

# *INVITING CREATIVITY*

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A Toolkit for Socially Engaged Creative Practices

by **Cyndy Chwelos and Elizabeth MacKenzie**

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### 1.1 WHO WE ARE

Cyndy Chwelos began her creative life as a ceramic artist who started collaborating with community members more than 20 years ago. She developed her socially engaged art practice even further as an arts programmer, most recently at the Roundhouse Community Arts and Recreation Centre (Vancouver). She has had the privilege to work alongside many artists, including Elizabeth MacKenzie, on creative projects for a wide variety of participants. Cyndy shares the important role that art can play in everyday life with the students she teaches in the department of Recreation Studies at Langara College (Vancouver).

Elizabeth MacKenzie's practice as an artist stretches back more than 35 years. Her work in drawing, installation and video has been represented in numerous exhibitions, festivals and screenings across Canada, United States and Europe. She's lived and worked in a number of Canadian cities, including Toronto, Saskatoon, Edmonton and now, Vancouver where she teaches part-time at Emily Carr University of Art and Design. What she brings to her role as a teacher is informed by, and predicated on, her experience as an artist—these two creative practices are deeply intertwined.

### 1.2 OUR PHILOSOPHY

We love the idea of inviting creativity. How can we make creativity hospitable to everyone we work with, including ourselves? How can we develop activities that encourage creativity? What are the features of a creative invitation? What are the strategies we can use to facilitate success?

Within our practices we focus on engendering opportunities for personal exploration and deep pleasure through creative activities. With our joint years of experience in creating art, teaching and engaging community members we propose to unpack this process in a fruitful and meaningful way. We want to provide access and understanding of the creative process to recreation leaders, as well as anyone interested in inviting creativity more deeply into their practice.

Our years of experience as practicing artists are central to the development of the seven principles we share with you within *Inviting Creativity*. They represent the basis for the strategies we depend upon to develop and enhance our work as artists. They are:

1. The relationship between creativity and play and their lasting benefits.
2. The value of parameters as the means to focus creative activity.
3. The exploration of materials—and the insights this handling encourages.
4. Social interaction as a way to extend individual capability and pleasure.
5. The role of chance and surprise to expand thinking.
6. The benefits of do-overs to deepen engagement.
7. Encouraging flow to create immersive experiences.

We believe in the importance of creativity within everyday life, so we're keen to share the methods we've learned to invite creativity. Our goal—within this project and our practice as artists and teachers—is to encourage a focus on the enjoyment, personal exploration and deep pleasure found within the creative process, regardless of the "artistic outcome." We consider creativity an experience, not a thing.

### 1.3 WHY THIS PROJECT?

As artists and teachers working in the field of community engaged art (CEA) we encounter a range of assumptions about creativity and how to engage participants in creative activities within both fine art and recreation contexts. Our methodology, which has emerged over time, has proven to be effective when working with both emerging artists and non-artists.

We recognize that there may be a knowledge gap for recreation programmers, camp leaders and students in how to engage participants in creative experience. We have seen first-hand how hesitant or resistant some may be in relation to developing these kinds of activities. They may be perplexed and fearful—worried that they are unequipped to develop creative programs. One of the problems we see is a focus on the outcome of a creative activity—the showpiece or achievement (like a mural)—rather than the process itself; this focus can detract from or diminish the creative experience of the participants.

As the benefits to participants in creative activities—which include both individual wellness and social cohesion—become more widely recognized, and as more community engaged arts take place outside galleries and museums, the need for leaders in the recreation field and elsewhere to be equipped with an understanding of the role of creative process is significant. *Inviting Creativity* explores this role and provides tools for students, educators, artists and recreation practitioners to develop and further the benefits of creative work within community life.

### 1.4 OUR PROCESS

*Inviting Creativity* began as a workshop (described in 4.2) Elizabeth presented to Vancouver Park Board's summer camp leaders in 2016. Cyndy was familiar with Elizabeth's methodology and had witnessed the success of other CEA projects she'd led. Together we were inspired to provide the summer staff with an informal "toolkit"—a set of seven

***We consider creativity an experience, not a thing***

principles for them to use to develop creative activities with and for children attending summer camps across Vancouver. This workshop was so well received we saw the potential for sharing it with a broader audience.<sup>1</sup>

### 1.5 PROJECT STRUCTURE

After we describe the framework of this project in this first section, the methodology shared within *Inviting Creativity* is presented in two main sections: "Considering Creativity" and the "Inviting Creativity Toolkit." The "Considering Creativity" section discusses key concepts and considerations for planning creative activities. The "Inviting Creativity Toolkit" section describes the seven key principles we suggest you integrate into the development of your creative activities.

The information in these two sections is presented within:

- a series of mind maps which visually present and connect our research and can provide touchstones while planning your activities;
- the written text which expands on key concepts and principles;
- and a collection of related captioned images which illustrate specific activities.

Finally, "Inviting Creativity in Practice" discusses the effectiveness of the *Inviting Creativity* methodology, as well as some of the outcomes when used by the camp leaders and recreation students we've taught. The final section provides acknowledgements and information regarding resources we found useful while compiling this document.

When we use the word "creativity" we are referring to the personal production of new meaning and understanding, through an art-making process. By encouraging interaction, with both materials and other people, we ask participants to push the limits of their understanding. Creativity is original—in that it originates within you and your imagination.

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<sup>1</sup> *Inviting Creativity* has also been developed to function as a companion to *Leading from Beside: Community Engaged Arts in Recreation*, a research paper developed by Cyndy and Marie Lopes in 2016. *Leading from Beside* demonstrated how community engaged arts projects take place in a variety of recreation settings including community centres, parks, pools, and on city streets. It described how professional artists and recreation programmers can work together to provide opportunities for important creative and personal relationships to emerge that foster imagination, community connection, and a deeper sense of self. Community engaged arts outcomes were linked to the broad goals of community recreation and leisure. The research paper provides a wide angle focus on participatory arts engaged projects, while the document you are now reading is intended to provide an expanded toolkit for the development of creative activities by a recreation or education leaders.



