

Illustration: J. Bent

theatre for living (**headlines**) presents

28 shows in 26 communities + 9 more shows in Vancouver!

2015 BC/Alberta Tour



# maladjusted

humanizing mental health  
the system. the people. the play.

Created and performed by patients and caregivers

Directed by David Diamond

theatre making policy



## *maladjusted* 2015 BC/Alberta Tour & Vancouver Tour Finale Outreach Coordinator Final Report

May 5, 2015

By David Ng

Project Funders:



Edith Lando Charitable Foundation

Hamber Foundation



Operating Support:



## **Introduction**

Due to the popularity of the 2013 run of *maladjusted* in Vancouver, Theatre for Living decided to remount the play and tour it across BC and Alberta. The tour was highly successful – playing to near full houses – and in some cases over capacity houses along the way.

I joined the Theatre for Living staff in May of 2014, inheriting the *maladjusted* tour booking process from the outgoing Outreach Coordinator, Liza Lindgren. As this was my first time booking and promoting a tour of this nature, this document also addresses some of my own personal learnings throughout the tour.

The following report also references how the outreach process at Theatre for Living demonstrates another avenue of the ‘outcomes’ that the company espouses.

## TOUR BOOKING

### Methodology and Strategy

One of our mandates at Theatre for Living is to focus our outreach through connecting with grassroots communities, in order to “grow” the outreach from the ground up. This way, we hope to connect the communities on the “front lines” and allow their voices to lead the dialogues on mental health that we intend to facilitate. This partnership with communities on the ground, is intended as a collaborative process, where the work and visions are shared.

Our intention is to also partner with First Nations communities, in order to encourage cross-cultural collaborations within local communities. We have been doing so by forging relationships with all the Friendship Centres in Alberta and British Columbia, as well as other local First Nations organizations, with the intention of honouring the integrity of solidarity building with indigenous people.

Another important point of the outreach process is to have as many collaborations as possible. The idea behind this is so that in the latter process of promoting the tour, there will be as many supporting organizations as possible who are invested in the show. As mentioned previously, because of the demand for *maladjusted* to tour, many organizations from all over BC and Alberta came on board to partner with us to bring *maladjusted* to their community. It was obvious from the tour booking process, that the issues that were being raised by *maladjusted*, really resonated with people from many other contexts across the region.

### Collaborations for *maladjusted*

There were many wonderful collaborations throughout the *maladjusted* tour. One of my favourite parts of the outreach coordinator position is the ability for a grassroots play, like *maladjusted*, to be a platform for partners to come together and work together. The relationship building aspect of the tour booking methodology is, I would argue, part and parcel of the overall outcome that the Theatre for Living philosophy supports.

## BRITISH COLUMBIA

Squamish, BC	Sea To Sky Mental Health Partnership
Nanaimo, BC	Tillicum Lelum Friendship Centre
Nanaimo, BC	BC Schizophrenia Society Nanaimo Branch
Nanaimo, BC	CMHA Mid Island Branch

