

Unsettling Dramaturgy Living Agreement

Project Context

Unsettling Dramaturgy is an ongoing project bringing together Crip and Indigenous dramaturgs from across so-called Canada and the United States who work in theatre, dance, and experimental performance.

This project grounds itself as a continuation of the thriving legacies of leadership and innovation that shape Indigenous and Crip dramaturgies, which precede, survive and move beyond settler colonialism.

We are bringing together artists from communities that have been historically excluded from mainstream performance ecologies. We are co-creating a space for critical cross-community collaboration. In our collaboration we are dismantling the silos in which we have been placed, to advance emerging conversations exploring the conflux of leadership and representation in creation and production as relate to Indigenous sovereignty, and Deaf, Mad and Disability culture in the arts.

This project considers the studio, the stage, and the street as porous and interconnected politicized spaces; spaces impacted by and implicated in the current political climate and historical contexts; spaces where urgent critique, and visionary futures can be imagined, practiced, enacted, and then disseminated to/co-created with a wider public.

Unsettling Dramaturgy, endeavours to strengthen and extend dramaturgical practice by:

1. Generating a platform for self-determined encounter and exchange where our local bodies of knowledge can be activated;
2. Supporting the articulation and investigation of critical questions to move current conversations and practice in mainstream theatre, dance and performance from “access” and “inclusion” to centring, from “reconciliation” to unsettling, decolonizing and Indigenizing;
3. Documenting and publicly disseminating alternative methods in support of the above.

A Living Agreement

In creating a container to hold and support our gathering, we turn to the lessons of traditional basketmaking.

A basket derives its structure not from the sameness of its materials but by the constant convergence and divergence of its constituent fibers. The fibers themselves have context: a life of growth reacting to their environments, the effects of collection, and the textures of processing.

In weaving this Living Agreement we honor the places where the fibers of our identities, experiences, legacies, heritage, geographies and outlook converge and diverge, recognizing that it is the interweaving that holds us together.

And so, we have come together to collectively create the following Living Agreement to support our collaboration.

This Agreement aims to make transparent the ways in which we are organizing our work, relationships, and resources.

Through this Living Agreement we consider this project's impact on us as individuals, as a collective, and on the communities at large to which we belong, and how to proceed in a good way with this work.

This Agreement functions as a statement of commitment, and expression of consent, to the ways in which we want to work together.

This is an alive document which we will continue to transform as needs be, as our work, relationships, needs and desires transform. We locate the aliveness of this document in the spirit of how Bodies in Translation defines radical reciprocity in their Principles of Governance and Engagement document. They write, "radical reciprocity does not assume all parties are equal (in power or resources) or that agreements are finite transactions; rather, it asks us to enter into agreements as ongoing relationships in which we acknowledge power dynamics, respect our differences, and share responsibility for the well-being of the relationship as a living entity." (pg 5)

We have taken inspiration from a variety of places for the creation of this document, including:

1. The Treaty made between Kim Senklip Harvey, The Arts Club Theatre, and The Citadel Theatre: <https://www.kimsenklipharvey.com/the-treaty>
2. Bodies In Translation's Principles of Governance and Engagement
<http://bodiesintranslation.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/BIT-Principles-of-Governance-and-Engagement.pdf>
3. Our Collaborator, Carmen Papalia's, 5 Tenets of Open Access:
<https://canadianart.ca/essays/access-revived/>
4. Accountability in a Time of Justice
<http://www.dismantlingracism.org/uploads/4/3/5/7/43579015/accountability.jjo.drworks.pdf>
5. Jill Carter's, Calling Out at "The Edge of the Woods": The Protocols as the Perlocutionary Event
6. Dylan Robinson's, Welcoming Sovereignty
7. David Garneau's, Imaginary Spaces of Conciliation and Reconciliation: Art, Curation, and Healing

A Note on Language and Relationship

It bears importance to share that this project does not aim to collapse Crip and Indigenous dramaturgies and experiences. The exclusions that our communities face emerge from very specific historical, cultural and political contexts. We locate the roots of ableism, sanism, and audism in colonial ways of assigning value and human dignity.

