Us and Them
Outreach Coordinator Final Report

By Liza Lindgren

Photo credit: David Cooper
Our 2011 main stage project *Us and Them (the play)* looked at why and how humanity creates divisions between ‘ourselves’ and ‘others’.

The play was part of a two-year long undertaking in 3 stages. In the first year (2010) we did stage 1: *Us and Them (the inquiry)*, which was 23 stand-alone events in community halls, cafés and people’s homes; no play, no actors, no script – everything came out of the audience each night. We explored people’s experiences of being turned into “the other” and of turning other people into “the other”. The events were very different each night and very powerful, as the partnering organizations pulled their communities together. A lot of the networking organizations that where involved in the inquiry phase of the project proved to be great allies throughout the entire Us and Them project.

Find the Outreach Report from the inquiry here:

Stage 2, also in 2010, was a two day skills transfer workshop, where twenty people learned the skills to facilitate the Rainbow of Desire exercise, which was the theatre technique used in the inquiry events. Shortly after the training I offered a meeting for the Rainbow of Desire trainees to discuss and offer support in doing outreach and organizing their own event. Many of these people have since then created their own *Us and Them (the inquiry)* events in their own communities.

Stage 3, in 2011, was the main stage project and the subject of this report.

**January and February**

In January and February I followed up with our community partners in regards to the inquiry, as well as continued the conversation about the upcoming main stage project.

In February I was invited by one of our community partners, the Transformative Communities Project Society (TCPS, formerly known as the Surrey Urban Youth Project) to an initial meeting regarding an upcoming series of events exploring the role of arts, culture and creativity in community empowerment and movement building. Unfortunately Headlines was unable to offer a workshop as part of the series due to scheduling difficulties, but I was able to help spread the word and to also attend and table a few of the events in the series, and met some potential partnering organizations and individuals who would be helpful throughout the next phase of the Us and Them project.

(The series was entitled *Centering the Tangent* and was Presented by the Transformative Communities Project Society and the Filipino-Canadian Youth Alliance. Learn more about it here: http://centeringthetangent.wordpress.com/

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Rainbow of Desire is a theatrical technique originally developed by Augusto Boal, founder of the “Theatre of the Oppressed”.

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During this time, Headlines was also invited to attend another meeting regarding an initiative by PeerNet BC and City of Vancouver called CitizenU. From their website:

“citizenU aims to create an even safer, stronger and more inclusive Vancouver by tackling racism, discrimination and bullying head-on on all fronts (discrimination based on ability, age, citizenship, culture, ethnicity, faith, gender, health, language, race, sexual orientation, socioeconomic circumstances, and/or social groupings) and by striving to build stronger, more positive relationships among our diverse communities.”

Learn more about CitizenU here: http://www.vancouveryouth.ca/node/327

In conversations with Program Coordinator Romi Chandra Herbert we saw how Us and Them fit really well in the scope of their program and how we could make it possible for the youth and their parents to attend Us and Them (the play) as part of their programming. About 120 youth and their parents/grandparents were able to attend the performances in November 2011, and some of the youth was even up on stage doing interventions.

March/April - Callout for participants

After preparing all the information for a callout for participants, a recruitment brochure was created, together with Dafne Blanco, my predecessor and Headlines’ current webmaster. We created the brochure borrowing some of the language from previous projects’ recruitment materials, and adapting it to the subject matter, while using the image that Jergus Oprsal created for the Us and Them project. It was printed and folded with the help of my co-workers and helpful volunteers. They then needed to be distributed throughout Metro Vancouver, to as diverse groups as possible.

Find the online application information here:
http://headlinestheatre.com/past_work/us_and_them_play/workshop_us_and_them.htm

(See the recruitment brochure in appendix A, print and archival versions only)

Apart from the printed call-out via our community partners, we also used newsletters, Facebook, Twitter, craigslist, employment centres, online listings and so on, to reach as far as we possibly could. Especially one employment centre was super helpful in getting the word out. I was invited to meet with Carol Madsen and her staff at Pathways Information Centre located on Main and Hastings. This wonderful multi-service agency is a community hub, a post office, a phone and internet spot, and an information and referral centre that helps people overcome barriers to prepare for, obtain and maintain employment. People call it the office of the Downtown Eastside as local residents pass through each day to pick up mail, check email, speak to employment counselors and access services.

To get the word out even further and reach people we would not be able to reach otherwise, we invited a few community members from our network to form the community working group (CWG). The working group was helpful in not only
brainstorming ideas and connecting us to other groups, but to help make sure the invitation to participate in the project was as clear, available and accessible as possible.

The working group members were:

- Robin Parry, Education and Outreach from QMUNITY
- Parker Johnson, who works as an advisor at the Equal Employment Opportunity Program with City of Vancouver
- Pat Kelln from the DisAbled Womens Network (Pacific Dawn)
- Iris Paradela Hunter (who later on became a cast member)
- John Kramer from the Aboriginal Community Policing Centre

One problem during the recruitment process was being able to provide information for potential applicants regarding the workshop and rehearsal hall accessibility. A few weeks prior to the application deadline, we had to start looking for a new venue, as the one that previously had been booked, was no longer going to work out, due to scheduling difficulties. As André Prevost (Headlines’ Office/Production Manager) was working hard on finding any available and workable venue, I corresponded with especially Pat Kelln from Pacific Dawn about how to quickly update potential applicants in regards to venue accessibility, in order for people to make an informed decision if this project was something for them. Pat was super helpful and kept sending updates as they were made available throughout her networks.

As the recruitment process had started I was scheduled to have a vacation. In order for the recruitment process to continue during my absence, I made sure to create a master list of organizations for David Diamond (Headlines’ Artistic and Managing Director) and André to follow up with our community partners, and keep putting the word out about this opportunity to partake in the project. (See a full list of networking organizations in Appendix B.)

Before leaving I also corresponded with Dafne to update the project website, transitioning from the inquiry to the play.

**May/June**

When I returned to work I had two more weeks before application deadline, and so many applications started coming in towards the last week. In the end we received 185 applications before deadline (and more after) from people wanting to participate in the community workshop and as cast members of *Us and Them*. This was a wonderful and overwhelming response, from very diverse communities across Metro Vancouver.

