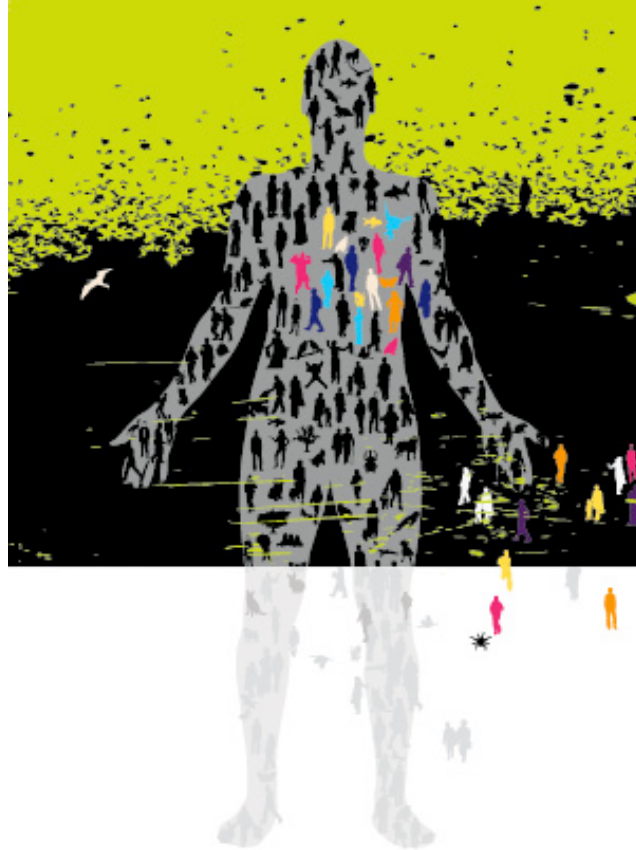


# Us and Them

(the inquiry)



An intimate evening of theatre (created by you)

Oct. 22 – Nov. 28, 2010

At various venues throughout Metro Vancouver

## Outreach Coordinator's Final Report



Canada Council  
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We acknowledge the financial assistance of the Province of British Columbia

The ***Us and Them*** project is a two-year undertaking. The first phase, our 2010 main stage production, was entitled ***Us and Them (the inquiry)***. This was a series of 22 **Rainbow of Desire** events, in and around Metro Vancouver, about our need to create *the other*.

This was my first project with Headlines Theatre. In March 2010, I started my journey at Headlines as the new Outreach Coordinator. I took over from Dafne Blanco, who had been in the position for 6 years. Apart from settling in at the company, I began the initial networking for the ***Us and Them*** Project.

My main duties during this time involved researching and connecting with potential community partners, keeping in touch and updating previous collaborators about our new project, as well as requesting letters of support.

Because the events were all happening at different venues, we also wanted to attach different community partners to each event. The community partners would activate their constituencies into the event they sponsored. I set up meetings with potential groups to sponsor the events, trying to find a diverse range of sponsors.

In meetings with several organizations to discuss a potential collaboration, I noticed that the project resonated deeply with so many groups. However, the funding situation for many grassroots organizations, as well as bigger not-for profits, made it difficult for some to be as deeply involved in the project as they wanted to. (Big organizational changes, moving venues, over-worked staff etc.)

In the end, 26 organizations engaged in a deep collaboration, each sponsoring at least one inquiry event:

- Agriculture Workers Alliance
- Amnesty International (Vancouver)
- Collingwood Neighbourhood House
- Black Dot Roots and Culture Collective
- Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House
- First Nations House of Learning
- Foundation Radio
- Heart of the City Festival
- In the House Festival
- KAYA (*Knowledgeable Aboriginal Youth Association*)
- Langley United Church
- Members of the Palestinian and Jewish communities of Greater Vancouver (*Elen Ghulam, Stephen & Kathryn Aberle*)
- Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood house
- National Nikkei Museum and Heritage Centre (*this event was unfortunately cancelled due to scheduling difficulties*)
- Newworld Theatre
- North Shore Welcoming Action Committee