Duncan, BC	Cowichan Tribes Ts'ewulltun Health Centre
Victoria, BC	Victoria Native Friendship Centre
Victoria, BC	City of Victoria
Victoria, BC	Victoria Mental Health and Addictions Services, Island Health
Victoria, BC	Hulitan Family Services
Victoria, BC	Moms Like Us
Victoria, BC	Victoria Native Friendship Centre - Health Services
Port Alberni, BC	CMHA Port Alberni Branch
Port Alberni, BC	Quu?asa Coordinator, Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council
Campbell River, BC	Mental Health & Addictions Program at Kwakiutl District Council Health
Campbell River, BC	BC Schizophrenia Association
Port Hardy, BC	Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw Band Office
Port Hardy, BC	North Island Community Links (North Island Community Services)
Port Hardy, BC	Port Hardy Mental Health Office
Alert Bay, BC	Namgis Health Centre
Kitamaat Village, BC	Kitamaat Village Health Centre
Kitimat, BC	Kermode Friendship Centre
Hazelton, BC	Gitxan Justice
Hazelton, BC	Office of the Wet'suwet'en
Hazelton, BC	Gitxsan Health Society
Burns Lake, BC	Lake Babine Nation
Burns Lake, BC	BC Schizophrenia Association
Fort St. James	Nak'azdli Health Centre
Prince George, BC	Theatre NorthWest
Prince George, BC	Youth Around Prince
Prince George, BC	Prince George CMHA
Mackenzie, BC	Mackenzie Mental Health and Substance Abuse
Mackenzie, BC	Northern Health
Chetwynd, BC	Chetwynd Mental Health and Addictions
Fort St John	Nenan Dane Zaa Deh Zona Family Services
Fort St John	Mental Health & Addictions Community Program
Fort St John	NENAS - North East Native Advancing Society
Kamloops, BC	Pheonix Centre in Kamloops
Kamloops, BC	Thompson Rivers University School of Nursing
Penticton, BC	Penticton Indian Band
Penticton, BC	BC Schizophrenia Society Penticton Branch/ Mental wellness

Starting with the British Columbia leg of the tour, the main sponsor in Nanaimo was the Canadian Mental Health Association Mid-Island branch, who worked with other local agencies, including the Tillicum Lelum Friendship Centre. In Duncan, Cowichan Tribes, and the Vancouver Island University partnered together to bring *maladjusted* to the community. This partnership was, in my opinion, quite powerful - the sponsors wanted to collaborate and show solidarity, so that young First Nations youth could see that the university community was something that they could be a part of as well.

In Victoria, the sponsors were the Vancouver Island Health Authority and Hulitan Family Services. Lisa Helps – who at the time of the tour booking was a city counsellor, but soon after, won the mayoral election – was instrumental in helping me network to secure the sponsorship for the show in Victoria. Valeria Cortes (who is a friend of the company), and Jaimie Sumner, stepped up to organize the show, and did an amazing job doing so. Val and Jaimie faced many challenges that were unique to the Victoria situation. The continuing challenge was that it was difficult to mobilize organizations on the ground, because Val and Jaimie were not the actual sponsors, and couldn't necessarily speak on the sponsors behalf. Also, because of the late process of identifying the organizers, Val and Jaimie were also under major time constraints to build a network of people to help organize the show in Victoria. They did a terrific job, and their efforts are reflected in the over capacity turn out that they had on the day of the Victoria performance.

In Kamloops, the Pheonix Centre and the nursing department at Thompson Rivers University collaborated to bring *maladjusted* to the community. The nursing students were exceptional to work with – their outreach and publicity was very extensive, ranging from sporting events, to very targeted outreach to service providers, First Nations communities, mental health organizations, homeless outreach programs, students...etc.

In Penticton, the Penticton Indian Band and the BC Schizophrenia Society partnered together to bring the show to the community. This was also a great partnership, as *maladjusted* was definitely a great platform for these two organizations to build new relationships together.

## ALBERTA

Grande Prairie, AB	Grande Prairie Regional College
Grande Prairie, AB	Grande Prairie Friendship Centre
St. Paul, AB	Mannawanis Native Friendship Centre
St. Paul, AB	St. Paul City Council
St. Paul, AB	Family and Community Support Services
St. Paul, AB	St. Paul Education (School Board)
Edmonton, AB	iHuman
Edmonton, AB	CMHA Edmonton

Edmonton, AB	University of Alberta (Department of Secondary Education)
Edmonton, AB	College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta
Edmonton, AB	Canadian Native Friendship Centre
Edmonton, AB	University of Alberta
Red Deer, AB	Cosmos Group of Cosmos
Red Deer, AB	Red Deer Schizophrenia Society
Red Deer, AB	Red Deer Native Friendship Centre Society
Red Deer, AB	CMHA Central Alberta Region
Lethbridge, AB	Sik-Ooh-Kotoki Friendship Society
Lethbridge, AB	CMHA Lethbridge
Lethbridge, AB	Southern Alberta Division (Lethbridge), University of Calgary
Lethbridge, AB	City of Lethbridge
Lethbridge, AB	University of Lethbridge
Medicine Hat, AB	Miyawasin Centre
Medicine Hat, AB	Inter-act Theatre Society
Calgary AB	University of Calgary Faculty of Social work
Calgary AB	Mount Royal University

