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# MAKING THE CASE FOR ARTS-BASED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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**The arts bring life to our communities. It sparks joy. It teaches. It connects. It asks us to see things differently. But so often when the arts are used in community engagement activities it feels like an add-on, a sidebar. As we continue the migration from more traditional community engagement—that tends to rely on surveys and is more transactional in nature—to transformational engagement that seeks to authentically connect, listen, understand, and empower, arts practices have so much to offer.**

So how can artistic practices be central to engagement? What barriers or myths do we need to break through? Together, let's ensure we understand the benefits of an arts-based approach so that we can advocate for it in our work.

The field of community-engaged art is rich. There are artists who stretch our imaginations, show us possibility, and connect us to our humanity. There are institutions and funders who support the arts and provide much-needed resourcing. There are community builders who foster connection and neighbourliness and are committed to creating resilient communities.

Despite the resources and examples available to us, there seem to be barriers stopping community engagement practitioners from initiating community-engaged art practices. It could be due to lack of awareness of what is possible, or clarity about what the process would look like, or uncertainty about where to start or who to involve. It is our hope that this exploration of community-engaged art will entice more community engagement practitioners to initiate and incorporate arts practices into their initiatives.

We're writing this article for the community engagement practitioner who wants to breathe more life into the engagements they are designing. For the municipality who desperately wants to connect with community members in more creative ways. For the planner who feels more comfortable with quantitative processes but wants to stretch themselves. For the strategy facilitator who wants to create spaces for stakeholders to imagine. We invite you on a learning journey to try something new.

# DEFINING COMMUNITY- ENGAGED ART

There are many different terms and styles of the intersection of art + community engagement. People might commonly think of an artistic project, like a mural for example, and add community engagement to the process, such as in the planning, design, or implementation. For example, community members could share stories about the history of the neighbourhood and the artist could use this to design the mural. Or community members could be involved in the actual painting of the mural as a community-building activity.

However, community-engaged art focuses more centrally on the process rather than the outcome. Community-engaged art practices, or social practice, are described by the Ontario Arts Council in the Community Engaged Art Workbook as follows:

*"Community-engaged art practices are forms of collective artistic expression. In this field, individuals who aren't professional artists actively participate in the artistic process, and the artistic process is considered as important as the final artistic product. Both the social and artistic outcomes of community-engaged art have value." (Page 5)*

## IN THIS ARTICLE:

- Defining Community-Engaged Art
- What do arts-based practices offer to community engagement?
- Mindset shifts needed
- What is possible?
  - Three stories of arts-based engagement
  - A brief inventory of how arts practices can be used in community engagement
- Advice for getting started

In the mural example, with community-engaged art we might not be setting out to create a mural. Instead, our goal could be to map and celebrate the assets of a community through a process of sharing photographs and stories, and in discussing emerging themes, community members could decide to create a mural at a historically significant site as a way to keep the strengths of the community alive for future generations.

When integrating the arts into community engagement, there may not even be a final artistic product or outcome. Artistic processes, such as drawing, photography, or theatre, could be the process by which community members learn about pressing issues and explore solutions together.

*"Community-engaged art is not just art that is made collaboratively, it is art that honours the perspectives, knowledge, stories, skills and cultural practices of community members. No individual can fully imagine the final artistic outcome of a community-engaged art project alone, as it evolves through a co-creative process. The final outcome is both co-authored and co-owned." (Community Engaged Art Workbook, Ontario Arts Council, Page 6)*

# WHAT DO ARTS-BASED PRACTICES OFFER TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?

**The arts can be seen as something separate from the 'real work' of community change. But there are beautifully inspiring and powerful examples of what can happen when we integrate these fields.**

