

**FIRST NATIONS**

**DIALOGUES**

**NEW YORK**

**5-12 JANUARY**

**2018**

**SUMMARY REPORT**



# BACKGROUND

The First Nations Dialogues New York was a First Nations sector led, gathering of artists, presenters, curators and producers held across various locations in New York from the 5th - 12th January 2018.

The First Nations Dialogues built on decades of First Nations sector gatherings and organising by our Elders and practitioners who have contributed a lifetime of work to enable these important gatherings to take place.

The First Nations Dialogues explored opportunities for a new four-year strategy of engagement, collaboration, exchange and expression.

The First Nations Dialogues Facilitators were:

- Emily Johnson, Catalyst
- Lee-Ann Buckskin, Deputy Chair of the Australia Council for the Arts
- Paola Balla, artist, curator
- Angela Flynn, Kukuni Arts
- BlakDance, National Peak Body for Indigenous Dance in Australia
- Vallejo Gantner, Artistic Director

# OVERVIEW

The project initiated the development of a 4 year Australian and North American First Nations performing arts strategy for performance makers, New York and USA field curators, presenters and market. Facilitated in Australia by BlakDance and Ilbijerri, in partnership with Yup'ik Alaskan artist and curator Emily Johnson and New York based Australian artistic director and programmer, Vallejo Gantner.

# PURPOSE

The First Nations Dialogues provided working opportunities to discuss and develop pathways and networks for performing arts across North America and Australia.

The First Nations Dialogues developed partners and allies to mobilise and profile First Nations Performing Arts in North America. It began with building dialogue and relationship through a carefully curated program.

# OBJECTIVES

For the Australian and North American First Nations performing arts sector:

- Capacity Building: To develop capacity by operating within international non-Indigenous markets - what they are, how they operate, what is the tone/opportunity and who gets cut through and why
- Sector Development: To create a network amongst Australian First Nations peers attending the market to work collectively to increase the visibility, reputation and reach of the Indigenous arts sector in international non-Indigenous markets
- Market Development: To create a platform for live in-market assessment for future activity and business planning
- Artistic and Business Development: Creating opportunity and access for Australian First Nations performance makers, with a focus on dance, to explore the NY market (and greater performing arts market internationally through the global context of NY in January), develop artistically, and to utilise the learnings to shape more targeted business strategies into the future
- Cultural Development: To build a platform for connecting to internationally based Indigenous peers to deepen access to the Indigenous arts sector internationally.

# FOR THE NON-INDIGENOUS PERFORMING ARTS SECTOR:

- Network Development: To enable relationships to form between non-Indigenous performing arts leaders and the Australian Indigenous performing arts sector
- Capacity Building: Developing the capacity of presenters, producers, directors, curators to better understand and program First Nations contemporary performance
- Cultural Development: Developing strong collegiate relationships with Australian First Nations and North American First Nations contemporary performance makers and working collaboratively with them
- Market Development: Cultivating ambassadors for First Nations Australian and global Indigenous performance.

# FOR FUNDERS:

- Sector Development: To invest in professional development of Australian First Nations arts leaders to learn and engage in their priority international markets
- Cultural Development: To enhance the cultural development of predominantly non-Indigenous funding agencies by their active participation in-market, providing a richer, more nuanced and sophisticated understanding of the self-determined opportunities for the Australian First Nations performing arts sector in priority international markets
- Market Development: To work alongside the Australian First Nations performing arts participants to learn more deeply about their cultural content, their work, their priorities and the opportunities that exist in order to enhance the agencies capacity to broker opportunities for the Australian First Nations performing arts sector in future
- Leadership: For the Australian funding agency to take a lead role internationally when it comes to working with First Nations artists.

# PROGRAM:

WELCOME TO LENAPEHOKING: CLOSED PROTOCOL CEREMONY AND LUNCH  
As is customary, The First Nations Dialogues included protocol and ceremony hosted by the Lenape, traditional custodians of Lenapehoking // New York at Bear Mountain.

**Session 1:** Getting to know each other; round table discussion and provocations  
5 January 2018 3:00 PM - 6:00 PM

**Session 2:** Identifying the Pathways; round table discussion and provocations  
8 January 2018 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM

**ISPA - Global First Nations Regional Update and Reception**  
10 January 2018 5:30 - 7:30 PM

**Session 3:** Voluntary working group  
11 January 2018 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM

**Session 4:** The Future Isn't Colonised; Workshop with Paola Balla  
12 January 2018 10:00 AM - Noon

# OUTCOMES:

- Developed deeper capacity and commitment within presenters, producers, directors, curators to better understand and program First Nations contemporary performance
- Developed strong collegiate relationships with Native American contemporary performance makers and scope for working collaboratively with them
- Cultivated future opportunity and access for First Nations Australian and North American performance makers
- Developed 'on ramp' opportunities for artists to explore the New York and USA market, develop artistically, understand how they can best position themselves in the market and fit
- Cultivated ambassadors for First Nations Australian and North American performance.

## **First Nations North American Delegates**

Emily Johnson - Catalyst

Rulan Tangen - Dancing Earth

Diane Fraher- American Indian Artists Inc. (AMERINDA)

Cynthia Lickers-Sage - Kaha:wi Dance now IPAA

Quita Sullivan - New England Foundation of the Arts (NEFA)