In Grande Prairie, the Executive Director of the Friendship Centre was very excited about the project, as she really recognized that mental health issues is something that really concerns the youth in the area. The drama department at the Grande Prairie Regional College had also shown interest in learning about doing interactive Forum Theatre for social causes, and partnered with the Friendship Centre to promote the show.

In St. Paul, a local community member actually reached out to us at Theatre for Living to bring *maladjusted* to St. Paul. She was very passionate about mental health issues in her community, and connected us to city council, who agreed to sponsor the show in St. Paul. The Mannawanis Friendship Centre and the local Alberta Health Services mental health folks were also interested in the production, and joined the steering committee.

The University of Alberta and the Canadian Mental Health Association partnered together to bring two shows to Edmonton. The Canadian Native Friendship Centre is also headquartered in Edmonton, and they helped network the play when it came to Edmonton.

In Red Deer, the main sponsor was COSMOS Group of Companies – a social profit organization that runs a variety of capacity building initiatives with marginalized communities. There were also a group of activist

mom's, who were also supportive of the project. The Canadian Mental Health Association in Red Deer was also supportive of maladjusted, as was the local First Nations Friendship Centre.

In Lethbridge, the University of Calgary (Southern Alberta), were the main sponsors. Rachael Crowder, and her battalion of social work students spearheaded the organizing of the show, alongside a social work fair that coincided with the performance. Working with this group of dedicated students was such a treat! They were incredibly organized, to the extent that they created own detailed publicity and outreach schedule that they implemented.

In Medicine Hat, we have a relationship with the Inter-Act Theatre Society, which is a group that works with people with disabilities. Inter-Act made a significant effort to outreach to the local First Nation as well, and they also collaborated with the social work program at the Blue Quills College – the students also wrote the Community Action Report.

Our last stop in Alberta was Calgary, The University of Calgary and Mount Royal University sponsored the play. Francesca Simon from Mount Royal really worked hard to outreach to First Nations communities. Francesca was able to secure a number of really great grassroots networks, including many First Nations organizations.

#### **Learnings:**

- The process of forming collaborations between First Nations and non-First Nations communities is important to consider. Because of historical contexts, having a First Nations organization as the main sponsor is very different than forming the relationship with the non-First Nations organization, and asking the First Nations organization to “come be a part of something”. To allow space for ownership of the work, the invitation should come to the First Nations organization first, so that they can lead, and feel like they are part and parcel of the leadership process. This is not only effective, but I believe, fundamentally part of a decolonization model

## **PUBLICITY AND OUTREACH SCHEDULE (PROC)**

The Publicity and Outreach “8 weeks to performance” schedule, is a document that we inherited from past Publicists and Outreach Coordinators at Theatre for Living. The document walks the community partners through a week-by-week process of promoting the show. Dima Alansari, this project’s publicist, and I, edited the document to tailor it more to maladjusted, and again, offered up to 8 weeks of support to each community. In general, we found it challenging to actually keep every single community partner accountable through the promotional period, however, most communities still managed to have regular check ins with us, and did an amazing job promoting the show in their communities.

We know that after doing this work for 34 years, that promoting this type of “grassroots”, “interactive”, “social cause” theatre is not easy. It is challenging to communicate and “sell” in community, and so we developed the PROC schedule to walk communities through the process – recognizing that most communities have never organized anything like this before.

We did receive some resistance from communities who didn’t feel like they needed our support, and they didn’t understand why we were as persistent as we were, in terms of checking in.