- **Humanizes** – Arts processes tend to focus first on people and ensure that community engagement activities are meaningful.
- **Animates** – Through artistic practices, information can come to life through visuals and interactivity.
- **Offers emotional connection** – Arts-based practices are designed to help you to feel and build empathy and understanding for diverse perspectives.
- **Community-building** – Shared experiences build connection among those involved.
- **Increases response and engagement** – A survey is often not the most exciting way to get feedback and response from community members. Having more creative engagement tools can increase community involvement.
- **Uncovers unique insights** – Art offers a new way for people to reflect on, and communicate, their experiences. It can uncover the complexities and nuances of an issue that may be missed through more traditional community engagement activities.
- **Allows for more innovative outcomes** – Artists are gifted in shifting the parameters we work under. Using imagination and creativity, artists can enable us to dream big; to re-think limiting structures or assumptions.
- **Shifting typical power dynamics** – Through using artistic practices we can equalize power relationships. Community members become co-creators and co-owners, which often enables community-led solutions.
- **Builds skillsets to think and act as a community** – Community-engaged art practices tend to start with questions like - who is this community? What do they care about? By engaging first before determining specific outputs, we learn more and are more likely to achieve outcomes that are aligned with community values.
- **Art can be used to decolonize our engagement** – More traditional community engagement activities are dependant on written communications and quantitative data. "Indigenous cultures have always understood that artists can make important contributions to public life as visionaries, healers and educators". (Community Engaged Art Workbook, Ontario Arts Council, Page 6)

**The arts can be a vehicle for productive and measurable change. It can be used for every component of systems change from program innovation to policy making to relationship building. When we want to transform something, whether it be structures or thought processes, we can and should depend on the arts which has a proven track record of emotionally connecting us to our work and imagining a new future.**

# MINDSET SHIFTS

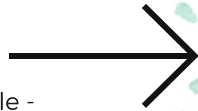
WHAT'S HOLDING US BACK FROM TAKING AN ARTS-BASED APPROACH TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT?  
WHAT MINDSET SHIFTS ARE NEEDED?

FROM

TO

## Only artists are creative

- Only certain people - 'creative' people - are interested in, and able to, participate in artistic practices.

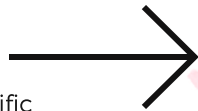


## All people are creative

- The idea of engaging people in art comes with the belief that everyone is an artist and has the ability to be creative, express themselves, and contribute.

## Pre-Defined process

- Organizers are committed to a specific output
- Schedule of activities is determined before the engagement starts
- Some systems have a limited ability to adapt or change their processes.



## Emergent process

- Organizers are committed to overarching goals and milestones, but the specific output might not yet be known
- The full process is determined through community engagement. The process starts by learning what the community values and what is most important.
- Community can be more nimble than more formal processes allow.

## Viewing artists as independent producers

- Commissioning artists to produce a specific output
- Involving the artist only once the strategy and process has been determined.



## Viewing artists as creative thinkers

- Inviting artists to the planning table to leverage their creativity and perspective in shaping the goals and boundaries of the project
- Artists are skilled at picturing what could be—dreaming big—and then figuring out how to make it work within limitations.

## Community as recipients

- The project is done 'for' a community
- Community members are engaged once the project has been clearly defined.
- Community members' role is to react
- Project coordinators often hold a risk management mentality.



## Community as contributors

- The project is done 'with' and 'by' the community
- Community members are centered in the project and help shape the process and outputs.
- Community members' role is to create
- Project coordinators have a role to enable community mobilization—help them to create what they value—and work to reduce barriers.



## CASE STUDY

# BROKEN CITY LAB

EXPLORING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH WINDSOR, ONTARIO

### Background

When *Broken City Lab* (BCL) started working together back in 2008, our home community of Windsor, Ontario was experiencing a dramatic economic turn. The recession we faced as a post-industrial automotive town was felt very deeply in Windsor, as well as Detroit, our neighbours to the north. The artists involved in BCL wanted to explore new ways of talking about civic issues with a wider public. We felt the community should have a say in the future of the city.

### About the project

We started by creating spaces to gather and talk about issues that were important to us. One important issue was the relationship between Windsor and Detroit during a time of economic collapse.

We met with high school physics students to help design an installation to have a conversation between Windsor and Detroit. The large-scale projection on a building beamed messages intended to be read across the river in neighboring Detroit. This installation opened up the conversation to talk about the social, economic, and cultural issues further.

We created *CIVIC SPACE* (Community Innovation through Vital Interactions & Collaboration) which served as a hub for a range of events, public activities, and research around locality, infrastructure, education, and creative practice as a driver for civic change. This storefront space hosted community projects, artist residencies, DIY workshops, public lectures and a range of other initiatives rooted in arts, community, collaboration, and problem solving. Funding for this space was provided by the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