- PHS Community Services Society
- QMUNITY
- Quirk-e
- The Phoenix Society
- TCPS (*Transformative Communities Project, formerly know as Surrey Urban Youth Project*)
- Unitarian Church of Vancouver
- UNYA (*Urban Native Youth Association*)
- Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre Society
- Vancouver Coastal Health – (*Complex Mental Health 's Anti-Stigma Program*)
- Youth Initiative Canada

One hope of having community partners was to contextualize each event, although we could never promise a specific focus for each night. All events were open to the public and anyone in the audience could choose to participate. (*In Rainbow of Desire*, three audience members tell a story from their own lives about “a moment in time when you were either making someone else into the other – or vice versa”.)

Together with David Diamond, Headlines’ Artistic and Managing Director, I created a letter of agreement and basics for an inquiry event to send to community partners. This helped streamline the events. Each sponsoring organization had their own way of doing things (of course) and we needed to retain some control. So, clear statements of what we could both expect from each other was very important. Agreements were made verbally and or written with each organization.

In June 2010, while confirming dates, venues, sponsors, communicating with the graphic designer (Jergus Oprsal designed a very lovely graphic for the project), finding a publicist for the project, and getting all details in place before David’s absence for all of July, we got a very interesting offer: to be part of *Ashtar Theatre’s The Gaza Mono-Logues*.

The monologues were written by youth about their life in Gaza today. They were to be performed in several countries around the world on October 17, 2010, one week prior to Opening Night of *Us and Them (the inquiry)*. We were not sure if this would be good or bad for our own project, but it was very hard to say no. So we decided to collaborate with three other local groups to make this one night event. It felt important. The collaborating organizations were:

- Newworld Theatre
- Jews for a Just Peace
- TCPS (Transformative Communities Project)

It seemed logical to collaborate with these three groups considering we were already working together on the *Us and Them* project. We were not sure if this would be a good or a bad thing - the timing, as well the collaborators being attached to both projects. Either it could be a way to really deepen the collaboration, but at the same time, would this

“exhaust” their constituency? In the end, the latter may have been the case for some of the events.

In August we were still getting requests from people who wanted to collaborate with us. We were also rapidly approaching the print deadline for the posters and postcards, which would include the schedule of events.

I met with an old friend of Headlines, Eric Wong, who was interested in bringing the events to a few First Nations communities across BC through *FNESC (First Nations Education Steering Committee)*. The problem to set up a mini-tour (for late December 2010) was the timing of initial discussions: during the summer. During this time, a lot of people were on vacation it was hard to contact key people at *FNESC* as well as in the communities that potentially would be involved in the project. I so wish we had more time! This never ended up happening, and in hindsight I’m not sure if we would have had time to organize another mini-tour. (The inquiry events in Metro Vancouver were a mini-tour in so many ways – and each performance had it’s own outreach process attached to it...)

Starting August, 2010 I also got some welcome help from Angela Sterritt (Outreach Assistant for the ***Us and Them*** project) to set up a few events, particularly in collaboration with *First Nations House of Learning, UNYA, KAYA, and the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre*. Apart from the initial set-up, Angela was helpful in getting the word out about the project in the communities she is actively connected to.

In mid-August, Seth Soulstein came on board as our Intern for the project. I am very grateful he was around at a time when my workload increased rapidly, as our first publicist left Headlines a few weeks prior to opening night. Before finding and initiating the new publicist, in the midst of the busiest time of the year, I had to take over some of the tasks. Seth helped me a lot in researching and calling new potential networks, and Erin Chen-ying Offer (Office/Production Manager) helped me to reach out to schools and unions in the Lower Mainland, to extend invitations to the inquiry events.

In the end, 149 organizations were super helpful in networking the events into their own constituencies. See the full list of networking organizations in appendix A.

