

A Journey into the Downtown Eastside Community Play

In the Heart of a City

**by
Valerie Methot©**

Photos by Bob Eberle
(except where mentioned)

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and the
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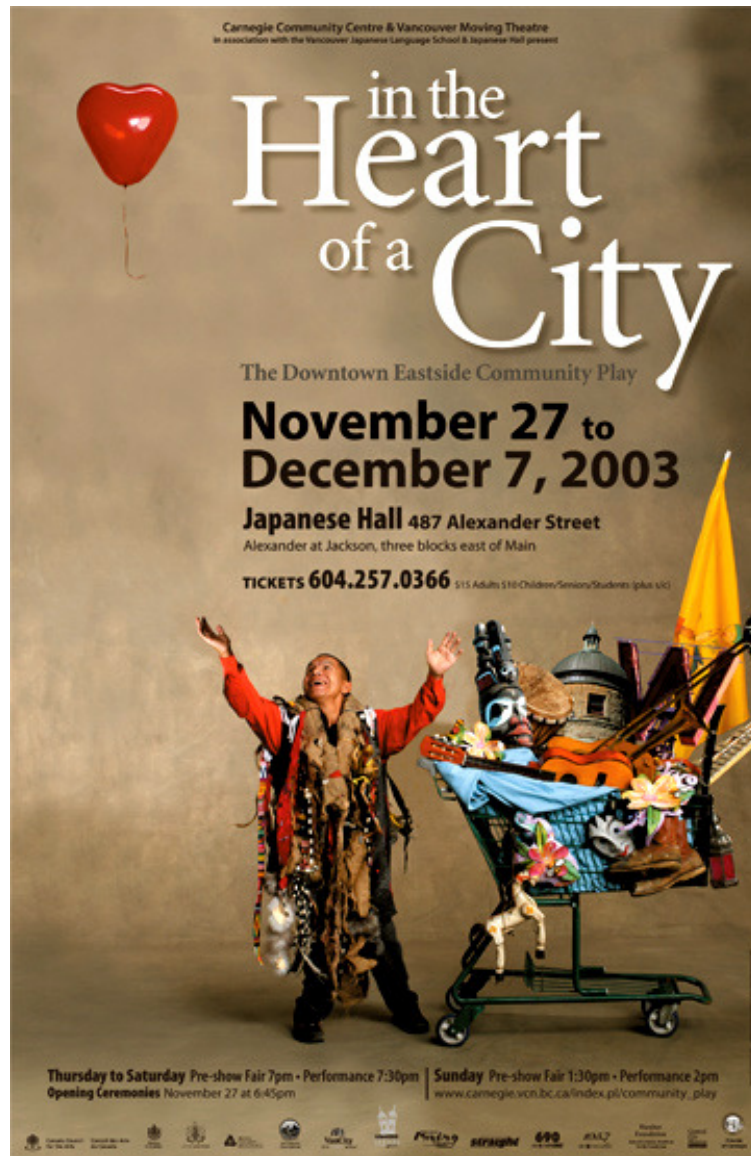
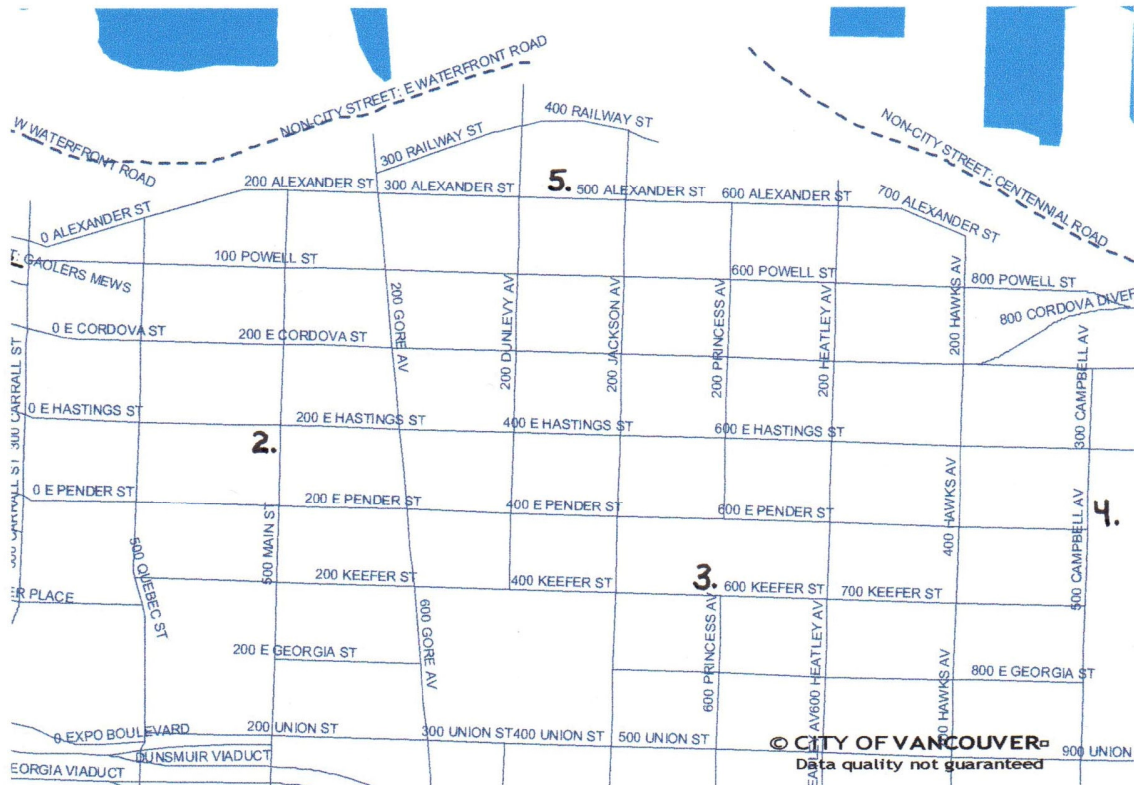


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MAP OF VANCOUVER'S DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE



← 1.

1. Roundhouse Community Centre- 181 Roundhouse Mews
2. Carnegie Community Centre- 401 Main Street
3. Strathcona Community Centre- 601 Keefer Street
4. Ukrainian Community Centre- 805 E. Pender Street
5. Japanese Hall- 487 Alexander Street

PREFACE TO THE 2009 EDITION

Five years have passed since I wrote this document. Re-visiting it has been an interesting journey in itself. When Savannah from Vancouver Moving Theatre asked me if this document could be included on their website, I was excited to read it and remind myself what this *journey* entailed. “*As I ascend the extraordinary circular staircase in the Carnegie Centre, I am overwhelmed by the years and years of memories that seem to radiate from the very stones of this place.*” All of what I experienced documenting the creative process in the Downtown Eastside Community Play ‘*In the Heart of a City*’ came back to me like it was yesterday. I hope that by reading this, the community participants, artists, and all who were involved, will experience fond memories and a sense of accomplishment from being involved in a play that touched so many lives. Re-reading this document has reminded me of the strength in all the people – everyone involved – who made this play happen. Truly, this was a positive opportunity to unite so many people who would probably not otherwise have the opportunity to be united. For those who were not involved in the play, I hope this document provides an experience that makes them feel like they were there.

Much has happened during the last five years in all of our lives. What has been great is seeing community participants from the play take part in other play projects, sometimes as writers or performers. I had the pleasure of working with a few performers in a community play I directed at the Roundhouse called ‘*Take a Breath*’. It’s been awesome seeing some participants who experienced theatre for the first time with ‘*In the Heart of a City*’, find something they enjoy and want to continue doing it. It is fantastic that the ‘In the Heart of a City Festival’ continues, providing Downtown Eastside Community Play participants the venue and opportunity to continue with theatre experiences.

One of my favourite parts about this document is how it captures the sense of *journey* and that everyone involved has the same *destination* – a successful show that shares strength and courage in the heart of Vancouver. I really enjoyed meeting all the people involved in this play project. I remember planning my walking route from the Roundhouse Community Arts and Recreation Centre to Hastings and Main for the first writers’ workshop I would be attending. It’s certainly clearer when you’re there – to see the level of poverty and desperation; it’s hard to not feel uneasy. However, once I started meeting and talking with the Downtown Eastside residents involved in the play, I certainly felt the heart in the city.

The process of writing this document has been quite interesting for me because I usually write fiction and plays. I’ve learned a lot, and for this, I am grateful. With this opportunity to re-read and make adjustments for a 2009 edition of the document, I chose to keep most of it in its original form. The changes include the addition of the 2009 Preface; a re-working of the 2004 Preface; an updated map to include exact locations of venues involved in the play project that are mentioned in the document; chapter cover pages to help guide the reader; an updated list of other documentation of the play project; a re-positioning of the Play Scenario and Cast List; and an updated Table of Contents.

I’m thrilled that this document will be accessible on Vancouver Moving Theatre’s website as well as the International Centre of Art for Social Change website. I hope that this document will continue to be accessible for a very long time so that more people could be invited inside the creative process of ‘*In the Heart of a City*’.

PREFACE 2004

When I first heard about the Downtown Eastside Community Play, it seemed epic and larger than life. The very heart of it inspired me and I wanted to be involved. In celebration of Carnegie Centre's 100th birthday, the play would be the final component of a year of community events, including neighbourhood historic walks, talks, parades, and other art events. In partnership with the Carnegie Centre, the Vancouver Moving Theatre Company was brought on board to oversee the artistic development of the play and its production. With longtime Downtown Eastside residents, Savannah Walling as the company's Artistic Director and partner Terry Hunter as the Producer, the established dance/theatre company has had a direct link with the Downtown Eastside for 30 years.

After a series of meetings to consider my interest in the play's process, an 'Artist Residency'¹ was put in place by Arts Programmer Amir Alibhai through the Roundhouse Community Arts and Recreation Centre. We met to share the residency concept with Savannah, jil p. weaving, (Arts and Culture Programmer with the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation), Sharon Kravitz, (Carnegie Anniversary Coordinator), and Rika Uto, (Carnegie Programmer). We discussed my interest and ideas for documenting the creative process of the Downtown Eastside Community Play. In the form of a journal, or *travelogue*, I would tell the story of what I'd see *traveling* alongside the participants on this *adventurous voyage*. I later met with Savannah to discuss the schedule and identified the aspects of the process that I would document: playwriting, public readings, workshops, casting calls, rehearsals, meetings, interviews, design workshops and performances.

My interest in this community play project stems from my experience directing community theatre projects. I'm an artistic/project director, director, playwright and playwriting facilitator. I've been directing theatre plays since 1989 when I lived in Montreal. I've tried different ways of capturing the play's creative process on shows I've directed throughout the years, because I find it a very exhilarating part of a theatre production. I'm excited to document this project and look forward to take on this new role in the creative process.

In this document I tried to capture the moments that reached me. Some people have been missed. I couldn't cover everything but thankfully, other people were also *tracking* this project with video, photography and writing. With all of the material combined, perhaps more of a complete documentation is realized. Due to the limitations of time allotted and the enormity of the project, my goal is to provide a *sense* of what it's like to be part of a community play. The interviews present in this document involved a process of review with the interviewee based on notes I took during the interview.

I thank everyone for the opportunity to be part of this heartfelt experience. In celebration of Carnegie's 100th Anniversary, welcome on board for "A Journey into the Downtown Eastside Community Play: *In the Heart of a City*".

***"We want to make the powers that be accountable. We speak on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves and for those who are no longer here. Therefore each member of this community may play a part; we are the very heart and soul of the Downtown Eastside community."* - Stephen Lytton**

¹ An 'Artist Residency' involves an artist working with community on an art project.

THE *JOURNEY* BEGINS...

INTRODUCTION

MARCH 24TH 2003

This afternoon I start my journey into the creative process of the Downtown Eastside Community Play. I've been invited to my first writer's meeting with the four authors who are working collaboratively on the script. The meeting takes place at the Carnegie Centre. I don't know if my role will be that of a *fly on the wall* observer or whether my travels with the process will involve me more completely. There's nothing like being a participant, to experience an active role and insider view of what is taking place.

Savannah informed me that the purpose of today's meeting is for the writers to deliver a first reading of the play, assess it, and make a plan. Leading up to this, the writers researched, interviewed over 50 community residents and gathered 180 questionnaires from students and residents to collect personal and historical stories. There have also been special events and skill-building workshops to foster creativity, generate popular support and team spirit, initiate community participation in the play process, and to give voice to the Downtown Eastside residents. A community outreach team brought on by Vancouver Moving Theatre also organized a series of workshops in writing, performing and props-building.

This community play is a Canadian adaptation of the Colway Theatre Trust Model of community plays, first developed by British Playwright Ann Jellicoe in the late 1970's. This kind of community play involves a large scale cast of around 100 people, a role for any member of the community who wants to be involved, a core professional team of artists and organizers, a long set-up period (ideally 2 years), a play written specifically for the community which expresses its wishes, needs and concerns, an innovative popular performance style and a variety of community events alongside the play. Most of the community plays have been created in rural settings.² The Downtown Eastside Community Play process will undoubtedly be different because it is centred in a culturally diverse and highly populated urban core. Each community play is bound to be unique, though still sharing one common purpose: building community. An area often represented by media as destitute, the Downtown Eastside is rich with spirit and strength – qualities that are bound to find their way into the play.

This is what I know about the play; in a way it's the suitcase I've packed, the preparations I've made, and now I'm standing at the Roundhouse – my place of departure, located in the depths of Yaletown in Downtown Vancouver.



Roundhouse Community Centre (Photo by Valerie Methot)



² See page 149 for a list of Published Canadian Community Plays.

The Roundhouse is the historical site where trains turned around to end one journey and turn to start another. I've been engaged in a theatre residency here for the past two years. I look at the original locomotive that sits on the corner of Davie and Pacific Blvd. The remaining tracks inspire me to think about the number of people who arrived here from around the world over the last century and made Vancouver their home. The West Coast is a place with so many possibilities for so many people...and it keeps growing. I'm drawn to the surrounding shops, co-ops, and condos.

I wonder how many people live in them?

And so, I embark on my travels. My destination: the Carnegie Centre, the former Vancouver Public Library and Museum, at the corner of Hastings and Main, the hub of the Downtown Eastside. I climb on board the *train* and make my way through the city, taking the same *tracks* so many have taken before me. I see people with destinations and wanderings, some look up, some don't. I'm looking up today, *through my window* I realize the number of times I've taken this route and not noticed what is up. I feel like a tourist today.



Chinatown- Pender Street (Photo by Valerie Methot)

Traveling through Chinatown, I feel a certain excitement. There's a buzz of action with the handling of produce, meats, desserts and almost any kind of product you'd need, not to mention all of the health remedies. I feel alive and a part of the community.



Chinatown (Photo by Valerie Methot)



Hastings Street (Photo by Valerie Methot)

As I turn the corner onto Main Street, heading towards Hastings Street, the Carnegie Community Centre comes into sight. Taken by the amount of activity, people of every shape, age, size, and colour, I pause for a moment. I feel I truly am in the heart of the city.



**Carnegie Community Centre- Corner of Hastings and Main
(Photo by Valerie Methot)**

**PLAYWRITING PROCESS:
WRITERS' MEETINGS, READINGS AND PLAY SCENARIO**

WRITERS' MEETING

MARCH 24TH 2003

The *train* stops. As I ascend the extraordinary circular staircase in the Carnegie Centre, I am overwhelmed by the years and years of memories that seem to radiate from the very stones of this place. The writers have met twice so far and I'm invited to attend part of the third meeting. It started at 10 am and will stretch through the afternoon ending at 5 pm. I arrive at 2:30 pm. I wonder if my presence might make the writers self-conscious. My concern quickly dissipates as I enter the room to welcoming smiles. I am truly in a creative space.

These brave writers are engaging in what seems a monumental task. The writing process is a collaborative one between the four, though Savannah Walling and James (Jimmy) Fagan Tait are responsible for final re-writes produced in consultation with Adrienne Wong and Renae Morrisseau. Jimmy is also the Dramaturge (oversees the structure of the play) and Savannah as the head writer will have the responsibility of the final script in agreement with cultural protocols and under the advisory of all the writers.

All are sitting around the table, which is covered in papers, thermoses, writing tools, sheet music...I settle in as one would around a campfire. Jimmy and Renae are on either side of me, while Adrienne and Savannah sit across the table. There's a strong sense of compassion and meaning in the room. In the flow of discussing ideas, I notice right away that all of the writers are very different from one another, and yet they are able to engage in functional uninhibited conversation. This is an important quality to have in an ensemble.

Savannah hands me the first draft of the script, which includes scenes written by all writers. I am told that the morning was devoted to weaving the stories, placing the scenes in order and reading Act One. Due to the volume of stories from the community, the writers express their regret that there are far more stories than they're able to include in the play.

Roles are assigned for the reading of Act Two. The writers are going to read multiple roles and I am also asked to read a few. Jimmy invites my feedback regarding the writing. Before the reading begins, Adrienne says she's learned why so many Chinese immigrants had the name "Ah Ching" on their immigration papers. "Ah Ching" means the Immigration Officials thought it was all part of the name, instead of the actual name, "Ching".

This makes me wonder about the acknowledged histories and the unacknowledged. How through communication and miscommunication the story changes...

I am invited into the early 1900s where we explore immigrants arriving to Vancouver, Chinese Cafes, the CPR, the Anti-Asian Riot of 1907, and the Depression of the 1930s. First, we read a scene that is a mixture of the true stories of immigrants arriving in Vancouver. Many different cultures are present. One of the aspects dealt with in this scene is how the CPR is unfair to their employees, paying different rates according to race and gender. All writers are dramatically engaged.

The next scene we read is of the Anti-Asian Riot of 1907. Headlines on the newspaper say that Chinese, Japanese, and Indians are not allowed to vote. One personal story involves a Chinese man who arrives to Canada in search of happiness. He sings, "*O Canada how*

deceitful you are. You have separated many a husband from his wife". Another Chinese man talks about how he gets to bed at 2 or 3 am and then has to get up at 6 am dizzy with exhaustion.

The outpouring of historical and personal stories sends shivers through my body.

We read a scene of the Roaring 20s. A song is sung to “*make you forget your cares and woes*”. Police are caught gambling, drinking, and socializing with prostitutes. A scene follows, which is inspired by the depression years, titled *Bloody Sunday*. Poor people are not being given relief. 2000 men arrive in Vancouver from the prairies and from labour camps in the interior. I am drawn into the scene. The unemployed men from the camps are holding a demonstration. “*When do we eat? We want relief- we want work and wages.*” A child runs to them and gives them a chicken to eat. Later in the scene, they sing “Solidarity Forever”, a very powerful expression of unity and hope. The story continues with many men starting out for Ottawa but they don’t make it and the march ends in Regina.

It is now 3:50 pm and the reading has reached its end. Jimmy invites feedback regarding the structure of the play with its many characters and themes. The following conversation emerges:

RENAE- *I like the collecting of birds as an ode to the **missing** women of the Downtown Eastside.³ I want to continue the through-line⁴ of why the old man is looking in the garbage. Does NANCY help him with the birds?*

JIMMY- *If the missing woman could be alive in the beginning and her life gets altered from being in the Downtown Eastside, the audience could get the chance to miss her. I encourage some of the stage directions to change to text, like in the GASSY JACK scene. I recommend mapping out the beginning, middle and end of each scene, to make sure it drives and guides the audience. The rhythm has to be clear in the writing so that it’s clear in rehearsals. Change some times when the actors are speaking to the audience directly, to actors speaking to each other. Like in the Fire and Phoenix scene.*

RENAE- *The overall tone of the play is a culmination of different perspectives and language rhythms that need to be brought together; Savannah has one tone, Jimmy has another, etc.*

ADRIENNE- *Let’s try to create one tone now, rather than waiting until later.*

JIMMY- *What kind of trip are we taking the audience on? When and why? Is the trip part of the city that goes through...*

RENAE- *...a number of transitions. I think it is an inward journey that conveys the sense of the environment they are in, through different times in history. I can’t see how the exact dates and times of historical events are going to work and how they will merge.*

³ There are many women missing from the Downtown Eastside, see page 22.

⁴ Development of an idea/character/theme/story throughout the script.

All the writers agree that the character of the OLD ONE is important. They try to understand who he is and what he means to the play.

SAVANNAH- *Is the character of the First Nations man present in each time of history as a through-line? Or is he a witness to the events unfolding in front of him?*

RENAE- *I spoke with the actual person who inspired the character of the OLD ONE. I suggest all the writers talk to him.*

And the other characters...

ADRIENNE- *The play as it stands is episodic. Who are the people taking us all the way through the play? Through the quest and journey of these characters, they meet a lot of people and this encourages performers to engage with each other on stage. Common themes of the play are protests, poverty, drugs, prostitution, and racism.*

RENAE- *Some people are here in the Downtown Eastside because they have invested in it.*

Jimmy returns to the beginning of the play and comments that Renae has set it up with “*The OLD ONE has been around for 1000 years*”. Jimmy says this magical element provides the framework to invite as many stories as possible and that they don’t have to be presented in a linear way.

RENAE- *There have always been missing people. There were missing people from the fire, people missing from China on their way here. Not only the missing women of today. The characters come alive through humanity: hopes, fears, and dreams. When we know we have to put historical stuff in the script, how do we personalize it? We need to interweave historical with personal stories. The historical events could set the tone for characters to meet.*

ADRIENNE- *Things happening today are linked to what happened before.*

SAVANNAH- *Is the character, OLD ONE, in every scene?*

JIMMY- *No, he’s present in the beginning and could come back 4 or 5 times.*

ADRIENNE- *He’s a witness and he interacts with people. He’s not just commenting on events.*

RENAE- *This actual old man knows the area very well, “like he’s walking on the bones of his ancestors”. He said when he left the area he got so confused that he needed a friend to take him back. He is a wise and crazy man; he is a watcher. The character NANCY honours that because she too is walking on the bones of her ancestry.*

The writers see that themes and elements of the story have not been included in the script.

SAVANNAH- *How do we connect the residential schools?*

RENAE- *A woman could enroll her child in school and the child goes missing.*

ADRIENNE- *During the scene, “Breaking the Silence”, people are watching for each other. “Have you seen...?”*

RENAE- *The through-line could be: someone is found and someone is not found.*

SAVANNAH- *Is the OLD ONE related to NANCY?*

ADRIENNE- *I want to leave that to the audience.*

RENAE- *The things people are dealing with in the Downtown Eastside have nothing to do with the colour of your skin. “The heart doesn’t know the colour of one’s skin”. A common theme is working for the betterment of humanity. These are the kinds of people here.*

ADRIENNE- *Activists. There could be a transformation with two women and one goes missing. The other woman could go through a transformation from victim to later helping people.*

SAVANNAH- *I think Jimmy should take on the first draft.*

RENAE- *I didn’t have the time to explore media in relation to how they portray the Downtown Eastside.*

JIMMY- *Explore it only if it evolves in the process. (i.e., the Anti-Asian Riot)*

ADRIENNE- *Maybe a media announcer could enter the stage as a broadcaster. He/She could talk about how Japanese baseball has been important throughout time. For example, “Today the Japanese baseball team got into the baseball hall of fame”.*

The writers question whether there are opportunities for characters from different times and places to mingle.

JIMMY- *Maybe there needs to be an evening for characters to mingle, so that it feels like they’re here and now; like the character of OLD ONE and the birds.*

SAVANNAH- *Maybe they could meet at Carnegie.*

RENAE- *When the characters gather, remnants of characters in the past could come through in different characters of the present. For instance, Adrienne’s great grandfather speaks through her.”*

ADRIENNE- *There could be a scene of an All Saints Day or Day of the Dead.*

JIMMY- *There could be an accident on the corner of Main and Hastings, characters talk about it and someone from the past would enter and say, “We never had accidents in our day”.*

RENAE- *Because the subjects in the play are so dense, I think it's important to play with the form of theatre, use it so that the audience can watch and understand the play easily.*

JIMMY- *I like the nightmare scene: Black Shadows/Poisonous Dreams, because the animal imagery isn't demanding. What we're trying to do is simple really, for example, the birds and the OLD ONE and pigeons from Pigeon Park could all speak about historical moments.*

Carnegie...

SAVANNAH- *I'd like to see Carnegie be more involved.*

JIMMY- *I see the whole play taking place at the corner of Hastings and Main.*

RENAE- *The OLD ONE is looking at the Downtown Eastside as a sacred place. First Carnegie was a library, now it's a living room to many who come through Carnegie daily. Where do we want to be in the future? It is affected by what we're doing now.*

I find myself taking many notes as the writers explore the connections and issues in the script.

Youth...

SAVANNAH- *Are there elements in the play geared towards youth?*

JIMMY- *We could expand on LEANNE's character. There could be a rap song. We used a mosh pit in the Enderby Community Play.*

ADRIENNE- *We could see if it develops in the writing.*

There are so many stories of political protest in the Downtown Eastside. The writers discuss which ones to include and how to tell them theatrically.

SAVANNAH- *How many demonstrations do we want?*

ADRIENNE- *One.*

JIMMY- *What about more? Women sitting on the tracks for days petitioning could then conjure men's demonstrations.*

SAVANNAH- *The women who were protesting the trains did not see it as a demonstration.*

ADRIENNE- *I like having one protest because then all groups with their protests can come together as one. It brings people together with the intention of making a better life for the now and the future.*

JIMMY- *I'm concerned about racial tokenism.*

ADRIENNE- *Race is a character in the story.*

RENAE- *Attitude and behaviour are also evident. I suggest that all scenes culminate into one demonstration.*

SAVANNAH- *I don't see it.*

RENAE- *I see the demonstration as a gathering of people to assert one message: A right to make the Downtown Eastside a better place to live. If there are too many protests throughout, they won't help build the story.*

SAVANNAH- *I suggest picking key demonstrations for both men and women.*

ADRIENNE- *Could the story bounce from men's to women's like a tennis game?*

RENAE- *I think it's important to look at how to honour two demonstrations.*

JIMMY- *I suggest the men's could be presented as a ballad and the women's as a historical reenactment.*

The writers plan the next step.

JIMMY- *I'll work on an outline of scenes with descriptions.*

RENAE- *I could work with Jimmy to explore ideas on that.*

SAVANNAH- *I'm overwhelmed by the amount of material.*

RENAE- *I'm also overwhelmed.*

JIMMY- *I need to re-read all the material that has been written in order to absorb it. I'll work on an outline this week based on the material already gathered. I think all of the stuff that is needed is in this first draft. It needs a beginning, middle, and end. I'll work on scenarios for the next meeting.*

RENAE- *I will research the missing women.*

ADRIENNE- *I will research stories of women who became prostitutes.*

JIMMY- *How does the girl who goes missing arrive to Vancouver? If anyone dreams this story, write it out. I think she should meet with someone from the past. I also recommend more jokes, generally, throughout the script.*

ADRIENNE- *Laughter is very important.*

SAVANNAH- *I suggest that Jimmy also work on aspects of Main and Hastings as well as the ending. I think that the Bloody Sunday scene is too long and I will work on that. I like the direction of the Gastown follies and I'm interested in seeing that develop. I like the specificity in the characters.*

ADRIENNE- *I think what's missing is the lost wives and the Chinese legislation acts.*

Jimmy asks everyone to think about how each scene will be represented theatrically. Savannah hands out her template for recording the overall 'colour' and emotions of the scenes and the entire play. She says that music is very important. Savannah will meet with Jimmy regarding the direction of the play.

The meeting is over. Jimmy invites me to voice any comments regarding the script throughout the writing process. I feel honoured to be involved.

I feel like I have just been on the first train arriving into Vancouver, looking out the window and finding myself time-traveling, a witness to life over the past century. I make my way back to 2003, back to the Roundhouse Community Centre. I am impressed with what the writers have set out to accomplish. Creative collaborations are challenging at best. The four writers appear to work well with each other in terms of listening to each other and reaching for ways to weave their approaches together. All have a strong sensitivity to the voices and stories of the Downtown Eastside. The key objective seems to be the inclusion of as many stories as possible with strong through-lines and opportunities for people from the past to mingle with the present. Utilizing four perspectives from four different writers seems to be an advantage to building this community play. It embeds an inherent awareness of different perspectives.

WRITERS' MEETING

MAY 12TH 2003

I arrive at the Carnegie Centre and look for the writers amongst a series of rooms where many people are busy using the Centre's resources. The objective for the meeting today is for the writers to assess the order of scenes, read the play, comment, clarify, and divide the script. Between the last meeting on March 24th and this one, the writers have met one-on-one and by email. Savannah and Jimmy met twice, Jimmy and Renae met once, Adrienne and Savannah wrote more scenes in isolation. At this present time, they are reading Act Two.

The following is a unit and scene breakdown of Act Two. Breaking down a text is common theatre practise. By achieving smaller thematic sections, the key element of each has focus, thus making the script more varied and 'colourful'.

UNIT/SCENE BREAKDOWN

ACT 2: The Downtown Eastside Community Play

Unit 5: *Standing up for Ourselves*

- **Sc 14a** *Waitresses* (Adrienne)
- **Sc 14b** *Bloody Sunday*, 1930s' text is from memoirs of Willis Shaparla, Slim Evans, Steve Brodie, writing of Sandy Cameron and interviews with Earl Peach and Sandy Cameron. (Savannah)

Unit 6: *The City of Sighs and Tears*

- **Sc 15** *LEANNE 3, The Women's Centre* (Jimmy)
- **Sc 16** *On the Shady Side* (Adrienne and Savannah)

Unit 7: *Falling Through the Cracks (landing where the spirits are lowest)*

- **Sc 17a** *The Women's Centre* (Jimmy)
- **Sc 18** *Falling Through the Cracks* (Jimmy)
- **Sc 19** *Black Shadows/Poisoned Dreams* (Savannah)
- **Sc 20** *The OLD ONE and the Missing Woman* (Renae)

Unit 8: *We will Rise Out of the Ashes that You Say We Live in*

- **Sc 21** *The Trial of Andrew Carnegie* (Savannah)
- **Sc 22** *Old Man Stirs the Soup* (Renae)
- **Sc 23** *ANDREW CARNEGIE'S Farewell* (Jimmy)

Cast Bow

- **Sc 24** *Food Scene* (Adrienne)

During the reading, I notice some changes since the last meeting with the addition of scenes and stories.

The Waitresses has added a new element of the murder of Janet Smith at a Shaunessy Mansion in the 1930s. The women waitress characters wonder who did the murder and why. They discuss their opinions of their boss, the rich restaurant owner, who they suspect murdered her. All the women depend on their waitress jobs for their wages. "*Need justice, need to march and yell at City Hall.*"

Bloody Sunday uses a contemporary game of chess as a metaphor to describe the historical elements of the 1930s. In the scene, *On the Shady Side*, taxes have gone up and prostitutes can barely survive. The women in the scene role-play the mayor and council and the police who arrive at the prostitutes' house, arrest and fine them. One woman is threatened with being sent to work in a kitchen in Victoria. The women propose an idea for a fundraiser to

pay the fines. Some women express their worry because of their pimp's power. As a result, nothing is done.

We then read *Women's Centre*, which involves the topic of the missing women, the police and First Nations people. They argue that the police should be spending their time looking for the women who are disappearing and the one(s) making the women disappear.

Black Shadows is a mythical scene with animal imagery to express a story of predator and the birds that are their prey.

In the next scene, *OLD ONE and the MISSING WOMAN*, the OLD ONE speaks to the spirit of a MISSING WOMAN from the Downtown Eastside. The OLD ONE asks, "*How can you be here and not here?*" Renae, who wrote this scene, explains that the bird's song will happen at the same time the OLD ONE speaks about the MISSING WOMAN. THE BIRD sings, "*Know who you are. That's what it takes to fly.*" The OLD ONE asks, "*Who's going to bury the bones of birds forgotten?*" The MISSING WOMAN exists in the birds, the cedar tree, in memories and says, "*I'm your fear. We're all parts of one big soul.*"

I am moved to reflect on the women who are *missing* from the Downtown Eastside. I think about how some of them have been found, murdered. How could someone take another's life? I am deeply saddened. How many women have died? Why has this happened? How could this have been prevented?

I then realize the group has gone on to read *The Trial of ANDREW CARNEGIE*, followed by the last scene where the OLD ONE is stirring soup.

It is now 4:05 pm. The reading of the entire play took three hours. Jimmy says the script needs to be cut in half. The goal is to have it read in an hour and a half. Even though the script needs to be shortened, the writers realize there are important stories and cultures that have not been included.

SAVANNAH- *There needs to be input from Hogan's Alley.⁵ There also needs to be the 'Main and Hastings' connection with the people from other communities in the Downtown Eastside who don't have that connection and never go there. There also needs to be a through-line of the Chinese stories to the end.*

RENAE- *We just spent three hours reading the entire script. We need to accept that we're not going to please everyone. My thought is there are too many stage directions right now. The script is bogged down. No one will really know what stage directions can really happen until rehearsals begin.*

Instead of adding new scenes, what other situations of socio-political movement can be added and connected to Bloody Sunday? Another thought is to add other demonstrations to represent other cultures and human groups other than just Asian in the Anti-Asian Riot scene.

⁵ Historic Black neighbourhood in Vancouver

ADRIENNE- *I agree. There need to be connections between the issues with the different groups in Act One and what happens to them in Act Two?*

What are the key elements?

RENAE- *There are emotional journeys that take place in the play. Kübler Ross says in her book there are six stages of an emotional journey when dealing with death and dying: denial, anger, bargaining (with God, habit, other person, etc), depression (recognize that change is really happening), acceptance (of the change, and hope (maybe this change will be good). I think these stages can relate to the play. I also think that there needs to be a representation of all groups of people in the scene, Falling through the Cracks. I don't want the dichotomy of responsible versus victim. These people exist throughout the history of the Downtown Eastside.*

JIMMY- *Falling through the Cracks is where the MISSING WOMAN ends up. It is important that the audience understands the emotional process. The interpretation of the history is up to you. Through-lines need to happen to make it a story.*

RENAE- *With a through-line focus, it means elimination of some other ideas and therefore scenarios will be shorter. I really like the Black Shadows and Poisoned Dreams scene and the through-line of the OLD ONE.*

Jimmy gives dramaturgical feedback.

JIMMY- *Internally, the script needs a pay-off for its main characters. For example, a young woman comes (contemporary) to town and a Guardian Angel could speak to her through the history. The historical/theatrical 'boxes' need to be more surprising than the thematic 'boxes' we have right now. I like the octopus imagery for ANDREW CARNEGIE and I like the bird story and the GRANDMOTHERS.*

I think other ways need to be found to represent themes from history. For example, Bloody Sunday right now is a play within itself. We need to know the theatrical point of the scene. It is unclear in some scenes what the point is. I don't understand the theme of demonstrations throughout the whole play; it seems like scene after scene of victory and loss. I think social injustice can be represented in other ways, other than a pageant of historical events. For example, a kitchen scene could display social injustice in personal life. I like the Militant Moms scene, but I'm missing the drama within the protests. The injustice only marginally gets introduced; it doesn't get deep enough.

RENAE- *I agree the script gets caught up in historical description to its detriment. It's one thing to say there's social injustice in history, it's another to personalize it in a human body. For example, with two people arguing, it's not necessarily about who's right and wrong, but about two different rights. This play is a chance to voice that.*

JIMMY- *I like the allegory in Black Shadows. I understand how we got the animals there, and the darkness in the Downtown Eastside.*

Falling through the Cracks as an overall theme...