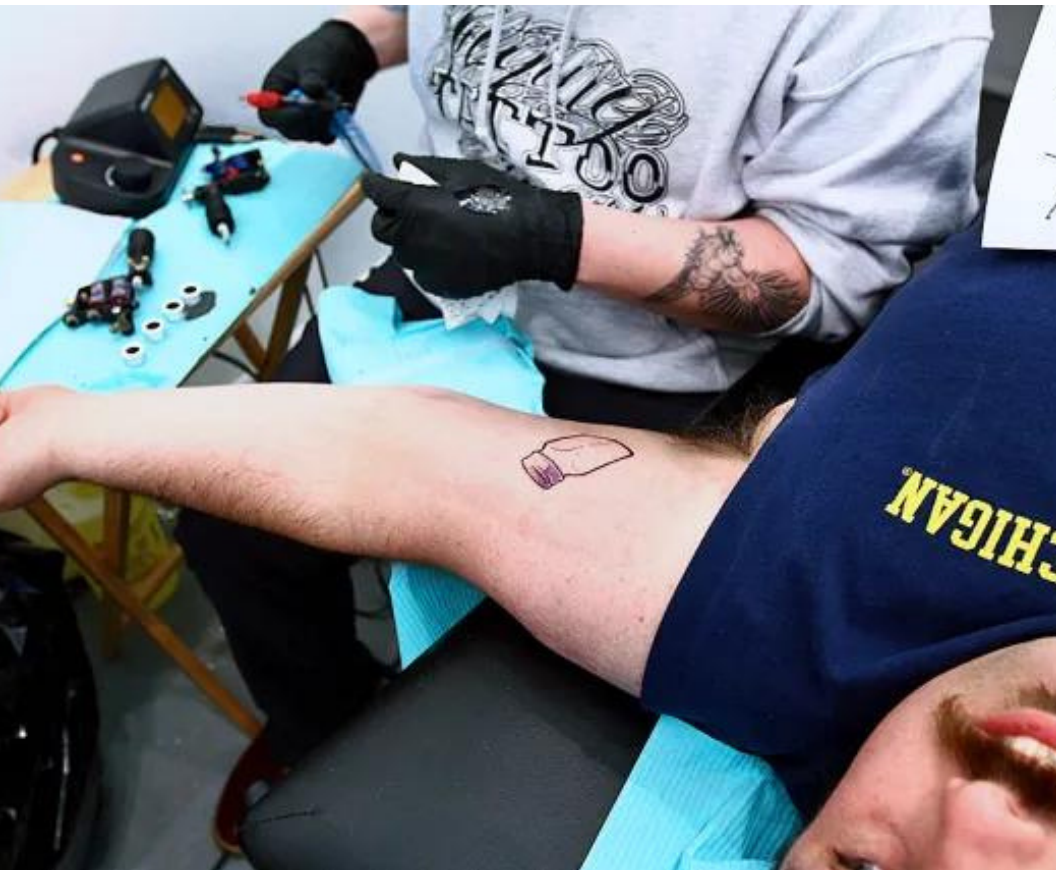
With Portland-based artist-in-residence, Jason Sturgill, we reframed his previous project, *Art is Forever*, as *Windsor is Forever* – a community-driven art and tattoo project that gave Windsor residents an opportunity to make a permanent commitment to the city. Participants chose from a flash tattoo set created in collaboration with local artists and illustrators to receive as their free tattoos, which were offered free of charge.

### Outcomes

Windsor, Ontario was a once-collapsing, now gradually stabilizing post-industrial city at the edge of Canada. We believe that Windsor provides an exemplary vantage point from which to consider the role of artists in challenged communities, but we

have also worked on various interventions, installations, and other creative endeavours in cities across Canada.

Our work has been created across media – from temporary interventions to large-scale community events and from gallery exhibitions to various workshops and publications – but we also often take on the role of organizing and facilitating the activity of other artists and creative practitioners through residencies, conferences, and writing projects. We aim to creatively respond to the issues we directly experience in a community, while also negotiating the ways in which other community members experience the same issues, differently.



### About Broken City Lab

**Broken City Lab** is an artist-led interdisciplinary collective and non-profit organization working to explore and unfold curiosities around locality, infrastructures, education, and creative practice leading towards civic change. Our projects, events, workshops, installations, and interventions offer an injection of disruptive creativity into a situation, surface, place, or community. These projects aim to connect various disciplines through research and social practice, generating works and interventionist tactics that adjust, critique, annotate, and re-imagine the cities that we encounter.

[www.brokencitylab.org](http://www.brokencitylab.org)



### About Hiba Abdallah

Hiba Abdallah is an artist and educator who frequently works with others. Her practice explores the structural legacies and futures of cities by researching the intersections of collaboration and disagreement as productive frameworks for re-imagining public agency.