## CONSIDERING CREATIVITY

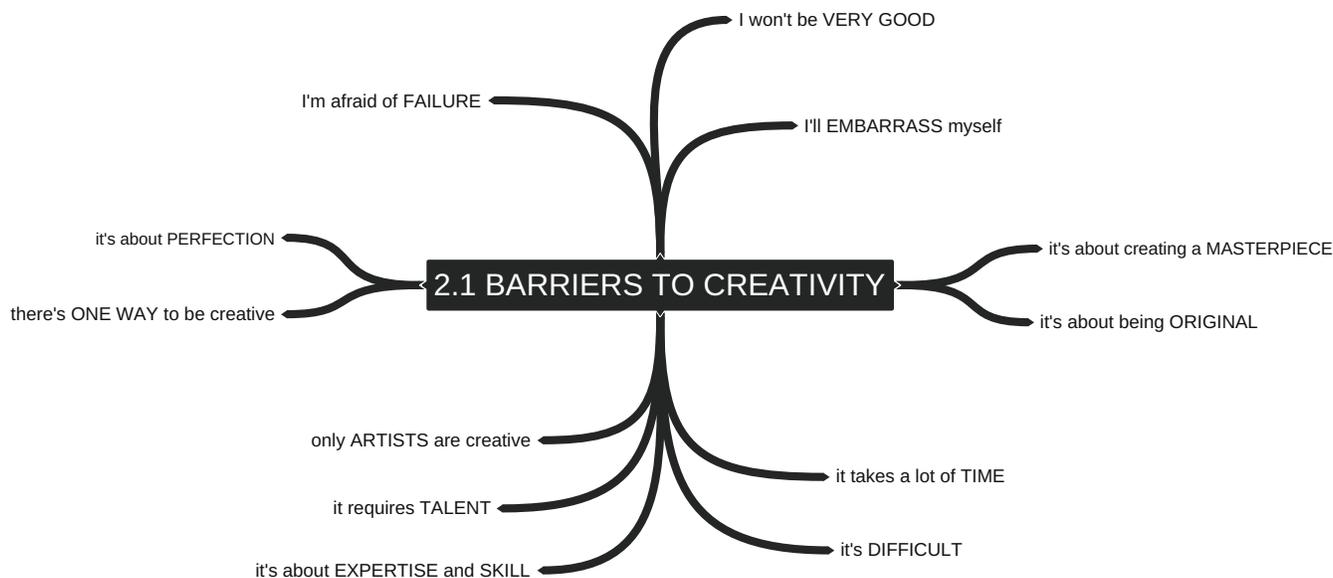
The methodology we outline in this document invites creativity by providing guidelines and principles for the design of creative activities for people of all ages and levels of ability. Designing the activities is a creative process in itself and you will find your imagination engaged as you embark on the process, implementing the principles as you move forward. Spiraling both inward and outward we can attest to the effectiveness of this methodology as it has emerged directly from the processes we've developed and used within our practice as artists and educators.

The activities that emerge from this methodology invite participants to access their imagination and be creative through engagement within a process. These processes encourage them to explore through the use of materials, the repetition of the process, interactions with others, problem-solving and the opportunity to be fully immersed and present in the experience.

We've seen time and time again the benefits of being engaged in a creative process. Participants tell us how surprised they are by their level of participation and enjoyment. In spite of their initial doubts and fears that

they weren't "good enough," they come to a new understanding of their creative capacity through their participation.

*The methodology we outline in this document invites creativity by providing guidelines and principles for the design of creative activities for people of all ages and levels of ability*



## 2.1 BARRIERS TO CREATIVITY

Creativity is often considered an innate capacity (or talent) that cannot be taught or learned—you either have it or you don't. In grade school we learn to identify certain peers as being particularly smart, as the artists, or the athletes. These kinds of categorizations leave a deep impression on us and our self-image.

By the time most people become adults they've decided that they're just not creative. Being creative is equated with being the best at something or making something that is perfect. "Since other people are better than me, I'd better stop doing it." Sadly, many people experience this outcome anxiety and worry about failure when they even think about being creative. What if what I do is wrong or bad? What if it's stupid? We imagine that other people will judge us harshly—sadly, we're usually our own worst critics

In fact, creativity is a shared human enterprise. We are all born with it and use it, to a greater or lesser degree, throughout our lives. As with a muscle, or the cardiovascular system, the consistent exercise of our creativity increases our capacity and ability to enjoy a fuller and more meaningful life.

As teachers we often encounter barriers to creativity within our classrooms as we work with emerging artists and recreation programmers.

Elizabeth uses drawing in her practice as an artist and has taught it for many years. When people find out what she does they often say, "I can't draw!" To which she responds, "Of course you can!" Drawing isn't only about making a highly rendered, recognizable image. Drawing is simply about making a mark on a surface—something we do all the time. We doodle, we draw maps illustrating the best route from A to B, we add fancy flourishes in our writing—we make marks on surfaces constantly.

Commonly held assumptions about creativity can be contradictory. Creativity is imagined to be difficult and require special skills and expertise; it's something certain people can do naturally without effort. There are certain specific, defined ways to be creative; there are no

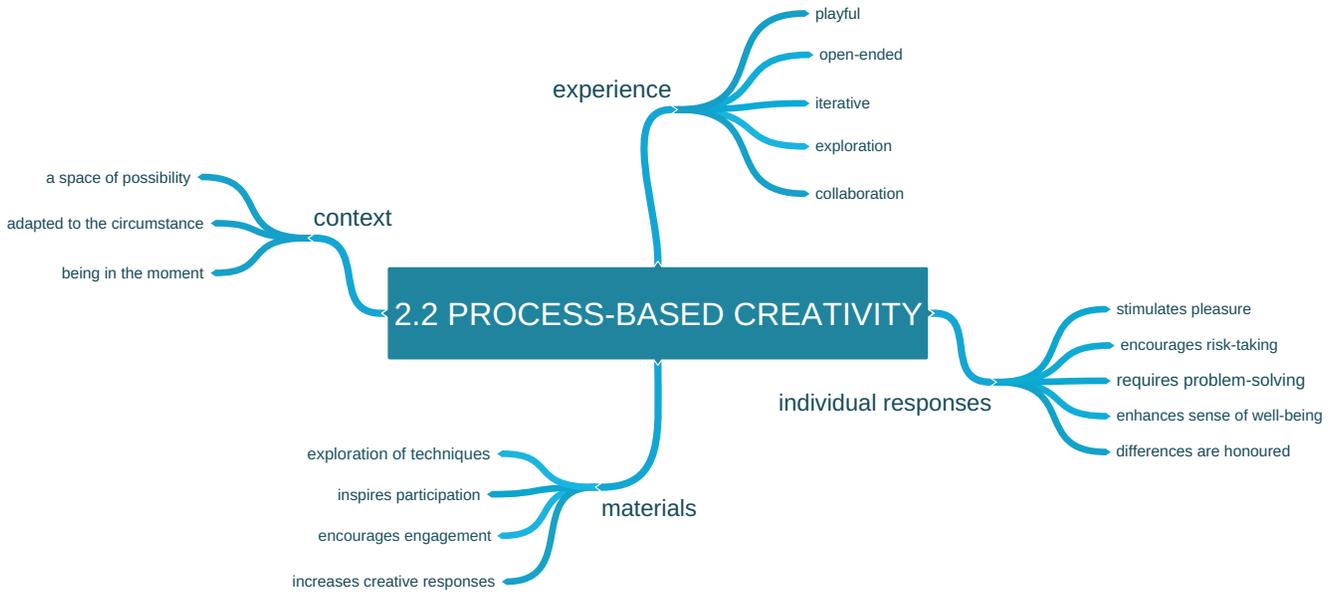
rules for creativity—it's just about doing whatever you want, whichever way you want! It's about creating a masterpiece, making something absolutely perfect; it's something my kid could do. No matter how we identify ourselves in relation to creativity our relationship to it is complex and contradictory.

These contradictions can make us anxious and self-conscious about our creativity—what if I'm not doing it right? Creativity is complex and contradictory—there is no single way to do it. Rather than narrowing down opportunities for creativity, it's valuable to find ways to expand our thinking and appreciate a wide range of working methods.

Some creativity is based on skill and expertise, but not all of it is. Some people seem to create effortlessly, but we all have the innate ability to be creative through practice and perseverance. Frameworks and parameters (discussed in the toolkit section) help channel creativity and create opportunities for a wide range of creative experience.

It's important to remember that while creativity is innate, our attitude towards it affects our ability to act in creative ways. Our misconceptions interfere with our ability to acknowledge and share creativity.