Erin and I created a venue/event checklist so we were all on the same page. Trying to streamline all the details for the venues, and the involvement each sponsor had, was harder than I had thought, as there were specific requirements for each event. Having this in writing proved to be very helpful. See an example of the check list in appendix B.

As I mentioned above, each event was vastly different from each other – not only because the venue and community partner was different each night, but also because of the audience. Holding each event in a different place each night has both strengths and weaknesses. It did create a wide array of communities to reach into, but each night had its

own challenges. You can read more about all the events in David Diamonds report (find it here [http://headlinestheatre.com/past\\_work/Us\\_and\\_Them\\_\(inquiry\)/reports](http://headlinestheatre.com/past_work/Us_and_Them_(inquiry)/reports))

The basic strategy was the same for all events. While I promoted the shows from here and expanded our network, I also assisted our community partners to promote and bring their constituency to their specific event. There were many phone calls and meetings with all the sponsors throughout the process. I sent out a schedule (created by my predecessor Dafne Blanco and Gabriela de Lucca, a previous publicist at Headlines) called “*PROC Schedule*” - how to create a successful outreach and publicity campaign. As well, I provided outreach material: email blurbs, images, postcards, and posters. As the write-ups, quotes from audience members, articles, and radio-shows about ***Us and Them (the inquiry)*** started coming in, we were able to push each show even more. The partnering organizations were excited about the ***Us and Them*** project but found it hard to explain to people. Having testimonials became important when explaining what people had the possibility to engage in.

In addition to the distribution of material I also gathered pamphlets and flyers from several different community partners, to be presented at a resource table at all the events. See a few examples of the resources provided in appendix C.

See below for descriptions of the challenges and strengths during the outreach process for some of the events:

### **Oct 29, 2010 in Langley: Agriculture Workers Alliance and Langley United Church.**

Before Dafne Blanco, my predecessor, left Headlines she suggested a collaboration with the *Agriculture Workers Alliance (AWA)*. They're an amazing organization that works with migrant farm workers mainly from Mexico. David and I met with Dafne and Raul Gatica from AWA in July 2010 to discuss the details, including the possibility of English and Spanish translation during the event.

The idea was to invite farm owners and farm workers to the event. Dafne started outreach to the community, together with *Langley United Church* (the venue and co-sponsoring organization for the event). Considering Dafne had done this type of work for 6 years already, I mainly provided her with all the material she needed, as well as promoted the event on our end. In the end, the event was quite successful. *Langley United Church* organized volunteers to drive some of the farm workers to the event because they would have not been able to make it otherwise. Many farm workers live in small communities in and around the Lower Mainland and where the public transportation is limited.

Reaching farm owners was never an easy task and, as far as I am aware, there were no farm owners present. AWA had sent out invitations to several farm owners but of course, in the end, they have to attend voluntarily! This was one of the hardest tasks for several events throughout the series; how do you invite “the other”, whoever they might be? This being said, the dialogue that happened at this event was transforming for many people

present. A woman from the *Langley United Church* community came up to David after the event stating "I will never look at a blueberry field the same way again". Even if the farm owners were (probably) not present, a lot of consumers of farmed products were there.

### **Nov 3, 2010: Collingwood Neighbourhood House (CNH).**

*CNH* is a very busy house! It is built up of a very diverse community and so many active members in the community. I was very excited for *Headlines* to offer an ***Us and Them*** inquiry in this neighbourhood.

In September 2010 Alexis Seto, my main contact for the *CNH*, invited me to set up a table at the community *Harvest Fair*. There, I had the opportunity to talk about the ***Us and Them*** project and to get a feel for this very active community. One of the main struggles in Collingwood at this time, which engaged a big part of the community, was a campaign to keep the schools open.

Through the neighbourhood house, we connected with the local high schools, senior programs, ESL classes, refugee groups, the *Multicultural Artist Collective*, the community newspaper, and so on. The word was out there; many people heard it through several different sources but, in the end, this was one of the smallest events in the entire run.