ADRIENNE- *Who are the characters that come back? I find those characters most interesting. Some succeed, some fail. They have a journey. I think those who aren't interesting don't have a journey right now. I identify more with the contemporary material. For me, Falling through the Cracks is about losing and finding, as Renae was mentioning, the six stages of an emotional journey when dealing with grief and loss. It gives hope when some people are found.*

JIMMY- *I like the simplicity of introducing the OLD ONE and his journey. Makes me wonder what's going to happen next.*

RENAE- *What makes someone fall through the cracks? How do you find out you're not wanted? Or that your voice is not valid? To be told to be a victim. To be a silent observer. How do people become oppressed? Look at the choices people make before they end up falling through the cracks. The dance of anger: 'Two steps forward, three steps back.' For example, the OLD ONE, is he on the threshold of falling through the cracks? Or is he observing? Is the "Anti-Asian Riot" the dance of anger?*

JIMMY- *How do people fall through the cracks? Is it circumstantial at times, willfulness? How do you define falling through the cracks? I think the script needs tags at the end of contemporary scenes. For example, NANCY with her suitcase, leaving the Downtown Eastside. I want to know what happens to the characters. Create the moments, not the scenes.*

SAVANNAH- *Falling through the Cracks is one theme, (individuals); the mass is another theme, (collective). The Anti-Asian Riot, Militant Moms, Bloody Sunday, and Carnegie scenes are all community events. The telling of these collective historical events gives the audience a sense of pride in mythic/epic dimension. There is an excitement and hope in mass movement.*

Reactions to the play...

RENAE- *I can't follow others' enlightened paths. I have to take my own path in writing about the characters. As a writer, where do you draw the line as to what your responsibility is as an individual to the collective? The emotional journey of an individual is extremely strong. How do you balance that with huge historical scenes? The script needs the audience to feel a connection with the emotional process on stage.*

JIMMY- *How do we keep the audience engaged? How do we represent actions by anecdote, or side scenes? A good example is the chess game scene in Bloody Sunday. As it stands, with the historical scenes, I think we lose the thrill to the rise of hope because they are all successes.*

How to portray the Downtown Eastside demonstrations?

ADRIENNE- *What if we look at Bloody Sunday as a tragedy instead of a victory? Leave the interpretation more open for the audience, regarding success or failure. Right now these scenes have the same narrative and structure: injustice and whether to fight or not. An idea to create variety would be to show the beginning of Bloody Sunday, show the middle of the Anti-Asian Riot scene and show just the end of the*

Militant Moms scene. Or can some scenes happen at the same time? Militant Moms and Bloody Sunday?

JIMMY- *In the reading, I liked it when Savannah acted out Bloody Sunday because of her stylistic approach in the writing of the scene. I suggest looking at different style approaches for each scene.*

ADRIENNE- *What stands out for me in the Militant Mom's story is that they didn't know that what they were doing was a demonstration. An idea would be to start the scene in the current middle of the scene, "We've stopped the train, what do we do now?"*

With minutes remaining in the meeting the writers ask, "what next?"

Jimmy says that the outline-of-scenes need to be rearranged and the structure of the play needs to change. He says that the next meeting will be devoted to fine-tuning the new draft. He welcomes feedback and ideas for titles between now and the next meeting.

On May 23rd, the community is invited to a reading of the play at the Ukrainian Hall. It will be the first time the writers will hear the play read by Downtown Eastside community members. Most of the readers participate in Jay Hamburger's acting workshops at the Carnegie Centre. Savannah will assemble the scenes for this reading.

The play has many plays within itself right now. The writers are experiencing the tension of the script being too long, and yet there are stories that are still *missing*. The complexity of collaborations is that all writers have to be satisfied with what is included in the script. My experience in facilitating writing collaborations is that all writers face the challenge of working together as a team, while maintaining their individual voices. It is crucial that communication involve listening and a respect for each other's views. Each writer must have the ability to grow, work through ideas and then be able to drop an idea if it's not going anywhere. The writers of this play face the final phase of their collaboration with only one meeting remaining before Jimmy and Savannah make final revisions.

As I reflect on the community play's developing script, one aspect that stands out for me is the theme of people throughout time who go missing, lose identity, or fall through the cracks. Right now, this story is so timely with so many women missing from the Downtown Eastside. I wonder if there are many more women who are missing and have not been documented. It is extremely sad, scary, and overwhelming. As time goes on, more DNA is found on a pig farm in Coquitlam, B.C., from the missing women of the Downtown Eastside, and more are being reported dead. This issue is enormous and it touches so many people's lives. A play could be written solely honouring the missing women from the Downtown Eastside. If anyone were to engage in that process as a writer, I'd recommend a process similar to this one, and set up sessions inviting community members to share their stories. I think it is very positive that the writers in this project gathered so many interviews and stories from community members. This way, they are involved from the inception, making it truly a community play.

PUBLIC READING FEEDBACK SESSION

MAY 23RD 2003

I'm unable to attend this first public reading session at the Ukrainian Hall, but I am very interested to know the feedback. Savannah handed out questionnaires to be filled out by those at the session. She collected the data and emailed the following information to me.

Readers – Carnegie Theatre Workshop

Grant Chancey	Leith Harris
Paul Decarie	Jason Logan
Robert Escott	Alex Martin
Patrick Foley	Joan Morelli
Jay Hamburger	Muriel Williams (not in workshop)

Writers in Attendance

Renaë Morrisseau
James Fagan Tait (directed and hosted reading)
Savannah Walling
(Adrienne Wong was unable to attend because of other commitments.)

SELECTED AUDIENCE FEEDBACK:

What is the strongest image, scene or character that stands out for you in the play?

- *The Gassy Jack scene and the Raymur Moms.*
- *The character that learns she is Aboriginal and Chinese.*
- *Chinese workers describing conditions; 2 guys on bus; militant moms; the OLD ONE and his shopping cart.*
- *There was just so much material – NANCY – the welfare moms.*
- *Pink powder for pale people; chorus of GRANDMOTHERS; women on the railroad tracks; old man who reappears.*
- *The OLD ONE and the young woman who finds out about her parents.*
- *The OLD ONE because of his continual reappearance. The image of Carnegie Centre itself is not very strong. Dr. WIZARD. The choruses.*
- *The train-stopping scene.*
- *Mom's victory over railroad.*
- *Falling thru the cracks, voices not being heard without a fight.*
- *The Militant Mom's Scene. DR.WIZARD'S Powder. The old Chinese man up on the statue w/statistics ('people being discounted') and the discovery by the young girl she is half Chinese/half native. The Anti- Asian riot (the father (grandfather?) and daughter and the riot swirling about them). The Old Man. Outta the Rain.*
- *Chinese immigrants talking of loneliness in their letters was very moving.*

What is the message that you'd want a play to represent about the Downtown Eastside?

- *Together we stand, divided we fall. Community strength.*
- *That there is untold wealth – that the area is a secret treasure.*

- *Mutual aid in community. Is there going to be something on the fight against the freeway? We only heard about houses being demolished.*
- *Community working together, struggling to make things better.*
- *One of the messages that seems a bit missing is the joy. Whether private joy or the joy of winning some of the battles – not just the triumph over the people who were perpetrating the unfairness.*
- *The difference of the neighbourhood – how people who don't 'belong' can belong here – whether they're new to the country or the city or just trying somewhere to fit in; also the place and people are different from the radio stereotype.*
- *Partly, that it's a community made up of many communities, that it's a community with depth and texture; that it's the home of the underdog who endures and occasionally, triumphs.*
- *The Canadian experience which interweaves the dreams and sweat of the immigrant with the displacement of the native peoples in this historical context of class struggle and colonization: the personal experience of the political. What does it mean to be CANADIAN? (ASSIMILATION?)*
- *The Downtown Eastside is multicultural and is a representation of the world.*
- *Community survives.*
- *A community that cares for those who find themselves here.*
- *The greatness of the Downtown Eastside – what it has meant to Vancouver – whether Vancouver likes it or not!*
- *The kids are the hope – art, music, science, literature, and business make it thrive – define communities; the play needs to really say what the 'Downtown Eastside' is – in the very beginning it was actually Vancouver and then it became the 'East End' and now it's the 'Downtown Eastside'. The play should trumpet the East End years and that vibrant community – talk about decline – and finish with homage to the existing and emerging community. Social problems are sensational and sell newspapers, but there are families and children who live, lay, and contribute to the core community.*
- *Ordinary people doing extraordinary things – both collectively and individually about their family – with stories that only happen here or are unique to our neighbourhood.*
- *Struggle, resistance, hope, solidarity, radical possibility*

Are there critical stories that were missed?

- *The part of the black community in the history in the area.*
- *The end of The Freeway Fight⁶ story. It's the most important story in Strathcona – it was the first time that the Asian and Caucasian communities (and lots of other people) came together in a common purpose and it changed the communities – as a result there was new housing that suited the neighbourhood; it spawned the career of Harcourt⁷ and others.*
- *I would have liked to hear some references to Hogan's Alley.*

⁶ The city planned to wipe out Strathcona, Chinatown, and Gastown with an 8-lane freeway to downtown. The communities joined together to put up a fight. City officials abandoned urban renewal in favour of rehabilitating existing housing.

⁷ He went on to be Mayor, Provincial Premier and is now at the Centre for Sustainable Development

- *I am strongly interested in writing a sketch for this play about Woodward's (I was an occupier and supporter of the 3 month squat)⁸.*
- *I would have liked to have a story or two from Hogan's Alley, (perhaps contact Wade Compton, author of 'Bluesprint').*
- *I'm being nitpicky but – Chinese women were not allowed by law into Canada early on, so there were many men and few women.*
- *Ferry market played an important role for tugboats and fish boats and other things you couldn't find elsewhere.*
- *More about Carnegie? City hall – Libby Davies – Bruce E!*
- *Content that involves children (with appropriate language)– because a lot of children at Seymour school are really interested in the play. The only 'strong' character is GASSY JACK and his role is far too influential. The play needs a number of other "strong" voices: 1) Aboriginal 2) Chinese 3) Japanese 4) Early fishermen 5) Sailors*
- *Yes – the fight to save Woodward's.*
- *The black community in the Downtown Eastside and Latin American community. The struggle for harm reduction policies is important. The housing struggle – Woodward's is also very important.*

What did you like about the play?

- *Chronological time manipulation in plot.*
- *Inclusiveness.*
- *Good strong beginning.*
- *OLD ONE; cedar tree-cedar basket-Squamish woman.*
- *Sawmill; GASSY JACK scene (good but long)-globe hotel-builders-Dayton hotel-creditors-fire –Johnny-----Squamish-Phoenix.*
- *Main and Hastings, and the characters in the play.*
- *NANCY, OLD ONE, chorus.*
- *Dr. WIZARD, pink powder, main and Hastings, crowd incl. OLD ONE; officers (better characterization of cops as I know them).*
- *China, LEANNE, Bethune.*
- *Turn of the century-DTES-parade-rule Britannia-extra extra – re racism-Chinese boarding house-Shanghai St-laundry-riot.*
- *Mackenzie King stroll – re opium.*
- *GRANDMOTHERS, Chinese grocery and immigrants, OLD ONE, LEANNE.*
- *1887 train.*
- *Housing complex with 5 women, cockroach song about the John, train confrontation, Campbell, Margaret Mitchell, Mike Carpenter and OLD ONE.*
- *Desk-Chinese man-shadow screen-GRANDMOTHERS.*
- *2003 – Mr. Kazelli (good), park bench, bull dozer.*
- *Bloody Sunday, women's centre, street workers' stories.*
- *Train – Wastings and Pain.*
- *Falling through the Cracks.*
- *Trial of Andrew Carnegie.*

⁸ Protestors set up tents and lived in them in front of the vacant Woodward's building to protest the need for social housing in the building.

- *OLD ONE and NICOLE.*
- *Its hopefulness.*
- *The way stories inter-locked – characters weaving through different stories – this is important to hold it together.*
- *The language is very lyrical in many places; the retelling of some of the stories I've heard before is quite stirring.*
- *The depth of story and characterization.*
- *The human diversity represented and people's real struggles.*
- *The use of choruses and the overall rhythm of the play give it a ghost-like or dream-like quality.*
- *Great stories which seem implausible but demonstrate the will of people to get things done. (ps. Gui-lo pronounced, "Gui-eye-lo". And the "ay-yah" needs work!)*
- *The poetic images interspersed with dialogue scenes."*
- *The explicit truths.*
- *Multi-diversity – attempt at. Some imaginative scenes using stilts – shadow puppetry – etc. Truth scene interesting.*
- *What about staging the play in the Tinsel Town Centre? It's empty but it's really beautiful.*
- *The richness of the writing – a lot of layers to the material. I like the full stories that were complete in themselves with a beginning, middle, and end and that they were about the community in action together.*
- *I liked the way it tried to tie many different stories together – like a mosaic*

WRITERS' MEETING

JUNE 9TH 2003

The writers' meeting today is from 10 am to 4 pm. I arrive at 1 pm. This is the last official meeting with all the writers working together. I am informed that they read Act One this morning and shared feedback. They are now reading Act Two. The reading reveals a change in the order of scenes and there are scenes that have been eliminated. In this draft, the character *NICOLE*, a First Nations woman, arrives to the Downtown Eastside from Bella Bella and goes missing. Act Two takes an hour to read.

Jimmy's dramaturgical feedback:

JIMMY- *I think the play needs to be edited down even further. I'd like to meet with Savannah first then with all the writers to talk about where the script is going. Overall, the play needs to lose 40 minutes.*

Who is *NICOLE*?

RENAE- *The storyline of NICOLE gets lost in some scenes. I'd like to see her character develop more, in different situations with different people. For example, she could be asking directions at the Women's Centre. There needs to be something at stake for her. The song for her is great, for her voice. What is the relationship between her direction and falling through the cracks that causes tension? The GASSY JACK scene is clearer now. I think it could be edited down further.*

SAVANNAH- *Act Two feels more dispersed, not as centred as Act One. I'm confused at the positioning where NANCY'S scene is. It's a delicate and quiet scene, and so is the scene with NICOLE and OLD ONE. With NICOLE missing, there needs to be a Phoenix, a spiritual Phoenix at the end of her story. I don't think the Hell Bound Train scene is solid. It needs a through-line. Is NICOLE a prostitute or is her status a mystery?*

JIMMY- *I want NICOLE to represent any missing person.*

SAVANNAH- *Does NICOLE enter the play with the Squamish Natives in the first scene?*

RENAE- *Half of the Squamish Natives are from the present and half of the Natives are from the past. All are cutting the tree in the beginning of the play for purposes of economics and ceremony.*

OLD ONE...

SAVANNAH- *The OLD ONE has been here for 1000 years. It confused me when he was tied to a specific time period.*

RENAE- *The 1000 years doesn't have to be literal. He could feel like he's lived for 1000 years. He's seen fishing and its huge importance, the First Nations involvement*

with residential schools and many other stories throughout history. Who's going to play the OLD ONE?

JIMMY- *He has to be a First Nations elder or a Voice Over. Is there someone out there to play GASSY JACK?*

Historical elements.

SAVANNAH- *Is the historical element accurate with the First Nations people canoeing across the Burrard Inlet to rescue Vancouver residents during the Big Fire?*

RENAE- *Yes. They sang a Christian hymn in Squamish while paddling. (They already had a Catholic church on their reserve.) They saw the smoke and had to save their brothers and sisters. In crisis it doesn't matter who you are, the people come together.*

JIMMY- *With William Lyon Mackenzie, I'm not clear about our perspective.*

SAVANNAH- *William Lyon Mackenzie was here. The script lines for him are from speeches he made, but not necessarily from when he was here.*

JIMMY- *I love the Chinese letter. Any ideas for the title of the play?*

The meeting continues past 5 pm, out the door, down the steps and onto the corner of Hastings and Main. Savannah and Jimmy plan to meet and tackle the remaining elements that need to be reworked in the script in preparation for the next public reading on June 22nd.

I make my way back to the Roundhouse Community Centre. Along the tracks, I think about how this play ignites memories of people from the past. It also explores how past memories connect with stories of today. It has been an amazing experience to hear the writers voice their concerns with the writing of the play and to also hear them read the play. These four writers are emotionally engaged and create connections within the script that are powerful.

I think it's essential that the play engages in a process that involves feedback the whole way through. The writers not only get feedback from each other, but from those involved in other capacities of the play, and also from invited and public audiences at readings of the play. I think feedback for a writer has the potential to be really useful, especially if he/she knows how to receive the feedback. Then it comes down to the writer's experience and expertise. In my experience with writing plays, the *process...journey or tracking* is in some ways more meaningful than the end product- a metaphor for living life, the play...and this book.

At this point in the writing process, I'm particularly drawn to the stories of the OLD ONE, NICOLE, and NANCY. The demonstrations and historical scenes are also interesting in that they seem like one character to me, a memory from the past. It's intriguing how the script moves from the present to the past and back again. I'm curious what the writers will cut from the script in order to reach their goal of losing 40 minutes. What direction will the script take as it moves towards a public reading? With more people about to get involved in the development of this play, it is about to become even larger than life.

PUBLIC READING

JUNE 22ND 2003

Today there is a public reading of excerpts from the play, a *sneak peak* between 2 and 3 pm. In the auditorium of the Carnegie Centre, 14 readers between the ages of 12 and 60 are on stage. Most are from Jay Hamburger's acting workshops, and also participated in the May 23rd reading.⁹ Adrienne Wong will read the stage directions. There are 34 people who gather to make up the audience. Terry Hunter, the Artistic Producer of the project is managing the food and beverage table. The reading begins with a gust of energy, with the play's opening scene and song "Outta the Rain". This is followed by scenes: *Missing One*, *Gassy Jack*, *Bloody Sunday*, and the *Carnegie scene*.¹⁰

This is the first time I've heard the play read aloud outside the writer's meetings. The songs make an impression on me today – hearing them sung by a group of people, there is a power in the united voices, and it is exciting. Other highlights include: the historical elements, the theme of remembering our roots and of "*looking for something or someone*", and the importance of "*looking for the sunny side of the street*". The "Solidarity Song" gives me goose bumps. I am impressed with the image of ANDREW CARNEGIE as an octopus, with the description of his many hands counting obscene amounts of money.

The readers are very committed and expressive in their delivery. It will be interesting to see their involvement (with the script) develop into acting in specific roles. I wonder if any of the readers will end up playing the same parts in the play as they read for today. Today is a positive experience; I am witness to the play's power in bringing people together. My curiosity leads me to think about how many people will go to the Casting Calls and ultimately fill the 100 or so roles in the play.



Public Reading at the Carnegie Community Centre (Photos by Valerie Methot)

NB: By the time the play is completed, the writers will have cut out 8 songs and over 8 scenes including stories of the Strathcona freeway fight, the turn of the century raids, and scenes entitled *The Chinatown Sweatshop*, *Chinatown Waitresses*, *Vi's Chicken and Steak House*, and *The Prostitutes History Lesson*. Two characters will have been eliminated and a new character AUNT RITA will be introduced.

⁹ See Public Reading Feedback Session, pages 23-26.

¹⁰ See Play Scenario for a synopsis of each scene, pages 30-32.

PLAY SCENARIO
In the Heart of a City
FINAL DRAFT – SEPTEMBER 2003

Play Summary: During the course of the play, a young woman, NICOLE arrives in the Downtown Eastside to carve out a new life for herself in current day. While she looks for her AUNT RITA and a job, she encounters the life and times of the DTES past and present. These encounters help her make discoveries about living and dying as she prepares for a life filled with hope. Historical scenes and personal stories unfold, historical characters come to life, fictionalized characters from the neighbourhood's past and present join the action, and fantastical episodes emerge. It's a wild joy ride through a thousand years of laughter and tears, bringing us tales of ordinary people doing extraordinary things to survive in hard times.

The Set: represents the Downtown Eastside's historic rolling hills, with the audience seated on either side of a long corridor.

ACT 1:

Scene 1) *Outta the Rain*: A company number is sung by residents of the DTES at Main and Hastings, introducing themes that allow them to survive as they look for work, for homes, for answers and for hope. A young native woman, NICOLE from Bella Bella arrives Outta the Rain, looking for her AUNT RITA, looking for some work. (**Song:** "Outta the Rain") (LOCATION: corner of Hastings and Main, present day)

Scene 2) *The OLD ONE*: Pushing a shopping cart, an old man arrives with his memories of the Downtown Eastside's past and present, its residents and its ghosts, its stories and its hopes. NICOLE asks for directions to her aunt. His explanation takes her on a guided mini-tour of the DTES. To NICOLE's dismay, her aunt has moved. (LOCATION: Hastings and Main, present day)

Scene 3) *The Cedar and the Sawmill*: A cedar grows and draws pre-contact Aboriginal men and women to it. As they prepare to strip the cedar's bark, drumming, and offering thanks, they are pre-empted by immigrant lumbermen who arrive to chop it down. All reject a drunken man's offer to help. (**Song:** "We Want to See the Money Coming In") (LOCATION: Q'umq'umal'ay' at the foot of Gore Street on Burrard Inlet, 1865)

Scene 4) *Gastown Days*: GASSY JACK climbs out of the garbage can to sell the first official spirits of 1867,¹¹ laying out his story and the story of the first immigrants. His young wife Madeleine's quiet strength and food gathering knowledge enables the family to survive. Rejected by Jack's English family, Madeleine is left in poverty after his death. She foretells the destruction of the new city by fire. (**Song:** "A Big Old Dream") (LOCATION: Luq'luq'i (later known as Maple Tree Square), 1867)

Scene 5) *The Great Fire¹² and the Phoenix*: George Carry describes the new city's destruction by a torrent of fire. Squamish people cross Burrard Inlet to rescue the victims. The new community vows to persevere as they create a tent town in the shape of a Phoenix. LEANNE, a contemporary Chinese immigrant, reads the story of Vancouver's fire to her young son and explains to him the legend of the Phoenix. (**Song:** "The Paddle Song") (LOCATION: Gastown, 1886)

Scene 6) *Coming and Going*: The OLD ONE hears the stories coming and going. After turning down an offer from the TERRIBLE TRUTH for something to set her mind at ease, NICOLE phones her Mom to report that AUNT RITA is missing. The OLD ONE asks NANCY, a con-temporary Chinese Canadian, for spare change. NANCY is shaken to learn he remembers her grandmother. She steps into her mother's Chinatown grocery store looking for her birth certificate so she can leave the DTES to study in California. To her surprise, her mother knows the mysterious old man. Refusing to answer NANCY'S questions, her mother directs NANCY to her Great UNCLE. (LOCATIONS: Main and Hastings; Chinatown Grocery Store, present day)

Scene 7) *Anti-Asian Riot*: Lonely Chinese men write home to their wives and labour in a laundry. A Chinese Merchant's family sits down to a meal. Their lives are interrupted by a racially-motivated mob attack. As the Chinese wait out the attack with dignity, a Japanese woman sings sadly to her son. Japanese men unite to repel

¹¹ First Public Bar.

¹² The Great Fire in Vancouver, 1886.

the invaders with improvised weapons. The riot retreats. Canada's Deputy Minister of Labour, William Lyon Mackenzie King arrives to settle claims for damages in Chinatown and Little Tokyo. Deciding to get some good out of the riot, he seizes the opportunity to end 40 years of legal trade in opium (but preserves the trade in "opiate" medication owned and operated by the Anglo community.) (**Songs:** "My Young Wife", "Sakura") (LOCATIONS: Shanghai Alley and Little Tokyo, 1907)

Scene 8) DR. WIZARD'S Miracle Cure: DR. WIZARD arrives at Main and Hastings at the turn of the century to sell his miracle cure for all of life's heartaches and pains. During the scene, turn-of-the-century characters are replaced by contemporary characters. DR. WIZARD makes a "killing" before the police move him on and move in on his customers. The OLD ONE declines the cure. (LOCATION: Main and Hastings, 1903)

Scene 9) NANCY'S Blood: Looking for her birth certificate, NANCY visits her old UNCLE, an accountant. He tells her the legendary story of her great grandfather's discharge from the Canadian railway, his near death in the mountains and his marriage to the aboriginal woman who rescued him. Learning the secrets of her heritage, NANCY also learns about her family's historic debt to the aboriginal community, and of her own responsibility to one day become the keeper of her family's stories. (LOCATIONS: contemporary Chinatown, memories of the Fraser Canyon, 1885)

Scene 10) Hot Lunch: NICOLE meets LEANNE, a Chinese immigrant, while eating lunch at the Carnegie Centre. LEANNE remembers AUNT RITA. They worked together at a fish cannery, but were fired when they couldn't keep up with the pace. When LEANNE last saw Rita a month ago she wasn't doing too well. LEANNE sends NICOLE to the OLD ONE, who knows everyone in the Downtown Eastside. (LOCATION: Carnegie Centre cafeteria, present day)

Scene 11) Crab Park: During a contemporary squatter's tent-in at Crab Park, Ralph, a black Canadian, arrives with his little girl Rose. He tells her the story of a prostitute who was good to him when he arrived in Vancouver as a homeless child. NICOLE arrives, finding the OLD ONE. He tells a sad story about a little girl sent to residential school who might have been her AUNT RITA and shares pre-contact memories about the arrival of small pox in Burrard Inlet. NICOLE is invited to crash for the night in a tent with a Hispanic Man, his Aboriginal wife and their child; they are protesting for housing and 24 hour access to the park by Aboriginal people. As she enters their tent, an official from 1887 announces the arrival of the first transcontinental train. (**Song:** "Hail Britannia") (LOCATION: Crab Park)

Scene 12) Militant Moms: The train arrives, endangering a contemporary child. A group of low-income moms from Raymur Housing band together and stop the trains to fight for a safe railway crossing for 360 children in 1971. NICOLE phones her mom from a booth and leaves a message on an answering machine: "*Mom, call me tomorrow night at this number. I think AUNT RITA is missing.*" (**Songs:** "The Welfare Mothers", "The Balmoral Cockroach") (LOCATIONS: Raymur Housing Project, the Railroad tracks at Raymur and Pender, a Courtroom, 1971; Carnegie Centre pay phone, present day)

(INTERMISSION)

ACT 2:

Scene 13) Bloody Sunday: At the Carnegie Community Centre, Willis Shaparla recounts the story of Bloody Sunday to teach political chess to a group of children. Recalling the poverty, the protests, and violence of the dirty thirties, he conjures up the dramatic events of the 1938 post office strike. NICOLE phones LEANNE from the Carnegie phone booth: she's afraid and she can't get through to her Mom. LEANNE tells NICOLE to meet her at the Women's Centre. (**Songs:** "Hallelujah I'm a Bum" and "Solidarity Forever") (LOCATIONS: The DTES from the Post Office at Granville and Hastings to the Ukrainian Hall, 1930s and present day)

Scene 14) The City of Tears and Sighs: As NICOLE walks from the Carnegie Centre to the Women's Centre, past and present intermingle. She listens to a contemporary prostitute who is transformed into a prostitute from days past by a group of turn-of-the-century ladies of the night. They offer NICOLE a cup of tea. She turns them down to make her appointment with LEANNE. (LOCATION: Princess and Hastings, past and present)

Scene 15) The Women's Centre: LEANNE arrives at the Women's Centre to find Ah Sue, a very old Chinese immigrant, being detained by two women for her bizarre behaviour. No one can figure out what's going on because Ah Sue speaks neither English nor Cantonese. The Women's Centre calls Susan, a cop, for help.

Arriving in the midst of the crisis, NICOLE is asked to come back later. After the crisis resolves, LEANNE asks if NICOLE has arrived, but no one remembers seeing her. (LOCATION: The Women's Centre, present day)

Scene 16) The Rage: NICOLE enters the Carnegie Centre and listens to the phone ring. *"Not now, Mom, I've nothing to say."* She wanders to Oppenheimer Park. The TERRIBLE TRUTH enters, enraged by life's events. He sings a lament about the Hell Bound Train from Hastings and Main. NICOLE asks if he needs help. *"Sometimes it's enough,"* he answers, *"to know that someone cares enough to ask. I am putting the 'dig' into dignity and the 'rest' back into respect."* (Song: "Hell Bound Train") (LOCATION: Oppenheimer Park, present day)

Scene 17) Black Shadows/Poisoned Dream: Exhausted, NICOLE falls asleep on a park bench. Her dreams are haunted by dark animal fables of predators and fledgling birds. As her dreams darken, the predators turn on her. A Chinese Dragon arrives to frighten away evil spirits. The wolves' retreat, snarling, and NICOLE awakes. (LOCATION: Oppenheimer Park where cherry trees are blooming, present day)

Scene 18) The Missing One: As three musicians jam on the front steps of Carnegie, NICOLE phones her Mom to tell her she's gone to the police to report AUNT RITA missing. Two musicians spook a third with a song of Carnegie's haunted libraries. As NICOLE and the OLD ONE return to Hastings Street, AUNT RITA'S spirit arrives. NICOLE helps the OLD ONE perform a ritual to release AUNT RITA'S spirit. NANCY, leaving the DTES with suitcases in hand, offers a flower to NICOLE and an orange for AUNT RITA. As NICOLE says a couple of prayers for her AUNT RITA, LEANNE offers her a place to stay. (Song: "The Libraries of ANDREW CARNEGIE") (LOCATION: Carnegie Community Centre at Hastings and Main, present day)

Scene 19) Phoenix Rising: The three musicians accidentally resurrect ANDREW CARNEGIE and his mother from the dead, scaring off AUNT RITA'S spirit. They accuse Carnegie of ripping off his workers to pile up millions for his libraries. Their verdict: a tour of Carnegie to see the liberating work done in the building that's got his name. High overhead soars AUNT RITA'S spirit as a phoenix rises. *"I've been found, not by any other two-leggeds, but by myself. I'm found in the stones, by the water, by the fire that still burns in my chest. I'm found in the cedar and the roots. I'm in your memories and songs"*. (Song: "The Sandstone Lady") (LOCATION: Carnegie Community Centre at Hastings and Main)

Scene 20) The Feast: With the help of NICOLE and the rest of the company, the OLD ONE takes a giant ladle out of his cart to scoop out messages and blessings from the Downtown Eastside to the assembled spectators: *"The stories of people are vast. Our dreams digest within us – digest how you will – the Hearts from the Past beat in the hearts that are now till the heart of our community knows that it beats on and on."* (LOCATION: Main and Hastings)

Songs:

- "Outta the Rain": lyrics by James Fagan Tait, music by Wyckham Porteous
- "We want to See the Money Coming In": lyrics adapted by Savannah Walling, traditional melody
- "A Big Old Dream": lyrics by James Fagan Tait, music by Wyckham Porteous
- "The Paddle Song": Traditional Squamish Song
- "My Young Wife": lyrics by Savannah Walling, traditional melody
- "Sakura": Traditional, English translation by Katherine Rohrbough
- "NANCY'S Blood Soundscape": music by Joelysa Pankanea
- "Rule Britannia": lyrics by James Thomson, melody by Thomas Arne
- "The Balmoral Cockroach": lyrics by Sheila Baxter and music by Wyckham Porteous
- "The Welfare Mothers' Song": adapted by Savannah Walling, music by Wyckham Porteous
- "Hallelujah, I'm a Bum": lyrics by Henry McClintock to tune Revive us Again
- "Solidarity Forever": lyrics by Ralph Chaplin to tune John Brown's Body
- "In the City of Tears and Sighs": lyrics by Andrew Sterling, melody by Kerry Mills
- "Hellbound Train": lyrics by Joe Ziegler, melody by Wyckham Porteous
- "Black Shadows Soundscape": music by Joelysa Pankanea
- "The Libraries of ANDREW CARNEGIE": adapted by Savannah Walling, music by Wyckham Porteous
- "The Sandstone Lady": lyrics by Patrick Foley, melody by Earle Peach

**CASTING PROCESS:
CASTING CALLS, INTERVIEWS, CAST LIST,
FIRST CAST READING OF THE PLAY**

CASTING CALLS/INTERVIEWS

SEPTEMBER 10TH 2003

It is a rainy night. I follow the signs, leading me to the Casting Call in the Strathcona Community Centre. It takes place from 6:30 to 9:30 pm. Posters, flyers, and pamphlets have been distributed to various places in the Downtown Eastside community, detailing play information including casting, rehearsal, and performance dates, times, and locations.

At 6:30 pm, there are already 21 people in the waiting room. When I enter the room, I meet Dorothy Jenkins, the Stage Manager of the production and Leith Harris, Participant Coordinator. Dorothy tells me she has worked with Jimmy on various projects, including the Enderby and District Community Play. After the immensity of that experience and the length of time she had been away from home, she hadn't expected to take on such a large project again. But with the passage of time, she says it was easy to remember the good times and the reasons she wants to do this play.

Dorothy talks me through the procedure as community members arrive. After signing in, they are photographed and measured for costumes. This is followed by interviews and auditions with Play Director Jimmy Tait, Artistic Director Savannah Walling, and Musical Director Wyckham Porteous.

I am introduced to Cynthia Wong who is working on communications. She is the translator and distributor for Chinese language posters and flyers. The Chinatown Community Police helped Cynthia put up the posters. She also went to the Vancouver Chinatown Revitalization Committee and gave flyers and posters in both English and Chinese, and to all of the students at the Strathcona School and Seymour School.

Dawn Buie¹³, the play videographer is taping and interviewing some of the participants as they await their turn.

Nearby, Marina Szijarto, Costume Designer, and Tamara Unroe, her Assistant, take measurements of the participants. A community member approaches me and says she runs



Dawn Buie interviews community members.

¹³ Dawn Buie is an artist in many capacities, primarily involved in community art projects.

an after-supper program. It consists of different activities including making puppets. She asks how her group could get involved in helping with the design of the show. I give her a flyer detailing design workshops and recommend she speak with Marina.

Another community member asks me if I've done this before. I say not exactly, that each project is different and that I'm always learning something new. *"That's good"*, he says and tells me he remembers his father telling him, *"Once you stop learning, you're stuck in the box"*. I ask him if he's ever acted before. He says no but that he wants to give it a try.

My role is changing and growing ever more from observer traveling alongside to becoming one of the travelers.

The line of people waiting for their fittings is growing. Marina and Tamara move quickly. Even this is a collaborative process with the community members writing down their own measurements.



Tamara Unroe, Marina Szijarto, and participants.

I talk with Terry Hunter about the positive turnout. I see Bob Eberle, a familiar face, a professor at UBC's department of theatre. He's on the Community Play Organizing Committee. We chat about our involvement in the project and how it's amazing to see it all come together. He will become one of the official project photographers and is already clicking away with his camera.

I see people talking to each other. Some are meeting each other for the first time. Some are friends and some are neighbours. Some people know each other from the acting workshops that are given by Jay Hamburger. One of them is Alex Martin. I recognize him as one of the readers at the June 22nd Public Reading and feedback session of the play at Carnegie. I'm curious to know more about his theatre background and what has drawn him to this project.

What is your theatre experience?

ALEX- *The first project I got involved with was the project I love the Downtown Eastside¹⁴ with John Juliani. I was writing an article, Acting as Therapy. I find it surprisingly easy to act. At workshops with Mercedes Baines and Renae Morrisseau¹⁵, people thought I'd acted*

¹⁴ Theatre project led by John Juliani and his company Savage God, in 2001.

¹⁵ These workshops were part of the beginning community process.

before. Acting is a lot of fun. It's being in the moment. It's a primitive connection with the audience. It's animal freedom. There's nothing else like it. Theatre touches the core, the animal thing that life is. Society is filled with symbolism and roles. Theatre is more real in that you get to release different expressions that you wouldn't ordinarily get to release, and it anchors the audience's deeper selves. They live vicariously through the stage. Like Aristotle said, "Acting is a way of flushing out pent-up emotions, good and bad."

Is there a particular role you want in the play?

ALEX- I want to be the WIZARD, something with depth. I used to sell cosmetics 30 years ago, wholesale. I was definitely selling hope, just like the WIZARD. I even brought a costume to help me with the audition.

Any last words before your audition?

ALEX- In the workshops, I saw how people changed with acting. Acting helps in being more aware of one's inner can-of-worms, because of having to be here, right now. It's visceral. In society we spend so much time in symbolic living, that sense of loss of the true self is very common.

INTERVIEW WITH MARINA SZIJARTO

I want to know more about what aspects of design Marina will be involved in. I see that she has a free moment.

What is your role in the project?

MARINA- I'm designing the costumes, set and props with my Assistant Tamara. Jimmy and Itai Erdal¹⁶ are also involved in the set. The props, I believe are integrated in the set. Ruth Howard¹⁷ only designed the costumes in the Enderby and District Community Play. I don't know how much I'll be designing at this point. The costumes are daunting. There are so many people. I haven't met with Jimmy yet; it'll be good to know his expectations.