Andre Bouchard - Walrus Arts Management and Consulting, LLC

Muriel Miguel - Spiderwoman Theater

Deborah Ratelle - Spiderwoman Theater

Lulani Arquette - Native Arts and Cultures Foundation

Martha Redbone - Independent producer

Lenape Centre

Sandra Laronde - Red Sky Performance

JJ Lind - Independent producer

Ryan Cunningham - Independent producer

## **First Nations Australian Delegates**

Lee-Ann Tjunypa Buckskin - Australia Council for the Arts

Paola Balla - Artist, Curator, Writer and Lecturer

Merindah Donnelly - BlakDance

Jermaine Beezley - ILBIJERRI Theatre Company

Angela Flynn - Kukuni Arts

Ben Graetz - Independent Producer

Sarah Jane Norman - Independent Artist

## **Non-Indigenous Delegates; guest organisations, producers and presenters**

Vallejo Gantner - Independent Presenter

Collette Brennan - Abbotsford Convent

Judy Harquail - Ontario Presents

APAM | Brisbane Powerhouse

Performance Space 122

Henry Street Settlement

Danspace Project

Abrons Arts Center

Tommy Kriegsmann - Arktype

Gibney Dance  
Elsie Management  
Western Arts Alliance  
National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)  
Canada Council for the Arts  
International Society for the Performing Arts (ISPA)  
Hopkins centre for arts  
Performing Lines  
Ontario Presents  
Portland Institute for Contemporary Art (PICA)  
DANCEHOUSE  
Los Angeles Performance Practice  
Mellon Foundation  
Melbourne Fringe  
Walrus Arts Management and Consulting, LLC  
DanceHouse Vancouver  
Embassy of Australia, Washington DC  
Vera List Center for Art and Politics  
ArtChangeUS  
Safe Harbors  
MAP Fund  
Rattlestick Playwrights Theatre  
Imaginary Theatre  
Jerome Foundation  
Ping Chong + Company  
Michèle Steinwald - Independent  
Karen Fischer - Pasifika Artists  
La Mama NY  
LA Performance Practice  
CounterPulse, San Francisco  
Fusebox, Austin, TX  
Portland Institute of Contemporary Arts

# SCRIBED SESSIONS

First Nations Dialogues Session #1

at Henry St. Settlement

3-6 pm Friday, 5 January 2018

Scribed by Nicole Loeffler-Gladstone

Arriving and hugs among those who know each other. Emily feeds people, as always :) exchanging basic info as we get to know one another...more arrivals, introductions and acknowledgement of country / land / territory... passing of protocols

Why: Fueling discussions among Indigenous artists. What can/will those of us in the room DO?! Individual and collective.

How do we as Indigenous people want our art out in the world?

We acknowledge the loooong history of conversations with other arts orgs, our ancestors, etc.

How do Indigenous people need to be treated when entering a white org?

The negative: systemic unchecked racism, perceived invisibility, history of violence, genocide and a cloak of dominant western cannon.

[Doodle] A bridge between the negative and what we can and will do for positive change.

Where we're at: Henry Street Settlement. Muriel is dropping history on us! NAACP born around this table!!!!!!

Exchange.

Introductions: Who, what where...and possibility. BUT FIRST! A story: in relation to possibility. Dance in relation to healing. Relations/relationships bring/breed consciousness shift and putting First Nation Peoples FIRST.

[Doodle] Names around the table.

People scramble for a concrete offering. Well, some, at least. What is the substantive change? Moving past symbolic change?



It's reassuring to know someone for decades, in this city.

[Doodle] Rising sun. Songs that are sung when special people get up in the morning.

[Doodle] Meaningful and necessary conversations. Who was your grandmother? And who was yours? I knew her!  
How do we participate in our own emancipation when we are used within it as recreation?

[Doodle] Eyes looking. What are you looking forward to, here in NYC?

NOT JUST A SEAT AT THE TABLE—THE WHOLE TABLE — ALL THE TABLES

Native performers.

Native directors.

Native producers.

Native writers.

Native storytellers.

People come to us.

1) How do we exit/dismantle the context of whiteness/colonialism?

1.5) It's cold. Attentions wander toward the end of the introductions because, tbh, it's hard to listen. It's hard to focus.

Catch up —> Acceleration —> Move forward.

Can we create a commonality?

[Doodle] Tradition, experiment and contemporary are linked, but what lives in the middle?

The group breaks, reconvenes in three smaller groups so we can discuss things that were said multiple times.

International exchange in its most beautiful form. Critical relationships: mechanisms for residency, defined protocol for doing well/being correct. The work is framed to invite the audience. Led by First Nations People. Opportunities to build leadership.

DEEPER THAN JUST PRESENTATION

Angela's group: Ecosystem change happens on all levels. Homogenous use of the term "Indigenous." Getting permission? Who has the authority to say something is or isn't Indigenous? What is a system of accountability, an artistic "Fair Trade"?

Legal boundaries to calling something Native?

Awareness that you can't just rely on one person.

Paola's group: Where are you from is a complex question. Claiming indigeniety on a public platform, but there are other ways to come home. Art helps us understand who we are. We're not the Indian police. You write your own bio, but we're not making you Native. Which group within a tribal group is the right group? The particular histories...some states don't have federally/state recognized tribes. There are histories that get in the way of knowing the protocol. Traditional values need to be part of this discussion. Is there a conversation around asking?

Groups talking, groups snacking.

WHAT IS THE PROTOCOL FOR MAKING MISTAKES?

An investment in decolonization feels like investment in our own survival. It's a lifestyle, not points toward being a good person. Some acknowledgements get normalized over time, while others don't. Why? Because of land? Conventionally, in classrooms, Native people are referred to in the past. PRESENT TENSE equals the decolonization of consciousness (for example), the difference between centering versus presencing. The curator lets go of hierarchy and turns toward partnership. Allegiance and alliance. Equity equals a shift in perspective on hierarchy and lack.

1. You need to ask the questions. (There is no general question and no general perspective.)

2. Funding = Resources = Access = Training

3. Being OK with the answer. The last word belongs to the artist.

Someone said: She was wonderful. She was a little scary because she always told the truth.

Sometimes there's such an overwhelming need to share about these topics that we speak until we run dry, and that also makes it hard to listen. We're living under a sense of scarcity for listening. And instead of listening to make space for more listening, we talk and talk at the first sign of listening.

There is always international exchange.

1. Beautiful relationships
2. Sharing and listening residencies
3. Clear protocol for presenters/audience
4. Audience Feels invited to receive work
5. Always Indigenous-led
6. Mentorships/partnership
7. Funding is Indigenous-led
8. The structure we know is dismantled

This work creates the space we need. This work in the world changes the perspective. Land acknowledgement starts with kids. Spaces we work in are safe.

- Rich, post-show critical discourse.
- This feels normal, present, everyone in the world is invested because decolonization is life, not a workshop.
- PRESENTERS ARE NOT CENTERED
- Each step is fuel-fueled (???)
- [Doodle] Circle within a circle: Gets big, but starts small
- Non-Indigenous allies make their actions public.

What is an Indigenous work?

[Doodle] It's more than creative control. It's specific to each project and each work.

[Doodle] Eyes looking: What does Indigenous look like? What "percent" Native is it?