From these applications we interviewed 44 people (30 minute interviews) over the course of 3 days, and then David brought back 4 groups of 4 people for a second interview. Out of this we found the workshop group of 14 people and the 6 cast members. This was a
really wonderful process, where we got to meet all these people who had been so open and courageous in applying, and were really dedicated to potentially being part of the project.

From here, I continued to organize and systematize the list of organizations and deepen my research of community resources, to prepare for the main stage production outreach.

Together with André I created a print and online version of a “Teacher’s Toolkit”. (Find the Toolkit in Appendix C.)

This was provided as a potential resource for teacher’s who would be interested in bringing their class to a performance of Us and Them. We had scheduled two Wednesday matinees to hopefully make the event accessible for schools as well.

July

In July Kei Baritugo, Headlines’ Publicist had started her contract with us. Together we set up Skype meetings with Dañé in regards to the layout of the promotional material and created a blurb for the GVPTA Fall listings, that could also be used for other listings further down the line.

I collected bio’s from the production team and cast, collected funder’s logo’s for the posters and postcards and so on.

Kei and I also met with Sean Condon, the Executive Director of Megaphone, who agreed to help us distribute free vouchers through the magazine, as well as writing a piece on the project. Kei bought a few ads in the paper as well, as a way to support the magazine and to reach their readership.

André and I met with Jenn Spry, the Rentals Coordinator at The Cultch (The Vancouver East Cultural Centre located on 1895 Venables Street) where the performances would take place, to discuss the agreement of free vouchers. According to the contract we could only give out 30 free vouchers/show before we had to pay an administration fee. In the office, we had discussed the importance of making Us and Them as accessible as we possibly could, and even with a ticket price set at a highly subsidized $10 - $20 (+ venue service charges) this could become a barrier for some folks.

This contractual agreement with the Cultch could not be changed, so in the end we could only offer 720 free vouchers (calculated for 23 performances) to low income individuals, meaning that I would have to be a bit more sparse with the outreach in terms of offer free vouchers later on.

August
Among my cyclical duties throughout the year, there is the coordination of our Theatre for Living Annual Training Sessions, taking place in August. Although trainees register all-year-round, July and the beginning of August are the busiest time to deal with final registrations, cancellations, liaise with our Financial Administrator, etc. Sixty people from all over North America and the world attended our trainings this year, and I was occupied with it for most of August, while at the same time dealing with the outreach for the mainstage production rapidly approaching.

On August 29th the Us and Them community workshop started. This was also the first day of work for Mutya Macatumpag as the Outreach/Publicity Assistant.

**September/October/November**

**About the washrooms:** During the community workshop the topic of gender neutral washrooms came up, and we decided to address the Cultch to see if this was something we could offer our audiences during the performances. As the topic of ‘us and them’ was looking at, and questioning, the binary lens through which we view the world, and that also included how we view gender, we felt it was important to address this not only in the theatre, but also in the lobby and washrooms before and after the performances. The Cultch were worried about accountability (even though most public pools have ‘family change rooms’ that are gender inclusive, without problems regarding accountability…) regarding offering gender neutral washrooms in their venue, but agreed to put up a sign on one of the single washrooms as a compromise; this because there was other shows in the other theatre at the same time as the run of Us and Them.

**About Accessibility:** We also tried to address the need for more information regarding accessibility at the venue (the venue website only states that the venue is wheelchair accessible) and I was put in contact with a person who performs accessibility audits under the name “Radical Access Mapping Project”. (Learn more about the project here: [http://buildingradicalaccessiblecommunities.blogspot.com/p/accessibilities-audits.html?zx=6303eaca08ee3b69](http://buildingradicalaccessiblecommunities.blogspot.com/p/accessibilities-audits.html?zx=6303eaca08ee3b69))

However, since The Cultch is not Headlines’ venue, we couldn’t do a full accessibility audit without their permission. The Cultch staff were very busy and could not find time for an accessibility audit to take place. (An audit can be non-monitored and would take about an hour. All the auditor needs is access to the space.)

In the end, there was a partial audit (all public spaces) conducted before an Us and Them performance, and the result can be read here: [http://www.headlinestheatre.com/past_work/us_and_them_play/accessibility_us_and_them.htm](http://www.headlinestheatre.com/past_work/us_and_them_play/accessibility_us_and_them.htm)
A big thank you to Radical Access Mapping Project for doing this even though I was unable to set up a time with the venue to facilitate a full audit!

**Filming the creation process:** One of my biggest passions is filming and editing smaller documentary pieces, and in September and October I got the chance to follow both the community creations process, as well as spending some time in the rehearsal hall. I created two videos that was uploaded to Headlines’ YouTube page:

**Video 1: “Us and Them Community Workshop”:**
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JtyxD7hy71w&feature=plcp&context=C3e71939UDOEGsToPDskLxZuRV0nQWdzMS_HeiprzH

And

**Video 2: Creating “Us and Them” (from the rehearsal hall):**
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JyIA1KXA-tA&feature=plcp&context=C33f8aceUDOEGsToPDskKyogAp1CXzhj2rVMkUQagS

These videos proved to be helpful for some of our community partners to explain what we were doing and what to expect from a Forum Theatre piece.

**Getting the word out:** When we were one month from Opening Night (October 21, 2011) I created the print and email version of the Opening Night invite to go out. At the same time Mutya was in charge of setting up school presentations, mainly at SFU and UBC, but we were also in contact with Langara, VCC, Frontier College, a few high schools etc. We had great help from many volunteers to do in school presentations, distributing free vouchers to low income individuals, handing out flyers at events and to groups who might be interested, and to start getting posters up around town.

On September 13 and 14 I attended an Open Spaces Meeting organized by Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) entitled “Addressing Stigma in the Health Care System”. Here I met various representatives from health organizations in Metro Vancouver, such as Clifford Hanuse (Project Manager at VCH Aboriginal Health) who was really interested in our upcoming project and invited me to table another conference in the end of September – “The VCH Aboriginal Wellness Showcase”, as well as help us spread the word about Us and Them throughout his networks. Both VCH events were well attended and I made some great connections. On top of this, an old friend of Headlines, Mary Clifford, who was part of “Out of the Silence” more than 10 years ago, offered to help us spread the word throughout her networks - about 40 urban Aboriginal organizations in BC, mainly in and around Metro Vancouver. (She is now the Aboriginal Community Development/Engagement Leader at VCH Aboriginal Health)

I did a few other presentations throughout September and October, such as meeting with the Street Vendors of Megaphone Magazine/Hope in Shadows, meeting with GWAST
members (Grandview Woodland Area Services Team) and Reach Community Health Centre, amongst others.