***No matter how we identify ourselves in relation to creativity our relationship to it is complex and contradictory***



## 2.2 PROCESS-BASED CREATIVITY

What exactly does “process” mean? Let’s define it as a series of steps taken towards a goal. If the goal of creativity becomes experience, rather than outcome, we begin to understand the tenets of process-based creativity.

Process-based projects expand the traditional leader/participant relationship. Rather than beginning with a specific end in mind, process-based creative encounters depend on a collaborative exchange between the leader and participants. The leader poses questions, invites exploration through materials and uses improvisational struc-

tures to stimulate creation through social interaction, as participants work within an open-ended process.

Process-based projects may lead to tangible outcomes, but they can also produce important short-term or ephemeral results, such as intergenerational connection within a shared activity. If we emphasize process, rather than focusing on the outcome of an activity, it’s possible to minimize performance anxiety and recover the sense of delight that comes with creative play. Process-based creative activity emphasizes experience in preference to things.



*Creativity results when individuals are invited to be playful and explore unusual materials; in this case, white pens on coloured paper reverse the usual configuration of dark marks on white paper. Drawing without looking at the paper encourages chance and surprise in the process.*



*Offering surprising and unusual mark-making tools and techniques opens a space of possibility for people to be in the moment; you can’t worry about how good your drawing will be when the process has you fully engaged in creative problem-solving as you draw with your head.*



### 2.3 COMMUNITY ENGAGED ARTS

The definition of community engaged arts (CEA) in *Leading from Beside* is useful to review:

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. (Chwelos and Lopes 10)

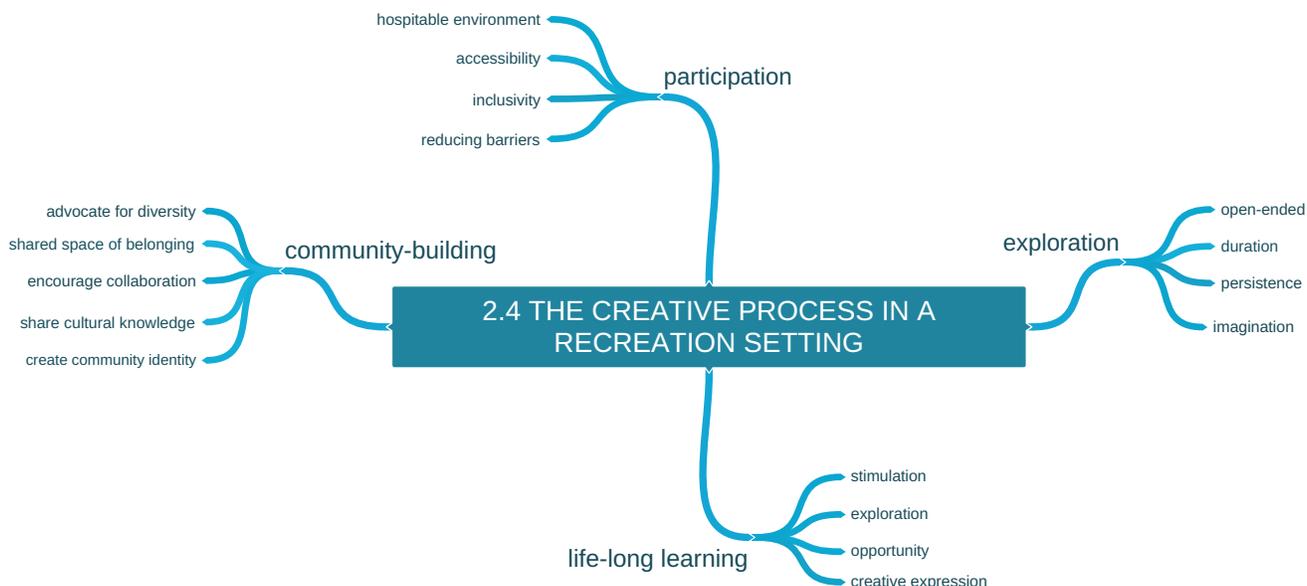
The idea of creating links between art and the everyday lives of people isn't new or novel—this form of creation is part of the practice of many contemporary artists. Interactive models of creativity reach a broad cross section of diverse populations by engaging them actively—through play, pleasure and collaboration—which fosters community and a greater sense of well-being. Artists, educators and programmers who share these principles help create a safe place for community members to learn and explore through meaningful engagement in art making processes.



*Creating circumstances to experiment together can include simple strategies such as shared paint boxes, using one large table and working on a collaborative image. Promoting dialogue and connection through playful exchange enhances one's quality of life—a key leisure goal.*



*Annual celebrations, such as Canada Day pictured here, provide great opportunities for creative and intercultural activities. Ad-hoc communities of co-creators develop spontaneously amongst attendees. Parameters such as working with the holiday colours of red and white link naturally to the event theme.*



## 2.4 THE CREATIVE PROCESS IN A RECREATION SETTING

Our experience has repeatedly shown us how community engaged projects offer immersive and satisfying leisure experiences for community members. We also recognize the challenge programmers face in providing arts engaged activities in community centres, with tight budgets and limited space and time. However, programmers understand that people engage in recreation activities throughout their lives for fun, pleasure, social interaction, creative expression, relaxation and to enhance their everyday life.

Community centres committed to embedding creativity into the everyday life of community are ideally suited to community engaged art processes. They offer a space where community members can come

to know one other, develop a working process and create projects that evolve over time.

An open-ended process that emphasizes experimentation and a spirit of adventure offers participants new ways of knowing. Projects with unanticipated outcomes can expand one's idea of the self and one's place within a community—new benefits and possibilities are born.

Hospitable and inviting spaces are key to the success of this form of programming. Recreation spaces have the capacity to host the meeting of different worlds: dance in swimming pools, easels on elevators, theatre in corridors. Familiar spaces are reanimated when used in unexpected ways.



*Chance and surprise stimulate creativity. Recreation facilities can open up new and exciting possibilities for participants and staff by using familiar spaces in unexpected ways—here, a swimming pool becomes the setting for a creative hat dance.*



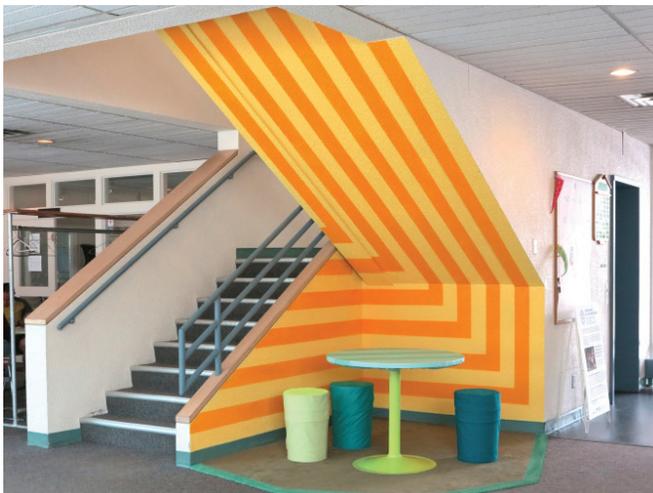
*Community centres are able to bring diverse community members together—meeting a chief goal of recreation. Here two participants, one performing in her chair, dance together while someone else transcribes their motion onto the large drawing.*

Creative explorations depend on uninterrupted time. Projects can unfold over many months, or several years. This open, free, exploratory process creates a range of opportunities for participants who are interested, but may not be ready to consider themselves art-makers.