- • Language: Permission, to avoid cultural appropriation
- • A system of accountability, but who has the ability to...pass judgement?
- • Community consultation. But what does that look like?

All of the above is specific to where the work is presented.

Indigenous orgs are always the bridesmaid :(

1. Ask the questions to begin with, with a feedback loop
2. Funding and resources
3. The last word has to be with the creative circle.

[Doodle] Power is greater than creative control

Non-Indigenous people need to ask the questions, but they don't, out of fear. Which stems from a feeling that it all emanates from you (the non-Indigenous person).

An interjection: Not about removing discomfort, but moving through it. Unhinge the dominant narrative. An advisory board is less than an advisory circle. Make it a noncolonial practice.

1. Circle of elders
2. Seeking balance means lots of definitions
3. Last-minute invites are very insulting and professionally ineffective - \_\_\_ -
4. Teaching protocols
5. Notion of identity and belonging
6. Culture first
7. No art without people
8. We're all related
9. Fluidity

Trust. Respect. Reciprocity. Listening.

Someone said: We're. Not. The. Problem.

Someone said: We've always been who we've always been.

Who gets invited in by white orgs?

Lateral violence. A term thrown at us when we're just being honest.

Longevity means more than one leader/the concept of the circle.

Trying to maintain cultural practices, and the fear white people have about getting it wrong is a stuck moment that we need to work through.

[Doodle] An empty box is a space for more than healing. A space for children to be born into healing.

Lateral violence is a term like white victimhood —> Is there a relationship to respectability politics? —> Still operating within a context of whiteness —> Which sees Native people as being 1D one dimensional if existing at all.

Our next steps: Provocations to dig deeper.

[Doodle] Keep the frame of possibility in your mind.

# SCRIBED SESSIONS

First Nations Dialogue #2

Monday, Jan 8 from 11-2pm

at Henry Street Settlement

Scribed by Tatyana Tenenbaum

Emily Introduction - What we can do to change? How to use our individual and collective power to shift the hierarchical structure of arts and therefore dominant society. Acknowledging the work that is happening in other circles to forward this conversation.

Friday recap -

Moving into positive solution and action steps. Acknowledge the unchecked racism in the room and the culture, the invisibility of indigenous culture and the cloak of western culture.

Unhinge the dominant narrative of the western canon / bridge vocabulary gap / address fear around privilege [for white folks or non-indigenous folks] / what is an indigenous project? / When producers or presenters engage with Indigenous artists, those artists must have control and be given “the last word”

ask / listen / feedback / loop - the last word must be with the indigenous artist

continual programming and collaboration, not checking boxes. colonization of consciousness.

Indigeneity as centre rather than the hierarchy

Non-indigenous allies need to take a more active role in stating these priorities publicly

Everyone introduced themselves (speaking very quickly! this is very summarised)

Merindah Donnelly - Wiradjuri, various dance and presenting histories led to current work with Blakdance, Australia's national peak body for contemporary Indigenous dance.

Paola Bella - Wemba-Wemba and Gunditjimarra - strongly rooted in matriarchal practices, visual artist and curator and teacher / curated the first indigenous exhibition at Australian Center of Contemporary Art - they had never had an indigenous exhibition. Fear and Hope.

Angela Flynn - Chinese and Tiwi culture equally present in upbringing and identity. Producer and presenter - Spirit Festival producer - Working with several Indigenous dance practitioners - International cooperation with Taiwanese company and Aboriginal dancers in Australia.

Vallejo Gantner - Australian living in New York - previous director of PS122 - speaking to the massive invisibility, coming from Australia, where there is more conversation in Australia. In comparison to New York - there is no conversation. How do we use this conversation as a useful springboard for those in the room to take action? How to we convert\* this room into a collection of ambassadors to make these strategies and knowledge cause a momentum?

\* this word choice was later questioned by Roberta.

Emily Intros "Long table format" - provocation is placed and then there is no leader. All of our knowledge is useful, but the council will hold the space and redirect if necessary. If you are sitting at the table you are actively engaged in talking. If you are in the outer ring you are actively engaged in listening. You can swap out at any time. ( Concentric circles are also is the start of Yupik cosmology, which starts at center and has four concentric circles...)

First provocation by Paola: Addressing 'Fear' - of unknown, of engaging with something you've never done before, etc. [In previous experience with education] found teachers are afraid of engaging with indigenous content because they are afraid of offense or getting it wrong. Breaking this 'fear' down - it is also a manifestation of Perfectionism, (White) Superiority, and 'needing to get it right.' Resident Elder (name?) referenced, refuses to teach on campuses and requires to teach on land, while walking " Ever noticed how white people are always worried about getting it wrong, and we worry about getting it right?" Aboriginal people are always striving to honor their ancestors. How to understand what the fear is first, and then break these things down. Sitting in the discomfort is necessary and important. Western world doesn't sit in pain or discomfort. There are gradations to this; in the States, there is more comfort in going to "therapy" and in Australia, less so. The arts is a fantastic vehicle for sitting inside the unknown. References a few performances that have been seen this week—one where a council of elders were drawn from the audiences and the performers said "it was inspired by Lenape people's protocol," and Merindah said it could have gone further, could have been phrased in a different way. "in honor of/in recognition of" [not actually sure what the exact suggestion was] and then bring Lenape in to advise the process. What came up in the circle - Fear and Hope.

Books referenced:

Decolonizing Methodologies by Linda Tuhiwai Smith.

'Creating' - is about channelling collective creativity / throughout colonisation indigenous people have survived through creativity / imagination / etc.

How do we move through Fear and get to Action?

Decolonizing Solidarity: Dilemmas and Directions for Supporters of Indigenous Struggles by Clare Land.

Getting non-aboriginal people to decolonise their own thinking first.



Paola - Who would like to talk about a “barrier” or addressing some fear, etc?

Muriel Miguel - [regarding audiences] They don't know if they should laugh or not. You say something and they feel uncomfortable to react authentically. [Speaks about a show that expressed some taboos about natives]. The audience that is mostly native thinks it's so funny. And non-indigenous people are very afraid to interact.

Paola - there are misconceptions about indigenous people being so noble and serious that they cant laugh at themselves or others. in fact, we laugh a lot at ourselves—and at white people because there is so much ridiculous in white culture.

