

Chapter 4 - *šxʷpaṁət (home)*¹

4.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with a thick description of *šxʷpaṁət (home)*, a forum theatre project in British Columbia (BC) and Alberta, Canada. After describing the project's process and story, critical discourse analysis (CDA) and thematic analysis findings are outlined. Analysis demonstrates the importance of identity, connection, cultural relevance and groundedness, and embodiment and emotionality within the play, the structures surrounding it, and indeed conflict resolution in general. Challenges that *šxʷpaṁət (home)* faced are also detailed. Following this, Galtung, Kahane, and Lederach's models of violence and conflict resolution are held beside *šxʷpaṁət (home)*, to investigate whether and how these models are inherent within the project and play.

4.2 The Project and Play

šxʷpaṁət (home) was a forum theatre play aimed at investigating barriers to Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadian reconciliation efforts and fostering change in participant and audience behaviours regarding Canada's treatment of Indigenous peoples. It developed from a month-long set of character development and co-creation workshops in Vancouver, Canada. The first workshop ran for one week in January 2017. Director David Diamond and the 15 participants, including both professional and amateur/community-based performers, engaged in dramatic activities, theatre games, and image work – using bodies rather than words to depict emotion – to investigate some of the “blockages” to reconciliation in Canada. The goal of this workshop was not to develop a story or even characters, but rather to “till the soil out of which the large play would grow” (Diamond, 2017, p. 7). Following this one-week workshop, seven

¹ Portions of this chapter have been reproduced for publication (Courtney, 2025).

participants were hired for the production process, which included creation, rehearsal, and performance. These participants, along with Diamond, associate director Renae Morriveau, and Indigenous support people, engaged in three weeks of character creation workshops, using participants' personal stories and identities, in conjunction with the themes identified in the initial workshop, to create their characters, relationships, and the storyline of the play. The Indigenous support people facilitated exploration of participants' identities and histories in safe ways. They provided culturally-relevant mental health support and facilitated Indigenous ceremonies and sharing circles where necessary. The play was performed in Vancouver in 2017 and toured through Alberta and BC in 2018, performing in urban and rural spaces and Indian Reserves, always in partnership with local community service organisations and local Indigenous support people.

šxʷʔamət (home) tells several interwoven and overlapping stories that explore the themes that emerged from the workshops. Lucas is an Indigenous man raised by adoptive white parents: Sarah, a reverend, and Doug/Robert,² a construction firm owner. They are well-meaning, but harbour deeply racist attitudes about Indigenous people. Lucas's friendship with Siya, an Indigenous woman, causes strife with his parents which leads to painful revelations about Lucas' Indigeneity. Siya's father, Joe, is a residential school survivor with significant trauma. Through the play, Siya and her friend Chase, a Filipina woman, protest the destruction the Kinder Morgan pipeline will do to Indigenous land and waters. Chase questions how she fits as an immigrant to stolen land. Vincent is an unhoused Indigenous man who works for Joe, struggles with alcoholism and other mental health concerns, and experiences significant racism from

² This character has different names in first and second run because there were different actors. The second actor was French Canadian, so his name was changed to reflect his French identity.

Doug/Robert. Throughout the play, all characters navigate their own stories as well as conflict with each other.



Figure 4.1: *šxʷamət (home)* characters. L to R: Lucas, Doug, Margaret, Siya, Joe. Source: *šxʷamət* Closing Night Webcast March 11, 2017, (32:52). <https://youtu.be/yoD6veo41QA?t=0>.

The production is performed from start to finish, unbroken, then again in forum style. In forum theatre, audience members are asked to intervene at moments where they “fully understand the blockages that the characters face...the blockages to true and honourable reconciliation, and...have an idea about how...[they] can work through the blockage” (Diamond, 2018, pp. 23-24). Practically, this looks like audience members stopping the action of the play, getting out of their seat, and replacing an actor on the stage to embody the character in a different way. Diamond is clear in his invitation to audience members that there can be no magic solutions: if an audience member is going to step into a character, they commit to stepping into that character’s worldview and working through the blockage without simply changing the character into a better person. Diamond describes the process as a circle: the characters and story are created from ordinary people, and then embodied on stage. Ordinary people in the audience

intervene in the scenes, bringing their own stories to the stage, then take these insights back into their own lives and communities to make change. For Diamond, exo- and macro-level structural change is important but cannot happen without micro-level individual behavioural change: “it is our patterns of behaviour that create and sustain those structures. And if our patterns of behaviour can create and sustain them, our patterns of behaviour can change them” (theatreforliving, *Theatre for Living and Social Change*, 2020, 3:14).



Figure 4.2: ṣx"ʔamət (*home*) audience intervention. L to R: David Diamond, an audience member, Lucas, Siya, Chase. Source: ṣx"ʔamət (*Home*) 2018 Webcast, (49:27), <https://youtu.be/UNvOF8sb3-A?t=0>

4.3 Research Process and Findings

This research project asks, “what underlies the power of theatre in conflict resolution?” It also queries if and how conflict resolution theories can be seen within applied theatre projects. For a full overview of interviewees and the materials collected for this case study, please refer to table 3.1 (page. 41 of this document). Several major themes emerge from critical discourse and thematic analyses of these interviews and materials: the importance of identity and colonial history in understanding and addressing conflict, the value of building and fostering connection and grounding the theatre work in personal and cultural relevance, the importance of

embodiment, and the value of emotion, including humour and pleasure. Supportive factors, including breadth and variety of tools and people, the development of tangible life skills, and safety also emerge. None of these themes are discrete: they all impact and rely on one another, and many are both pre-requisites for successful, impactful applied theatre and valuable outcomes of the work. Nevertheless, they are detailed below in a discrete fashion. Galtung, Kahane, and Lederach's models of violence and conflict resolution are present in this work, evidenced by the relationships built within the project, the integration of many different, often opposing, perspectives, the desire to address violences of various types and at various levels, the heavy focus on cultural violence as the root of all other forms of violence, and the importance of a strong community support structure.

4.4 Critical Discourse Analysis – Historical Context

In analysing the materials collected, it is clear that individual identity and experiences were vitally important in how the participants and audience members engaged with *šxʷəamət* (*home*). The initial workshop participants brought their own stories to the project, drawing on them to create their characters, and spent considerable time reflecting upon their own relationship to reconciliation. In the developmental workshop, when asked about some of the blockages to reconciliation each participant sees and experiences, themes such as white guilt, intergenerational trauma, historical and contemporary forced removal of Indigenous children from their communities, shame, Indigenous impatience, anger, and resentment were all apparent (Diamond, 2017). Within the context of Canada's historical and ongoing genocide against Indigenous peoples, these themes are vital to understanding how reconciliation can and should work. The themes differed based on who expressed them and who was in the room. For example, Margaret Roberts, the woman who played Rev. Sarah Walker in the play, is herself a Reverend.

The Indigenous participants struggled with her presence in the early stages of the workshop, which she understood and “graciously absorbed” (Diamond, personal communication, May 21, 2024). Throughout the workshop, she grappled with what it meant to be a representative of the religious institution that caused such horrific trauma in the form of residential schools and tried to make amends while recognising that she herself was not part of this history, igniting feelings of guilt and frustration. This internal dilemma formed the basis of much of Sarah’s character. But this relationship between Roberts and the Indigenous participants also sparked important conversations about the role of the Church in reconciliation: can reconciliation happen within a Christian framework? This conversation happened several times with audience members during the forum theatre portion of the developed play (Diamond, 2017) and was a direct result of Roberts’ presence in the early stages of the project.

Many of the themes that emerged in workshops also emerged from audience members during the performance’s forum processes. Here, again, the identity and experiences of the audience members mattered in how they understood and engaged with the play. For example, in Calgary, one of the two shows was sponsored by the University of Calgary’s School of Social Work. The audience was predominantly social workers and social work students, and the interventions reflected this: most of the audience members replaced Indigenous characters to show them how to behave ‘properly’ according to their colonial view of ‘proper’ society (Diamond, 2018). One of the audience members commented that they found incredible value in replacing a character and learning from the cast with whom they interacted on stage. This same person also admonished Diamond on Facebook for “silencing” an Indigenous woman who wanted to intervene. Diamond explained that she wanted to give her suggestion from her seat rather than embody the character, which is not how forum theatre works; she chose to stay in her

seat and not move forward with her intervention. Diamond also expressed that he chatted with the woman after the show, and that she was not at all upset. The person thanked David for his answer, and claimed to see the value in embodiment. However, there is a striking contradiction here. This audience member claimed to have learned much from directly engaging with the actors but then tried to speak for an Indigenous person he felt was treated unfairly by being asked to do exactly what he apparently found so much value in – and, as it turns out, she did not feel she was being treated unfairly. As a social worker, advocating for Indigenous people is an important skill, but the way this audience member went about it further reinforces what was seen on stage at that show: the social workers’ drive to “[replace] Indigenous ‘clients’ and [show] them ‘what to do’” (Diamond, 2018, p. 61). This shows the importance of words and actions being placed in the context of identity. It also demonstrates Kahane’s view that we must all recognise our own role in a conflict: here, the audience member’s whiteness is part of the problem. If the person who wanted to give an intervention but declined to do so on stage had been white, would this social worker still have felt it necessary to speak for them? Would an Indigenous social worker have felt the need to speak for this audience member? This behaviour mirrors the white saviourism and silencing that Indigenous people in Canada, and indeed, oppressed populations all over the world, regularly fight against, particularly within the helping fields.

Another way identity was important to the show was in the decision surrounding who would Joke the forum. In forum theatre, the Joker is the person who facilitates the forum portion of a production and asks questions of both the cast and audience to dig deeper into what each scene and intervention means. In *šxʷʔamət* (*home*), there was debate about who would Joke the show: David Diamond, who has the skill and experience necessary but is white, or Renae

Morriseau, the associate director, who is an Indigenous woman but lacks skill and experience as a Joker. Diamond was aware that he represents the oppressor, especially in a show like *šxʷ?amət* (*home*). However, Joking is a difficult job, and the value of the forum can be diminished if the Joker does not do an adequate job. Diamond, Morriseau, and the cast decided together that Diamond would be the one to Joke, and the Indigenous cast affirmed they would support him if audience members attacked him for taking on such a clearly power-laden role in a play that is meant to be about undoing some of that power. In this way, the Indigenous cast did exactly what the play was meant to do: used their privilege as an oppressed population in determining who can and cannot speak with or for them (Gladwell, 2013).