Accessibility increases inclusivity, a key goal for the recreation setting. Creative programs can provide the opportunities for new skill development, creative expression and an opportunity to play—through visual arts, music, theatre or dance, or unexpected combinations of these and other disciplines.

By exhibiting the work of community members, the “voice” of the community is made present in the daily life of the centre, representing those who use the space as well as the learning that takes place within it. Creative projects celebrate the work of community by building and enhancing community identity.

***By exhibiting the work of community members, the “voice” of the community is made present in the daily life of the centre***



*Participation is encouraged by designing a space in the lobby that clearly invites creative encounters and activities.*



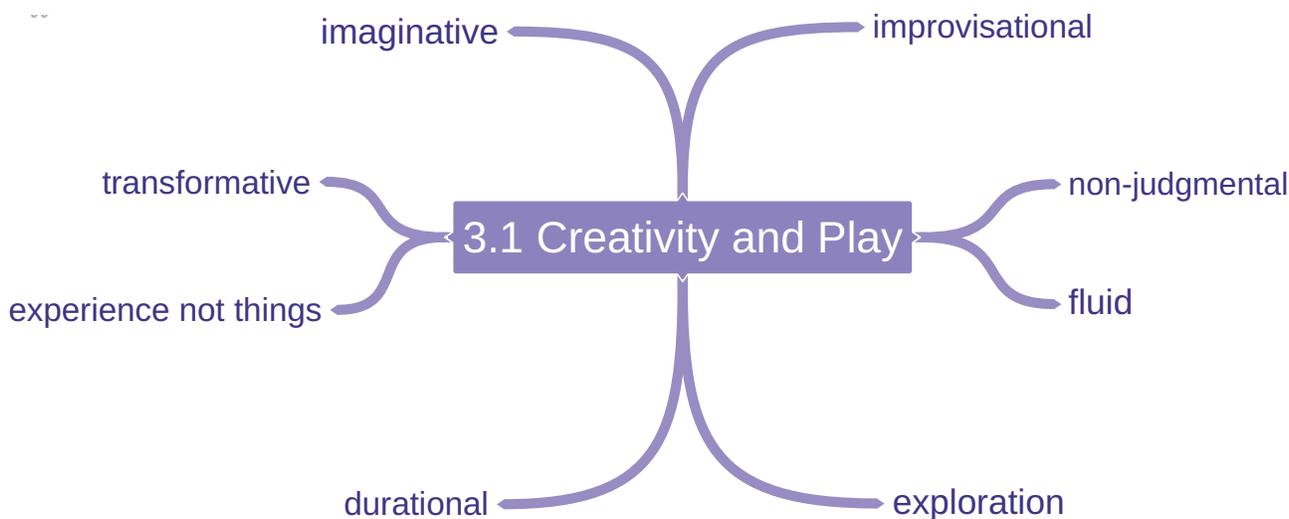
*Beautiful, thoughtful displays of community artwork stimulate others to acknowledge and appreciate the range of activities that go on at their local community centre—a practice both inspiring and informative.*



In this section we describe the seven principles that can assist leaders in developing creative activities within a range of circumstances and contexts. These considerations give important insights into creativity and can enhance even the simplest activity or project.



*Drawing from life in a playful experimental manner provides a deeply satisfying experience for the individual—in play we can fully be ourselves.*



### 3.1 CREATIVITY AND PLAY

As artists and teachers, we're interested in the relationship between creativity and play. We know that play is an essential part of artistic creativity. Grown-ups tend to focus on the practical purpose of what they do. What will it accomplish? There are many good reasons why this is necessary. But one of the problems with being so practical and efficient is we may lose the benefit of play.

As we noted earlier, creativity isn't really something we need to learn—it may be something that we just need to remember.

Here are some of the characteristics of play that are important to remember:

- That we figured it out as we went along.
- Nothing was too stupid or silly.
- We didn't have an agenda in mind. We weren't trying to learn something. There might be a particular toy or activity we wanted to explore, but we weren't thinking or worried about where our exploration would take us.
- Objects were fluid and could easily be transformed (a table could become a fort).
- Time seemed different; hours would go by and we wouldn't notice—we could be completely and passionately absorbed in what we were doing.

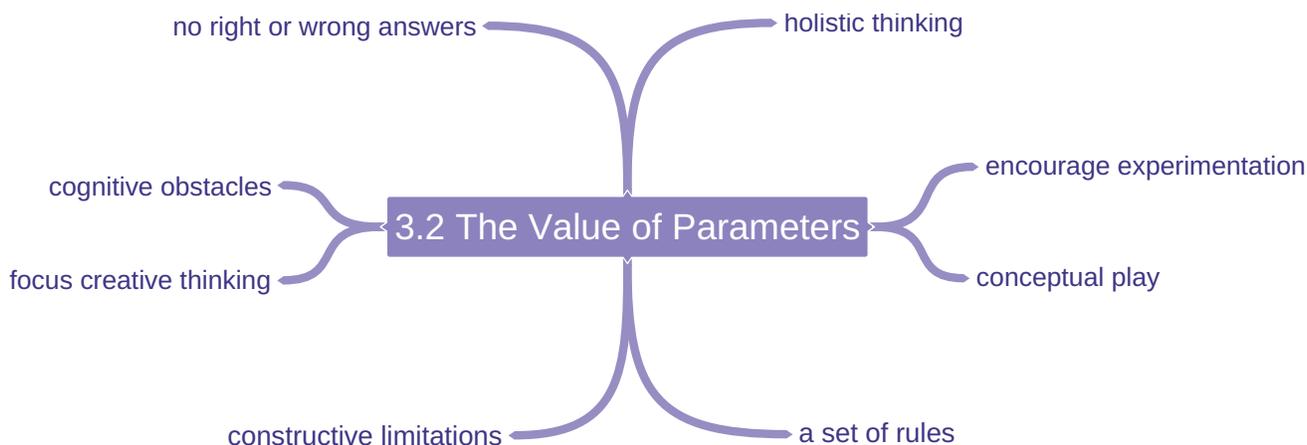
***Creativity isn't really something we need to learn—it may be something that we just need to remember***

These qualities are very similar to the fluid state of mind we experience when we're involved in a making art. This experience can be described as flow—a state discussed in greater detail in section 3.7.

When we develop creative activities we need to remember the importance of play. Is what we have planned fun? Does it spark our imagination? Are we excited to see what participants will come up with? If it works this way for us, we can be pretty sure it will engage participants in the same way.



*Approaching a familiar activity like hopscotch in an unfamiliar setting like the grass, stimulates participants to become inventive and develop new forms for this well-known game.*



### 3.2 THE VALUE OF PARAMETERS

Creativity is enhanced by constraints. When there are no parameters, the possibilities may seem overwhelming and may lead to creative block. Parameters are a set of rules that you set for yourself to trigger and focus creative thinking. The best parameters are those that excite, rather than intimidate. The point of parameters is to shape, rather than limit possibility.

When participants are offered engaging project parameters they become motivated to find their own solutions and responses. The parameters defined for a creative problem are not about finding “right” or “wrong” solutions; they are about defining a space for conceptual play and purposive experimentation. The object of using parameters is to extend a participant’s creativity, not to change or limit it.

