, performing, exhibiting—in café spaces, on balconies and stairwells, in the gym, and on the soccer pitch. For the artist, the recreation environment offers an opportunity to 'get out of the box' of the studio and the proscenium stage, and the traditions and expectations those carry.



CEA, Anthony Shrag at Trout Lake Community Centre.

The diversity of community centre life also offers arts participants a space to consider their art-making in different ways. Groups that come together around artists' projects in community centres can become a creative resource, performing at community events and contributing in diverse ways to community centre life.



CEA, Arts and Health.

## CONNECTING COMMUNITY-ENGAGED ARTS AND LEISURE

In its work to re-integrate art into daily life, CEA shares many goals with leisure and recreation, focusing on engagement, access, participation, connection, and community building. That deceptively simple definition of leisure and recreation—activities and practices undertaken by choice, often for the sake of the experience in its own right—resonates powerfully with artists practice. As philosopher David Steindl- Rast observes, “We do not dance in order to get somewhere. A piece of music does not come to an end when its purpose is accomplished. It is the playful unfolding of meaning” (Popova par 1). In contrast to the close connection of specific purpose with school or professional life, in leisure pursuits, as in community-engaged arts, purpose emerges through participation in the activity. “The measure of art, the source of its value is rarely how effective it is at fulfilling this or that function.”(Noë par 4)

The Vancouver Park Board Arts Policy, adopted in 1993, outlines the positive opportunities for meshing the Park Board’s community development mandate with the arts through community cultural development processes (defined as the process of collaboration between artist and community in addressing agreed upon issues). While this field was reasonably well established in England and Australia and was being supported in some areas of the United States, it had not been formally embraced by Canada. The Park Board’s Arts Policy provided a notable departure that was recognized to the extent that the National Archives requested file copies.<sup>(5)</sup> The discussions that drove that policy were also central to the founding of the Artist in Residence Program, the Neighbourhood Matching Fund, launched in 1994, and the Roundhouse Community Arts and Recreation Centre which opened in 1997—a facility that could function as a community cultural centre meshed with a traditional community centre. The Roundhouse offered a facility with specialty arts spaces (theatre, exhibition hall, dance, visual arts studio, ceramics and woodworking spaces). More exceptionally, the Park Board established two Community Arts Programmer positions,<sup>(6)</sup> a residency program which engaged artists for extended community arts project, and a Roundhouse partnership program, that saw arts programmers work with diverse cultural organizations to develop and present exhibitions, performances, conferences, and more.

The Park Board Arts Policy was revised and focused in 2004 to clearly affirm values of creativity, inclusion, community, and collaboration. Community cultural development through CEA has continued to grow and change in the Park Board. Today a staff of community arts programmers support extended artist in residence projects in community centres and parks across the system (see more about neighbourhood Community Cultural Development programs)<sup>(7)</sup>. While support for CEA has grown within the Park Board, the Roundhouse continues to serve as a laboratory, providing a space for experimentation and reflection in CEA that has considerable influence across the system. Recreation departments in many municipalities are now working with artists to create opportunities in community to engage, build meaning and increase a sense of well being by integrating art into everyday life.

For over 22 years, the Vancouver Park Board has worked to achieve these goals by:

- building a professional staff of arts programmers to support recreation programmers in integrating the arts into their centres and to oversee new kinds of community-engaged opportunities in the arts;
- investing in the Roundhouse as a laboratory space for artist in residence projects and larger collegial learning about CEA that can have import in community centres across the system;
- annually funding artist in community projects through the Artist in Communities, Neighbourhood Matching Fund and the new Indigenous/non-Indigenous Reconciliation Program. (Appendix p 52 Funding Sources); and
- working to build diverse funding, space, and programming partnerships that put more artists into community settings on long term projects.

## FOCUS ON PRACTICE: COMMUNITY-ENGAGED DANCE, VANCOUVER PARK BOARD

Narrowing focus to consider community-engaged dance projects already taking place in community centres across Vancouver reveals a fruitful marriage of goals in recreation and arts. The past five years have seen a dramatic expansion of dance in the Vancouver Park Board. In 2016, nine community-engaged dance projects are programmed in community centres (see Appendix p 48, dance overview) and Artist Fieldhouse Studios<sup>(7)</sup> across the city. The projects are all:

- offered free to participants or for a minimal user fee;
- open to all participants, no one is excluded;
- welcoming to participants as both drop-in and long time attendees;
- run for a minimum of nine months annually (some continue for several years);
- process and exploration focused—there is rarely a finished piece in mind when the project begins; and
- built on choreography that emerges from participants.

Projects come from many starting points with diverse funding models and partner organizations (see Case Studies): programmers seek out artists in response to community interest, dance artists approach Park Board and Community Centres to secure space, administrative support, and access for a project they have in mind. Projects are fully funded, co-funded, and supported by Community Centre Associations with donations of space and administrative infrastructure. Artists and programmers also work together to secure grant funding through a Community Centre Association not-for-profit society. On the surface, these projects run much like traditional courses. Participants register, groups meet weekly, attendance is documented.

### INCLUSION, ACCESS, DIVERSITY

Offering projects free of charge for participants, or for very minimal user fees, removes financial barriers to participation. This sense of meeting ‘all comers’ is evident in the make-up of community dance projects at the Vancouver Park Board: across 10 projects, adult participants are culturally and economically diverse, ranging in age from 20 to 80. Even projects targeting a particular participant group, such as *Dancing the Parenting* (parents and small children) or *All Bodies Dance* (integrating dancers with and without disabilities), accessibility is front and centre as artists challenge accepted norms that can be exclusionary. *All Bodies* dancer and organizer Sarah Lapp explains, “Usually disability arts programs are totally for people who use mobility devices or have a disability. They take place in places like GF Strong (rehab centres). In *All Bodies Dance*, there’s integration. To be in an arts space... this is so unique and awesome. It’s not about the disability. Its about anybody who wants to try.”

Practicing what artist Karen Jamieson refers to as ‘radical inclusivity’—making a place for anyone who comes, whenever they come, for as long as they can stay—speaks to both artistic goals and political agency. For professional artists, maintaining broad accessibility and enabling diversity is key to the aesthetic as well as the social good of projects. “I was curious about what it is to make dances. I was curious about how non-trained bodies move. I was

rewarded when I watched people move with complex, in-depth emotion, and how much story came across in their bodies. It fed the fire..." explains dance artist Miriam Colvin

"Building dance with these very different bodies... these are productive, creative constraints... a seven year old and a 75 year old move very differently and in exquisite ways... so how do you build their own awareness of how they move, then help them to edit, to choose, to really make their dancing shine? It's really interesting to compose that way as an artist." (dance artist, Julie Lebel)

For artists, working with non-dancers tests the limits and understandings of dance and multiplies inspiration. In an interview, Karen Jamieson suggests that the creative inspiration comes from eliminating the separation between dancers and audience associated with traditional performance.

Between the audience and professional dancers is a whole layer of dancing people that became more and more interesting for me... I like the idea of creating pieces that have so many layers, there's a layer for someone who has danced all their life, for someone who just arrived, for someone who is watching... its not a thing with a sharp boundary and border that makes it a 'not thing'. It's a continuum. (dance artist, Karen Jamieson)

In addition to the creative possibilities that non-dancers bring to dance, artists see powerful social activism in community dance. "Movement is our first way of communicating with each other... there is knowledge in diversity, and that (dance is) not just for super virtuosic, typical thin, white, bodies." (Dance

artist Naomi Brand, Union Street Video). These projects interrogate power structures around access and inclusion, dismantling assumptions about propriety and expertise, and affirming goals around participation for its own sake—for personal and community growth. Community-engaged dance asks: Who is not dancing? Who decides? When do we give ourselves permission to dance and where? Dance artist Caroline Liffmann asserts, "That's another way of saying who gets to be in their body and who doesn't... sometimes I feel like dancing is this radical, political act—take the space to be in your own body... just as it is."

The artists acknowledge the key tension that comes with doing this work in a recreation environment: it is very unexpected. Projects can take a long time to build and, at start-up, may struggle to find consistent participants. "The people who came and who were attracted to this idea—Community Dance— came from all over the city. The only thing that brought them together was this word 'dance' and it meant something different to each of them." (Jamieson in Durand 28). Participation balloons and shrinks and balloons again as community members take time to understand how and CEA, *All Bodies Dance*.



whether this work fits into their lives. Artists and programmers make extra effort in establishing connection with individual participants as each group slowly forms. Artists maintain, the work is the work, whether there are three participants or 20 but this is a big concern for programmers accustomed to a fee-for-service model where attendance is a key measure of success.

The easy way out would be to offer this type of project only where expected—in theatre outreach, art and dance schools or, for mixed-ability dancers, through health service organizations. While that approach might more easily pad attendance, rich possibilities around diversity, access, and inclusion would be lost.

“Dance is a birthright. You have a body. You live in it. You can dance. So many people have been told by someone along the way: you’re too big, too small, can’t keep up, don’t have rhythm... those people come to us at 60 or 75, realizing, I’ve wanted to dance all my life and never given myself the permission. That’s a long time! Its not okay.” (dance artist, Julie Lebel)

## GETTING INVOLVED

As in most recreation programs, participants interviewed report many reasons for becoming involved in community dance. With new dancers the most common answer to ‘why did you start this?’ is ‘I’ve loved dance all my life but never had training’. The perception that ‘real’ dance training is something that must begin in childhood is common. Openness to all levels and abilities is a key incentive here. “Do what your body can do. You don’t have to be like anybody else. Do your max, do what feels right. Its not about getting every movement right like in a regular dance class but it’s still working to the greatest capacity you want to,” encourages an *All Bodies Dance* participant. While fee-for-service courses seem to focus on the future you—skill building so that someday you will be good at this... community-engaged arts projects focused on the present—what can you make with what you bring with you right now? In traditional courses, there is an assumption that people start in the same place and learn at the same pace. For participants who have danced in the past and are returning to the practice, the CEA focus on the dancer you are now rather than the dancer you were, or could be, is an important incentive to re-engage; it enables a re-finding of embodiment, passion, and skill that matches present life.

Participants who have experience in martial arts and recreational fitness indicate they are drawn by the wish to explore movement in a different, more creative way. Many see dance as linked to health and fitness: stress-busting, greater flexibility, strength building, and assisting with anxiety and depression. They’re absolutely right. The evidence that links dance to physical and mental health at any age is legion and well researched (Canada Council for the Arts; Arts & Health Project; Mulligan; Miringoff; Shannon). As a mother of young twins observed, “Its not about technique. It’s about being in my body. It’s also my exercise. It helped me build my strength back... I didn’t see dancing as a possibility having two young kids, but because of this, I did.” Even those who may not have health and fitness benefits top of mind when they begin soon discover them.

My brain does a lot of my work, or covers up for me when maybe I haven’t done enough work. In choreography... this is such a different challenge for me. Being physical is not part of my every day life and having physical demands is not either. It was a challenge for the body more than anything else. (participant, *Le Grand Continental*)

Finally, as in many leisure activities, some come to community dance seeking a new experience: “I wanted to try something totally outside my comfort zone.” Participants report that they feel little pressure in ‘checking out’ projects to ‘see what it’s all about’ in early sessions. Often figuring that out is what keeps them coming back in the initial phase.

## STAYING INVOLVED—THREE LINCHPINS OF ENGAGEMENT: CREATION, PERFORMANCE, COMMUNITY

### 1. Creation

Regardless of why they come to community dance, the creative challenge of making art together is overwhelmingly what participants report keeps them returning to community dance. Rather than teaching choreography, the dance artists share exercises and propositions for improvisation that build body awareness, intention in movement, and awareness of the self and the group. This work comes from many sources in professional dance: contact improvisation, Laban movement structures, energy body work, and ensemble thinking.<sup>(8)</sup> Eventually this exploration leads to the development of choreography. Traditional ideas of leader and follower, teacher and student get mixed up.