This attention to identity and colonial history is important in conflict resolution. Galtung argues that cultural violence is often what legitimates structural and interpersonal violence, and that is very much the case in the Canadian context. The outcome report of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) argues that the British Crown and Canadian Government engaged, and continue to engage, in cultural genocide by eliminating all aspects of Indigenous culture and identity. Only by supporting Indigenous people to reclaim their culture can true reconciliation happen. Moreover, both Kahane and Lederach focus on the interpersonal nature of conflict through challenging conflicted parties to recognise their own role in a conflict. This requires a deep investigating into one's own identity. Here, CDA of *šxʷ?amət* (*home*) demonstrates these theoretical frameworks.

4.5 Thematic Analysis Through Conflict Resolution Models

CDA demonstrates that identities were vitally important to how cast, audience, and Theatre for Living staff interacted with *šxʷ?amət* (*home*). The thematic analysis confirms these findings, with *connection* being the strongest theme to emerge. Other themes, which can also be

seen throughout the CDA, such as cultural relevance and groundedness, embodiment and emotion, breadth and variety of participants, and the development of skills emerge as well.

4.5.1 Connection and Relationships

According to Lederach, broken or damaged social connections lead to conflict, and restoring and (re)building connections within and across identities and power dynamics is essential for reconciling and working through conflict. Strong relationships also provide the strong platform needed upon which to scaffold ongoing community building, leading to positive peace, in Galtung's words. The importance of connections and relationships here mirrors Kahane's view that stepping into the game and working together, even with people we distrust, is essential for holistic conflict resolution.

For Diamond, and indeed many applied theatre artists and activists, building and fostering connection is vital. Performance artists and theatre scholars Aslan et. al. (2020) assert that *šxʷamət* (*home*) is evidence that “theatre is, at its best, about relationships—human patterns of behaviour. So, we make plays about the patterns of behaviour and allow that human interaction to teach us about the need for structural change” (p. 152; see also Conrad, 2014). Diamond argues that we cannot solve problems like genocide and reconciliation, as in the Canadian context, without a collective, societal response. Echoing Kahane, Lederach, and Galtung, this requires finding a way to work together, without laying blame or creating hierarchies of oppression, but recognising the humanity in each of us. Activist work, and the use of art within it, is

about taking responsibility collectively...for growing so much violence. And while of course individuals and groups must be held accountable for their actions, we're never going to deal with the issue if we continue in the binary [i.e. oppressor/oppressed] path

we're on, which neglects to ask how and why we end up manifesting so many various forms of violence (Diamond, personal communication, May 21, 2024).

4.5.1.1 Relationships amongst cast. Engaging with one another in a collaborative, respectful way required strong relationships between cast members, particularly when cast members found themselves on opposing sides of an issue or were of different identities. A notable example of this tension was Rev. Margaret Roberts, who played the role of Sarah as highlighted above. Given the focus on residential schools, (intergenerational) trauma, and the destruction of culture that the Church brought to Indigenous peoples, many of the Indigenous participants were uncomfortable with a religious presence. But, according to Diamond,

then they got to know who she was. [...] She didn't run, nor was she part of, a residential school. [...] and she's there in the workshop for very good reasons. [...] And I think there was a tremendous amount of respect for her and her courage that grew in the room. [...] There are priests and nuns who did unforgivable things, let's be clear, and they need to be held accountable. But that doesn't mean that everybody who is in the church today is personally responsible for that (Diamond, personal communication, May 21, 2024).

Here we can see how the process of creating theatre is important. By asking participants to bring their own identities, histories, wants, and needs to the workshop, and using these to generate the content out of which an eventual play will be built, the participants learned from each other and built important relationships. Participants are also given space to explore their own identity and relationships with other people and broader structures. People on various sides of a conflict can express themselves in ways they may not otherwise be able to, using their bodies and energy rather than words. They can connect on a deeper, different level than a simple conversation.

In his interview, Seward discussed at length how he is often surprised by how many people, including other *šxʷʔamət* (*home*) participants, are still unaware of the history of residential schools and other aspects of Canada's genocide against Indigenous populations. For Seward, being able to help educate these people about what happened to him, to his people, and the struggles they still face, was very powerful:

we're starting to share our history, you know, what we've lived and what we've experienced and what we know, what we can share, you know, what we know of our parents, our grandparents, how they lived. And some of us are finally, are finally starting to share that because [...] who wrote the history books? It wasn't us (Seward, personal communication, June 4, 2024).

For other participants, learning directly from Indigenous participants changed their perspectives significantly. Dr. Tom Scholte, who played Doug, sees *šxʷʔamət* (*home*) as a turning point in his life, where "it's led to a greater level of activism in [his] own life today and just Indigeneity on the university campus where [he] work[s]." He states that he has "a different lens than [he] had to look at the world before [he] did *šxʷʔamət* (*home*)."⁶ (*theatreforliving*, 6 *šxʷʔamət home Cast and Audience Speak*, 11:10). In both cases, Scholte reflects on the attitudes that he and other settlers hold toward Indigenous people which lead to the cultural violence that caused, and continues to cause, such immense harm. Through structural violence, the education system and governance structures of Canada work to hide the history of Indigenous genocide, in many ways perpetuating it, and barring access to true reconciliation; the direct violence that Indigenous people experience is the outcome. Participating in *šxʷʔamət* (*home*) allowed Scholte to undo some of the violence toward Indigenous peoples that he has internalised through his interactions

with these structures and other settlers. All three aspects of Galtung's model are present in these two quotes.

Exposure to different people and worldviews can also build and strengthen relationships outside of the peace work itself, potentially preventing future conflict and providing support if and when conflict arises again. This speaks to Lederach's view that conflict resolution requires a strong societal foundation upon which to rest. For example, Asivak Koostachin, the actor who played Lucas, connected Seward with his agent, which has allowed Seward to expand his professional acting work. In return, Seward was able to secure a seat for Koostachin in the carpentry school at which he teaches, providing him with skills that can help him supplement his acting income. Seward also developed a lasting relationship with Joey Lespérance, who played Robert, and learned valuable acting skills from him. These relationships that were built within and outside the theatre work demonstrate that, in Kahane's words, the chance to work with people who are not like you, who you would not normally interact with, who may represent that which you fear, distrust, or despise, is powerful. In building connections and relationships with these others, we can strengthen our communities, working through conflict and preventing future conflict.

4.5.1.2 Relationship between actor and character. In applied theatre, actors usually play characters rather than themselves, allowing them to step into another person's world view, experiment with and practice new behaviours, and imagine what the world could look like if the situation was different. In *šx^wpa^mət (home)*, having a strong relationship between actor and character was important for grounding the work in participants' lived realities, presenting real barriers to reconciliation to the audience. The participants chosen to cast the play created the characters through sharing their own stories and relationships to the theme, stories they had

heard from others, and their own thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about the issues, challenging them in themselves and each other. For Diamond, this is the most important part:

If the characters don't know what they are thinking, feeling, wanting, afraid of, etc., in each moment, then what they are saying, where they are moving, has no meaning. The MOST important thing for me is the relationships [...] to one's self and the other characters. Everything else flows from there (Diamond, 2018, p. 17).

For Seward, his character Joe was in many ways like him: a carpenter who runs a construction company that contracts day labourers out to other companies; a father; a recovering alcoholic;³ and a residential/day-school survivor. However, there were important differences between the two. Joe had not confronted his own trauma. He resisted therapy and healing and refused to share his past with his daughter Siya. He cut himself off from his Indigenous culture and language, and became angry and volatile when Siya pushed him to help her recover this part of her own history. While this aspect of Joe was not Seward's story – Seward has processed a lot of his own trauma and regained his relationship to his culture – it is many Indigenous people and families in Canada.

Similarly, Scholte says of his character, Doug,

I certainly didn't relish having Doug's attitude towards the world because there are things about his attitude that I really disagree with, and made me uncomfortable. But [...] he was created, raised in a certain milieu; he has his own reasons [...] And so trying to make Doug as real, as human a person, and to deeply understand what his beliefs are anchored in, what is the lived experience that his world view is anchored in? (Theatre for Living, *6 šxʷ?amət home Cast and Audience Speak*, 6:21)

³ Shout-out to Sam Seward who is 42 years sober!!

Scholte understands the culture in which Doug was raised because he was raised in the same culture. He understands the perceptions of Indigenous people, and the racism that goes along with them. While Scholte does not hold all of the same views as Doug, he was able to channel that part of him that was like Doug to respond as Doug would to an intervention.

Connection to one's character allows participants to investigate their own thoughts, feelings, histories, and behaviours through the safety and distance created by performing a character rather than themselves. It can also allow them to rewrite their own story, telling it in a way that fits within their own personal and cultural understanding of themselves. Moreover, it allows audience members to see themselves in the characters, as these thoughts, feelings, histories, and behaviours are ultimately rooted in a shared cultural and historical context. This is important in relation to Galtung's model of violence, which sees culture as the ultimate root of most violence, and in relation to Kahane's stretch collaboration, which challenges us all to recognise the role we play in creating and, ultimately, addressing conflict.

4.5.1.3 Connection to the audience. In forum theatre, audience members engage directly with the actors on stage, replacing them to redirect the play to make some sort of change. This is valuable for audience members, who can step into another person's worldview and learn from it, but also inject something of their own worldview to reimagine a new future. As he facilitates, Diamond reminds audience members that if they intervene in a scene, they must do it from a place of understanding – they can identify and resonate with some aspect of that character's story or the conflict – and they also must step into the character's world view. Scholte reflects that Diamond often says that every one of these characters "is doing these things for their own 'good' reasons. They think they're doing something that is right," so audience interventions must understand and represent "what [the characters'] beliefs are anchored in, what is the lived

experience that [their] world view is anchored in?” (theatreforliving, 6 šxʷpaṁat home Cast and Audience Speak, 6:44). The goal is not to make the character a better person, or magically solve the problem, but to help that character, and others in the story, move through some kind of blockage. Intervening to show the character how to behave properly or redirect the story in a way that is inconsistent with the character’s world view, as seen in the Calgary show described above, shows that the audience is disconnected from that character, and the intervention will be much less effective than one that is truly grounded in the character’s world view. Stepping into a character’s worldview can create a strong sense of empathy, allowing an audience member to understand what it might feel like to be in that character’s situation, even for a moment. This can broaden the audience members’ own worldview and allow them to see conflict from someone else’s perspective.