Muriel - naming an audience character “Two Dogs Fucking”

Paola - humor is actually a subversive tool for disrupting a colonial space - subversion is a way of survival because we have survived so much trauma and genocide.

Muriel - sometimes it's the saddest things that we laugh at. After a show Daddy's Drunk, all these native people surrounded us. They were all telling their sob stories and this was causing so much laughter and relief. The outer circle was white people feeling mortified. They didn't know what to do. Why do we laugh? It's not only laughing at each other, but it's laughing at the tragedy.

Paola - As presenters, language is very important. How do you work through mistranslations when [the marketing language] is passed off to another member of the team? An indigenous artist might feel upset that they are not supported. All team members need to be on the same page. You might engage an aboriginal consultant. If you have an indigenous staff member, loading this kind of work onto them all the time might be too much and burn them out. But this external support could be useful in addressing the fear. It's all about time—deadlines, etc. So get the support you need. The most effective thing around language is to make sure the messages are very clear and they are being understood—but not taking away part of the selfdetermined messages of the work. How do you frame the context so that people know if laughter is ok?

Emily - [Redirecting] But there is a first step. Before we get the audiences there, we need to get the work presented. [to the American presenters] Do you have fear around presenting Indigenous work?

Judy Hussie-Taylor - Years ago I worked in Colorado and helped produce an Indigenous project. I learned a lot [about indigenous community] working there, more than on the East Coast where the history is more whitewashed. In Colorado and Southwest, there seemed to be more visibility of indigenous leaders. So you know who to “go to.” When I think about New York I think about where are we? I don’t know a lot about the Lenape. I don’t know who to go to. I know building relationships takes time... and then I feel like I don’t have the time, and then things move on. Real relationships, time is necessary. Do I call the Lenape Center? Who do I go to?

Diane Fraher - [Speaking about an event organized with Artists Space Books & Talks] - In regards to an event we were planning [launching *No Reservation: New York Contemporary Native American Art Movement* by David Martine, Published by AMERINDA 2017] , we reached out and they responded. The responses - “We would like to know what would you would like to do.” They said we would like to meet in person, and did. It was a wonderful conversation. When the event took place a month later, Pete Jemison was present and led a prayer. Space was reconfigured, and you could hear a pin drop. The author was honoured. The next day the curators from the Whitney said, they had never been in the presence of people who had so much love for each other. The artists said, “well we have known each other for a long time” and they said, “No, it was really special,” and we went back and forth. I said to the Whitney curators “How did it make you feel?” I could feel their discomfort and I could feel their longing. I pointed out, historically, when people have been with our people, they haven’t been so keen to leave. Artists books and Spaces also felt a revelatory experience. The native people were just themselves, and it was effortless.

Vallejo - Reflecting on the interaction with indigenous art/artists “there is nothing to fear, only to gain...” To MAP/ Moira Brennan - what are some of the roadblocks to bringing this work to fruition?

Moira Brennan - I have noticed, that when there aren’t indigenous representatives on the panel, the work is being perceived as marginal, insular, etc. The articulate pushback from indigenous artists that we have received is, “that’s not the intention of the work, that’s not the frame,” etc.

How can we change our mindset so we're not blocking this life-force? Coming from a culture that intends to block it, how can we alter our mindset so that blockage is removed as much as possible? Fear is a big piece of that in terms of the force of the racism in the structures that exist. As an individual, the sense that you will be held accountable to the racist structures if you try to push back?

Muriel - They will replace you

Australian presenter - Fear is so institutionalized and so hierarchical - it's predicated on having some kind of control of the outcome. When you are engaging with indigenous artists, you have to surrender some of that control.

Diane - Forced assimilation is part of the government program.

Vallejo - how can I jump the barrier to audiences within a contemporary frame? If I present the work within that frame, am I assimilating the work? Am I denying the indigenaeity?

Roberta Uno - I think you just have to do it. When I ran a theater in Massachusetts that was predominantly white, we just continued to present Indigenous work. We just did it. You have things to offer—residencies, commissions, etc. Just do it. Normalize it. Flood the programming with non-dominant perspectives. [Example given of a season focusing on work of James Baldwin] we just jumped in. We put it into every aspect of what we do. We were consistent about it, and then we put the time into the relationships. Also - let's talk about the binaries and missionary language that are being used here "how can we convert you?" etc... there are people of color in the room too, there is a whole spectrum of people; how can we be in this together? How can we help each other?

Muriel - but that doesn't happen. How does one approach PS122 without being fear of being blasted away or being ignored? A lot of us come from the East Side and East Village. [Addressing Roberta] I was there, it was great. There was a big conference and they didn't invite any Indians. A man [at this conference] got up there and talked about everyone and never talked about us. Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson... [reference unknown?] I almost got arrested! You think your job is on the line, or you might not get a job. Then, you go to the institutions and nobody calls you back. The fear is that you don't want to feel bad.

Diane? - that's why I said, we were just all ourselves.

Judy - I know that Artist Space Books & Talks had a 1 year program leading up to this event called "Decolonizing this Place." I was following it a little, and I think that.. in the late 90s something happened in the funding world where conversations got disrupted and shut down. I see my younger colleagues trying to pick up the thread.

Roberta - I think what we've seen in the USA because of the civil rights movement, the immigration, opens the door to a browning of America. Visibility comes out for people of color, but the institutional support is not behind it. We have Amerinda, but it doesn't have a facility. How can we recognize the "institutions" that already exist in these communities to build something? How can we stop the 2-track system of funding where White-led institutions get the majority of the funding and everyone else has to get a bit from everything else?

Paola - RISK - it's not reciprocal if the presenters aren't willing to take a risk with us. But it's worth it, as Diane said, when you get people in the room, and they experience reciprocity, then it works. You have to push control but then trust develops after that. Trust in longterm sustainable relationships is going to hold us up in the end.

Judy Harquail - Toronto - I am here today because the most passionate thing i have allowed myself to in the past several years is to work with Indigenous friends and presenters to bridge into the non-Indigenous community. I've had the privilege of working in very deep relationship development over the past couple of years. Yes, there is a lot of fear. I'm afraid to say something wrong. But the thing is, when you are a human and you create that relationship then you get to that place where you can move through that fear. And actually deal with that. We're all people. My big love in life is dance. I work with presenters who present all kinds of "world dance" all the time [examples given: Indian dance, Flamenco, etc]. So what's the big difference? Please don't take that as me being simplistic—but [indigenous art] — it's Art. And we want to share that art. I have found that audiences are usually very excited about experiencing it. And sure, questions will need to be answered and things will come up. But people are generally very generous. Curators are the Gatekeepers between the artists and the audiences.