When we have limited options—even when the limits are artificial—creative thinking is enhanced. The fewer options you have, the more you are forced to rely on your ingenuity. Limiting what you do and how you do it creates a cognitive obstacle, a hurdle that compels the mind to think in a more holistic, creative manner.

Parameters may affect a number of different aspects of a project, such as time, materials, subject matter (or theme), and working method. We can liken parameters to a sandbox—the limits need to be clear and understood (especially if we ask participants to keep the sand in the box), but there is infinite possibility for play within that box.



*Becoming fully immersed in a creative activity provides an intrinsic experience where you find out more about what you enjoy doing—a transformative experience.*

*When we have limited options—  
even when the limits are  
artificial—creative thinking is  
enhanced*



*Using cardboard to create a pathway as they develop a new game offers a troop of participants the pleasure of working collaboratively with a cognitive obstacle. A sense of play and delight emerges as they sort out rules and use repetition to figure out how this brand new game works.*



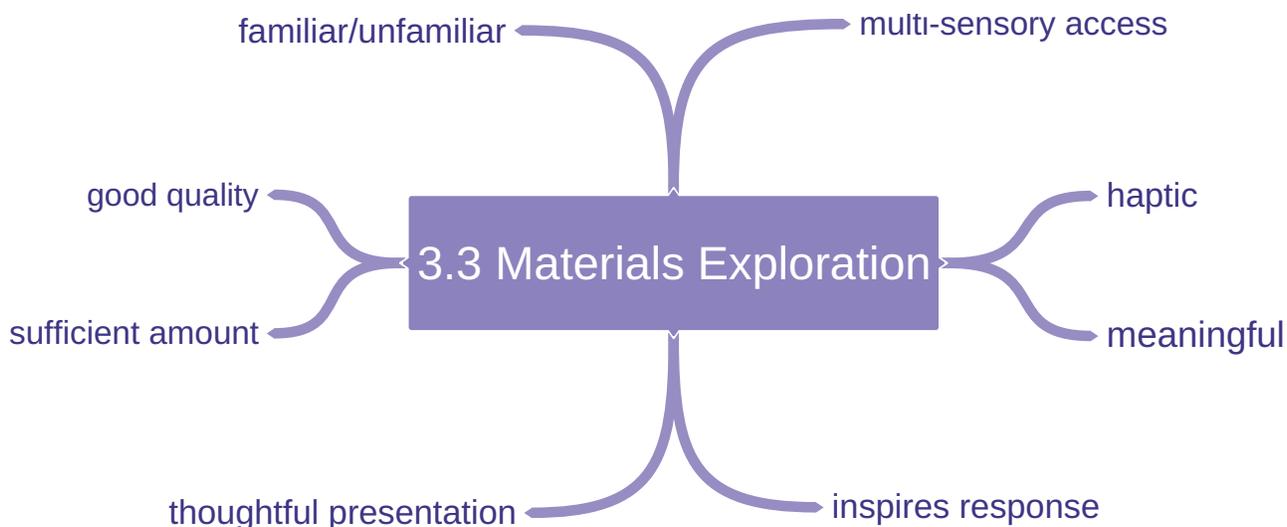
*Drawing a plant from observation with black marker provides parameters that offer a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment while practicing a new skill.*



*Working within the parameters of using a brush and black ink to fill a large sheet of absorbent paper with a variety of lines from one side to the other, this young person has the freedom to engage in the experience with deep concentration.*



*Introducing specific parameters, in this case recycled strapping for basket weaving, offers deep pleasure as we use our intellect, memory and hands to practice and learn a time-honoured cultural tradition.*



### 3.3 MATERIALS EXPLORATION

Our relationship to creativity deepens through material consideration and practice. Materiality encompasses how your body interacts with the tools you use as well as the time spent being creative. The insights that come with handling materials is deeply meaningful within all forms of creative practice.

The materials provided and how they are presented affects a participant's relationship to a project. The opportunity to handle and become captivated by materials is an important first step in a compelling invitation.

If we take care in our choice of materials and present them thoughtfully in ways that make sense for the activity, then participants will respond with greater care and consideration. The use of good quality and unusual materials (or familiar materials presented in unusual ways) encourages creative responses.

There have been times when we've needed to develop a creative project with very limited materials. Imagine opening the craft cupboard in a community centre and finding dried out markers, crayons, crepe paper, sidewalk chalk and cotton swabs—how can these materials be used in stimulating new ways? Can the markers become building tools, the crayons taped to sticks, the crepe paper used to design t-shirts, the chalk used to trace shadows on the wall, the cotton swabs used to build a maze?

*The insights that come with handling materials is deeply meaningful within all forms of creative practice*



*Excited by the challenge of an unusual drawing tool this young participant is eager to explore and experiment. Interacting with engaging tools keeps us in the present moment, generating productive involvement.*



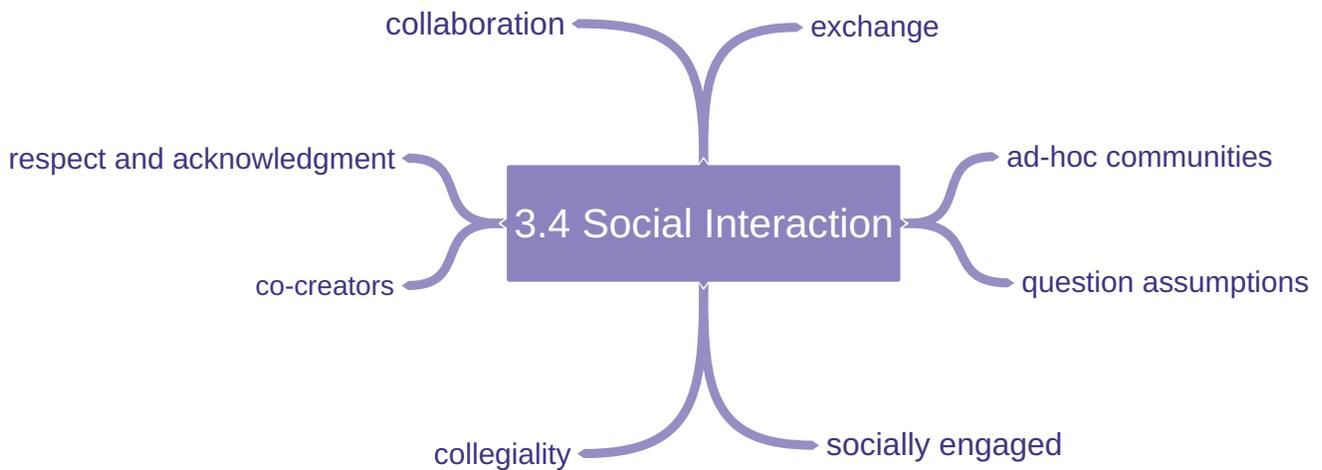
The thoughtful presentation of beautiful materials can spark interest and motivation for people to want to participate in creative activities. Here, local flowers have been gathered and sorted in preparation for a wool-dyeing event.



The selection and presentation of materials, along with sufficient quantities, supports a positive response. Participants pick up on that care and attention, and begin the activity from a relaxed and engaged starting point.



Materials exploration is key to enthusiastic participation—by providing guidance and uninterrupted time we foster a positive, high-quality recreation experience.



### 3.4 SOCIAL INTERACTION

By building opportunities for social interaction and exchange to take place within the development and presentation of creative projects we heighten their significance for both program participants and ourselves.