For Diamond, all interventions are valuable because “the psyche of society has actually come on to the stage” (Diamond, personal communication, May 21, 2024) and until harmful beliefs are challenged, even at the micro-level, reconciliation will never be achieved. The connection between the audience and characters drives the interventions, and the connection between the individual people on stage – the audience member and the actor engaged in a theatrical relationship – is what generates thought, reflection, and, hopefully, behaviour change in everyone participating in or witnessing the interaction. Sometimes there will be interventions that are tone-deaf or entirely problematic: for example, one man intervened in a scene to replace Siya and began taunting Joe, asking him about “getting on his knees and sucking the priest’s cock” (Diamond, 2018, p. 29). This man appeared to be white and was bald, giving the appearance of being a “skinhead”, or white supremacist. However, when he identified himself by name, which was clearly a Coast Salish one, Seward, who played Joe, recognised that what

sounded like an incredibly racist comment was more likely a projection of the internalised racism and trauma that so many Indigenous people carry. In this case, Diamond stopped the intervention before it could progress any further and asked the man about his intention. The man said that he did not believe Indigenous people were telling the whole truth about residential schools.

Diamond then asked the character Joe what happened for him in the intervention, and he tearfully said, “he pissed me off.” The audience member, also tearful at this point, apologized, saying he never meant to hurt anyone, and the two men shook hands and hugged. Diamond then turned to the audience and asked how many have done something like this: had great intentions but just made things worse? Many hands went up (Diamond, 2018, p. 29).

There are many layers of audience connection here: between the man and the story, between the man and the character Joe, between the man and the actor Sam, between the man and his fellow audience members, and between all audience members and the story in recognising that *all* of us have made things worse while trying to help. Moreover, many of these connections shifted once the man’s Indigeneity became clear, demonstrating the importance of identity and context in applied theatre, and indeed, conflict resolution more broadly. To use Galtung’s words, what appeared to be direct violence from the audience member to Seward was actually a manifestation of cultural violence; the attitudes held by audience members and Seward simply by looking at a man who appeared to be a white supremacist could have led to direct or cultural violence against him had Diamond not stepped in and revealed the man’s Indigeneity. And the structural violence that creates these attitudes, beliefs, contradictions, violences was, in a sense, upheld by a powerful white man using the structural violence that gives him power to his advantage to defuse the situation.

Indigenous oppression and history are increasingly part of Canada's popular and national discourse, education systems, and media. As such, from a CDA perspective, *šxʷəamət (home)* speaks to experiences and topics with which most people growing up in Canada are familiar, regardless of their viewpoints on the topic. This is not to say that everyone in the audience has the same understanding of residential schools as Seward and his character Joe, or the same tense relationship to religion as Roberts and her character Sarah. But we can find overlaps, however small, where we can resonate with those characters. This is the foundation of Kahane's stretch collaboration: we must stretch our understanding of a conflict and find shared experiences and goals upon which we can build. In communications with Diamond, audience members consistently highlighted the power of this shared sense of understanding, reflecting on how multifaceted and interconnected reconciliation must be. That ability to resonate, to find *something* that we can share with the character, can build profound empathy and recognition of humanity within others, no matter how different they are. This is vital for moving toward a real reconciliation in Canada, and in conflict resolution in general.

4.5.1.4 Connections outside of the theatre space. Lederach argues that conflict resolution programs must be scaffolded onto a strong community structure that can continue working through conflict, and prevent future conflict, long after a single intervention or conflict resolution program ends. During *šxʷəamət (home)*, Diamond was adamant that the show be built in collaboration with community supports. During the 2018 tour, each show was sponsored by at least two organisations, one Indigenous and one non-Indigenous. These organisations distributed outreach materials to community members, provided a local support person in addition to the one on staff with Theatre for Living, provided land acknowledgements, and connected audience members with community services after the show. These partnerships were essential for

providing access to communities and local legitimacy. In Calgary, for example, the Indigenous partner organizations were very uninvolved; as a result, there was no one to give the land acknowledgement. Diamond had to do it himself, without a firm understanding of all the Nations who reside in treaty seven where Calgary sits, and without a pronunciation guide. Meanwhile, the non-Indigenous partner, the University of Calgary, did very little outreach, and so the first showing was predominantly social workers and students from the School of Social Work, which resulted in an insensitive audience. Once again, drawing on CDA and in line with Lederach, identities matter in terms of which community structures are part of a conflict resolution process.

Partnering with local organisations also allowed for connections and relationships to be built across organisations. In several cases, Diamond would introduce organisations working in complementary service areas within the same community. Sometimes those relationships formed and lasted, other times they did not, and in most cases Diamond does not know the extent to which they persisted after the show moved on to the next community; but in the moment, building the spiderweb of connections built capacity and expanded and extended organisation capabilities. Working with community members who perhaps they previously would not can have a profound impact on both service providers and beneficiaries. It also spurred some people to begin working with or for local organisations. One audience member stated that after watching *šxʷpamət* (*home*), they began fundraising for their local Indigenous Nation, and had befriended an unhoused man in their community, helping him connect with organisations and find the resources he needed to get off the street (audience member post-performance feedback email).

The theatre event itself also created connections between audience members, both within the theatre space and outside of it. In Vanderhoof, a small community in central BC, one man intervened in a scene seemingly just to ask for help. It was -17C, and the man was unhoused.

Diamond stopped the intervention to ask the audience if they knew this man and how it is possible that so many did yet he was sleeping on the street in these frigid temperatures. He was offered support from a community organization, and Diamond turned it into an important moment for growth, stating that “part of reconciliation [has] to be the end of this kind of poverty, of homelessness” as the room went quiet (Diamond, 2018, p. 45). This example reflects Diamond’s own stance, and arguably shows how he could use his position in the theatre space to make a point he felt was important. However, regardless of intent or action, the very hosting of a theatre event brought people together into one space, where an obvious problem – homelessness – could be identified and addressed.

After each show, information and resource guides were given to audience members, as well as information about a Facebook group where audience members could choose to keep the conversation going and build relationships after the show ended. They could also opt in to a contact list where audience members could share their personal contact details with others, building more one-on-one supportive relationships. Moreover, at the end of each webcast, Diamond read aloud the locations of IP addresses that connected, and they truly came from around the globe. Several of these IP addresses were watch parties, usually based in Universities in parts of the world where internet is not always accessible, for example, Ghana and India. This helped to build relationships and connections amongst people in those watch parties, as well as in the Facebook group and/or contact list from across the world. Here, Bronfenbrenner and Wallerstein’s systems analysis are important: audience members were able to build connections with each other within a micro-level space and with service providers and educational institutions at the meso- and exo-levels. Connecting people across the world demonstrates

integration of the macro-level: while theatre itself may not solve macro-level problems, it can build macro-level relationships.

4.5.1.5 Connection to Self. While relationships and strong connections between participants, audience members, and community members broadly are vital for conflict resolution programs, ultimately any conflict resolution process must work with, and sometimes challenge, people's own understanding of themselves and their relationship to the conflict. This can be seen in origins of *šxʷəamət (home)*. *šxʷəamət (home)* was the spiritual successor to a project called *I Have to Tell my Story* run by Theatre for Living in 2013. This play focused predominantly on the impact of residential schools on Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians. It explored actors' and characters' self-perceptions, the attitudes they had about others, and how others perceived them, asking how these perceptions and attitudes impact our relationships. *I Have to Tell my Story* was remounted several times in partnership with various Indigenous organisations in Vancouver, and further calls for theatre of this nature led to the creation of *šxʷəamət (home)*.

šxʷəamət (home) continued *I Have to Tell my Story*'s focus on relationships and identity. The play asked questions about what it means to be Indigenous: we are all indigenous to somewhere, but does that make us Indigenous? What does it mean to be a settler? Are we still settlers if we are immigrants? How can we, or should we, engage with Indigenous people, their symbols, their land, and their culture? Whose responsibility is it to apologize and make amends for residential schools? And how do others view us, as white people, immigrants, Indigenous people, religious adherents, substance users, victims/survivors, and/or unhoused people? These attitudes and frustrated needs are, in Galtung's view, the roots of cultural and structural violence, which are themselves the root of the direct violences explored throughout the development and

production of *šxʷ?amət (home)*. The workshop participants and cast interrogated these questions during development, and the characters interrogated them on stage each night. Audience members who intervened interrogated them in character and as their own person, and audience members watching walked away with questions about themselves. In audience comments and reviews online, countless people highlighted the deep reflection and unsettling of self that *šxʷ?amət (home)* awoke in them, highlighting Kahane's third stretch: step into the game and recognise how we each play a role in a conflict.

4.5.2 Groundedness and Cultural Relevance

Galtung argues that culture is ultimately what underlies most violence and conflict, and drawing on Fanon's understanding of culture, is the preferred mode of resistance for colonised peoples. Thus, to address any conflict, we must address deeply embedded cultural beliefs. This may mean challenging them or perhaps reinforcing or reclaiming those cultures that were lost through colonization and genocide. Lederach further argues that conflict resolution must be grounded in local communities to resonate with those experiencing conflict. Similarly, it is important to acknowledge the vital role that groundedness and cultural relevance played in the success of *šxʷ?amət (home)*. Here, "grounded" means that everything about the production was deeply embedded within those involved, centering their own world views and experiences, in line with feminist and critical race theories. The story and characters are grounded in the actors' own experiences and identities, meaning they represented things on stage that were very real to them. The play was grounded in the culture of the people watching it, meaning it was something with which Canadians who grapple with reconciliation every day can resonate. And the play was grounded in the culture and land upon which it was performed. The community outreach, support people, partner organizations, and sage for smudging were all sourced from the specific location

for each performance. This allowed the audience to feel that the show was truly part of their community, and they could continue the work the play starts in their own community after the show moved on. For Seward, interventions being grounded in the audience members' own experiences was also beneficial in understanding that person, and the world outside the theatre space. The interventions allowed Seward, Diamond, and others to see how people truly feel, what they are being taught, and develop a better understanding of the attitudes people hold toward reconciliation (Seward, personal communication, June 4, 2024).