CEA, *Carnegie Dancers*.

The piece as it grows is inspired by what happens in the room. We're really evolving and growing with the piece. I feel like I'm getting an insider's look at how art gets made. And not just seeing that, being a part of it—every little bit, every member in the group is contributing to making art. It takes on its own life. (participant, *Roundhouse Community Dancers*)

The material comes from the dancers, the path from the artist—a kind of creative orchestration. Karen Jamieson explains,

The literal meaning of choreographer is 'the person who draws the circle'. I like that because the form of the circle implies lack of hierarchy. I'm really interested in what people come up with...Out of what I see, the piece surfaces, and I draw the circle around it to create the structure. It gives a kind of safety but also holds the energy of everybody involved. (Montague, par.5)

The process explores both taking risk and power sharing. Dance becomes, "a nurturing place AND a place where people are challenged to do better. (Lerman 45) Participants who may never have thought of themselves as artists become totally committed to making art.

In CEA, the artist models an approach of creative openness, attentive and sensitive to what comes.

The lead artist is a leader, a mentor in all aspects, hospitality and openness, a sense that they are there for you and open to exploring with you. Their work has to be thought-provoking, how do you bring things out of the participants rather than just saying, "Okay, I do it this way now you do it this way, too." There are ways to explore and expand every single move just by asking what if...? That's what she does... (participant, *All Bodies Dance*)

The role of the lead artist in shaping this process is subtle and deep; at different times, they are an instructor, a facilitator, a fellow dancer, a leader, a follower, a choreographer—a context shaper rather than a content maker. Participants remark again and again on the positive impact of the artist's ability to 'read the room', to respond to the energy level of the group, to model flexibility by throwing it all out and starting over. The work develops outside the artists' original control or intention and evolves in concert with the particular intelligence and insight of the participants' here and now (Finklepearl p 116). The participants become responsible for their own work in a way that connects self-awareness to the group, to individuals, and an ensemble.

When we're trying to remember a sequence, I don't only write down the movement, I often write down a name. People have signature movements that come to them easily, they do it well, they look fabulous. In looking at the other dancers and how they move, not that you have to do it exactly, but in looking at how they do things, you can echo their intent. (participant, *Ageless Dancers*)

sometimes we forget how much fun we're having. Someone will come in from outside and say Wow...there's a lot of fun and silliness here its crazy. We just say, it's the process... (participant, *Roundhouse Community Dancers*)

Lead artists and participants are both sensitive to the amount of risk that is involved in this creation and presentation process. The element of risk and its corollary of trust in the process, often leads to innovation. Lead artists know that community members bring vulnerability to this practice. Part of their job is to create a safe place for people to take risks—a safe container where people can experiment and where judgement is suspended. They model hospitality and openness. Trust is reciprocal.

We do take risks in front of each other. The artists set the groundwork so that when we come in, we're open, not judgemental. They create an atmosphere that allows us to take the risk. Even within that the first time you get out there and do your own movement it's a bit traumatic... What do I look like? What do people think I look like? The more you do it, the more you realize that if you're doing something different from everybody else it's probably a good thing... (participant, *Ageless Dancers*)

There is an honesty about skill level. No one is trying to pretend they were somewhere they weren't. People who were struggling were comfortable struggling because they knew there was support there. (participant, *Le Grand Continental*)

For the artist, risk-taking is a fundamental part of CEA in all disciplines. Armed with a series of questions, an arts practice, and the bare bones of a flexible structure, they welcome all comers and leave the path open for what comes:

...community-engaged arts process is leaping into a void: promising a performance at the end of a process which no-one yet has committed to and with only the barest bones of what they have brought as ideas for starting points... and staking their professional reputations with funders and their colleagues alike that they will land the project successfully... that they can engage strangers, that they can shift gears in mid-flight and that they will deliver a performance worth attending to. (weaving, par. 5)

## 2. Performance

I think there is a necessity for art to meet its public. I don't know whether the audience is necessary as much as having executed something together. Performance is not real life—its heightened life! You're so into the doing that it takes on more meaning. Whether the public is there or not... that feeling that you have been through and accomplished something together is extraordinary. Dance is ephemeral, but the experience stays with you forever. (dance artist, Naomi Brand)

In almost all of the Park Board community-engaged dance initiatives, projects culminate in a performance where art meets audience. This is a definite challenge. There is tension between the tradition of the 'big show' as the actual work of art (is it good?) and the group's desire to share their experience of dance. The layers of interaction and transformation that take place in the process are hard to reveal in a 'bite' at a performance that carries traditional expectations around virtuosity and the spectacular. Still artists and participants agree that performing is important: it catalyzes and energizes the group, brings focus, and offers participants the chance to experience the transformative impact of professional production with costumes, lighting design, live music, and professional production values. How then can audiences see this work in a way that honours it? Karen Jamieson explains,

Its not what this or that movement looks like. What you're sharing with the audience is an experience. That to me is the key to getting out of that place where the audience is watching and ... is what they look at good? The experience of what the dancer is going through in the moment



is what you're giving to the audience. That takes a bit of work. People are anxious—am I doing it right? We go back: are you experiencing the connection to the roots under your feet? Are you engaged? In your body? What does it feel like? Guess you're doing it right...

Artists and participants look to new models for sharing work that keeps the tradition of a final performance while incorporating changes to remind audiences that the production is not the sum total of the art, and, to paraphrase Karen Jamieson, to include the audience as a layer in the messy continuum of the creative process. Strategies include performing on the same level as the audience without a stage, dancing in unexpected and intimate spaces, inviting audience interaction in the dance, hosting post-show dialogue with audience and dancers, incorporating participant writings as sound and visual elements, integrating performances into other events such as conferences and workshops that bookend performance with reflection and discussion. All of this eliminates some of the traditional distance between audience and performers and shifts the perception that 'art' = one final show.

There are other challenges that come with performance. Artists and participants report a tension between those who do and do not wish to perform, and, although all of the groups develop strategies to accommodate both desires, this remains a point of conflict. Anxiety, frustration, physical complaints, and sometimes social discord emerge in an intense rehearsal processes. Artists work to bring transparency to the tensions linked to performance rather than working to smooth them away. Performance is a definite catalyst for forming an identity as a group. Across projects, 75% of the participants who return year after year were participants who performed for a public audience. A group of strangers comes together, makes art out of what emerges from them, and then presents that work as a dance ensemble—a collective working together. Actually 'doing it' is more important than whether people watching it think its 'good'.



...to be part of the whole—the birth the creation and the production and having a show. It's inspiring and incredible to be part of it and at the end, in a real theatre in front of a couple hundred people. No matter what people think about themselves, their own barriers that they perceive, real or not, they stick with it and go through all the way to a production. It's huge. It's life-changing for me. It can be stressful but when we stick with it—that sense of accomplishment and getting feedback from people—it's really incredible." (participant, Roundhouse Community Dancers)

CEA, *Dancing the Parenting*.

## **finding flow...**

“before I started doing this, me and my body were kind of sometimes stranger to each other...”  
(participant, *Dancing the Parenting*)

To return for a moment to a key goal and outcome in recreation programming, it is through the processes of creation and performance that artists and participants report that sense of immersion—energized focus, concentration and involvement with a deep sense of enjoyment and satisfaction—that characterizes flow. Csikszentmihalyi observes a strong link between creativity and the autotelic personality, individuals inclined to undertake pursuits for their own sake (Csikszentmihalyi 1997 pp 116-130). Everyday life slips away when challenge, skill, focus, process, and accomplishment come together. Both artists and participants speak of ‘time slowing down’, of individual and group focus on problem-solving, of being completely present in the room and in body, of the galvanizing and transformative experience of performing.

### **3. Community**

Nearly all of the participants interviewed reported that learning to move, think and work as a group was at once one of the most challenging and one of the most rewarding aspects of the work.

The hardest thing when I started was not only to dance and improvise but to do it in relation to other people. Thinking about how my movement relates to their movement is new ... in a group I look at it quite differently. I’m always aware of the other dancers—what they’re doing, not doing, their tempo.... (participant, *Ageless Dancers*.)

Moving from a collection of individuals to a unified ensemble is not only about understanding the physical dynamics of dancing together, in this context, it is also about building community. Making space for personalities, learning styles, beliefs, work ethics—is both a challenge and a reward. “Its good to be reminded that people don’t all learn the same way. They don’t learn the same things at the same speed, they don’t get ‘results’ in the same way, everyone’s different. A process like this really brings this forward—our different abilities and places.” (participant, *Le Grand Continental*). Groups discuss, get frustrated, grumble, gossip, argue, reflect, negotiate, love each other, and drive each other crazy. They are passionate, vulnerable, and involved. In “Conversation Pieces,” Grant Kester argues that this is key to both art-making and community building. The very act of creating something new together builds community as it builds individuals—figuring out what you think, feel, and can contribute in the company of others working towards a common goal, means that even when you disagree, you’re in it together, and gain insight into yourself and each other (Kester p 4). In practice, this challenge is aesthetic, social, and physical.

While dance work—contact improvisation, ensemble thinking—builds embodied understandings of how to move as a group, participants also find ways to work as a community. Lead artists encourage diverse sets of guidelines that participants create for themselves. These range from establishing a loose structure that everyone accepts (e.g. arrive on time, dance first, talk later) to formal, heartfelt statements of belief and shared social contracts for participation (see Appendix p 45). For participants, creative focus includes and moves beyond acquiring skills and techniques that enable individual self-expression to a commitment to self-discovery and inter-subjectivity: “the shared cognitions and felt emotions between people—that can build interpersonal trust and understanding” (Warburton, Reedy, Ng p2). A group of individual learners become a community of peers working together to create and problem solve within a creative practice.

We build dance from an awareness of each other... feed off each other’s moves... improvising, listening, taking time to feel where someone else is coming from. (participant, *Roundhouse Community Dancers*)

We are all connected. Its not about who is related to whom. (participant, *Dancing the Parenting*)

Several participants reported becoming better listeners, not only with their ears but also as physical collaborators. Gablik speaks of CAE as art that embodies a listening paradigm, observing, “It is impossible to find oneself listening to others without the construction of a new kind of self, in which the ego is willing to take a back seat.” Taking this metaphor one step further, Jamieson re-asserts the importance of embodied listening—that there are many kinds of listening,



CEA, Roundhouse Ageless Dancers.

We go around the circle with cerebral dance and embodied dance. You get sick of people talking, and then you get sick of technique. What remains is that dance is a language. It speaks, but it's hard to trust it. We are quick to fall back on words. But dance can say things that words can't. It's a language of weight and space and energy. (Jamieson in Durand p 29)

Not everyone may be equally an author but everyone is contributing to creation. Finding common ground through dance and shared experience, this process of collaborative creation grows community.

We all come as individuals and now we are friends. We get together to go see dance, we share shopping tips, personal things, common activities, we go for coffee and chat. We talk too much!" (participant, *Ageless Dancers*)

We became close knit. Every session ended with 15 people going out for a drink! A lot of the camaraderie grew out of the challenge. (participant, *Le Grand Continental*)

I have found new friends, strengthened the bonds with old friends through laughter and shared creativity. As an older woman, I find myself with fewer playmates every year and aside from "air hugs" not many opportunities to touch and be touched by others. (participant, *Ageless Dancers*)

I feel like these guys have great aunts, uncles and cousins when we go into the studio... we are a family. (participant, *Dancing the Parenting*)

This sense of community is related to another positive outcome that connects CEA and recreation: a desire to engage in lifelong learning. Projects become programs as participants express a powerful desire to continue to work in community-engaged dance and build their groups with new participants. Across the Park Board, groups:

- continue working with one lead artist in successive projects that are deeper and more complex;
- become involved in multiple projects with a lead artist;
- remain as a group and work with different lead artists on different projects;
- build a lead artist team as the group grows; and
- develop independent groups that are co-led by participants without a lead artist.