I feel it is our responsibility to make that bridge. So it's tricky. At least once a week I know I am going to say something wrong. One of the organizations I work with presents multidisciplinary work - a number of years ago, through connections with our service organization (like APAP) there was a connection with the Indigenous Performing Arts Alliance in Canada. We acknowledged that there was a problem. So we went to a foundation and got a bag of money to pilot a program. We worked with three of our white-led presentations and pairs them with Indigenous organizations. This was a pilot. We are trying to make it national. It's "freaking" scary. But it's also so rewarding. If you open your heart and allow yourself what you don't know you will learn and get so much. The people around me have taken this on now too. I reached out to Emily yesterday to help me craft a land acknowledgment to say at the beginning of a session I was leading [as part of APAP]. She made one adjustment. And I did it, and I'm so glad.

Paola - I get scared doing the land acknowledgements too! We've all been colonized. But when you hear non-indigenous people doing these statements, you feel better. You feel seen and acknowledged. So—a lot of this is about succession. How to build these things into organizations as protocol. [example of curating indigenous work, where there was no precedent], we created an advisory board who are paid. Then you build relationships and now one of these Indigenous representatives then became a board member. There is now a permanent position for an indigenous person on the board. Uncle Larry [one of the advisors and mentor] - is passionate about promoting indigenous work all the time, not just during special programming. [not sure of the connection btw Uncle Larry and the last sentiment]

Judy Harquail - You can't just create a relationship with one person in an organization. In the next phase of the work we are going to do, we need to have state training for anyone who will be involved in this work—and venues are now lining up to do this. There is cultural training for everyone who is involved in this, including Janitors up to the Stakeholders and Board members. Because people move, and all that work gets lost. And that's wrong. And when you invite an artist into your organization, you can have all the best intentions, but if someone on your staff makes a mistake, that takes all the good work you are trying to do. Recently I was at a session and somebody said that "the flip side of love is not hate, it's fear." Sit with that and get the courage to say things that sometimes you shouldn't say.

Emily - you can feel this from Judy and the resonances from people in the room. We've been talking about for ages, how far behind the US is in terms of acknowledging indigenous lives and art. So what we are going to do now with all this energy and awareness. And we are going to leap forward. In that forward motion, sublimate that notion of "control." We have some great examples in the room.

Vallejo - Is there something specific that is about developing projects with/by Indigenous artists that is different from other people of color? How to approach this question as a curator?

Angela - it's about leveraging indigenous works out of being the "other" into being the "normal." doing co-presentations and engaging the other party from the beginning. It could be as simple as, "let's go see this show together and see what we think." [examples given] Yirramboi [ First Nations Arts Festival] , but with a Black Writers program, and also bringing in indigenous tech and theater staff, at every level. Bringing mentorship into it. [separate thought] Also, it is important to be bringing indigenous artists together, without an outcome required. We don't silo our art forms—it's not just dance, music, visual arts. It's more interdisciplinary by nature. And now it's the "cool thing" to be interdisciplinary, and we've been doing that for 2,000 years...haha. You have to take a more holistic approach to programming understanding the full impact of what we are offering.

Roberta - when I was a presenter and a funder, I would be invited to a few things that were super uncomfortable because I was the only non-white person present. On the one hand it was great, but we need to think much more intersectionally around anti-racism work. When there is indigenous work centered, we can bring other people of color in to that place at the table. Create mixed groups whenever possible. We could curate that table to be bigger.

Emily - Ok - around "just do it." as indigenous people, we just come to it and just do it, but in terms of broadening the funding, what is the process of funding the successful festivals [in Australia]. We don't have that success here.

Lee-Ann Tjunypa Buckskin - Deputy Chair for the Australian Council for the Arts - Thank you to everyone's contribution to this program. Australian council is doing work with North America, and South America—there is a global movement of us creating connections and networks with ourselves but also importantly that there is an audience base for us. There is a slow movement where First Nations [are gaining visibility]. Not just a silo but changes to the Australian Council where there are no longer various art form boards and we are all responsible for the change we are creating. Most Australians are acknowledging that this is an important thing to carry into the future that is all our futures.

Tony Grybowski - Chief executive of the Australian Council for the Arts - for nearly 50 years the Australian Council has had one of the only all-indigenous boards or councils driving changes. 5 years ago when we were looking at how to take this to another level, the whole concept of multi-arts and new platforms, it's about how artists speak and have expression. Putting them into silos is just a thing of the past. When we came to First Nations, looking at that, it's about embedding that in our strategy. It's very easy to compartmentalize but it's important to embed it, getting cultural training and having people in the organization with a clear passion and drive. It is a slow burn—but the last few years have been going to another level. Growing up in Australia there was no education about First Nations people. It's been growth for me, overcoming the fear to sit down with the artists in the communities and listening. [eating Kangaroo for the first time.] I had an opportunity to go to a closed indigenous festival, and it was quite a privilege as a white person. There isn't always time to talk and form relationships. There's a lot to learn, as white people. Sometimes you just have to listen. Then you go back to your community with that impact.

Lee-Ann - We are a grant funding body and it's peer-assessed. Artists themselves are looking at those art forms and "who is worthy?" From our strategy panels, they see the gaps that exist in the landscape. Our art as a nation is a byproduct of that culture. We have to remember the layers of content in there. But also... art is what the artist says it is.

Vallejo - Do you think we are so familiar with our own perspective of Western art that...??

Australian Presenter - there is a fear in non-indigenous presenters and that is our own lost culture and privilege. Navigating the post-colonial world for non-indigenous people too, is problematic as well. The fear of being rudderless, and having to hold the gaze of being in Australia without [the totality of colonial cohesion?] is hard

East Village arts worker - I want to talk about the “readiness.” There was a gathering with New York City Theater Leaders and a training with PISAB [People’s Institute for Survival & Beyond “Undoing Racism”] - and there was a non-representation of Indigenous leaders.