Three weeks prior to Opening Night, the ideal plan would be to focus on grassroots promotion almost exclusively. However, the reality of production time prevails. Multitasking is a must and my work pace was hectic. Besides the campaign, I had to collect materials for our resource table (please see samples at the end of the binder, print version only) and design the layout of the Evening Program (Appendix D, print and archival versions only).

When creating the layout (a time-consuming endeavor) I gathered the production team and cast bios, a word from the Artistic and Managing Director, compiled of a list of thank yous and acknowledgements (a task shared by all the staff, but coordinated by me before the definitive version is put into the program). The bios and photos needed to be approved by the cast and we have to proofread it several times before it went to press.

In the midst of all the major tasks, many other details had to be taken care of: create a file with the sponsor logos to be delivered to the Tele/Webcast Director; constantly update or ensure that the website was updated with the latest information; send electronic newsletter reminders, and one week before opening night, we got on the phone to remind people in the network of organizations that the show was about to open.

Two weeks prior to opening night Mutya and I talked about the upcoming performances at Co-Op Radio’s “It takes a Village”. A few days later I also did an interview with “Wake up with Co-Op Radio” as well as CiTR Radio. I have never done much radio in my life, but it was fun! We were so close to opening!

October 21st was Opening Night, a sold out performance and a lot of great feedback. Now our task was to keep pushing the show, to gather feedback, keep distributing free vouchers, follow up with community organizations and to find new organizations who potentially would be interested.

As the show had opened, I was very pleased to start getting requests for free vouchers from organizations that I didn’t know of.

Around this time “Occupy Vancouver” was also happening outside the Vancouver Art Gallery, so Mutya and I tried to attend as many days as we possibly could. There was quite a few of the community workshop participants who were either tenting down there or who frequently visited and participated in Occupy, and were happy to help us spread the word, as there was a lot of overlap in conversations that was happening in Vancouver, and what was happening on stage at The Cultch.

As the word was spreading about the performances, I also had to focus some of my energy to get the word out about the live, interactive, global webcast on Closing Night, Nov 12. In previous years this was a task done by the Production Manager, but after conversations
with David and André we decided it made more sense if I did the main outreach and networking for the webcast as well.

I brainstormed a list of key people and old friends of Headlines around the world, and got some help from volunteers with contacts mainly in Singapore, the Phillipines and Australia. We were also in contact with a friend of Headlines working for Community TV in 5 provinces in Eastern Canada about live streaming the webcast through her networks as well. Unfortunately we only found out about this opportunity shortly before the actual webcast and if we had more time we would have been able to spread the webcast even further. This is definitely something to look into for the next mainstage production!

I sent two announcements through our email lists about the webcast. Although a truly exciting aspect of the project, it was a delicate balance when promoting the webcast, since we wanted to prevent the local audience from choosing to watch the project in the convenience of their homes, rather than venture out into the cold, dark November night and go to the theatre, where you had to pay a ticket price.

Dafne had put together the intro page to the webcast interface and we had two live tweeters in the audience that evening, and there was an attempt to set up another interface so that people could also watch the performance from their phone. (This might be something to look into further for next year.) In the end, the webcast was sold out, but people who was turned away were able to tune in online and participate via the web.

**Feedback:** For a complete list of audience members’ and media quotes go to: http://headlinestheatre.com/past_work/us_and_them_play/images/us_and_them_quotes.pdf

Below is a thank you note, one of many, from a community worker who received free vouchers and distributed them among his clients:

From: Conner Hildahl <contact email>
Date: Mon, 7 Nov 2011 17:44:45 -0800
To: Liza Lindgren <outreach@headlinestheatre.com>
Subject: Attn: Liza regarding UGM guests attending theatre

Hey Liza,

Thank you again for bringing tickets for us to hand out to guests at Union Gospel Mission. I talked with a couple of our guests who really enjoyed the show and they put some of their comments down on paper. We may be able to send off more comments later. See below. I know that one of our guests, Peter, went on Sunday and really enjoyed it. He was actually given the opportunity to go to the BC Lions game on Saturday and then went to the concert on Sunday. Today, when I asked him about his weekend, he talked as though not even the BC Lions game could compare to how much he enjoyed his time at “Us and Them.”

Below is one of the comments - hope you enjoy!

Conner

“Thanks for the ticket! I found that the issues addressed, and the way that they expounded on the negativity between “Us and Them”, were very relevant. Though there is much negativity around these issues, the theatre exposed them in a very positive manner. I really enjoyed the fact that they included the audience, that it was an
interactive play. It even allowed me the opportunity to get up on stage and provide my input! My friend’s couldn’t believe that I was up on stage. I think more of these dramas should be available to people that can’t afford it otherwise —whether the government provides funding for this or more theatres.” -Kenny W.

Outcomes of the Outreach Activity

As I mentioned before, we received 185 applications to participate in the community workshop and to be part of the cast, a record number in Headlines’ history. I connected with 186 organizations, by phone and email and most of them also received posters and flyers. A final list of organizations is included as Appendix B

Throughout the project I had great help from many volunteers, but would like to shout out a special thank you to these 13 individuals: Rianne Svelnis, Molly Caron, Gua Khee Chong, Anita Dhanoa, Andrea Klassen, Joyce McBryde, Elena Jimenez, Neil McBurney, Hailey McCloskey, Kim Sholinder, Astrid Varnes, Eve Wilensky and Harry Wong.

Between the live performances, the live webcast and subsequent taped airings on SHAW, *Us and Them* played to an estimated 22,471 viewers.

As is often the case with Headlines’ shows the audience was very, very diverse in so many definable ways (race, orientation, income level, age, etc.) This is both a success of outreach and the result of creating a grassroots project with members of diverse communities (the cast was representative of the transgendered, immigrant, First Nations, Caucasian majority and Muslim communities.)