Speaking to Alexis after the event, she was surprised at the small number of audience members. But, at the same time, a lot was going on in the community; the day before the event there was a big rally to save the schools, as well as a Small Grants Celebration. Some senior groups decided to attend our only matinee inquiry instead of the event in their own community; Collingwood's timing was not right for them, it being too late in the evening. Generally, events start at 6.30 at *CNH*, but we could not change the time due to streamlining the events. Alexis also mentioned that *CNH* could have potentially offered childcare, which would have made it easier for parents to attend the event.

The event was really powerful even though there were so few people, and there was an amazing response from the people in attendance.

### **Nov 10, 2010 at Calabash Bistro: Foundation Radio and Black Dot Roots and Culture Collective.**

*Calabash Bistro* is an amazing restaurant in the Downtown Eastside. *Foundation Radio* and *Black Dot Rots and Culture Collective* hosted the event On November 10, 2010. As their Facebook states: "*The BLACK DOT Roots & Culture Collective* is a community group of indigenous artists and professionals who are committed to sharing the stories of the "Black" experience through education, creation, and celebration."

*Foundation Radio* is an online radio station that plays Reggae, Hip Hop, Jazz, Soul, Afrobeat, and so on. Together the two groups, in collaboration with *Calabash* (they are all

connected), brought out a lovely crowd. Many people seemed to know each other; it was a very warm atmosphere. Being in a restaurant creates a warm, welcoming feeling, but it also has its challenges. I think there could have been more discussions between us and the venue beforehand, to discuss how to work in a restaurant setting. When do people have to leave the tables if they are not staying for the event? It is, of course, in the interest of the venue to sell food. But, at the same time, we had to ask people to wait to be seated, because people who continued to dine did not intend to stay for the show. It was a very busy evening and the event did not start on time. But when it finally did, it was a very profound and unique community dialogue.

### **Nov 6 & 13, 2010. Downtown Eastside:**

*Vancouver Moving Theatre's Heart of the City Festival* contacted us to collaborate on one event. This was perfect timing for their schedule and would make it even more accessible for the Downtown Eastside Residents.

Teresa Vandertuin (*Heart of the City's* Associate Artistic Producer) was a great resource for finding venues in the DTES to make an event very accessible to DTES residents. Several venues in the DTES are not accessed by residents. This generated discussions about how to either MAKE those venues accessible to residents in the DTES or to find a venue that is already commonly accessed by residents. In the end, we had three events in the DTES: *Calabash Bistro*, *the Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House*, and the *Interurban Gallery*. The last two events were well attended by both DTES residents as well as visitors to the neighbourhood.

### **Nov 18, 2010. Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre (VAFC)**

In August 2010, Angela Sterritt and I met with Program Director Clifford White at the *Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre*. We decided that one event would take place in the centre's *Simon Baker Room*. The original thought was that this performance would be part of VAFC family programming. But, after discussing the details further, decided with Clifford that this might not be suitable for small children accompanying their parents. Although *Headlines* shows are frequently attended by people of all ages, we thought it might be the wrong type of invitation. The family night at VAFC is a festive meeting with food and games. The inquiry event is a 2.5 hour event that investigates hard-to-talk about issues...

Shortly after our initial meeting, we also contacted *UNYA (Urban Native Youth Association)* to co-host this event. Carly Dickinson, the coordinator of *UNYA's MAC* program (*Music Arts and Culture Program*) engaged her youth as well as other *UNYA* youth and staff into the event. In case there would be triggering conversations at the event there was a counsellor from *UNYA* present at the event, but no announcement was made to make the entire audience aware of this. The *UNYA* youth had a private discussion beforehand about what to do if they needed someone to talk to during or after the event. To announce the presence of a counsellor at the actual event could potentially set a tone

of the event as “triggering”, when it may not be. As far as I was informed, there was ultimately no need for a counsellor.