Muriel - In Minneapolis a few years ago there was a big group of us that came together PANGEA. It was wonderful. A lot of us got to speak. At least 100 of us. We were all native. That’s what was so exciting about it.

Tony - As a funding agency, it’s very difficult for us and we have a dialogue with the community and we did some research. The second one was a survey of presenters and what their audiences perceive about First Nations art. We presented this data back to the presenters. Audiences perceived that that 2% of presenting was of First Nations art - This perception is all the proof we needed. [Perceptions are reality]

Angela - [references a “Wordcloud” exercise about describing Indigenous art... and the reductive language that emerged, including “digeridoo,” etc.]

Merindah - That’s statistical too...

Tony - In contrast, in talking to Australian, 50-90% WANT to engage, but there isn’t the work to be explored by presenters.

Lee-Ann - We were interested in why. What were the blocks and barriers going on? The racism of the gatekeepers was actually speaking on behalf of the audiences without asking them. Determining what people want. And it was inaccurate. The presenters’ own cultural bias was prohibiting them from meeting the demand of First Nations work.



Diane - I have this feeling - i feel an imbalance, we have to contextualize everything here. The native people, in America, we don't have a place... we can't talk about putting a lot of energy into changing white-led institutions without talking about giving the indigenous-led organizations a home of their own...on their own terms. when presented with an opportunity, they don't do it. We have to acknowledge that this is part of what has to change. We cannot continue to be an ignored and humiliated people without speaking to this.

East Village woman - I'm not trying to discredit that, but I want to say that there are new Artistic Directors, movement of positive succession that wants to hold space.

Emily - rather than thinking of it as "making space," we're at a beautiful moment where it's not only about that, but a consciousness shift within society. Checking every bit of language—Dianne was saying, we are here and we need a space of our own. And that's not incumbent on white organizations to make space for us. We just do it. We do this work, and that's what generates the space. Also, about "the artists says what it is... "recently i presented two artists at Gibney Dance Center [explains the artists works being presented] and in the postshow, i forbade the words "traditional" and "contemporary." And in the talk, someone was talking about the ceremonial objects and referring to the masks in one of the artists' work, as ceremonial. And Mike and Miquel [those artists] said, "but Maria's felt is ceremonial. Why aren't you ascribing that word to the felt, and listening to Maria about what she is doing?"

Muriel - I also think there are spaces we are needed in. I've been in Canada. I was [at a reserve in Canada] doing work that was about "abuse" and I didn't know the work that was happening on that reserve. I didn't know the story, and all these women were coming up to me and crying. And that's when I realized that we were needed, and started doing the Material Witness and the Spiderwomen Circles, etc... but it doesn't happen here. We tried to do it in the States, but it was very very hard because we don't get the support here. We took it to different places and into towns in Canada, but the difference about there and here... the need there was so great. With that, [the art leader in the Canadian reserve] has built so much more. And all of it came building on top of what we did. Also—i'm sitting here and I am getting pissed off. And I realize that I have a lot of anger about what has happened in New York. They got rid of the Community House... it was wonderful and it's down to 1 room. All of it seems to be so far away.

I can talk about my feelings, but at the same time, where the fuck are we? I think my rage, my anger, stops this process. As I listen to myself I think, I want to start yelling, but i can feel it in my stomach. When we go begin from theater to theater looking for a place. Begging. That shows you where native people are here in NY.

Angela - I just wanted to say as an Indigenous presenter myself, that we all need to support each other. There are issues and fear that indigenous presenters also have. [pointing out the support around the room] because there are somethings that are very unique about being an indigenous presenter, and then... I'm an indigenous person but i don't know everything. I acknowledge when I do make mistakes. I work with cultural advisory committees that will pull me out if I ever do anything wrong. Something that is really unique to me, as one of the few indigenous presenters in Australia, is that it is a really long process. It may take a few years before our work comes to fruition. And because of the genocide and the colonization in Australia there is a cultural disconnect. You need to support indigenous artists so they find the right guidance so they don't feel that disconnect. A lot of the work actually speaks to that [disconnect], but it can be hard part of being an indigenous presenter. I have very much a sense of "I want to have my own agency, do it myself" but then it means it that i am making those choices myself and I am not beholden to a non-indigenous organization. I have worked in some really conservative colonial organizations and I'm happy that I'm not anymore... we are on this journey together and we need to all support each other. There is always going to be a fear, and mistakes. I've been told off by an elder, and I take that and learn from it.

Vallejo - Mistakes are the most useful thing that can happen sometimes. A series of fucking up can lead to awareness and change.

Roberta - A lot of times we feel ourselves to be very under-resourced [people of color] but my theater went under at a time when it had the most support and grants than ever before. BUT - failure of leadership, at the time when there were programs getting cut, [people of color organizations] are the first things to go. And that's a huge fuck up. Murial, thank you for calling out the Community House. The Community House gave us the first place for hula. To have hula given a space within a native-led space, not just as supplicants to a white organization, it was so meaningful. And now we are at a very exciting moment just because of sheer numbers. And I appreciate the pain and the discomfort. I don't just want to be a part of healing white people. I was provoked by the first moment when [Vallejo] said "I want to convert you," but I don't want to be converted. My family was already converted to Christianity.

Paola - I just want to say, that I think we ran over Auntie Muriel's grief. And I think that was disrespectful. Let's not rush over her rage, because that's a continual erasure of the genocide that has taken place in this country. Let's sit in this discomfort. I want to say that. Thank you for being brave and honest.

Diane - When we were here Friday, and we acknowledged the generosity of being given this space [at Henry St. Settlement?], but all that [Amerinda] has been given is a tiny office... and when we look over and see all the space that the white-led organization have been given for \$1—the Henry Street Settlement was given the firehouse for that amount. It happens all the time. I have to be honest, that our organization tried to get into the PS122 community center. And we were rejected when we were as qualified if not more than this white dance group. And they would not share any of the 4,000 sq foot space. [Vallejo] warned me that the outcome was already preordained. I am not going to the next meeting because I don't support exclusionary organizations.

Vallejo - PS122 is not the building,

Diane - But they were part of the selection process.

Vallejo - They were part of the process though— i'm not denying that.

Diane - there was a panel of no people of color, and people were graded. Our people used to get hung because of juries of all white people. This is the legacy of that behavior. We reported it this to the DCA and he [Tom Finklepearl?] spoke to the PS122 community center and they said “ there was nothing they could do.”