Ticket prices were kept low at $15 (students/seniors) and $20, with four $10 performances (All tickets + $3.36 venue service charge). We also distributed free entry vouchers via social service organizations aimed at people with very low income who would otherwise not have been able to attend. 545 of these vouchers were used.

Although attendance was low in the early and middle parts of the three week run, word of mouth was great and we sold out the final four performances (plus had nearly full houses for the matinees), turning people away closing night. Word from other producers and directors around Vancouver is that theatre attendance was very challenging across the board for theatre companies during the time period of our run (Oct-Nov 2011).

In the end, we played to 1,802 people = 52% houses, with 23 performances in a 150 seat theatre.

Audience members came from Vancouver, Burnaby, Coquitlam, Delta, Langley, New Westminster, North Vancouver, Squamish, Victoria, Surrey and Richmond, to name just a few.
The webcast and broadcast: 439 computers logged into the web cast from 18 cities across BC. Canadian viewers were also located in Calgary, Saint Albert and Edmonton AB; Regina SK; Selkirk and Winnipeg MB; Kitchener, Windsor and Toronto ON; Montreal PQ; in the USA: Alameda, CA; Merced, CA; Petaluma, CA; San Francisco, CA; Dayton, OH; De Pere, WI; Fort Collins, CO; Goshen, IN; Issaquah, WA; Seattle, WA; Olympia, WA; Phoenix, AZ; St. Paul, MN; Other International: Canberra, Australia; Cebu City and Zamboanga Philippines; Islamabad, Pakistan; Mexico City, Mexico; Osaka, Japan; Singapore; Sunne, Sweden; Tel Aviv, Israel; Tucumán, Argentina.

We know from our organizing work that in many instances, people do not watch alone and in fact, organize small parties to view the project. We can estimate that (439 * 3) * 66% = 869 people watched the play and Forum on the web.

An edited version (edited for time) also aired twice on SHAW Cable in late November, 2011. SHAW tells us that up to 15,000 people view a show. Being conservative and taking 66%, this would mean another 9,900 * 2 = 19,800 viewers, for a total of 20,669 viewers outside the live, theatrical audience. **22,471 viewers in total.**

Apart from the usual huge workload, and the stress during production due to ongoing deadlines, I can say that the project went fairly smoothly. Overall, from the grassroots/community engagement perspective, the project went quite well.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Liza Lindgren
Outreach Coordinator
Headlines Theatre
Appendices
Appendix B – Networking Organizations

411 Senior’s Centre
Aboriginal Front Door Society
Aboriginal Health Strategic Initiatives (VCH)
Aboriginal Wellness Program (VCH)
Aboriginal Women’s Action Network (AWAN)
Agriculture Workers Alliance AWA (Surrey Support Centre)
AJEFCB / BC French speaking legal professional association
Alliance for Arts and Culture
Art in the Public Interest / Community Arts Network (CAN)
Arts Health Network Canada (AHNC)
Association of BC Drama Educators (ABCDE)
Association of Chinese Canadians for Equality and Solidarity (Vancouver) ACCESS
Association of Neighbourhood Houses of British Columbia
Atira Women’s Resource Society
Battered Women’s Support Services (BWSS)
BC Centre for Disease Control
BC Society for Male Survivors of Sexual Abuse (BCSMSSA)
BC Teachers for Peace and Global Education
BC Teachers’ Federation
BC Teachers’ Federation Social Justice Group
Black Dot Roots and Culture Collective
Bleezed
Bob and Kay Ackles YMCA Nanook House
Broadway Youth Resource Centre (BYRC) / Pacific Community Resources
Calabash Bistro
Canada World Youth (CWY)
Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)
Capilano Students’ Union
Carnegie Centre
CDI College
Center for Service Learning Fort Lewis College
Check Your Head (CYH)
China Creek South Community Garden
citizenU, (Partnership with PeerNetBC, City of Vancouver)
Collingwood Neighbourhood House
COLORED COLLECTIVE (CoCo) (UBC)
Community ARTreach Team (VCH)
Community Arts Council of Vancouver (CACV)
Cottonwood Community Garden
Covenant House Vancouver
Coyote Arts Percussive Performance
David Thompson Secondary School
Delta Secondary School
Designated Medical Profile (DMP) Program, St. Paul's Hospital, Emergency Department.
DEWC - Downtown Eastside Women's Centre
DIVERSEcity Community Resources Society
Douglas College
Downtown Eastside Heart of the City Festival
Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House (DTESNH)
Dr Peter Centre
DTES Power of Women To Women (DTES Women’s Centre)
Dusty Flowerpot Cabaret
Eastside Family Place
Engaged Immigrant Youth Program, District Reception and Placement Center
Ethical Arts
Evelyn Saller Centre
First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC)
First Nations House of Learning / First Nations Longhouse UBC
First United Church
Frame Projects
Fraser Basin Council
Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House
G.I.R.L - Girls In Real Life!
Gather and Give
GenWhyMedia
Goodman House
GVPTA (Greater Vancouver Professional Theatre Alliance)
GWAST (Grandview/Woodland Area Service Team)
Healing Our Spirit - BC Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Society
Helping Spirit Lodge Society
Homeless Hub - The Canadian Homelessness Research Network
Hope in Shadows
ihath.com
Immigrant Services of BC (ISS of BC)
In the House Festival
Indigenous Performing Arts Alliance (IPAA)
International Centre of Art for Social Change (ICASC)
It’s Up To You Recovery Society
Jews for a Just Peace (JJP)
KAYA - Knowledgeable Aboriginal Youth Association
Kettle Friendship Society
Killarney Secondary School
Kindred Place / More Than A Roof Housing Society
Kiwassa Neighbourhood House
Kwantlen Polytechnic University
Langley United Church
Leave Out the Violence (LOVE) BC
LifeSkills Centre (PHS Community Services Society)
Little Mountain Neighbourhood House
Living Lab - UBC
Living Wage Campaign
Lookout Emergency Aid Society - DTES
Lookout Society, North Shore
LUMA Native Housing, Community Voice Mail
Lutheran Urban Mission Society
Megaphone
Mission Possible
MOSAIC
Mount Pleasant Community Garden
Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House
Multicultural Family Support Services
Multicultural Helping House Society
MY Circle (ISS of BC)
Native Education College (NEC)
Neighbourhood Care
Nelson Park Community Garden
Network of East Vancouver Organizations (NEVCO)
Network of Inner City Community Services Society - NICCSS
New Works
newCHAPTER Community Employment Resource Centre
Neworld Theatre
Newton Advocacy Group - Project Comeback
Next Up
North Shore Multicultural Society
North Shore Welcoming Action Committee (NSWAC)
Office of Neighborhood Involvement, City of Portland
Oppenheimer Park
Out on Campus (SFU)
Pacific DAWN (DiaAbled Womens Newtork)
Pathways Information Centre/Tradeworks Training Society
Peace Poppies
PeerNetBC
Phoenix Society Transitional Housing Program
PHS Community Services Society
PICS - Progressive Intercultural Community Services Society
Positive Women's Network (PWN)
QMUNITY
Queens Avenue United Church
QUIRK-E (the Queer Imaging & Riting Kollective for Elders)
Raging Grannies
Rangeela Academy of Indian Fine Arts
Raven Spirit Dance
REACH Community Health Centre
Regional Complex Concurrent Disorders Program (VCH)
Renfrew Collingwood Multicultural Artist Network
Rhizome Cafe
Richmond Addictions Services
Safe Harbour AMSSA (Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC)
SCOPE
Seniors Network - BC
SFPIRG (SFU)
SFU School of Communication
SFU School of Contemporary Arts
SHARE Family and Community Services
SHIFT Performing Arts Society
Social Planning and Research Council (SPARC)
South Vancouver Neighbourhood House
St Andrew's United
St Paul's Hospital
St. Alban Anglican Church
St. Andrew's-Wesley United Church
St. James Community Services Society
Stanley Park Ecology Society
Tea Swamp Community Garden
The B.C. Muslim Association (BCMA)
The Kettle Friendship Society
Transformative Communities Project Society (formerly the Surrey Urban Youth Project)
UBC School of Social Work and Family Studies
UBC Social Justice Centre
UBC Theatre
Union Gospel Mission
Unitarian Church of Vancouver
University of the Fraser Valley
Vancouver Aboriginal Community Policing Centre (VACPC)
Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society
Vancouver Association for Survivors of Torture (VAST)
Vancouver Catholic Worker (VCW)
Vancouver International Storytelling Festival
Vancouver Moving Theatre
Vancouver Multicultural Society
Vancouver Native Health Society
Vancouver Public Libraries
Vancouver Queer Film Festival
Vancouver School Board
Vancouver-Burrard Presbytery (United Church)
VCC Student Union (Vancouver Community College)
W2 Community Media Arts
Warriors Against Violence Society
Welcome to South Hills Project
West End Community Centre
Woodwards Community Choir
YMCA Connections
Youth Initiative Canada (YIC)
Youth Warriors Against Violence
YouthCo AIDS Society
YWCA
This is an introduction to the **Us and Them** project, and a selection of six stories, which came out of the first phase of the project. The stories are provided to you as guides for introducing potential “Us and Them” scenarios that can be used in your classroom; with the understanding that a chosen story will vary given the issues of most concern to any individual classroom and/or school. The stories could also serve as food for thought and spark dialogue in the room. Please note that these are 6 out of 23 “Us and Them” stories. It may, or may not, be relevant for your class. Instead of using the stories provided, maybe the content for discussion can come from your students directly? This is how David Diamond, Headlines Artistic Director, got the 6 stories:

“We’re looking for a moment when you came together, into the same physical space with another person and, through an interaction with that person, either turned him/her into “the other” or s/he turned you into “the other”.

**Introduction**

- The context of Us and Them
  - *Us and Them (the Inquiry)*
  - Come Play with Us!
  - What is Forum Theatre?

**Included in this Teacher’s Kit are the following PDFs as added resource information for use in your class:**

- Insights from *Us and Them* so far...
- Six *Us and Them* Stories from the 2010 inquiries:
  - “I don’t mean you, you are whitewashed”
  - “Farmworker rights and safety.”
  - “Demonstrators and the police”
  - “Islamophobia in our midst”
  - “Racial Profiling”
  - “Why are you such a failure?!”
- Ticket prices and dates for school weekday matinee performances

**The context of Us and Them**

*The Us and Them project* is a two-year undertaking. The heart of the project lies within our belief in humanity’s need to recognize that there is no ‘them’, only an ever-evolving ‘us’.
On this tiny blue speck hanging out in the middle of nowhere, there really is nowhere to go – who are “they”? What is it about humanity that compels us to create “the other”? What kind of structures and systems would grow from us that would transform the world in which we live, if we understood this, at a fundamental level?

**Us and Them (the inquiry)**

In the first phase of the project, in Fall 2010, we mounted 22 interactive theatrical events in a broad diversity of locations, hosted by many different communities. At each event, David Diamond (Headlines Artistic Director as well as the Joker/Facilitator) explained the context of the project and asked for *Us and Them* stories to come from the audience - from people’s own lives – not friends’ lives, not relatives’ lives, not the movies – their real lives. The focus of the story? “A moment when you came together, into the same physical space with another person and, through an interaction with that person, either turned him/her into “the other” or s/he turned you into “the other”.

Using a technique called “Rainbow of Desire” we would then put one story (chosen by the audience) on the stage – to use the theatre as a vehicle to aid community transformation. Here are 6 examples of stories that came out of these events - Please feel free to use this PDF-file as food for thought, or as examples for discussion in the classroom.

Please be aware that the examples in the PDF will not necessarily reflect the content of the upcoming main stage project, the second phase of *Us and Them*.

**Come Play with Us!**

Now – we invite you and your students to participate in the culmination of this 2 year process. In this, our 30th Anniversary Production, we continue to investigate the mystery of *Us and Them*. Come play with us!

*Us and Them* is an Audience-Interactive Forum Theatre/Dance piece that will perform at the Cultch *(1895 Venables St. East Vancouver)* in Oct/Nov 2011.

**What is Forum Theatre?**

In traditional Forum Theatre, we show the audience the play all the way through, and then start playing it a second time. Audience members can then stop the play and enter the stage themselves, by replacing characters with whom they identify and try to solve problems or issues inside the story. The theatre becomes a creative rehearsal for transforming the world.