I've found out the play will be presented in the Japanese Hall, but I haven't been in the building yet, so I ask Marina.

MARINA- It's like a theatre gym, a modern gym with a stage. I think we're going to try to make it in the round. I've read the script. There's so much in it. I need to find out what we're going for. At this point, it looks like a year of work with staff at the Playhouse. I'm used to having a 3-4 week production process with 40 costumes, working with 2 assistants. I know there are a bunch of people who want to help. Though I can't see the parameters yet, I have to be really practical. Walk first, and then, run. I'm used to parameters. For example with Circus of Dreams¹⁸, I was facilitating people with what they wanted to do. On this project, my job is to design and people will help. Plus there is a script to abide to in this project, which makes it tricky because we have to follow the demands in the script, rather than work from the community's ideas and me as Artist-in-Residence, facilitating their

¹⁶ Local lighting designer

¹⁷ A costume, props and set designer, social activist and Founder/Artistic Director of Jumblies Theatre in Toronto.

¹⁸ A community art event that is held regularly in the spring and in December.

ideas. This time around, I'm more like the designer and the community is helping me create stuff.

Marina is needed. I look across the room. I see Brenda Dalloway, someone I first met years ago through a friend. I've also seen her in the audience at the Cavern Theatre, which was once on Commercial Drive, run by a theatre company I was involved with. Brenda was at the Public Reading at the Carnegie Centre. She says she's excited to be involved.

BRENDA- *I'm interested particularly in helping with the design of the show, especially the puppets.*

How do you feel about your audition?

BRENDA- *I'm nervous...I haven't acted since high school. I needed a creative outlet, so I thought, why not? I'll act in it too.*

I walk home that night through the streets of the Downtown Eastside. It is still raining. The streets are brightly lit as I make my way home through Chinatown. I see groups of people and sometimes people walking alone. People walking to the rhythm of their own walk, doing their own thing. I think about how people have united tonight, the connections that were made and the conversations that were had. The heart beats in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside with the Community Play growing each day. The connections are growing stronger as well as the hearts behind them.

CASTING CALLS/INTERVIEWS

SEPTEMBER 14TH 2003

I arrive at the Carnegie Centre at for the Casting Call that started at 10 this morning and will last until 5 pm. It's 11:30 am and fifteen people have already been through. Marina and Tamara are busily measuring people, while Jimmy, Savannah, and Wyckham conduct interviews and auditions in another room. Terry Hunter talks to people in the waiting room, where refreshments and food are provided. Music is playing. There is also a TV/VCR with the *Two Towers* movie playing. Dan Feeney, Office Manager for the play's Administration Team, and Leith Harris¹⁹ are at the reception desk and welcome those interested in participating in the play.

I sit across from Chloe Uhlis, Terry Hunter's Administrative Assistant.²⁰ She says she was at the second Public Reading here at Carnegie, and I ask for her reaction. She says she was surprised at the amount of comedy in the script. When she read the timeline of the play, she had seen all the historical hardships. Chloe says she's happy to see a wide representation of the community coming out to these auditions. She hopes through word of mouth that even more people will come out. Chloe is involved in the project through an internship, (HRDC grant supporting a temporary summer position). She says the project has been very positive and that the people involved are kind.

CHLOE- *Terry and Savannah have an idealistic and positive attitude, they are doing something to enrich the community and they have the courage to do it. I admire them for that. The positive impact on the community motivates me. The project is bringing together people who wouldn't integrate otherwise.*

It is now 12:15 pm and there has been a steady flow of people. 62 people have come through in total, including 35 people from the other night. Each person who auditions will be assigned either one or multiple roles, information that will be disclosed at the first cast reading of the play. (In this document, the Cast List is recorded on the following two pages: 39 and 40.)

I recognize some people today from the Public Reading that took place here. The waiting room has a comfortable atmosphere. A community member sits and waits for his turn to be interviewed and auditioned. He tells me he hasn't acted since grade 8. He's been here in Vancouver since the early 90's and is currently a dishwasher here at the Carnegie Centre. He gets called into his audition and disappears around the corner.

I make my way out of the waiting room and reception area and buy my 80-cent lunch in Carnegie's Cafeteria. I walk home through the sunny neighbourhood of the Downtown Eastside. The streets are bustling with people.

¹⁹ Participant Coordinator of this project. She is also a local activist and artist. See page 144 for her comments.

²⁰ A large administration team is needed to help with the many details of this huge production.

CAST LIST

NICOLE- Priscillia Tait

OUTTA THE RAIN CHORUS (Residents of the DTES)- Gail Bowen, Roger Brouillette; Grant Chancey; Wendy Chew; Rosemary Collins; Brenda Dallaway; Luke Day; Patrick Foley; James Hance; Yvonne Kato; John Krotez; Sai Law; Kuei-Ming Lin; Michael McNeeley; Julia Marks; RH Maxwell; Joan Morelli; paisley Nahanee; Qi Li Pan; Brenda Prince; Roberto Garcia Roman; Saskia Scopman; Gena Thompson; Hannah Walker; Emile Wilson; Susan Poshan Wong; Bernadette Wycks

OLD ONE- Stephen Lytton

LEANNE- Susan Poshan Wong

MICHAEL (LEANNE'S son)- Emile Watson

FIRST PEOPLES- Sarah Angus; Wendy Chew; Henry Pruden; Kat Norris; James Hance

IMMIGRANT MEN- Mickey Clark, Michael Guenette, Elwin Xie, Roger Brouillette

CEDAR TREE- Sharon-Jo Jelden

DRUMMERS- Victoria Marie, Javier Romero

ALBERT- Grant Chancey

GASSY JACK DEIGHTON- Luke Day

MARION (JACK'S first wife)- Gladys Evoy

MADALINE (MARION'S niece and JACK'S second wife)- Sandra Pronteau

GRANNY (MARION'S grandmother)- Sue Blue

TOM (JACK'S brother)- Michael McNeeley

EMMA (JACK'S sister-in-law)- Elizabeth Murdock

YELLOW DOG- John Krotez

CREDITORS- Robyn Livingstone, Paul Decarie

REVEREND TURNER- RH Maxwell

CONGREGATION- Magdalena Fekete, Lynne Shepard

GEORGE CARRY- Elwin Xie

PHOENIX/FIRE PUPPETEERS- Roberto Garcia Roman, Wendy Chew, Kathleen Gowman

SQUAMISH SINGER- Siamtenaut (Sheryl-lyn Rivers)

TERRIBLE TRUTH- Grant Chancey

TELEPHONE PUPPETEER- Dan Feeney

NANCY- Kuei-Min Lin

MA (NANCY'S MOTHER)- Sai Law

SEAGULL PUPPETEERS- Kira Bennett, Jacob Bennett, Paisley Nahanee, Emily Robinson, Elisha-May Walker, Mercy Walker, Emile Wilson

CHINESE MAN- Elwin Xie

GOOSE PUPPETEER- Julie Brassard

CHINESE MOTHER- Susan Poshan Wong

CHINESE SON- James Hance

CHINESE SISTERS- Fanna Yee and Wendy Chew

CHINESE LAUNDERER- Javier Romero

JAPANESE MOTHER- Qi Li Pan

MOB- Patrick Foley, Dan Feeney, Michael Guenette

NEWSBOYS- Emile Wilson and Hannah Walker

MR. MORLEY- Robyn Livingston

OFFICIAL- Luke Day

WILLIAM LYON MACKENZIE KING- Mickey Clark

DR. WIZARD- Grant Chancey

SUCKERS- Dan Feeney, Brenda Dallaway, Michael Guenette, Robyn Livingston

MOTHER- Wilhelmina Munro

POLICE OFFICERS- Michael McNeeley, Roberto Garcia Roman

BIRDIE; ETHEL; WILLIS; MR. COSETTI; SHILL cameos performed by- Mayor Larry Campbell (Nov. 27); Parks Board Chair Heather Deal (Nov. 28); Mystery Guest (Nov. 29); MLA Jennie Kwan (Nov. 30); Councillor Jim Greene (Dec. 4); CBC Radio Host Bill Richardson (Dec. 5); Councillor Ellen Woodsworth (Dec. 6); MP Libby Davies (Dec. 7)

NANCY'S UNCLE- Gus Cabrero

NANCY'S ANCESTRAL GRANDMOTHERS- Sue Blue, Ada Con, Gladys Evoy, Sharon-Jo Jelden, Yvonne Kato, Joan Morelli, Harriet Prince, Susan Poshan Wong

NANCY'S GRANDPARENTS- Elwin Xie and Brenda Prince
UNCLE CARRIERS- Roger Brouillette, Antonio Dossantos, Michael Guenette, James Hance, John Krotez, Michael McNeeley
RALPH- Roger Brouillette
ROSE (his daughter)- Paisley Nahanne
PIGEONS- Kira Bennett, Jacob Bennett, Mercy Walker, Emily Robinson, Emile Wilson
VICTORIAN GIRL- Elisha-May Walker
CARLOS- Roberto Garcia Roman
SHEILA (his wife)- Julia Marks
WILLIAM VAN HORNE- Grant Chancey
RAYCAM MOMS- Saskia Schopman, Brenda Dallaway, Gena Thompson, Bernadette Wycks, Brenda Prince
MOMS- Sue Blue, Gail Bowan, Wendy Chew, Kathleen Gowman, Lily Loncar, Adrienne Macallum, Joan Morelli, Qi Li Pan, Isobel Ramirez, Fanna Yee
TRAIN PUPPETEERS- Antonio Dossantos, James Hance,
CHILDREN- Elisha-May Walker, Mercy Walker, Katie Jobin, Hannah Walker, Paisley Nahanee, Si Qi Pan, Dakota Prince, Emile Wilson, Emily Robinson
RAILWAY OFFICIALS- Michael Guenette and Patrick Foley
SOCIAL WORKER- Lynne Shepard
LEGAL AID WORKER- Luke Day
MR. O'HARA- Robyn Livingstone
ACTING MAYOR- Michael Guenette
JUDGE- RH Maxwell
LAWYER- Michael McNeeley
TOURIST GUIDE- Sarah Angus
TOURISTS- Sharon-Jo Jelden, Joan Morelli, Sandra Pronteau, Trevor Robinson, Susan Poshan Wong
WILLIS SHAPARLA- Patrick Foley
MR. COSETTI- RH Maxwell
EAGLE- Hannah Walker
MICHAEL- Emile Wilson
WELL FED FAMILY- Gus Cabrera, Joan Morelli, Emily Robinson
LITTLE GIRL WITH CHICKEN- Mercy Walker
UNEMPLOYED MEN- Roger Brouillette, Antonio Dossantos, Dan Feeney, Michael Guenette, James Hance, Robyn Livingstone, Roberto Garcia Roman, Javier Romero, Elwin Xie
STEVE BRODY- John Krotez
SLIM EVANS- Trevor Robinson
UKRAINIAN WOMEN- Ada Con, Sarah Galuska, Magdalena Fekete, Wilhemina Munro
MAJOR HILL- Paul Decarie
COLONEL FOSTER- Mickey Clark
RCMP OFFICER- Michael McNeeley
BIRDIE (prostitute)- Gail Bowen
PROSTITUTES- Rosemary Collins, Brenda Dallaway, Gladys Evoy, Kathleen Gowman, Yvonne Kato, Adrienne Macallum, Kat Norris, Saskia Schopman
AH SUE- Ada Con
AH LEI- Wendy Chew
ETHEL- Joan Morelli
KAREN- Lily Loncar
SUSAN (police officer)- Rosemary Collins
SHADOW PUPPETEERS- Julie Brassard, Roger Brouillette, Wendy Chew, Brenda Dallaway, Dan Feeney, Robyn Livingstone, RH Maxwell, Fanna Yee, Hannah Walker
CARNEGIE MUSICIANS- Luke Day, James Hance, John Krotez
AUNT RITA (puppet, NICOLE'S AUNT)- Sue Blue (voice), Gladys Evoy
ANDREW CARNEGIE (PUPPET)- Mickey Clark
ANDREW CARNEGIE PUPPETEERS- Emile Wilson, Roger Brouillette, Brenda Dallaway, Michael Guenette
MARGARET CARNEGIE PUPPET (ANDREW'S MOTHER)- Rosemary Collins

FIRST CAST READING OF THE PLAY

SEPTEMBER 23RD 2003



Japanese Hall- Alexander Street (near Jackson)

The first reading of the play with the cast takes place this evening from 7-10 pm at the Japanese Hall. As I turn the corner from Jackson to Alexander Street, I see a crowd of people standing outside. I see Alex. With a huge grin, he tells me he's playing the part of the WIZARD. He says he thinks it helped that he brought attitude and costume pieces to the audition. He based his costume on Wild Bill Hickok and the *Wild West Traveling Show*. He wore a wig, goatee and cowboy hat. He says he was told he got the role because he wanted it more than anyone else. When asked to sing Happy Birthday in the audition, he got down on one knee as a crooner and sang *à la* Marilyn Monroe. *"They loved it!"*

I enter the Hall and sign in. The evening is incredibly organized. Each person is handed a nametag with a designation, whether you're crew or cast, designer, musician, writer or publicist. I enter the auditorium. It is set up with three rows of seats arranged in a circle. The auditorium is half full. Elizabeth Murdock, a Strathcona community member, excitedly tells me she is about to find out which part she is playing. All scripts are organized on a very long table, each one labeled with a person's name, their character(s), and scenes.

I scan the room. I see Jimmy. He is focused and very excited. He is talking to a participant. He thanks me for some notes I gave him regarding the script. He says the script has gone through some changes. We set up an interview that will take place in a couple of days. I look forward to meeting with him and hearing his perspective.

I stand back and take in the energy from the creative space. There are close to one hundred Downtown Eastside residents here. From children to elders, the cast is an incredibly diverse group of people. There is a buzz of uncertainty and excitement as the seats are near to being full. I take my place within the circle.

Introductions are made by Terry and Savannah, George Sakata, the Director of the Japanese Hall, and by Michael Clague, the Executive Director of the Carnegie Community Centre. Jimmy welcomes everyone to the reading of the Downtown Eastside Community Play newly entitled *In the Heart of a City*. He says that for anyone here tonight without roles, they will be cast this week. Before the reading begins, Jimmy asks everyone to introduce themselves, and to say which role(s) they are playing. Everyone speaks, one by one. We are connected

as a group. We are members of the Downtown Eastside Community Play. It is exciting to see everyone together, the integral players who will bring this production to life.

The reading begins. There are touching moments, and rapport between some actors spring up immediately. Some actors have a lot of fun with their lines, using gestures and accents. Some people's voices get louder as the evening progresses. Sai Law and Kuei-Ming Lin have a good time with their scene *Coming and Going*. Dorothy Jenkins, the Stage Manager reads all the parts not yet cast and for those who are not there.

We break at 9:10 pm. On the back tables are warm samosas, corn chips, hot beverages and water. I meet Bernadette and ask her how she found out about the play. She says a friend told her. She says she wants to help primarily with making puppets, but also has a role in *Militant Moms*. She says she hasn't acted since high school.

After some mingling the company resumes with the reading. Jimmy informs us that if we haven't read the complete script, we'll stop at 10 pm regardless. Rehearsal schedules are given to participants tonight, with specific times and dates that they're needed for specific scenes. There is laughter during the evening and emotional engagement with the script lines that are read.

We stop before the last three scenes. Jimmy announces that the next time the play will be rehearsed in its entirety will be in three weeks. Everyone helps to put the chairs away and slowly we make our way home. Stories are shared among those who have met tonight.

I go back to my studio musing about this project and how I am involved. This amazing experience is about people of the Downtown Eastside throughout history and today. Who are the people? What are the stories? How is this enormous production going to come together? And who are the people making this possible?

From seeing the large-size cast, crew, and artists involved, the schedule and time constraints, I realize it is not possible to interview everyone, as I'd like to. While maintaining an observer perspective, I'm interested in being as close to the heart of the process as possible. Now that the roles are cast and the performers have engaged in a first reading, I see that the play has reached a new level...*it's really happening*.

INTERVIEWS AND PRODUCTION MEETING

FIRST INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR/CO-WRITER
JAMES (JIMMY) FAGAN TAIT
SEPTEMBER 25TH 2003

I want to ask Jimmy questions about the writing of the play before he moves too heavily into his role as director of the production. I meet with him for a brief interview at the Japanese Hall, brief because he will then have to embark on three more meetings.

Why and how did you get involved in this project?

JIMMY- Because of my experience as writer and director for the Enderby and District Community Play, I was asked to be an advisor when people at the Carnegie Centre were planning this production. I was asked to share with them what a community play was.

Savannah and Terry approached me with questions about how to do it and offered me the director position. I was interested in being one of the writers and bringing my experience to a team of writers, as a Dramaturge. It was easy for me to imagine hopping on board with this project because of my previous experience with this theatrical form. I knew how to do it, with a wealth of strategies that would save time. I didn't want to direct at first. I said no right away. After a three hour meeting with Savannah and Terry, I left feeling good about the play because of Vancouver Moving Theatre; and I felt happy to be in theatre. Terry asked me what it would take for me to direct it. I said a structure and a fee that was different than Enderby. I'm happy to be both one of the writers and the director on this project.

What did you want to express through the writing?

JIMMY- I wanted to express, or rather, I wanted to discover what the material was to express. To represent the Downtown Eastside, everything from images to verbal. I wanted to make sure each writer would be represented in style and content and that I would be the container for securing each individual voice, whether I understood it or not. I like pulling voices together. Rather than distilling the voices together in one voice, instead find a 'container' to keep each distinct voice. After June, Savannah and I understood the container and what it was.

‘NUTS & BOLTS’ OF THE PRODUCTION

SEPTEMBER 25TH 2003

After our interview, Jimmy and I have to find the next meeting, which is being held in the huge Japanese Hall in one of its many rooms. We move the meeting to the rooftop and take advantage of the beautiful day. This meeting focuses on community involvement. Present are: Savannah, Itai, Marina, Tamara, Wyckham, Dan, Leith, Jimmy, and myself. Jimmy introduces me to the group and explains my role in the project.

Jimmy addresses concerns about the set.

JIMMY- *We’re looking for a construction crew to build the model. How do we find carpenters in the community, in order to get a set built safely?*

ITAI- *Leith has a contact with a group who learns carpentry in the Downtown Eastside. They have a big shop that the set can be built in. But, we must find the community members who are interested in working on the construction of the set.*

JIMMY- *Any participant, who wants to help with the set, will help with the set, whether it’s painting, construction etc.*

SAVANNAH- *I recommend talking to local places regarding discounts on lumber.*

JIMMY- *Is there is a community member already involved from the list who falls into the category of carpentry?*

MARINA- *It’s hard to tell at this point. If there is, should I tell Leith?*

LEITH- *Yes. Then I’ll tell Itai.*

SAVANNAH- *We need to figure this out this week.*

ITAI- *How many hours are participants helping with design?*

JIMMY- *My understanding from Enderby is that Don, the Production Manager would have design workshop drop-in hours scheduled. The construction is more formal, so we need to have a guarantee that they’ll be there.*

ITAI- *With Erin Kennedy as the Technical Director checking the safety and working with a foreman, the set will be safe.*

Jimmy recommends providing Wyckham with community resources for musicians.

SAVANNAH- *Have you had a meeting at Carnegie regarding their list of musicians?*

WYCKHAM- *I’ve spoken with some of the people from the list. They’re highly supportive, but not personally involved with the play. I went to the Carnegie Orchestra*

where one person is a possibility. Most of those who are skilled want to be paid. On Tuesday nights, they have a singer and guitar usually at Carnegie.

LEITH- *Carnegie is the nucleus of musicians in the Downtown Eastside.*

WYCKHAM- *From last night's rehearsal, we know we have a good number of singers.*

SAVANNAH- *Try recruiting from the Vancouver Folk Orchestra.*

WYCKHAM- *The problem is time. I also have to write the music.*

SAVANNAH- *Do you want to give Leith the list of interested musicians?*

WYCKHAM- *Yes. I'm confident we can build an ensemble sound with what we have. Another resource we have is the Britannia School Band to be the marching band.*

JIMMY- *Give all lists to Leith.*

LEITH- *This is good; I had no idea Wyckham wanted help.*

DAN- *We need to advertise musicians wanted and get information from Wyckham to Leith.*

WYCKHAM- *The structure is 4 nights a week, from 6-7 pm at the Japanese Hall.*

SAVANNAH- *The Chinese Seniors Choir is also interested and the Ukrainian Choir expressed interest.*

JIMMY- *I don't want it to get too complicated. I know that the Chinese Choir will be alternating 20-40 of their members each night. Some other people can fall under the category of "Bloody Sunday" because of the "Solidarity song", but we can't be adding minutes to the show.*

Itai encourages a discussion about costumes.

MARINA- *We'll meet the participants this Saturday and find out who's doing what. We spoke to all interested people and gave them a flyer. We're not sure who will show up. I reminded people at the reading.*

JIMMY- *Let's see who shows up on Saturday and take it from there.*

LEITH- *By then we'll have a phone.*

Keeping track of participants...

JIMMY- *We need a translator for Qui Li Pan's rehearsals. She is a valuable member of our cast and we don't know what language she speaks.*

SAVANNAH- *Cynthia could talk to her and see if she speaks Cantonese or Mandarin.*

JIMMY- *Her 5 year-old son was helping her at the reading. We need to keep track of our participants. Right now, we have a massive people inventory problem. We need a cast list for each scene.*

SAVANNAH- *I can take what we have and do it.*

JIMMY- *We need to keep track -Marina, Wyckham and I. We need scene-by-scene, rehearsal-by-rehearsal, slots for musicians and for actors. I suggest Savannah take Dorothy's list and take it from there.*

MARINA- *I'll need a longer-term volunteer to be at workshops to help facilitate with sign-in and tea. It doesn't have to be the same person.*

Leith acknowledges the request. Jimmy adds that we need someone to help with food at rehearsals and that Emiliano Velasco, the Assistant Stage Manager (ASM) who's doing it now cannot do it any longer because it's taking away from his ASM duties in the Rehearsal Hall.

Time runs out and the meeting moves from its roof top area to the company's office inside. Savannah and Jimmy are talking about a couple of participants who have withdrawn. The production meeting commences with the same people who were at the previous meeting plus Terry Hunter, Erin Kennedy the Technical Director, and Dawn Buie the Video Documentarian. Production meetings take place on a regular weekly basis.

The first objective of this meeting is to discuss documentation. Savannah says that Sister Victoria Marie, a consultant with the Strathcona Research Group,²¹ has been hired by the Parks Board to evaluate the project, using an outcome based research model. She then introduces Dawn Buie to the group. Dawn says she wants to meet with Jimmy to determine what rehearsal shots to take.

JIMMY- *Actors Equity Rights need to be negotiated for Dorothy's and my involvement in the video.*

ITAI- *It needs to be cleared what will be taped because to my knowledge some footage at the Casting Call has already been taken when it wasn't wanted.*

DAWN- *I want people to be aware that I'm there for community process. I want people to realize its okay for example to be frustrated on tape. I also want people to approve the footage, which will end up being used as part of an edited documentary about the creation of the play.*

JIMMY- *Terry, Itai and I have parameters and we have to make sure that Equity is okay. The level of comfort in rehearsal with Dorothy and I and the participants will be vulnerable. I'm worried about the camera making people self-conscious to want to jump prematurely to a performance level in rehearsal.*

²¹ See pages 129-130 for more about Sister Victoria Marie

A meeting is set between Dawn and Jimmy.

MARINA- *I recommend that Dawn tell me when she's coming so that I can set up some shots for her.*

SAVANNAH- *Anyone should have the right to refuse an interview and video, even if they have previously agreed.*

Dawn describes a documentary that she liked based on the process of a community art project. Wyckham says that his partner, Patti Fraser created that video and he could lend her the tape. The meeting continues with the topic of food.

TERRY- *The refreshments will be stored here in a fridge and freezer that will be arriving soon. The food will be brought out on a need-be basis. There is an oven and microwave here.*

ITAI- *When are the design workshops?*

MARINA- *Tuesday and Thursday evenings and Saturdays.*

TERRY- *There will be coffee, tea, juice, frozen pastries and sausage rolls etc. There isn't enough money for catering.*

MARINA- *Can a volunteer do it?*

LEITH- *I'm doubtful.*

JIMMY- *Could a team of volunteers do it?*

ITAI- *Do we have money donated for food?*

TERRY- *Yes.*

ITAI- *Could a portion of the money go towards hiring someone?*

TERRY- *No. What about the Assistant Stage Manager?*

JIMMY- *Dorothy says he doesn't have enough time. Marina says it can't be her or Tamara because they'll be busy doing other things with the participants. The Ann Jellicoe Model²² suggests that volunteers take on that role. We need to take the ASM away from the food duties. It's a Producer problem.*

TERRY- *The bottom line is that people need food. I can solve the problem in long-term, but in the meantime, how am I going to provide food tonight and on the weekend?*

²² For more information see page 7.

JIMMY- *Dorothy says because there are less participants acting tonight, Emiliano can help with the food tonight. But he has already missed a big chunk from last night's rehearsal, so the problem needs to be solved as soon as possible.*

Food issues aren't typically part of a typical theatre production.

ITAI- *What are your needs, Marina?*

Marina hands a list of requests to Itai.

MARINA- *The studio we're using needs to be tarped on the floor. There's a water leak. I also need a car to pick up supplies.*

TERRY- *I can help.*

MARINA- *I'm concerned because twice now the studio has been left opened.*

ITAI- *I'll look into that.*

MARINA- *I need a trunk to lock my tools in and I need a key to the main building and kitchen as well as a garbage can. I'm going to have a message board set up in the lobby and I need a first aid kit. I'm making props but not buying them.²³*

ITAI- *Erin and I are purchasing them.*

Marina arranges a meeting with Jimmy to devise a prop and set list.

JIMMY- *Who is handling rehearsal props?²⁴*

ITAI- *I can do rehearsal props but not show props as well.*

JIMMY- *Rehearsal props are needed as soon as possible.*

ITAI- *There's no budget for rehearsal props plus real props.*

MARINA- *UBC department of theatre has offered costumes and props.*

WYCKHAM- *I need cymbals.*

TERRY- *I'll check what we have in Vancouver Moving Theatre storage.*

WYCKHAM- *We don't have amplifiers. What is the insurance status? What if something goes missing?*

TERRY- *We have liability insurance and not property insurance right now.*

²³ Props are made, bought, or found.

²⁴ Props need to be gathered for theatre rehearsals, which are not necessarily used for the actual show, (i.e. sticks, food tray etc).

LEITH- *I have people interested in participating who haven't auditioned yet.*

JIMMY- *Tell them they can drop by on either of the next two Sunday rehearsals.*

LEITH- *Issues with volunteers are very different in small towns compared to the big city and specifically the Downtown Eastside.*

With five minutes remaining in the meeting, Jimmy says that he needs a wagon, ladder, umbrellas and a shopping cart for rehearsal and that the piano needs to be moved off the stage. Savannah says that acting coach Jay Hamburger wants to know when he's needed. Jimmy says that he and Dorothy already discussed that with Jay. Savannah says that she needs to look into security of the building and asks Dorothy, seeing as she will be there every night for rehearsal, if she could be the liaison person with security at the Japanese Hall. Dorothy agrees. Savannah then asks when the potluck should be arranged for. Jimmy says that it's good to have one in the lull period, sometime after the first run.²⁵

The meeting ends and I talk to Dan Feeney regarding the Carnegie Newsletter that he's putting together. We talk about the possibility of including some interviews I've had with participants. Meanwhile, the rest of the group has gone somewhere for another meeting based on artistic vision, joined by Bob Eberle. The production meetings today are the basic *nuts & bolts* meetings I'm familiar with from directing theatre productions.

The buzz of production is in the air. Tonight there is another rehearsal, followed by another tomorrow night, and Saturday and Sunday. Jimmy and Dorothy will be rehearsing 6 days a week.

²⁵ First time a play is acted on stage in its entirety.

FIRST INTERVIEW WITH ARTISTIC DIRECTOR/CO-WRITER
SAVANNAH WALLING
SEPTEMBER 29TH 2003

Savannah welcomes me into her home. I am immediately made comfortable by the smell of the soup cooking. Her son Montana is playing the piano. There is a strong sense of home and creativity in her space. She takes me to her study and we begin our interview.

How did you and your theatre company Vancouver Moving Theatre (VMT) become involved in the project?

SAVANNAH - When we first heard about a community play for the Downtown Eastside, we wanted to support it... because this is our home. Maybe Terry and I could be actors. Maybe we could organize the music.

Turns out the play planning committee assembled by Carnegie Centre are real inspired by a kind of community play that happened in Enderby, B.C. in 1999. (Enderby's play was inspired by Britain's Colway Trust model). Carnegie talks to several Downtown Eastside-involved artists to see who wants to 'play' with them.

Well, at one point, there was talk of collaboration between Savage God (with John Juliani) and Theatre in the Raw (with Jay Hamburger) and Vancouver Moving Theatre (Terry and myself). (Jay, Terry, and I worked with John on a really powerful community theatre project called I Love the Downtown Eastside.) We all thought, "Why follow another community play model – let's do our own." But in the end, Carnegie's play planning committee decided to go for their original dream.

John decided the project wasn't his 'cup of tea' – he doesn't want to follow someone else's recipe. (But he gave his blessing to the rest of us if we wanted to move forward with it.) Jay felt the project was too big for his own company to manage – he already had a lot on his plate. Terry and I were interested -I like to cook and 'riff' on recipes - but we decided it was all too big and too rushed for us to take on alone.

Then a month or two later, Carnegie called us again. "Does VMT want to produce this kind of community play for them?" "How can we do this?" we asked ourselves. We were already producing two shows and a festival during the year. Carnegie only had a quarter of the funding – and we'd have to raise the rest. It all had to happen in one year, from start to finish. "Impossible," we thought.

But it's important we thought. We've lived in the Downtown Eastside for 30 years. This community's given birth to our theatre company, our art form, and our repertoire – our son. It's time we say 'thank you' for some of these blessings. Maybe...if we get the right kind of help...maybe... if it doesn't kill us... maybe... we can all pull it off.

How did you work out the partnership with Carnegie?

SAVANNAH – "It's going to be like climbing Mount Everest," we thought. We'd better make sure we all know what we're doing and that we're all trying to climb the same mountain.

So, we took a month to work out the details of our partnership with Carnegie. We asked Carnegie to spell out their mandate and goals, so we knew if we could support them. We agreed to involve women in leadership roles and to make sure different cultural groups were represented. Because we knew there was going to be controversy, we asked the agreement to spell out exactly what type of community play is wanted: a small core of professional artists working with as many community participants as possible.

Carnegie's play planning committee wrestled long and hard with the question of honourariums. Was it VMT's responsibility to work with 15-20 people and pay everyone some kind of honorarium? Or were we expected to open the experience to as many people as possible? Was this project about creating temporary jobs for a few? Or was it about building bridges and opening up the art-making experience to as many as possible? Do we 'close the door' after a few enter, or do we keep the door open? In the end, Carnegie wanted to open the doors to all. We agreed to support this policy. We'd do our best to build-in benefits for participants, ranging from skill building workshops to cast refreshments.

Carnegie determined the play's purpose and objectives; participated in a consensus short-list selection of artists; introduced us to community people, provided venue and fund-raising support and contributed creative ideas to the process.

Vancouver Moving Theatre oversees the artistic development of the play and its production; agrees to manage it according to Carnegie's purpose and goals; fund-raises for the play; administers and publicizes the play; hires artists and staff; organizes story research and documentation; locates and sets up the facility, and reports (and reports and reports and reports) to Carnegie.

After the mandate and type of community play are defined, we attach copies to the artists' contracts – we want to make sure that everyone is walking the same road.

Did you ask the Enderby community for help?

SAVANNAH –Yes, we did and still do. After signing the contract, Terry and I headed out to the Interior to meet Cathy Stubington and other members of the Enderby community play team. We spent three days learning about how they did what they did, and getting examples, advice and warnings. These folks are incredibly generous and encouraging. Maybe it will be possible to pull off the play, we think.

How did you find the writers and director?

SAVANNAH –Our first step was to find a director for the play. We asked ourselves, "Whom do we know with the experience, personality and understanding to pull off this kind of community play? Jimmy Tait!" We knew he successfully directed (and co-wrote) the Enderby community play. We worked with him in our Brecht in the Park series. He's an East Ender. He is absolutely dependable; a man who commits himself 150% to his projects.

Then we had one month to find a writer. Research had to start yesterday! 4 months to first draft!

"How could one writer contain all the cultural voices of the Downtown Eastside," I wondered, "better have a collaborating team."

We needed experience on the team, someone who'd actually written a big community play for a hundred actors. Jimmy Tait! He's directed one. He'll know what works and what doesn't. And he's got a great hand with comedy.

*Carnegie wanted women in leadership roles, and artists from the Asian and Aboriginal communities. Who do I know from the Asian community with roots in Chinatown who is working in the Downtown Eastside? Adrienne Wong! She was a great collaborator (actor and dramaturge) in VMT's *Tales from the Ramayana*. She's an artist in residence at the Firehall this winter. She's a contemporary young voice with a real gift for capturing the flavor of 'every-day' dialogue.*

Who can we bring on from the Aboriginal community? Penny Gummerson, Margot Kane and Marie Clements are interested, but they're all too busy. (I don't learn about Larry Loyie until three months later.) Then Jimmy suggested Renae Morrisseau. Yes! She's an experienced collaborator. She knows popular theatre forms. She has lived and worked in the Downtown Eastside. She understands the underlying historical issues of the Aboriginal community and how they affect today's political scene. She writes from the heart. Well, how many other writers should I add? So many interesting roads to travel...A Carnegie writer ...an emerging writer... a Hispanic, black, Japanese or Italian writer? But into how many parts can we sub-divide one fee before turning into exploiters? And how many writers can work effectively together in such a hastily assembled team? Let's go for four - four writers experienced in the art of collaboration; four directions of outreach and input. Jimmy, Adrienne, Renae and –

Wait a minute – who's going to organize the collaboration? Who's going to make sure we're all walking on the same road? Who's going to spend hours and hours trying to make sure we integrate as many voices as possible from the past and present and many cultural traditions? And who's going to carry the writing process to the end if it takes far longer than anyone expects to pull it off – and longer than we've budgeted?

I guess that's me. I've got lots of experience researching and writing for theatre – especially theatre with tons of music and visual spectacle. I've spent five years researching the Downtown Eastside for the Annual Strathcona Artist at Home Festival (from History Talks and Walks to program notes). Terry and I've produced local community arts programs for years—from the Strathcona Dragon Band to Brecht in the Park and the Strathcona Artist at Home Festival. We've lived in the Downtown Eastside for 30 years.

And I'll still be living here after the play is over. I've got lots of incentive to reach out for local input and feedback.

How did you research the script?

SAVANNAH –4 months to research and get ourselves a first draft of the script. It's like the Labors of Hercules! How would we be able to pull it off?

We needed help – from other locals. Colleen Tillman helped me get questionnaires off to local gathering places and schools. The questionnaires asked "What do you like, what don't you like, what do you want to change in the Downtown Eastside? What photos would you choose to describe the community to someone far away? Who are your Downtown Eastside heroes? What are your favorite stories?" 180 people, including school kids, filled them out.

Terry Hunter, Marlene Trick, Sharon Kravitz, John Atkin, Valencia Bird, Julia Marks, and Yvonne Chui helped us to set up 11 public story collecting sessions.

Sandy Cameron identified for us important themes of the Downtown Eastside:

- *resistance (100 years of struggles for dignity and human rights, homes and jobs.)*
- *alienation (experiences of marginalization and exclusion.)*
- *sanctuary (the feeling of a small town and human scale and belonging to a community.)*
- *radical possibility (the right of a community to say who they are, and change their image and dream of a better Canada.)*

Sheila Baxter gave us permission to weave in bits from her books of interviews with Downtown Eastside residents to give dialogue an ‘authentic feel’. Wayson Choy gave us permission to work with images from his books. Playwright Larry Loyie told us to write a scene about ANDREW CARNEGIE.