Community building is seldom an articulated objective for either artists or participants. It is tangled up in new learning, struggling together, supporting each other, skill development and practice, and accomplishing something together. Ultimately there is a dance ensemble and a community. There is social development, building a sense of belonging, continuity and change, group identity, trust. Participants in all projects report making new friends and building solid relationships that they can rely on both inside and outside the project. They also reflect on being reminded of the value of being a part of something larger. "There's lots of camaraderie outside the class but within the class itself... to be able to create something as a group. You cannot do as an individual. We need the group, the whole group and everybody brings their individual strengths." (participant, *Roundhouse Community Dancers*)

This is seen as one of the biggest rewards of participation. While they enter into the project for personal reasons the participants come to understand the importance of everyone in the room.

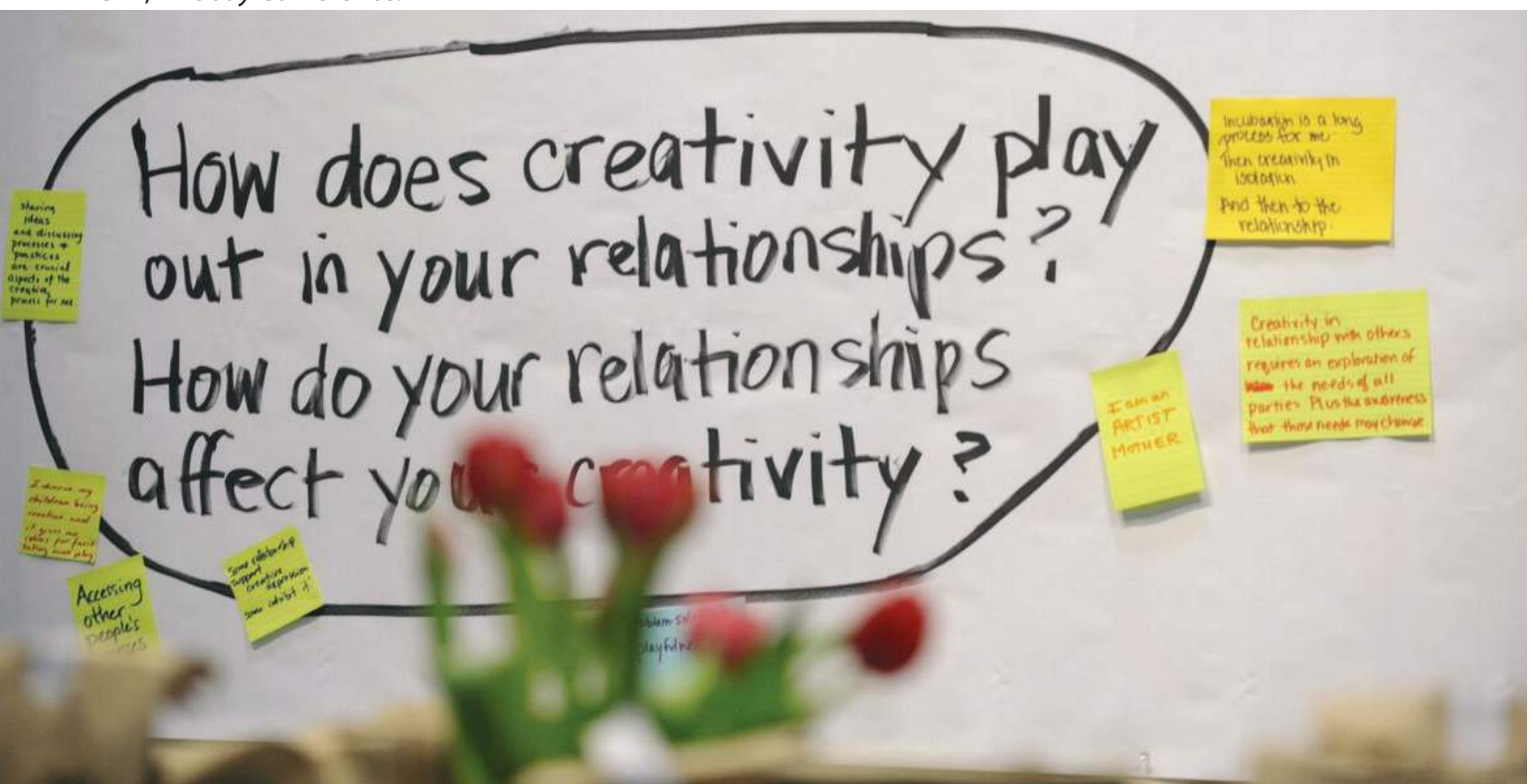
## CAPACITY BUILDING THROUGH THE ARTS

There is ample research confirming that community-engaged arts projects build community (Mulligan; McCarthy; Clift; Guetzkow; Heath). Vancouver Park Board community dance projects clearly exemplify this. All of the participants interviewed report building friendships and forming a unique group identity through this process, but the community building runs deeper than this. A sense of collegiality and peer-to-peer confidence leads to greater investment in community. As a community of collaborators rather than a class led by a teacher, the dance groups begin to show their influence: as individuals they become a part of community centre life, taking courses and volunteering; as dance groups they perform at community centre events. They take a role in crafting the vision and direction of their own group, join other dance projects and support projects, special events, and performances as a first layer of participating audience. They develop their own arts projects. As friends with a common interest, they become an active arts audience that is thoughtful, convivial, and inclusive.

The larger community cultural development dividends that can grow from work in community-engaged dance at the Park Board have been even more remarkable. Projects born within the recreation system have the capacity to change thought and practice in health, education and recreation.

The *Roundhouse Ageless Dancers* perform and lead participatory workshops at seniors' events and conferences on healthy aging.<sup>(9)</sup> *All Bodies Dance* practitioners lead workshops, and speak and perform at conferences and workshops across western Canada (see Case Study p 33) as passionate advocates for difference as creative strength. Toppling stereotypes about aging and disabilities, these projects exemplify and promote positive change in societal norms. In 2015, *The Dancing the Parenting Project* was the subject of a Vancouver Park Board supported conference<sup>(10)</sup> that brought together community-engaged artists and early childhood educators and theorists to explore embodied thinking in emergent, child-centred thinking for curriculum development in early childhood education, art and the family. Lead artist Julie Lebel has begun to collaborate with educators and creative organizations that focus on teacher training and on families, including Sunset Community Centre Preschool and the Surrey Children's Festival. Innovations that grow in the experimental environment created through CEA in Vancouver's recreation system are at the forefront of these new understandings. This work does not go unnoticed. In 2015-16 the cities of Richmond, New Westminster and Maple Ridge are building their municipal investment in community-engaged arts with consultative support from the Vancouver Park Board Arts team and their projects. Partly as a result of their ongoing collaboration with the Park Board, *Made in BC: Dance on Tour* has developed and made new investment in CEA dance across the province.

CEA, *Embody* Conference.





CEA, *Songs for Reconciliation*.

## MOVING FORWARD: MORE DANCE STEPS

There is still a great deal of terrain to explore in community-engaged dance projects in recreation. The project model described here drives roots firmly into western European contemporary art practice—a reality that is increasingly problematic in Vancouver’s culturally diverse landscape of leisure and recreation. Cultural dance in a recreation setting, exploring creative experiences through cultural traditions that may not be their own, demands a very different approach for respectful engagement and requires new thinking about what constitutes collaboration. It is particularly pressing to begin to make a consistent place for Indigenous cultural practice in community spaces. Following on Vancouver’s Year of Reconciliation, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action, the Vancouver Park Board accepted 11 recommendations at the Vancouver Park Board Commissioners Meeting, January 11, 2016, including:

- Taking a 360 degree approach to programming, including in the areas of culture, health, public dialogue, physical activity, and sport in order to increase public knowledge and awareness of reconciliation and to provide support to indigenous peoples including children, youth, Elders, and families.
- Establishing and funding as a priority, a program for Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists to undertake collaborative community-engaged projects and produce works that contribute to the reconciliation process.

In West Coast First Nations culture, arts practices are bound by ancient hereditary rights and privileges and respectful understanding cannot necessarily involve ‘everyone making art together’ across cultures. Indigenous creative practices are central to the responsibility to restore, protect, and pass on cultural identity, law, and protocol to peoples deeply impacted by the realities of colonialism and the residential school system. As writer, activist, and cultural critic, Lucy Lippard observed in her keynote lecture for the Creative Time Summit of 2013, “Putting things together without divesting them of their own identities is a metaphor for cultural democracy.” The Vancouver Park Board is at the very beginning of a process to understand how to support and invest in Indigenous artists who choreograph dance, compose song, and lead Indigenous dance groups in order to begin to understand how to invest in Indigenous community cultural practice as a first step towards appropriate models for collaboration.

## CONCLUSION

If people only knew! They'd be banging down the doors to get in. I love what we're doing in this project and hope it can expand in the future" (participant, *Ageless Dancers*)

Exploring community-engaged dance through the lens of recreation and leisure goals reveal incredible value in accessibility, inclusion, diversity, engagement, life-long learning, and building community and social capital. The projects increase recreation capacity, enabling high quality recreation experiences that are relevant, engaging and potentially transformative as well as experiential learning, skill and knowledge acquisition, and experiential outcomes such as flow. Research substantiates that CEA programming holds unique value in promoting personal health. Creating art has a powerful effect on wellbeing, exemplifying key recreation principles:

- connecting people through the creative process to promote social connectedness and cohesion;
- promoting inclusion by providing the opportunity to involve all participants in the community;
- fostering broad, deep-rooted respect of understanding and learning together;
- facilitating an appreciation and understanding for the arts that enriches life;
- developing new skills through an artistic sensibility, engages capacity for artistic expression;
- enhancing psychological, physical, and spiritual wellbeing; and
- valuing active, creative collaboration between artist, programmers, participants, and audience members.

Still, CEA is seen as a 'new' way for integrating the arts into recreation facilities. In the 2016 roster of recreation programmers working in 24 community center across Vancouver, an informal survey revealed that 70% have not had direct experience hosting a CEA project at their site, although that same percentage of the programmers in the system have positive knowledge of projects that have happened within the system. In answer to the question, *Why don't we do more of this kind of programming?*, time was one of the consistently identified barriers, as is funding. Further identified barriers included stepping outside the regular programming box, staff support, and not knowing where to begin. As a recreation programmer laments, "Most programmers have a set portfolio with seasonal programming, contracts, and invoices and on top of it, we have the added responsibility ... [of] a lot of non-recreation tasks. Our responsibilities as a programmer do not allow us the time to build community partnerships and build creative arts program." It can be a source of frustration.

I mostly feel that I come in and deal with the day to day...put out the fire, I haven't been in the position to be creative with my programming- I get caught up in the day to day, efficiency of running programs. (recreation programmer)

CEA sees the overarching objective of recreation programming—to provide encouraging environments for people to experiment, seek new experiences, find a sense of belonging, and thrive—extending to community centre staff and boards of governance. There is risk—the common fee-for-service model subtly trains staff to look for quick templates that offer early returns. When CEA projects have slow starts, when there is confusion about a project or a hesitancy to engage, when expectations about what constitutes 'art' clash, when there is failure to connect (as sometimes happens in any new creative undertaking) and outcomes are unknown, it may not be easy for programmers and the supervisors who support them to go with the flow, bounce back, take the risk, enable and continue. This is extra work, and a very different way of thinking, even if it is the kind of work programmers say they want. Still, as Gablik notes, "As more people acknowledge the need for an expanded framework, it has become obvious that any social or professional field is actually created by the tension and interaction of many opposing views, all of which interweave and essentially complement each other." Recreation programmers who have had the opportunity to work with artists describe the work as significant for their portfolio and see the experience as excellent professional development. Programmers build relationships with artists and begin to see how CEA can infuse existing program and grow their community.