Throughout the play, Diamond used the phrase “true and honourable reconciliation” many times, but he never defined what that meant. According to Aslan et. al. (2020), this was by design, as it allowed the actors and audience members to define it for themselves. The main theme of the play was itself interpretable and meant different things to different people. This allowed the audience to internalize the themes in ways that resonated with their own experiences and identities, while expanding their understanding of the world in which they live through witnessing others' stories. With that said, however, there were aspects that Diamond made sure were not left up to interpretation, particularly cultural relevance.

To speak directly to the theme of reconciliation in Canada, everything about *šxʷ?amət* (*home*) was culturally relevant: to Canada, to Indigenous people, and, where possible, to the specific Nations the cast represent or the land upon which the play was shown. Diamond hired Indigenous service providers and contacted Indigenous leaders to recruit Indigenous workshop participants and cast. For the tour, David Ng, Theatre for Living's outreach coordinator, researched each community on the itinerary, allowing them to target the outreach at that specific population. Local service providers sponsored the show, helping with advertising and volunteer recruitment, and distributing low-cost or free tickets to those living in extreme poverty. Ng also

connected with local Indigenous leadership to advertise the show to their own people in culturally appropriate ways. The idea of touring the show was itself culturally grounded: many people from across BC and Alberta had either heard about or seen the 2017 show in Vancouver and wanted it to come to their community so that those who could not travel could see it.

Actor identity was important to the story and the characters they play. In *šxʷəmət* (*home*), Seward (2018) and Sam Bob (2017) were both Coast Salish, as was their character Joe; Madeline Terbasket was part Okanagan, and their character Siya was Okanagan on her mother's side; Asivak Koostachin and Nayden Palosaari were both Cree, as was Asivak's character Lucas (Palosaari's character Vincent did not identify his ethnicity in the story, beyond being Indigenous); Mutya Macatumpag was born in Canada to Filipino immigrant parents, and her character Chase's Filipina identity was vital to the storyline. Between the 2017 and 2018 runs, Tom Schulte, a white man who played Doug, left the show, and was replaced by Joey Lespérance, a French-Canadian man, and the character was subsequently renamed Robert to reflect his French identity. Margaret Roberts, who played Rev. Sarah, was herself a Reverend, and her own relationship to reconciliation is a tense one, as was Sarah's. For Seward, this identity-based relevance was important. In his interview, he reflected on having been cast to play Indigenous and even Mexican roles in other projects and having no concept of that identity. This makes him uncomfortable and often feels tokenistic. With *šxʷəmət* (*home*), he knew that he was cast specifically for his cultural identity, and that the character and storyline would reflect not just his Indigeneity, but his specific Coast Salish identity, which allowed him a deeper connection to the story, other cast, and audience (Seward, personal communication, June 4, 2024).

Cultural relevance can also be seen within the props used on stage, and the symbolism they carry. One of the most important symbolic props was that of the medicine pouch. At one point in the play, Siya gave it to Lucas, which offended Chase – she believed she should have one too as she was indigenous to the Philippines; it was also what sparked the fight between Lucas and his parents regarding his identity, and the subsequent fight Siya and Joe had with Lucas’ parents about their parenting. When asked what the pouch means during the 2017 webcast, the audience gave answers like mother, identity, healing, culture, roots, belonging, soul, and intervention (1:107:12). There are other symbols in the play too: Siya’s desire to go up the mountain protest the Kindermorgan pipeline was symbolized by a sleeping bag that she gripped tightly while fighting with her father Joe. The audience in the 2018 webcast saw the sleeping bag as resistance, action, back to her roots, refusing to let go, solidarity, and sovereignty (1:32:15). While symbols and metaphors are important for creating meaning in any art, they are especially important when a play focuses on something as deeply personal as Indigenous trauma and reconciliation.

The storyline itself was also profoundly grounded in themes that are relevant to Indigenous history and reconciliation. This was perhaps clearest in Joe and Siya’s relationship. Joe was a residential school survivor who had his culture and language stolen from him; Siya was a young Indigenous woman desperate to connect to her own history but felt she could not do so without her father’s help. Joe wanted to protect Siya from the trauma he faced and did not want to harm her with his own memories and trauma of his past; Siya wanted to know her father on a deeper level and share his trauma if it meant discovering herself. Neither recognized that the other’s perspective was simultaneously valid and problematic, and they were asking too much of each other. This is a common story for Indigenous people in Canada. Similarly, the storyline of

Lucas being adopted as a baby by a white, Christian family and having his identity stolen and hidden from him is all too real for the thousands of Indigenous children impacted by the 60s scoop and ongoing Millennial scoop. For Seward, theatre is a powerful way of having conversations like this. In his interview, he reflected on a friend who, despite being 66 years old and growing up near an Indian Reserve in Ontario, did not know about residential or day schools, nor that Seward had attended one. His friend told him “you should have told me. [Seward] said, how would I bring it up?” (personal communication, June 4, 2024). Culturally grounded and relevant applied theatre can create space to bring it up.

4.5.3 Embodiment and Emotion

Many conflict resolution projects or programs rely on capacity-building, microfinance, (instrumentalised) education, western-style psychotherapy, democratisation, and structural adjustment. These types of programs focus on intellectual or action-based outcomes. While local people participate in these programs, to varying extents, they are rarely permitted to fully sit in their bodies, working through the emotion, psychological harm (Galtung, 1969) and trauma of a conflict, and “experiment[ing] a way forward” (Kahane, 2017b, p. 43) with others. One of the powerful things about applied theatre is that it can help us bypass the cognitive parts of our brains and instead engage with emotion. People who have experienced trauma cannot begin to address that trauma until they work through the emotions and physical sensations associated with it (Van der Kolk, 2014). This is evident in the following quote from Palosaari when asked if he agreed with an intervention from an audience member who replaced Vincent:

the intellectual side of me says yes. But the emotional side is no. And with Vincent by the time this occurs, he’s pretty much made up his mind what he’s going to do [which] just reinforces the emotional side of it all. Because in my experience of people that

I've seen, and my own self, it happens in the emotion (theatreforliving, *šxʷpaṁət 2018 Webcast*, 1:47:25).

Embodiment and emotion emerged as important themes during the thematic analysis of *šxʷpaṁət (home)*. According to Diamond, theatre “is an emotional, psychological space” (Diamond, Personal communication, May 21, 2024). Workshop participants, cast, and audiences were all asked to engage with, challenge, and embrace deep emotions, all of which are vital for working through a conflict, healing from trauma, and moving forward after a conflict has ended in a cohesive manner. Embodiment in the context of theatre can mean physically engaging the body in a role or to process an emotion, or the external representation of an internal state of being. While all theatre is embodied, and that embodiment can result in reflection for actors and audience members as a powerful part of storytelling, embodiment in applied theatre is intentionally used to foster learning, attitude and behavioural change, and somatically process emotions in both actors and audiences. In the case of *šxʷpaṁət (home)*, both types of embodiment were apparent in the workshop participants and cast: the audience responses to witnessing the embodied action happening on stage speak to how powerful it can be; and, because *šxʷpaṁət (home)* was forum theatre, audience members were invited to embody their perspectives and emotions by intervening directly in scenes. Thus, emotion was both a tool utilized by the production to foster change in the audience, and an outcome, with audiences and cast experiencing strong emotions throughout. Moreover, the cast members felt that they learned more about themselves and reconciliation in Canada through the process.

4.5.3.1 Embodying characters and emotion. For Madeline Terbasket, playing a mixed-race Indigenous woman struggling to connect with her Indigenous roots allowed them to feel “much more present on stage because [the character] was so deeply ingrained in [their] body, that [they]

didn't have to remember lines, [they] just remembered who [they were]" (Theatre for Living, 6 *šxʷ?amət home Cast and Audience Speak*, 3:38). Terbasket's character Siya had her own beliefs, but in many ways they mirrored Terbasket's, which was reflected in Siya's anger at having to explain racism to white people, her pain at being denied access to her father's language, and her sense of injustice at the Kindermorgan pipeline. Diamond argues that physically embodying our perspectives, thoughts, feelings, and relationships is essential, stating that it is "very different than just sitting around talking about [an issue], or reading a pamphlet or a book about it...that embodiment changes the chemistry of how we sit inside the issue" (Theatre for Living, 5 *Theatre for Living and Social Change*, 5:00). Dr. Judith Marcuse, former director of the International Centre for Art and Social Change at Simon Fraser University, and a previous participant in one of Theatre for Living's annual trainings, agrees, arguing that embodied practice can reveal truths that are otherwise hidden through the relationships formed between two or more bodies acting together (Theatre for Living, 5 *Theatre for Living Alumni Speak*, 2:33)

Embodying emotion can be difficult and, in some cases, even dangerous for an actor. Many of the cast, especially the Indigenous ones, struggled with the emotionality of the play, in part because of how they historically were emotionally and bodily controlled through colonial, structural, and cultural violence. For example, Seward was resistant to "sitting in [the] deep emotional reality" (Diamond, 2018, p. 16) of his own and Joe's story. After having his emotions policed for so long, as an Indigenous person, a man, and an Indigenous man, emotion feels inaccessible for him, even after years of trauma therapy. This resistance became part of the development and production of the play: he was asked to tap on his knees when he felt himself losing control and wanting to run away from the emotion. To the audience, this underscored the emotion his character was feeling, but the direction also helped him ground himself and stay

present while engaging with a part of himself that feels unsafe (Diamond, 2018). Palosaari's constant movement on stage was similarly meant to help ground him as he worked through Vincent's emotions. This deep, embodied connection to the actors' own sense of safety allowed them to process some of what they were feeling and generate some beautiful art in the process. It also reflects Diamond's view that

human beings don't think in words, we think in metaphor, we think in images, and that's the reason art, which is a language of image [...] reaches deep inside us. And so art is a very powerful tool for social change because it communicates with people at a non-intellectual level, which is the level that I think that motivates us actually to change our behaviours [which] is the foundation of what changes the world (Theatre for Living, 5 *Theatre for Living and Social Change*, 1:31)

Giving participants a way to express and process emotion in a way that may feel safer than enforced trauma therapy from a western perspective or intellectualizing it through disembodied discussion, as often happens in post-conflict societies, and learning skills to manage emotions when they become unbearable can be a valuable part of moving on from conflict and living with the lasting trauma.