We interviewed lots and lots of people – over 115 people, including most of the cast of “I Love the Downtown Eastside”. We poured through books, listened to audio tapes, looked at films, and visited museums, archives and libraries.

How did you decide what stories to tell?

SAVANNAH –We asked people what stories they wanted to hear. Who are the kinds of characters they wanted to see in the play? What is really important for people to understand about the Downtown Eastside?

People asked us to talk about the history of racism in the Downtown Eastside. They asked us to talk about its cultural diversity.

People said they wanted to see strong First Nations characters visibly succeeding in life. They didn’t want to see drug addiction and prostitution portrayed as the only route for Aboriginal people.

People asked us not to demonize addiction and prostitution, nor to celebrate them as a ‘cool’ lifestyle.

People told us to talk truthfully about poverty in the Downtown Eastside and people who have a hard time coping with tough circumstances.

People said they’re tired of hearing all the time about the street drug stuff, the squats, and people fighting for food. They wanted to hear stories about the old days and stories about the different cultural groups. They wanted to hear stories about the invisible people who never appear in the media: people who work, fight for jobs and homes, help their neighbors, pay taxes and raise families in the Downtown Eastside.

We looked at the harsh realities. We looked at what’s gone right here. We looked for hope and strength and what people can do well. We didn’t ‘laugh off the grief but embrace the joy’. We looked for the ‘surrounding health that heals’, making sure we didn’t overlook the ‘Phoenix in the ashes’.

We tried to figure out how to write a script that was ‘inclusive’ so we didn’t alienate big segments of the neighborhood. We put some big polarizing issues into historical and fantastical situations (because humor and distance can help people cope with difficult issues and gain perspective). We turned conflicting accounts about aboriginal presence and racism

in the Downtown Eastside into jumping off points for the story. Missing women screamed to be heard.

The writers retold stories we heard over and over again. We made up new stories inspired by the kinds of real people we heard about again and again. We told stories we heard over and over again about communities that have disappeared.

We know this community needed to see and recognize itself in the play and production. The weight of the responsibility is enormous. If our work falls short, the whole community will pay, not just the writers.

How do four writers work on one script?

SAVANNAH –What a job! We began by establishing a collaborative process so we wouldn't get into fights with each other. We needed to generate raw material, share story ideas, crystallize/clarify themes, interweave story lines, and frame a unifying scenario.

As dramaturge, Jimmy oversaw the play's structure. As head writer, I had the responsibility of the final product in agreement with all cultural protocols and under the guidance of the writers.

Each writer planned their own strategy to research and collect stories. Renae focused mostly on Aboriginal experience. Adrienne focused mostly on Chinese experience. Jimmy focused mostly on GASSY JACK and the street scene. I focused mostly on historical events, local context and period songs. We started off with a big 'gossip tea'²⁶, collecting stories at Carnegie Community Centre's 23rd anniversary Celebration.

We organized four 'day-long' writers' sessions at Carnegie Centre. Our first meeting began with 'share and tell'. We shared stories. We reported on community issues. We took a first pass at where a scenario could be headed based on our original research. Our first homework was to write 4-6 scenes on material 'that strikes you; following your gut'.

At our second meeting, we shared stories. We assigned roles to each other in our new scenes and then read them in order.

Jimmy recommended some practical strategies. Writers gave dramaturgical feedback to each other: "you are free to take the input or not". We built in room for 'delayed reactions'. (When you thought the rest of the team is 'off base', or you rethought a scenario/scene or had a new inspiration, wrote a new scene or amended scenario for the next meeting.) Each writer had final approval on their own text.

Renae focused on the spirit and emotional worlds of characters that had been around a long time and didn't need a lot of explanation. Adrienne wrote intimate dramas about individual people whose personal journeys were transformed by encounters with historic events. I wrote epic historical chronicles about characters and collective heroes in mass actions that evoked the spirit of a culture and time. Jimmy talked about economical, emotional, vibrant writing, startling theatre devices, unusual individual units that reveal central points, Aristotelian play structure, and getting pay off from main characters.

²⁶ These were held in the beginning of the community process for writers to hear personal and historical stories from members of the community.

Early in the process, Renae wrote about the OLD ONE, the Cedar Tree, and a Missing Woman. Adrienne wrote about NANCY, a young contemporary Chinese Canadian in search of her heritage. Jimmy wrote about arrivals in the Downtown Eastside: a contemporary young native woman and Chinese immigrant, historic GASSY JACK. I brought in songs and wrote about historic events: lumbermen (1865), the Big Fire (1886), the Anti-Asian Riot (1907), the Militant Moms (1971), and Bloody Sunday (1930s).

As our collaboration evolved, we wrote new scenes: Jimmy brought in The Women's Centre and Outta the Rain. Renae brought in a story of the Squamish paddling across Burrard Inlet to rescue victims of the 1886 fire. I brought in a Phoenix fable, DR. WIZARD'S Miracle Cure, Black Shadows, ANDREW CARNEGIE'S resurrection, and local songs by Joe Ziegler and Patrick Foley. We edited scenes and we rewrote scenes. Different writers got involved with each other's scenes and characters.

We wove together as many stories and characters as we could. We realized we were 'waking up Downtown Eastside ghosts', so memories from the past will connect with today's stories. We got feedback at readings. We did plenty of revising and revising. But help! Help! We're drowning in too many voices! We can't possibly include them all! Renae warned us, "There are so many voices inside the Downtown Eastside that we risk creating an inarticulate clamor by trying to include everyone."

Did you have to leave out many stories?

SAVANNAH –Oh my, yes. We left out almost all the stories we heard. And all the stories we should have heard. Important stories. You could tell stories day and night for a year about the Downtown Eastside and still have more to tell.

Our play was too long, so we discarded a bunch of scenes written by Adrienne and myself – great stories about police raids on gambling dens, a party at the Grand Hotel, a prostitutes' history lesson, a Chinatown sweatshop, a protest by Chinatown waitresses, life at a chicken and steak house, a party in Hogan's Alley, the Freeway Fight.

We edit! Edit! Edit! Down to the stories that insisted on being heard now – today! (But don't forget characters A, B, and C; cultural groups M, N and O and stories about X, Y, and Z. They needed to be heard, too!) Well, we'll add in a reference, or add them to the program notes or add them to historical timeline in the hall. And whatever you do, don't forget!

How did the script get finished?

SAVANNAH –June 9th was the last meeting for all the writers. Although the writers' contracts were finished, the play wasn't.

Most of the scenes were written, but we were still struggling with structure. The road map through the play confused people at the readings. The last one third of the play was too dark in mood; it's a lament, not a celebration. We had three big stories: The OLD ONE (who resurrects old stories from the Downtown Eastside), NICOLE (a contemporary Aboriginal woman involved with a missing woman), and NANCY (a contemporary Chinese woman searching for her heritage). The three stories were sabotaging, instead of supporting each other.

So, Jimmy and I agreed to carry on with the writing and editing (It took us another 10 meetings into the middle of September.) Our big stumbling block was NICOLE'S story. We just didn't know enough about her or her relationship with the play's missing woman.

Finally, in June and July, I brought our questions about NICOLE and the missing woman to Julia Marks and Rosemary Georgeson, whose ancestors are West Coast with a long Downtown Eastside history. Rose talked about what it's like to grow up in a rural Aboriginal community by the sea and hear family memories about residential school, what it's like to work in the fish canneries and what it's like to be Aboriginal in the Downtown Eastside.

And so, NICOLE'S story revealed itself. She's been raised by her grandma in Bella Bella. She comes to the Downtown Eastside looking for work, a job, and her aunt. The tall buildings and bright lights and action in the Downtown Eastside are exciting. There's comfort in a place with people who look like her and where she's not in the minority. She doesn't want to talk to cops, and white folks make her nervous. When she can't locate her aunt, she's in big trouble. She has to find a place to stay within 24 hour or she'll be in the street. She's helped by a street dad who keeps predators away. The OLD ONE is the only one she can trust with her fears. She meets a woman who worked at the fish cannery with her aunt and says she wasn't looking too good. Now she's missing. Booze, drugs, and street life extend their lures to NICOLE. She doesn't want to get lost in her aunt's world. She has to pick and choose her way. The OLD ONE tells a story to help guide NICOLE to her aunt. NICOLE understands that she's the one who has to help her aunt so her spirit isn't wandering any more.

NICOLE'S story is a classical hero's (and heroine's) journey – she leaves on a journey, faces obstacles and challenges, finds help on her way which takes many forms, and returns to share her gifts with her people.

When we understood NICOLE'S story, we understood the structure of the play and we knew how to edit it. We finished the rehearsal draft on Sept. 18th, one week before rehearsals began.

(But we continue to revise and fine tune the script all the way through rehearsals, as we get feedback from cast members and Chief Janice George from the Squamish Nation.)

What was Adrienne and Renae's feedback regarding the script changes that you and Jimmy made?

SAVANNAH –Adrienne said the changes were great, regarding clarification. She liked NICOLE'S story and suggested changes for NANCY. Renae said she was very busy but had complete trust in Jimmy and myself. She supported the changes with NICOLE and her AUNT RITA and made more suggestions.

How did you and Jimmy know the script was ready for rehearsal?

SAVANNAH –The miracle happened. Four writers' voices, plus hundreds more voices from the Downtown Eastside's past and present woven together into a living creation that made sense. We felt engaged and confident and excited. A huge burden lifted from our backs.

Do you have any advice for writing community plays?

SAVANNAH- Jimmy gave us several valuable suggestions:

- *Good characters in a good drama or comedy are easier for people without experience to act.*
- *Remember the Aristotelian model: introduction, development, climax, ‘denouement’, (or resolution).*
- *Write clear and strong entrances and exits.*
- *Do not use many stage directions unless you’re creating a dance drama.*
- *Be conscious of three items when you approach any scene: its style (e.g. French farce), its territory (e.g. sit-in at city hall, 1940), and its theme (e.g. man’s oppression of man). When you approach any scene, identify its territory, follow a particular style, and allow the scene’s theme to guide you.*
- *Write lots of medium sized roles, 10-12 secondary leads, minimize big leads, and create parts for group scenes.*
- *Allow humor to be present even in tragedy.*
- *Don’t take anything for granted.*
- *When you look for feedback, create a formula (or list of questions) that people are invited to respond by. You want to find out where the script is going well.*

I add some more suggestions:

When you write (and research) a community play, care for the people you meet, listen closely to their lives and be intensely valuing as you listen. You need the capacity to tolerate other people’s pain, to witness what people have gone through without judgment, and to appreciate what it takes to survive in and cope in difficult situations. (Anything less than bearing full witness will be silencing.)

Respect confidentiality when people share stories that could be harmful to them if made public.

Listen to the feedback you get back from the community – especially from the people who shared their stories. If they say what you write does not have the ‘ring of truth’, they’re right. Revise it.

**SECOND INTERVIEW WITH
JAMES (JIMMY) FAGAN TAIT
SEPTEMBER 30TH 2003**

Terry welcomes me inside the Japanese Hall and says that James (Jimmy) is expecting me. I see Jimmy. He tells me he's been looking forward to meeting with me and having the interview. There is a rapport between us, and has been ever since I met him. He is full of life. There is no one I could imagine directing this show except for Jimmy. We sit outside comfortably like old friends.

JIMMY- There have been some moving situations, which have happened in rehearsal. Feel free to visit any or all rehearsals, 'carte blanche'. Your positive energy is appreciated. When you're in the room, you're welcome to join us for the warm-up and game. This happens at the beginning of every rehearsal. It starts us relating to one another. The ball game has varying degrees of exercising the physical and the mind and overcoming shyness. My experience is that this exercise is the best thing. It worked well in Enderby. It helps the group imagine something as a team. I believe in putting the show in the body first. I don't talk a lot with regards to the material; I let the participants figure it out. Sometimes they'll ask questions.

Jimmy thanks me for documenting the play process. He shares some stories he feels need to be documented.

JIMMY- On Sunday morning, coming straight from the hospital, was a participant with pneumonia. She said she was afraid she'd lose her role if she didn't come. She wasn't well. For the warm-up, I encouraged her to participate and do what she could. She did the warm-up from her chair. She told me that before her father died he said, "Promise me you'll go back to the theatre because it makes you happy". She said she had studied theatre a while back. At one point after the rehearsal started, I noticed she had fallen asleep on her feet. Dorothy helped her and left the rehearsal hall with her to make sure she got home safely. Ordinarily, the Stage Manager never leaves the Rehearsal Hall during rehearsal. Dorothy and I have a clear understanding, from our experience working together including Enderby. When she has to leave, it's because a participant has to leave.

Another story I want to share is about the woman I talked about at the community outreach meeting. She came to the audition and couldn't speak English. She was at the first reading with her son who was maybe 5 years old. The next day she came to rehearsal. She didn't understand the text but she understood the choreography. Friday she came to rehearsal. There was some confusion -the production's fault- because she wasn't needed for rehearsal. She showed me the Japanese song she was supposed to sing. Her daughter was with her and I asked her what language her mom spoke. She replied, "Cantonese." I said I wanted to get her an interpreter but her daughter said it wasn't necessary. Her mom studied Japanese in school and this was one of the songs that she learned. She knew the song and sang it for me. It was magical. Two days later the song was in rehearsal, it was so moving how it influenced the rest of the scene.

There's a fellow who shows up for every rehearsal. He's 100% committed. Not the best reader, but he, for example, is why the play is happening. He's learning a lot. He has a part already but he wants more. He asked Dorothy if we're allowed to miss rehearsals or shows. Dorothy replied with, "You'll come in a wooden box if need be". I couldn't imagine doing this if Dorothy wasn't here.

Jimmy has one more story to tell.

JIMMY- *At one of the first gossip tea sessions²⁷, a fellow spoke to me. I ended up casting him as the OLD ONE. He comes every day when he's needed. He aced the ball game. He's a native elder. I count on him.*

Jimmy says his job is about 'attunement'. He enters rehearsals prepared to let go of all his preparation for the session.

JIMMY- *It's all about relating to people, connecting and being grounded. The whole production team needs to be grounded. We do whatever we can do with whoever is in the Rehearsal Hall. I guide the people; I have to be connected because they're the ones doing the show. I'm not worried about re-casting. 86 people showed up to the audition, the same number as in Enderby. However, I believe the experience that is going on here is bigger than any other production I've worked on. I can't imagine how this play is triggering other areas in people's lives. I don't go into the socio-psychology area; I only focus on the art.*

We review the interview we had last week. I ask him to continue speaking about his process in discovering what to express in the writing of the play.

JIMMY- *I've worked on this kind of project enough to know you can be decisive about what you want to write, but the flow happens and you have to respond to the different things coming at you: images, voices etc. You find yourself saying at writer meetings, "I think it's about this – ." I go to the library a lot regarding geographic site, history, sociological, etc. The images and voices that came to me were particular, not a huge canvas. For me the stimulus is created and then a visceral response happens.*

I based the character of LEANNE on a woman who approached me at the gossip tea in Pigeon Park. She told me her life story. It's in the play. On a walking tour of the DTES with the woman LEANNE is based on, a prostitute (a different woman) approached me in an alley way and sang to me, "I wonder, wonder who wrote the book of love?" There's a lot of representational power in that. That became part of the accumulative information of the project. When I sat in the Balmoral, bits of that went into the script. I had a strong response to the material that all three writers had. In this project as any collaborative piece, it is a mosaic. In this case, with four writers I want to bring out the best. All writers were off contract by June. I was prepared to work off contract, be the dramaturge, and work with Savannah to finish the script. Through the process, Savannah and I discovered each other's valuable work. Adrienne and Renae accepted all of the proposed internal shifts in what they wrote. Large chunks were edited and rewrites happened. They are very busy and put entire trust in what Savannah and I did.

How did NICOLE'S character become one of the through-lines?

JIMMY- *The missing one, NICOLE, was the through line in the beginning for me. Savannah proposed it was NICOLE'S mother. I thought that was too intense, so I changed it into AUNT RITA. It became more about the one looking for the missing one. I knew the story of the missing women had to be involved. But I wondered how this tragedy was going to entertain an audience.*

Humour seems to be throughout the script.

²⁷ For more information see footnote 26.

JIMMY- *I knew humour was key to enable the opening of the door, to get inside the material through humour. I believe humour enhances the seriousness. There's more room for humour. I was thinking of adding a joke box in rehearsal for joke suggestions to add to the play.*

So, you're open to any changes in the script that happen in rehearsal?

JIMMY- *I'm open to hear what's there in rehearsal. In the Enderby project there was one cast member who stood out but it was hard to place what she could do in the show. One day she told me she could do the can-can. She danced for me and I ended up adding a song, "Here comes Dolly Beatle", while she danced the can-can. It was one of the most beautiful scenes in the show.*

**REHEARSALS AND DESIGN WORKSHOPS
INCLUDING INTERVIEWS**

REHEARSAL

SEPTEMBER 30TH 2003

I'm excited about the rehearsal tonight. I know I will be in an invigorating creative space, a place that is full of life, a place where people grow to trust one another and the creative process. I enter the Rehearsal Hall. The thrill of the unknown fills the room. Emiliano Velasco, the Assistant Stage Manager, and Dorothy greet everyone at the door.

At 7:00 pm, Jimmy welcomes everyone. He asks us to make a circle and say our names. He then leads us in a physical warm-up, which enables us to stretch and breathe. He explains the ball-toss game, a concentration exercise that demands eye contact. We play this for a while and already the group feels more united. We rejoin the circle with scripts and prepare to read the scene, *The Great Fire*. Jimmy confirms who is here and who is playing what roles. One actor is missing. A community participant, John Krotez, stands in for the role. Jimmy warns Dorothy that "*fire!*" will be yelled in this scene. Dorothy informs the staff outside of the Hall. Jimmy explains the purpose of the tape on the floor, it defines the set areas and that the stage will be in an alley configuration, with audience seating on two sides. The musicians are set up at one end of the *alley*.

The staging of the scene begins. Jimmy works with the actor playing the role of the Reverend. He shows him where to enter. He directs the actor to enter in a very determined manner and to deliver the lines directly to the audience as a sermon. He then gives direction to the musicians to make a roar sound. On to the fire dancers, Jimmy gives each a stick (which will eventually be attached to fabric in order to represent both the Great Fire and the Phoenix), and shows them where to enter the stage. They enter. He encourages them to make their entrance more definite and changes their configuration. After the development of the fire dancers, Jimmy then directs the actors playing the Squamish roles, who arrive in their canoes to help those harmed by the fire. He then directs the actors who try to put out the fire. The performers run through the scene a couple of times.

Throughout the rehearsal, Jimmy talks about stage safety with choreography and handling of the props. He talks to the actors about the urgency of the scene with the fire and encourages humour in a few parts. Jimmy wants a pulsating drum to accompany the progress of the canoe alongside the stage. The musicians echo Sister Victoria Marie's drum beat. Henry Pruden leads the boat. All are choreographed with their paddling, and entering and exiting the canoe.

There is a ten-minute break. I talk to Magdalena Fekete, one of the actors from this scene.

What is your response to the play?

MAGDALENA- *This is really exciting, being in rehearsal and seeing this all come together.*

Once the break is over, we're back in rehearsal and right back into the scene. We're at the part where one of the actors has to carry another actor off-stage because his character is injured from the fire. The one actor exclaims, "*My god, do we have to carry him?*" Jimmy chuckles. After some experimentation Jimmy says, "*For tonight we'll mime it and try it when we have more people to help with the carrying.*"

The scene continues with the character of LEANNE and her son. The era has shifted and we are now in contemporary time. She is reading to her son about the Great Fire in Vancouver. Jimmy remarks, *"The sentiment being expressed here between LEANNE and the child is really great."* Music is interspersed in LEANNE'S telling of the story. During this, the fire dancers enact the Great Fire transforming into a Phoenix. I glance over to Jimmy and his face is a huge grin. After some final choreography, with the transformation from the phoenix to tents, the entire scene is run. It is ten minutes long.

There is an enchanted feeling in the Rehearsal Hall that is taken along as we leave the hall and move out into the night. As we go, I tell Jimmy I wish I had a camera installed in my forehead to capture the magical moments in rehearsal. It is truly a mystical feeling to be involved and see this Community Play come together.

I leave the Japanese Hall with a group of people. We talk about the play and our involvement. One participant, Mickey Clark, tells us that he's been researching the characters he is playing. He questions the representation of one of his characters, ANDREW CARNEGIE. He read that Carnegie gave all his money to charity when he died. He says he's also been trying to find William Lyon Mackenzie's voice recorded at the library or on the Internet.

Do you have acting experience?

MICKEY- *I was just in a play all summer long in Penticton. I found out about this play a month ago. Now I'm playing four parts. I love acting. I get bored easily, not with theatre though. Even with the Penticton play that was performed 40 times, I didn't get bored; it's new every night. I know to focus only on my part during rehearsal and do the best I can do. I want this play to be really excellent...and I think it will be. I like Jimmy, he's a good director, professional and open-minded.*

We chat for a bit longer and then I make my way home.

**SECOND INTERVIEW WITH
SAVANNAH WALLING
OCTOBER 1ST 2003**

I ask Savannah to write out her job description in detail as Artistic Director of this project.

SAVANNAH –My main role has been to oversee the shaping and integration of all artistic elements of the production. I shared responsibilities with the Artistic Producer in a number of areas, including budget, funding proposals, contracts, promotion, outreach, and ticket pricing policy. I substituted for the Artistic Producer as needed at organizing committee meetings.

SELECTION OF ARTISTIC AND OUTREACH TEAM: Locating potential artists; assembling biographies for short list; interviewing applicants.

CONTRACTS: Developing job descriptions; researching and determining fees; writing contracts for artistic and outreach team; researching and writing video waiver; writing and/or reviewing all partnership and staff contracts and addendums; negotiating with artistic team.

OVERSEE RESEARCH: Reviewing community play literature and DTES history; field trip to Enderby; organizing story collecting opportunities ('gossip teas'); preparing and reviewing questionnaires (for story collection and play readings); providing period songs and historical images for musical director and designer; researching and writing historical timeline for wall displays and program.

COORDINATE WRITERS' TEAM: Organizing and planning (with Jimmy) writers' meetings and research strategies; providing historical songs, visuals and DTES overview for writers; typing and editing script. (In my role as writer, I attend special events (DTES Film Festival; Heart of the City Parade, and anniversary events); story collecting events (historical walks, talks, and gossip teas), interview over 65 people, and co-write 4 + drafts of the script).

PUBLICITY AND PROMOTION: Researching and writing 3 promotional brochures; overseeing (and sometimes writing) series of articles for Carnegie newsletter; reviewing web site content; attending planning meetings with publicist, graphics designer and Carnegie communication team.

SOUVENIR PROGRAM: Planning design with graphics designer; organizing meetings with local historians and with cultural researchers from the Squamish, Musqueam and Tsleil-Waututh bands; reviewing existing historical literature; writing 32 page program (including historical notes on the script; articles on the DTES, 8 of its neighborhoods, and its historic theatres; and a listing of cast members, production team and staff, community volunteers, sponsoring organizations, play patrons, funders, etc.).

FUND-RAISING: Writing 10 + proposals (including background, context, and project descriptions.)

FACILITIES SEARCH: Viewing and approving proposed facilities.

OVERSEE DOCUMENTATION: *Developing documentation plan and sitting on documentation sub-committee; tracking production statistics (story collection events, workshops, rehearsals and special events; co-planning and reviewing Victoria Marie's evaluation; developing work plan, reviewing and co-editing Valerie's travelogue; developing work plan and reviewing videos on the play.)*

COMMUNITY OUTREACH: *Developing outreach strategy and job descriptions; co-identifying workshop facilitators and venues; helping to partner outreach with existing programs and special events (including Carnegie anniversary programming); oversee (with producer) outreach team; attending bi-weekly meetings with outreach team and participant coordinator; networking with Carnegie anniversary programmer and pre-show fair-organizer (Sharon Kravitz) and Carnegie Radio Play Project (Jay Hamburger).*

REPORTING: *Preparing written bi-weekly reports for community play organizing committee; reviewing reports from participant coordinator, production manager and producer; preparing interim reports for funders.*

PLANNING: *Developing and revising production timeline and budget; identifying opportunities for volunteer participation and participant support; developing security policies; meeting bi-weekly with producer. Help organize and attend auditions and casting sessions.*

COORDINATION OF ARTISTIC TEAM: *Attending planning meetings with each member of the production team prior to rehearsals. Reviewing and approving director's vision, costume/puppet/prop designer's vision, musical director's vision, set designer's vision, lighting designer's vision to ensure all elements evolve into a coherent whole.*

During rehearsal, attending weekly meeting with director; meeting regularly with production manager and participant coordinator; meeting as needed with designers, musical directors, technical director, and stage manager to ensure all elements stay on track. Viewing rehearsal runs to provide feedback to director.

ODD JOB WOMAN: *Carrying dragon puppet in two pre-show productions; standing-in for cast members as needed during rehearsals; preparing props list; assembling rehearsal props; responding to complaints and security concerns within artistic and outreach teams; substituting for floor washer.*

PRODUCTION WRAP-UP: *Organizing post mortem meetings with members of the artistic and outreach team and Carnegie staff; preparing 10+ final reports for Carnegie and funders; cataloguing costumes; organizing thank you gifts for production team; writing thank you letters; distributing programs; planning low-key follow-up events for participants; writing letters of recommendation for participants; returning research loans; organizing publicly accessible storage of all production-related documents.*

REHEARSALS/DESIGN WORKSHOPS/INTERVIEWS

OCTOBER 2ND 2003

It is 7 pm and the rehearsal begins for the scene, *NANCY'S Blood*. Jimmy invites everyone to gather in a circle. We introduce ourselves. This is followed by a warm-up and the ball-toss game. We then sit in the circle with our scripts.

Jimmy explains that probably four people will carry Gus Cabrera, the actor playing NANCY'S UNCLE, onstage in a chair. A participant asks if the scene is all about Chinese people. Jimmy explains that it's a mix of First Nations and Chinese. In the scene, NANCY'S UNCLE reveals to her that her heritage includes First Nations.

Jimmy asks me to stand in as one of the GRANDMOTHERS. We read the scene. Jimmy asks us to say a one-word response to how we feel about the scene. Responses include: "*Good, sad, touching, roots, ancestry...*"

Jimmy says, "*The scene is magical, a different form of realism. It gives us the liberty to be bizarre and odd.*" Gus reads his lines softly with sensitivity to the words and meaning in the script. Jimmy suggests that he deliver his lines opposite to his sentiment, (in order to achieve the magic of this different form of realism.) He says the ghosts are GREAT GRANDMOTHERS and GRANDMOTHERS of NANCY, either First Nations or Chinese. Jimmy asks the women playing the roles of GRANDMOTHERS, what names we want to have and suggests we use the names of our actual Grandmothers. We reply: "*SOPHIE, ANNA, MARY ANN, YING AND MARTHA.*"

Jimmy explains that the purpose of the tape on the floor is to map out the stage areas. He then describes what the set will look like and where the audience will be. He mentions that Mayor Larry Campbell²⁸ will be in the show on opening night.

Jimmy starts staging NANCY'S UNCLE'S entrance, followed by NANCY'S entrance, played by Kuei-Ming Lin. The actors start the scene and Jimmy directs NANCY to start looking for her UNCLE. He encourages her to use a louder voice. The scene continues as she circles the raised platform on which her UNCLE sits. She looks for stairs. There are none.

The staging of the GRANDMOTHERS begins. I am called to the stage to join the five other women. We have a blast. Jimmy directs us as these fantastical 'other-worldly' characters. We share a few laughs as we lose our inhibitions and become these wacky wise women. We share eye contact in our chorus delivery of lines, watching each other for our cues.

At break time I see someone I spoke with at the Casting Call at the Strathcona Community Centre. I ask him how he thinks the rehearsals are going.

RH- *Fantastic.*

Did you have any expectations going into your first rehearsal?

²⁸ See page 101 for a description of this role.

RH- *I want to learn. I've been at a few rehearsals now and Jimmy is clear in his direction.*

I see Sarah Angus who I'm acting with in the scene. I ask her what her expectations were for rehearsal tonight.

SARAH- *I thought I would be bored, but I'm having a lot of fun tonight. I thought if I would say something, everyone would look at me. It's okay though because I'm used to performing poetry. I have no problem with an audience. I'm also going to be working on a documentation video that involves community and cultures. It will be in three languages; one will be my language.*

We re-enter rehearsal mode and continue on with the scene. At the end of the night, we share how much fun we had. To be able to act the scene with everyone else brought me right into the heart of the play. I thank Jimmy for this opportunity to experience the essence of the play.

I walk home tonight and think about the strength of the people acting in the play and the strength in the characters they are portraying. I think about the strength of the entire fabric of the play created from the diversity of people who are woven together in it. The play is connecting people who might not otherwise connect.

The scene tonight of NANCY finding out her true heritage is very moving. NANCY'S UNCLE tells her, "*You are blessed with GRANDMOTHERS from two proud, strong and ancient peoples.*"

Although NANCY is a fictitious character, her story of heritage in both First Nations and Chinese culture, and the experiences of rediscovering hidden heritage are very real. *A Tribe of One*, shown on CBC Newsworld, recounts the story of Rhonda Larrabee, a woman who grew up thinking she was fully Chinese and discovered she was half-native. The Larabees were a half-Native, half-Chinese family who survived residential schools and Chinatown in the 1930s and 1940s in part by denying their Aboriginal background. The documentary follows Rhonda on her quest to find her true (or *whole*) background and reclaim her identity.

INTERVIEW WITH MUSICAL DIRECTOR WYCKHAM PORTEOUS

OCTOBER 7TH 2003

I arrive at the Japanese Hall at 5:30 pm to meet with Wyckham, the Musical Director of the show. We meet at the front door and venture to the play's office. We have half an hour before rehearsal starts. I ask him how he got involved in the project.

WYCKHAM- *I was called by Jodi Smith, the publicist. I knew what was going on because Jimmy is a good friend. Savannah interviewed me and here I am.*

Have you worked on a Community Art Project before?

WYCKHAM- *I've done The Leaky Heaven Circus before with Marina, Tamara and Jimmy. About 40-50 community members get involved at Christmas.*

Did you have any expectations going into this project?

WYCKHAM- *None. I'm leaving it open. I felt the play was already a success at the casting call because of the number of people who showed up. Process is very important. The musical team is Joelysa Pankanea and I. Sometimes people show up to play music but it's not consistent. Britannia's secondary students are not available because there is no marching band. The Ukrainian group said yes. It's an issue for some people to come down here because of its location and neighbourhood. I always thought it would be okay if it ended up being just Joelysa and me. We gear music from the start to be able to play with two people. Some musicians like John Krotez are very reliable.*

What is the musical process like in rehearsal?

WYCKHAM- *The process with Jimmy is particular. He'd come in with lyrics, standard folk songs, and songs already in the script. Jimmy is specific about the rhythm being put to lyrics. He is particular to what he hears. Musical rehearsal starts at 6 pm with whoever is there. Jimmy is sometimes around. I compose the music alone, then I bring it to Joelysa, then I play it for Jimmy, then I bring it to rehearsal.*

What is the most challenging aspect for you?

WYCKHAM- *The lack of people, because I like to texture things. It's not difficult; it's easy stuff.*

How do you create the abstract sounds you are asked to create in rehearsal?

WYCKHAM- *It's easy making abstract sounds. I get a hint of mood from Jimmy. I like to enable the actors, to give them a heightened sense of mood.*

Do any scenes or moments stand out right now as being successful?

WYCKHAM- *That's difficult to answer. The Phoenix scene and the Lonely Man scene. The actors are very good and very effective. After next week, some rehearsals will only be learning songs with the actors. All the music is on paper. The run-through is this Sunday and we'll take it from there and go through it again and again, make it better with touch-ups.*

What is your musical experience?

WYCKHAM- *I primarily play guitar, write for plays usually with piano because it's a different sense of rhythm. I also play the drums.*

I mostly consider myself as a writer. I've written plays like Joe's Café that was shown at the Arts Club and I co-wrote six CBC stories. I write for fun. Right now, I'm writing a TV pilot about the Downtown Eastside. I also wrote music for a circus. Last year I wrote about the red light district in Amsterdam.

I've acted since I was 7 years old. I acted for Touchstone Theatre. I didn't enjoy acting though. I was a good performer but not a good actor. I didn't have the desire to do what actors have to do to get good. I always did music at the same time because it was more successful. I like to have control with what I do. I get that more with writing.

A participant told me she had one of your albums.

WYCKHAM- *I have six albums out there. I've been in Vancouver for 20 years, mostly in the Commercial Drive area. I'm originally from Vancouver Island.*

Do you have a personal interest in this project?

WYCKHAM- *A year ago, I gave up a lot to honour the missing women from the Downtown Eastside. I wanted to try to make people in this country aware that the missing women may be from their city. I sang with members from Tragically Hip and Blue Rodeo to raise awareness about community caring. I was on News World all the time and was a spokesperson for many people I didn't actually know. I started a Foundation to build a home for residential treatment for women that wasn't government-like. I think my expertise in this matter is a willingness to listen and I'm non-judgmental. People are in situations and it doesn't matter why people are suffering, the fact is people don't want to suffer. They deserve to feel human. Our responsibility is to foster their humanity. I don't care if people do or don't do drugs. There is a consciousness here in Vancouver. This is why I wanted to do this play.*

Has there been a situation in rehearsal that stands out or has made an impact you?

WYCKHAM- *The biggest impact hasn't happened yet. One situation that stands out so far is when a participant entered late one day to rehearsal with her shopping cart. After Jimmy introduced her to the group, she immediately transformed into a diva, a born talent. There was also another participant who had pneumonia, who despite her illness was able to give consistent and exceptional performances in rehearsal.*

**REHEARSALS/DESIGN WORKSHOPS/
INTERVIEWS CONTINUED
OCTOBER 7TH 2003**

At 6 pm, I visit the Design Workshop upstairs in the Japanese Hall. Marina and Tamara are working with some community members on various costume pieces and props. The shelves are filled with materials and props that are completed... including ANDREW CARNEGIE'S legs. They are these skinny long legs in black and white striped material, so long in length that they take up the entire length of the shelf, and beyond. The style is circus in these puppet legs. I turn around and see the beginnings of his giant body; a skeleton of his shape is made from metal rods that are curved to make its circular shape.

The atmosphere is warm in the room with music playing and tea brewing on the back table. Marina is sharing with the group the list of props she gathered from the script that need to be made. She asks the participants what projects they are interested in doing and what skills they have, for example sewing, painting etc. I offer my assistance. Tamara makes some suggestions of what I could do. My project is to make large-sized subpoenas.

I see Magdalena who has just arrived. I ask her if she is acting in *Bloody Sunday* tonight. She says yes and that she wanted to come earlier to help make props but couldn't because of her work. As 7 pm approaches, Magdalena and I walk downstairs to the Rehearsal Hall.

MAGDALENA- *I can't believe how Jimmy is able to remember so many people's names.*

Have you acted before?

MAGDALENA- *I haven't acted since my one time in high school. I don't like being the centre of attention. It makes me nervous. I think that performing the play in front of an audience will be less nerve-racking than in rehearsal. This is what happened in my high school play. The costumes and make-up help me be less nervous and more in character.*

Did you have any expectations going into your first rehearsal?

MAGDALENA- *For my first rehearsal, I didn't know anyone so I didn't know what to expect. I was less nervous at my second rehearsal and I think with more rehearsals, the less 'alien' I will feel, because people will know each other.*

What's your reaction to the script?

MAGDALENA- *It's exciting to see the scenes coming together in rehearsal. Visualizing it makes it easier to understand. I found the reading of the play confusing. I appreciate that the script is informative with the history of Vancouver. I think the script is gradual enough from scene to scene, so it's not hard to understand. It's upbeat and easy to get to the seriousness of the play because of the comedy. I'm amazed how little time there is to rehearse this play. It's great that people are willing to come together and create this show.*

The rehearsal begins and we agree to talk more at break time. We all introduce ourselves in a circle, followed by a warm-up and the ball-toss game. A lot of people are in *Bloody Sunday* and it is a long scene. Jimmy says that we're going to stage this scene quickly tonight and after the break, it will be a musical rehearsal for the songs in the scene. After

Jimmy determines who is present, he casts remaining roles to some new participants and other participants who now play more than one role. I recognize most of the participants tonight, with a few new faces. The level of participation in this project is quite high.