[www.hibaabdallah.com](http://www.hibaabdallah.com)



## CASE STUDY

# DEPARTMENT OF UNUSUAL CERTAINTIES (DOUC)

## STOREFRONT SUCCESS STORIES

### Background

*Storefront Success Stories* was initiated in 2010 as response to an artist residency hosted in Windsor by *Broken City Lab* (BCL). *Storefront Residencies for Social Innovation* was an open call to artists and designers to spend a month in downtown Windsor, engaging with the space and context however they chose.

At the time, *Department of Unusual Certainties* (DoUC) was in its infancy as a studio, but we had already been discussing an idea we called *Storefront Urbanism*. We wanted to operate DoUC from a storefront in order to engage more directly with the community on projects and had already been developing processes of community-engaged research that would assist with this idea. The residency call from Broken City Lab felt like the perfect opportunity to put some of these processes and ideas into practice.

### About the project

Windsor was, at the time, struggling economically as a city and especially in the downtown area where the BCL storefront residency space was located. However, rather than focus on the challenges everyone was facing we felt it was important for us to engage with business owners, as well as people who lived and worked in downtown Windsor, around success—what their experiences of success were and what success meant to them when it came to running and supporting small businesses.

The project took shape in many forms and involved a series of different types of research and engagement, and used the art of sharing and conversation in different formats as a basis for building knowledge and relationships in the community.

For any type of community-engaged work, one of the most important starting points is to focus on how to build trust. We approached the owner of a local music and cultural institution, Tom Lucier of Phog Lounge, to work with us and be our local champion for the project. Tom was instrumental with introducing us to many of the downtown business owners and helping to promote the project locally. Building key relationships with community leaders can help to extend that trust into communities you're working with, and goes a long way with credibility and participation.



As groundwork for the engagements, we walked the entire downtown area to map and catalogue the different businesses and services located on each of the streets, leading to a series of data visualizations that would be used later.

We then began to work with the community through interviews with business owners and representatives at the banks who work with small businesses, recording the conversations through photos, audio recordings and written notes. At this point, it's important to note that there was no clear outcome planned for the project—we were using mapping and engagements with individuals as a way to gather research on the community experiences and understand what shape the project might take next.

We also created an office in the storefront where we would invite both residents and business owners to meet with us and each other, share or listen to stories about downtown Windsor, and begin to hear strategies take shape as they spent time in the space together. In some ways, our space turned into a constantly changing gallery as we created more maps, drawings, and t-shirts around the interactions that were evolving. Our idea of Storefront Urbanism was beginning to take shape.

### Outcomes

While talking to many of the business owners it became clear that they didn't really know one another very well, so we decided one thing we could do was host an event to bring them together, and specifically facilitate a space for them to share their stories, concerns, and perspectives on what success looked like in downtown Windsor. We designed and hosted an event in the last week of the residency called 'Speed Dating for Store Owners' where 20 owners attended and shared with each other through a series of mini conversations and activities. After the event, we compiled all of the research and knowledge that had been contributed through our work and the engagements, and we created a 'tip sheet' in the form of a 2' x 3' poster that captured the discussions, ideas and experiences of success. A digital copy was provided to the downtown BIA leadership and the Planning Department of the city to print and hand out to new business owners.

We were able to bring the community together in a way they had never been given the opportunity to before even though they all inhabited the shared space of downtown. The project allowed—and encouraged—they to share their experiences and vision of downtown Windsor, and for some the chance to focus on success possibly gave them more hope for the future; one of the attendees subsequently ran for city council. The BIA was grateful for our work, although the Planning Department sadly still struggled to understand the value of the engagements because it was outside of their typical processes. For DoUC, the project was a learning experience to fully understand that community engagement should be more than something used to achieve a specific outcome, that there is equally value in creating opportunities for people to come together to build shared values and future actions.

### About DOUC

**Department of Unusual Certainties (DoUC)** is a research, and design studio driven by curiosity, information, and the human experience. Our team of design strategists with interdisciplinary backgrounds build individualized solutions for organizations seeking to strengthen their strategy, engagement, or to revitalize existing processes.