Headlines is a global leader in Forum Theatre. Now that we are turning 30, we want to experiment and see if we can bring the language of dance into these audience interactive events. Come play with us and contribute to an important exploration about ‘us’ and ‘them’. 
To get a better idea of what to expect from a Forum Theatre event, we suggest you check out one of the following DVD’s from a previous Headlines project. These DVD’s have also been used as tools for discussion about homelessness, gang violence and chronic poverty.

- “after homelessness...” (created and performed by people who know homelessness)
- “Here & Now” (created and performed by people who had lived the gang issue)
- “Practicing Democracy” (created and performed by people living issues of chronic poverty)

Ticket prices and dates for school weekday matinee performances:

- Wednesday Oct 26, 2pm – 4.30pm
- Wednesday Nov 2, 2011, 2pm – 4.30pm

The Cultch
1895 Venables Street, Vancouver (off Commercial Drive)

Rates for Matinées: $10/person + applicable service charges.

To make a reservation call 604.251.1363 or visit [http://tickets.thecultch.com](http://tickets.thecultch.com)

For more information about the Us and Them project, please call Headlines Theatre at 604.971.0508 or email [info@headlinestheatre.com](mailto:info@headlinestheatre.com)
David Diamond was very struck with how much audiences were ready, perhaps even hungry, for a new “model” a different lens through which to see the world and ourselves. There is a deep fatigue about the polarization all around us and also inside us. It is easy, of course, to sit back and judge others. It is more challenging to take the story into our personal lives. Into our workplaces, our families, our relationships. But of course, over and over again, we saw that it was and is the personal moments that create the larger picture.

Paulo Freire’s observation was that winning the revolution is not the challenge. The real challenge is having won the revolution, not becoming the very thing we were fighting against. Why does this happen throughout history? David would suggest it happens because we trick ourselves into believing we are prisoners of the structures we inhabit and therefore focus our activism only on structural change. Nature teaches us that it is patterns of behaviour that create structure – not the other way around. So, of course, if we neglect changing our patterns of behaviour we are doomed, regardless of our good intentions, to recreate the very structures we have been fighting against.

In order to change patterns of behaviour we need to embrace the truth that in an inter-connected universe the boundaries between “oppressor and oppressed” are very fuzzy. Are children born to be violent? Born to discriminate? Born to be criminalized? Of course not. What happens to us? How and why does humanity grow people and groups of people and institutions that oppress others? The answers are not in the “big moments”. They are in the small, human moments, woven throughout our individual stories. Both over-protective fear and over-aggressive desire play important roles in our need to create “the other”. Both of these destructive forces emerge from a sense of not feeling safe. It is, however, such a “chicken and egg” cycle. Our fear makes us aggressive and our aggression creates actions in others that reinforce our fear. Distrust grows. Walls are erected.

Something else that became apparent was that sometimes “we” have an addiction to creating “the other”. If we no longer define ourselves in relation to “them” – how we are not “them”…who are we? And also if we no longer have “them” to blame and lash out against, what do we do? Investigate ourselves? Far too scary, this. And so, when this is the case, we remain in the addiction, as individuals and as a collective people, nation, race, gender, etc., in relation to “the other”.

Our need for certainty plays a role. This is also connected to our human need to feel safe/secure. A way for us to be certain, however, is to live in a world of “right” and “wrong” and if these get defined too tightly then we become “right” and they must be “wrong”. Nature teaches us that the universe is, in fact, a very Uncertain place. Our task becomes to find a way to live in uncertainty. Doing so creates space – not to condone overtly hurtful acts – but to see and hear others, with whom we may disagree, as having their own perspectives. From this place of mutual uncertainty, relationships can be forged that dissolve the sense of “the other”. How do we accomplish this when someone is so diametrically opposed to our worldview? It takes such courage and generosity.
There is a difference between listening to find weapons to convince the other side to change and listening authentically to find commonality across our differences. How do we navigate a world that accommodates very different worldviews? Of course this is very complex and the devil is in the details….but as came up so many times – what do we WANT?

**Six stories from the Inquiries**

**Story #1: “I don’t mean you, you are whitewashed.”**

The young woman telling the story reached back into High School – but still, being so young, the story was still in her relative present. She and her drama class “friends” are in the theatre, where they hang out to have lunch. She is South Asian. A Caucasian classmate is making fun of “brown people”. She looks at him and he looks at her. “Oh, I don’t mean you – he says – you are whitewashed.” …. “Oh, good”, she says, and then falls silent. One could have done Cops in the Head with this, but the Rainbow was also effective, and more to the point for the exploration we want to make in *Us and Them*.

**The Fears and Desires**

**The girl**
- Desire: to be seen – a shape all twisted, face towards the boy, body facing away
- Fear: hiding behind a chair – fear of being alone
- Desire: To befriend/embrace the boy;

**The boy**
- Desire: to be forgiven
- Fear: of being alone

Of interest: the young woman had a very hard time throughout articulating any emotions. This became more obvious the more we worked and turned into a part of the discussion. This happened in the context of how much both characters wanted to avoid talking about the issue, even though on the surface they both did. This was mirrored in audience member’s experiences of inappropriate comments and how one ‘just doesn’t want to go there’, because of how complicated it might get to open the subject up – how it was just a small thing, why make a big deal of it?

- How one might become more of a target – how one may have internalized the racism or other oppression.
- The various improvisations had this thing in common – characters would not say what they were really thinking, didn’t want to have the argument, wanted to avoid conflict. This led over and over again to walls being built up, even when it appeared that both parties wanted to reach across the divide.
- When winding up, audience members had a lot to say about insights they had had about:
  - The other being a mirror image of themselves;
- How hard it is to conquer the reaction of shutting down inside;
- How honesty in the multitude of small moments might keep our relationships healthier.

**Story #2: “Farmworker rights and safety.”**

*Background info:* The general public came from the Langley area and great learning and bridge building happened. The Agricultural Workers’ Union (AWU) organized transport for the workers. The AWU also provided a wonderful translator. The whole event was translated from English to Spanish – Spanish to English. An indication of how well this worked is that the Spanish-speaking workers participated very deeply in the event. Having translation was great – but it also slowed everything down a lot. The Rainbow was limited to one fear, one desire from each character because of the time factor. The farm workers, in particular, had to meet transport back to farms and work in the morning.