I believe it is also important to note that there is a clear correlation between the successful attendance of shows, and the communities who agreed to regularly check in with us about the outreach and publicity process. The organizers who did not check in, or claimed they already had everything under control, had lower attendance numbers than communities that were willing to listen to the support and guidance we offered. This is not just to toot our own horn, but to reinforce the idea that promoting a show of this nature is not easy, and is not like organizing any other sort of community event.

In working with a variety of mental health related organizations, it was interesting how many organizers we worked with, expressed to us how stressed they were. Service provider burn out was a huge issue that affected the PROC process – which is, interestingly, one of the concepts that emerged from the play. Many of the obstacles that we faced, or frustrations with the process, stemmed from the fact that people we were working with had their plates full and more.

### **Learnings:**

- The communication that the promotion of the performances requires a grassroots effort needs to be communicated as soon as possible. Theatre for Living can offer as much support as the community needs, but at the end of the day, it will be the efforts of the partners and their networking that will bring bums a diverse audience to the event.

## **Working with First Nations communities**

Working with First Nations communities is a really important part of the Theatre for Living model, whether it is in the project development, in the play creation, or in the outreach and promotional period. We have mandated this because we believe it is important to be in solidarity with First Nations peoples struggles – and we continue to negotiate within the organization how this takes shape in the work that we do.

In organizing the shows, Theatre for Living has always allowed room at the beginning of the program for a First Nations elder to do a welcome to the territory. When I began the outreach and publicity schedule, I had kept this in mind, but it was really up to the organizers to suggest or indicate to me if they wanted to have this welcome.

I realized halfway through the actual organizing of the Publicity and Outreach process that the assumption that the (First Nations) organizers would indicate to me if there was going to be an Elder doing a welcome was a short sight. How are the organizers supposed to know that we have a process to allow space for an elder to do a welcome – especially considering the way First Nations people have been treated historically? Once I started talking openly about the fact that we have space for a territorial welcome (and not waiting for the suggestion to come from the organizers), there was a response from the First Nations organizers was tremendous. Many said that this would be incredibly important to the community, it would mean so much, and how deeply good this would be. In the future, making it aware (and in a way that is still an offer of collaboration as opposed to a “suggestion”) that we have time for a territorial welcome, would be a really good idea, and would be quite meaningful to the outreach process.

## **VANCOUVER CAMPAIGN**

### **Methodology and Strategy**

Prior to the rehearsals in January, I had developed a rough strategy for the outreach part of the Vancouver campaign. Starting with our own extensive network, and the network developed by Dafne Blanco, the Outreach Coordinator for maladjusted 2013, I began to connect with local partners in December, in preparation for the pending promotional period in January.

Melissa Kuipers was hired as the publicity and outreach assistant, a co-op student placement from the University of British Columbia, who came on board to be a part of the outreach team. Melissa was instrumental in the networking for the Vancouver network.

Because of the Theatre for Living mandate to have diverse audiences, the number of targeted audiences was very wide. We targeted:

- First Nations (Nations (reserves), wellness centres);
- Service providers: homeless shelters, mental health teams and supporting organizations, social housing, street nurses, health clinics, women's shelters, hospitals, trauma centres, crisis centres, suicide prevention organizations, schizophrenia organizations;
- Students of a variety of disciplines: Including sociology, criminology, nursing, medicine, social work, public health, theatre classes, social justice, anthropology;
- Community centres;
- High school students; social justice classes, counselling teachers;
- Vancouver police department (since Police have been dubbed the "front line workers" for dealing with people with mental health issues)

One of the huge successes we had was that we expanded upon the 2013 network, and managed to build the network of contacts to 300 people. This was largely due to Melissa's research, and some personal connections from myself and Dima.

### **Volunteer Recruitment**

We had many volunteers for this run of *maladjusted*, which I believe contributed to the successes we had during the Vancouver run of the play. We posted recruitment ads in various online sites like Craigslist, which did generate some interest. We also did some direct outreach, lots of cold calling, to engage with community members, to see if they wanted to get involved with promoting this creative dialogue about mental health.