CEA offers different types of art and provides the community an opportunity to experience it—we integrate these artists with existing programs like our pre-school or the Lighting of Abertheau [December light display]... we can engage the families in different types of art, in different ways and they love it... Without our artist in residence we would not have the skills to do this. (recreation programmer)

The artist enhanced our existing programs... the outcomes I am seeing now, she has made connections with organizations that we would never have reached. The value and benefits the community gains from this form of programming is different from a 10-week art program where we might see 15 people max, but with this project, we are connecting with Nimbus School of Recording, The Native Community College, Our Community Bikes, the Mount Pleasant Business Improvement Association. She is mobilizing many more people that we could through just our programs. (recreation programmer)

Artists who work in this capacity understand how to connect the project to the community, how to breathe new life into everyday existence. A recreation programmer describes the unique approaches artists utilize to engage and respond to community:

She has great strategies to involve community members- she sets up in the lobby at peak times and has they really attractive space with all these bike parts, and I think this being Mount Pleasant-bikes really interest people, and attracts people- also it is a different type of art so people are curious, they think oh we can art with bike parts? This is interesting; on top of it we really are a big bike community. So her project really speaks to this community.

But what I am seeing with this project is that the artist is totally adapting the project. She is responding to what the people in the community are comfortable with. She is finding a vehicle to have people express themselves, a vehicle for people to come over and ask more questions- to participate in the creation of it, and also people participating as audience members. She has adapted based on community connections that she has made, so it is really interesting to see where the project is now.

Recreation programmers' experiences with CEA projects clearly illustrate that the goals of recreation are achieved in ways that differ from the fee-for-service model. Working with professional artist and recreation programmers who are committed to these creative process promises high quality recreation experiences that hold deep meaning in people's lives. The challenges in undertaking CEA programming points to the necessity for the development of CEA programs alongside fee-for-service courses, and that they be supported by municipalities, centre administrators, and Community Centre Associations. In her Harvard lecture, Gablik re-affirms the importance of risk-taking, of making space for, and balancing, a diversity of voices and approaches:

We need to become advocates for the edge; the co-creative boundary which is not really a position, but a process of unfolding... and should we succeed at this we may actually achieve in our cultural life the sort of reciprocal interaction that we find at play in an ecosystem. ... Success is about building bridges into the community at large, developing interactive and collaborative dynamics, and fostering a spiritual awareness of the transformative effect of art.

The creative processes of CEA enable participants to seek out greater meaning and an increased sense of wellbeing. Community-engaged practices have the capacity to return community members, who may not think of themselves as creative, to the idea that 'making' is fundamental to human nature. Through the processes of exploration, improvisation and creation, projects build community as they transform lives. While participants will probably not pursue professional careers as painters, dancers, or actors, they will move in the world as different makers, thinkers, movers, friends, audience members ... as different people. At the heart of this work is community cultural development—building community by making art together.

## END NOTES

1. For more information, see <http://canadacouncil.ca/>, search: Artists and Community Collaboration, all disciplines.
2. For more information, see these main titles: Suzi Gablik/*The Reenchantment of Art*, Guy Debord/*The Society of the Spectacle*, Lucy Lippard/*Lure of the Local*, Nicholas Bourriaud/*Relational Aesthetics* and Harrel Fletcher/ <http://www.harrellfletcher.com> retrieved April, 2016.
3. For a historical overview of community-engaged practice in the United States of America, see Flinkelpearl (pp 49-50).
4. For a perspective on the development of community centres in Vancouver, please see Mark Vullimay (pp 41-72).
5. The Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation Arts Policy was considered a notable departure to the extent that the Canadian National Archives requested file copies see [http://former.vancouver.ca/parks/board/2003/031215/artspolicy\\_rpt.pdf](http://former.vancouver.ca/parks/board/2003/031215/artspolicy_rpt.pdf)
6. The Vancouver Park Board established two new community art positions to program this new arts and recreation centre. <http://vancouver.ca/parks-recreation-culture/roundhouse-community-arts-recreation-centre.aspx>
7. To learn about the Vancouver Park Board Fieldhouse Studio Project and Moberly Cultural Centre see <http://vancouver.ca/parks-recreation-culture/field-house-studio-residencies-in-parks.aspx> <http://moberlyartsculturalcentre.blogspot.ca>.
8. For more information see: Nina Martin, Ensemble Thinking: <http://www.ensemblethinking.com/>; Contact Improvisation: <http://contactimprov.ca/>; Laban Movement Analysis: <http://www.movemen-thasmeaning.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/LMA-Workshop-Sheet.pdf>.
9. Seniors conference, held June 4, 2014, during Seniors Week, *Linking Seniors Services: Working Collaboratively in a Changing Landscape*. Co-presented by Vancouver Park Board and Vancouver Coastal Health.
10. *Embody/In My Body: Dancing the Early Years*, Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, Roundhouse Community Centre in January, 2015.





## CASE STUDY ONE: THE ALL BODIES DANCE PROJECT

### LOCATIONS

Roundhouse Community Arts and Recreation Centre  
Trout Lake Community Centre  
Mount Pleasant Community Centre (Fall 2016)  
Sunset Community Centre (Fall 2016)

### DATES

2014 – ongoing

### ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE

2014-15 Lead artist: Naomi Brand; Co-facilitators: Sarah Lapp and Mirae Rosner  
2015-16 Lead artist: Naomi Brand; Co-facilitators: Sarah Lapp and Mirae Rosner

## PROJECT GOALS

The *All Bodies Dance Project* is for anyone with or without a disability who is interested in exploring movement as a means of creative expression. Participants experience the joy of dancing, performing, and choreographing in a diverse community of movers. In mixed ability dance, differences become creative strengths as they explore the choreographic possibilities of wheelchairs, crutches, and canes, and celebrate diverse ways of moving and perceiving.

- Access: mixed ability or integrated dance is an approach that is accessible to all bodies.
- Engagement: in a mixed ability dance practice, differences are regarded as ‘productive constraints’ that are a source of inspiration.
- Participation: the practice explores the point of contact between people with different abilities in order to create dances that are the direct result of who each individual is and what they bring to the group.
- Participants learn about organizing and structuring ideas, working with each other to problem solve creatively and shape an artistic statement.
- Aims to empower new artistic voices and offer foundational dance, performance and compositional skills.
- Seeks to engage artists and prospective artists with disabilities in the creative process and provide new tools for creative expression.
- Expand the lead artist’s understanding and skills at facilitating community based art and contribute to the vibrancy of an integrated community.

## DESCRIPTION

The *All Bodies Dance Project* asks questions about the dancing body, community, and connection. Who dances? What is dance? How does dance reflect values of diversity? By bringing together ‘standing dancers’ with dancers in wheelchairs and with mobility aids, All Bodies challenges the normalized dancing body and gives artistic voice to an inclusive community. Through this exploration, *All Bodies* hopes to find common ground, redefine the notion of inclusion and establish a collaborative art-making practice that values the distinct contributions of individuals of diverse abilities. For the purpose of this project, the community is defined as a group of adults who self-identify as persons with disabilities and others who are interested in engaging in this creative process. Outreach activities draw on the disability community in Vancouver including a wide spectrum of individuals, groups, and organizations.

## CHALLENGES

- Creating balance between the artist’s desire and the desire of some participants to work towards public performance, which requires significant investment and commitment of time vs. offering only weekly class without commitment.
- Ideally this work is facilitated in pairs with a ‘standing dancer’ and a dancer with a visible disability, so that the leadership in the room is shared. The artist is very aware of her role as the facilitator being a white dancer without a disability. There are many barriers for dancers with disabilities to get the dance training and experience necessary to be able to teach. In the past couple years there have been many challenges around leadership and how to empower folks to be able to lead or co-lead without having the years of dance training.
- Keeping the work accessible for participants of all cognitive abilities and for new participants to enter in at any point, while also progressing the group and the work forward towards more in-depth explorations, choreographic studies, and skills.

## MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

- Over 60 participants have taken part developing a committed group of participants interested in a deeper engagement with dance practice
- 50% of all participants returned for a second year in the project. 14 out of the 16 dancers who performed together in 2015 returned to the program in 2016.

- Attendance is diverse in age, gender, cultural background, and dance ability
- Participants successfully learn to work together, develop new skills and tools to experience the role of choreographer, and lead their own work
- Participants and artists report a high level of satisfaction with the project as engaging, creative, and challenging, and identify personal growth and strong relationships created throughout the hours of rehearsal and performance.
- The project has expanded its reach from one to four community centres after two years.
- *All Bodies Dance* performs at community centre events including Trout Lake Family Days and Seniors Week at the Roundhouse.
- The project is profiled in Made in BC/Cineworks video project, Play It Forward 2016
- The project is profiled in Dance Currents, Canada's National Dance Magazine

## GREATER IMPACT

There are very few established choreographers with a disability in Canada and even fewer opportunities for emerging artists to develop the necessary skills and experience. The growth of integrated dance depends on empowering the artistic voices of choreographers with disabilities and providing accessible ways to develop these skills and experiences. The Vancouver Park Board recognizes the growth of integrated dance in *All Bodies Dance Project* and will continue to support its expansion into other community centres across the city.

*All Bodies* is building capacity across the Lower Mainland and beyond. Lead artists and participants have been invited to speak, lead projects and workshops and perform at:

- International Day of Persons with Disabilities, Roundhouse, December, 2014
- ConnectTra Abilities Expo, December 2014
- Trout Lake Family Day, February 2015
- Shaughnessy Stroke Recovery Society, 2015
- LINK community dance series, Roundhouse, May 2015, April 2016
- Self-produced, full performance see & be seen, Roundhouse, June 2015 (sold out audience)
- Dance in Vancouver Choreography Walk, November 2015
- Canadian Inclusive Dance Teacher Intensive, Momo Dance Theatre, Calgary, Feb 2016
- Self-produced, full performance, Trace, Roundhouse, May 2016
- The Dance Centre Fundraiser October 2016
- Made in BC: Community Dance Residency, Nanaimo BC, Fall 2016

(funded in part by MiBC Vancouver Foundation grant and Crimson Coast Dance Society)

In Vancouver, *All Bodies* has introduced a new way to work with 'all bodies' together that challenges what it means to work with difference. Participants benefit from the experience of being a part of a unique artistic community, from learning new skills to seeing a project through to public presentation. The opportunity to see dancing bodies that don't necessarily match a typical idealized body of 'dancer' sparks important discussions and thinking about arts practice. More importantly, the visibility of mixed ability arts as a rigorous aesthetic practice rather than a social service makes an important public statement that furthers discussion and broadens understanding of integrated arts practices.

## PARTNERS

Vancouver Park Board, Roundhouse Community Arts & Recreation Centre, Trout Lake Community Centre, Made in BC: Dance on Tour

## COMMUNITIES SERVED

Participants come from across Vancouver for this project

## VANCOUVER PARK BOARD STAFF SUPPORT

Marie Lopes, (programmer, Arts, Culture and Engagement), Eva Srobotnjak (recreation programmer, Trout Lake Community Centre), Stephanie Chow (recreation programmer, Creekside Community Centre), Pending: Joe Wing (recreation programmer, Sunset Community Centre).