[www.wearedouc.com](http://www.wearedouc.com)





## CASE STUDY

# THEATRE FOR GOOD

BUILDING CONNECTION & BELONGING  
THROUGH THEATRE-BASED EXERCISES

### Background

*Theatre for Good* uses theatre-based exercises and processes to engage groups of people around the issues they care about. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, people were more disconnected and isolated than ever. Division between varying perspectives were intensifying. The overall worry of the world about our future as humans on the planet (think – climate change, white supremacy, sickness and war) was taking its toll on everyone in their own ways. There was certainly a need to bring people together in meaningful ways to make sense of what was going on and to re-connect with how we relate to one another so that we can imagine a better path forward.

So, *Theatre for Good* fought the urge to wait until the pandemic was 'over' and began to host workshops online. Workshops were open to anyone 'yearning for connection' and attracted a mix of people from across Canada with varying backgrounds all gathering together from their own homes over Zoom.

### About the project

The online workshop was called *Building Connection and Belonging* and focused on reflecting on our experiences during the pandemic using embodied and theatre-based exercises. Participants were asked to unmute, turn their videos on and to push their chairs to the side. Together we stood up in our Zoom windows and got warmed up with a few body and mind icebreakers. These usually helped the group to get their jitters out and to laugh at themselves (and most importantly hear other people laughing too).

We then introduced ourselves using a technique from *Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed* arsenal – say your name, where you are joining from, and make a sound and movement for how you are feeling coming into this workshop. The rest of the group's job would be to listen to the person introducing themselves with their sound and movement, and then in unison repeat back what the person had offered. Almost as if to honour what they have shared with the group.

It was usually at this moment where you could feel the knot in people's stomach form, where you could see the discomfort flash across the Zoom windows—"do we really have to do this?" But, like clockwork, one by one participants would bravely say their name, where they were joining from and then their sound and movement, the group would then reflect it back in unison — and people would begin to smile, to exhale a little, to feel curious and to wonder what was coming next.

The workshop would go on to integrate music, partner and group exercises, storytelling, and small performances. One activity after the next, participants' ability to be courageous and vulnerable with one another would increase. People's openness to try new things, to share things that mattered to them, to reflect on what they were going through seemed to unlock. People started to feel seen, heard — connected.

Many of the comments we received after the workshops would speak to the surprise of the level of connection one can have over Zoom. And to be honest, we were just as surprised as the participants themselves. By engaging with our bodies, sounds and imaginations first, and then discussing the wisdom and the realizations that came from those offerings after, we seemed to open up a new space for dialogue and connection that we didn't know was possible online.

In addition, people were able to overcome their discomfort, to practice being vulnerable and to step outside of their comfort zones in a safe and creative space. It is these kinds of skills that we believe will be imperative to facing the challenges ahead; and these deep connections that will be needed to get us there.

*Theatre for Good* now believes in the power (and secret magic) of using art to engage groups effectively online. It is now turning its focus to working with organizations who are struggling to engage their teams meaningfully as we navigate the challenges that come with working in 'the new normal.' To use our theatre-based processes to facilitate deep connections across teams and to help them uncover the challenges they are facing and co-create solutions together. And it's going to be all online.

### About Theatre for Good

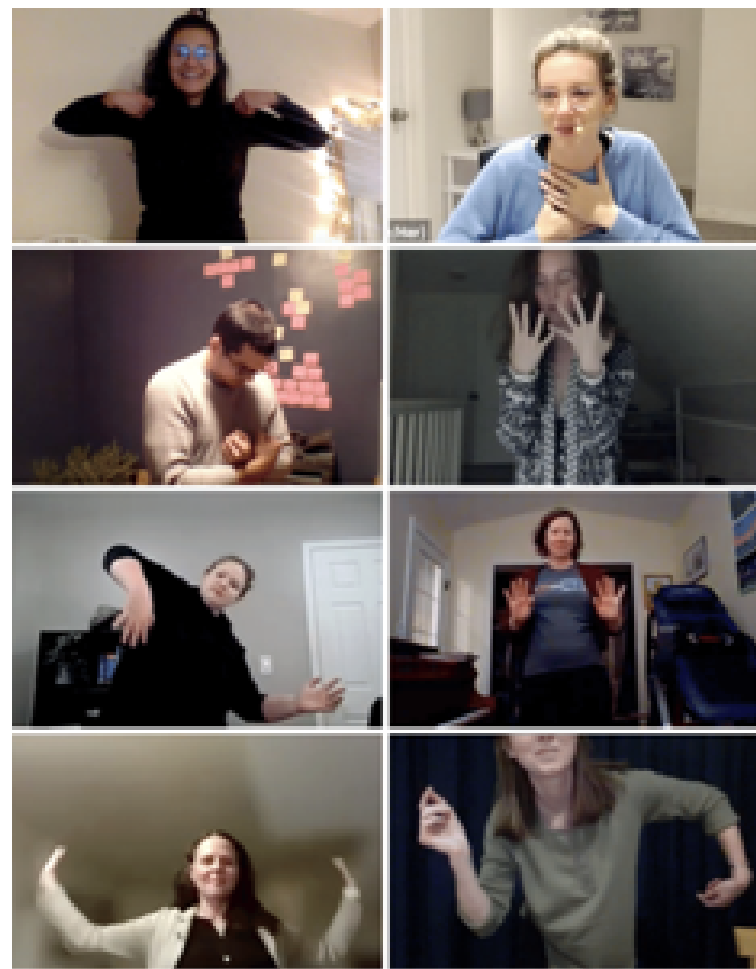
**Theatre for Good** facilitates interactive theatre-based workshops that bring people together to build connections and discover solutions in a new way. We work with organizations, businesses and community groups to identify a key struggle or challenge that you care about, and through a mix of embodied and creative exercises we explore it, we build connections around it and together we chart new paths forward for change.