We use the language of Crip to include those who identify as Mad, Neurodiverse, Sick, Chronically Ill, and Disabled, as well as those who are *deemed* disabled by society and/or medical institutions whether or not they themselves accept that term; for example those for whom Deafness is a cultural identity not a medical condition. We use the word Crip as a political intervention, to turn attention onto, and to disrupt, as our collaborator Carmen Papalia writes, "the disabling conditions that limit a person and/or community's agency and potential to thrive."

We use the language of Indigenous with an acknowledgement of the many complex ways that community, family, belonging, polity, and heritage interact with systems of

state recognition.

The words Crip and Indigenous are both used as shorthand and are not intended to generalize or reduce our vast multiplicity of identities, experiences and affiliations.

Guiding Methodology

- Engage modalities of working which centre the body, place, and land as collaborators in creation;
- Challenge “empty-vessel” approaches to creation and production which require that we leave our identities, embodiments, and histories at the door of the studio or the stage. Instead, practice collaboration which centres relationship, collective care, self-determination, intervulnerability, interdependence, responsibility, reciprocity, adaptability, consent, celebration, emergence, and spiritual and cultural practice as core principles of creative practice;
- Engage with and transform systemic and interpersonal dynamics of power towards equity as part of the work of our collaboration, troubling the ways in which hierarchical approaches to creation and production reproduce broader systems within our work;
- Acknowledge ongoing social, cultural, political, structural, spiritual, economic violence and trauma, and the impacts that these continue to have on our communities and individual bodies. Hold and honour that this will at times be part of why we - as individuals and collectively - do things the way we do. Bridging from this we will move with our relationships, conversations and work at the pace of trust to support our capacity to engage in creative risk-taking;
- Acknowledge and honour the distinctions between and complexities of our identities. Actively make room for irreconcilable spaces to form, where we choose to work with other Creative Collaborators whose identities, embodiments, and histories are closer to our own. Uphold these spaces as central to our ability to collaborate.
- Expand our understandings of and relationships to time and space in the context of collaboration; undermining product-oriented process with approaches to working that take their lead from our physical, emotional, spiritual, cultural, and

cognitive access needs;

- Address that we are all working in place, often on land that is undergoing ongoing projects of colonization, with direct violent impact to Indigenous communities and artists; and that we often do so supported by government institutions or foundations engaged in maintaining and benefiting from the colonial project. This introduces critical questions about responsibility in relationship to advocacy, resource distribution, leadership, and representation at all levels of creation and production, and attention to protocols within our work.
- We will work together to decide what modalities of decision-making serve each moment of our collaboration best.

Approach

Our Methodology will be upheld by our Approach which is made-up of the following values:

1) Wellness

- Respect ourselves and others
- Take care of ourselves and centre wellbeing
- Communicate your needs
- Honour the dignity and the responsibility of our emotional responses
 - Emotional responses are a type of truth telling – they point to a truth of experience and so often in spaces language goes directly towards how to manage instead of taking the step of recognizing that those responses are valid and useful and truthful
- Consent is an ongoing process
- Centre Joy, Play, Pleasure and Resilience individually and collectively

2) Community

- Honour each other's self-determination and identities
- Lift each other up
- Allow others the space to share
- Be open to learning and sharing
- Participate and do what you need to stay engaged

3) Risk

- Take self determined risks
- Be open to and be willing to engage (discomfort) unsettling feeling states, non-resolution, and failure and welcome these as generative
- Bring willingness to dive deep, examine the self (self-reflexivity), and to potentially recreate the self as an ongoing practice
- Value conflict and different ideas as opportunities for transformation and connection

4) Communication

- Ask questions before assuming (or assume positive intent)
- Intent and Impact
 - Being thoughtful. Intention matters, impact matters more. Recognizing the duality of those systems in our communication, prioritizing the results of impact.
- Accepting responsibility for our impact
- “This is my current thought” – You, your beliefs, and your understandings are dynamic, and constantly in development and transformation. Let’s welcome that!
- Get the most out of this experience and be aware of time constraints
- Responding in a timely manner to communication
 - Recognizing and honouring the multiple and intersectional engagements that we have with time
- Speak your truth and speak from the "I"
- We agree to communicate on our agreed platform
- Confidentiality

Protocols

1) Openings

Turning to Indigenous practices, we see the importance of beginning our gatherings in a good way by identifying ourselves - however we see fit - to renew our agreements, and state our purpose in coming together.