**The story:**

A Farm-Worker (FW) is in the field, driving a tractor. The Manager (M) comes to him with a large bag of chemicals and tells him to distribute the chemicals across the field. The FW takes the chemicals. He wants to give them back to the M until he gets breathing protection but does not. The M sees this moment “on” the FW and ignores it.

The Fears and Desires

**The Farm-worker**
- Desire: to give the bag of chemicals back to the manager until protection is provided.
- Fear: wants to run away from this danger.

**The Manager**
- Desire: to get the farm-worker to do what he is told, so the Manager can do his job;
- Fear: if this farm-worker will not...who will?

The audience seemed to all understand the FW’s desire, but only the Farm Workers understood fully how hard it was for him to refuse to do the work and also to run from the work. His family is relying on him and the income he is earning for his labour. He feels trapped.

One of the most interesting moments in the evening for me was when the fear of the M and the man who was the FW were playing a scene. The person playing the FW, in order to create space for the M to BE in the scene, knelt down and brought him the microphone. The audience gasped and burst into applause. What was this? In a way it was a reversal of roles. The FW having the microphone (serendipity of the moment) was the FW also having the power. But it had meaning. Is it possible for the AWU to recognize the work that is possible with the Managers?

Something that emerged in the evening, from the audience, was that one thing both
sides of the story have in common is that they want the work done – for different reasons, perhaps, but it is a meeting ground. A man who was an executive in the Union, or Leader of some kind, agreed that this kind of fear inside the Manager, made the Manager ignorant. So...how do we approach and really dialogue with the fear? Why do that? Because as we saw tonight, when both sides entrench neither side gets anywhere. What do we want in the end? How do we get what we want?

Story #3: “Demonstrators and the police”

A young woman (the Demonstrator) is in downtown Vancouver marching against the Olympics. She and her friends have agreed that if it feels like anything out of control will happen, they will go home. When the tension starts to rise and the police start to “push back” she decides not to go home, but to push against the police. An Officer pushes her once, twice, three times – each time telling her to leave and on the third time, pushes her to the ground. She is arrested, searched, etc. The moment we investigate is just after the second push – she starts to come back up against the officer and he really pushes her to the ground.

The Fears and Desires

The Demonstrator
• Desire: to push against the Officer;
• Fear: that she is going to get hurt;
• Fear: that she will get arrested.

The Police Officer
• Desire: to push the demonstrator down;
• Fear: that he will fail in his job;
• Desire: to protect the demonstrator.

The man who ended up in the role of the Police Office and David Diamond had chatted a bit before the event. He had come very early. He was a Police Officer in South Africa during Apartheid. He now lives in the DTES and is part of a movement against gentrification. We had no way of knowing the story tonight would come an activist and involve a police officer. This was a very radical evening because of the place we went in the investigation – a surprising place, that, even more surprisingly, was deeply appreciated by the many “demonstrators” in the room. That is that we want the Police to understand us, but we never really ask ourselves if we understand the Police. How do our tactics change if we bother to investigate (not our clichéd assumptions) but the true dynamics of the men and women in Blue.

Something that became apparent over and over again, and articulated by many in the room.... including, for instance by a large, burly bearded man, covered in tattoos and piercings... that we think there is only one “line” in the scene – the Police Line – but over and over again the Demonstrator(s) displayed their own line – not a physical one – but a psychological and emotional one. No “movement” from the Officer was ever enough. When we investigated this further it had to do with the need to “educate” him, the need to be seen and heard, and the feelings of loyalty to the rest of the group. The
Officer, of course, has his role to play, his job to do. Both sides get trapped really easily in these roles. David played around a fair bit, “difficultating” as Augusto Boal, founder of the Theatre of the Oppressed would say. In a scene where one of the Officer’s desires had just let the Demonstrator go home, David brought the real Officer in to be a “partner”. Of course the “partner” questioned letting the Demonstrator off the hook. There are ramifications to this kind and generous act. How do we “break the rules” of the roles we play? Sensitivity training, of course, comes up – and – also more maturity from the Demonstrators’ side. Knowing “where they are”, strategizing more clearly and when the plan is to be non-violent and sticking to that even when it is challenging. There was much discussion at this event of not being trapped in the structures we have built; structures of power that seem rigid but are only so because we let them be so. Yes – the other side has guns, there is a power imbalance. But during the investigation, it was seen that there is power equality inside the different sides’ hearts.

**Story #4: “Islamophobia in our midst”**

The Man is having a visit from his Cousin, who he has always known as a kind, intelligent, loving person. Suddenly, the Cousin starts to talk to the Man about the threat of Islam and how Muslims are trying to take over the world and we must stop them. This takes the man by complete surprise. The moment where we freeze, is inside an incredulity from the Man – like he has been slapped in the face – he doesn’t know how to respond – wants to lash out, run away.

The Fears and Desires

**The Man**

- Desire: to reach out, openly to the Cousin;
- Fear: that he won’t hold his anger and will explode;
- Desire: to run away, but remain – a shape in a chair, twisted ‘away’ but still reaching out with arms.

**The Cousin**

- Desire: to be open with the Man;
- Fear: that he won’t be heard/understood
- Desire: to lecture the Man.

Some moments:
As the evening unfolded the audience warmed to the idea of investigating the Cousin, meaning there was a resistance to this off the top. The woman who came to play him was great; she brought a depth to the character. David says he didn’t know how – what she connected to – but he did know it was an act of courage to take the character on and a great service to all of us. It won’t come as a surprise that those moments when one or the other of the ‘sides’ could find a way to really listen/see were the most ‘successful’ in the evening and also threw out a challenge. How do we accomplish that when someone is so diametrically opposed to our worldview? This came up a number of times and the courage and generosity it takes.

There is a difference, though – and was seen many times – between listening to find weapons to convince the other side to change and listening authentically to find
commonality across our differences. Isn’t this the challenge between the Islamic and the Judeo/Christian worlds? The current course of some members of both sides insisting each is correct is leading us down a path of war. How do we navigate a world that accommodates very different world views? Yes, we know this is very complex and the devil is in the details….but as came up many times tonight – what do we WANT?