4.5.3.2 Audience and embodiment. The value of engaging with someone else's embodiment extends to audiences too. This is essential for full conflict transformation: everyone, even those who view themselves as external to a conflict, must step into the game and participate fully in the process. CDA revealed that audience members often used action-oriented words to describe what the play inspired in them: thinking, capacity to shift minds and hearts, disruption, transformation, educate, progress, awareness, thought provoking, reflection, insight, motivates change, and participation are just some of the words in these responses. For many audience members, these

experiences were inspired by watching the actors embody their characters' perspectives to work through conflicts and barriers, and inspired changes in themselves. One audience member's comment beautifully demonstrates the power of applied theatre as compared with reading historical documents or attending educational seminars and classes for truly understanding a conflict and ways of getting through it:

Over the past few years, I have informed myself about the history of the settler relationship with indigenous [sic] people. I have read the TRC Report and the Indian Act. But it wasn't until I attended Theatre for Living's *šxʷ?amət* (*home*) and felt the everyday struggles of those on the stage—both cast and audience members—that this became more than intellectual knowledge, and I began to understand how challenging and necessary is this process of reconciliation (audience member post-performance feedback email).

When asked during a performance what blockages to reconciliation the audience sees in the characters, the words they gave were often emotional: shame, guilt, fear, hope, trauma, helplessness, forgiveness, and blame all featured in the 2017 webcast (38:15). These are emotions with which we are all familiar and can help build a sense of connection and empathy with the characters on stage. For one audience member, seeing and feeling these emotions from the characters is due to the unique way theatre goes beyond words, allowing people to understand what others may feel or think without necessarily having that experience themselves (audience member post-performance feedback email). According to Kahane, this ability to stretch our understanding of conflict and conflict resolution by recognising another person's perspective or sharing their trauma, even if it is different trauma, is essential for building the relationships Lederach values and moving forward together.

More impactful than watching a deeply embodied performance is participating in one. Diamond says that it is common for an audience member to approach the stage and then freeze because they had an idea but when asked to embody it, it becomes so much more real. He argues that it is easy to suggest from the safety and comfort of one's seat what a character could or should do; but when asked to take the place of that character and step into their worldview the intellectual idea they had clashes with the emotional reality of doing something that seemed easy. Seward has a similar perspective: for him, when an audience member fully commits to getting up on stage and doing something, he knows that is what the person truly believes or feels. It comes from the heart, because the person is potentially opening themselves up to being or feeling unsafe (Seward, personal communication, June 4, 2024). Public commitment is essential for changing attitudes both internally and in like-minded others watching the public commitment (Vaidis & Gosling, 2012). This is where, as Diamond puts it, the psyche of society comes on stage, and regardless of the intention or outcome of the intervention, everyone learns from it, including the audience member on stage and the cast (Diamond, 2018).

4.5.3.3 Workshop participants and cast emotion. During the initial project workshop. participants identified emotions such as guilt, trauma, shame, impatience, and anger that they felt while thinking about, and working toward, reconciliation in Canada. These themes were clear in the play: each character felt some or all of these emotions, often in conflicting ways. For some of the cast, embracing these emotions was difficult, as with Palosaari and Seward. For others, being able to express emotions was freeing, but also frustrating. Terbasket struggled with a sense of feeling like they needed to educate white people about Indigenous issues night after night, but also felt empowered by being able to speak their truth. In all cases, physically processing

emotion through movement, as well as reliance on culturally appropriate support workers and healing or cleansing ceremonies was valuable.

In his interview, Seward spoke at length about how emotional *šxʷamət* (*home*) was. He felt the emotion of the audience in their words, body language, and energy, and in some cases took the brunt of their emotion when they projected it onto him. He recalled one example where an audience member intervened to take the role of Vincent when Joe was trying to convince Vincent to quit drinking and find steady employment. The audience member began screaming, swearing, and throwing things at Joe. She cried that Joe had left her at residential school, and the staff hurt her. Although this was not part of the storyline, something triggered this audience member, who began projecting her own history onto Joe, and Seward was forced to take the abuse. He stayed in character, telling the woman he never left her, that he was always with her and always would be, with one mind and one heart, and began speaking to her in their language. This calmed her down, and she took his hand, led him to the couch on stage, apologized, and wept. For Seward, as an actor, this exchange is part of his job. But as an Indigenous man who survived day school and the 60s scoop, this woman's outburst is intimately familiar. He found it to be extremely emotionally taxing, but also powerful, connecting with another Indigenous person whose story he understands, and is grateful that he was able to be part of her – and other audience members' – healing journey (Seward, personal communication, June 4, 2024).

In watching the play, it is clear that the emotions are real for the actors and characters, allowing transmission of the themes and symbols on stage into the real world. In the 2017 webcast, an Indigenous woman intervened in a scene where Joe and Siya fought about Siya's desire to learn her father's history and language while Joe shut down and eventually explodes that he must protect her. This Joe instead calmly told Siya that she wanted to share their history

and culture, but was scared: he did not want to burden Siya with the pain of what he went through. He also explained that he did not know their language or history, because it was stolen from him, but was willing to learn alongside Siya. He said that those who came before the settlers and those who survived colonisation were warriors, and that he will continue fighting. Sam Bob, who played Joe in the 2017 run, can be seen crying off stage. When Diamond asked him why, he said that he so deeply recognized what this audience member said: they do not want to pass their pain on to their children, and instead hide their emotions in poor coping mechanisms. Terbasket also cried and said that being told their people were warriors was so different from anything they had ever been taught in the colonial school system (2:10:49-2:20:46). Connecting across generations, genders, Nations, and personal stories created a strong relationship, even for a moment, that facilitated healing for all three people.

The emotion in the cast and characters was palpable throughout the play. But the emotion the audience felt and displayed while watching and participating in the play is no less powerful.

4.5.3.4 Audience emotion. CDA showed that audience members used many emotional words to describe the play and how it made them feel: heart, edge, honesty, compassion, provocative, moving, satisfying, challenging, harrowing, sad, vulnerable, brave, sensitive, blessed, safe, bitter, gratitude, love, inspiring, uncomfortable, healing, and empathy. In the webcasts, the audience reactions were audible and, at times, visible. They gasped, sighed, sobbed, ululated, and laughed, and even through a computer screen, the tension was palpable at times. Here I share my own experience watching the play as part of my research:

I, too, felt a range of emotions watching the webcasts. When Doug/Robert tells Joe to “stop sending me these Native guys,” I felt extremely uncomfortable and angry on Vincent’s behalf, and frustrated that this man has an Indigenous son yet still speaks to

and about Indigenous people in this way. When Vincent screams “you’re not my father” and “I’m not your problem anymore” while crying at Joe, I wanted to crawl through my computer screen and hug him. When I finally realized, after watching both webcasts several times and reading the outcome reports and an audience member in the 2018 webcast says it outright, that Vincent intends to kill himself off stage, I got goosebumps and had to stop the video. I was filled with such a profound sense of empathy, injustice, anger, and sadness. And when, in the previously described intervention, the woman playing Joe told Siya that Indigenous people were not victims, they were warriors, I cried alongside Bob, Terbasket, and the audience member. I am not Indigenous. I never went to residential schools. I have never struggled with alcoholism, or had to tell my child that I cannot share my history with her. But I share many of the experiences of child abuse, suicidal ideation, and living with addicts. I have enough recognition with these actors and characters to feel the deep emotion of the play.

My experience supports Diamond’s perspective that we need not overlap completely with someone’s experiences and world view to connect with them and build a web of relationships and support. Whether watching applied theatre, or engaging directly in a forum or other interactive theatre, “these performances all resist the idea of 'witness' in the passive sense, and invite embodied (sometimes viscerally charged) participation on the part of an audience...sharing in the ritual, feeling its energies, and being (hopefully) inspired towards action” (Aslan et. al., 2020, p. 158).

4.5.3.5 Pleasure. Conflict resolution is difficult, and must attend to complex, often painful topics. But it also can be a space for finding pleasure and joy: whether that is finding the

proverbial silver lining, reminiscing on a past before conflict took hold, reclaiming lost or stolen cultures and stories, playing silly games to decompress or distract from the ongoing trauma, processing emotions in a way that feels safer, or imagining a new future. Pleasure is also an important part of learning in making difficult topics accessible (McKinnon, 2015), and can help challenge the attitudes we hold about others and the frustrations and contradictions we feel in navigating cultural and structural violence.

šxʷəamət (*home*) engaged with pleasure through strategically utilizing humour and enjoyment alongside, or as a counter to, heavy emotionality. Many of the audience comments highlighted how funny the play was at points, and in watching the webcasts, audience laughter could be heard throughout. The manner in which the characters spoke, for example Joe's stereotypical Indigenous accent when making a joke about the ancestors blessing his card game, or the sarcastic way that Lucas said "for, or against?" to Chase and Siya about their petition regarding the Kindermorgan pipeline while they both recoil as if it should be obvious, were genuinely funny. But humour was also juxtaposed with truly painful topics throughout the play. The snide tone in Siya's voice when she said "Hello Reverend Walker" to Sarah, or the way she mispronounced the Squamish word for "dad" after Joe relented to her demands to learn some of his language, brought the emotional, painful subtext of the storyline into sharp focus, allowing the characters and audience to access topics that hurt them in a safe way.

Diamond also used humour throughout his Joking. The introduction of the show is relatively straightforward; he explained the impetus for the show, where it came from, how and why it was created, and explained how the evening will unfold. After the play concluded, Diamond once again took the stage to introduce the forum portion of the show. Here he engaged with humour to break the tension in the audience and make the members feel safe. He was very

clear that the story is heavy and difficult, possibly even triggering, and debriefed some of the major themes in the play. He then gave his invitation, explaining that audience members can shout stop and take the place of a character to change the scene, the actors will improvise, and “...we’ll see what happens!” (with a chuckle and big smile). He reminded the audience that he could see their faces, in a very funny way, and that they needed to participate for it to work. He then had the audience engage in a silly physical warm-up, which the audience enjoyed. The energy in the room shifted dramatically. He then re-grounded the audience in the content of the play and set up for the forum.