## RESOURCES AND FUNDING

Canada Council for the Arts	\$23,00 (2014) \$22,000 (2015)
Vancouver Park Board	\$2000 (2015, 2016)
Roundhouse Association in-kind	marketing support through in-house posters, program guide, web and social media, workshop space and theatre rental fees waived
Grandview Community Association	\$2000 (2015)
Grandview Community Association in-kind	programmer support, workshop space, marketing support through program guide, web
Made in BC: Dance on Tour	\$6000

## COMMENTS ON PROCESS

"This is what you need to know to dance with me. Right away... it's focused on the dance. I say, you can interact with me and my chair as much as you want, just be mindful of my joystick on the right which is my power source. That opens the door right away for anyone to interact as they like. They can still wonder, they can still ask questions but they know right away what every person's needs are without it being awkward. We never focus on 'what disability do you have?' That doesn't even come up. As we get to know each other more and more, we're more comfortable to interact. Doing close things, people climbing on my chair... that's how the creative process happens. We feel comfortable with each other doing exercises and then expanding that into creation." (participant, *All Bodies Dance*)

"I think the most rewarding thing for me has been a connection with a group of intergenerational people, very diverse situations and the kind of energy and dialogue that creates. We have a lot of peace with each other. That's very rewarding... you don't get that in groups!" (participant, *All Bodies Dance*)

"Discovering how far I can go and realizing that that's a journey that doesn't end; discovering limitations and how to deal with them; discovering how quickly community builds; discovering really quickly how important it is to me and my lifestyle because without it I feel lost" (participant, *All Bodies Dance*)

"Usually disability arts programs are totally for people who uses mobility devices or have a disability. In the *All Bodies Dance Project*, there's integration so there are standing and sitting dancers. This is so unique and awesome. Its not about the disability. Its about anybody who wants to try. If you have a broken leg, it doesn't matter. If you want an easier dance class without pressure, its there. We're all working together. That this program is for everyone—that's the huge difference for me... and what makes this program so inspiring." (participant, *All Bodies Dance*)

## DOCUMENTATION

*All Bodies Dance Project, seen and be seen*  
<http://allbodiesdance.ca/media/>

Made in BC, Canadian Inclusive Dance Teacher Intensive  
<http://www.madeinbc.org/bodies-dance-goes-first-ever-canadian-inclusive-dance-teacher-intensive/>



## **CASE STUDY TWO: FOOLISH OPERATIONS ENSEMBLE, DANCING THE PARENTING**

### **LOCATIONS**

Creekside Community Centre  
Trout Lake Community Centre  
Moberly Arts Centre

### **DATES**

2011 – ongoing

### **ARTIST IN RESIDENCE**

Julie Lebel

## PROJECT GOALS

Parents, caregivers, children under five years old, and professional dance artists come together in creation, practice, and performance. *Dancing the Parenting* co-creates work that explores what it means to dance with children rather than assuming that adults must always lead, direct, and teach. Their work explores the coming together of the family self and the creative self, the creative capacities of babies and young children as collaborators, and ideas of ‘appropriate behaviour’ while making art. Shifting the power dynamic to collaborate with young children as partners in creative expression, this project asks, ‘What impact could young children have on our culture if we are attentive and open to the perception that they are doing exactly what they should be doing most of the time?’ This project aims to:

- explore new ways to engage inter-generationally through movement and choreography;
- connect people with a broad range of abilities through the creative processes of dance;
- learn from children’s qualities of embodiment (relationship to gravity, exploration of developmental movement patterns, touch, repetition, open gaze, etc.);
- engage non-professional dancers in the ‘daily working life’ of a dance practice; developing choreography, dancing, and performing;
- build awareness around the intense emotions of young family life—eg. joy and extreme fatigue, attachment stages and their relationship to movement, presence, and choreography;
- practice shifting common power dynamics between parent and children;
- explore the creative and pedagogical possibilities of making dance ‘with children’ rather than ‘for children; and
- foster new skills, community spirit, and artistic sensibilities as producers, practitioners, and audience.

## DESCRIPTION

The *Dancing the Parenting* project explores the creative and pedagogical possibilities of making dance with children rather than for them, providing a low stress space for families to connect and create in an embodied way. The physical lives of babies and toddlers—cradling, bouncing, chasing, rolling, crawling, unsteady standing, repetition—meet adult dance practices including contact improvisation and ensemble thinking. This project promotes healthy movement literacy in children as well as exercise and expression for parents. By focusing on families with babies and toddlers, it uncovers what movement, dance and creativity can bring to adults experiencing the shifting sense of identity parenthood brings. Including babies and small children in creative process responds to the often isolating and demanding early years of parenthood. This project differs from traditional parent and tot programs in that it does not focus on educating children. Instead it seeks to build strong creative relationships within and beyond the nuclear family. Dance is embraced as a way to spend deep time in self-discovery, and family and community relationship building.

*Dancing the Parenting* works to avoid the ‘cute’, making space for what dance artist Margaret Paek (New York based Co/Motion: a dance collective comprised of parents and children) describes as “...allowing the kids to be seen, in all their glory. Their presence and awareness is so pure. Allowing parenthood to be seen, in all its glory. Corralling the chaos and framing the amazing-ness.”

New ideas and theories around teaching, learning, parenting, and the family that see children as creative and curious partners with the potential to share in the construction of their own ‘learning’ opens up the possibility of considering new creative relationships on many different levels.

## CHALLENGES

- Building a class structure that works with the chaotic immediacy of infancy and early childhood (late arrival, naps, snacks, diapers, meltdowns).
- Building consistent attendance in such a chaotic period in participants lives.
- Balancing the needs and interests of a committed corps of dancers and those who come in and out of the program.
- Building transparency and finding common ground around parental expectations of ‘acceptable behavior’ in small children—tensions when kids are cranky, acting out, in conflict, etc.

## MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

- Participants do return. *Dancing the Parenting* maintains a consistent corps of 22 dancers who perform (10 parents, 11 children). Seasonal numbers are 30-50 participants per session at each community centre.
- Adult attendance is diverse in age, cultural background, dance ability. Children range from infants to four year olds.
- Participants work together to effectively plan, communicate, practice, and perform.
- Participants and artists report a high level of satisfaction with the project as engaging, creative, and challenging.
- In 2015, the project was the subject of a major Park Board Conference, *Embody/In My Body* with over 200 delegates/audience.
- The project expanded to include fee-for-service introductory classes from 2013-16 at Creekside community centre, Trout Lake community centre, and Moberly Arts Centre.
- The project is profiled in Made in BC/Cineworks video project, Play It Forward 2016.
- Foolish Operations will become a not-for-profit society in 2016.

## GREATER IMPACT

In 2015, to promote discussion and the dissemination of experiences and learning emerging from the *Dancing the Parenting* project, Foolish Operations and the Vancouver Park Board hosted a day-long conference exploring creative practice in collaboration with children, incorporating artistic, cultural, and educational perspectives. Artists, educators, programmers, and families explored the role that the arts, and dance in particular, can play in relationships between parents, care givers, educators, artists, and young children. The conference, titled *Embody/In My Body*, included:

- a master-class for professional, community-engaged dance artists with renowned family dance artist and educator Patricia Reedy from Luna Dance Institute (Berkeley, CA);
- a keynote address for all delegates by the abovementioned Patricia Reedy
- presentations by dance artist Julie Lebel, early childhood education and Reggio Emilia specialist Susan Hoppenfeld, and visual artist Elizabeth MacKenzie followed by a panel discussion;
- a 30-minute *Dancing the Parenting* performance with professional production values—live music, costumes, and lighting design;
- audience dialogue with presenters and performers; and
- the creation of a 12-minute documentary video profiling Foolish Operations: *Dancing the Parenting*.

One hundred educators, parents, artists, programmers, and culture workers interested in community- engaged practice attended the conference, and the performance was presented to a sold out audience of an additional one hundred people. *Embody/In My Body* connected and energized a new audience of people interested in balancing creative pursuits, early childhood education, intergenerational community-engaged art, embodied pedagogy, and parenthood.

New partnerships and opportunities have grown out of *Dancing the Parenting* and *Embody/In My Body*, enabling the practice of community-engaged family dance to flourish in different contexts. New participants continue to join the practice, and the group continues to perform, presenting new material at LINK Dance, the Vancouver Park Board annual showcase of community dance. Julie Lebel has begun working with Sunset community centre preschool in a partnership that enables rent-free access to Moberly Arts and Culture Centre. Through Made in BC Dance on Tour, Julie Lebel led a series of workshop for teenaged mothers in 2015 that continues as a Foolish Operations initiative in 2016. Foolish Operations has been commissioned by the Surrey Children's Festival to create a new work that involves community families with children aged 18 months to four years old. Children under five years of age who attend performances are able to participate in the piece

## PARTNERS

Made in BC: Dance on Tour (2013-15), Jewish Community Centre of Greater Vancouver (2014-2015), Surrey Children's Festival (2016).

## COMMUNITIES SERVED

Participants come from across Vancouver, Burnaby, and Richmond for this project.

## VANCOUVER PARK BOARD STAFF

Marie Lopes, Danita Noyes, Lorrie Wager (arts programmers, Arts, Culture and Engagement), Eva Srobotnjak (recreation programmer, Trout Lake Community Centre), Manabu Koshimura, Michelle Rideout, Chris Podlecki (recreation programmers, Creekside Community Centre).

## RESOURCES AND FUNDING

Vancouver Park Board	\$4,000 (2011) (AIC funding) \$5,000 (2015) (Roundhouse Artist in Residency funds)
Roundhouse Association funding	\$5000 (2015) ( <i>Embody/In My Body</i> conference funds)
Roundhouse Association in-kind	marketing support through in-house posters, program guide, web and social media, workshop space and theatre rental fees waived
Creekside Community Centre in-kind	programmer support, workshop space, marketing support through program guide (2011-2016)
Grandview Association funding	\$2,000 (2012)
Grandview Association in-kind	programmer support, workshop space, marketing support through program guide (2012-2016)
Moberly Arts Centre/ Sunset Community Centre in-kind	programmer support, workshop space, marketing support through program guide (2014-2016)
British Columbia Arts Council	\$18,000 (2014)

## COMMENTS ON PROCESS

"Mom and tot courses... seems to be more about let's have fun. *Dancing the Parenting* is about being present, learning how to be in our bodies, have an exchange between parents and children and other children and other adults." (participant, *Dancing the Parenting*)

"Being present as a creative person and as a parent and honouring what is happening in the moment... Your children get to see you in a different way." (participant, *Dancing the Parenting*)

"The yummiest part for me was when I was rolling with my kids... lying on the floor being starfish... or they are starfish on top of me. We're rolling and connecting physically. It's lovely and intimate and joyous. That's success to me. Even if I just have five minutes of that, it's worth it, the rush to get there... everything. And even better if we start doing it at home. It's a way of being physical with my kids. There's something sacred about the dance studio. I know how to roll on the floor, but I don't do it with my kids! Somehow, in the dance studio, I give myself permission to..." (participant, *Dancing the Parenting*)

"I am inspired. I am reminded how precious this time is. Also, how we can share some of our frustrations about being a mum, being a parent... Feeling not alone." (participant, *Dancing the Parenting*)

"Coming together to move... it activates different parts of the brain than sitting around having coffee, talking about difficulties or successes as a parent... it's always parenting on the go in a way. Whenever you go out with children, it's parenting on the go, but moving the body, seeing each other eye to eye, in that workshop... it opens my heart and brain." (participant, *Dancing the Parenting*)



## DOCUMENTATION

*Dancing the Parenting* overview:

<https://juliebeldanceprojects.wordpress.com/community-dance/foolish-operations-ensemble/>

*Embody/In My Body* Conference: Keynote and presenters:

<https://juliebeldanceprojects.wordpress.com/embody-in-my-body/conference-presentations-videos/>

*Embody/In My Body* Conference: performance and dialogue with audience:

<https://juliebeldanceprojects.wordpress.com/embody-in-my-body/performance-video/>



### CASE STUDY THREE: ROUNDHOUSE COMMUNITY DANCERS

#### LOCATION

Roundhouse Community Arts and Recreation Centre

#### DATES

2001 – ongoing

#### ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE

2001 Karen Jamieson Dance

2002 Kathryn Ricketts, Saille Abbot, Alvin Tolentino, Anne Cooper, Jai Govinda

2003 Clayne Conings, Helen Walkley, Kira Shaffer, Barbara Txi Hannah, Jai Govinda

2004 Paras Terezakis, David MacMurray Smith, Philip Clement, Kira Shaffer, Mortal Coil, Kokoro Dance

2005 Jennifer Mascall, Kathryn Ricketts, Peter Bingham

2006 Deborah Madison, MACHiNENOiSY, Byron Chief Moon, Tara Cheyenne Friedenber, Navaro Franc and Pepe Danze

2007 Tara Cheyenne Friedenber, Kathryn Ricketts, Kokoro Dance

2008 Diana Casas, Txi Whizz (Barbara Hannah), Kathryn Ricketts, Rosario Ancer, Cezar Tantoco

2010 Jai Govinda, Alvin TolentinoKevin Bergsma, lee Suh fe

2011 Jacci Collins, Desiree Dunbar, Kat SingleDain, Kathryn Ricketts

2012 Kathryn Ricketts, Raven Spirit Dance

2013 Caroline Liffmann, Flamenco Rosario, Julie Lebel & Miriam Colvin

2014-16 Julie Lebel & Miriam Colvin

## PROJECT GOALS

The *Roundhouse Community Dancers* project brings together non-professional movers of all ages, sizes, dance abilities and cultural backgrounds to work alongside professional dance artists creating, exploring, and performing dance. Community-engaged dance recognizes all participants as important contributors to the collaborative process. Together, artists and participants explore creative movement, and develop work that is important to them. This project aims to:

- connect people with a broad range of abilities through the creative processes of dance;
- engage non-professional dancers in the 'daily working life' of a dance practice; developing choreography, dancing, and performing;
- facilitate an appreciation and understanding of the roots, diversity, and richness of dance; and
- foster the skills, community spirit, and artistic sensibilities of producers, practitioners, and audience.