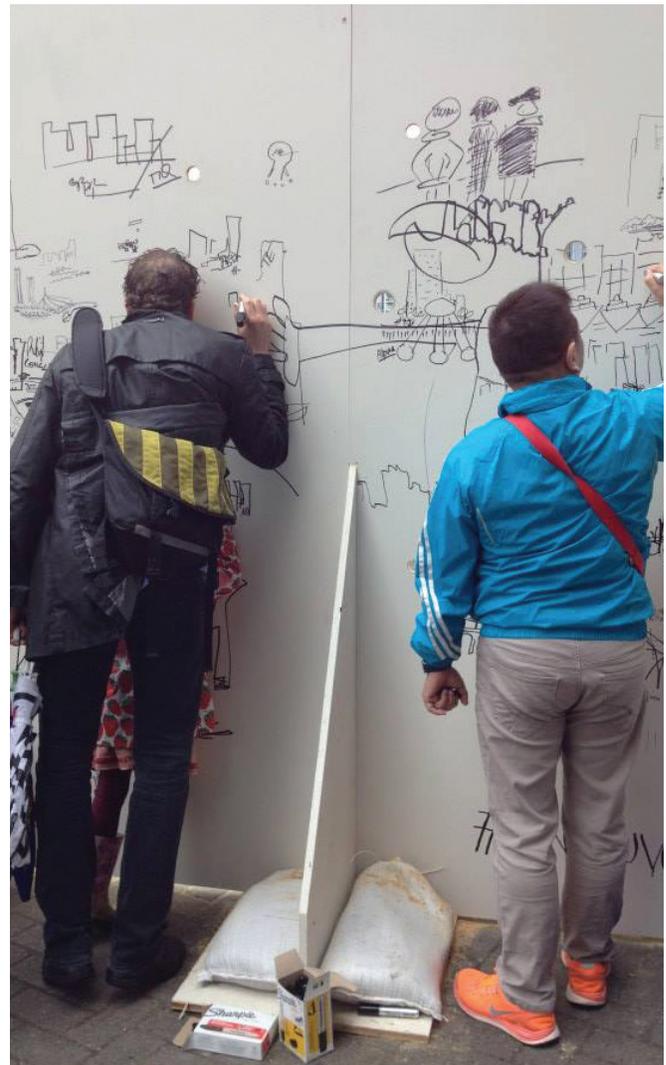
Collaboration has been important to our development as cultural producers. Collaboration extends what you are capable of as an individual and gives you the opportunity to question your assumptions and working methods.

This project comes out of our relationship with each other as long-time collaborators and colleagues. Each time we work on a collaborative project, whether with each other or with other colleagues, we've learned and produced something we wouldn't have been able to do on our own.

Many contemporary artists, designers and others working on creative projects, have embraced the act of collaboration as a way to shift the emphasis away from the individual to a more socially engaged form of practice. The idea of collaboration disrupts the persistent and popular image of the creative person as a "heroic" solitary figure.

Our teaching provides numerous opportunities for social interaction, between ourselves and our students, but, more importantly, amongst the students themselves. We see classrooms and community centres as ad-hoc communities of co-creators—a safe place to question and exchange ideas.

How we set-up the room for a creative activity, with small groups sharing tables and materials, promotes a sense of belonging and responsibility towards each other. Creativity lives and breathes through some form of social exchange.



*Providing the opportunity for people to make a satisfying contribution provides fulfillment within the recreation experience.*



*The opportunity to share and delight in one's creative production meets one of the intrinsic goals of leisure—where the activity is done primarily for the quality of the experience.*

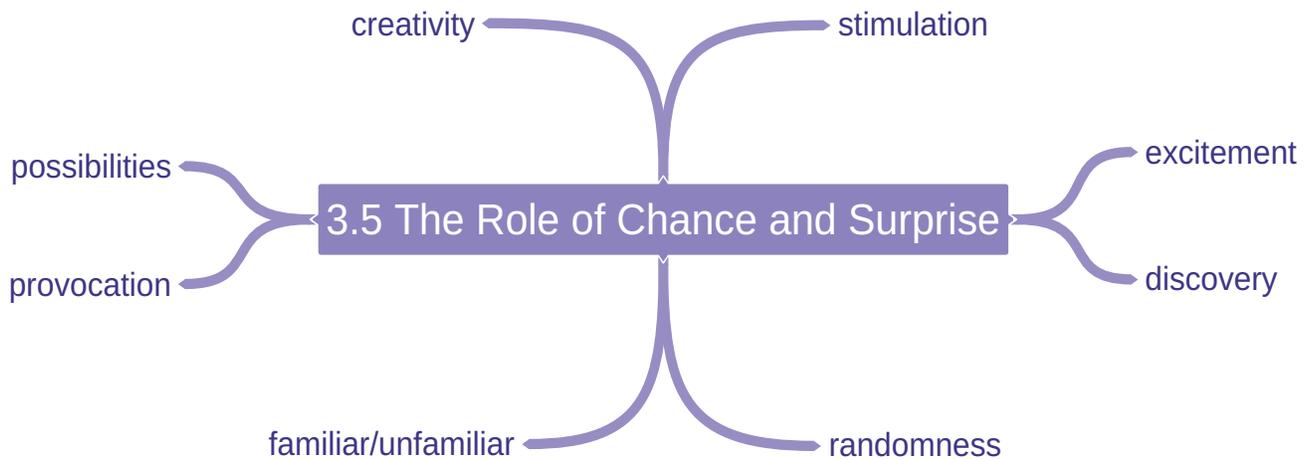
***Creativity lives and breathes through some form of social exchange***



*Some people might come to a creative activity for a few minutes and others stay all day. Activities that account for diverse levels of engagement and ability create an inclusive environment for creative response.*



*By connecting to others in a casual, relaxed weaving circle, new relationships are formed. Building new hand skills, using local natural materials, emphasizes the importance of environmental stewardship.*

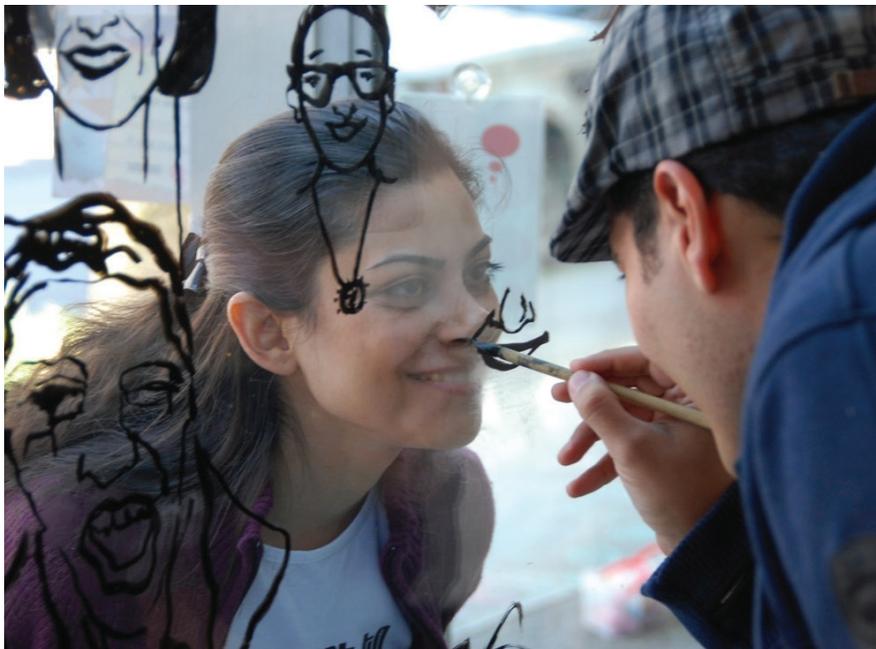


### 3.5 THE ROLE OF CHANCE AND SURPRISE

The element of surprise is important to creativity. When we're not quite sure what will happen next our creative faculties are stimulated. We're surprised when we're introduced to something unfamiliar, or when something familiar is presented in an unfamiliar way. Combining things that don't normally go together can be surprising, as can discovering something new while we're doing (or looking for) something else.