Throughout the forum, Diamond’s Joking and the actors’ improvisations continued to juxtapose difficult content with humour and pleasure. When Diamond paused the action and asked the characters to use their bodies to show the strongest emotion they felt or to state their deepest thought, it was quite often funny, breaking the tension and using humour to poke fun at something that is heavy and painful. For example, a woman who replaced Sarah explains to Lucas that she wanted to raise him as a good Christian. Lucas then listed off all of the Ten Commandments she had broken that day alone, which the audience found hilarious (1:59:30). Diamond acknowledged it in his Joking, articulating how we do not want reconciliation to hurt, so we make jokes and deflect (2:05:33). The actors and Diamond also used physical humour to process the emotions on stage. In the 2017 webcast, an audience member intervened to replace Joe while he and Vincent fought in the park. The new Joe told Vincent that he wanted to fight *for* him rather than fight him and offered to bring Vincent home with him to spend time with his family. The intervention was extremely emotional, with the new Joe begging Vincent to let him help, and Vincent sobbing that he always hurts everyone. After Diamond ended the scene, Palosaari was visibly crying; he physically shook his body in an exaggerated manner to release

the emotion and flitted across the stage like a fairy to break the tension (1:37:25). The blending of humour with tension and profound emotion helps to create the safety and comfort needed to address the blockages to true and honourable reconciliation referenced throughout the play.

4.6 Supportive Conditions

Connection, groundedness and cultural relevance, embodiment, and emotion are the themes that were most evident when thematically analysing *šx^wʔamət* (*home*), both in terms of what was necessary for the success of the project and the lasting value and impact. Other factors that support the success of the project also emerge, include breadth and variety of people, the reliance on and generation of tangible life skills, and the importance of safety. These are important in conflict resolution. Lederach argues that we must engage a variety of people in a variety of ways that resonate with them in order to build the strong spiderweb of relationships that support conflict resolution. Kahane views experimentation with and practicing of skills that can lead to a resolution of conflict and animosity as essential for moving forward together. And in any peace work, safety and trust are of the utmost importance.

4.6.1 Breadth and variety. For Diamond, having a variety of people involved in the workshops, creation process, and cast is vital to creating a well-rounded, grounded, and emotional play. Hiring a diversity of actors before there is even a story for a play is difficult. But it is necessary for ensuring that whatever play emerges comes from many perspectives and lived experiences, and that there are actors who can represent the issues from these experiences and perspectives. In this way, diversity creates the play and allows for a deep resonance with audience members and within the cast, creating the strong relationships that are so vital to conflict resolution.

4.6.2 *Tangible life skills*. The goals of conflict resolution programs are usually broadly the same: bring together those involved in a conflict, build education and skills, empathise with and recognise the humanity of others, and move forward into a post-conflict society that is, hopefully, fundamentally different from the conflict context. Audience feedback indicates that *šxʷəmət (home)* facilitated these goals effectively. One audience member told Diamond she planned on integrating some of Theatre for Living's exercises into the work she does with understanding the tension between Indigenous people and non-Indigenous Canadians. Someone who had previously been part of one of Theatre for Living's trainings in Milan used the skills in his own theatre work and found that they helped him as a facilitator. And after the 2017 show in Vancouver, the Vancouver School of Expressive Arts Therapy created a three-day intensive on reconciliation issues that is now part of its regular programming (audience members, post-performance feedback emails).

Beyond these actionable skills, dozens of audience feedback emails highlight how *šxʷəmət (home)* forced them to challenge their own internal biases and blockages to true and honourable reconciliation, shifting their attitudes and compelling them to educate themselves and have hard conversations with their loved ones (audience members, post-performance feedback emails). This extends beyond the audience as well: several of the cast said in their outreach videos that participating in the workshop and play changed their perspective on reconciliation. In line with Kahane, Seward argues that true and honourable reconciliation cannot happen unless everyone, especially the white settler population, recognizes their own role in the process (Seward, personal communication, June 4, 2024). Deeply learning about these issues, reflecting on one's own position, and learning conflict resolution and/or theatre skills that can be used in one's own life and work, is where the applied theatre, particularly forum theatre or theatre for

development forms, really shines. Being in a space together, using embodied art, connecting with others on a deeply personal, emotional level, and seeing one's own perspectives, wants, needs, and concerns reflected fosters a stronger push for change than simply talking about an issue or learning about it from pamphlets or textbooks.

4.6.3 Safety. Conflict resolution work requires that people be vulnerable, interact with those who may have harmed them, and engage with strong emotions. This requires a strong sense of safety and support. In *šxʷ?amət (home)*, safety was fostered throughout. In his invitation to the audience, Diamond was clear that there is no way to do an intervention “wrong,” and audience members were also reminded of the support people on site if they needed someone to talk to, smudging, or brushing. On the tour, in addition to the Indigenous support worker employed by Theatre for Living, local support workers from each community were retained, providing ongoing support for those who need it during or after the play. Cast also participated in talking circles and other culturally appropriate healing and grounding activities. On tour, cast stayed in hotels two to a room, but there was a floating single room, so everyone got at least a couple nights where they could be alone and decompress how they needed to. Diamond describes the importance of safety very eloquently:

Whose emotional mechanism does any actor have? They don't have somebody else's emotional mechanism. And that's one of many reasons why actors [...] spend a lot of time in the bar, right? Because the actors' job is to do this, is to pry their chest open in public every night. [...] So you provide a structure in which there's as much safety as you can create doing that. (Personal communication, May 21, 2024)

In their interviews, registered counsellors Caley McConaghy and Anthony Goodwin both spoke of the “window of tolerance,” a concept drawn from psychological trauma theory to

describe the range of optimal emotional functioning for humans, where people are challenged to be uncomfortable without being overwhelmed or flooded with emotion (McConaghey, personal communication, August 2, 2024; Goodwin, personal communication, May 13, 2024). In drama therapy, this window of tolerance is often referred to as “aesthetic distance” (Landy, 1983), which is that place where someone can use characterization to express something or process something safely, without becoming overwhelmed by the content. Theatre researcher Julie Salverson (1996) refers to a “‘container’, a space or a ‘gap’ [which] holds the circle of knowing open and invites a current that prevents steering a straight line through the story” (p. 184); this keeps storytellers safe while engaging in an emotionally difficult topic. Again, we see this in *šxʷpaṁət (home)*, particularly in Diamond’s rule that actors can play characters that are very much like them, but are not them. With careful handling, this can help create the safety that is so necessary to the success of applied theatre.

Engaging with emotion can feel unsafe for many people, so finding that range of functioning or window of tolerance, where the emotion is real but is felt by the character rather than the actor, is important. With that said, when the actors create the characters themselves, rooted in their own experiences and perspectives, finding that delicate balance is complicated, requiring significant expertise and care on the part of facilitators and often previous healing on the part of actors.

4.7 Challenges to *šxʷpaṁət (home)*

šxʷpaṁət (home) was absolutely a success based on testimony from audience members and cast, financial and outreach metrics, and legacy. With that said, however, the project faced some challenges, including access to people willing and able to participate – mostly in terms of racial diversity in workshop participants and audiences – and power dynamics.

4.7.1 Participation. While breadth and diversity in terms of cast/workshop identities were important to the success of the show, breadth and diversity in terms of audiences was a significant challenge. In many communities, the audience was substantially comprised of Indigenous people. Diamond believes, based on conversations with partner organisations, this is because often settlers do not believe that reconciliation is our responsibility; it is an Indigenous issue and so Indigenous people are the ones who should attend performances like this.⁴ In other communities, Indigenous audience participation was difficult to secure, as it was in securing workshop participants and cast at the very beginning of the project. Diamond's partners told him that many Indigenous people do not trust reconciliation projects because they often recreate cultural, structural, and direct violence through "an invitation to assimilate more deeply" (Diamond, 2017, p. 6). In Nelson, BC, the Sn̓ɬay̓čkstx (Sinixt) Elders declined to participate in outreach for their communities, because their Nation was at the time locked in a battle with the Government of Canada and Supreme Court regarding their legal status and felt the optics of participating in a reconciliation program run by a white man were problematic. In terms of recruiting participants for the workshop and cast, getting non-Indigenous people of colour to apply, particularly immigrants or first-generation Canadians, was difficult. In some cases people legitimately are unaware of the tense relationships in Canada; for others, they feel an intense pressure to assimilate into Canadian culture and play the part of a "good, appreciative immigrant" (Ng, 2017, p. 1) by not getting involved in contentious political and social issues.

In all cases, absence of any demographic is noticeable and problematic: if different sides are not stepping into the game, reconciliation will never happen. Kahane and Lederach both argue that relationships must be built, stories shared, attitudes changed, and accountability taken

⁴ I would also add that at least some settlers (misguidedly) do not feel that they should participate in a show like this as they should leave the space for Indigenous people who have been harmed and need to heal.

on all sides for any change to occur. Absence of any demographic also makes it difficult to address the attitudes, contradictions, and behaviours that underlie the historic and ongoing violence Indigenous peoples experience. Lack of engagement can be seen as a demonstration of how safety and groundedness can contradict each other: in order for the story to be relatable, and for the actors to improvise with interventions in a way that works toward connection and healing, the show must be grounded in all of these different perspectives; but if it is too grounded, it may not feel safe for people to participate due to their own racism and ignorance, unresolved trauma, or precarity in society. Refusal to engage is also a valid form of resistance against colonial structures (Coulthard, 2014). This may present a challenge to all three conflict resolution models: they all, to varying degrees, center culture and personal connection to a conflict as a way to move through the conflict. A delicate balance of connection and distance must be struck.

Audience participation was also difficult to balance in some cases. According to Seward, far more white people intervened in scenes than did Indigenous people, unless they were in a community that was predominantly Indigenous. While white perspectives are valuable and welcome, Indigenous people have truths and histories that must be shared, and their interventions were often profound and extremely moving. For Seward, the interventions were very different when they were from settlers: they were more often from a perspective of saving Indigenous people, centering their own white guilt, and belying their own racist attitudes toward Indigenous people (Seward, personal communication, June 4, 2024). Seward distinctly recalls the Calgary shows as being very difficult for him and the other Indigenous cast members for this reason. As a result of the obvious coloniality in the room, the few Indigenous audience members were reluctant to participate.