Connecting with students quickly became one of the focuses of volunteer recruitment for *maladjusted*. Nursing, public health, theatre, and medical students were very keen on getting involved with the outreach, as it pertained to their area of interest. Also, there were a few people who got involved purely because they needed volunteer hours – this was also useful!

I gave a guest lecture at UBC at an Anthropology class, which also garnered some volunteering interest.

We also invited a group of core volunteers to the office for a more formal meeting about doing volunteer work. The idea behind this was to build some closer relationships with volunteers, so that they might feel a

deeper investment in volunteering for *maladjusted*, and take on some leadership as volunteers. This worked to some extent, with a few volunteers who came to the meeting, reconnecting with us to get more posters, or postcards that they could distribute to their communities.



The volunteers partook in a wide range of activities, ranging mostly from putting up posters, and distributing flyers, and networking. Tapping into the volunteers who were involved in the 2013 production of *maladjusted* was very useful, as several of them were interested in getting involved again.

### **Voucher program**

We once again reserved 20% of the house each night for complimentary tickets that were designated for those with low or no-income, and the homeless population. We distributed over 700 vouchers, and received quite a good response from community members who were interested in the voucher program.

To echo Melissa and Dima's report, the Voucher program was an overall success. People were lining up at the door, we had long waiting lists, and we had to turn people away from the door every day.

### **Learnings:**

- One major shortfall was that the vouchers themselves did not have clear information about the procedures to redeem the vouchers for tickets. In the future, we need to have clear information on the vouchers that states "subject to availability", and "To claim your ticket to *maladjusted* You must present this card in person at the box office on the

day of performance” – this is critical, and was an oversight when we implemented the voucher program, which led to some confusion.

## **Youth Campaign**

Through advertising on Craigslist to solicit for volunteers, we were contacted by Intersections Media, which is a job skills organization in Vancouver that works with youth. Through Intersections Media, we met Theodore Lake who was interested in creating a short video clip for our twitter contest, about youth mental health. He eventually also used this video to outreach to his community, and was instrumental in connecting with youth in Vancouver.

Because of the office capacity, we were unable to let Theodore stay in the office for hours at a time. It would have been good to have Theodore around more, so that we could train him to do more outreach as well, so that we could maximize the impact of his multimedia work.

We also focused some attention to outreaching to youth through the school system. This is not always easy, as cold calling a school secretary about a play about mental health proved to be a little challenging if you didn't have a connection in the school system. Through some of our other networks, I was able to connect with a few interested teachers. Social justice classes, and school counsellors were normally the most interested staff.

Melissa was also key in outreaching to the youth population. As a youth herself, who was on salary at Theatre for Living, we could really tap into her own networks, and reach out to young people to come to *maladjusted*.

### **Learnings:**

- Cold calling teachers at schools is a bit futile, but often necessary to get a connection into the school system.
- Personal networks were by far the most useful. Melissa's high school social justice class teacher had originally reserved 40 tickets because this pertained to the class subject he taught