The unexpected is provocative. If we include some form of chance in the activities we present, performance anxiety is reduced and excitement increases. We want to know: what's going to happen next?

How can you include randomness in developing an activity or project? Is it in the materials—like how the tool is reconfigured? Is it in the collaborative nature of the process—where you start a drawing and someone else continues? A little randomness can awaken us to the creative possibilities that exist around us all the time.



*Utilizing the window as a drawing surface and tracing a friend's face to add to a collection of community faces offers the opportunity to work with something familiar in an unfamiliar way.*



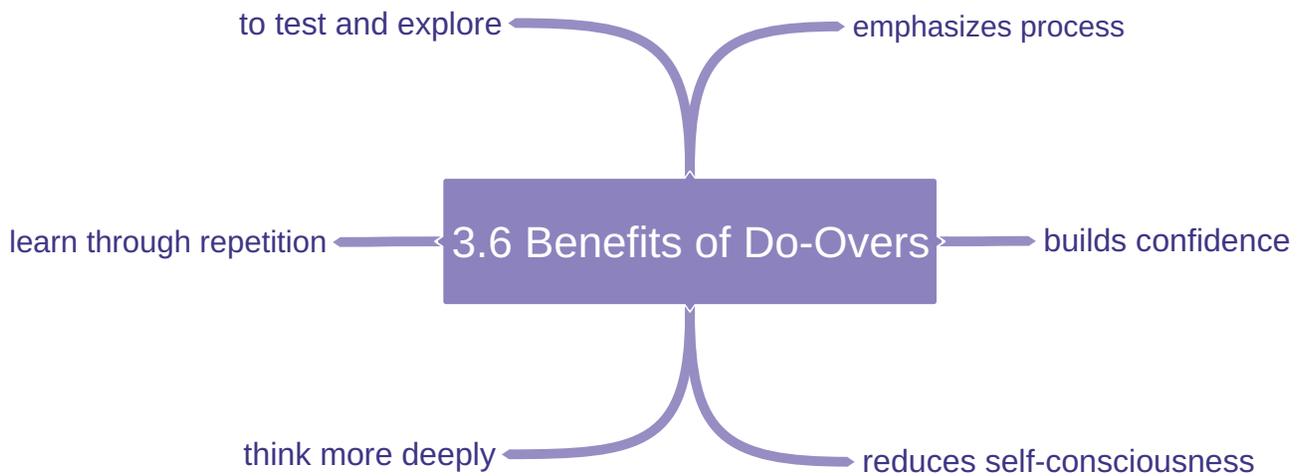
*Using chalk to draw on the grass in parks expands ideas of where drawing can take place—a process that opens up new spaces of possibility and participant delight.*



*By working with something familiar in unfamiliar ways, in this case, rose petals becoming the “paper,” participants are stimulated to answer the question, “What does Canada mean to me?”*



*The element of chance and surprise is provocative—unusual tools stimulate a range of playful responses. Participants can experiment without focussing on the right or wrong way to use this new creative tool.*



### 3.6 THE BENEFITS OF DO-OVERS

The act of repetition is not the same as replication. When we repeat a creative gesture or activity it transforms through accumulative insight. The act of repeating something helps to break down some of the self-consciousness that people may associate with creativity.

Repetition emphasizes process. What can I do this time, that makes it more interesting than the last time? Repetition allows us to test and explore a situation and learn through practice. Repetition allows us to return again and again to a subject or way of working as a way to think more deeply about it or develop a sense of greater confidence.

Ideas and working methods become more familiar through repetition. This closer examination increases complexity, rather than simplifying understanding.

If creativity is about pushing limits then repeating something over and over again encourages us to expand our thinking beyond our usual limits and conventional thought. It also gives participants insight into the iterative practice of artists, whose work depends on this type of creative exploration.

*Ideas and working methods  
become more familiar through  
repetition*



*Setting parameters that encourage repetition can unblock anxiety by making the process more familiar and increase one's sense of play with the materials at hand.*



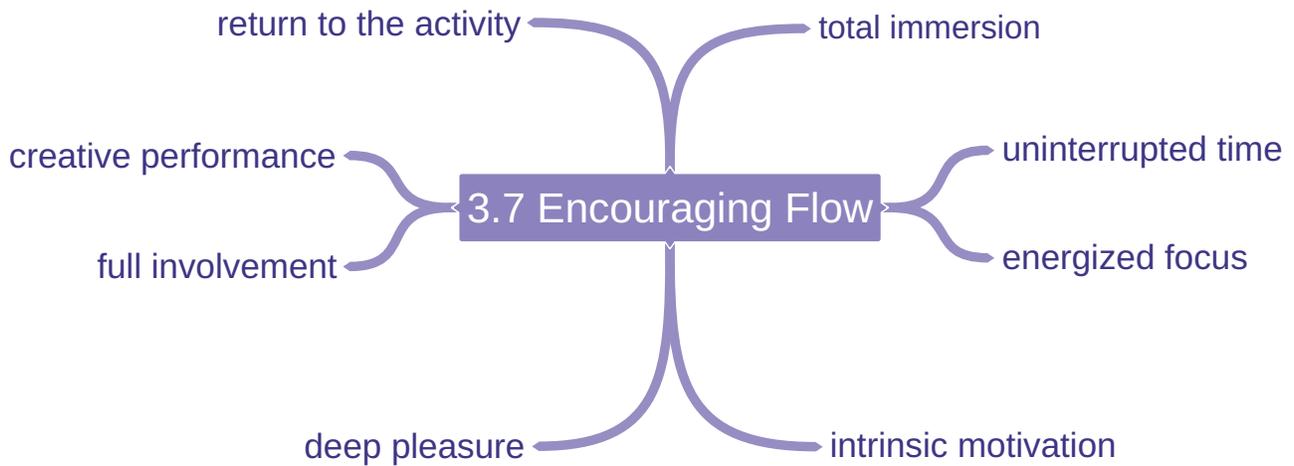
The 2008 project 150 Faces, which celebrated the founding of BC, offered young people an opportunity to learn through the process of repetition. Following a specific set of parameters, they drew simple faces multiple times with black ink on rice paper and contributed to this permanent collaborative installation.



It's satisfying to do the same thing over and over again, making slight changes and adjustments.



Repetition emphasizes process. Supplying plenty of materials for participants to repeat an activity to their satisfaction fosters the freedom to test and explore art-making activities and builds confidence through that process.



### 3.7 ENCOURAGING FLOW

When we're really in the zone, we experience creative flow—the “almost automatic, effortless, yet highly focused state of consciousness” (9) that psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi identifies as characteristic of high-level creative performance. Within a flow state we become fully immersed, with a feeling of energized focus, full involvement and deep pleasure in the process of the activity.