hello@theatreforgood.ca  
[www.theatreforgood.ca](http://www.theatreforgood.ca)

**“Such a powerful experience. I felt bliss, grief, joy...and space to reflect and connect in ways I haven't felt for the last two years. I'm utterly astounded that you were able to create a space for that...and do it VIRTUALLY! Wow. I am totally blown away.”**

### Outcomes

With the pandemic bringing so much of our work online, many have become burnt out and drained from the endless Zoom meetings. But what this workshop taught us was that by integrating art—in this case theatre-based exercises —people can engage on a whole new level. Instead of feeling lost, disengaged, and bored on Zoom, people were able to engage meaningfully and uncover new ideas and insights about their own lives and also about their relationships with others and the issues they were struggling with.



# A BRIEF INVENTORY

## HOW ARTS PRACTICES CAN BE USED IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Arts Practice	Description	Community Engagement Goal
<b>VISUAL ARTS</b>		
<b>Drawing, Painting, Collaging</b>	<p>Using methods like drawing, painting, or collaging to reflect, capture, and express thoughts, attitudes, and feelings.</p> <p><b>Example I</b> <a href="#">Creating Change Through Art in Rankin</a></p> <p><b>Tool I</b> <a href="#">Drawing Together</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness building of lived/living experience</li> <li>• Create emotional connection around key issues</li> </ul>
<b>Installations</b>	<p>Art that is applied to a physical environment for a temporary period of time. Installations are often large-scale, mixed-media constructions, and can be interactive.</p> <p><b>Example I</b> <a href="#">Youth Voices Become Art Installation</a></p> <p><b>Example I</b> <a href="#">Buying &amp; Selling – Exploring Local and Global Housing Options</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create emotional connection and social commentary around key issues</li> <li>• Explore alternative realities</li> </ul>
<b>Photovoice</b>	<p>Photovoice is a participatory-action research method in which participants capture and collectively reflect upon photos of their lived experience.</p> <p><b>Example I</b> <a href="#">Photovoice as an Intervention for College Students Living with Mental Illness: A Pilot Study</a></p> <p><b>Example I</b> <a href="#">The Story of Pascaline – One Drop Foundation</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness building of lived/living experience</li> <li>• Evaluation of a program or service</li> <li>• Policy making</li> <li>• Healing</li> </ul>
<b>Artist In Residence</b>	<p>Recruiting an artist with a specific skill or attribute to provide an artistic practice in a particular place (institution or geography) for a defined period of time. Artists can be observers, commentators, or moderators to animate civic life and priorities.</p> <p><b>Example I</b> <a href="#">Watershed+ Artist in Residency</a></p> <p><b>Example I</b> <a href="#">Artist in Residence at Amethyst Women's Addiction Centre through Arts Network Ottawa</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social commentary - Understand and amplify community perspectives</li> <li>• Build sense of community</li> </ul>
<b>Art Therapy</b>	<p>Art therapy combines the creative process and psychotherapy, facilitating self-exploration and understanding. Using imagery, colour and shape as part of this creative therapeutic process, thoughts and feelings can be expressed that would otherwise be difficult to articulate.</p> <p><b>Definition I</b> <a href="#">Canadian Art Therapy Association</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness building of lived/living experience</li> <li>• Discussion of difficult issues</li> <li>• Build understanding</li> <li>• Community Healing</li> </ul>