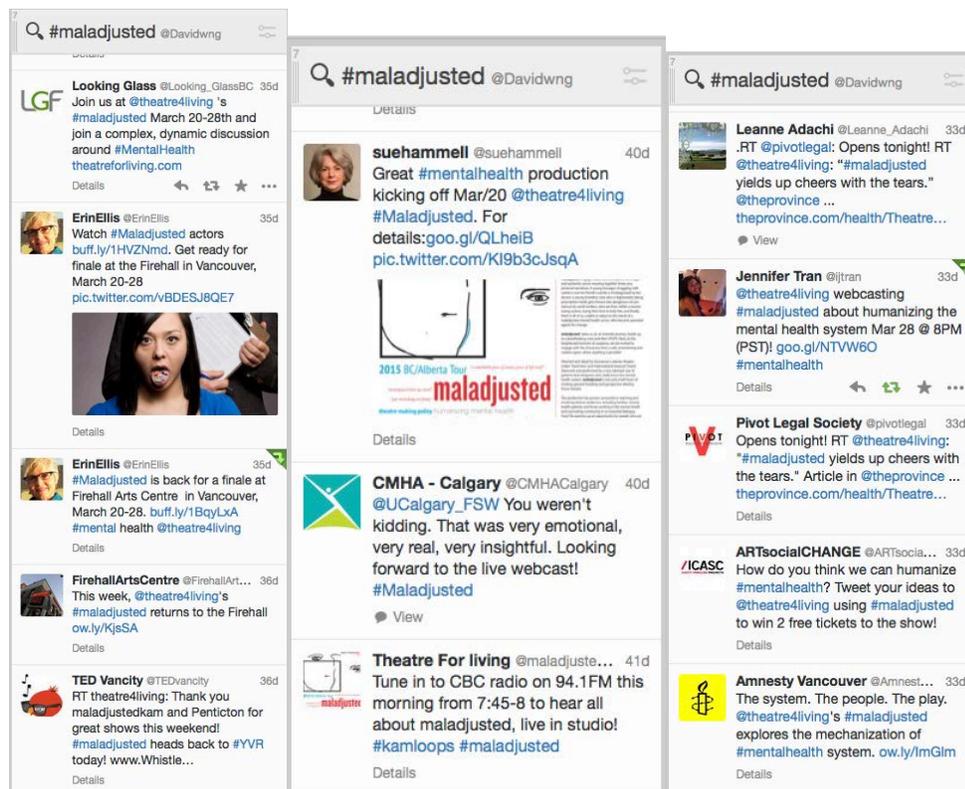
## Social Media

### Twitter

Overall I was quite pleased with the social media efforts we put in. We had tons of responses to our tweeting, with lots of people tweeting up to the culmination of the peak of the tour. Melissa and I had put together a strategy for social media, which essentially involved regular social media engagement (putting out daily tweets, cross tweeting across accounts), and distributed days of more intense tweeting (normally around the times when advertisements were released in Vancouver). Another component to the social media outreach strategy was to connect with like-minded organizations through social media, to help us promote the tour and the show. This was relatively successful, though at one point we were so busy at the office, it was very challenging to keep on top of the critical mass that was building. We attempted to find a volunteer to take some of this workload on, but to no avail.

I found that there isn't much knowledge from community partners and volunteers about twitter – specifically strategy about using twitter for promotion – and so for effective use of twitter, it is essential to have a strategy in place before hand, and also to send support to partners who want to use twitter as well. To deal with this, I created a volunteer package, which details the main tenets of social media outreach and publicity.

Here are some of the examples of responses we got from various community supporters:



## Publicity Videos

Our project Publicist, Dima, decided to create a series of short video clips to help promote the tour and the Vancouver run of *maladjusted*. These videos were quite useful in terms of publicizing the tour, and we also used them extensively for outreach. I have included some learnings from this process that I believe would help in the future if the company chooses to make cast videos for promoting the show.

## Methodology and Strategy

For the creation of the videos, Dima and I went through a month long process of consulting with the cast, and with the office team about what the clips would be about. I suggested that illuminating the stories of the cast – since the play is created and performed by patients and caregivers – would be a good idea, and this is what we decided to go forward with. The reason I chose this direction was because if we stayed with the “stories” of the cast as it relates to the issues in the play, it would remain at the grassroots level – as the play itself was created.

Dima and I pre-interviewed the cast, to get an idea of what we would “script” as interview questions. This was a very good idea to do, as this made the two-day shoot in January much easier. It is also important to note that the pre interviews allowed us to really get to the heart of the stories that the cast wanted to share – not just make videos that would gratuitously promote *maladjusted*. For example, instead of gathering stories that would exaggerate the challenges that some of the cast/characters have gone through (which would “tug at heart strings”, and compel people to come see the play), the interview style and video editing process must retain the heart of the story of what the participants wanted to share. This process must also be in place to ensure that the process of making these publicity videos does not exploit the stories of the participants for the purpose of the publicity process. This is absolutely critical.