2) Pace and shape of our work

We will remain in an emergent and responsive shape throughout all of our meetings, adjusting pace and shape of our work to reflect the pace and shape of all Collaborators. We are encouraged to name our access needs as they arise

throughout all meetings. To support full participation of all collaborators we will activate our Access Practices each time we come together. These Access Practices can be found at the end of this document.

3) Closings

In care for the deep nature of our engagement we will conduct a closing each time we gather, to support us in leaving and taking what will be most useful for us.

Our Methodology, Approach, and Protocols are further upheld by our Access Practices outlined in ***Appendix A***.

Activities

Our work together will be comprised of the following:

1) Regular Web-Based Convenings

Convenings are the central method through which we will engage in:

- a) Ongoing formation and nourishment of our collaborative community;
- b) Cross-pollination and knowledge exchange in relationship to practice; and
- c) Collective decision-making regarding Project Activities, Timeline, Vision and Direction.

Convenings will take place approximately every 6 weeks starting February 2019 through to June 2021, and will be a maximum of 3 hours in length. Convenings dates will be proposed by the Co-Coordination, and will be scheduled in accordance with the majority availability of the Creative Collaborators. In a desire to engage in mutual-responsibility for the shape and depth of this project, it is expected that the Co-Coordination are present at all Convenings, and that all Collaborators are in attendance at all, or as many Convenings, as is within their capacity.

2) Public-facing events

The Co-Coordination, with Collaborators who elect to be involved, will produce a series of semi-regular, public-facing web-based events throughout 2019 - 2020. Through these events, we will share our work out through our own networks, and those of our partners: The Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas, HowlRound and SpiderWebShow.

Collaborators are always invited, though are never required to take part in, or produce content for, public-facing events.

Collaborators will help to promote public-facing events through their networks.

3) In-person gathering

- a) Extend web-based work through embodied immersive place-based exchange
- b) Live-stream and digital documentation of gathering to engage wider performance ecologies in knowledge and practice building

Creative, Documentation and Attribution Practices

All of our Activities - whether internal or public-facing - will be conducted on our terms. We commit to non-extractive practices in the ways in which we gather, document, and share our work. This means:

- 1) That how we as individual Creative Collaborators participating within this project represent ourselves, and how we get represented publicly is part of an ongoing negotiation.
- 2) That we are credited for any and all internal or public-facing work that gets created, and memory of our involvement is kept alive.
- 3) That we will use Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs Licensing (CC BY-NC-ND) for all internal and public-facing works created This license is Creative Commons' most restrictive license, only allowing others to download your works and share them with others as long as they credit you, but they can't change them in any way or use them commercially.
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode>

Resources

Funds Raised

As we exist within the matrix of settler colonial capitalism we find it necessary to make transparent how monetary and other resources are involved in our exchange.

This project has received \$\$X,XXX.00 CAD in funding from the Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas, and \$XX,XXX.00 CAD from the Canada Council for the Arts, making a total of \$XX,XXX.00 CAD. The LMDA funds were raised by mia susan amir, and the Canada Council funds were raised by mia susan amir and Roo “DeLesslin” George-Warren, but submitted through mia susan amir’s account. All of the funds that have not yet been paid out are currently held in an account for this project by Convener & Co-Coordinator mia susan amir.

The Co-Coordinators have developed a budget for the resources which can be found here: [weblink](#)

Along with the monetary honourarium we commit to mobilize evolving practices and resources to facilitate the full participation of all Co-Coordinators and Collaborators alike.

Honouraria

Within this budget each of the Co-Coordinators are to receive an honourarium of \$X,XXX.00 CAD.

Within this budget each of the Creative Collaborators can receive an honourarium of up to \$X,XXX.00 CAD.

Payment of honouraria is based on an equity model. This means that Creative Collaborators self-determine what they need by way of monetary resources in order to participate in the Colloquium. For some this may mean payment of the full \$X,XXX.00 CAD honourarium; while for others, based on income and/or access to wealth this may mean choosing to receive a portion of the fee. This information is detailed by Creative Collaborators in ***Appendix B***.