Arts Practice	Description	Community Engagement Goal
<b>DIGITAL ARTS</b>		
<b>Graphic Design</b>	<p>Graphic design is a craft where an artist creates visual content to communicate messages. The visuals can be shared in different mediums including online, through posters or billboards, on clothing, etc.</p> <p><b>Example I</b> <a href="#">Regret &amp; Resolve, Broken City Lab</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocacy</li> <li>• Sharing a message</li> <li>• Educating or informing a wider public</li> </ul>
<b>Digital Storytelling</b>	<p>A participatory process of inviting people to use digital tools to tell their stories. The participant crafts their narrative to take the listener or reader on a journey. Just like a novel or a documentary, digital stories have a plot, characters, and themes.</p> <p><b>Examples I</b> <a href="#">Story Center</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness building of lived/living experience</li> <li>• Using a digital storytelling screening for sensemaking and discussion around key issues</li> <li>• Evaluation of a program or service</li> </ul>
<b>Documentary</b>	<p>Capturing and sharing reality through film. Social media tools like TikTok are also being used for documentary snippets.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing traditions</li> <li>• Awareness building of lived/living experience</li> <li>• Educating or informing a wider public</li> </ul>
<b>Augmented Reality/ Virtual Reality</b>	<p>Augmented reality (AR) augments your surroundings by adding digital elements to a live view, often by using the camera on a smartphone. Virtual reality (VR) is a completely immersive experience that replaces a real-life environment with a simulated one.</p> <p><b>Example I</b> <a href="#">Augmented Reality, DOUC</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore alternative realities</li> <li>• Educate or inform a wider public</li> </ul>
<b>MUSIC &amp; POETRY</b>		
<b>Written/Spoken Word</b>	<p>Using letter/journal writing, poetry, or other written or spoken media to reflect, capture, and express thoughts, attitudes, and feelings.</p> <p><b>Example I</b> <a href="#">Healthy &amp; Safety Notes, Mark Reinhart</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness building of lived/living experience</li> <li>• Social commentary - Understand and amplify community perspectives</li> </ul>
<b>Musical Composition</b>	<p>A participatory process where music is created by multiple people sharing ideas, memories, stories, and musical instrumentation.</p> <p><b>Example I</b> <a href="#">Pros and Cons Program</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create emotional connection around key issues</li> <li>• Build sense of community</li> <li>• Healing</li> </ul>

Arts Practice	Description	Community Engagement Goal
<b>THEATRE &amp; DANCE</b>		
<b>Applied Theatre</b>	Applied Theatre is an umbrella term that encompasses many different forms of using theatrical tools and processes to create social change. Applied Theatre focuses on real-life experiences and typically takes place in non-conventional theatre spaces and with everyday people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create change in awareness, attitudes, or behaviours</li> </ul>
<b>Theatre of the Oppressed</b>	<p>A form of popular applied theatre that includes a number of different styles of theatre to create transformative community change (includes: Forum Theatre, Legislative Theatre, Image Theatre, Newspaper Theatre, Rainbow of Desire, Invisible Theatre and more)</p> <p><b>Learn More   <a href="#">ImaginAction</a></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engaging diverse perspectives</li> <li>• Examining the complexity of an issue</li> <li>• Generating new ideas and solutions</li> <li>• Policy making</li> <li>• Community Building</li> <li>• Conflict Resolution</li> </ul>
<b>Social Presencing Theatre</b>	<p>Supports people and groups in accessing a deep and embodied knowing of their social experience, by connecting in and engaging with the wisdom of the heart and body.</p> <p><b>Learn More   <a href="#">Presencing Institute</a></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examining social challenges</li> <li>• Uncovering new insights</li> <li>• Community Building</li> </ul>
<b>Theatre Exercises &amp; Games</b>	<p>A repertoire of experiential and symbolic activities that bring out different meanings for each participant. Activities are highly embodied and many are done without speaking. After each activity a short debrief is facilitated where participants are asked to reflect on the experience.</p> <p><b>Examples   <a href="#">Drama Resources</a></b></p> <p><b>Toolkit   <a href="#">Interactive and Embodied Exercises</a></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building trust and connections between teams and collaborative groups</li> <li>• Creating space for reflection, listening, courage, and vulnerability</li> </ul>
<b>Dance</b>	<p>Community-engaged dance is when the artistic process is shared between professional dance artists and community members.</p> <p><b>Example   <a href="#">Dance for Every Body: Engaging Communities and Making Vancouver Move</a></b></p> <p><b>Example   <a href="#">Kaeja d'Dance's Porch View Dances</a></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build a sense of community</li> <li>• Healing</li> <li>• Educating or informing a wider public</li> </ul>