## DESCRIPTION

The *Roundhouse Community Dancers* (RHCD) is the oldest continuous community-engaged dance initiative in Vancouver. It grew out of one of the first Roundhouse artist in residence projects, Karen Jamieson's *Raven of the Railway* (1999), a dance-work exploring the Roundhouse as a site with a long indigenous history of use, a recent past as a Canadian rail industry building, and a new role as a community arts and recreation centre. *Raven* brought professional and community dancers together and was characterized by Jamieson's now signature principal of 'radical inclusivity'—there is a role for anyone who wants to be involved regardless of when they joined or how often they can attend. This open framework has been a pillar of the *Roundhouse Community Dancers* for 15 years. The RHCD is an open project: dancers come as they are able and there is no minimum attendance requirement. Their work involves a constant, ever changing group of adult community participants that comes together to learn about their bodies and how they move, and to create and perform dance. The group maintains processes to support a core group and casual participants, and there is confidence in continuity—you could travel for a year and come back.

Over the years, the RHCD has focused on a diversity of dance practices from contemporary dance, to classical Indian dance, clowning, aerial dance, and flamenco. Programming has responded to community interest, exploring a range that included both intense variety and deep investment over time. Lead artists worked with the dancers for as little as six weeks and as long as nine months. In 2012, the decision was made to contract a single artist or collective to work with the dancers for up to three years at a time. Artistic and group goals are reviewed at the end of each year to determine whether the relationship is still fruitful and if there are new areas of interest to explore. Dancers for the three-year project are solicited through an open call and chosen by a selection committee made up of community dancers, Roundhouse programmers, professional dancers, and dance administrators.

Over 15 years, group members have been active in organizing how they will work together—not quite a dance class, not quite a professional ensemble—something in the middle. They actively craft cooperative guidelines that enable them to work together, accommodating change in the group and the different approaches lead artists may take. Group members meet annually with programmers to discuss the direction of the project. They participate in the selection process for new artists coming to work in the program.

### Challenges

- Balancing the needs and interests of a committed corps of dancers and those who come in and out of the program.
- Balancing the desires of those who would like to make the work public through performance and those who simply value the process in its own right.
- Balancing variety and depth: a variety of lead artists versus long term work with a single artist.

## MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

- Participants return: RHCD maintain a consistent corps of 10-15 dancers with numbers as high as 30 dancers per season.
- Attendance is diverse in age, cultural background, and dance ability.
- Participants learn to work together to effectively plan, communicate, practice, and perform.

- Participants and artists report a high level of satisfaction with the project as engaging, creative, and challenging.
- Participants stay with the Roundhouse across disciplines—taking courses in yoga, drumming, etc.
- The project was profiled in Douglas Durand, *Dancing Our Stories; Personal Narratives* from Dance Animation and Community Dance in Canada, Canada Council for the Arts, 2004.
- The project was profiled in Made in BC/Cineworks video project *Play It Forward* 2016.

## GREATER IMPACT

RHCD has become an important part of the Roundhouse community. As a whole or in small groups, working with a lead artist or independently, they perform regularly at Roundhouse events including Winter Solstice, the Memory Festival, Seniors Week, and Vancouver Draw Down. They participate in dance projects and performances led by partner organizations including PuSh Festival, Boca del Lupo, and independent artists' projects. They are audience members and volunteers for dance events at the Roundhouse including Dance Allsorts and the Vancouver International Dance Festival. Some dancers have gone on to collaborate with other dance groups.

Participants have a strong sense of ownership of this project. They drive the overall philosophy and working dynamic, and have co-written "Principles of Unity" (2002) and a "Social Contract" (2013). These documents are reviewed regularly to ensure the core values of the group are relevant and participation guidelines make sense for present participants.

## PARTNERS

Made in BC: Dance on Tour (2013 – ongoing)

## COMMUNITIES SERVED

Participants come from across Vancouver, Burnaby and Richmond for this project

## VANCOUVER PARK BOARD STAFF

Elizabeth Kidd (arts programmer, Roundhouse) 2000-2009, Marie Lopes (arts programmer, Arts, Culture and Engagement) 2009-current.

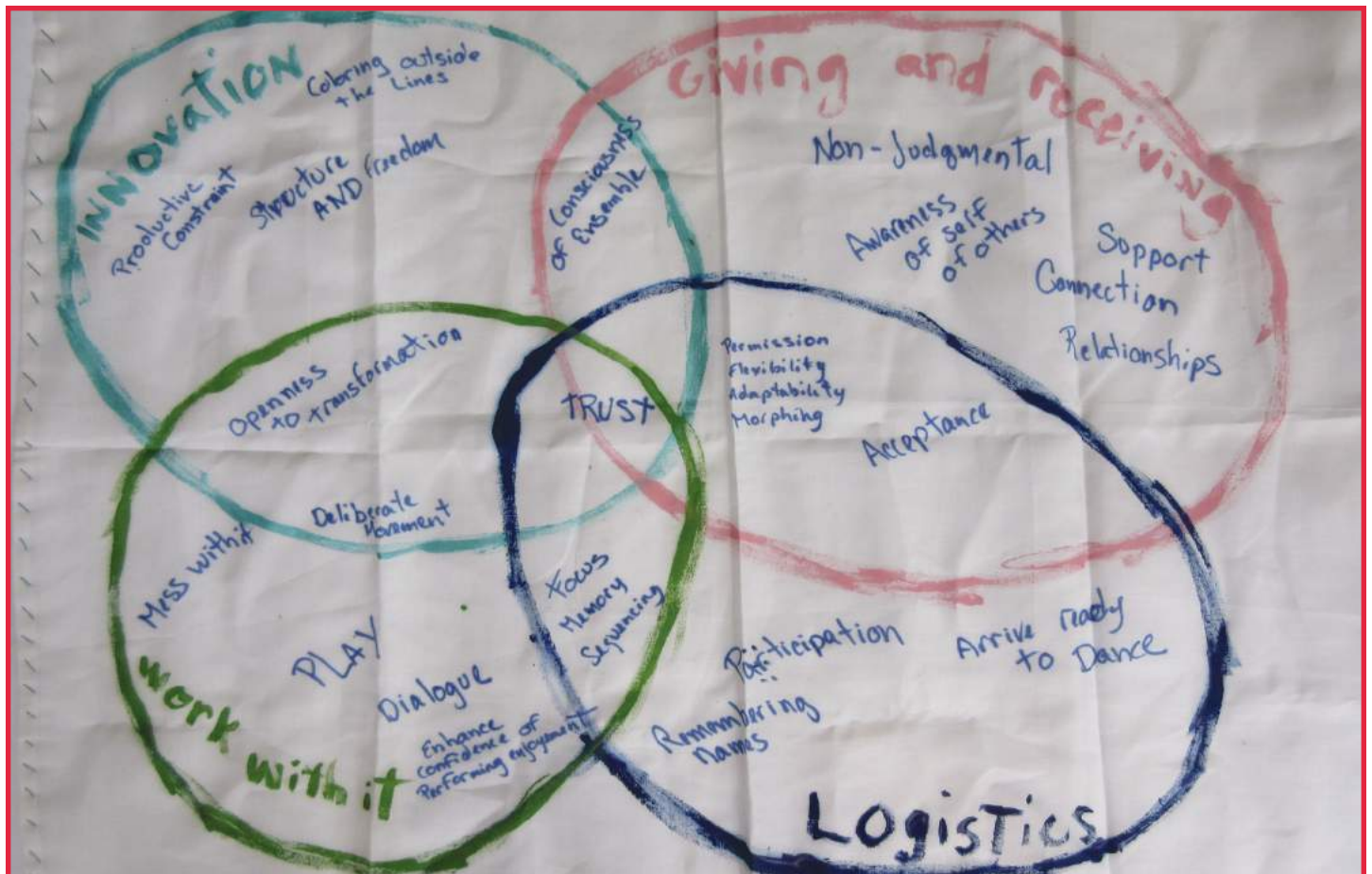
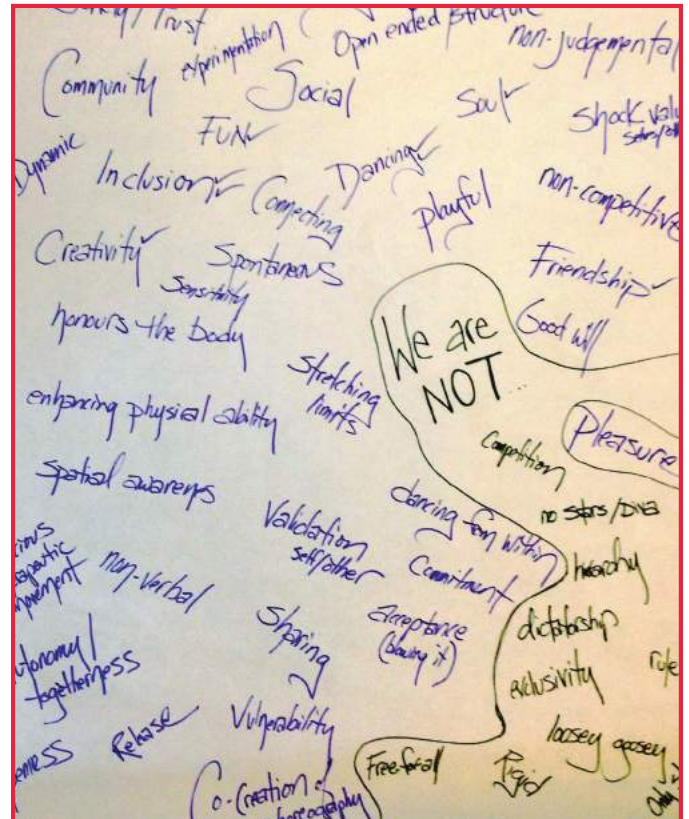
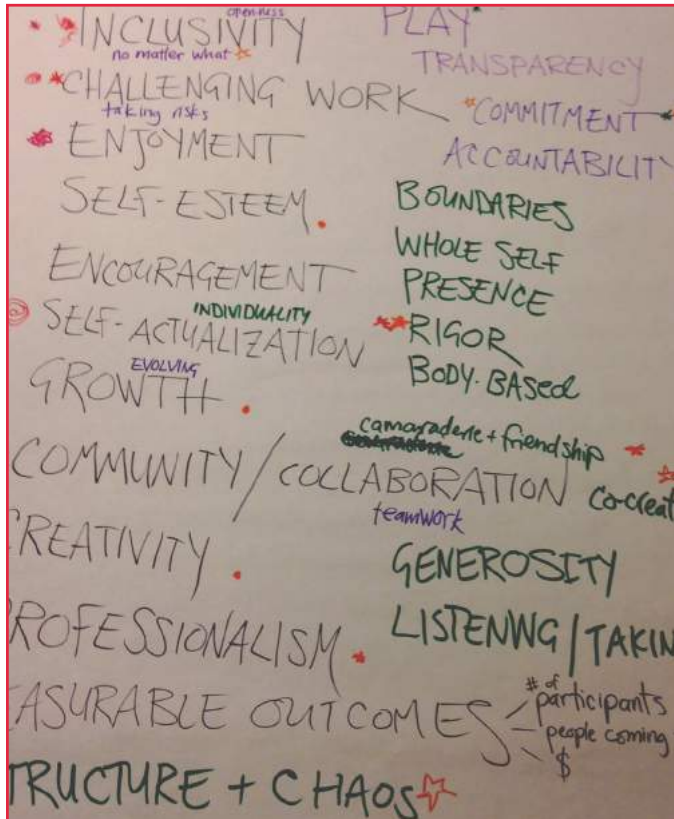
## RESOURCES AND FUNDING