At 7:45 pm, the reading ends and Jimmy explains the performance areas and where the audience will be. He starts directing the actors, making use of sticks as rehearsal props. The characters are in a prison; the sticks are their bars. Jimmy asks if I will stand-in for the role of the MOTHER with Jay Hamburger who is standing in as the FATHER. We introduce ourselves and I ask him about the acting workshops he leads at Carnegie.

JAY- *I give acting workshops every week. Most of the participants are acting in this play. I'll find out where I'm needed as an acting coach after speaking with Jimmy. I think some of the actors need louder voices.*

We play our bit as a snooty couple on the periphery of the stage area. I'm drawn into the scene on stage. The actors move together in large mass movements from one end of the stage to the other. There is expansive unity and there is strength in the scene. It is now break time.

Jay and I talk about our experience facilitating workshops and the challenges involved. He speaks about his company, Theatre in the Raw, and the radio play series with his Carnegie acting group, (one of Carnegie's 100th anniversary events).

JAY- *Some have written plays that have already been performed over the radio. Some people from the group have had their work produced in a theatre.*

Magdalena and I continue our interview.

What do you think about the rehearsal process so far?

MAGDALENA- *Jimmy's awesome. He's very forward but he's not rude and not pushy. He lets people explore and make their own character and then he adds to it. I've heard that some directors say, "Do this and do that". That way of directing would seem like there's only one character in the play because there's only one perspective. I'm relieved Jimmy's not like that, because there's a bit of you in whatever you do. Jimmy's approachable and I can tell he likes what he does.*

The break is almost over and we return to the Rehearsal Hall to practise the songs in *Bloody Sunday* with Wyckham (piano), Klisala Harrison (violin), and Joelysa (percussion). "Hallelujah I'm a bum" is a song from the early 1900s. We sing with triumph. We also sing, "Falling through the Cracks" and the "Solidarity" song.

The rehearsal is almost over and I ask one of the young performers, Hannah Walker, if she wants to share her experience of participating in the play.

HANNAH- *It's absolutely wonderful. I get professional training for free. I'm doing something that I really love doing, acting, and I get to do it for free.*

I leave the Rehearsal Hall and exit the building passing a huddled group of people sheltering themselves from the rain. I make my way home, the songs from rehearsal replaying in my

head. I remain in the 1930s with the struggles and triumphs. I think about the strength in solidarity represented amongst the people in the scene tonight. Demonstrations have been a strong component in the history of the Downtown Eastside throughout time, including today.

REHEARSAL

OCTOBER 12TH 2003

This will be the first run of the play *In the Heart of a City* in its entirety. I experience a rush of energy as I enter the Rehearsal Hall. This is one of the joys of theatre for me, the elevated level of life itself. It is 2 pm and Jimmy addresses the company of actors with some notes before the run of the Act One. Dorothy and Jimmy will read the parts for people who are not here today. There will be a break after Act One. I am told there was a rehearsal of some of the final scenes this morning. Jimmy thanks the group for their commitment and talent. He explains the practical reasons for the run-through and that it will help inform actors' positions before and after scenes. He encourages everyone to enjoy the session and to refrain from making noises that will distract the actors.

JIMMY- *During the run through of the play, you might hear my voice or Dorothy's giving directions. I will guide the company by saying what scene is next and what scene is standing-by. Standing-by means get ready in position one scene before your scene. No running backstage and don't use stage area to get into position for your scene. There will be no stopping; and for those who haven't acted in their scene in the last 3 weeks, only observe today. People will be standing in for those who have not been here.*

It's okay to make mistakes. Forgive yourself immediately. Stay in the scene. Don't let me know you don't know what's going on. Fool me. Never direct a fellow actor. I am the only director. With the scenes that haven't been completed, stop in the scene and read the remaining lines from your spot. Be careful with the sticks.

Dorothy shows the actors where the order-of-scenes are taped to the wall and where the props are kept.

We all engage in the ball-toss warm-up. We are a very large group and the circle we make can barely fit in the space. Everyone is familiar with the game now and it shows. The room is filled with confidence and concentration.

Jimmy then announces we are ready to start the run. Everyone takes his or her place. It is now 2:30 pm. The musicians start playing and a large group of people moves onstage singing, "Outta the Rain". It is extremely moving as they walk slowly across the stage. Jimmy sings NICOLE'S part. The actor playing her is absent this evening. In Scene 2, the actor playing the OLD ONE watches Dorothy stand-in for his part, revealing the staging of the scene. All of a sudden, the fire alarm starts blaring. We exit the building into the rain. The timing is impeccable so some of us start singing "Outta the Rain" as we huddle underneath an umbrella. The fire alarm stops ringing and the fire officials say that we can go back in.

The event wasn't too disrupting as we immerse ourselves in the play. As the actors play Scene 3 and the cutting of the cedar tree, the song they sing is very beautiful. Onto Scene 4; Luke Day, the actor playing GASSY JACK, sings right off the top of the scene and delights us with his delivery and chorus. Spontaneous applause erupts at the end of the scene. The

momentum, the sense of pride and the excitement builds. Other highlights include NANCY'S solo, performed by Kuei-Ming Lin, during which the Rehearsal Hall is silent. In Scene 7, the portrayal of the Anti-Asian Riot, Elwin Xie plays the role of a CHINESE MAN reading from his letter to his wife in China. He walks very slowly across the stage. I am moved by the sincerity and sensitivity that fuels his delivery of this letter. The NEWSBOYS enter and announce the racial injustice that headlines the local newspaper in the year 1907. This scene gives me a sickening feeling—although I'm grateful that the truth of this injustice is represented in the play.

We then experience the WIZARD in Scene 8 and are invited into the fantasy and fun style of the scene. Scene 9 follows with *NANCY'S Blood*. Standing-in as one of the GRANDMOTHERS, it is my turn to be onstage with the enjoyable group of women who play ghosts of the maternal ancestors.

Act One continues as we reach Scene 12, *The Militant Moms*. The scene plays out as a strong demonstration with a large cast of actors. It is now 4:35 pm and Act One finishes. It has taken us approximately two hours.

During the break, there is a feeling of enthusiasm in the room. The company mingles while eating and drinking the refreshments that were provided to help us make it through.

Act Two is shorter and has a running time of one hour. Currently the play runs at three hours, as it did at the last writer's meeting. I wonder if Jimmy will reduce the length.

I start to open the door to the washroom, I hear someone on the other side, trying to exit. It is Sharon-Jo Jelden. We recognize each other from acting in *NANCY'S Blood* together. She tells me she used to be a drama teacher in the neighbourhood. She wanted to get involved with this project to be reunited with her experience in theatre. She also tells me that she currently belongs to a women's writers group at the Carnegie Centre, and invites me to attend. We wish each other a happy thanksgiving and go our separate ways. It is still raining. As I make my way home from the Japanese Hall, I see a participant from the play. We stop to talk about writing and the play. The play is on everyone's minds...even outside the Rehearsal Hall.

DESIGN WORKSHOP/REHEARSAL

OCTOBER 14TH 2003

It is 6 pm and the weekly Tuesday evening design workshop is taking place upstairs in the Japanese Hall. I have an hour to help before I sit in on the rehearsal of *The Cedar and the Sawmill*. Tamara shows me templates of what needs to be made to complete the bird puppets. I cut cardboard reinforcements to attach the already-made papier-mâché birds to the metal rods that will hold the puppet up high. I have just enough time to finish cutting the metal rods.

I make my way downstairs. Jimmy asks if I will stand-in for the role of the first SQUAMISH WOMAN who enters the stage with a speaking role. I'm grateful for another opportunity to work side-by-side with the actors. We rehearse the scene with the sticks once again, this time as our paddles, bark-cutters and saws. The scene starts with the growing of the cedar tree, followed by SQUAMISH PEOPLE who enter paddling canoes to the great cedar. We ask for its gifts to feed us. The IMMIGRANT MEN and LUMBERMEN then enter to chop the tree down. All join forces to cut down the great cedar tree, in order to use it for its gifts and prosperity. Jimmy directs us in the staging of the scene, detailing what we're doing, where we're supposed to be, when and why. We rehearse the scene with a few interruptions to explore its complexities. Then we run the scene without stopping before the rehearsal is over.

As we return our sticks from the scene, I ask one of the participants if he'd acted before tonight. He says no. I ask him if he had any expectations before his first rehearsal. He says he had an open mind with no expectations. He grins and tells me he had fun tonight.

DESIGN WORKSHOP

OCTOBER 16TH 2003

Tonight Jimmy, Dorothy, and Savannah are holding a Casting Call to fill vacant spots in the play. This is something that was always planned, in case people dropped out. Jimmy has been working with whoever shows up to rehearsal. There are about twenty more roles to cast. There is also a design workshop tonight upstairs. I make my way upstairs to the design studio. The workshop starts at 6 pm and ends at 9 pm.

The studio is always exciting to enter as new props are constantly being completed. The shelves shift from holding stacks of fabric and supplies to phoenix heads, gigantic puppets, potion bottles, geisha headdresses and birds. Tamara shows me the completed projects and the props that still need additions. The next room is full of costumes. Erin and Itai are installing a horizontal rod to hold two rows of costumes. Marina stands back and assesses her workload. I ask her how her process with costumes is going.

MARINA- *Changes happen every minute. I asked Dorothy for a cast list and she said it's not confirmed yet. When Dorothy compares it to the Enderby project, she says there are more actors playing multiple roles in this play. There are also roles that have not been cast yet. It's challenging for me because I'm used to building costumes for a specific person. I like to see the person and build a costume specific to them. With this production, I'm forced to build general costumes without knowing who the actors are.*

What about the props?

MARINA- *Most of my time is consumed with props right now. Tamara is a huge help. Also among the people helping is Deborah who made hats on the Enderby project. She is now painting Mrs. Carnegie's chair.*

Deborah Lount meets with Marina for a discussion. I look around the room and see one person making hats, others tending to the large puppet body of the character of ANDREW CARNEGIE, some are working on the Phoenix, and others are organizing the materials on the shelves. I join Magdalena to papier-mâché one of the Phoenix puppets. As we work, we share stories about past projects, where we're from and what our interests are. Others in the room join in the conversation. The music plays, and our Phoenix is almost finished. Before we know it, the time is 9 pm and it's time to go home.

I walk downstairs and see Jimmy outside the Rehearsal Hall. I ask him how the Casting Call went. He says that around 20 roles were cast tonight and he is particularly happy with the number of GRANDMOTHER roles that were filled for *NANCY'S Blood*. He asks me to be a stand-in for that scene at the next rehearsal, so that I could help inform the new actors with the staging. I like helping out, especially in the role as one of the GRANDMOTHERS. Jimmy has provided a lot of fun direction for this scene, and I love acting in it with the other women who also play GRANDMOTHERS.

REHEARSAL

OCTOBER 19TH 2003

It is Sunday afternoon at 2 pm. I enter the Rehearsal Hall where a large group of people are busily getting ready to run through Act One. It is amazing to count the number of people involved. I see Jason Bouchard, who's been there every time I've visited a design workshop. When I ask him how long he's been involved in the project, he says since the beginning. I ask him why and if he's had any experience with design.

JASON- *I'm a painter. So, I'm used to working alone. I wanted to get involved because I'm interested in learning about 3-D art and what it's like to work with others on a collaborative project. It's an organic process. I'm learning a lot with Tamara and Marina. I've been working mostly with the puppet of ANDREW CARNEGIE and even got to learn how to sew. I'm excited about moving on and learning to work on something else.*

I see Mercy Walker, one of the younger actors. She runs up to me and says she saw my friend today who teaches an acting class in the Downtown Eastside. The arts community is a small one.

At 2:35 pm the run of Act One begins. I notice right away that the performance of the song in Scene 1 has improved. The actors are more confident and the scene is beautiful. In Scene 3, I stand in for the role of the SQUAMISH WOMAN, so that the woman recently cast for the part, Kat Norris, can watch. Jimmy asks me to share with her the staging of the role after the run is finished. Overall, the run reveals the development of the choreography, acting and singing. Some actors already have their lines memorized and are able to act and fully engage in great dynamic scenes. After the break, Jimmy gives his feedback to the company of actors, so that they can improve the second time they run it. I share the staging of Scene 3 with Kat Norris.

The company runs Act One once again. Watching it leaves me with thoughts of time: the past, present and future. The line "*your blood sings to me*" rings in my head. As we put away our chairs at the end of the rehearsal, I see Elwin Xie, who plays the CHINESE MAN in *The Anti-Asian Riot*. I tell him that his performance is very moving and ask him about his experience in the play.

ELWIN- *It's an interesting experience. I grew up in a laundry in the 60's in Chinatown, in the Downtown Eastside. My great-grandfather and grandfather worked at the Hastings Mill. Later in the 80s, I was on the Board of Directors for the Carnegie Centre. After that, I tried to run away from my past. Had a suburb job, no, didn't want to do that. I realized I couldn't run away. I was born into hard times. It feels like home, to come back here. I realized the further away I went, the further I was running away from who I was. In 1911, my grandfather arrived and was officially registered with his first name as his last name. So, our family lived with his first name as our last name.*

Identity is hard to deal with. When I heard about the play I wanted to be part of it. Like coming home, where I want to be, where I ought be. All my friends left for the suburbs. I'm now involved in a few groups here in the Downtown Eastside.

When you read the letter in the Anti Asian Riot scene, it is very moving and seems personal.

ELWIN- *The letter, it could have been written by my great grandfather.*

Letter read by Elwin Xie:

CHINESE MAN: *“Sept. 7, 1907. Shanghai Alley, Vancouver. My Beloved Wife, It has been several autumns since your dull husband left you for a remote alien land. Thanks to my hearty body, I am alright. Therefore, stop your embroidered worries for me. Yesterday I received your letter. I could not keep tears from running down my cheeks while thinking of the miserable conditions of our home. Because of our destitution, I went out to try to make a living. Who could know that fate is always opposite to man’s design. Because I cannot get gold, I am detained in this strange land where we are not welcome. Not a year has passed without an anti-Oriental cry being raised. Time runs like water and takes my youth, but I cannot go home! My beauty, you are implicated in endless misfortune. Jade hands become worn claws. A maid becomes a crone. I wish this paper would console you a little. This is all I can do. The tea is bitter but we drink.”*

DESIGN WORKSHOP/REHEARSAL

OCTOBER 23RD 2003

I enter the Japanese Hall and see Sharon-Jo, who has arrived early to investigate the design workshop before rehearsal. We walk upstairs together and view the colourful props that protrude from all corners. Sharon-Jo and I share the task of cutting metal rods for the wings of the bird puppets. We laugh our way through the sometimes-difficult task. We finish in time for rehearsal.

Tonight's rehearsal is of the scene, *NANCY'S Blood*. Jimmy asks me to stand-in again. It is a good-size turnout for the roles of the GRANDMOTHERS. After standing-in for a couple of the women, they arrive to rehearsal and take over from me.

Jimmy changes the 'chorus' text from the script that was read by all GRANDMOTHERS, into individual lines for each GRANDMOTHER to read. As the evening progresses, the scene evolves into a fully realized scene of magic, wisdom, connections, and joy. Jimmy tells the GRANDMOTHERS that their laughter reveals, "...*they know what's going on.*"

After a number of run-throughs, the large group of GRANDMOTHERS has bonded into a strong presence on stage. The entire scene has culminated into a layering of ancestry and present day connections. All the elements of this story are intriguing. As NANCY'S UNCLE reveals the love story between her grandfather, who is Chinese, and her grandmother who is First Nations, the actors find themselves enthralled. The importance of this scene is undeniable. It is filled with love.

LIGHTING DESIGN MEETING

NOVEMBER 12TH 2003

I have returned to the Downtown Eastside Community Play today to attend a design meeting between Jimmy, Marina and Itai, followed by a meeting with Jimmy and then a rehearsal of *Bloody Sunday*. I've been away for three weeks because of my father's sudden death. My experience makes me slow with heartache. It is difficult for me to relate to the quick pace of day-to-day city life. As I reintegrate into the life of *In the Heart of a City*, I am welcomed with warmth and am aware of the significant advancement of the production.

The set is now installed and Erin is cutting the final pieces of wood. Bob arrives to install the stairs and brings the masonite for the covering of the undulating set. I am amazed with how 'wavy' the stage floor is and I try walking on it with Marina and Jimmy. We realize it's easier than we thought it would be.



The 'wavy' set in process.

It's 3 pm and the design meeting begins. Jimmy says it's a conceptual meeting about lighting. Marina is there because the lighting affects the colours in the costumes, set and props. Starting at the beginning of the script, Jimmy talks about the 5-minute address that will open the show each night.

JIMMY- *This is the same lighting that has to be in half an hour before the show. Nothing flashy, maybe golden, I don't want to give away any show lighting. The beginning of the show hits hard with Outta the Rain as the actors raise their umbrellas. Right away, I want surreal lighting.*

ITAI- *The umbrellas are a problem. I'll need low lighting.*

Scene 1- *Outta the Rain* - Surreal with street look.

Scene 2- *OLD ONE Arrives* - Street.

JIMMY- *I'd like there to be one look per scene (20 scenes). The lighting has to help us stay in the scenes. Not many lighting transitions within the scenes because otherwise it would be confusing. Maybe just one special per scene. I want the audience to stay on track from scene to scene.*

Jimmy talks about the cedar tree in Scene 3 and that he'd like it lit from inside. He wants people to see the growth of the tree. Itai suggests taking the overall lights out and only focus on the tree with the light. Itai also says in some scenes he'd like to light the walls. Jimmy explains whenever any lighting shifts happen in a scene, he doesn't want the audience to notice. He says because there are so many scenes within some scenes, it would get confusing.

Scene 3- *The Cedar and the Sawmill*- Green lighting to represent a lush world. When the tree comes down, the lighting changes to add some sky.

Scene 4- *An Ill Wind* - GASSY JACK scene is like an operetta. More sky gets revealed, no internal shifts happen within this scene.

Scene 5- *The Great Fire and the Phoenix*- Fire red, (Phoenix is white).

Scene 6- *Coming and Going*- Echo of Scene 1.

Scene 7- *Anti-Asian Riot* - Formalistic lighting- Peking Opera, Dance lighting, side lighting, long shadows.

Scene 8- *DR. WIZARD'S Miracle Cure*- Return to the street look, but it's a fun fair- the lighting needs gobos²⁹ with swirling designs. Light the pink pills. We have to be able to help the audience realize the time is the turn of the century, which transforms into the contemporary street lighting.

Scene 9- *NANCY'S Blood*- Interior and magical lighting on the ghosts- gothic and haunted. GREAT UNCLE'S story returns to the rainforest green colour from Scene 3. After isolating the love story of NANCY'S GRANDPARENTS, lighting changes back to the gothic house.

Scene 10- *Hot Lunch*- Interior yellow light in order to translate the indoor warm light of the Carnegie Centre.

Scene 11- *Crab Park*- Halfway between inner city and nature. Within the scene is the Victorian girl who enters pulling a ship and tells the story of Vancouver. Located at the mid-stage ramp- blue light, to emulate water. We then change to 1892 with William Van Horne.

Scene 12- *Militant Moms*- Train headlights enter towards the ramp, changes to interior dingy kitchen lights. Then change to railway tracks- dingy and harsh- '60's realism', then there's a court scene, then a change to contemporary with NICOLE'S phone call. OLD ONE announces the intermission, while the MILITANT MOM'S characters stay in position as if they're on the street in present day.

Scene 13- *Bloody Sunday*- Action happens at the end of the ramp, opposite stage of the musicians. Back-lit-back in time, like an old movie silhouette. Use gobo on the end wall. (Not sure of design at this point.) Action on centre-stage is contemporary chess game in the Carnegie Centre.

²⁹ A gobo is a cut out metal pattern that goes inside a light so that it projects the design on a wall, on the floor or on the set.

Scene 14- *City of Sighs and Tears*- Victorian-style with ‘topsy-turvy’ lights. The scene is a dance procession with big puffy brightly coloured skirts and hats.

Scene 15- *Women’s Centre*- Bright lights to indicate indoor fluorescent lighting.

Scene 16- *Rage*- (The song “Falling through the Cracks” is gone.) The scene starts in the Carnegie Centre with the warm yellow lights, then the lighting transforms to the outdoor look representing Oppenheimer Park.

Scene 17- *Black Shadows/Poisoned Dream*- The darkest part of the play is NICOLE’S dream, represented by shadow puppets of wolves, a fox, pig, dragon, and birds on stage.

Scene 18- *Phoenix Rising*- The puppet of AUNT RITA flies above people’s heads, back and forth between Carnegie and the street, followed by the funeral ceremony with OLD ONE and the BIRD.

Scene 19- *The Trial of ANDREW CARNEGIE*- Horror movie with the giant puppet of ANDREW CARNEGIE and his MOTHER.

Scene 20- *Feast*- Entire cast, including audience.

After the meeting ends, Jimmy and I walk to Gastown for dinner. He tells me what has been happening over the last three weeks. There have been some community members who have not been in rehearsal for a while, some who have left the project, and some who are new to the project. He says that fluctuating commitment among participants is common with community plays. As a Director, he says his job is to be ready to work with whoever shows up to rehearsal. He says the show will come together no matter what happens. “*The show must go on.*”

He says he’s exhausted but looks forward to the weekend when he will direct ‘stop and start’ rehearsals to work through details of the show. “*That’s the last big push,*” he says. He then explains that the scenes needing more rehearsal time will happen next week. This will be followed by run-throughs of the show, dress run-throughs,³⁰ and tech dress run-throughs³¹... and finally Opening Night.

He tells me there was an issue during the week with some community members and the video agreement waiver form. They were shocked that they were not consulted about a video being made before hand. Jimmy says the community of this play -the *family* of the play- just keeps getting more and more evolved and involved.

³⁰ In full costume, make-up with props.

³¹ With lights and sound.

REHEARSALS/WORKSHOPS/INTERVIEWS CONTINUED

NOVEMBER 12TH 2003

Tonight is the rehearsal of *Bloody Sunday*. It's 7 pm and I see some faces I haven't seen in a while. Stephen Lytton, who plays the OLD ONE, enters and offers me some words of consolation. This project has definitely brought together a family, a community with heart.

This is the first rehearsal where the cast will use the set. One by one, the actors practise walking on it. One actor balances the chair he will use in the play, over the top curve of the set in the middle of the stage. Dorothy ensures that he is safe. The room is full of action, more cast than I've ever seen for this scene. Mickey Clark is in a new role and John Krotez is playing STEVE BRODY. Both actors have multiple roles in the play and John is also a musician and helps with the set. There are many new cast members tonight. As we begin, I realize how this scene has grown dynamically with music and choreography. Meanwhile, I notice that Colin Thomas (Georgia Straight Theatre critic) and Terry Hunter have entered the Hall. They sit amongst the actors, who wait for their cue. The rehearsal continues and Jimmy works with the actors fine-tuning actions and motivation.

During the break, RH, (who always goes by "RH"), says he hasn't seen me in a while. We talk and I ask him if he'd like to comment on his experience with the play.

RH- *The play is fantastic. It's very timely, opening people's eyes. This scene reveals how men died to get welfare for us, unemployment insurance, decent jobs, and many other benefits. Now Gordon Campbell is going to end that all. By the end of the year, we'll be going back to the 1930s, before we had benefits. Any rights in unions will fade. I compare Campbell to Hitler.*

RH says he is now playing about six roles in the play. The rehearsal resumes and the men are coached and choreographed through, "Solidarity Forever". The song "Hallelujah I'm a Bum" is rehearsed. This is sung with enthusiasm and gusto. It is very catchy and stays in my head. After the scene is run a few times with Jimmy stopping the actors to adjust various points, the group runs through it one final time without stopping.

Afterwards, I see John Krotez and we talk for a while. I ask him how he sees the play.

JOHN- *I see the play as a grassroots way to include as many excluded community members together into the process of putting on the play. It's all about respect. The play is secondary. The process is very important. In the Downtown Eastside, there is a history of people not being consulted. These people have been the most vocal. For example, there was a situation last week about the video agreement waiver. After we read it, there was an argument about us not being involved in the making of this waiver. No consultation. As a result, there's a meeting with some of the community member actors in the play and Terry.*

These members are also proposing a request form for things like changing the food and daycare, and having access to the budget. I think overall though, the energy in this project is very positive. It's a process-oriented project. It's liberating to develop new skills. The mentorship of Jimmy is amazing. His leadership shows the balance between compassion and constructive criticism. He keeps everyone together and no one is left out. Everyone is given the ability to shine. In hindsight, I think it would be great to also get more people involved in the management and organizational end of things.

I make my way home, thinking about fair wages and equality. I think about what happened in the scene tonight depicting the Depression years, the constant struggle to survive and the strength in demonstrations and solidarity. The strength that won us so many rights to the basic necessities for survival. Today, with so many government cuts to social assistance programs, and pending welfare-cuts, it definitely seems we are going backwards in time to the desperation of the 1930s.

I pass people on the street. Some are curled up in door entrances. Some are walking to keep warm, or trying to find some dry place to settle in for the night. With so many people depending on the street for their home, I think about the importance of the play. *Do not forget us, we are the people of the Downtown Eastside.* I wonder who the audience will be, for a play that is so monumental and needs to be seen by so many.

REHEARSAL AND INTERVIEWS

NOVEMBER 19TH 2003

Before the rehearsal begins, I feel the positive creative energy in the room. I am sitting with Priscillia Tait who plays the part of NICOLE, who is in search of her AUNT RITA. Originally, Priscillia played a small role in just one of the scenes. She now plays a substantial lead character.

PRISCILLIA- *This is my first time acting. I didn't think it would be this big, I thought it would be just a small play. It boosted my self-esteem, being around Dorothy, Jimmy, Emiliano, the music crew, and especially my son Uligen and the cast. Prior to this, I was stressed looking for work and being out of post-secondary school. When I came here, it opened me up because I was pretty closed. I am Wetsuwet'en.*

This play helped me not to think about current issues that my people face with the Indian Act and its dysfunction. This play brightened my horizon into the positive: opposite thinking to the limited resources that I have to face as an Indigenous person. I think I put my status card and Indian Act dysfunction into a safe box when I went to rehearsals so that I could be me. The people at rehearsals saw me. On the first day of rehearsal, I didn't want to be the token Native. That wasn't the case. I didn't feel criticized or judged. I learned how to take constructive criticism. Jimmy said I have potential. I want to go further in theatre. I've already started looking for other future theatre projects.

At first, I wondered, what about the Indigenous people, the Coast Salish people? Are they included? I learned that the production brought on to the organizing committee Julia Marks³², to involve the neighbouring Coast Salish speaking people. I'm used to experiencing discrimination. But not here, there's acceptance here.

This experience has helped me be stronger to continue on with my journey and to guide Uligen. This opened him up in his goals such as acting and/or hockey. He's taught me to be me without a care in the world. I would like to honour my parents and grandparents for giving me an opportunity to find myself in such a beautiful journey as a Wetsuwet'en mother. Misiyh

Jimmy asks me to work with the group of actors in the puppet scene, *Black Shadows/Poisonous Dreams*. After he directs the actors in their staging and timing, I run the scene with them a few times with Joelysa playing the music. It is a dark eerie scene with striking shadow puppet animal masks: birds, a pig, fox, 3 wolves and one big dragon. Each actor wears a mask and some operate puppets with their hands. We work through the timing of the scene, each action in sequence.

Meanwhile, Jimmy is rehearsing Scene 3, *The Cedar and the Sawmill* with another group of actors on the set. After we run the puppet scene a few times, the actors are comfortable and confident with remembering their actions and timing. Jimmy watches the final run of this scene and then moves back to concentrate on Scene 3.

I see Stephen Lytton, who plays the OLD ONE. He is not needed in the rehearsal so we decide to have our interview.

³² First Nations Consultant.

STEPHEN- *Life is but metaphors. "When this little bird died his little soul just kept flying. Had no problem knowing its time was up." This play is about real life. I could be talking about people in this line from the play and not just birds. "It's not so much about the burial; it's your way of thinking. Life is too short, sometimes makes for the sweetest thing. Ebb and flow ebb and flow".*

This play isn't about me; it's about community. Unity. It's about the dare to care for the so-called 'disadvantaged'. But in our weakest point in life, we are at our strongest. Because we are united in one goal, one initiative: the fight for survival, and that's what matters. Without weaknesses what would be the challenge? How would we find out about our own character? We must continue to make bridges despite obstacles. It is the very heart of our community. It is our strength and soul of the Downtown Eastside. Some people see what they want to see from the outside, they don't see the inside.

I'm trying to reach in and grab the very heart of the play. I'm learning how to use the different possibilities of my voice. Some days, you just need to know who you are, and having that knowledge to support you on a regular basis.

"Life is like a feast. It's part of a journey of chance. We digest it all; progress is what it's called. The hearts from the past beat on until the heart of our community beats on and on." The bottom line is that we must reach out to other communities. They must realize we are a strong and united community. Every community has strengths and weaknesses. We need each other. Aboriginal women are dying. We need to get to the bottom of why women of any culture are going missing. We need to begin trust through dialogue. It's a long process. A lot of our Aboriginal people who are in this community cannot escape because of economics and the housing situation. More importantly, they're committed to the people. Who else is going to care? I myself am committed to our people and community. About 65% Aboriginal people are living in cities and not reserves because the resources are better.

There needs to be more commitment from the different levels of government and commitment from ourselves. In order to hold those accountable, we too as community members must be accountable to our governments in order to establish communication. It's a slow process. The squeeze is tight now due to cutbacks for the whole community, a possibility for a lot more crime.

The Olympics are going to have an effect on our community. Expo '86 devastated our community. So many promises were not kept. A lot of people were uprooted from their homes. A lot committed suicide or died of loneliness, because they were taken away from what was dear to them. We need to address that. We need serious community communication before these 2010 Olympics. We need real honesty and to be held accountable on all sides. Everyone has a stake in this. No one can just bury the Downtown Eastside under a rug. We need to ensure that Canada looks after their own backyard before they look after other things. People are starving and going to the streets. We in the Downtown Eastside can either be part of the problem or the solution. In this case, I choose to be part of the solution, despite the obstacles. There are always obstacles we must overcome.

"So many people walk around water-clogged, but no tears fall. They just keep it all inside." Our cultures have taught us it is a shame to cry. We have forgotten how to laugh and cry, but we sure know how to die. When I first moved to Vancouver, I was full of life and you could see it in my eyes. Living in the city, people take the zap out of you until you have nothing left. I learned about tough love. People will survive with you and will continue without you.

I feel that every disabled person, Aboriginal or other must be involved in the community. This involvement not only benefits the individual but also strengthens and promotes the health of each community. Involvement in government policies on decisions that affect our communities and that of the country in general will, I know, make way for a much more productive and hopeful future for all Aboriginal people and perhaps all people.

I've stayed with the play because it has a beauty within itself; bitter/sweet."

[Stephen's interview with John Greenway (Japanese Bulletin):

"The play is not an end in itself, but a means to get there. The play can help break down racial and other barriers-through compassion, commitment, encouragement, and self-growth. We can be part of the solution. The play can also help build team concept, establish trust through dialogue, squash the stereotype mentality of the Downtown Eastside by changing attitudes and building bridges. Racism does not discriminate. It embraces all who will partake. It takes it in and gives out. But love conquers all."]

I thank Stephen for his time and the interview. I make my way home with Sarah, on this cold windy, rainy night. We talk about death, nature and sensitivity. We talk about people from the past living in us and the importance in knowing who we are and where we come from.

**COUNTDOWN TO OPENING NIGHT:
FINAL REHEARSALS**

REHEARSAL
NOVEMBER 22ND 2003
...5 DAYS BEFORE OPENING NIGHT...

I enter the Japanese Hall. There is a mix of positive energy, nervousness and excitement. There are only five days left before Opening Night.

I enter the Rehearsal Hall for the run of Act One. I notice that the actors are now using theatre lingo. They feel comfortable with the terminology and are gaining confidence, using theatre as an art form. The relationship between Jimmy and the actors has become so close that they sometimes finish each other's sentences. Words are now fragments and the power of the play takes over.

The moving colourful lights invite me into the magical world of the theatre. I sit back and enjoy the show. Susan Poshan Wong sits on the top of a tall moving ladder. I realize, besides her other roles, she is now also playing the part of LEANNE. She speaks of the *Great Fire and the Phoenix*. Jimmy coaches the children to have louder birdcalls when playing the SEAGULLS. NANCY and her MOTHER play a very animated scene. I notice their voices are louder since the last time I witnessed this scene. I see that stronger connections have been made among the actors as they look out for each other and help each other at times with remembering cues on the stage.

The lament at the beginning of *The Anti-Asian Riot* is beautiful. Elwin Xie, as the CHINESE MAN, reads the letter he sends home to his wife. "*My Beloved Wife, it has been several autumns since your dull husband left you for a remote and alien land.*" There are a lot of interwoven stories within this scene.

There is a new actor playing the WIZARD in, *DR WIZARD'S Miracle Cure*. Grant Chancey is now the WIZARD, (as suggested by Alex). Grant enters the stage with a huge suitcase that he places overtop the garbage can. Bottles of pink pills fly up out of the bag and into the hands of the WIZARD. Emiliano, who is under the stage, is responsible for throwing the bottles up through the suitcase on cue. At that point, musicians play their penny whistles to accent the flying bottles. Itai tells me that the lighting cues were developed yesterday in a ten-hour marathon that built on the work they had done the night before. There are roughly 40 cues, he says. Not that many, compared to other shows that sometimes have over 100 cues.

I'm drawn back into the action of the scene as Grant sings homage to the miracle cure. Itai has provided the scene with a psychedelic gobo lighting effect of pink swirls. It is a fun scene and the design elements work well with the theatrical action.

In the next scene, eight men enter carrying NANCY'S UNCLE in a throne-like chair. The lights are dim and give the ambiance that something otherworldly is about to happen. Serena Gnomes is the lighting operator, a student from UBC. She also is following the script and reads out lines for those requiring assistance. The very large group of GRANDMOTHERS enters the stage. I feel a deeper connection with the scene, because of my experience as a stand-in Granny. There is a strong representation of Chinese and First Nations ancestry.

I speak with Kat Norris with regards to her scene, *Cedar and the Sawmill*. She says it's changed a lot because people got sick and missed some rehearsals. Changing a scene this close to Opening Night sometimes happens in regular theatre practise, especially with these circumstances. The scene is a lot shorter now with less action, for example there is no longer the bark stripping. The rehearsal ends after the scene *Hot Lunch* with NICOLE and LEANNE.

I drive Victoria Marie home and we talk about her doctoral project at Simon Fraser University. She says she wishes she knew of *this* project before she started working on her current topic. She says she would have loved to write about this project because of its complexities and she regards her involvement as a very positive experience.

REHEARSAL
NOVEMBER 23RD 2003
...4 DAYS LEFT UNTIL OPENING NIGHT...

I arrive at the Japanese Hall to find Brenda Dallaway, Grant Chancey, Sue Blue, and Victoria Marie standing outside in the rain. All are talking about the show. At 6 pm, the entire company sits down to dinner provided by the play project. A dress run of the show will follow. The place is packed with people. There is a buzz in the air.

I eat my dinner next to Grant. He tells me he's playing DR. WIZARD and the TERRIBLE TRUTH. He says he's only discovered acting recently. He says he loves it. He talks about his costumes and how he was surprised about the clown aspect for the WIZARD character. He was concerned whether he'd be taken seriously as a result. He also questions the respect factor with one distinctive costume piece which he feels strongly resembles that worn by a well-known Downtown Eastside resident. Grant is a political advocate and is one of the six organizers of Woodward's 'Tent City'.