Muriel - I've been doing this for over 40 years and I think that, the anger does rise. Why are there only 3 of us [NYC-based artists] here?

Angela - do you find you are having these conversations again and again?

Muriel - We just took our theater and took it some place else. Peter [Jemison?] said “ if they take away this and that funding, and then you can’t run your theater, we shouldn’t be applying those grants. “ They give—but when they take it away, it’s like diabetes. I don’t know how to work it. I need a board of directors, and I don’t want that. All kinds of those little things. I have to network—i don’t like that, all those things that I don’t like doing and it feels like bitter syrup in the mouth. You sit on these panels and hear about how other people got their \$100,000 and... it’s hard. In NYC where we should have a higher profile, and we don’t.

Lee-Ann - part of the anger is always being reminded of what you don’t have. I see that with my own elders.

Roberta - how many people are based in NYC? When we were talking about a native-driven conversation about the lack of space for native organizations, how can people in our community work to strategize so that this can happen? There needs to be more support. You’ve obviously done all the steps.

Muriel - Can we invite more native people here [to these talks]?

Emily - absolutely.. the call did go wide

Muriel - that happens a lot, I started to want to talk to people one-on-one to find out what they need. I want to talk to everyone about what they want.

Emily - this need. Our next session is a focused working group with action steps. We are resolved to move in that direction. And it will be part of a 4-year strategy. We are dedicated to action. How can we move that?

Merindah - I also want to acknowledge both of you and that I have, like Angela, been lucky and privileged to have a lot of strong indigenous women nurture me for a long time. For a long time in Australia we’ve known of you [Muriel] and you recall, when you arrived to this meeting I jumped up and hugged you. You have to know the impact of that back home, what we call our Blak Theater taking to the street and fighting for our civil rights and sovereignty. I just want to honor you and and both your work and the effect that it has had in Australia and throughout the world. It’s an honor to be here and to be able to hear your rage and resentment and be fueled by that and my own. but also the carrying of that has also carved out some pathways, which you’ve acknowledged.

Us younger generation do get to come through... and so, our final provocation, I say it with that in mind. And that project of finding space is with that in mind. I work for BlakDance, a service organization it's dance but with storytellers and multidisciplinary. There has been a significant shift in dialogue at home, with many practitioners at home. One of the things that has come up at the Australian Dance Forum in 2015 - there was all this mention of the Western Cannon. Jacob [last name]'s theme in this time was rage and resentment. there was almost a boycotting of the Australian Dance Forum. It was a significant disruption—empowered by the fact that Uncle Larry was there at this forum and had so much power. My colleagues and I felt, we can express this rage. [In this Forum] there was no acknowledgement of thousands of years of dance before colonization. It was rage. The whole forum was brought to a standstill—500 people. Jacob said, this is not ok. I am sick of it and I am done. Who else was there?

Someone - The disruption created a new space for listening but also doing something. It had rippled effect.

Merindah - To your [Vallejo's] questions about “what is Western art?” I wrote a little note to myself, that said “that's why I hate Shakespeare.” i mean, I don't know anything about that. There are two parallel universes. And in a pre-briefing before we came, Rachel spoke to that. And asked, “do they even want to meet? Two parallel universes do they want to meet?” And so, the provocation I wrote at 2am: Australian contemporary dance context: IN Australia, BlakDance, I am so lucky to be lucky to be working in this organization that was founded by Marilyn Miller. A very significant person in Indigenous Contemporary Dance movement in Australia. It's a beak body over a decade old. She estimated there were almost 200 community indigenous dance groups. There are 100 independent practicing artists. We're talking about a seriously significant amount. On top of that, more recently, there is one major performing arts organization. Bangarra. There is one medium sized organization. There is 4 small to emerging companies. Name one of them... [room is silent] I'm trying to say, that there is significant abundance, but we are invisible. So ask Indigenous practitioners continue to develop their practices—presenters are at different stages of unpacking their colonial lens. More recently our work responds to colonialism. where is the opportunity for self-governing indigenous platforms? So there could be a First Nations-curated program that cuts across all of the [APAP] festivals—programmed across all of them [UTR, COIL, etc] and the presenters have to deal with their cultural biases. Indigenous people self-determine this.

[time is up... discussion and Provocation is tabled for next time...]

# SCRIBED SESSIONS

First Nations Dialogues Session #3

11 January 2018

11:30am – 2:30pm

## 1. Welcome and Acknowledgement and Clearing the Space/Blessing

- a. **By entering this space, you acknowledge:**
  - i. You are on Manhattan (Mannahatta) in Lenapehoking and you pay respect to Lenape land, water, and ancestors past, present, and future
  - ii. This is an Indigenous led conversation and process
  - iii. You are here to be an active part of discussion and change
  - iv. There is no end to the work we begin here

### *Wanishi Quyana*

- b. **Overview**
  - i. Focused on building the volume and recognition and capacity of First Nations around the world
  - ii. Focused on possibility about what we can do with our own organisations
  - iii. In this room/world systemic and unchecked racism, trauma and acknowledge to move past into a full realised present and future
  - iv. Unhinge the dominate and false narrative
    - 1. Work at unbridging vocabulary gaps
    - 2. What is an indigenous project?
    - 3. How to create an international/exchange with constant platforms
- c. **Challenge/Provocation**
  - i. Building on 40 years of activism, rights that elders and pioneers have laid tracs for us to walk today. Thousands of generations have been self-determining our culture
  - ii. Create Reference Group/Working Group
    - 1. (1970's - us markers of contemporary art)
    - 2. (40 years ago - Australian reference point)

**d. Indigenous Curated and Led**

- i. What or Where is the Opportunity for Self-Governing Indigenous Platform at the January Arts Period in NYC?
- ii. Indigenous Curated and Self-Governed Program (across all artforms) in NYC in 2019 as launch pad to ongoing global dialogue to create touring networks and partners (USA, Canada, Australia, etc.)
  1. Program includes:
    - a. Community engagements – cultural protocol
    - b. Works in development
    - c. Professional development for producers, artists, etc.
    - d. Showings ready to go – presenter series
    - e. Critical discourse
  2. Integrated across multiple presenters, festivals so it does not stand alone or singular
  3. Fundraising driven by indigenous leaders
  4. Long-term strategy with soft launch in 2019