Being interrupted and having one's attention called away from the task at hand can be detrimental to creativity. While concentration is essential to the creative process it's often difficult to create and maintain flow within the shared space of a classroom or public facility.

When developing opportunities for creative activities we need to include uninterrupted time for participants to enter into the process as fully as possible. It's useful to develop a clear time frame for an activity and whenever possible, provide opportunities to return to the activity or allow participants to continue working on their own. Encouraging periods of silent activity is a parameter that can also be beneficial. Sometime leaders need to remember not to interrupt activities where participants are obviously immersed.

Being in the flow is where we experience “intrinsic motivation”—where we find our own reasons for doing what we're doing. This form of motivation is crucial to creativity.

To encourage flow when developing a creative opportunity, we suggest you respond to all (or some) of the seven principles described above. Ask yourself: does this project incorporate play, include engaging parameters, introduce interesting materials, encourage social interaction, add the element of chance or surprise, permit the opportunity for do-overs and allow participants the opportunity to become fully immersed?



*Uninterrupted time to explore and learn can lead to inner confidence and a deep sense of well-being.*



*Circumstances that provide an opportunity to be side by side with others, fully involved in a shared activity, reminds us what it is means to be creative and how to use our imagination for pure enjoyment.*



***Within a flow state we become fully immersed, with a feeling of energized focus, full involvement and deep pleasure in the process of the activity***

*Concentrating on the task at hand creates a state of total immersion, where deep pleasure is experienced with a yearning to return to the activity again and again.*



In this section we will share information and examples that demonstrate how the principles of *Inviting Creativity* have been applied within our practice.

In 4.1 we describe Cyndy's application of this methodology with her Langara Recreation students. She challenged them to implement the principles in the design of a creative activity which would then be "tested" by the other students in the class. This section includes first person testimonials to the student/participant experiences and new understandings of the benefits of creative activity.

In 4.2 we share details of the workshop Elizabeth developed for camp leaders. We demonstrate how the *Inviting Creativity* method provided them with new skills to develop activities that encourage a focus on enjoyment, exploration and deep pleasure without being overly concerned with outcomes. In other words, it helped leaders consider creativity as an experience rather than a thing—making this methodology an excellent fit for recreation, with its emphasis on wellbeing and participation.

***To develop activities that encourage a focus on enjoyment, exploration and deep pleasure without being overly concerned with outcomes***

#### 4.1 INVITING CREATIVITY AT LANGARA

In the fall of 2017, Cyndy introduced her Langara recreation students to the *Inviting Creativity* methodology. Using these principles, students developed and delivered a creative activity for an existing event within a community centre (such as Canada Day, a facility birthday/ anniversary or an annual cultural festival) with the goal of enhancing community members' experience of that event.

The activity needed to challenge the standard programming often provided at such events (e.g. face-painting, bouncy castle, arts and crafts table).

Cyndy asked her students to address five principles from the *Inviting Creativity* methodology: process; consideration of materials; use of parameters; collaboration; and the promotion of do-overs.

In written reflections about the assignment, students shared what they learned by working with the *Inviting Creativity* methodology:

- My outlook on how it is possible to make art accessible to all has changed
- I now really enjoy doing art and am comfortable exploring, creativity and making mistakes
- I also now understand the importance of focusing on the process rather than the product
- Parameters eliminated the idea of "I am not good enough "
- I am now better to see different opportunities for where Arts and Culture can be incorporated in the smallest ways

Process is not a thing, but it is actually an experience This evidence demonstrates the effectiveness of this method. The students' response indicate how working with these principles provided them more confidence when developing creative activities for participants. The experience has expanded their understanding of the role of creativity and the imagination, and proves to us as educators, what a valuable tool it is. We see first hand how productive this method can be, not only for students but artists, summer camp leaders and programmers—all those who are committed to working with socially engaged creative practices.



*A recreation student leading a creative activity inspires participant confidence with clear parameters and careful preparation. Black markers and long strips of paper with repeating square drawing areas were available for each participant to respond multiple times to the question: "What you think of when you see the color (red, yellow, orange, green)?"*

#### 4.2 INVITING CREATIVITY WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION

As previously mentioned, this project evolved out of a workshop Elizabeth developed for incoming City of Vancouver day camp leaders to help them develop creative activities within their programs.

Elizabeth began the workshop with a game called, "Stand Up If..." As she read out a list of activities—such as taking pictures with your phone, playing a musical instrument, sewing, baking or gardening—participants were asked to stand up if the statement applied to them. This was a great way to break the ice in a room full of strangers and recognize the many ways they've already fostered creativity within their everyday lives.

The workshop introduced and described each of the seven principles outlined in the toolkit (in section 3) and demonstrated the methodology through a drawing activity that resulted in a series of collaboratively drawn whimsical creatures.

Here's how the drawing activity worked: before the workshop, a set of cards were prepared, using coloured or white card stock cut into quarters. This activity also required sets of watercolour or tempera paint (with 3 or more colours), paper towels, Crayola (or similar) markers and Sharpie (or similar) fine-tipped pens. Of course, other materials could be used in place of these. The three-part activity proceeded as follows:



*In this exercise each person contributes a part of a drawing—the first paints a random splotch, the second "discovers" a creature, the third adds details, such as eyes, claws, tails and scales to produce a series of quirky collaborative creatures.*

- Part 1: Participants used damp, scrunched up paper towels, dipped in two (or more) paint colours, to create an ambiguous splotch on each of the cards.
- Part 2: Once they were dry, participants were invited to look through the splotches and discover creatures they could draw out of the splotch using the markers. Each participant was encouraged to "find" and represent multiple creatures.
- Part 3: Participants looked through the creatures that they hadn't previously worked on and chose those they wanted to complete with texture and details (such as scales, wings, claws, etc.) using the fine-tipped pens.

This flurry of activity resulted in a large collection of diverse creatures each of which incorporated the work of three different people. As we reviewed the activity with the workshop participants they further assimilated the *Inviting Creativity* principles. We discussed the process of the activity and how it evolved from a simple set of parameters using a particular set of materials, done repeatedly. Participants could easily understand that the use of these parameters invited all kinds of creative expression.





Our descriptions within this project and related mind maps outline the many ideas that we've encountered in our journey as artists and teachers. We hope they will resonate with you and encourage you to draw on your own creativity and develop a space of creative possibility for yourselves and the communities you work within.

As leaders, we need to work against self-defeating preconceptions about creativity. The strategies introduced in this toolkit encourage a direct and personal relationship to creativity. Our goal is to help create mindsets and environments that are hospitable to creativity. We want to share the deep pleasure and sustaining benefits of creative work within community life and provide this toolkit to help you move towards that goal.

### 5.1 TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We respectfully acknowledge that we are on the unceded traditional territories of the Coast Salish peoples of the *xʷməθk-wəy̓əm* (Musqueam), *Skwxwú7mesh* (Squamish) and *Səlilwətaɬ* (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. We are grateful to them and hold in the most sincere respect the creativity that infuses their cultures and permeates this place where we live and work. We recommend that all people who have come to this land learn about and from the Indigenous people whose ancestors have been here since time immemorial.

### 5.2 DOCUMENT ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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### 5.3 CITED WORKS AND FURTHER READING

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