So many times during this investigation, characters started speaking sentences that were “I want YOU to…” “I want HIM to…”…and David would respond and say – this is what you want HIM to do…what do YOU WANT? An audience member mentioned that this bothered him for some time and then he began to see why David was insisting and how profoundly important it is to know what one wants – not what one wants the other to do. This IS the space in which we can be authentic and take responsibility for ourselves.

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**Story #5: “Racial Profiling”**

An Canadian man (born in Iran) is crossing into the US in his car. He is going to do some shopping (and to do some other artistic work, while he is there, but won’t be mentioning that at the border.) The Border Guard, after looking at the man and his passport, asks him when was the last time he was back in Iraq. ‘I am not from Iraq’, says the man, ‘I am from Iran’. ‘Yeah, yeah, well – one of those countries’, says the Border Guard. The statement of the Guard is like a slap in the face. The man gets into the US, but not without being profiled and insulted. We freeze at the ‘slap in the face’.

The Fears and Desires

**The Man**
- Desire: to punch the Border Guard
- Fear: of being turned away
- Fear: of being arrested

**The Border Guard**
- Desire: to let the man in
- Fear: of being attacked
- Desire: to protect his country

One of the difficulties with this story is the mechanization of the border guard. But there have been other *Us and Them* events that have dealt with police, who could also be very mechanized, and they didn’t get as “stuck” as in this investigation. Of course the desire to punch the guard is something many of us understand and, we agreed, it would get us incarcerated. We see this even more so when that desire is put up against the guard’s desire to protect his country. This is a very volatile combination.

The fear of being turned away, however, is just as ‘dangerous’ to the man as the desire to attack. It paralyzes him. The fear/paralysis makes the guard suspicious. We seem to be in a lose/lose situation at the border. It is when we put the man’s fear of being arrested together with the guard’s fear of being attacked, that we actually start getting at least a conversation happening. These two fears recognize each other – each has a
window through which the other can communicate. Why is this important?

It became important when David asked the room how many of us are the guard? Many. 70% or so. How? ‘Because I am a teacher who sometimes has to fail a student’; ‘because I am a parent’; ‘because I am in a relationship that is distrustful’; ‘because I am an employer’. It is also fascinating to start to understand how facing our fear can be a way “in” to the difficult conversation. The normal impulse is, David suggests, to be paralyzed by our fears or to listen to their advice to run or fight. In the same way an effective massage therapist goes for the knots of muscle – the place that hurts – and digs in there…facing our fears (and doing so with others) can be an effective way to build bridges between opposing people/forces. How do we do that in life?

The actual story at the border becomes very constricted over and over again, partly because the man playing the guard can’t or won’t delve into his humanity at all – he is portrayed throughout the evening as a kind of robot, no matter how hard David tried to help him open up. Perhaps this is a result of not having the courage to face the fear. This resistance was woven throughout the evening inside the room. The guard can’t be a human being – he can only be a machine. Well, what does it mean to the guard if that is who ‘we’ also turn him into?

When David asked people what they would take away:
- A tool (image theatre) to use inside their family situations;
- A desire to try to understand what is inside ‘the other’ before judging.

**Story #6: “Why are you such a failure?!”**

*Background:* This story came from a woman who was very open about her own struggles with mental health and an abusive family. This story focused on her relationship with her mother who has berated her all her life. The woman who played the mother was also very open about her own struggles with mental health. *She knew ‘the mother’ very well, not necessarily as the mother, but as the daughter.*

**The story:**
The daughter has come to her mother’s home, out of a sense of obligation, to visit. The daughter has recently had a nervous breakdown and is once again on medication, not working, hoping to take a training program. Mom starts to ask “the questions”...what are you doing with your life? When will you have a job? Why are you such a failure? We freeze just as the undermining questions are about to happen, when the daughter is thinking, “oh – here we go again…”

**The Fears and Desires**

**The daughter**
- Desire: to be hugged by the mother;
- Fear: of disappearing, of always being isolated;
- Desire: to embrace the mother.

**The mother**
- Desire: to embrace the daughter;
- Fear: of turning her back on her daughter and losing her forever
- Desire: to be forgiven.

Obviously we were in very delicate territory during this investigation. The daughter was in tears a great deal – not sobbing tears – but quiet tears, and David kept coming back to her, checking in, and she always wanted to continue, even though she found it very uncomfortable. He told her at one point that he “wasn’t afraid of her tears” and she broke out into a big smile at him, through her tears. Same with the mother – often playing scenes through tears. This is so much like “Out of the Silence” was years ago and many other projects that dealt with really core family issues. How many of us have been the daughter, somehow (David asks the audience)? More than half the audience. How many of us have been the mother somehow? The same.

Some moments:

- The daughter’s desire to be hugged by the mother is also filled with fear. Her arms outstretched, exposing herself, she is so vulnerable to being hurt and this is the pattern – rejection over and over again….and yet here she still is, with arms outstretched. This resonated for many beyond this particular mother/daughter story into our struggles to remain open to affection and yet not so exposed that we have no boundaries.

- The mother’s desire to be forgiven seemed very self-centered and just a different side of the abuse. This may have to do with the perspective of the woman who took on playing the mother – of course the ‘actor’ is always a filter. The desire never apologized or promised to change behaviour, it just wanted forgiveness. There is insight here, about how we tunnel into a desire/need and how this affects how we are seen and heard. Someone commented that the mother/daughter roles switched over and this was true in the improvisation and so true in families caught up in abuse; that the children sometimes start parenting their parents.

Having said this, the daughter’s fear of disappearing and the mother’s desire for forgiveness managed to reconcile on the stage. How? Neither could “see” the other in the shapes they were in and ironically this forced them into using other senses. Touch, for one, and truer emotions. They were also the only two rainbow fragments who were on the floor (together). So many other improvisations involved one character towering over another, often in judgment. These two didn’t fall into that. Judgment was a very big theme in the evening.

When David asked the audience what they’d take away:
- How important it is to set healthy boundaries;
- To not be so certain about what ‘the other’ is thinking/feeling and to create the space to find out from them;
- How complex the rainbow of fear and desire is in all of us
- To be generous enough to embrace those we perceive as ‘the other’
- To investigate our own reflection in those we perceive as ‘the other’.