

SUMMARY OF 2018 GATHERINGS - ADHOC ASSEMBLY

ADHOC Assembly invited Indigenous and culturally diverse artists to circle up for Affinity Gatherings in multiple regions across Turtle Island. These meetings placed the needs of artists and organizations formerly marginalized by systemic inequity at the centre. Below is a summary of recurring ideas from six gatherings hosted in 2018:

Edmonton Affinity (April 11 & November 1), Calgary Affinity (April 5 & October 29), SummerWorks Exchange in association with Generator TO (August 13), MontreALL commons (May 18-19).

Resources from the resourced

It can be difficult to imagine ideal outcomes when adequate resources to realize them are not readily available. It can take concerted effort to entitle oneself to demand resources, such as money, facility access, and interpreters from dominant cultured organizations. Resourced organizations should make conscious commitment to make tangible material offers that match their expressed intentions to create a more equitable community.

Trust

Establishing trust is key to partnerships, and trust must continue to be built through all stages of a relationship. The necessity of risk assessment of prospective projects and willingness to walk away, if safe artistic practicing cannot be supported, builds such trust. Unsolicited compromise, accommodation or self-extension by the more resourced party is a strong beginning.

Isolation

Folx expressed discomfort around being the sole representative of their community in the room, and the labour that entails. Many have evolved mechanisms such as shadow networks through which to check engager's references, identifying allies, inclusion riders, requesting a community witness in the room. It is agreed that better representation in all roles (leadership, onstage, backstage, audience) alleviates some of this discomfort.

Creative agency

There is a strong desire for creative autonomy, and aversion to curatorial influence from parties external to the work. Producers, presenters, commissioners, collaborators must be receptive to boundaries and aware of the emotional cost of being expected to reproduce trauma. Unsolicited offers of discussion around such boundaries and communication about the emotional and mental labour is appreciated.

Logistic clarity

Clarity of needs upfront is essential, eg time needed with script to prepare, energy management, intervention protocols. Planning to address one's own needs requires producer/presenter/engager transparency around schedule, budgets, contracts, parameters of work. It is incumbent on engagers to prepare for potential needs of artists before and during engagement.

Process

Meaningful engagement requires that patience and flexibility be built into the process from the outset, and is often best driven by questions rather than answers, discoveries rather than expectations. This can be supported in a structure that enables all parties to engage with ongoing negotiations around malleable parameters.

Acknowledgements: This report was synthesized by Grace Phan, Cole Alvis and DM St. Bernard based on notes taken by scribes at each event, for whose work we are grateful. As per our commitment to those assembled, remarks are neither attributed, nor shared in full.