### Learnings:

- These videos were quite a bit of work, and basically took a whole working week out of my schedule overall. While I do not believe this affected the outreach process for the tour, it would have been nice to have the video making process independent from the outreach process, so that I could have focused on the outreach for the tour (which we were smack in the middle of when we were producing these video clips)
- One of the major learnings that I had from this process, was that I could have spent much more effort on formulating a stronger outreach (and publicity) strategy for these videos. For example, we could have done more blogger outreach to get these videos embedded into blogs that receive the viewership traffic from the demographics that we

were targeting. We could have also done a more targeted outreach to media around these videos. We were closed to getting them on APTN, and there was just not enough time to do a more intensive outreach to get more media on board.

We went through an internal process about how to implement the publicity around these videos as well, particularly on how as the theatre company, we were “representing” these stories in the public sphere. Particularly we debated on whether or not we would even write (on publicity communications) that the videos of the cast were about them being First Nations or not (or formerly homeless or not, etc.) – some of us contended that this would make the company look like we were using First Nations identities for promotional purposes, which would (essentially) be appropriation.

In the outreach process, it was very clear that having videos that talked about these issues – i.e. mental health and being First Nations – was very useful in the outreach process, especially when working with communities that were struggling to communicate the purpose of this theatrical dialogue to various different communities.

#### **Learnings:**

- The biggest struggle for me with the video production, was negotiating the process of the video creation, which would truly honour the participants stories. Before taking this position at Theatre for Living, I previously worked for a social marketing company, Hello Cool World, that specialized in creating grassroots social cause videos, and so I know that I know that this is a very big struggle – it is very difficult to solidify a video making process to truly embrace this anti-oppression philosophy of honouring stories. While I think we did a very good job of this, figuring out this process was not easy.

#### **Community Action Reports**

The Community Action Reports are an opportunity to turn ideas that are offered from the audience about humanizing the mental health system – in the form of live interventions offered on stage – into specific policy recommendations that we can share with policy makers and stake holders. In 2013, we hired a community scribe to attend each of the performances, and to take notes as to what the interventions were that were offered from the audience during the interactive part of the performance. The scribe would then turn the interventions into policy recommendations. This year, we decided to have all of the community partners have a scribe available to write community action reports for every performance across the entire tour. I then turned the reports into a larger macro level community action report that was geared towards provincial and federal level policy makers.

Our community partners will be bringing these reports to different policy makers in their own community, in hopes that these stakeholders will listen to the voices on the ground, and that shifts can begin to happen in the system. I will then be taking the provincial level report to stakeholders at the provincial level, so that knowledge from the ground can be transferred as far up as possible. We are in communication with Sue Hammel, the NDP mental health critic for British Columbia, who will hopefully be bringing this to the health minister of British Columbia, and/or legislature.

You can find all the individual reports, and the provincial reports on our website under past projects, *maladjusted* 2015, Final Reports, or at this link:

[http://www.theatreforliving.com/past\\_work/maladjustedTour/reports\\_maladjusted.htm](http://www.theatreforliving.com/past_work/maladjustedTour/reports_maladjusted.htm)

### **Final Conclusions**

The tour outreach process was quite a learning experience for me, as someone with a feminist activist background, but with very little knowledge of 'theatre'. I have found that the work of Theatre for Living – and in context, *maladjusted* – intends for the community transformation that I have been used to working towards, but with different tools (i.e. the tool being the theatre). From the cold calling, to the PROC process, the relationship building mandate that the Outreach Coordinator role inherently embodies, is fundamentally a part of the outcomes of the project. Whether it be from the relationships between organizations (Native and non-Native) – many who have never worked together before – to the relationships between ourselves as the theatre company and our community sponsors, part of the impact of *maladjusted* is the lasting relationships that build communities.

The diversity of work that it took to organize *maladjusted* was in itself something to be really proud of. The wide breadth of impact that this project has: from the actual theatre itself, the community action reports, the tour booking, the outreach and publicity process, the voucher program – is extensive, comprehensive...and impressive! All of those "pieces" are each themselves an impact that this project has, and I am grateful to have been a part of this process.