**e. Who Is Here?**

- i. Lee Farrow Theatre
- ii. Spiderwoman Theatre
- iii. Nicki Barazo – Curator/Artist
- iv. Andre Boucharde – agent to 25 Native American artists across 8 groups – chair of WAA
- v. Tim Wilson – WAA
- vi. Zohar Spatz – APAM
- vii. Ali at Abron Arts
- viii. George Lugg – LA Performance Practice
- ix. Elenor Savage – Jerome Foundation
- x. Ryan Cunningham
- xi. CounterPulse – San Francisco
- xii. Fusebox – Austin, TX
- xiii. Erin – Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts

2. Is January the Wrong Time of the Year? Too Much Going On/Too Cluttered?

- a. Cultural Sovereignty and Cultural Equity – there can be no progress in the US without the acknowledgement of those two constructs
- b. My movement of contemporary native art – from 1970's onwards it was a native artist with a vision they wanted to fulfil
- c. History shows us community and cultural protocols that keeps moving forward. The native people must have a place of their own.
- d. Imbalance of what is currently going on in NYC and the vision of doing this in NYC – needs to continue to work on cultural protocol
- e. So important to work closely with the elders who feel displaced/from discussions and relationships in forward thinking planning
- f. How to work together?
- g. Controlling distribution, context and narrative is important
- h. NYC in January may not support the audiences
- i. Technology is key
- j. Interested in First Nations artists curators in institutions/working towards ongoing working groups (Columbus Ohio) including cultural, arts, etc.
- k. Much work to be done but headway is through individual relationships who want to give control over, decolonise their space (Andre)
- l. Ambassadors/Allies Critical
- m. Slow down, change the process (Andre) – Emily disagrees – we are not slowing down
- n. Is this a national Initiative? (La Mama)



### 3. National and International Initiative

#### a. Valley:

- i. Clearly an appetite for the work
- ii. As a presenter it can be difficult to find the work. As presenters we need to change the way you view your season. In the US historically, we haven't programmed Native American work, and it needs too.
- iii. How do we make a national, touring network? Slow down for cultural protocol
- iv. Each place needs to be rooted

#### b. Rose:

- i. The national centre – reflect a whole range of practices and has to intentionally and purposefully say I will program
- ii. How do I discover the range via a vehicle like this platform to discover more work?
- iii. Bitterville Arkansa – Focus – Liehen Biertels running arts centre  
walten family foundation – apply for funding

#### c. Tim:

- i. If not in NYC how do we get people to view the work, what is the other platform?
- ii. Franchising the idea. Model being built. It's not one of the other, it can be both.

#### d. CounterPulse:

- i. It is not up to the room of when this happens. Could set a priority today to make residency happen.
- ii. Native American artist roster – online resource.

4. No Title

a. Ryan:

- i. EPA Website – 100's listed 1st Nations Canadian

b. Abron:

- i. Changing institutional culture – publicly commit – what does that mean? How do we do it? Hospitality – will always explore
- ii. My per locality – politically how do shift the commitment to produce more local 1st nations artists here as well as global?

c. Marion Pottz:

- i. 3 tier approach required to support this initiative
- ii. NYC is just the global focus of 1 of 3

d. Erin:

- i. Most successful is when indigenous led, curated – propose that artists are paid. Consortium put money on the table to invest in the research – a guest curator.
- ii. Residency can be prioritised with inclusion of both visiting international and national indigenous, intergenerational and interdisciplinary is important.
- iii. Indigenous representatives on panels, sharing info on who could sit on panel

e. George:

- i. Series of protocol being developed is really important timelines more critical than diversity/checkbox
- ii. How do we find words to bring people into the change of consciousness?
- iii. Combination of resources – want to share and access

5. No Title

a. Muriel:

- i. How do overcome the set of expectations for presenters – pushing the envelope
- ii. Living ritual as on ej – how did they do that? Before I die I want a space

b. LaMama:

- i. Do something in January that is just 1st Nations focused but we need collaborations and allies to ensure that it does get the audiences

c. Vallejo:

- i. There is space that is opening up b/c coil is over
- ii. There is an appetite from other festivals to come on board to also present but there is a curator's specificity across cultural contemporary
- iii. There are finders around the world that will come on board – it is relevant
- iv. Nothing else but individuals not institutions

d. Diane:

- i. Funding needs not to be cannibalised. Space needs to be given to local Native American.
- ii. Paradigm is corrupt as it is based on white privilege.

e. Merindah:

- i. Don't shy away from national touring model.
- ii. How as indigenous people can we ensure a new platform, can con continue to push the envelope of audiences seeing work.

f. Debbie:

- i. Everything is a process. First year strategy – figure out a protocol that takes us to 5 years
- ii. Energy/funding who the orgs are interested in giving more to NYC. Get out of the boxes of NYC
- iii. Need our own press, critics.

- g. Elenor Jerome (foundation):**
  - i. Resources taken from Native American land.
  - ii. Protocol of giving is based on colonial practise.
  - iii. People are aware and are trying to navigate to make change.
  - iv. Systematically powerless.
  - v. Know # people who can be conduits that are relationship based.
  - vi. She will connect you to people within the foundation environment.

**6. Jerome Foundation**

- a. Connect to fellowship**
  - i. Opportunities for artists
  
- b. What are the next steps?**
  - i. Name and email on lists and will continue to communicate
  - ii. Encourage to reach out
  - iii. It is not our intention to create an either/or situation
  - iv. Shared press release to commit to cultural transformation.
  - v. (Abron, CounterPulse and George LA) looking for a commitment and a coalition of presenters interested in shifting protocol
  
- c. Tim WAA:**
  - i. Committed to self-governance and bringing indigenous artists to WAA
  - ii. Support for this concept and aligning our strategy with yours
  - iii. Resources and ourselves to lead other presenters to training and programs
  
- d. Lee Farrow Theatre:**
  - i. Committed to shame presenters who don't participate.

Regional presenters bring their networks and consortiums	Presenter series and indigenous curators	Residency Julie Phelps CounterPulse (S.F) 3 Tier Approach - intergenerational and interdisciplinary
It's not either or. It's multiplicity embedded self-governed S.D. and our own space	Commitment to Non-colonial organisational cultural transformation	Local = National = International = NY in Jan and more