### **North Shore Welcoming Action Committee:**

Through discussions about a potential *Theatre for Living* workshop in North Vancouver, I came in contact with Saba Golchin. Saba is the Program Coordinator for Get Connected Youth Program at the *North Shore Multicultural Society*. The Multicultural Society was definitely interested in collaborating on one of the inquiries, so Executive Director Elisabeth Jones proposed to involve the larger North Shore community. This is how the *North Shore Welcoming Action Committee (NSWAC)* came on board. *NSWAC* is composed of North Shore service providers who have come together in recognition of growing diversity within the North Shore communities, and the need to coordinate and collaborate to ensure the development of welcoming and inclusive communities.

Through the *NSWAC* program coordinator I communicated with the organizations attached to the program. In this way, we reached a big part of the North Shore. I also communicated with the *Capilano Student Union*, which was very helpful in getting word out to diverse student groups at *Capilano University*. It seemed like the word and interest for the event was out there. In addition to this, *NSWAC* had announced a photo contest entitled “*Picture Diversity*”, and the winner was presented at a reception in the same venue, just before the ***Us and Them*** inquiry started.

Unfortunately, the weather was not in our favour for the actual event and it proved to be a very large venue (a gym with a stage) for a very small crowd. Alerts about not driving due to bad road conditions (snow storm) made it difficult for many people to attend. The no-show rate was extremely high. A few people who didn’t plan on staying throughout the event ended up staying for the entire event, but it was definitely not an ideal setting. I can’t say if the weather was the single reason for this event not being so “successful” or not.

### **Vancouver Coastal Health:**

The very last event in the run was sponsored by *Vancouver Coastal Health’s* Anti-Stigma Initiative: a program within *Complex Mental Health and Addiction*. The Regional Director Heather Hay and I had an initial meeting to discuss how this could kick off their Anti-Stigma Campaign: to bridge the gaps between service providers, health care consumers, and the general public. Devon McFarlane, the Anti-stigma Coordinator, worked with *VCH’s* publicist to get the word out to their constituency. *VCH* is a massive service provider, with approx 60,000 employees. I am not certain if they were all contacted, but they did reach to all aspects of the Mental Health and Addictions part of *VCH*.

They sent out emails and made phone calls, constantly keeping me updated and asking for feedback. This was a very good collaboration. We all worked together to create a full house.



## In the end:

We're half way through the **Us and Them** Project. There were 20 inquiries in and around Metro Vancouver, 2 previews in Mission, BC and Powell River, BC. There were 149 organizations connected to the project in various capacities. 26 of these were Community Partners attached to at least on inquiry by working towards engaging their constituency into the events. We played to an average of 77% houses in the end.

During the run audiences had the possibility to sign up for a two day, very focused training in *Rainbow of Desire*, the technique that was used during the inquiries. 129 people signed up, 32 people applied, and 26 people participated in "the Viral Skills Transfer workshop". The idea is for the trainees to use their new skills to create their own **Us and Them** *Rainbow of Desire* event, and to keep Headlines informed of any events they do.

The training took place at CBC's *Studio 700* on February 19 & 20, 2011. Here is a quote from one of the participants, Sarah Van Borek:

*"Participating in the **Us and Them** Skills Transfer Workshop was a truly rewarding experience on numerous levels. The multi-layered approach to learning the process simultaneously from the perspectives of ROD participant, workshop participant and Joker-in-training provided a richness and depth in learning as much about the process and how to lead it as about ourselves, our own lives and the world around us. The remarkable group of people that Headlines Theatre brought together into the workshop made for an equally rich experience in terms of what each person also contributed to the concepts in the workshop, as well as personal and professional networking. I would highly recommend this workshop to other community-based artists and practitioners."*

On March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2011 I will meet with some of the trainees to help them with their outreach and promotional process.

To be continued...

Sincerely,



Liza Lindgren  
Outreach Coordinator  
Headlines Theatre