Vancouver Park Board	\$4-6000 (annual funding)
Made in BC funding	\$2000 (2013-14)

## COMMENTS ON PROCESS

"What I loved is that as a participant you are guided with processes and things to do as a group and the choreography develops from there. I love that organic development and to see the dance and the pieces grow out of the facilitators observation and encouragement of the group. To see that, to be part of the whole—the birth the creation and the production and having a show. Its inspiring and incredible to be part of it and at the end in a real theatre in front of a couple hundred people... there's nothing like it. I've become more confident. I've learned that I can listen and watch and see patterns, that I have the discipline to stick with something and go deep. It's a big personal accomplishment." (participant, *Roundhouse Community Dancers*, 2009 -2016)

"I wasn't very outgoing... I admired people who could just get up and dance or interact with a performer. Part of it is giving people opportunity... but some people are borderline... now I want to give them an opportunity that was given to me. Are you tapping your feet? Then go for it!" (participant, *Roundhouse Community Dancers*, 2005-2016)



## **PARTICIPANT SOCIAL AND WORKING CONTRACTS: FORMAL EXAMPLE**

### **ROUNDHOUSE COMMUNITY DANCERS PRINCIPLES OF UNITY**

#### **Roundhouse Community Dancers**

January-March 2002; Revised June 2002, Revised May 2005

The Community Dancers are a new and ever-evolving group of people brought together in the spirit of dance. We are always open to new input or ideas.

All of your creativity is welcome!

#### **PRINCIPLES OF UNITY**

The *Roundhouse Community Dancers* are unified by a series of codes of behaviour which ensure that the group, the instructor and new members feel respected, safe and supported. This is a semi-professional group. It is not a social club, but a group of people brought together by love of dance. It maintains a professional respect for colleagues and instructors alike. We're here to learn about our body, how it moves, and to dance.

Our principles of unity are as follows

1. *Roundhouse Community Dancers* will appoint a Coordinator and Assistant Coordinators every three months. Their roles will be
  - to schedule meetings,
  - to receive new proposals for choreographers from members or choreographers,
  - to welcome new registrants and ensure members are contacted if they leave,
  - to co-sign contracts with the choreographer and the Roundhouse,
  - to bring the group together in a circle at every workshop,
  - to identify roles for other members as needed (treasurer/fundraiser, communicator/outreach, etc).
2. Come on time at 2:30 to all workshops in order to sign in, meet new members, to discuss any concerns regarding previous class or to share new information. Participants should be changed and ready to start warm-ups with the instructor at 2:45.
3. Store clothing, shoes, backpacks etc. in the storage room rather than leaving them outside cluttering the Dance Studio.
4. Act professionally during workshops – keep focused on the instructor and the dancing. Talking amongst ourselves during class, flirting, giggling, drifting away in the middle of an exercise is distracting and disrespectful to the class and to the instructor. If a member is going to leave early – please tell the instructor at the beginning of the class.
5. Refrain from eating during class or in the Dance Studio; food should be consumed outside the Dance Studio before the beginning of class or during the class break.
6. During meetings, respect others while they are speaking; do not interrupt or speak while another is talking.
7. All individuals must refrain from aggressive antagonistic behaviour, disrespectful language or come-ons. We want the dance studio or workshop to be a safe, non-threatening space for everyone. We will all work towards creating a tolerant, harmonious and supportive environment that meets the group's objectives.
8. Persons wishing to photograph individual(s) should always ask permission prior to taking any photographs. Do not wait for the person(s) to indicate or explain why that they don't wish to be photographed. Unless express permission is given by the instructor and the rest of the dancers, no photographs should be taken during the workshop. To do so can be disruptive and distracting to the dance workshop and to the dance process.

10. Anyone who wishes to use photographs of the workshop or workshop participants for any public purposes must get prior permission of the photographer and from the person(s) photographed, using a release form. Public use includes, but is not limited to, those who wish to use the photographs in publications, artwork, web sites, or illustrated lecture.
11. The photographer must be credited for his/her photograph(s) that are used for any public purposes.
12. Anyone who wishes to use images or texts from documents, e-mails, brochures, etc. related to the activities of the Community Dancers or the Roundhouse must get prior approval by the owner of the image/text prior to its being reproduced and published.
13. New members will be welcomed and acknowledged by the group during the circle/warm up at the beginning of the class.
14. There should be at least 10-minute recession in the middle of the class for late registration, water, telephone or bathroom breaks.
15. At the end of each session, the community dancers will get together to discuss their experience and to thank the instructor.
16. Any change of schedule will be reported immediately to all members, instructors and Roundhouse personnel.
17. The instructor will be encouraged to show flexibility in teaching members with different abilities, ages and body types.
18. The instructor or any community dancer will consult with and gain the approval of the group before inviting the participation/collaboration of a non-member in teaching, rehearsing, producing or promoting anything related to the Community Dancers.
19. Every member is responsible for their own physical and mental wellbeing and is encouraged to speak out (respectfully) if s/he feels they are being put at risk. Members should also stop or slow down if they do not feel capable of keeping up with the workshops. They are not designed to turn you into an athlete or a professional dancer.

## **APPENDIX E: COMMUNITY-ENGAGED DANCE VANCOUVER BOARD OF PARKS AND RECREATION, 2016**

### **AGELESS DANCERS (ROUNDHOUSE COMMUNITY ARTS AND RECREATION CENTRE)**

The *Ageless Dancers* are an inclusive community of older adults who create, practice, and perform in ways that honour the aging body, affirming and celebrating the unique experiences of later life. In a series of weekly workshops, adults over the age of 50 explore the creative and interactive potential of their physical, mental, and emotional selves through dance using movement and voice. Their work together is sourced in the knowledge, stories, and experiences held in the mature body.

<http://roundhouse.ca/programs/older-adult>

### **ALL BODIES DANCE**

#### **(Roundhouse Community Art and Recreation Centre and Trout Lake Community Centre)**

Mixed ability or integrated dance is accessible to all bodies and all abilities, including people with physical, developmental, sensory and neurological disabilities. In a mixed ability dance practice, differences become creative strengths as they explore the choreographic possibilities of wheelchairs, crutches, canes and different ways of moving and perceiving. The practice explores the point of contact between people with different abilities to create dances that are the direct result of who each individual is and what they bring to the group. Led by Naomi Brand, *All Bodies Dance* seeks opportunities for every body to discover dance, and for artists with disabilities (and without) to access pre-professional dance training. *All Bodies* works to widen the spectrum of who dances and what dance can be.

<http://allbodiesdance.ca>

### **ARTISTS' FIELDHOUSE STUDIO PROJECT: WRITTEN ON THE BODY**

#### **(McBride Park Fieldhouse)**

At the core of *Written on the Body* is the collaboration between musician Elisa Thorn (harp, composition) and dance artist Dayna Szyndrowski (percussive dance). Their work navigates the intersections of music and dance, tradition and innovation, composition and improvisation. Through creative work and play with community members of all ages, the pair aim to develop methods to look within in order to look outwards in art and beyond.

<http://www.writtenonthebody.ca/>

<http://vancouver.ca/parks-recreation-culture/field-house-studio-residencies-in-parks.aspx>

### **ARTS AND HEALTH PROJECT: THE VANCOUVER DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE ELDER DANCERS**

#### **(Carnegie Community Centre)**

The Arts & Health Project, in partnership with the Carnegie Centre and Karen Jamieson Dance Society, coordinates this community dance project for seniors living in the Downtown Eastside. Coupling a strong, vibrant dance foundation and a fresh flexibility of social, creative movement in the group, Karen's team of dance artists reach out to the participants, providing space to discover expressive movement through improvisation and sharing. Participants find a balance of playfulness, fun, motivation, and focus.

<http://www.artsandhealthproject.com/carnegie2.html>

<http://www.artsandhealthproject.com/>

### **POLYMER DANCE**

#### **(Moberly Arts and Culture Centre and Hillcrest Community Centre)**

Polymer Dance offers weekly classes mixing techniques-training and improvisation for beginners and intermediate/advanced non-professional dancers with at least three years of experience, along with opportunities to perform in a mix of traditional and non-traditional venues a few times a year. Led by Miriam Esquitín and Kristina Lemieux, Polymer collaborates with other community dance and arts groups, city events and professional artists.

<http://polymerdance.com>



## **FOOLISH OPERATIONS: DANCING THE PARENTING**

### **(Creekside and Trout Lake Community Centres)**

Parents, caregivers, children aged newborn to four years old, and professional dance artists come together in practice and performance. Facilitated by artist Julie Lebel, Foolish Operations co-creates work that explores what it means to dance with our children rather than assuming that adults must always lead, direct, and teach. Their work explores the coming together of the family self and the creative self, the creative capacities of babies and young children as collaborators, and ideas of 'appropriate behaviour' while making art. Shifting the power dynamic to collaborate with young children as partners in creative expression, this project asks, 'What impact could young children have on our culture if we paid attention and treated them like they belong just the way they are?'

<https://julielebeldanceprojects.wordpress.com/category/foolish-operations>

## **ARTS AND HEALTH PROJECT: THE MOBERLY SENIOR DANCERS**

### **(Moberly Arts and Culture Centre)**

The Moberly Senior Dancers grew out of a group of older adult women already meeting regularly as a knitting group. With the leadership of dance artist Jacci Collins, and assistant Anna Kraulis, this group weaves connections across cultures, with representation from the South Asian, Chinese, and Philippine communities. Diversity is integral to their practice and provides many opportunities for learning. The dancing group explores creative expression through movement, sound, and facial expression. Elements of traditional Chinese dance and Bhangra dancing have been shared by group members. Knitting remains a symbol of what the group strives toward: skill, attention, cooperation, and working towards a common creative goal.

<http://www.artsandhealthproject.com/moberly2.html>

<http://www.artsandhealthproject.com/>

## **ROUNDHOUSE COMMUNITY DANCERS**

### **(Roundhouse Community Arts and Recreation Centre)**

Now in its 16th year, *The Roundhouse Community Dancers* is a constant, ever changing group of community participants that comes together to learn about their bodies and how they move—and to dance. They are united by a shared fearlessness and playfulness when it comes to exploring the body, mind, and emotion through dance. Over the years they have worked with dance artists in diverse practices including contemporary dance, clowning, aerial dance, and flamenco. Artists who have worked with this group include Julie Lebel, Karen Jamieson, Alvin Tolentino, Jai Govinda, Donna Redlick, Rosario Ensor, Barbara Bourget, and many others. In 2015/16 they are working with Julie Lebel and Miriam Colvin on Findings/Trouvailles.

