

The Arts & Equity Project Event Recap

The Arts and Equity Project explores topics like intersectionality, diversity and inclusion with the goal of providing Kingston artists and arts organizations with tools and resources to advance equity in the arts. Through peer-to-peer learning, the project provides participants with insight and resources to help grow their work and practice, as well as opportunities to discuss equity-related issues, and learn about the experiences of artists and community groups who are working to reduce barriers to participation.

Funded by an Ontario Arts Council project grant, the two-year long project wrapped up with a panel discussion on Saturday, 23 March 2019. You can read details about the event below.

Equity Principles in Action



The Arts & Equity Project A Kingston Arts Council initiative

Equity Principles in Action
Panel Discussion and Q&A

Saturday, 23 March 2019, 1 - 4 pm
Tett Centre for Creativity and Learning
Pay What You Can

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'Equity Principles in Action' was a moderated panel discussion exploring ideas and practices that relate to equity, diversity and accessibility. Guest speakers Nikki Shaffeeullah ([The AMY Project](#)), Kevin A. Ormsby ([Cultural Pluralism for the Arts Ontario](#)) and Cyn Rozeboom ([Tangled Art + Disability](#)) shared their experiences and learnings from their community-engaged work in Toronto. KAC Administrative and Communications Officer Diana Gore moderated the discussion. We were thrilled to welcome Abena Beloved Green as our guest artist at the event. Abena performed a poetic summary to conclude the event.



Left: Guest speaker Kevin A. Ormsby. Photo: Liz Cooper
Right: Guest speaker Cyn Rozeboom. Photo: Liz Cooper

The goals of the event were to build community ties, share resources, reflect on our understanding and approaches to inclusion and hear inspiring, real-world examples of how equity principles can be implemented into arts practice. Artists, arts workers and professionals joined the conversation as we continued our collective efforts to transform the ways we work.



L to R: Cyn Rozeboom, Nikki Shaffeeulla, Kevin A. Ormsby, Diana Gore. Photo: Liz Cooper

Each of the guest speakers had the opportunity to discuss aspects of their work as they relate to inclusivity and access. Nikki Shaffeeullah reviewed ten different ways organizations and artists can build safe containers for their work and practice. Kevin A. Ormsby focused on the need to decentralize spaces and turn discomfort into inquiry. Cyn Rozeboom spoke about disability as community building, the differences between the medical and social model of disability and encouraged attendees to make small but permanent changes to their organizations. KAC Administrative and Communications Coordinator Diana Gore led the panel discussion, touching on topics like personal accountability, overcoming systemic barriers and mentorship opportunities in the arts. Local poet and dancer Abena Beloved Green delivered a moving spoken word poetic summary that touched on all the different topics and concepts explored throughout the afternoon.



Attendees at 'Equity Principles in Action.' Photos: Liz Cooper

About the speakers:

Nikki Shaffeeullah is a theatre-maker, writer, facilitator, and community-engaged artist. She has been Artistic Director of The AMY Project, an award-winning organization providing barrier-free performing arts training and mentorship for youth, since 2015, and also teaches performance and directs in the University of Toronto Scarborough's Theatre and Performance Studies program. She has also been a resident of the Director in Development program at Canadian Stage; Editor-in-Chief of *alt.theatre magazine*; founder/Artistic Director of the artist-activist performance group Undercurrent Theatre; and Assistant Artistic Director of Jumblies Theatre. Nikki holds an MFA in Community-Engaged Theatre from the University of Alberta. Nikki believes art should disrupt the status quo, centre the margins, engage with the ancient, dream of the future, and be for everyone.

Artistic Director of KasheDance, **Kevin A. Ormsby** works as a dancer/choreographer and Arts Strategies Consultant. He is the Program Manager for Cultural Pluralism in the Arts Movement Ontario (CPAMO), Professor of Dance Performance at Centennial College and an Adjunct Artist with Dance Exchange in Washington, DC. An Ontario Arts Council Chalmers Fellowship recipient, OAC KM Hunter Dance Award 2016 nominee, Toronto Arts Council's Cultural Leaders Fellow, and Canada Council for the Arts' Victor Martyn Lynch — Staunton Award recipient in



Dance. With a career that spans over 30 years, he has performed with various companies and projects in Canada, the Caribbean and the United States. He currently sits on the Board of Nia Centre for the Arts, Dance Collection Danse and Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts.

Cyn Rozeboom (Tangled Art + Disability Executive Director) has over 25 years of experience in the non-profit arts sector as a fundraiser, communications specialist, artist, and administrator. Career highlights include founding the Art of the Danforth festival; serving as the inaugural Managing Director of East End Arts; helping establish the Next Stage Theatre festival during her tenure at the Toronto Fringe; and three years with Hospital Audiences Inc. a group which provides innovative arts-access services in New York City. She has an MA in Communications, a Certified Fundraising Executive designation, and a college diploma in Radio & Television Arts. Cyn is Mad-identified and is particularly interested in the contradictions of human nature, construction of identities through story-telling, and the fluid dynamics of power within social structures.

Abena Beloved Green is a poet, writer, and dancer who seeks to create, engage, and elevate through her artistic work. She was a two-time member of the Halifax Slam Team, competing in the Canadian Festival of Spoken Word. She is also the 2016 winner of the Atlantic Poetry Prize, (now Nova Writes) and 3rd place finalist in the 2017 Canadian Individual Poetry Slam (Vancouver, British Columbia). Abena is a Canadian of Ghanaian heritage who has lived in Nova Scotia most of her life and recently moved to Eastern Ontario. She is passionate about sustainability, creativity, and connection between living beings. Her first book of poetry, "The Way We Hold On" was published by Pottersfield Press in the spring of 2018.

The Arts & Equity Project is supported by an Ontario Arts Council Arts Service Project Grant and through collaborative partnerships with the Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts, Kingston Immigration Partnership, and H'art Centre.