The run of the play starts at 7:25 pm. I sit in the front row. There is some nervousness in the opening song. The actors are now working with their costumes and umbrellas, and the scene is lit so that they cast beautiful silhouettes on the back wall. Priscillia Tait is now also playing the singing role of NICOLE. Stephen enters the stage as the OLD ONE speaking his lines in a strong and well-inflected voice. NICOLE asks for directions. The OLD ONE replies with a long description and then emphasizes, "*Directions. They're like time. Which don't stand still for no one. It moves forward and turns back and it walks right beside you. You can lean on the past- you can hold onto the present- an' you can talk with the future- 'cause they're all goin' on at the same time right now.*"

Scene 3 reveals a lot of changes, as Kat Norris said, there are less people in it and the scene is shorter. The song is beautiful. Not all cast members are here today. Sharon-Jo is awesome as the voice of the cedar tree.

Scene 4 is a lot of fun with GASSY JACK popping out of a garbage can and singing through his entrance. I can't help but tap my foot to the fun rhythm of the scene, which is stylish in its choreography interweaving with dance and comedic movement. The actors are confident and obviously having a good time. Robyn Livingstone is new to this scene and has recently taken on a lot of roles.

The Fire and Phoenix is impressive with its theatrical lighting and the choreography of the actors representing the fire. Some actors are missing but Sarah Angus and Victoria Marie are encouraged to continue with the scene and rescue injured people from the fire. Dorothy reads for actors who are absent.

The Anti Asian Riot draws me in as always. I find that the music, choreography and acting are a powerful mix. Mickey Clark as WILLIAM LYON MACKENZIE plays his role with a good sense of irony. The scene is very moving with the letter from the lonely husband followed by other stories of loss and longing, ending with the JAPANESE MOTHER singing to her baby. The song is so delicate as she mourns for the safety of her child. As the sound

of feet stomping on the ground grows from all different directions, she runs off-stage crying out in fear. It is petrifying.

In *NANCY'S Blood*, the lighting is ghostly with its wave of mauve and blue. NANCY'S UNCLE tells her, "*You are the keeper of our family's history*". The transition to him calculating on his abacus the numbers of young people dying of HIV/AIDS in the DTES is shocking. He is distressed by the statistics. As he is carried off-stage he says, "*Statistics can be deceiving*".

Crab Park has new cast members and there are also new cast members in *Militant Moms*. The song is very catchy, "*You have to cheat in order to eat...and the governments don't give a damn.*" The scene is complex as it moves to women gathering with children on the train tracks, to demonstrate against the danger of children face every day crossing the train tracks in order to go to school. Tourists enter the scene viewing the moms as a bizarre spectacle, followed by unsympathetic people in power positions, the school principle, and city mayor, who are wheeled in on rolling chairs.

Act One lasts one hour and forty minutes. Twenty minutes have been cut from Act One since its first run. A few lines and actions have been eliminated, plus the actors are quicker with their lines and the transitions between scenes are faster.

After a 15-minute break, Act Two begins. It is now 9:20 pm. *Bloody Sunday* is even stronger and reflects the work that was accomplished in rehearsal last week. All cast members are present. I wonder if the scene might run faster by the time Opening Night arrives. Otherwise, the scene feels so long that it is a play within the play.

The next scene, *City of Sighs and Tears* is brilliantly staged with brightly coloured outfits, flowers, hoops, and warm-toned lighting. Gail Bowen starts the scene playing a contemporary prostitute who transforms back in time. "*Papa tell me where is mama? Cried a little girl one day, I'm so lonesome here without her, tell me why she went away? You don't know how much I'm longing for her loving goodnight kiss. Papa placed his arms around her as he softly said this:*" (Sung by all women) "*Down in the City of sighs and tears, under the white light's glare, down in the city of wasted years, you'll find your mama there...*" There is a bittersweet irony in this song sung by the diverse group of women.

Then the scene, *The Rage* takes place. It is built around the poem of the *Hell-Bound Train* recited by a prophet-like character, the TERRIBLE TRUTH. For the first time I see the set floor as a metaphor for a bumpy ride down the road of life. The rest of the characters in the scene, having returned from the dead, are shaken by the bumps on the trip of the 'Hell-Bound Train'. NICOLE witnesses this.

Towards the end of the play, Sue Blue and Gladys Evoy enter holding the puppet of AUNT RITA. This 'character' is dressed in a traditional healing skirt, which was created in the traditional manner. The OLD ONE asks, "*Who else is going to bury them birds that can be forgotten?*" The scene with its design elements appears the most complete I've ever seen it.

The run of the play ends at 10:20 pm with all cast members on stage for their finale. It is a remarkable sight. This Act took one hour, as it did at the first run through. The pacing of the Act seems right, although I hope that *Bloody Sunday* does speed up.

REHEARSAL
NOVEMBER 26TH 2003
....THE NIGHT BEFORE OPENING NIGHT...

I walk into the Japanese Hall for a final dress rehearsal. I find Terry at the front desk and he shares with me some of the last minute details he's taking care of: dressing rooms, front-of house, seats, audience etc. He tells me that an article on the play will be coming out today in the Westender paper and that the Georgia Straight story will come out tomorrow. I ask how the ticket sales look. He says that Opening Night is almost sold out. There are 25-30 tickets sold for almost every other show. (There are 8 shows in total.) In comparison with other plays, this is a pretty good starting point, especially good for Opening Night. But the rest of the nights are pretty low numbers. Terry says he's hopeful that word of mouth will help.

I enter the Rehearsal Hall and pause for a moment. I take in all of the positive and creative energy in the room. I see Priscillia Tait in a quiet moment. She is preparing for the run. She tells me she's feeling good.

It is warm in the room tonight, due to the volume of people. The theatre lights also give off heat. I talk with Javier Romero, Elwin Xie, Victoria Marie, and Wendy Chew. All are wearing their costumes. There is an added excitement and element of focus amongst the actors. Although Wendy says she's worried about losing her pronunciation. She repeats the word 'exuberant' over and over and says it is the word she uses to describe Jimmy.

Dorothy gives the cue to all actors to get into starting positions. I decide to watch the play tonight from the opposite side of the theatre (from where I've usually been). I climb the bleachers to experience the audience point of view from the middle bleacher. The band is warming up with segments of songs. Bob has just finished fastening cushions for added comfort to the bleacher seating. He has also added a front row of chairs.

At 7:20 pm, a few audience members invited to the preview enter the theatre. Jimmy welcomes and warns everyone that as this is the last rehearsal, he may pause the action in order to give the actors any final directions. Julia Marks delivers the introduction and the room goes dark. Moments later an amazing sight appears as the lights come up revealing the cast with the umbrellas performing their opening number "Outta of the Rain". The ensemble is strong and confident. Priscillia seems buoyed by the confidence as she performs her solo introduction of NICOLE.



Opening scene with chorus and Priscillia Tait (NICOLE)

The OLD ONE enters. Stephen is very focused and delivers a powerful performance. He varies his annunciation as he gives the long-winded directions through the Downtown Eastside to NICOLE. His ability for comedy and improvisation allows the confusion of the OLD ONE to come through. NICOLE politely tries to follow.



**Stephen Lytton (*OLD ONE*) and
Priscillia Tait (*NICOLE*)**

Something catches my eye, right in front of where I'm sitting. The cedar tree is 'growing' out of the garbage can. Mickey Clark as one of the LUMBERMEN leads the others in song and the four start to cut the tree down. The sound of Sharon-Jo's voice is very ghostly as the CEDAR TREE. She exclaims, "*I'm alive!*" A First Nation's man joins the LUMBERMEN, and they work together to cut down the tree. (Cable attached to the tree and ceiling enables the tree to fall safely into the hands of the actors.)



**Michael Guenette, Roger Brouillette, Elwin Xie and
Mickey Clark**

The transition is smooth as the past changes to the present with OLD ONE'S entrance and the First Peoples exit. Again, the transition is smooth and quick with the exit of the OLD ONE and the entrance of GASSY JACK from the garbage can. Luke Day is extremely entertaining as he glides around the stage in song and dance mixing seriousness and humour. Everyone in this scene follows suit with commitment and enjoyment. It's written on their faces, they know the scene and they're having fun with it. Most of the actors in this scene enter from the garbage can, including John Krotez in a stunning costume as the YELLOW DOG. The choreography is highly stylized into the realm of absurdity in this scene. The congregation exits the stage as if they are sheep, with a bounce in their walk. Elizabeth Murdock has a lot of fun playing the stuffy sister-in-law to GASSY JACK. She expresses

true culture shock arriving from England. She delivers her lines skillfully, utilizing a wide vocal range and excelling in this comedic role.



Luke Day (GASSY JACK)

Again, the transition is smooth into the next scene; RH expressively announces the Great Fire. Red lights and chaotic music pour into the theatre. From the garbage can, Elwin delivers a moving monologue about Vancouver exploding with its casualties. Four figures dressed in white, with sticks and white fabric, enact the transformation of the Great Fire into the Phoenix.



The Great Fire and the Phoenix

NICOLE enters the stage and we shift back to present day. There is a rapport between NICOLE and the OLD ONE. She asks where she can find a phone. As he says the Carnegie Centre, Dan Feeney enters the stage as the phone booth. There is immediate laughter in the audience. Children enter dressed in their SEAGULL costumes. NANCY enters the stage and meets the OLD ONE, who says “*Your blood sings to me.*” She does not understand and wonders if he knows her family. The story of the connection between the OLD ONE and NANCY’S MOTHER is much clearer at this point of the production. Kuei-Ming Lin and Sai Law are having fun on the stage tonight. Kuei-Ming sings strong and loud.



Kuei-Ming Lin (NANCY) and Sai Law (NANCY'S MOTHER) in *Coming and Going*

The scene *Anti-Asian Riot* takes my breath away. The dramatically lit characters in full costume and make-up have huge visual impact. I've always thought this scene was strong, and now it has gone beyond what I imagined. The opening song is poignant with, "*Oh Canada you have deceived me...*". The stories performed by these actors are very personal and moving. I am in tears.



Beginning of the *Anti-Asian Riot* scene



Emile Wilson, Hannah Walker and Elwin Xie in the *Anti-Asian Riot* scene

But within moments, I am jolted from my sadness as the mood changes radically with the entrance of DR. WIZARD. He is captivating as he strides around the stage in a top hat, striped pants and carrying a giant suitcase full of bottles of *pink pills for pale people*. He tantalizes the sick and weary with his promises of remedies; the pink pills will deliver. Itai's lighting with its hypnotic pink swirls adds to the mesmerizing quality of the WIZARD.

Next, we experience the ghostly scene of NANCY, her UNCLE and the ghosts of her GRANDMOTHERS and GREAT-GRANDMOTHERS. The actors' comfort level is tangible in this scene. They unveil the story of NANCY'S heritage with conviction. This makes me think about the strength in the truth, and again, of the importance in knowing who you are.

All of the scenes have improved since I last saw them three days ago. The cues are quicker, the transitions are smoother, and all actors are projecting their lines better. Confidence shines as they act in full costumes and make-up. Even with the additional challenges of the unusual set with its wavy stage floor, the actors appear to be in control of the show.

I am caught off-guard as the CPR OFFICIAL enters as a two-headed human. It's quite enjoyable to watch Michael Guenette and Patrick Foley in these roles. They even help each other out with their lines—as a two-headed person would be sure to do. The theatrics are fun in this scene. The moving ladder is used as the train with a railway official wearing a miner's light on his head to act as the headlight for the train. It's fun to see Robyn Livingstone wheeled in as the PRINCIPAL of the elementary school, followed by Michael Guenette as the ACTING MAYOR, also wheeled in but from the opposite side of the stage. The scene is tight and professional.

Act One ends at 9:14 pm. I wonder if the audience will be informed how long Act One is so they know to use the facilities beforehand. I notice how little room there is for people to get in and out of the bleachers once everyone is seated. This is a theatre created in a hall with very few resources. It's a good thing the play is so enthralling because despite hard work and ingenuity, some of the comforts of a regular theatre hall are still missing.

At 9:30 pm, all actors are in place and Act Two begins. *Bloody Sunday* is 20 minutes long. One of the actors has trouble remembering his extensive lines. There is a script on the chess table to enable the other actors to help him. The song "In the City of Sighs and Tears" is absolutely beautiful. Gail Bowen sings with bitter/sweet irony. She leads the chorus of women with their full-length coloured gowns and arms full of flowers.

The Women's Centre is a bit slow tonight. There are actors missing and some are unsure of their cues. The play picks up again with the dynamic performance by Grant Chancey as the TERRIBLE TRUTH in his delivery of *The Hell Bound Train*. NICOLE asks if he needs help, he says quietly and slowly, "*Sometimes it's enough to know someone cares enough to ask.*"

The shadow puppet scene is very successful. It is exciting to see it integrated with the rest of the play. It reads as a surreal nightmare. The Carnegie scene is fun, the musicians onstage with their oversized guitars and enthusiastically performed songs. ANDREW CARNEGIE is wheeled onto the stage as a giant oversized octopus. To see his mother running onstage, physically attached to her armchair, is a memorable piece of magic.

The performance of the burial of AUNT RITA, with the OLD ONE in his ceremonial costume, brings a new level of importance to the acknowledgement of those who have died or have gone missing.



Puppet of AUNT RITA

Towards the end of the play, NANCY enters the stage to give the OLD ONE some food. It's a detail I haven't noticed before. It's a nice way to tie-up NANCY'S story with the connection of the OLD ONE to her heritage. I am once again left with the words from the end of the play, "*We are all parts of one soul.*" The company is relieved and overjoyed with this run of the play. They change out of their make-up and costumes to return for notes from the director.

Jimmy and I talk outside before I leave. There has been considerable improvement from the last rehearsal. We talk about how the actors are 'owning' the show now and how it will keep getting better and better. There was a strong feeling of commitment and a sense of unity with almost all actors being present tonight. Usually in typical theatre productions, all actors attend each rehearsal. With professional theatre productions though, actors are paid. I see Marina and compliment her on the amazing costumes...not to mention props.

As I leave the Hall, I feel like I'm saying goodbye to something that is about to be reborn into something even larger. Tomorrow the play will be shared with a full audience. Tomorrow the play becomes public.

**OPENING AND CLOSING NIGHT SHOWS
INCLUDING INTERVIEWS**

OPENING NIGHT!
THURSDAY NOVEMBER 27TH 2003

I arrive to an astonishing sight. There is a crowd of people extended beyond the sidewalk and onto the street outside the Japanese Hall, listening to M.C. Sharon Kravitz for the opening ceremonies.



Mayor Larry Campbell, Terry Hunter, and Sharon Kravitz

Suddenly I experience butterflies, for I know there is also a large group of people inside the building preparing to perform the show for the first time in front of a huge audience. I am with my mom, partner and sister. I see familiar faces in the line-up for tickets. Inside, the hallways are also packed as the line-up continues to the doors of the theatre. We talk with Savannah, Itai, and Rika as we make our way inside the theatre. There are some seats reserved for seniors in the front row. We all sit amongst the growing audience. Jimmy and Marina sit nearby. There is thrill in the air tonight. The room pulsates with excitement during a pre-show of First Nation drummers, dancers and singers. Opening prayers take place with acknowledgements and introductions.

The play starts with a great blast of energy in the song “Outta of the Rain”. The audience applauds the performers as we move into Scene 2 with the OLD ONE. The undulating set brings focus to the OLD ONE’S shopping cart, which won’t stay balanced. The cart takes off and rolls down the stage towards the musicians. Wyckham dives to the rescue, Stephen improvises and the audience roars with laughter.

The full cast is present in Scene 3, which is very moving. For the first time, I hear Kat Norris sing. The *GASSY JACK* scene is full of energy tonight and the audience loves it. I tap my foot throughout. Approval from the audience shows up in the applause.

I am drawn into the play. I am an audience member. I forget to take notes and just enjoy the show. Mayor Larry Campbell performs a cameo appearance in *DR. WIZARD Miracle Cure*. He says he suffers from impotence among other things and says he is considering a career in politics. His modest performance receives applause.

The audience enjoys the GRANDMOTHERS as they help NANCY. I notice one of the writers of the play, Renae, sitting across from me on the other side of the audience. She is

smiling right now during *Hot Lunch* with NICOLE and LEANNE, and seems to be enjoying LEANNE'S description of fish factory work.

The audience gasps with pleasure as the two children enter as PIGEONS, in their multi-coloured costumes. I notice the Mayor laughing during *Crab Park* after NICOLE sees the tents and asks, "*Are you allowed to camp anywhere in the city?*"

The *Militant Moms* scene is a lot of fun tonight. The actors are confident and deliver strong performances. The costumes define the era and we are transported to the early 70's. There is a spattering of applause throughout the scene.

Intermission. Many audience members get up from their seats. I chat with Renae, asking her how it feels to see the play. She says it's an amazing accomplishment. She thinks it's really great. We agree that the performance of the OLD ONE is absolutely fabulous.

Act Two runs very smoothly and each scene gets applause. *Bloody Sunday* may have been too long for the audience. Every story in every scene stands on its own merit. The audience is witness and a part of this epic event. At the end of the play, the entire cast is on stage, walking down the aisles, distributing messages into the audience. As I unroll the message handed to me, it reads, "*Keep telling our stories- that's the only way we'll survive. That's what holds us together and keeps us strong. Because we have to know the stories of our elders to serve our future and help our youth.*" –Rosemary Georgeson, former Downtown Eastside resident and writer. (I still have my message ...it's on my desk.)

There is a standing ovation at the end of this memorable night. The room is flooded with emotion, including the pride of the whole community in this epic accomplishment. There is a good feeling in the air as we exit the theatre that night. People start making their way home, with discussions of the play fading out into the night.

CLOSING NIGHT/INTERVIEWS

SUNDAY DECEMBER 7TH 2003

I arrive to a sold-out performance of the final show. There is a line-up of people as well as a waiting list. I enter the theatre and see Jimmy. He waves me over to some seats he is saving. Someone who acted in the Enderby play sits next to Jimmy. Someone on my other side asks me if that is Jimmy Tait who is sitting in our row. He says he enjoys watching Jimmy's acting and is a fan of Caravan Theatre where he first saw Jimmy's work. "*He has so much heart,*" he says.

The show begins with Wyckham encouraging us all to sing, those from East Vancouver and those from West Vancouver. The show has brought everyone together. He energizes the audience. Then, Terry Hunter and Julia Marks do the formal introductions. The final performance of the Downtown Eastside Community Play begins. It has grown so much and it is a thrill to see the actors own the show so completely.

During *Bloody Sunday*, some audience members around me join in the singing of "Hallelujah I'm a Bum" as well as the "Solidarity Song". The show is a complete success. I notice that Priscillia's performance of NICOLE is particularly strong. Throughout the play, she moves me to tears with her emotionally engaged journey in search of her missing AUNT RITA.

After the show and standing ovation, a Closing Ceremony takes place. Audrey Williams says a closing prayer and Sheryl-Lyn Rivers sings a traditional Squamish song. Both women invite audience members who are familiar with the song to join them on the stage.



Closing Prayers with Audrey Williams, Sheryl-Lyn Rivers and audience (Photo by Valerie Methot)



**Company of actors, director, puppet of ANDREW CARNEGIE and audience members
(Photo by Valerie Methot)**

I want to talk with Priscillia. We hug and I thank her for her performance. She tells me she found out recently that the character of AUNT RITA was inspired by the first missing woman from the Downtown Eastside, whose family had brought the news of what was happening to women in this neighbourhood to the general public. Priscillia says this realization brought her understanding of NICOLE'S journey to a new level.



**Magdalena Fekete and Victoria Marie
(Photo by Valerie Methot)**

I see Magdalena Fekete and ask her how she feels.

MAGDALENA- *I'm glad I did it. I hope for more opportunities with hopefully some of the same people.*

Did you feel less nervous in front of an audience with your costume and make-up?

MAGDALENA- *The most nerve-wracking part of performing in front of an audience is waiting on stage before I have to say my line. Once I was speaking, I was fine.*

I see Brenda Dallaway and ask for her reaction.

BRENDA- *I feel numb. Even if there was half the audience, the play was a success. A lot of trust developed among the company. At first, most people were shy. To see everyone break out of that and get along was an amazing experience. It was also fun helping with the design. A lot of people had fun and new friends were made. The project was so multi-cultural and very quickly the multi-cultural sensitivity went away. It was so good for the community and there'll be so many projects coming from this.*

The scene Militant Moms was easy to do. It was easy for the actors because of the positive aspect. Before the show each night, we would say, "Power to the moms!" I felt the respect from the material and I knew original moms (the women whose history was being represented) would come and see this. I felt proud. For a lot of the women this was a favourite scene. I realized the audience is right with you. The challenge about the lines didn't become important, it's the energy brought to the scene that matters. The best thing for me to come from this whole experience was my self-confidence. I was able to lose my ego and myself. It was tough, but it happened.



City of Sighs and Tears cast: Rosemary Collins, Brenda Dallaway, Gladys Evoy, Kathleen Gowman, Yvonne Kato, Adrienne Macallum, Kat Norris, Saskia Schopman

I reach the fifth floor where there is a gathering with a couple of tables of food for all involved in the play. I see John Krotez, who played many roles including the YELLOW DOG and STEVE BRODY. I ask him how he feels.

JOHN- *I have mixed feelings. It's sad the show has come to an end, but from this we can plant more seeds for more projects. Some of us can be leaders.*

What was your experience performing in front of an audience?

JOHN- *I had a blast. It was my first time acting and now I want to do more. It was fun to have an audience. Each night the audience was so different and unique. All of the audiences were good; there were a couple of tough audiences though. Over all, the project was a healing one.*

Savannah is thanked by the company and presented with a bouquet of roses. Savannah thanks everyone and says she is so honoured to have worked with the beauty and

commitment of everyone. She says that with every project there is a sense of loss and sadness. She encourages those who have made friends to keep in touch.

I see Elwin Xie and ask him for his reaction.

ELWIN- *I'm glad that good issues were dealt with in this play: emotional, cultural, and racial. The play was therapeutic. The issues of Chinese Laundries and mining are not well documented. Generally, Chinese people don't want to talk about cafes, grocery stores, and laundries. They don't want to celebrate the working class. It was acknowledgement for me that the history took place. Not just Chinese history but Canadian history. I loved the fact there were different backgrounds in this play. Unlike most commercial theatre, social activism is not on the repertoire.*

The emotional investment you gave to your role grew.

ELWIN- *Every night before the show I'd touch the tattoos of my parents on my arm, and draw energy from them. I wanted to evoke the gentle touches of the letter in the, Anti-Asian Riot scene. I wonder if my parents, grandparents, and great grandparents were alive if they'd be proud?*



Elwin Xie

I see Luke Day and congratulate him for his performance of GASSY JACK. I ask how he got involved in the project.

LUKE- *I just happened to be in the Carnegie Centre on the day of casting of the play. I saw the sign and I thought, "I'll do it. Why not?" I had no expectations, but I did manage to change my mind several times before my audition.*

Savannah and Jimmy gave me different lines to read- GASSY JACK'S brother and DR. WIZARD, then asked me to sing "Happy Birthday". I let it out. It wasn't until the first rehearsal that I found out who I was playing. It evolved from that.

It was a fabulous learning process. I was scared my voice would croak. When people would compliment my voice, I thought it was weird because I didn't know what my voice sounded like. Lots of fun moments developed in rehearsal. At one point, I was clearing my throat and that turned into a permanent feature in my song.

Luke is wearing his t-shirt that he wore in the Carnegie scene. It reads, "I have always imagined that paradise will be a kind of library." - Jorge Luis Borges.



Sandra Pronteau (*QUAHAILYA*)
and Luke Day (*GASSY JACK*)
(Photo by Valerie Methot)

I ask Luke how he was able to achieve such precise comedic timing.

LUKE- *I find comedy easy. You just draw it from yourself, let go and enjoy yourself. The audience is with you. If you make a mistake, who is going to care? No one. I have admiration for everyone involved in this play. I also really enjoyed the ‘historical’ history and social history in the play. One of the benefits I realized in a Community Play is that there is more room to allow for mistakes and it allows the individual to come out and be him/herself. This play became so much a part of me. I wake up in the morning and sing any song from the play, not just my songs. Even when talking with other cast members, we’d naturally include lines from the play in our conversations.*

What do you think you’ll do next?

LUKE- *I’m interested in doing acting workshops at the Carnegie Centre with Jay Hamburger. I’m also interested in writing post-production reflections that I have.*

Sue Blue sits down and talks about her experience with the play.

SUE BLUE- *Everyone listened to me. I’m not used to that. I love acting; I can be someone else. Some of the story reminded me of my family. I feel lost now that it’s over.*

I see Grant Chancey and ask for his reaction.

GRANT- *I’m thrilled with this experience. It took me some time to get comfortable with my costumes, but now, (with a huge grin), I get to take the shoes home. I’m excited to try out for future productions. It feels good getting a good review from the Georgia Straight. I hear it is quite rare.*

**POST-SHOW:
THANK YOU DINNER, INTERVIEWS, FEEDBACK WORKSHOP,
CLOSING REMARKS**

THANK YOU DINNER PARTY
DECEMBER 14TH 2003



Thank You Dinner Party at the Japanese Hall.

The Rehearsal Hall in the Japanese Hall is filled with people who were involved in the many different aspects of the play. I sit with Stephen, Magdalena, Sharon-Jo, and Hannah. Photographs of the show are being passed around as we reminisce about the good times. As more people gather in the room, a slide presentation takes place of photos capturing different moments of the play process. There are reactions and sometimes applause from the crowd after each slide is shown.

After dinner, various people take turns to speak and offer thanks. One person comments that the play made, *“a positive change in our neighbourhood”*. Some people talk about why they got involved in the project. Before I leave, I make arrangements with Stephen, Priscillia, Mickey, and Alex for interviews.

As I leave the Japanese Hall, there is a lot to reflect on...

INTERVIEWS
STEPHEN LYTTON
DECEMBER 16TH 2003

I meet with Stephen at the Carnegie Centre. His bright spirit is infectious and heart-felt. We review his previous interview and he expands on some of his thoughts. I tell him that many people thought he was outstanding in the show.

STEPHEN- *This experience of theatre, this role as the OLD ONE allowed me to have the audience in my hands. It allowed me the ability to pull people in and reach in and have them trust me. As the process of rehearsals continued the role got more important because of the impact and intent to build bridges. To pull people in to share beauty and the bittersweet that life is, that is the play. I thank the Creator.*

As a lead in the play, I was honoured with the purpose to get the message out: we care. We the actors and everyone involved waited so long to get to Opening Night. It was the pinnacle and there was a lot of weight on the performance. Opening Night was so energized, a ‘give all and die all’ attitude.

I believe that all communities of people have forgotten how to laugh and cry together. That’s why we have crime. My purpose is to teach people to come together to laugh and sigh and cry. These are forms of release and healing. I felt the bittersweet scene of City of Sighs and Tears. A lot of Vancouver is based on these women.

The play I believe brought light, an opportunity to share change and light. The play brought the four corners of the world together. It was awesome that the racial slurs that happened in the play didn’t happen for the participants. There was no racial tension and no labels. Having all cultures coming together doing something so awesome and powerful, all in the one house. The Japanese Hall, a building with historical value to the community.

Stephen and I walk through the rain and continue our conversation about hope and change. We talk about the play and how it was a once-in-a-lifetime epic event. No other community play at this huge scale, to my knowledge, has ever happened in Vancouver before. The Downtown Eastside is the first community to do it.

PRISCILLIA TAIT

I make my way to the coffee shop where I am meeting Priscillia. We share stories like old friends. I tell her a response from a nine-year girl who saw the play, *“My favourite part was the woman NICOLE looking for her missing aunt. I felt her pain and it was very sad.”* I tell Priscillia how she brought me to tears with her emotional journey. We talk for a while then Priscillia reviews her previous interview. She then gives me a poem to include as well as a picture of her and her son. I am touched by the love between Priscillia and Uligen.



Priscillia and Uligen

Uligen (Wolf) Dinee (Man)

You have given me hope to continue on with my journey.

Your smile fulfills an empty valley

You have given me courage to express my outmost pain

Your eyes reflect comfort of joy on a rainy day.

You have given me love to be able to accept “me”

Your heart warms the coldest winter days

You have given me “you” as a teacher and student lesson of life

Your spirit so warm yet strong like a cedar tree rooted down by Mother Earth.

Love Mommy-Priscillia, misiyh my son. (Dec 16.03)

MICKEY CLARK

I arrive at the home of Mickey Clark. His roles included: CHORUS, WILLIAM LYON MACKENZIE, ANDREW CARNEGIE, and one of the singing IMMIGRANT MEN. Mickey has a strong and beautiful voice with an extensive vocal range. Besides singing and playing the piano, Mickey shares with me his passion for music oldies from the early 1900s. He plays various recordings. I ask him what it was like to be WILLIAM LYON MACKENZIE KING.

MICKEY- *The scene was otherworldly in that I played a character who didn't 'interfere' with people's lives. There was an eerie surreal feeling of a person living in a vacuum of wealth and power, who casually destroyed other people's lives. People who are comfortable manipulating other people's lives don't need to show power. It's so easy to do it, it's the reality of power. We even got hissed one night. I was happy about that, it meant I was playing the part well. With my first line, "Opium...that's not legal", laughter from the audience got them open and comfortable. The actor has to be in the moment in order to convey the message. Theatre is life itself.*

As ANDREW CARNEGIE, I only had my face to express as the puppet. The movement of my head came naturally. I felt more squid-like than an octopus. To flitter around with my eyes popping out, showing happiness and benevolence. I believe my character was in torment because of course he knew he didn't stop WWI. It was hard to come down from the platitude phrases like 'Survival of the Fittest'. I had to use word games to remember this line, but ironically, it would be the line I messed up. Whenever I heard my mother say, "ANDY!" my otherworldly face would come out.

Canada is not a happy place. Manipulation is manipulation. It's like the steel hand in a soft glove. We get fooled into thinking it's warm and safe. The guard goes down. A lot of immigrants have left their cultures behind. There are a lot of dispassionate people in Canada. If you ask a Canadian, "how are you?" the response is usually "not too bad". Why? Because those who try to do something, get shot down.

Canada is trying to be homogenous. We're not all the same; we're different. It's okay to succeed. It doesn't come without pain, hard work and learning. In order to succeed you have to relinquish control. Look at the successes of the people in the play. It's important to keep the ball rolling, keep the momentum of the success of the play. People don't want to be unhappy but a lot of people find life intolerable. Those living marginally have a lot to offer. I wonder what the people from the play will do next. Ideally from our success, we could start a new project. Structure in one's life is very important.

Mickey plays the piano and sings for me two songs from his repertoire. He sings a line, "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen". I am moved by his music. He tells me that in the summer when he opens his window, people gather outside to hear to him play. We talk about marketing as an artist and the challenges an artist faces. He gives me a couple of his CDs. He also shares with me his many accomplishments as an actor, singer, musician, director and stage manager. He is hopeful for momentum in his many passions as an artist.

ALEX MARTIN
DECEMBER 18TH 2003

Two days later, I meet with Alex Martin in the Carnegie Centre, after his workshop with Jay Hamburger. We sit down to review the interviews I had with him throughout the process, beginning with the Public Reading. Alex reads through his interviews and makes changes. He talks about the rhythm in writing and talking as being different from each other. We talk about the meandering in speaking, as we enter tangential conversations and share stories inspired from each other's.

Alex tells me due to heavy rains, the roof of his home had caved in and he had to drop out of the play. He said he was *choked* all around and had to make a choice. He tells me about his experience seeing the final performance of the show.

ALEX- *Everyone in the production and audience experienced a sense of hope, faith and humanness. That was the miracle buzz of it. Out to sea, the play shouldn't have held water. (i.e. scattered moments, reading on stage, hesitancy) We all learned to walk on water with this unique play and experience culture as inclusive faith. We became rooted together. Why did it work? For me, seeing hope and faith in people changed my life. Real faith is hope realized. It's a new phase in my life.*

POST-SHOW WORKSHOP
“BRAINSTORMING FOR THE FUTURE”
JANUARY 10TH 2004

My experience with theatre projects is that once they're over, it is always difficult picking up and leaving. It's also difficult still being there. I've been invited to a Community Play Workshop focusing on *In the Heart of a City*, organized by jil p. weaving and assisted by Terry Hunter. Visiting artist Rachel Van Fossen volunteers to facilitate this workshop for community play participants at the Carnegie Community Centre, sharing exercises she developed with communities after the plays she worked on in Saskatchewan were completed.

The aim of the workshop is to reflect on experiences of the play, talk about experiences and effects of the play and to brainstorm about what to do in the future. Approximately fifty people are here today including actors, writers, musicians, documentarians, community outreach coordinators, and others.

RACHEL- *“I find that community plays are life-changing experiences, rewarding artistically and socially. The joy of a big cast, set, etc...and people from every sector. People come together who wouldn't otherwise. I now teach a course on community plays at Concordia University. I also work with Black Theatre Workshop in Montreal, developing programs to connect community.”*

Rachel asks us each to say our name, in a clockwise order around the giant circle that we have formed. A lot of people wish “Happy New Year” and say it's good to see everyone again. It is a tremendous turnout. We then engage in the familiar ball-toss game. Rachel adds a new element of sound. She then introduces us to ‘risk’ exercises starting with the ‘mirror clapping’ exercise, where she leads us in by clapping and we have to try to time our clapping to match hers exactly.

Then Rachel asks for volunteers to form an inner circle. Rachel facilitates an image exercise inspired by Augusto Boal and popular theatre³³. She gives words to the volunteers such as joy, desperation and serenity. The volunteers have to embody and reveal each word as a pose or a body sculpture. The people remaining in the room walk around the sculptures and view them as though in a gallery setting. Comments are shared. New volunteers play the exercise. To embody emotion is empowering.

Rachel puts us into five smaller groups to model each other into group sculptures based on images representing: 1) Before the Play 2) After the Play 3) The Future. Each group gives a title to their sculpture and poses for the other groups. The following images are used to describe their experience:

- 1) Before the Play: *“Searching for Hope”*
 “Separation”
 “Isolation”
 “Branches”
 “Uncertainty and Suspicion”

³³ From his book *Theatre of the Oppressed*, he writes about theatre exercises that engage participants.

- 2) After the Play: *“Solidarity”*
 “Unity”
 “Proud Connection”
 “Tree”
 “Coming together and saying Goodbye”
- 3) The Future: *“The Wheel”*
 “A Better Tomorrow”
 “Fountain”
 “Acorn”
 “Open Invitation & Collaboration”

After the exercise, there is a break with refreshments and muffins. I talk with Priscillia and Elwin about the story of Chinese and First Nations heritage uniting in love and strength. We talk about the scene *NANCY’S Blood* and how it is a stunning story in itself.

The workshop resumes and people are divided into new small groups to brainstorm on five questions posted by Rachel. People share many reflections about the play and ideas for projects down the road.

What was, for you, the most magical experience of the play and/or the most magical thing about the WHOLE play experience?

For many people, Opening Night was their most magical experience. *“I had seen two dress rehearsals and I wasn’t sure it was going to work.”*

For some, the most magical part was watching people’s talents come alive through the process and then on Opening Night, seeing the growing confidence in the cast and crew – the strengths, talent, growth, and incredible performance of a largely amateur cast. *“We discovered our potentials and abilities”* and saw *“people with little or no acting experience come into their own – confident and happy.”* *“The most magical experience for me was that I could act. I met so many talented and committed people in the DTES.”* *“I was humbled to be in the presence of such strength and beauty – it was a miracle to do it – and I cried for an hour after the first night.”*

For others the most magical part was meeting new people and how they worked together - friends and strangers coming together, nationalities coming together to create something special. They talked about the solidarity of the players, the acceptance between people - trust, respect, support, group spirit, and discovery – like a society of the future.