<https://julielebeldanceprojects.wordpress.com/community-dance/findings-trouvailles>

<http://roundhouse.ca/programs/adult/>

## **ARTISTS' FIELDHOUSE STUDIO PROJECT: DANCE TROUPE PRACTICE**

### **(Pandora Park Fieldhouse)**

Dance Troupe Practice (DTP) is a movement-based performance collective, creating work that combines dance, voice, video, and installation. Committed to a deep exploration of the moving body and creative collaboration, they connect community needs and interests to their artists' practices, exploring the connections between dance and everyday life in unexpected places. DTP believes that powerful new dance works emerge from a commitment to collective process that fosters trust, personal expression, and relationship. Curious? DTP hosts open practices on the first Sunday of each month. <http://dancetroupepractice-fieldhouse.tumblr.com>

<http://vancouver.ca/parks-recreation-culture/field-house-studio-residencies-in-parks.aspx>

## APPENDIX F: RESOURCES

### COMMUNITY-ENGAGED ARTS PROGRAMS THAT SHARE SIMILAR PRINCIPLES WITH THIS PAPER.

These projects contain a range of guidelines, reading lists, examples, and conference notes that further describe this creative practice of community art engagement.

#### ARTS AND HEALTH PROJECT: HEALTHY AGING THROUGH THE ARTS, VANCOUVER, BC

The Arts & Health Project is a working collaboration of seniors and professional artists, who together develop an arts practice that focuses on the creative expression of ideas and issues that are important to them. Three resource guides were developed out of this project:

<http://www.artsandhealthproject.com/guides.html>

- Community Engaged Arts Practice with Seniors: A Start-up Guide—written by Margaret Naylor & Patricia Fraser
- Arts Administration Practical Guide for Community Engaged Artists—written by Sharon Kallis
- A Guide to Creating Peer Support And Collaboration Strategies For Seniors: Community Engaged Arts Practise—written by Dr Clarie Robson

#### COMMUNITY ARTS WORKBOOK: ANOTHER VITAL LINK, TORONTO, ON

A national conference hosted by the Ontario Arts Council examined this form of social practice and generated a workbook for artists, communities, and the public who want to become involved in community arts. It is designed to give some background on the application of community arts as well as provide hands-on tools, advice, frameworks, and techniques to help artists, cultural workers, and communities to create a community arts project.

<http://www.arts.on.ca/Asset363.aspx?method=1>

#### EVERYBODY DANCE: MADE IN BC, VANCOUVER, BC

Everybody Dance is organized by Made in BC in partnership with the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation. This website hosts examples of current community-engaged dance projects open for new participants by Vancouver independent artists or companies.

<http://www.madeinbc.org/everybody-dance/>

#### TRACKS 7TH CANADIAN COMMUNITY PLAY & THEATRE SYMPOSIUM

TRACKS was a six-day national symposium that brought together community-engaged Indigenous and settler/immigrant artists, arts producers, and cultural thinkers who collaborate to create art with, for, and about community.

Resource List: <http://www.trackssymposium.com/resources.html>

#### JUMBLIES THEATRE, TORONTO, ON

A theatre program based in Toronto that expands where art happens, who gets to be part of it, what forms it takes, and which stories it tells. This impulse has led them outside of specialized art places, and to place participants at the core of their projects, as a bridge between artists and audience. They say, "Everyone is welcome!" and grapple with the implications, social and aesthetic, of trying to mean it.

<http://www.jumbliestheatre.org/jumblies/about>

### **CREATIVE DANCE CENTER, SEATTLE, WA**

The Creative Dance Center is a unique, non-profit organization that has been providing brain-compatible dance education for over three decades.

<http://creativedance.org/>

### **CANDOCO DANCE COMPANY IS THE COMPANY OF DISABLED AND NON-DISABLED DANCERS- MIDDLESEX, UK**

Candoco produces excellent and profound experiences for audiences and participants that excite, challenge, and broaden perceptions of art and ability, and place. People and collaboration are at the heart of their work.

<http://www.candoco.co.uk/>

### **JOINT FORCES DANCE COMPANY, EUGENE, OR**

Joint Forces Dance Company's mission is to encourage the evolution of contemporary dance and provide ways for people to connect through dance. This mission is accomplished through the work of DanceAbility International, contact improvisation workshops and events, and performances. The work of JFDC creates inclusive communities through dance.

<http://www.jointforcesdance.com/>

### **PEOPLE DANCING: THE FOUNDATION FOR COMMUNITY DANCE, LEICESTER, UK**

A professional organization for anyone involved in creating opportunities for people to experience and participate in dance.

<http://www.communitydance.org.uk>

### **LUNA DANCE INSTITUTE, BERKELEY, CA**

Luna Dance Institute is a nationally-acclaimed dance education organization based in Berkeley, CA. Established in 1992, their mission aims to bring creativity, equity and community to every child's life through the art of dance.

<http://lunadanceinstitute.org>

### **THE DANCE EXCHANGE, TAKOMA PARK, MD**

The Dance Exchange creates dance that arise from asking: Who gets to dance? Where is the dance happening? What is it about? Why does it matter? Dance Exchange is an intergenerational company of artists that creates dance and engages people in making art. They serve as an incubator for creative research, bringing ideas to action through collaborations that range from experts in the field of dance to unexpected movers and makers.

<http://danceexchange.org>

## APPENDIX G: FUNDING SOURCES

### CANADA COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS

<http://canadacouncil.ca/council/grants/find-a-grant/grants/artists-and-community-collaboration-program-accp>

The Canada Council for the Arts is Canada's national public arts funder. We champion and invest in artistic excellence so that Canadians may enjoy and participate in a rich cultural life.

#### ARTISTS AND COMMUNITY COLLABORATION PROGRAM

Artists and community collaboration is an arts process where professional artists and community members actively work together as creative partners in collaborative projects within Canada. Activities and projects are joint undertakings where the process of collaborating is equally important to the art created, and where there is shared decision-making and ownership of project results.

##### **Application Deadlines:**

Dance: March 15

Media Arts: Deadline Feb 1

Visual Arts: April 15

Theatre: September 15, March 1

Music: February 1

### BC ARTS COUNCIL

[https://www.bcartscouncil.ca/organizations/org\\_general.htm](https://www.bcartscouncil.ca/organizations/org_general.htm)

The BC Arts Council believes that vibrant arts and cultural communities are central to the creation of a healthy society. Arts and cultural organizations are an essential aspect of the foundation for artists to create, produce, present and disseminate their work. The Council has a range of programs designed to provide support to professional arts and cultural organizations throughout the province.

#### ARTS-BASED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

##### **Project Assistance – Arts-Based Community Development**

Awards are available to assist with projects that develop and extend the practice and understanding of arts-based community development through the processes of creating new work, producing events; and developing resource materials for arts-based community development practitioners.

**Application Deadline:** April 1

#### YOUTH ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

The BC Arts Council's Youth Engagement Program provides support to eligible organizations taking innovative and inspiring approaches to actively engaging British Columbia's young people with professional arts and cultural organizations and their programming, through exposure to professional artists and arts experiences; as participants in the artistic or creative process; and/or, as the primary audiences for artistic work and programming.

**Application Deadline:** January 15

## ARTSTARTS IN SCHOOLS

<http://artstarts.com/aic>

Teachers, principals and PAC representatives can apply for Artists in the Classroom (AIC) grants to bring professional artists into their classrooms. AIC grants support projects in schools across BC that demonstrate artistic excellence, strong curricular connections, high levels of student engagement and an active partnership between an educator and a professional artist.

**Application Deadline:** May 27, 2016 or October 17, 2016

## CITY OF VANCOUVER: CULTURAL SERVICES

<http://vancouver.ca/people-programs/community-arts-grant-program.aspx>

### COMMUNITY ARTS

Is your group planning a community-based art project or event? Your group may be eligible for grant money for planning, running, or promoting that event or project.

**Application Deadline:** January 2017

## VANCOUVER PARK BOARD

<http://vancouver.ca/people-programs/artists-in-communities-program.aspx>

### ARTIST IN COMMUNITIES

The Vancouver Park Board Artists in Communities program builds community by making art together using principles of community cultural development.

We host artist residencies each year in participating community centres to support artists working in neighbourhoods and encourage a wide variety of interactions between artists and residents.

**Application Deadline:** January 2017

### NEIGHBORHOOD MATCHING FUND

The Neighbourhood Matching Fund supports neighbourhood-based groups that want to make creative improvements to local public lands. Eligible projects must actively involve the community and build neighbourhood connections. The Neighbourhood Matching Fund is not a grant; community groups are reimbursed for project expenses based on equivalent contributions from volunteer labour, other funding sources, and in-kind donations.

**Application Deadline:** April 15 and October 15

## HAMBER FOUNDATION

<http://www.hamberfoundation.ca>

The Hamber Foundation makes grants for cultural, educational and charitable purposes within the Province of British Columbia. Grants are awarded only to institutions and organizations registered as "educational" or "charitable" under the Canadian Income Tax Act and which are in possession of a registration number in good standing at the date of application.

**Application Deadline:** March 15 and September 1

## APPENDIX H: RESEARCH LEARNINGS

I begin by recounting how *Leading from Beside: community-engaged arts* developed because describing my process illustrates my learning.

Janet Ready's encouragement, and inspired interpretation of the possibilities for an applied research project, led me to approach my colleague Marie Lopes, programmer with the Arts, Culture and Engagement team at the Vancouver Park Board to co-author this paper. Both Marie and I come to the field of recreation through the arts. She has a 25-year career in museum education, bringing a breadth of historical and contemporary art understanding into community-engaged arts programming. I come to the field as a visual artist and educator. We are fortunate to work in a municipality that recognizes the value of the arts, and funds and supports projects that bring professional artists together with community members to imagine, engage, innovate, create, and produce work that is meaningful to them. This form of programming is not yet typical in recreation centres, but it is growing rapidly throughout the Lower Mainland. Marie and I had already identified a desire to write about the range of creative projects we have facilitated, coordinated, funded, and witnessed over our seven years working with the Vancouver Park Board. We recognized the many ways these CEA projects fundamentally affect people's lives. The Langara applied research project offered us that opportunity.

I was also motivated to produce this paper for course reading and teaching in the Recreation diploma and degree programs. Accessible explorations of CEA programming are under-represented in critical writings. *Leading from Beside* provides a window into defining this form of arts programming as well as offering insight into the principles of practice and the benefits that community members, artists, and recreation programmers articulate through interviews. Three case studies further describe the process. Similar to the way a community art project might develop, responding to opportunity and community interest, *Leading from Beside* has evolved into a broader research project that now includes a symposium and an exhibition in the fall 2016 at the Roundhouse Community Arts & Recreation Centre in Vancouver. As a cultural change agent I feel that this applied research project—with all its components, can contribute to the growth of the arts in the field of recreation.

*Leading from Beside* was made possible through the Langara Recreation Studies department, the Vancouver Park Board, and Made in BC, a non-profit society dedicated to building a culture for dance throughout the province of British Columbia. The generous support of community partners is often how we do this work, so to deliver an applied research project that demonstrates that form of best practice feels right.

Finally, I acknowledge that the process of researching and co-writing this paper provided me the opportunity to investigate my own practice as an arts programmer and post-secondary instructor. I have come to understand more fully how my interest in teaching and facilitating community-engaged programming complement and inform each other.

Cyndy Chwelos

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Fieldhouse, *Dance Troupe Practice.*

CEA, *Roundhouse Ageless Dancers.*



# LEADING FROM BESIDE



## COMMUNITY-ENGAGED DANCE

SYMPOSIUM: SEP 16-17

EXHIBITION: SEP 10-21

RESEARCH PAPER:

[LANGARA.CA/DEPARTMENTS/RECREATION/FACULTY/FACULTY-RESEARCH.HTML](http://LANGARA.CA/DEPARTMENTS/RECREATION/FACULTY/FACULTY-RESEARCH.HTML)

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBILITIES FOR INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES WHEN DANCE ARTISTS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS COLLABORATE TO CREATE AND PRESENT WORK THAT EMERGES FROM THEIR IDEAS AND CONCERNS? JOIN US TO EXPLORE THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY-ENGAGED DANCE IN THE FIELD OF RECREATION.

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