4.7.2 *Power Dynamics*. From a post-modern perspective, power dynamics are everywhere and exist between all people, structures, and systems. This is even more pronounced in conflict situations. The process of developing ᓄᓂᓐᓂᓐ (*home*) and the production explored many of these dynamics. One clear manifestation was in terms of race: Diamond is an “older white guy” (Diamond, 2017, p. 28), creating, directing, and Joking a play about reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians. Diamond is “not naïve. It is impossible for [him] to not be a 63-year-old white male walking onto the stage. [He carries] the symbolism and the reality of the colonizer” (Diamond, 2017, p. 11).

The role of the Joker is itself a powerful one as well. For better or for worse, Theatre for Living’s process is largely the same, regardless of the theme, and is based on Boal’s well-researched and established Theatre of the Oppressed (ToTO) (Boal, 1974).⁵ The Joker’s role is to facilitate the forum, guiding the actors and audience members through improvisations and engaging the cast and audience to make sense of what they see on stage. But if someone’s actions contravene the process, what should the Joker do? In some cases, Diamond lets it happen: in Penticton, for example, one woman intervened not so much to impact the story or try a solution, but rather to soapbox for 15 minutes about Indigenous history and genocide. While this outburst does not further the storyline or benefit the cast or audience, Diamond also felt that he could not cut her off, because as an Indigenous woman, she has been silenced her entire life. In other cases, he takes a firmer hand, like disallowing audience members to give their solution from their seats.

⁵ In practice, Theatre for Living’s forum theatre process is nearly identical to Boal’s ToTO model. The biggest difference is in intention: in Boal’s model, the oppressed audience members can intervene to replace a character who is being oppressed to work through ways of emancipating and liberating themselves; he calls this “rehearsal for the revolution” (p. 122). While Diamond initially used this model, he states that he increasingly found that the line between oppressor and oppressed was not clear. Thus, he invites audience members to replace *any* character with whom they can identify, whether oppressor, oppressed, or somewhere in between or beyond.

One exception to this was a child, who came down but panicked when she had to get on stage. Diamond let her tell him her idea then used it as a discussion point with the audience. His perspective was that we can make exceptions for the young ones, but the adults must put in the work. There were also situations where no one intervened in a scene. While he will never force anyone to come on stage, he will ask the audience if they are sure there is nothing that needs to change about this scene, and remind them that their silence in the theatre space is representative of the silence in society. This is an interesting use of the Joker's power: on one hand, if the audience does not see an issue, then is it his place to push them to find one? On the other hand, if there is an issue and the audience does see it, perhaps they need a push or reminder that this is a safe space in order to find the courage to intervene. On those occasions when nobody is willing to engage, or the interventions are repeatedly problematic, the Joker must decide how to proceed. In the case of the Chetwynd show, there were only two interventions in the whole play, the first a magic solution and the other deeply racist. Diamond ended the forum and had the cast sit on the stage and discuss the issues with the audience in more of a talk-back format. While some people valued it because "people who never speak got to speak" (Diamond, 2018, p. 49), the value of embodiment and emotional engagement was lost.

There was also an interesting cultural and racial power dynamic on the part of audience members. How much of someone's experience must another person share to step into that role? While the show was cast specifically along gender and racial lines, the forum asks audiences to suspend reality and focus on the themes and experiences that we share. If we are waiting for someone to share 100% of a character's experiences, then we will never get anywhere (Aslan, et. al., 2020; Diamond, personal communication, May 21, 2024). Dr. Sarah Woodland attended a showing of *šxʷamət* (*home*) in March 2018, and at first was uncomfortable with Diamond

stating that audience members could replace any character they wished, regardless of identity. This “[brought] to the surface all [her] fears around misrepresentation, cultural appropriation, and recolonization” (Aslan, et. al., 2020, p. 152). However, she quickly understood why this was the case, and in speaking with Diamond after the show, learned that it is usually settlers who have this fear; Indigenous people tend to understand why the intervener’s race, gender, age, or other social identity do not matter. And yet, at least one showing had a group of high school students walk out because they disagreed with the idea of white people stepping into the role of Indigenous people (Diamond, 2018). Much like the social worker in Calgary described above, this act of resistance, which is in many contexts extremely valuable, is part of the problem with reconciliation that has led to the need for *šxʷəamət* (*home*): a group of young white people, with the best of intentions, have spoken over Indigenous people who understand and value the connections being built in the theatre space, committing further cultural violence. Kahane’s stretch collaboration suggests that this kind of conflict occurs because we do not listen to others, instead focusing on what we *think* others need or want; we must truly listen and be open to other perspectives, while asserting our own, in order to move through this kind of blockage.

4.8 Conflict Resolution Models

CDA and thematic analysis of *šxʷəamət* (*home*) demonstrate that colonialism, relationships, cultural and personal groundedness, emotion, and embodiment are all vital to understanding how the project functioned, both for audiences and actors. The conflict resolution models and theoretical frameworks discussed in the literature review are important in understanding the value of *šxʷəamət* (*home*) and how these themes manifest. Systems theories and Galtung’s typologies of personal, structural, and cultural violence appear here, showing how violence against Indigenous peoples in Canada and reconciliation exist at multiple levels and

therefore must be addressed at multiple levels by all people – in this, Bronfenbrenner and Wallerstein’s systems theories and Kahane’s stretch collaboration are also important. Violence against Indigenous people in Canada is rooted in settler culture, takes the form of cultural genocide, and is predominantly resisted through a reclamation and reassertion of Indigenous cultures. Moreover, Lederach’s spiderweb model of conflict resolution and community building can help us understand how connections and relationships must be built in order for change to happen, and demonstrates how the outside always invades in applied theatre. Finally, some language borrowed from drama therapy, aesthetic distance, can help reconsider some of the challenges and contradictions highlighted above.

Diamond’s circle analogy, where participants and audiences bring their perspectives to the stage, engage with them, and take them back out into the real world to affect broader social change, shows how all systems – micro, meso, exo, macro, and even chrono – must interact for any kind of change to happen (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The process of making the play, the way it is delivered, and the content itself are rooted in the lived realities of workshop members, which are shaped by all five systems; the audience members also bring their own lived realities in, which are likewise shaped by all five systems. In any theatre, but especially in applied theatre contexts like forum theatre, the play and forum become a microcosm of what is happening in the “real world,” and the audience members must take what they have seen, learned, and felt in the play back out into the “real world” with them to effect change. However, Diamond argues that the work is done primarily at the micro and meso level: “theatre is not good at structural change...theatre is the most powerful when it’s dealing with human relationships” (Diamond, personal communication, May 21, 2024). After witnessing and engaging in the play, individual people can make change within themselves, their families and social groups, place of

employment, and maybe larger community; each of these can ripple out to their own relationships and networks, and eventually, over time, maybe systemic change can happen. In this way, applied theatre represents a grassroots community-building and conflict resolution method. In the case of *šxʷʔamət* (*home*), the legacy of settler colonialism, including the foundational coloniality of our Constitution and governance structures, and the damaged nation-to-nation relationship upon which Canada was meant to be founded, were interrogated.

The chronosystem, the passage of time, is also important here: Canada today looks very different than it did when Diamond founded Theatre for Living in 1982 – the year Canada repatriated its constitution, created the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (“Charter”), and revamped its criminal code. Since then, residential schools have closed, Indigenous representation in the Canadian prison system has spiked, the definition of Indian Status has changed multiple times, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples investigated harms committed, Prime Ministers Jean Chretien and Stephen Harper formally apologised for residential schools, Indigenous children have been over-represented in the foster care system (although changes have been made to child protective services protocols to address this problem), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has run its course and 13 of the 94 calls to action enacted, The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples has been “implemented” in Canada (although not well), and conversations about race, settler colonialism, genocide, and Indigenous trauma have significantly changed, with more people recognising the problems – although a surge in right-wing politics and extremism is forcing many of these conversations and efforts back out of the mainstream. In many ways the conversations in *šxʷʔamət* (*home*) are easier, and in many ways, harder than they would have been in the past.

One of the reasons Diamond shifted Boal's original ToTO model to the process he currently uses, which is very similar but with a broader intention, was because he disagreed with the oppressor/oppressed binary Boal saw in the Brazilian context in which the form was created. Both EST and Galtung's typologies of violence support this sentiment. Within *šxʷ?amət* (*home*), it is easy to pinpoint moments of oppression: when Sarah took the medicine pouch away from Lucas; when Doug/Robert fired Vincent for smelling like alcohol; when Joe lost his temper with Siya for asking him to share his culture with her; and many more. These were moments of direct, personal violence, where one person is committing harm to another.

However, from a post-colonial and anti-colonial analytical perspective, it is less easy to identify any one person as strictly an oppressor:⁶ Sarah was raised in the Church, and both Sarah and Doug/Robert were middle-aged white people who grew up in a time and cultural hegemony where Indigenous people were barely considered people; Joe was a residential school survivor who had suffered significant mental, physical, and sexual violence and had struggled to get help for it, and had to raise a young daughter who had a very different sense of self-worth as an Indigenous person than him as a result of shifts in the Canadian milieu. This represents both cultural and structural violence. The experiences the characters had are representative of the experiences that most Indigenous people in Canada have or are at least familiar with. These experiences are deeply rooted in the Canadian political structures and legal systems: as just one example, despite the Canadian Constitution being rewritten in 1982, with section 35 being added to specifically address the oppression against Indigenous peoples and the Charter being added to recognise the rights of all people, including Indigenous people (S. 25), section 91(24) of the

⁶ Boal himself recognised this when he left the Brazilian context and began working in the Global North. In Brazil, totalitarian state violence against an Indigenous population created a clear oppressor/oppressed binary, but his own mindset on this binary shifted when he was faced with the types of complex hierarchies and relationships Diamond grapples with in much of his work (Hamel, 2013; Emert & Friedland, 2011).

constitution continues to place “Indians and land reserved for the Indians” under federal control, and the Indian Act continues to regulate nearly every aspect of Indigenous identity and life.

Discrimination against Indigenous people continues to be extremely common in Canadian culture: in the workforce, housing markets, media, and education systems, and calls for recognition of Indigenous self-government and autonomy continue to go largely unanswered.

The trauma that residential school and 60s scoop survivors experienced continue to harm them today, and intergenerationally harms their children and grandchildren in ways that may never be undone. Non-Indigenous Canadians often hold deeply rooted prejudices and misbeliefs about

Indigenous people, fostered by our government and education systems, and feel that Indigenous people get special treatment that white people do not, instilling a subjective sense of oppression.