Some people spoke about the magic of the rehearsals: working with director Jimmy Tait, interacting with individuals within the group, watching a creative seed grow - the characters, the bits of scene into a whole play, everyone’s support of each other. *“For me, the most magical thing was watching it grow – just the idea that it took on a life of its own as it went. It was always on the edge of whether it would work or not – be an incredible success or an incredible disaster – just that element of trust moved it forward.”*

A lot of people talked about the magic of the production. *“The first time I saw the new stage I realized that it was happening.”* People talked about the transformation of face masks and

make-up, seeing scenery and props arrive, fabulous costumes and lighting effects, the wonderful poetry and songs, the captivating music and how it interwove with each scene, the enduring stories, the integration of all the elements, the cooperation/trust/camaraderie and support. They talked about the music (“Outta of the Rain”, Joe Ziegler’s “Hell Bound Train”), various different deliveries (like Stephen and Priscillia’s acting), the scenes of NANCY and her MOTHER, the *City of Sighs and Tears*, the moment when all the actors came out in *The Feast*, the First Nations Opening Ceremony. *“One night some one hissed at me when I played the pompous government official at the end of the Anti-Asian Riot – that minor character moved them so much (they hated that character so much) – as an actor I conveyed so much.”*

Some mentioned the magic of the audience that came out to watch the play. *“Every night was full – a lot of people showed up. People go and have fun. They watch the people from the East Side. They enjoy it and want to come back again. We project to them the reality.”*

“The most magical part – the sweetest thing was that we had worked together. The bittersweet beauty of the love story came together and the whole production came together – united for one goal. This play was bittersweet – ‘but we drink’.”

What was the most challenging or difficult part of the community play experience for you?

Many people spoke of acting challenges: memorizing lines, singing alone, stage fright. They talked about the challenges of performing in multiple roles, being consistent, expressing strong emotions on stage and in rehearsal and *“not knowing what the expectations would be –not knowing what part you were going to play, what part your character would be”*. The disappointment of losing a song you had worked on because the show was too long. The difficulty of learning to play a new role only two weeks before the performance!

The play’s content was also a challenge. One person said the parts of the play about violence towards women were hard for them. It was not easy to play and generate sympathy for characters *“I had no empathy with and didn’t like”*, or to play an *“upper middle class ignorant snob”*.

People faced other challenges, too – like being in an overcrowded group with different sizes and weights of people or being the focus of attention in a scene. Following the lines properly was hard if you spoke English as a second language or had trouble with reading (People at Carnegie’s Learning Centre, acting coach Jay Hamburger and cast members gave lots of help.) Speaking in your second language in front of hundreds of people was hard.

For some people signing up – even agreeing to take part was a challenge and something they never thought they’d do. And then to show up and stay the first day!

One person’s challenge was *“becoming the system rather than fighting the system”*. Another said, *“The most difficult part of the experience for me during the play was “finding myself” – finding out who I was and what I believed in (and to stop fighting with myself to desperately find myself).”*

Organizers had challenges too, like “...*knowing that all you did was never going to be enough*”. How do you distill a community’s stories in a way that carries truth for the community? How do you structure a huge production into a safe, enjoyable and meaningful experience?

Organizing food as well as making a play, building a theatre and publicizing the play was hard. It was a big responsibility getting people to feel free and comfortable enough to come and want to be involved, and to deal with some of the issues that some members had while being part of the play. “*The most challenging and difficult part – getting people to do things for nothing. I didn’t want it to be a bad experience for people. I was really worried, getting people involved in things I didn’t really know would be all that good.*”

Everyone involved in the play talked about other challenges too. Getting to the practises on time was hard – and juggling the rest of life to give up extra time for the rehearsals. Long hours and lots of waiting. Other people not showing up for rehearsals. Dealing with frustration. Going home late when you did not have company or a lift. “*Staying up very, very late and having to get up the next morning.*” The lack of child care in the first weeks. Sausage rolls, sausage rolls, and more sausage rolls...

And everyone agreed: “*We succeeded – we met the challenge*”.

“*I want to nourish that we, as a people, came together and succeeded in that mandate of building bridges. The weight of that production, I realized, was an enormous task to fill for the entire production – being where it’s coming from – the Downtown Eastside. And the failure of it would have been far more damaging because of where it’s come from. And that we built trust with one another without realizing, as time went on – we learned to trust one another.*”

What one thing in your Downtown Eastside community do you most want to nourish or preserve?

A lot of people want to preserve the momentum of the play - the fact that people came together - and not stop there but to deepen the network of community that was built around the play. They want to preserve the costumes. They want “*another play - to bring us back together again.*” They want to keep community theatre alive, and to continue to celebrate the community’s history.

People want to preserve the spirit of co-operation with everyone: the sense of community and friendship – of knowing your neighbors and getting to know strangers and making more friends. They want to preserve the respect and dignity, honesty that’s in most of the people who live down here in the DTES. “*For me it’s the heart – the unique consideration people have for each other.*”

People want to preserve individuality and autonomy.

They want to preserve the cultural diversity of the Downtown Eastside – and the tremendous talents, spirit, strength and unique gifts of the people of all the groups of the Downtown Eastside. “*I want to preserve the dignity of the people of this community – and the history – the potential – the multiculturalism of this neighborhood.*”

People want to preserve community activities and family life.

They want to preserve the Carnegie Centre and its programs (*“The thing I want to nourish is the chess club. We know each other and come here every day.”*)

They want to nourish the creative community and share within and beyond in a respectful structure. *“People in the Downtown Eastside can become involved in the performing arts – and be empowered to accomplish and believe certain goals – can express themselves without fear.”*

People want to preserve the balance between creative discipline and risk taking – and still keep stirring up the shit! – *“Employing spirit and courage and determination and creativity to overcome stereotyping of me and my neighborhood”.*

They want *“to expand on the opportunities for individuals to develop their hidden talents (and a lot of it came out in this production)”.*

What one thing in your DTES community do you most want to change?

Many of people said that they want to change negative perceptions of the Downtown Eastside. They want to change the negative headlines in the media and the perceptions of people in the DTES as being ‘Other’. They want foregone conclusions about negative aspects of the DTES to be challenged and straightened out. They want to educate the outside community about mis-information, negative image, and stereotyping.

People want to change the unfair balance of power between the poor and those with more status – the entrenched classism. *“I want to change the economic barriers and lack of confidence – I think we should be real proud of ourselves.”*

People want more help in the community for non-addicts and more help for drug users. They want to get rid of fighting in the park and replace crappy graffiti with murals. They want an end to police brutality and disrespect for our neighborhood and people. They want the streets to be safer for women.

People want to change people’s feeling of indifference and pessimism - the isolation and alienation and defeatism too many Downtown Eastside residents feel and experience.

They want to increase self-confidence and self-esteem (more). They want *“better food – more respect – hand-outs to opportunity – opportunities in spirit, psyche”.* They want to teach people to believe in themselves

They want accountability on all levels within the community and from the different levels of government – and they want accountability from the community to their leaders.

They want new recognition that not everyone wants the same thing in life.

What are the different projects that could happen as a result of this play? (As many things as possible that you can think of, that you or someone could pick up and run with?)

People want to bring in more art programs, more performing arts activities, and more art projects with funding for all involved. There is so much untapped potential and talents in the DTES. They want to see more opportunities for creative activity and training, more studio space, more free and low cost programs. Rachel wrote all responses on large pieces of paper and had to keep flipping them to new ones. People had many, many ideas for the future:

Build on the Downtown Eastside Community Play Experience

- Community Play Sound Track.
- Create a condensed, scaled down version of *In the Heart of a City* and tour to high schools, etc., together with workshops – to create a more positive awareness about the DTES (with a small stipend for those in need; perhaps done by corporate funding?)
- Book based on play to let people know what happened here.
- Distribute video, book, or web site to let people know what happened here – “*to shed light on a community devastated by stereotypical ideas*”, (each community across nation is sent a video).
- Workshop for people who worked on the DTES Community play – to give us an idea of how we might go into (get involved with) other areas – bring in the people who worked on the play.
- Another workshop to approach each other – how to formulate ideas into proposals.
- Prepare a booklet of play stories with information about the stories collected for this play – so people can know more about the neighborhood.
- Make a film of the play.
- 2010 – Preserve Downtown Eastside – play (stay beautiful).

Improve the process of building Community Plays

- Have a counselor present during the play to work with individuals and the group.
- Have a First Nations counselor as part of the team and be part of a workshop with aboriginal talent.
- Stipends for participants and staff to organize nourishing, varied, attractive food.

Expand Carnegie’s current theatre program

- Put more funding into it to make the program even broader (add playwriting and theatre production).

Start Downtown Eastside Theatre Group(s)

- Sustained DTES resident theatre company that addresses DTES concerns. (Need space and someone at helm.) Acting Coop.
- Touring group (start by going into schools to create more positive awareness).

Get a Downtown Eastside Arts Facility

- A DTES Theatre for local access by low income, “*a theatre space/facility that we control – for us – for the DTES – low income actors and actresses and with workshops for people to do stage crafts, lighting, playwriting, acting*” and a “*Grass*

Roots process that means low-income poor are making decisions, empowering and creating a knowledge base among people in community.”

- Save the Pantages Theatre (near Carnegie) and turn it into a Downtown Eastside Performing Centre with classes.

Bring in more arts training and work opportunities

- Workshops in all areas of theatre and creative training: communications, writing, management; workshops in how to approach other agencies and make proposals; workshops in stagecraft, lighting design, music training, how music integrates with everything else (bring in people who worked on the community play, etc.)
- Bring in teachers and facility to establish a Theatre School: our goal is 6 years.
- Establish Scholarships at acting schools for DTES people to further their craft/technique.
- Connect with educational centres, Native Education Centre, summer students, E.I. funding.
- Connect with Vancouver arts organizations to bring training here (like the Arts Umbrella, Firehall Arts Centre, Headlines Theatre).
- Access to auditions at local theatres.

Start new Art Projects

- Create a play for the Fringe Festival. Get in early.
- Create a yearly traditional Christmas pantomime – link lightly into different issues each year.
- Open Air Theatre; take it to the parks during the summer.
- Get ideas for a play from the public.
- Organize a Downtown Eastside Playwriting contest - the prize is: we put on the winning play.
- Have a Flag for the DTES.
- Make an art project about bridges or wheels or circles that blossoms into theatre.
- Take our theatre skills and provide leadership and support to political activist groups as street theatre (take skills we learned in theatre and use those skills to mobilize protests).
- Make a community Video or Film Project; television program; documentary.
- A project for self-healing through the arts.
- Participants have the ability to do spontaneous theatre pieces – just do it!
- Take all the ideas to use for theatre project that deals with these and involves more people, e.g. Project on homelessness with funding from ____ and city can draw in more of those people (to express to those in DTES some realities and possible solutions we see and draw people to work on resolutions for the community).

Organize special events

- Raise money for a retreat – for example at Bowen Island or Haida Gwaii.
- International/National community theatre conference/workshop - exchange ideas.

Fund-Raising Ideas

- 2010 – take advantage of culture dollars – there are grants for this – so yeah!
- Bingo Night.
- Raise funds to address community issues.
- Get more agencies on board (like the Portland) to assist with more life-enhancing theatre; helps heal the community and it helps heal their clientele.

Community Arts Trust

The legacy of Carnegie Centre's 100th anniversary is to be a Community Arts Trust. Its purposes are to support local resident participant in the arts as audience, for personal development, and as aspiring artists. The Trust was launched this year with an \$18,000 donation from a fund-raising evening sponsored by the Chinatown Revitalization Committee. Arts and culture play a pivotal role in the health of a community. When people have an opportunity to express themselves creatively they have a stronger sense of who they are, and of belonging and contributing to community.

MORE INTERVIEWS
WITH STEPHEN LYTTON,
PATRICK FOLEY AND ALEX MARTIN
JANUARY 13TH 2004

I meet with Stephen at the Carnegie Centre. I ask him if he is looking to work on any other theatre projects.

STEPHEN- Not right now. I'm experiencing the aftermath of touching the community that needed to face the challenge. The play was beautiful in that it brought people together. It succeeded in its mandate in reaching other communities. A lot of people who care here are advocates. They're a lot further ahead. They're committed to the process of changing stereotypical attitudes. The majority of Aboriginals are on the street. Someone has to care for them. The change won't happen overnight.

Another reason I got involved in this community play was to learn from the community. I want to change the fear factor of those outside this community and to change the attitude of those who discriminate against my own people because of where they live and economics. I'm a board member of an organization that didn't want to come here for a conference because of their fear of the DTES. With a big push, they ended up coming here.

My purpose for doing the play was to distribute the play videos, to change attitudes. I want to give the video to my people on the reserves, to shed light on our own reserves, and to show strength of our people in the DTES. I don't know if I'll be able to distribute the videos. This play is the only project I've spent so much energy, because of the enormity it represents. It had to succeed. Failure of it would have been damaging. We're rich because of the success of the play. We've all found common ground. The issues in the play bonded us together. Issues with all.

Patrick joins us at the table for our scheduled interview. Stephen decides to stay. I ask Patrick why he got involved in the project.

PATRICK- The community play gave participants an opportunity to participate in something that could shed a good light on Carnegie and the Downtown Eastside. I support Carnegie; it's one of the few bright lights in the Downtown Eastside. People can come here and meet friends. It's warm, safe, and they've got a lot of programs for people. People have said there are friendly spirits in this building.

I have been coming here off and on for about ten years. For the last four years, I have been coming to Jay Hamburger's theatre workshop and also to Earl Peach's choir. Jay's workshop has inspired me to finish a number of plays and write new ones. We have put on a number of plays from the workshop and hope to do more.

I guess I wanted to play a part in the community play as a way of saying thanks. Also I thought it was a worthwhile project: the objective was to raise funds for the artists' trust fund or endowment. I support this idea. Doing art is a healthy endeavor, both for the artists and the people who go to see it.

What was your reaction to the community play script?

PATRICK- It was too long. But I also think there were reasons for that. There are a lot of stories to be told about the people and history of the Downtown Eastside. The writers tried to

be inclusive and comprehensive. But there's a danger here. To write a strong dramatic script I think you need one main thrust, like a hero or heroine on a quest. Along the way, they encounter many obstacles to be overcome. This is one approach. But there are probably others.

The script also had a lot of songs and music. For me this was one of the strongest elements of the play. The music was beautiful, and some of the tunes were haunting. People were humming them to themselves even after the play was over.

The play was made up of about twenty individual scenes. A lot of these could be developed into one-act plays or even full-length plays.

What scenes would you want to see expanded?

PATRICK- I think the scene with ANDREW CARNEGIE could be expanded into an interesting play. I mean the idea of his donating money for libraries in many cities is interesting. What caused him to do that?

The other scene that I'd like to see developed is Bloody Sunday. There was a documentary made of the On to Ottawa Trek, which took place back in the 30s, and a lot of it took place right here in this neighborhood. In fact Willis Shaparla, a trekker himself, used to be a regular at the Carnegie Centre.

How did you feel once Opening Night arrived?

PATRICK- Excited. It was hard to believe that we were actually going to perform. I mean it was a long script with a ton of actors. None of us had seen the whole thing. But thanks to Jimmy Tait's direction, especially his blocking and choreography, it was pretty incredible to see it all come together. Also, there was a good turn out, so that gave us a lift and probably inspired us in our performances.

Did you gain skills from working on the play?

PATRICK- I regard myself more of a writer than an actor, although I've had some training as an actor. But that was quite a few years ago. So, I guess I was relying on some things I learned then, but I found I was a bit rusty. I enjoyed doing the role of Willis Shaparla but I had a tendency to forget lines. It was really disappointing for me, humbling in fact.

I want to write and perhaps direct in the future, so having a chance to see a big production put together was a good learning experience. The set was quite imaginative. Also, the music, Jimmy Tait's direction, the costumes, and the lighting...I hope all of these things will inspire me in my future work.

People involved in the production experienced it in different ways and sometimes held differing opinions.

STEPHEN- The play had to succeed for me as an Aboriginal person. I look at the needs of the many people (destitute) versus the needs of the few (like me). The Downtown Eastside is wrongfully dubbed as being just poor.

PATRICK- *I wonder if aboriginal issues, poverty, and prostitution could have been dealt with in more depth. If we see an individual struggling to overcome an addiction or a problem, we can identify with their predicament more easily. It hits home.*

STEPHEN- *Issues that were in the play did affect the audience and actors. I believe we lost actors in the rehearsal process because of the way the issues hit them. Like the doors of hell.*

PATRICK- *I think some people were going through heavy stuff at the time and couldn't really work on the play. Maybe we needed a counsellor to be available.*

Anything you want to add about the play?

PATRICK- *Yes, a number of things. I think using the model of a community play like the one in Enderby is wrong. The people in Enderby are better off than people in the DTES: the poorest neighborhood in Canada. People here suffer from poverty, lack of housing, addictions, disease, mental health issues, etc. The model should have been altered to fit the Downtown Eastside.*

There have been other performances in the Downtown Eastside. Namely, I Love the Downtown Eastside, organized by John Juliani, and the women's performance, Six Arias. Now there might have been problems with those too, but the organizers paid the participants. I think it was a mistake not to pay the actors in the community play an honorarium. They all should have been paid. Why? Because many poverty agencies preach empowerment and capacity building which means improving the lives of residents in all areas of their lives. If the participants were paid, it would have helped their economic circumstances and contributed to their self-esteem. Poor people's work and labor doesn't seem to be valued. This is not kosher.³⁴

Another possibility of improving future performances is by mentoring. If experts or professionals are brought in, they should serve as mentors or teachers, so that people could learn to write, perform and direct plays. There are many talented people in the DTES, but few opportunities to perform.

During the performance, the actors were fed sausage rolls and quiche for over 3 weeks. Most people got sick and tired of them. People complained individually and in a petition. I think more input from the participants on some of the decisions would have helped things run smoother and build morale. When the food was improved, people's spirits and energy level really picked up.³⁵

The community play highlighted one of the major needs for the DTES: an adequate performance space, one that is fully equipped with proper lights, seats, stage, etc., a place where local residents can enjoy plays, musical concerts, and dance performances.

(The Firehall Arts Centre is in the neighbourhood and it's a professional fully equipped theatre.)

PATRICK- *I'd also like to say that if theatre is a health-promoting activity, and I firmly believe it is, then, other agencies in the Downtown Eastside could ask themselves, "How can we promote theatre in the Downtown Eastside?" They could do this by having workshops*

³⁴ See Savannah Walling's interview for more details regarding issues such as honouraria, pages 51-58.

³⁵ See Terry Hunter's interview regarding food issues, pages 131-134.

in acting, directing, and playwriting. They could also make performance spaces available, fund a theatre festival, or even establish a resident theatre company. Who knows?

STEPHEN- *If this community wants to do something, it has to be on a volunteer basis. Yet, the government is pushing us to get off welfare. That is the maddening part. If we performed the play for a longer run, maybe we could get off welfare and get paid for the extra shows. It is a lot more energizing if everyone is on the same level. It gives dignity and self-esteem. This time it was okay for me not getting paid because it was a learning experience for me. Next time I want to get paid. I was doing it from my heart, to represent a positive light and that not all Aboriginals are drunks and druggies. It meant more for me to succeed than the money. We united as a group. We cared. We overcame any obstacles.*

I wonder if it would have been okay to put the food money toward honouraria? Fewer opportunities would have been available for people to participate if there was honouraria. There would have also been another list of rules for attendance. When does it become not okay to ask for volunteers? What is the ideal structure?

ONE MORE INTERVIEW
WITH STEPHEN LYTTON
JANUARY 16TH 2004

I meet with Stephen at Carnegie. I give him his last interview to read and review. Stephen begins to reflect.

STEPHEN- *As time goes on, I think more in depth, with new perspectives. I'm always thinking why I got involved in the play. It was more than a play, it was a community. Dubbed as the poorest postal code in Canada, the play was about the strength of the community coming together. That was the human factor. Having people come together, with no pressure, to send a common message, that we are a community, when the chips are down, we can come together to share hope, commitment and compassion. The sharing aspect existed from the beginning of rehearsals to the anticipation of the first show and to the closing show. I had to ensure the show would succeed, even though there was the fear of the unknown and the response from it. The amazing part of that was the different emotions and how they made people feel within and throughout the production.*

For me at this time I'm refraining from any other initiative because of the physical, emotional and psychological energy that was spent in order to do the best I could do. I realized I had to utilize those gifts that the Creator bestowed on me to get the message out with empathy. Having that responsibility, with the support of the people in the production, and carrying it out was an awesome experience. I recommend it to anyone. I didn't know until further into the production, that I could carry that responsibility.

Why did you take on the responsibility?

STEPHEN- *For me, perspective is weighing the pros and cons. Each has a different perspective. For me, there was a lot at stake with the play. You have to put your needs on the back burner for the needs of the many. Sometimes you have to sacrifice your own personal issues.*

One of the main reasons I did the play was because of the events happening in the Downtown Eastside, mainly the missing women...and others who either fall through the cracks or seem to be forgotten. The people I work with are Aboriginal people. They are mainly from Aboriginal communities throughout Canada. My motive for the play was a RACE issue and humanity. It's also about the sex-trade. It's about speaking against the people who take advantage of the women. It's about speaking on behalf of the people who can't speak for themselves. It's about life. It's about people dying and the forgotten people.

That, for me, is why the play had to succeed. That's why there was so much emotion in it, from everyone. That's why the audience cried. One woman who cried said it touched her very soul. It's about touching the heart of the audience. It's about reaching in and holding the very heart of the audience in the palm of your hand and having them be a part of the play. So strong and fragile, it was so bitter sweet to share their tears, their laughter, and having the trust to do that. That's why we had full audiences, because we shared something so bitterly sweet. It was the right time for the production and the right length, because it took time to share. It even brought our elected officials together to take part in the play.

How do you see the play continuing on?

STEPHEN- *People asked if we'd be held-over, because they were so touched by it. I think it would have been awesome if it had been. Having something like this in any community is an awesome experience. We learned so much about our community. If we were held-over, maybe other communities would have invited our show to their communities.*

If other communities saw the video, it might inspire new community plays in their communities. Maybe another video could have been made and negotiated and shown to more communities. There may have been other initiatives set up to travel the show. I want to show it across Canada, to shed a light on the community that has a bad reputation. We don't see it that way. My purpose is to share that we're a diverse, caring and strong community. Not having that ability to share the video with the rest of Canada angers and frustrates me. It can only change through more discussions. It needs to happen. We need to build bridges.

Speak about how you see it as a Canadian issue.

STEPHEN- *A lot of people in Vancouver come from all over Canada. They think Vancouver is filled with glamour and hope because of how it is portrayed. The video would share the reality. You're not always going to get what you thought you came here for. You might get caught up in drugs. Don't let the bright lights fool you. When people come here, they stand out. They're full of life, gullible and ill prepared. There are people who would take advantage of you. That's why I want to share the video.*

Is there any other way to share with the rest of Canada if the video cannot be distributed?

STEPHEN- *Doing radio interviews and like the interview we're doing right now. If the video can't be distributed, maybe I have to go across Canada and show the video myself. Canadians need to know it's their people who come here with false hope. We need to educate people. I got involved not because I'm Native but because of the human issue. Now it's women from all walks of life. Through no fault of their own, they come here and they have dreams. They come here unprepared and are pulled in and misled. Things don't work out and they're disillusioned and thrown out to the 'wolves'. They get treated poorly because they feel they owe something and they stay. Some end up in the sex trade. Sometimes they're forced to stay. A majority end up missing or are dead. They could be running away from something quite minor compared to what they're running to.*

Alex sits down and joins us. When Stephen asks Alex what he thought about seeing the play, he shares his reaction of hope and faith in seeing it all come together. I mention how Stephen kept the play together when his cart rolled off the stage on Opening Night. In that moment in the play, Stephen as OLD ONE said, "*Quit trying to get away from me, ole Bessie.*"

STEPHEN- *You have to learn to improvise on the spot.*

ALEX- *You're good at that. You're good with people.*

STEPHEN- *Without improvising you make the whole production nervous.*

We laugh.

ALEX- *The buzz of the show is people working together.*

STEPHEN- *It's a natural high.*

ALEX- *When people work together it feels good.*

STEPHEN- *It's the human connection.*

ALEX- *It's part of our biology.*

We're all part of the same organism.

STEPHEN- *That is what time has done, divided us. And now, we're learning to reconnect.*

ALEX- *Only this play could have created this special buzz. My neighbour said it reduced barriers between people. Nothing is perfect. Not everything has to be solved. I don't have to be such a perfectionist anymore.*

STEPHEN- *Maybe a team of us could travel across Canada and share the Downtown Eastside play experience. Or the video would absolutely speak for itself. I think a joint venture between this book and the video would be awesome.*

INTERVIEW WITH EVALUATOR SISTER VICTORIA MARIE

JANUARY 23RD 2004

The following are e-mail responses from questions I asked Victoria Marie. She had an interesting position in the play process, as a musician/actor and play evaluator. Victoria and I shared some similarities in our roles as documentarians of the process.

What is your background?

VICTORIA- *My ethnic background is African-American, born and raised in Brooklyn, NY. emigrated to Canada 1965 (Montreal), became a Canadian and moved to Vancouver in 1971.*

Academic background: *I have a BA (Sociology & Anthropology), MA (Anthropology), MPS (Pastoral Studies), and am currently writing my Ph.D. (Dissertation on the role of Spirituality in recovery from addiction in the department for Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia).*

Occupational Background: *I'm currently self-employed as a researcher/evaluator, and consult with the Strathcona Research Group. Previous to that, I worked for six years as a Pastor's assistant in the Downtown Eastside. I'm a Franciscan Sister of Joy (nun) and still work in a volunteer capacity for the parishes. I have only been a sister since 1997. I am a member of AA and will be sober 14 years in March.*

Showbiz background: *None*

How did you get involved?

VICTORIA- *I got involved as an evaluator of the community play process from the community capacity and community cohesion building perspective. However, the time allotted for data collection was insufficient to the task. So, I thought that by participating in the play, I could do a better job of evaluating the process, while having some fun and stretching myself because this was as new of an experience for me as it was for many of the other participants.*

Describe your experience.

VICTORIA- *I felt really fortunate because I was only in two scenes and the rest of the time, I was playing the drum with the band/orchestra. That meant I didn't have to wait backstage but could watch all the scenes except the Shadow Play and the two scenes in which I participated. Also, as NATIVE DRUMMER #1, I didn't have to learn any lines. I just had to remember cues to know when to do what.*

The luxury of my position was that I felt I was in a fairy tale every night. My favourite scene was the City of Sighs and Tears because it captured the sadness, the resilience, and the beauty that is present in the people of the Downtown Eastside. I also have the double blessing of getting to write of the experience not just from my view, but as a fly on the wall (through the completed questionnaires) of what my fellow thespians were feeling.

As many people were, I was surprised and awed by the commitment, talent, and determination of the people who participated. Opening Night was an experience that was special in so many ways. For one thing, it was the first time that all the cast showed up.

There are three things that will stand out in my memory forever: (1) graduating university with my BA; (2) making my profession of perpetual (final) vows; and, (3) participating in the community play.

What did you learn?

VICTORIA- *I truly learned:*

- *not to judge people by their appearance.*
- *there is a wealth of talent in the Downtown Eastside.*
- *people can live up to what you believe they can do as well as down to what you attribute to them.*
- *there needs to be a strategy/program or something in place to continue to nurture the talent and skills that are in the Downtown Eastside.*
- *under encouraging leadership, people can achieve wonders and work together harmoniously.*
- *that I love drumming (loud)!*

INTERVIEW WITH ARTISTIC PRODUCER TERRY HUNTER

FEBRUARY 20TH 2004

Throughout the process, Terry Hunter plays a key role in making sure the production runs smoothly. Dealing with a wide variety of tasks, his involvement is enormous. Now in post-production, Terry answers some questions I emailed to him regarding his experience in the project.

Describe your role as the Artistic Producer of this project

TERRY- *My central role was to oversee the administrative and background aspects of the project and to work closely with the Artistic Director to determine principle artistic elements of the Community play (thus the title 'Artistic' Producer).*

The administrative aspects of the show included:

FINANCES: *including creation and maintenance of play budget, budget and petty cash tracking, bookkeeping and banking.*

PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT: *with Carnegie Centre, including outline of responsibilities, financial obligations, accountability and budget.*

PERSONNEL SEARCH: *including interviewing artistic and production personnel, job postings.*

OFFICE STAFF SUPERVISION: *providing resources and support to office administration, delegating tasks and responsibilities, overseeing and approving work.*

CONTRACTS AND PAYROLL: *including Union agreements, video release agreements and job interviews, and payment of salaries and fees.*

FACILITY SEARCH AND FACILITY SETUP: *including assessment of neighbourhood facilities, meetings, contract, insurance and theatre/office and workshop set up (tools, tables, clothing racks, heat, equipment; telephone and internet set up, office set up and equipment purchase).*

PUBLICITY AND PROMOTION: *including organizing and overseeing photo shoot, design, ads, play brochure, workshop flyers, poster, transit ads, postcards, bulletin boards, community play lobby displays, newsletter articles and Community Play website construction, and setting up media interviews, doing media interviews, managing the community play photo archives.*

DATABASE MANAGEMENT: *setting up and maintaining the play contact database, play mailing list.*

COMMUNITY OUTREACH: *co-designing, overseeing and managing the Outreach team and their 40 public workshops and planning the overall community promotion program of bulletin boards, displays, banners.*

COMMUNITY EVENT PARTICIPATION: *overseeing, co-coordinating and set up of participation in community events including the Chinese New Years Parade, The Friends of Victory Square Parade, and the Heart of the City Parade.*

FUND-RAISING AND NETWORKING: *grant writing (12 grants) networking (i.e. meetings with Community Organizations, meetings with Mayor, Community Play Organizing Committee, Friends of Carnegie, Chinatown and Strathcona Merchants Association and Carnegie communication team, etc), sponsorship requests (Media -CBC, Georgia Straight, and businesses), liaison with partners at Carnegie Centre and the Japanese Hall.*

DOCUMENTATION: *video and photography, including the details of why, who, where, when and how.*

RECEPTION, FILING AND SECRETARIAL: *answering phone and emails, taking messages and responding to inquiries, filing, relaying information and serving as a go-between for participants and artistic and production team.*

SOUVENIR PROGRAM: *overall design with Savannah and John, program advertisements and editing of text and layout, photocopying black and white free programs, program distribution.*

PRODUCTION SUPPORT: *attendance at all Production Meetings, assisting Artistic Team as required, In-kind donations, supervising the moving in and out of the office and workshops, VIP cameo role selection and contact, information conduit.*

FOOD ORGANIZATION: *food set-up and maintenance, including buying and setting up equipment (freezers, fridges, kitchen supplies) ongoing supply of food and food supervision of food personnel.*

SPECIAL EVENTS: *designing and overseeing the Pre-show Fair and the Historical Display, Gifts and T-shirts, Cast Suppers, Party, Thank You supper organization, setting up all script readings, (including facility rental, space setup, promotion, and engagement of local people as readers, play auditions co-ordination and setup).*

BOX OFFICE AND FRONT OF HOUSE: *hiring of staff, instruction and supervision, attendance at each performance to MC opening of show, and ticket sales set up to Community and City at large, complimentary ticket policy and organization.*

COMMUNITY PLAY ORGANIZING COMMITTEE: *all policy discussions (i.e. community tickets, honourariums, food), bi-weekly reports and meetings.*

POST PRODUCTION: *including post mortems, reports, budgets, strike out of theatre, storage of props and costumes, dispersal of properties, return of rentals, loans and in-kind equipment.*

ODD-JOB MAN: *an odd-sod assortment of responsibilities like truck driver/courier and pick up man (I was the only one with a van), credit card guy (I was the company rep with the credit card), 'complaints' department (receiver of the petitions for more food etc), and substitute floor washer, dishwasher, food clean up and garbage taker outer.*

The Artistic elements of my work included:

ARTISTIC INPUT AND ADVICE: *with Artistic Director Savannah Walling, I helped to determine the scale of production (when, where, how many shows) and contributed ideas towards artistic elements of the show (style, artists to be hired, content). In turn Savannah also shared other responsibilities with the Artistic Producer, including shaping the budget, negotiating co-producers agreement, writing up contracts, funding proposals, reports,*

brochures, articles/video release agreements, design of the outreach workshop program, souvenir program, and job interviews.

How is this project different from others in your experience?

TERRY- *The sheer size of the production was enormous. Far bigger on every level than anything that I had ever undertaken before. Huge cast, large production team, new facility for office, workshops, theatre and food, large budget with many funding sources, huge promo campaign, meetings upon meetings upon meetings, thousands upon thousands of details (I sound like Carl Sagan! – but it's an apt metaphor). My 'to do' list at one point was twelve pages long!*

What were your biggest challenges?

TERRY- *I worked on the show solidly for over a year (Nov 02 to Feb 04), and did three other major productions at the same time (between Nov 02 and April 03), including performing 45 shows myself during the March – April 03 stretch. I didn't have a day off between mid-August to Dec 19th, 2003, working 7 days a week every week for eighteen weeks– many days from 5 am to 11 pm. As long as I kept on working, I managed to stay behind the 8-ball and not get run over. Stop working, even for a day, and some crucial deadline would be missed and you'd have someone really upset. Despite the enormous workload, I was constantly encouraged by supported by the community, the community participants, the artistic team, and our partners.*

During all this, the hardest thing by far was managing the food for the community participants. It almost broke me. And we never knew exactly how many people would show up. The initial plan was coffee/tea/juice and a small snack for the participants at each rehearsal to be set up by the assistant stage manager (ASM). This then grew to providing sandwiches on weekends at lunchtime for those that were there all day. After the first day Dorothy, the Stage Manager said it took too much time for the ASM to do. We had no money in the budget to hire anyone full time, so I did it for a few days (it did take a lot of time!) and then I hired a local person on disability by topping up his disability. This worked for the most part- when he showed up. Many in the cast also came to rely on the food for their supper so the demand for more and more was always there. It become an enormous strain to try and provide all this (ordering the food, picking it up, delivering, storing, bringing it out of storage) all in a space that wasn't designed as a kitchen, (our office on the 4th floor become the food storage area with the freezers and fridges- while the rehearsals were on the ground floor), and at the same time take care of all the others things I had to do. And this over an 11-week period with often 100 people at a rehearsal. We could only store so much food, so we had to constantly track how many were coming to what rehearsal, make sure we had enough food there, and then restock all over again. Needless to say, if I ever to this again in a poor neighbourhood like the DTES, I would do everything I could to make sure the budget had a professional person on fulltime just to handle cast hospitality.

What was most magical for you?

TERRY- *Seeing the people of the community perform in the show on Opening Night! I was dancing (and I mean dancing!) in the back of the theatre to the opening song "Outta the Rain" I was so happy. All that work and more work had come to fruition.*

What did you learn?

TERRY- *Working on this project was the best thing I have ever done in my life. It was a gift and an honour to participate. I learnt so much about this community – its heart, its determination, its grit, its refusal to role over and die, its willingness to fight and fight and fight for what it thinks is right. Its contradictions, its pains, its hopes, and dreams for a better life for themselves and their community. And I’ve gained such a huge respect for the people in this community who participated in the community play- so many of them have become my friends. I’ve come to see the enormous amount of talent that they have, and what an incredible contribution they can make if only given the chance.*

I’ve also learnt that Savannah is an extraordinary artist and woman. That Jimmy is an amazing talent with so much positive energy. That Marina and Tamara are design goddesses, that Itai is a WIZARD with lights, that Erin is solid as gold and has a steadiness beyond her years, that Wyckham and Joelysa can write powerful and emotional songs that will stay in your head for weeks, that Steve Lytton is a treasure, that there is only one NICOLE in this world and that is Priscillia Tait, that Jodi (publicist) and John (designer) are a dream publicity team, that Rika Uto is a pleasure to work with – so supportive and wise, that Dan has a great sense of humour and a great ability to see what needs to be done and goes out and does it thank you very much, that Michael and Sharon are visionaries and will pour their heart and soul into their work, that people in this community are yearning to reach out to each other, to build bridges, to make a contribution, to make a difference, that Leith has a fierce dedication and love for her community, that Bob Eberle, Julia Marks and jil p. weaving are the best advisors that anyone can ask for, that my son Montana has enormous patience and love while he watches his Dad work hours and hours and hours and have little time for him, that I can cry every night when I watch a show like the Heart of the A City: The Downtown East Side Community Play because I am so moved by the people of the community performing their lives, their stories for their community. That I love this hardnuckle, tenderhearted community.