All Creative Collaborators receive \$XXX.00 CAD as a first installment of their honourarium. For each future installment, Creative Collaborators self-determine the amount of the remaining \$X,XXX.00 CAD of their honourarium that they would like to receive as per the Payment Schedule (below). Creative Collaborators indicate this in their completed ***Appendix B***.

Accountability

In a commitment to challenge notions of productivity and instead centre principles of co-creation in our work, payment of honouraria to Creative Collaborators is not tied to the creation of any material artifact, but as one mode of honouring participation in Convenings, and contributions that therein arise, to the collective. In this project, Creative Collaborators self-identify and share via **Appendix B**:

1. What meaningful participation in the Colloquium means to them;
2. The criteria they would like to use to assess their participation

Project Co-Coordiators will check-in with Creative Collaborators after 2 convenings are missed to assess if the project trajectory is still in alignment with their desires, interests, and capacities, and to identify any ways that access can be better supported. Amendments to Appendix B will be made based on this check-in if necessary.

Payment Schedule

In order to receive honouraria, Collaborators must submit an invoice to mia susan amir on or before the dates specified below.

December 19, 2019	\$XXX.00
March 19, 2020	Amount TBD by Collaborator
June 20, 2020	Amount TBD by Collaborator
September 22, 2020	Amount TBD by Collaborator
December 21, 2020	Amount TBD by Collaborator
March 20, 2021	Amount TBD by Collaborator

APPENDIX A: Access Practices

This is an evolving list of practices intended to support full accessibility during any live meetings. Please feel free to add to this document!

Identifying ourselves

We recognize that in general and specifically in digital spaces, it is important to not assume our own recognizability and continue to identify ourselves every time we speak.

Navigating the Technology

Please ensure you are muted when you are not speaking. Please use headphones when possible.

Visual Description

In all of our check-ins we will offer visual descriptions of ourselves and the space we are in. Any visual images used in our work will be accompanied by visual descriptions.

ASL Interpretation

Will be provided for each meeting when required.

Meeting Length & Breaks

Our meetings will last a maximum of 3-hours. We will take a minimum of two, 10-minute breaks, each time we meet, with additional breaks as needed.

Pace and shape reflect the pace and shape of Collaborators

We will remain in an emergent and responsive shape throughout all of our meetings, adjusting pace and shape of our work to reflect the pace and shape of all Collaborators. We are encouraged to name our access needs as they arise throughout all meetings.

Live Meeting Notes

A link to a "Live Meeting Notes" GoogleDoc will be distributed prior to each meeting. This document will include the proposed agenda. We will collectively share the role of note-taking as we are able, and will establish note takers at the beginning of each meeting, to support those who are joining the meeting late. The notes taken in this document will serve as a record of the meeting for future reference.

Signposting throughout meetings

Non-human collaborators welcome

Consent is a consistent act not to be assumed

Guardianship

Folx volunteer to 'Guardian' our access practices for the duration of our convening, interrupting when those access practices aren't being meaningfully incorporated.

APPENDIX B: Creative Collaborator Forms

NOTE: The following Forms must be signed and returned along with the entire above document by DATE.

1) Creative Collaborator Self-Determined Accountability Practices Form

1. Meaningful participation in the Colloquium to me means:

-

2. The criteria I will use to self-assess my participation

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2) Payment Schedule Form

Creative Collaborators receive a maximum of \$X,XXX.00 CAD in honouraria for participation in this project.

For each future installment, Creative Collaborators self-determine the amount of the remaining \$X,XXX.00 CAD of their honourarium that they would like to receive as per the Payment Schedule (below).

Should Creative Collaborators run into financial hardship or for any other reason wish to alter the amounts they wish to be paid, please contact the Co-Coordiators.

In order to receive honouraria, Collaborators must submit an invoice to mia susan amir on or before the dates specified below.

December 22, 2019	\$XXX.00
March 19, 2020	_____
June 20, 2020	_____
September 22, 2020	_____
December 21, 2020	_____
March 20, 2021	_____

3) Creative Collaborator Living Agreement Consent Form

Through signature below, I (Print Name Here) hereby express my understanding of, and consent to all parts of the Living Agreement of the Unsettling Dramaturgy Colloquium.

Creative Collaborator Signature

Date