All of the oppressions, objective or subjective, against all characters and the people whose stories are represented on stage, exist at the micro, meso, exo, and macro levels, and are all examples of cultural, structural, and often direct violence.

CDA revealed that identity was a major component in how people engaged with *šxʷ?amət* (*home*). This can be seen in the workshop participants’, actors’, and audience’s stories. While Diamond argues that the actors must have a deep understanding of who their character is from their own lived experience, for audience interventions, it is less important that the intervener has the same identity or experience as the character; what matters is that the intervener understands something about the blockage or violence they are seeing on stage, and has an idea of how to solve it from within that position. This is a very postmodern feminist perspective (Alcoff, 2005) that invites people to intervene from their own horizon, acknowledging that their worldview and experiences may differ from those on stage and that we cannot and should not speak for The Other, but recognising that there are some areas of overlap where we can begin to make inroads

into empathising and identifying with that character (Conrad, 2006). Kahane's stretch collaboration says something very similar: we need not fully understand, agree with, or even like the person with whom we must work; but we must find ways of working toward a shared goal, which means finding things on which we *can* agree and relate. While we can never fully understand what it is like to be someone else, and the line where we must step back and admit that this is not our own story to tell or battle to fight is often shifting and uncertain, we can recognize our own role in a situation and our own place in relation to the other, and build relationships and connections across difference.

In speaking about the value of embodiment, Seward suggests that getting up on stage to physically replace a character and put an idea into action is much more difficult than simply stating the idea from the audience, but is more meaningful because it requires a public commitment to it. He argues that this is the same for government reconciliation programs and supports for Indigenous people: the government says that it is going to change policies or increase the budget for Indigenous and Northern Affairs, or that lives are improving for Indigenous people living on reserve, or apologies for historical harms committed by previous governments; yet, as an Indigenous man, he rarely sees any actual commitment to making these things happen or to improving Indigenous lives (Seward, Personal communication, June 4 2024). The relationship between Indigenous Nations and the settler Canadian State continues to be one of conflict. In this, as well as in Diamond's assertion that there is no oppressor/oppressed binary, Kahane's (2018) stretch collaboration appears. In order for any change to happen, regardless of which level of system or which type of violence is being enacted, everyone must step into the game and commit to working together to find a solution that benefits everyone.

There are ample examples of this within the play: Vincent saw himself as a victim, and to a great extent he was, but he also must take responsibility for his own alcoholism and allow those who love him to help him; Siya saw Joe as being closed off and unwilling to discuss his past, while Joe saw Siya as idealistic and naïve, but both must recognise that the other has a valid point and that they cannot move forward with the kind of relationship they want without each other. Within the structure of the play, this need to step into the game and work together is also evident: when the audience refuses to engage, as in Chetwynd, the forum turns into a facilitated conversation and much of the value of the art is lost; when partner organizations disengage unexpectedly in outreach, audiences are one-sided, as in Calgary. And when Indigenous people feel uncomfortable engaging in a project about reconciliation run by a white person, white people feel that reconciliation is an Indigenous problem, and newcomers refuse to engage so they look like “good, appreciative immigrants” (Ng, 2017, p. 1), nothing ever changes.

One of the fascinating, yet difficult, aspects of any community development or peace work is that the outside always invades: methodologically speaking, it is impossible to isolate single variables or control for confounding variables when working with complex human behaviours. Lederach’s (2005) spiderweb model harnesses this, arguing that, in addition to all the relationships and connections that must be built for any program to be successful, it must be scaffolded onto existing structures. *šxʷ?am̓ət (home)* did this in many ways. In outreach, for example, Ng relied on local leadership structures to help find participants for the workshop and cast, as well as to bring the show to their communities. In some communities, *šxʷ?am̓ət (home)* was brought in to be shown as part of existing reconciliation projects.

Aside from these intentional linkages between the show and the world outside the theatre space, there were several cases of unintentional impacts. For example, in St. Paul, 202 people

showed up – 144% of house capacity – in honour of Colton Boushie, whose murderer had been found not guilty the day before.⁷ During the 2018 webcast, a large number of audience members had come straight from a protest against the Kindermorgan pipeline – the same pipeline Chase and Siya protest in the play – and were full of energy and enthusiasm. There were also four shows in BC that were impacted by deaths in the local communities – two had terrible turnout because the community was involved in funeral rites and Indigenous ceremonies, while one had incredible turnout in honour of their deceased Elder. The two with terrible turnout also had snowstorms and extreme cold temperatures, which may have negatively impacted attendance. In Medicine Hat, the racism of many Albertans was clear. Many of the interventions were quite racist, and some audience members were honest about the “lazy Indian” trope that exists in their community. In Peace River, no one volunteered to help with set-up or strike, so Diamond had to hire day labourers from out of town, which was not in the budget. And in Edmonton, the second show had a number of Indigenous audience members who were extremely aggressive with Diamond about representations of Indigenous people. In all of these ways, for better or for worse, the spiderweb of connections and relationships that *šxʷ?amət* (*home*) builds is only as strong as the physical structure – be that humanmade or natural – upon which it is mounted.

Table 4.1 shows the full analytical integration of the themes identified above and the theoretical conflict resolution models. It summarises the findings, connects the findings with key

⁷ Colton Boushie was a young Indigenous man who was shot and killed on a private property in rural Saskatchewan in 2016 while trying to find help for a flat tire. Gerald Stanley, a white man, was charged with second degree murder, and then manslaughter, but was ultimately acquitted of the crime, claiming that Boushie and his friends were attempting to steal property from him, and that the gun he pointed at Boushie discharged accidentally. The investigation was riddled with racism and shoddy police work, with even (then) Prime Minister Justin Trudeau denouncing the verdict. For more information, see <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/gerald-stanley-and-colten-boushie-case>

illustrative case evidence, and provides implications for conflict resolution that emerge from these results.

Table 4.1: Analytic Integration of Themes and Theoretical Models in *šxʔamət (home)*

	Relevant Theoretical Models	Analytic Focus / Mechanism	Illustrative Case Evidence	Interpretive Implication for Conflict Resolution
Connection / Relationships	Lederach (2005) – Spiderweb model and broken/repaid relationships; Kahane (2017) – Stretch Collaboration (step into the game); Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Wallerstein (2004) – Systems Theories	Relationship-building across power dynamics, identities, and geographic locations; creative “webbing” that sustains dialogue beyond performance	Cast forming skills-based and support relationships with each other; connections between audiences and actors/characters; deep investigation of personal identity and story; ongoing relationships amongst service providers	Demonstrates value of embracing difference and utilisation of embodied art to unearth deep-seated racism and conflict
Groundedness and Cultural Relevance	Galtung (1969, 1990) – Cultural Violence; Lederach (2005) – Culturally-relevant processes/themes	Attention to culture as the root of violence and the mode of resistance; interrogating attitudes, contradictions, and behaviours	Themes rooted in participant experiences and identities; cultural sensitivity in recruitment and procurement of resources	Shows how applied theatre exposes and transforms attitudes, contradictions, and behaviours that create and sustain violence; Illustrates the value of attending to community needs in conflict resolution.
Embodiment / Emotion	Galtung (1969) – Direct (psychological) Violence; Kahane (2017) – Experiment a Way Forward and Step Into The Game	Target emotional processing of trauma before intellectualisation; harnessing emotion to understand and unpin racism; stretch understanding of conflict through empathy and compassion	Access to emotion challenging for certain demographics; release of emotion through physical movement; emotion words highlighted by cast and audience; humour used to access difficult topics	Illustrates how emotional engagement complements dialogue in peace processes, allowing empathetic connection with the other.
Breadth and Variety	Lederach (2005) – Spiderweb model; Kahane (2017) – Step Into The Game	All sides of a conflict must be engaged	Diversity of cast and audience interventions; challenged by non-engagement of newcomers and Indigenous people	Evidence of the importance of holistic, grassroots conflict resolution and reconciliation
Tangible Life Skills	Systems Theories; Kahane – experimentation with solutions and skills	Theatre as a circle; build robust, resilient society	Audience challenging their own and community attitudes; audience and former TFL students using applied theatre in their own practice	Suggests that applied theatre can be a useful site of learning and practicing new skills that strengthen overall community
Safety	Conflict resolution broadly	Creation of safe space in which to experiment with new skills, access and process emotion, and interrogate identity and beliefs	Aesthetic distance – characters are similar to but not the same as actors; Indigenous support people; challenged by themes and emotions being too grounded	Highlights ways in which theatre can create safety and trust needed to work through a conflict

4.9 Conclusion

What is the role of forum theatre? It's to knock the community off balance. Because that's where the learning is. It's where the transformational potential is. When [...] any organism, it can be a single celled organism or a human being, it gets knocked off balance. And there are in a binary sense two choices now. In trying to regain equilibrium, the organism either goes back to the same place, or to somewhere different. But that's impossible, unless the organism is knocked off balance. So for me, that's the role of the interactive play, is to knock the community off balance. And then, in the forum, the audience interventions are the community trying to regain equilibrium. It should be uncomfortable. (Diamond, personal communication, May 21, 2024)

In science, we would call this “homeostasis.” When one chemical or element is introduced to another, or the state that the element is in changes, a reaction occurs that creates a new substance; when an organism is introduced to a new environment, or the environment changes, the organism must adapt, evolving into something new or developing new tools to live in its environment. In psychology, people seek out psychoactive substances – recreational or prescription – or therapy because they need to change something about themselves in order to continue surviving. In political science, the dominant theories – be that at the domestic or international level – all, to varying degrees, recognize that people, structures, governments, and states change in response to changes in other aspects of the overarching political system (Boulding, 1978), and that often, revolution occurs when the cost of staying the same is greater than the risk of uprising and change.

šxʷʔamət (home) demonstrates how applied theatre embodies the central premises of conflict transformation: it reconstructs relationships, re-humanises difference, and renders visible

the emotional and embodied dimensions of reconciliation. By situating individual and collective transformation within Indigenous epistemologies of healing and community, the project enacts what Galtung has called “positive peace,” what Lederach has termed the “moral imagination,” and what Kahane has described as “stretch collaboration.” Its power lies not in delivering structural reform, but in unsettling participants’ and audiences’ equilibrium—momentarily activating discomfort and inviting the development of new relationships, empathy, responsibility, and accountability.