# ADVICE FOR GETTING STARTED

## UNDERSTANDING A STRUCTURED BUT EMERGENT PROCESS

Often we find a mis-match between the words an artist might use to describe a process compared to words a strategy consultant or engagement practitioner might use. A common question we also hear is – how can we describe deliverables to funders if we don't know what the timeline and outputs will look like? So what words can we use to connect the dots?

### Common phases of a structured but emergent process:

# 01

## EXPLORATION / COMMUNITY RESEARCH

Includes talking with/interviewing stakeholders, understanding peoples' values and what they're feeling. Creates spaces for conversation about social, economic, cultural priorities.

### Deliverables might include:

- Engagement strategy
- Facilitation of community-based research
- Synthesis of priorities / key themes
- Identification of possible engagement activities based on community interests and needs

A specific timeline and budget can be provided for the exploration phase. Budget parameters can be defined for the whole project so that possible engagement activities that are identified fit within the scope of the project.

# 02

## PLANNING / DESIGN / BUILD

Specific engagement goals and processes are defined.

### Deliverables might include:

- Identification of key stakeholders
- Project roadmap
- Detailed budget
- Creation of engagement tools or processes

# 03

## IMPLEMENTATION

Implement targeted engagement strategies.

### Deliverables might include:

- Facilitation, monitoring
- Capturing and summarizing findings

# MAKING IT REAL

## 01

### START BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

- Is there a creator or artist in your network who is interested in being part of your work? Artists involved in advocacy can be seen by some as challenging. Bridge relationships so that others can understand that there are shared values.
- Is there a colleague who is also interested in incorporating arts practices into their work? Is there a leader who shares the same values who can be an internal advocate?
- Connect with your closest Arts Council to see how they can share resources or connections with local community-engaged artists or funders.

## 02

### EXPLORE WHAT SMALL STEPS YOU CAN TAKE

- Can we play with how we collect data? For example, could we ask community members to share photos of their experiences or write a letter to their younger selves?
- Can we change how we evaluate? For example, can we use digital storytelling or a drawn reflection for participants to share what has changed for them through the intervention?
- Can we bring awareness to lived and experience in more creative ways?

## 03

### IN THE NEXT YEAR COMMIT TO PILOTING AN ARTS-BASED PRACTICE IN YOUR ENGAGEMENT

- Never believe that anything is permanent – “That’s just the way things are.” All things were built by someone and everything can be changed.
- Brainstorm with your team to name your engagement goals and use the inventory (Pages 11-13) to explore what practices could be exciting to try.
- Use the word ‘pilot’ or ‘experiment’ to bring flexibility to historically structured processes or requirements.
- Give it a go!
- Share what you learn with other teams and us too.

# RESOURCES FOR FURTHER LEARNING

- **GUIDE** | [Community Engaged Art Workbook](#) from the Ontario Arts Council
- **GUIDE** | [2022 Artist Professional Services Fee Schedule](#) from CARFAC (Canada's national voice for professional artists)
- **WEBSITE** | [Arts Bridges](#) – a hub and forum for connection for anyone interested in or active in community-engaged arts and arts for social change in Canada
- **ONLINE RESOURCE** | [Art Engage Canada](#) This site is dedicated to helping performing arts presenters and artists to understand and create community engagement projects.
- **SERIES** | [Community Arts? Learning from the legacy of artist social initiatives](#)
- **APPROACH** | [Artistic Activism](#)
- **BOOK** | [Theatre for Living: The Art and Science of Community-Based Dialogue](#) by David Diamond
- **TOOLKIT** | [The Ultimate Team Building Toolkit](#) using interactive + embodied approaches to guide your team to success

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Sonja is the Consulting Director of the Tamarack Institutes's Community Innovation Area. She is a dynamic educator, social scientist, and innovator with over 16 years of experience in the sector. Having lived, worked, and played in over 80 countries, she has a broad spectrum of international experience that cuts across the public, private and civil society sectors.. She is passionate about the arts as a vehicle for social change.