Any other comments?

TERRY- *One of the painful things about undertaking this project is letting it go. I wish I could wave a wand and give a job to everyone of those in the show that so desperately want one. But I can’t – I can only do so much – each person must take responsibility for their lives, at the same time we all must continue to fight that government/business and nonprofit organizations give the help that is required so that people can take advantage of the opportunities given them.*

Terry is now organizing the Art Festival at the Carnegie Centre. The community asks the artist, “What’s the next step?” Is the artist responsible to make community? Many basic needs need to be covered for doing a play in the Downtown Eastside. Even though many were exhausted and struggled with time constraints, something wonderful was always happening. It was a once in a lifetime community play experience.

PERSONAL NOTES FROM SAVANNAH WALLING

MARCH 2004

Although I've lived in this Downtown Eastside Community for 30 years, the project play becomes an opportunity to meet hundreds of more people and develop many new friendships in my home community – often with people I've passed on the streets for years but never met.

The project is enormous and exhausting. Like every other person involved in the project, I am vastly overextended. Every spare moment, every ounce of energy, I devote to pulling off the play, (the same year that my company mounts two other original productions and a community arts festival); I'm home-schooling my son every day. As a result, for the first time in over 20 years, I have absolutely no planning for the future. I have no energy left to spare for the future.

'Feast and famine' are big challenges this year. Lots of resources for community outreach spring up quickly. Yet bare bones funding for the production is not in place until late July—less than two months before rehearsals began. So much stress! Our final funding is not committed until a few weeks before show time – and how we welcome it. Those resources allow to move more resources to the play participants – to improve food, provide childcare, a couple of group suppers, travel help for crises, complimentary show tickets, archival video tapes, and souvenir t-shirts.

It's an enormous challenge to fit this type of community play process into the realities, complexities and poverty of the Downtown Eastside – a community tremendously strong and united in some ways, but deeply fractured and alienated in others.

From day one, the idea of a community play evokes excitement in some and resistance in others. I run into negativity, distrust (of new money and new faces), suspicion (of "poverty pimps" and "make-work" projects), tension (between cultural groups and "haves" and "have-nots"), and just plain bad memories. During the making of the play, we face language, literacy, economic, and cultural barriers. We face issues of food, poverty, legal, and illegal drugs, safety, and security. Relationships take time to build. Trust takes time to grow.

"You realized how fragile the thing was and the huge damage if it had failed." Bob Eberle (Community Play Organizing Committee)

I constantly feel guilty because nothing I do is enough I can never talk to enough people; I can never accomplish enough work. Although I talk to hundreds of people, there are hundreds more I should talk to. I knew our script is long. I knew we're eliminating far too many stories. Important voices are not heard in the play (and I'm grieving for their loss) – and we keep every 'voice' we dare not lose.

The responsibility of representing the voice and 'truth' of a community is terrifying. I live in this community. I can't leave after the play is over.

The process of interviewing people is inspiring. Talking to so many people is emotionally draining (especially for shy introverts like me).

It takes us months to locate a facility large enough to house our huge cast, providing space for workshops, office, storage, and rehearsals. (The Japanese Hall is confirmed only two months prior to rehearsals and we nearly lose the facility when they run into temporary financial

difficulties.) Then we have the enormous task of constructing a theatre and building workshop from scratch.

The auditions are magical – over 100 people came out from an incredible variety of cultural groups and economic and social conditions – so much talent, and so much gut-wrenching courage. The rehearsals are a constant logistical challenge – it's like marshalling an army. There are difficult issues to sort out on the way. Jimmy's respect for the participants, his solid 'homework', his good humour and knowledge of theatre protocol - plus Dorothy's organizational skills – keeps us on track. And so does the Carnegie Centre's solid support.

We wrestle with the logistics of providing healthy snacks for an unpredictable number of volunteer participants – trying to make a limited budget stretch over three months. (Food is a big issue for people living life on the edge.)

3 weeks before show opening, we run into the mid-way lull predicted by Ann Jellicoe and the Enderby team. Artists and cast are tiring. I've been sick for two weeks (at this point it takes all my energy to work on the daunting souvenir program and outreach to Aboriginal Band researchers to clarify cultural protocols and historic details. The Aboriginal history of the Downtown Eastside has turned out to be a whole lot more complex than I realized; we're part of the pre-contact history of several bands, and historic land ownership is a contemporary issue). Incidents erupt between individuals to sort out. A petition from the cast arrives, requesting input into video waivers, childcare and better food, compensation for travel expenses, show complimentary tickets, budget transparency -and people are getting tired of our food standby- sausage rolls. (Thank God, some additional funding arrives at this time, giving us some more resources to direct to participants.)

Fortunately, almost everyone really enjoys the rehearsals. Some of the cast members talk to the producer about how the rehearsals have been a healing place for them. The creativity is really helping them deal with trouble and illness in their lives and helping them on the road to recovery.

A week later, more challenges arrive. One of the people who attended some rehearsals dies of an overdose. Itai's house is broken into and his computer stolen – with all the show cues. VMT's computer crashes for five days. The strain to organize and produce enough food grows overwhelming. A second petition arrives requesting food backstage during the shows. A security issue has to be resolved. So many costume are being created, the projected costume parade turns into a fitting, (where someone makes a mistake and told the babysitter to go home and the stage manager never shows up because the paper tech rehearsal runs late). The capacity of the bleachers is less than anticipated and we have to reduce the house size – while our co-producer's Board directs us to reduce community ticket prices. My sickness turns into stomach flu. And Producer Terry's dad goes into the hospital with a heart attack (and survives).

When the play is finished, I felt shattered inside – burnt out, emptied – and wonder if I would ever be able to create again. I too, am grateful, for the low-key follow-up events. Even the documentation process has its helpful aspect – steady production “house keeping” and wrap event give time to slowly adjust to the aftermath. Imagination slowly repairs, but I am too exhausted to contemplate moving ahead.

CLOSING REMARKS

As I make my way to the Roundhouse, I reflect on the life of the play and the number of people it involved. This enormous production was more than just a success. Those involved were proud. Those who saw it were very happy they did. The play built bridges and had memorable impact.

There were moments in the creative process where it was questionable if or how the production would come together. With such a large cast, many with other commitments, there were several rehearsals where actors were missing. I remember the beginning of the project, with so many unknowns, and only a year to pull it off. The amazing part about all this is that not only was the process so incredible, but that when the time came for Opening Night, the theatre was packed, the music played, the stage was filled with a fully committed cast and a most beautiful and touching play that will stay with me, and many others, for a very long time.

This show was extremely ambitious on all levels. It is the largest cast I have ever seen, not to mention the huge volume of fully executed costumes, larger-than-life sized props and set. I witnessed the importance of key artists remaining grounded around which goals could be realistically achieved. The final result was a production, more than anyone could have hoped for. The Downtown Eastside Community Play dazzled full houses, night after night in the Japanese Hall. *In the Heart of a City* was both a professional looking show and a very moving community play.

It was everything and more than I thought the Downtown Eastside Community Play would be. It connected people who wouldn't otherwise connect. It brought together people of all ages from the cultural backgrounds that make up the Downtown Eastside population. The integrity and heart behind the whole production from the writers' meetings to the casting calls and rehearsals, was very inspiring to witness. I saw consistent qualities of patience, respect, and understanding in the artists involved. I think the team of artists worked well together and worked admirably with the community members. There was a definite bond that grew with the people and the production. As Jimmy said, "*The family keeps evolving and getting involved*".

It is obvious that the connections people made with this experience are still strong and that many people want the play to live on and grow into other projects. Many people documented this project – videotaping, photographing, and writing about the play as I did. There were reviews written and there was brainstorming of ideas about where to go next (i.e. permanent DTES theatre companies, etc.). Everything needs to be brought together and assembled to help 'spread the word'.

I pull open the glass doors to the old/new building that is The Roundhouse. It is a place where the trains used to come from all different directions to meet. The *trains* in this case are the different elements of the play that all converge- the artists, the script, set, costumes, lights, music, actors, the many voices, the cultures, the histories and the different documentations of the play.



Roundhouse Community Centre (Photo by Valerie Methot)

This train has ended its journey with hope that it will resonate and find its way into continuation, community, and... meeting again.

With the multitude of stories from the Downtown Eastside and talent of the people in the community, undoubtedly new projects will grow. Strength and spirit shine from this community of people, from their past, present, and future, and so, the Downtown Eastside community will live on.

The actors rose to the occasion and 'owned the show' with confidence. Every night the cast, musicians, crew, and others shared the magic of the play that had been growing for almost a year. The play in its entirety touched the community and surrounding communities. With the many struggles and triumphs the Downtown Eastside has experienced over time, the neighbourhood found a way to celebrate its strength and spirit. As the OLD ONE says at the end of the play, *"We have served you a poetic feast. The hearts from the past beat in the hearts that are now. Till the heart of our community knows that it beats on and on."*

DOCUMENTATION:
SPECTATOR, PARTICIPANT AND MEDIA RESPONSE
PHOTOS OF CARNEGIE'S 100TH ANNIVERSARY EVENTS
LIST OF DOCUMENTATION CREATED AROUND 'IN THE HEART OF A
CITY'
CANADIAN COMMUNITY PLAY LIST

SPECTATOR, PARTICIPANT, AND MEDIA RESPONSES

SPECTATORS RESPONSES (Gathered by evaluator Sister Victoria Marie)

Very positive: 94-100% enjoyed the story, acting, music and singing. 80% of them strongly enjoyed these elements.

Biggest criticisms:

- Bleacher seating was uncomfortable.
- Hard to hear some of actors so some dialogue was lost.
- Play moved too slow where some of actors had trouble remembering their lines.
- It was great – but just a little long, especially in 2nd half (because of the above).

Praise:

- *This play is a great gift to the neighbourhood and should be replicated in all neighbourhoods.*

Sister Elizabeth Kelliher, Franciscan Sisters of the Atonement

- *It's worth seeing more than once to unpack the message by attending to different aspects of each scene. Thank you.*

Aldona Ewazko, Sister of Charity of St. Louis

- *I'll help get proper seating donated – call me...James Tait is a genius and is invaluable to the world. The writers are wonderful. Itai is a genius and so is Marina.*

Patti Allan

Anonymous Praise:

- *The acting was superb!...Great singing voices...Found it very informative, tender poignant in parts and something to be proud of!*
- *A real delight –wonderful – awesome! I thoroughly enjoyed the whole thing and learned a lot! Very inspiring.*
- *The write-up in the program along with all the actions made the stories easy to follow.*
- *Gave me a greater insight into the situation on Eastside. Excellent presentation.*
- *I found the storyline cleverly woven – the “climate” portrayed, quite real! The involvement of the children was appreciated... the new generation learning from the story. It was a real thrill to be present - CONGRATULATIONS.*
- *I truly hope this informative and entertaining production will live on.*

- *As an Australian new to Vancouver, this was an excellent intro to some history – the talent –Wow. Brilliant.*
- *The souvenir program is informative and beautifully designed. I especially enjoyed the pride the performers expressed in their ensemble accomplishments. The dramatic impact of the overlapping of time kept my interest.*
- *Thank you!!! I'd love to see the play come back again. I would definitely come see it again.*
- *An excellent example of multicultural talent. All my relations!!!!*
- *Absolutely superb – This must be done more often. Brilliant! Stunning show!*
- *This was important for everyone, the Downtown Eastside, the Japanese Hall.*
- *I would like to see more plays like this, dealing with our history. Thanks a lot for the experience.*
- *Found the sets and scenery “extremely” innovative and enchanting. Wonderful!*
- *Please do several performances for old Vancouver people to see – even for the 2010 Olympics! I will come.*
- *Couldn't hear parts – but action made up for it.*
- *Excellent community builder!*
- *I would support an arts fund where most of the resources were clearly directed to training, development and employment of local low-income residents of the Downtown Eastside.*
- *The cast deserves great and meaningful and sustaining recognition – such as – jobs!*
- *Congratulations all around!!*
- *I was proud to witness such a fantastic creation. Many thanks.*
- *I loved the play and would support you and others in the arts for the DTES. The friends I went with also loved it and we wondered what about the post-partum blues. How are the cast members doing?*
- *I thought the play was excellent!! I thoroughly enjoyed it! I would love to see and support more wonderful creative projects such as the community play in the DTES!*
- *The lighting, music, and singing were excellent... Will it be a movie? And will it be developed further and reproduced? Would the script be for sale?*

- *Very motivating and inspiring!*
- *The play was extra special because of its “flaws”. I was so excited to realize that these were not professionals but just people like me, who came together to do their best, and their best was outstanding! I would love the chance to be involved with a project like this. I think everybody should be involved with a project like this. The song “Outta the Rain” almost made me cry and I still sing it to myself when I’m feeling down or lonely. Thanks to everyone. Please don’t stop.*
- *Absolutely fabulous – stirred my heart and soul, great!!!*
- *I wept in the first scene. When I saw the umbrellas and heard the music and heard the first couple of lines, I thought this is powerful. I never anticipated so much comedy; it was great. I learned history, I loved the symbolism, and the shadow play was unbelievable. It was neat to observe the people watching the play, across the stage. It seemed a lot of people who don’t live in the DTES were at the play the night I went, I’m glad. Everyone seemed to enjoy it. Stephen Lytton was brilliant; everything was incredible. I liked the ladder as a tangible symbol of political hierarchy. I liked Sandra’s acting and Gail’s singing voice. That voice has lived. I liked the women playing NICOLE and NANCY and LEANNE. They were all so good. The most touching thing for me was seeing the scene with the French Canadian man and his daughter. She was so focused that she was saying his lines as he was saying them...I think in order to keep her place.*
- *Gripping emotions are raised throughout the whole play. May this play be produced again and again.*

Spectator Comments on politics of play:

- *Found the history of the DTES too political.*
- *Congratulations! Especially enjoyed political/historical aspect.*
- *Could be a little more politically engaged.*

Letters from Spectators:

- *To everyone involved in In the Heart of a City congratulations! All of us at Headlines came to see your Opening Night performance and we enjoyed it very much. Wishing you lots of success for the rest of your run.*

David Diamond, Headlines Theatre

- *I would like to congratulate you once again for this big success. The play has truly demonstrated the collective effort of our community members who were involved in the process. Your leadership and commitment are beyond what I can describe. The Community Play becomes a vehicle bringing the community together which is something priceless that stay(s) in our hearts forever. I’m proud of each and every one of you.*

George Hui

- *The play is still fresh in many of our hearts and daily I hear from people who attended and loved it and were moved.*

Susan Gordon, Vancouver Parks Board

- *Congratulations to One and All! What I saw and heard and experienced at the Opening Night of In the Heart of a City touched me more than I could ever have imagined. Your collective efforts wove a rich reality into the story of Vancouver and your community. My heartfelt thanks goes out to all of you who had the vision and the courage to assemble this massive amount of history and personal stories into a production that enriched the lives of all who had the opportunity to experience it. Please extend my congratulations to your colleagues and collaborators on a most successful celebration of community spirit and memory.*

Pauline Thompson, Chief Executive Officer, The Vancouver Museum

- *Thank you so much for bringing Vancouver's history so vividly to life with In the Heart of the City. Thank you for so forcefully and beautifully making the point that our understanding of the past shapes the way we can live in the present. I was riveted to my seat for every moment of the performance, astonished and delighted as you wheeled out, one after another, powerful and moving interpretations of the Downtown Eastside's history. Out of all the stories from the past that are out there, I think you chose some of the most important and most useful ones for us in the year 2003. It was thrilling to see them presented with so much courage and feeling (and humour). It was wonderful to see clothing and objects from the Museum's collection reflected in the amazing costumes and props. Thanks to each of you for your part in this landmark event. Vancouver's history will never be the same."*

Joan Siedl, Curator of History, The Vancouver Museum

PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES

- *We succeeded – we met the challenge. I want to nourish that we, as a people, came together and succeeded in that mandate of building bridges. The weight of that production, I realized, was an enormous task to fill for the entire production – being where it's coming from – the Downtown Eastside. And the failure of it would have been far more damaging because of where it's come from.*

The most magical part – the sweetest thing was that we had worked together. The bittersweet beauty of the love story came together and the whole production came together – united for one goal. This play was bittersweet – but we drink.

Stephen Lytton

- *Watching it grow – for me the most magical thing was watching it grow – just the idea that it took on a life of its own as it went. It was always on the edge of whether it would work or not – be an incredible success or an incredible disaster – just that element of trust that moved it.*

Jim Sands

- *The audience that came to watch the play. Every night was full – a lot of people showed up. People go and have fun. They watch the people from the East Side. They enjoy it and want to come back again. We project to them the reality.*

Roberto Garcia Roman

- *The most magical experience for me was that I could act. I met so many talented and committed people in the DTES.*

Susan Poshan Wong

- *This play is one of the most important cultural events in the history of the DTES. Congratulations and thanks for inviting me.*

Jim Green

- *The community play is a shining example of how arts and culture are making an impact in this community.*

Mayor Larry Campbell, Four Pillar News: Mayor's Column

- *Amazing, eh?
Such a wealth of talent gleaming under those lights
Like a buried treasure chest suddenly flung open
A feast for the eyes and ears and heart
Honoring our proud history
In a perfect blend of laughter and tears and art
For almost two years
The Downtown Eastside Community Play Phoenix has been rising from the flames.*

Leith Harris, Participant Coordinator

MEDIA RESPONSES

Rehearsals:

- *It's the grand finale to Carnegie's 100th anniversary party, a celebration of courage, endurance, compassion and vitality of the people of Vancouver's oldest neighborhood... A vibrant Downtown Eastside theatre community has been created. People are getting to know each other. People connected to the play are greeting each other on the street. They know their play reflects strength, pain, and beauty of our multicultural Downtown Eastside that rises like the phoenix, from one generation to another.*

Sandy Cameron, The Carnegie Newsletter

- *Community play tackles one thousand years of history in the Downtown Eastside...For Lytton, the play represents an opportunity to shine a light on the area he calls home, to rise above the headlines of drug abuse, crime, despair and death, and to illumine the humanity that is the essence of this or any other community...The creators of the play have resisted the temptation to churn out a political manifesto and instead have crafted a gentle, often poetic work that nevertheless has at its heart a steel core of determination and strength...It is easy in a production like this to get weighted down by the logistical challenges. Yet as the actors got through their paces, working back and forth between their printed scripts and their memories, there is a sense in the air that magic, and maybe even history, is being made.*

John Endo Greenaway, The Japanese Bulletin

- *At night, the 400 block of Alexander St. can feel like hell. Just a few doors break the dark, blank walls of warehouses and, in many of those doorways, human beings huddle. But stepping into the brightly-lit Japanese Language School is a kind of deliverance. A theatre rehearsal involving dozens of people is underway and everyone is gentle, friendly, and purposeful. The contrast is so stark that these folks might as well be wearing wings.*

Colin Thomas, The Georgia Straight

Interviews:

- *I wonder aloud what keeps 100 unpaid participants coming back day after day and the answer comes: people feel that they own the project and that they belong here... Bouchard tells me that working on In the Heart of a City has definitely changed his relationship to his surroundings. "I'm running into people, like, on my way home. And any time in the city when you know more people that you can say hello to on a street, that changes the way you look at your neighborhood. He hopes that some of these friendships will last.*

Colin Thomas, The Georgia Straight

- *"Getting involved in this play has been really beneficial for me," says Luke Day..."My own personal 'coming Outta the Rain'. It's really helped me get out of, essentially a depression – just meeting people and watching people, and seeing how much effort goes into something like this."*

Tom Zillich, Westender

Performance Reviews:

- *Powerful performances were mixed in with a theatrical inventiveness that drifted back and forth between the present and the past. There was a strong presence of young and elders, poetry and prayer, injustices and activism, laughter and circles of sadness. I sat among a group of Chinese, Spanish and First Nations people. We were strangers who after awhile started talking to one another. I'd heard about the importance of community making people feel welcome and being invited. This play was just that. I hope they keep telling their stories.*

Mary Gazetas, The Richmond Review

- *In the Heart of a City has moving moments...Mayor Campbell did the clan proud, delivering his handful of lines with a combination of vocal bravado and a gee-shucks-Ma-I'm-on-stage posture...GASSY JACK, played by Luke Day, whose fine voice served as a beacon to guide others ... There was a moment when this crusty old critic got a little choked up, and it had nothing to do with what was happening on stage...While waiting for her next cue, one of the performers reached up and surreptitiously took the hand of the woman above her and gave it a squeeze. It was like a hug, that squeeze, and it said, 'This is what it's all about'.*

Leanne Campbell, The West Ender

- *Show's Heart is in the Right Place ...On the level of process, In the Heart of a City was a huge success long before it opened... Stephen Lytton, who plays OLD ONE, has a great voice, natural comic timing, and the kind of confidence that allows him to adlib with ease. Grant Chancey, who takes a number of roles, including a snake-oil salesman named DR. WIZARD, is a dynamically watchable actor with a great face. Kuei-Ming Lin ... and Priscillia Tait... bring simple authority to their parts, and many others, especially the kids, are charming...Szijarto's props and costumes ... provide many of the highlights of the evening...I hope that we will see more community plays in Vancouver.*

Colin Thomas, The Georgia Straight

- *Inner city play has lots of heart ...For the nervously excited performers, relief came when the first performance of In the Heart of a City was enthusiastically cheered, when it was obvious that the show had touched the hearts of many...The play is a saga of First Nations people and immigrants who peopled the downtown area. Stitched in through all the stories is the present day story of NICOLE... a young First Nations woman who arrives by Greyhound from Bella Bella to find her AUNT RITA...At the heart of this production is tiny (under five feet) Downtown Eastside resident Stephen Lytton in the role of The OLD ONE... as the embodiment of the wisdom of the ages, his ability to remember lines, to deliver them passionately, and to ad lib with a quick wit when necessary is nothing short of astonishing. Several other performers are amazingly good too, and those who are not, do their charming enthusiastic best. In the Heart of a City beats with vitality and hope –characteristics that don't usually make the evening news from this part of town. These funny and brave performers are proof that the courage and humour that kept Main and Hastings alive and kicking through the 19th and 20th centuries are still around.*

Jo Ledingham, The Vancouver Courier

**LIST OF DOCUMENTATION CREATED
AROUND THE DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE COMMUNITY PLAY
'IN THE HEART OF A CITY'**

The Carnegie Public Library Downtown Eastside Special Collection

792.0971 **Downtown Eastside Community Play**, 2003 (flyer). 2 copies. Binder

822 **In the Heart of a City: The Downtown Eastside Community Play** (Play Script)
135m

792.0971 **In the Heart of a City: The DTES Community Play** (Theatre Programme).
135c 2 copies.

792.0971 **A Journey into the Downtown Eastside Community Play: *In the Heart of a***
135me ***City*** by Valerie Methot. (funded by the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation
and the Roundhouse Community Arts and Recreation Centre)

791.0971 **United in Play: An Evaluation of 'In the Heart of a City': The Downtown**
135 m **Eastside Community Play** by Victoria Marie, O.S.F. (prepared by Strathcona
Research Group and MarieCo; funded by the Vancouver Board of Parks
and Recreation)

Archival Binders

- Memories of the Plays: photo documentation, theatre program, media
- Managing the Play: planning, researching, administering, production team, photo log
- Publicizing the Play: marketing plan, logo, press releases, flyers, brochures, newsletters

Published Articles

"*The Downtown Eastside Community Play*", an article by Savannah Walling, published in **alt.theatre: cultural diversity and the stage**, vol. 3, no. 4, March 2005

"*The Magic Circle*", an article by Leith Harris, published in **alt.theatre cultural diversity and the stage**, vol. 4, no. 1, January 2006.

"*In the Heart of a City: community play tackles 1000 years of history in the downtown eastside*" by John Endo Greenaway, **The Bulletin, A Journal of Japanese Canadian Community, History & Culture**, November 2003

Website Publication

"*Responsible Arts Practice and the Vancouver Downtown Eastside Community Play*", an article by Savannah Walling, **Dramatic Action: Community Engaged Theatre in Canada & Beyond**, a website exploring connections between theatre, performance, community development and civic engagement (funded by the Laidlaw Foundation)

Public Art Installation

A commemorative wall installation was created by graphic designer John Endo Greenaway and is on permanent display in the lobby of the Carnegie Community Centre

Powerpoint Documentation

An illustrated powerpoint slide presentation on the making of the play created by Bob Eberle

Video Documentation

The Downtown Eastside Community Play: Excerpts (11 minutes) filmed and edited by Dawn Buie.

Hours of unedited interviews, rehearsal and performance footage filmed by Dawn Buie

Photographs

Portraits, character portraits, rehearsal and performance documentation by photographers including David Cooper, John Endo Greenaway

LIST OF PUBLISHED CANADIAN COMMUNITY PLAYS

The Spirit of Shivarree: Eramosa Community Play (Ontario, 1990)

Pa'Ko'Pi'Ci'Wak: The Calling Lakes Community Play, Fort Qu'Appelle (Saskatchewan, 1992)

Ka'ma'mo'pi'cik/The Gathering: (remount of The Calling Lakes Community Play (Saskatchewan, 1993)

Many Hands: The Blyth Festival and District Community Play (Ontario, 1993)

The W(Rites) of Spring: St. Norbert Arts and Cultural Centre Community Play (Manitoba, 1994)

Dene Suline Ho Ni Yeh: Common Weal produced community play (Saskatchewan, 1994)

A North Side Story (or Two): Moccasin Flats community play, North Central Regina (Saskatchewan, 1995)

Pilgrim in Time: The Saint James Cathedral 250th anniv. Community Play (Ontario, 1997)

Arum Dem Fayer: Camp Naivelt Community Play, Brampton (Ontario, 1998)

All Over the Map: Guelph, Eramosa Township Community Play (Ontario, 1998)

Not the Way I Heart It: Enderby and District Community Play (B.C., 1999)

Twisted Metal and Mermaid's Tears: South Riverdale Community Play, Toronto (Ontario, 2000)

Swimming for Shore: Etobicoke community play, Toronto (Ontario, 2001)

More or the Magic Fish: Davenport Perth Neighborhood Community Play, Toronto (Ontario, 2002)

In the Heart of a City: The Downtown Eastside Community Play, Vancouver (B.C., 2003)

**CARNEGIE'S 100TH ANNIVERSARY PHOTOS
2003 - A YEAR OF CELEBRATORY EVENTS**



Carnegie's 100th Anniversary Parade



**Carnegie's 100th Anniversary with
Mayor Larry Campbell**



Historical Walk



Historical Walk



Heart of the City Parade



Heart of the City Parade



Heart of the City Parade



**Heart of the City Parade
The Community Play Phoenix**



**Neighbourhood Historical Talk- Hastings
Street and Main**



**Neighbourhood Historical Talk- Hastings
Street and Main**

CREDITS:
LIST OF PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE PLAY
ARTIST BIOS
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE PLAY

CO-PRODUCERS

VANCOUVER MOVING THEATRE

Formed in 1983 in the Downtown Eastside, VMT has performed all over the world and for many different events. They create and tour theatrical repertoire for schools and festivals and produce educational programs and community residencies. VMT has received Jessie Richardson Theatre awards and nominations for Outstanding Production and Significant Achievement in Spectacle Design (1998), Outstanding Production Theatre for Young Audiences and Significant Achievement in Cultural Exchange and Education (2002). They enjoy playing for audiences of all ages in high quality productions that celebrate the power of the human imagination. In 1998, they initiated the annual Strathcona Artist at Home Festival.

CARNEGIE COMMUNITY CENTRE ASSOCIATION

Located in a heritage building operated by the City of Vancouver, the Carnegie Community Centre provides social, educational, cultural, and recreational activities for the benefit of the people of the Downtown Eastside. Operating since 1983, the doors of Carnegie are open 14 hours a day, 7 days a week, with facilities that include the most utilized public library/reading room in the city as well as ongoing writing, theatre and music programs.

Community Organizations (who supported event with venues, in-kind donations and services, discounts, etc.): 54

All India Buffet, Arts Club Theatre, Association of United Ukrainians, Bard on the Beach, Breaking the Silence, CBC Archives, CBC Radio, Carnegie Community Centre (including Carnegie Kitchen, Carnegie Newsletter, Carnegie Public Library), Christie Lights, Cook Studio Café, David Cooper Photography, DESMedia, Dick's Lumber, Downtown Eastside Residents' Association, Downtown Eastside Women's Centre, Firehall Arts Centre, First United Church, Four Sisters Coop, Happy Planet, Ted Harris Paint, Kokoro Dance, Leaky Heaven Circus, Long and McQuade Sound, Lord Strathcona Elementary School, Lori Krill Coop, the Mailbox, Public Dreams, Ramada Vancouver Centre, Raycam Community Centre, Raymond Burr Theatre, Rocky Mountain Sound, Roundhouse Community Centre, Shadbolt Centre for the Arts, Strathcona Community Centre, Strathcona Public Library, Sunrise Market, Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Gardens, Translink, UBC Department of Theatre, Film and Creative Writing; UBC Fredric Wood Theatre, Vancouver City Hall Printers, Vancouver Civic Theatres, Vancouver Community Net, Vancouver International Children's Festival, Vancouver Japanese Language School and Japanese Hall, Vancouver Museum, Vancouver Opera, Vancouver Parks Board, Vancouver Playhouse, Vancouver Symphony, West End Community Centre, William F. White.

Sponsor support list: 28

Canada Council for the Arts through the Artists and Community Collaboration Fund; Human Resources and Development Summer Student Employment; British Columbia Arts Council; Province of British Columbia; BC Gaming Commission; Office of Cultural Affairs City of Vancouver; Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation (Artist in Residency Program, Neighbourhood Matching Fund, and Evaluation); Vancouver Social Planning Department's Downtown Eastside Revitalization Project; VanCity Savings; Anonymous; Vancouver

Foundation; Hamber Foundation; Samuel and Saidye Bronfman Foundation; Central City Mission Foundation; Carnegie Community Centre Association; Roundhouse Community Centre; Strathcona Merchants Society and Business Improvement Area; Vancouver Moving Theatre; Downtown Eastside Residents Association; Friends of Carnegie; Mailbox; The Georgia Straight; 690 CBC Radio One; 105.7 CBC Radio Two.

COMMUNITY PLAY TEAM: STAFF

Writers: 4

Renae Morrisseau, James Fagan Tait (*Dramaturge*), Savannah Walling (*Head Writer*), Adrienne Wong

Artistic Team: 14

Artistic Director: Savannah Walling; *Director/Choreographer:* James Fagan Tait; *Musical Director:* Wyckham Porteous; *Assistant Musical Director:* Joelysa Pankanea; *Design Diva:* Marina Szijarto; *Assistant Designer:* Tamara Unroe; *Dragon Designers:* Karen Wong and Zhongxi Wu; *Lighting Designer:* Itai Erdal; *Set Designers:* Marina Szijarto and James Fagan Tait; *Stage Managers:* Dorothy Jenkins and ASM: Emiliano Velasco; *Acting Coach:* Jay Hamburger

Administrative Team: 10

Artistic Producer: Terry Hunter; *Participant Coordinator:* Leith Harris; *Office Manager:* Dan Feeney; *Special Events Coordinator:* Sharon Kravitz; *Office Assistant:* Chloe Uhlis; *Publicist:* Jodi Smith; *Logo:* Michelle Nahanne; *Graphics Designer:* John Endo Greenaway; *Front of House Manager:* Keith Suriani; *Box Office Manager:* Caitlin Mckee

Production Team: 17

Production Manager: Itai Erdal; *Technical Director:* Erin Kennedy; *Props Finder:* Doug Vernon; *Wardrobe:* Arielle Fraser, Deborah Lount; *Security:* Earl Majeski, Wankey Chery; *Food:* Treni Carr, Fernando Sam; *Set Up Crew:* Mike Inwood, Jason Leane; *Tear Down Crew:* Skylar Vine, Jason Bouchard; *Child Care:* Jennifer Christensen, Sara Jacobson, Preston Jobin, Robyn Prince

Outreach Team: 6

Leith Harris, Rosemary Georgeson, Colleen Tillman, Cynthia Wong, Dana Wong, Karen Wong

Documentation Team: 3

Valerie Methot; Sister Victoria Marie; Dawn Buie

Workshop Team: 16

Mercedes Baines, Yvonne Chartrand, Marie Clements, Beverly Dobrinski, Terry Hunter, Renae Morrisseau, Bill Pozzobon, Russell Shumskey, Cathy Stubington, Marina Szijarto, Teresa Vandertuin, Chloe Uhlis, Tamara Unroe, Dana Wong, Karen Wong, Zhongxi Wu

Special Events Team: 9

Opening and Closing Prayer: Audrey Rivers; *Opening Ceremony Pyrotechnics:* Elliot Neck; *Anniversary Banner:* James Cunningham with Bill Pope and Sara Ross; *Pow Wow Drummers and Dancers:* Dawn Marks, Shalisha Marks, Fred, John, Rusty

COMMUNITY PLAY TEAM: VOLUNTEERS

Organizing Committee: 12

Andalee Adamali (*Firehall Arts Centre*); Valencia Bird (*Breaking the Silence*); Dara Culhane (*SFU professor*); Bob Eberle (*UBC Associate Professor of Theatre*); George Hui (*Vancouver Social Planning Department*); Terry Hunter (*Play Producer, Executive Director Vancouver Moving Theatre*); Sharon Kravitz (*Carnegie Anniversary Programmer*); Julia Marks (*Community Directions*); Ann Suddeby (*First United Church*); Gena Thompson (*Carnegie Board of Directors*); Rika Uto (*Carnegie Programmer*); jil p. weaving (*Community Arts Programmer, Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation*)

Sub-Committees: 3

jil p. weaving (*Documentation*); Bob Eberle (*Facilities*); Dara Culhane (*Carnegie Newsletter*)

Community Play Patrons: 10

Rick Archambault, John Atkin, James Burton, Wayson Choy, Shannon Daub, Julia Marks, Donna Spencer, Ann Suddaby, Pauline Thompson, Yvonne Chui

Community Volunteers: Friends of Carnegie (Fund-Raising): 10

Mayor Larry Campbell (Honorary Patron), Russ Anthony, Milton Wong, Jim Bishop, Donald Shumka, Dave Mowat, Philip Owen, Peter Fairchild, Jeff Sommers, Margaret Prevost

Community Volunteers: Play Readers: 21

Jay Hamburger's Carnegie Theatre Workshop and Guests: Grant Chancey, Wendy Chew, Mark Clayton-Taylor, Paul Decarie, Robert Escott, Patrick Foley, Jim Green, Jay Hamburger, Leith Harris, Montana Hunter, Jason Logan, Stephen Lytton, Alex Martin, Ruth Mehta, Joan Morelli, Irene Schmidt, Dora Sanders, June Seto, Sorelle, Gena Thompson, Muriel Williams

Cast List (Actors and Musicians, 81 of whom are Volunteers): 84

Sarah Angus, Jacob Bennett, Kira Bennett, Sue Blue, Gail Bowen, Julie Brassard, Roger Brouillette, Mayor Larry Campbell, Gus Cabrera, Grant Chancey, Wendy Chew, Rt. Hon. Glen Clark, Mickey Clark, Rosemary Collins, Ada Con, Brenda Dallaway, MP Libby Davies, Luke Day, Vancouver Parks Board Chair Heather Deal, Paul Decarie, Antonio Dossantos, Gladys and Patty Evoy, Dan Feeney, Magdalena Fekete, Patrick Foley, Sarah Galuska, Councillor Jim Green, Michael Guenette, James Hance, Sharon-Jo Jelden, Klisala Harrison, Katie Jobin, Yvonne Kato, John Krotez, Sai Law, Kuei-Ming Lin, Robyn Livingstone, Stephen Lytton, Adrienne Macallum, Victoria Marie, Julia Marks, Gregory Maxedon, RH Maxwell, Michael McNeeley, Joan Morelli, Wilhemina Munroe, Elizabeth Murdock, Paisley Nahanee, Kat Norris, Qi Li and Si Qi Pan, Joelysa Pankanea, Wyckham Porteous, Harriet, Brenda and Dakota Prince, Sandra Pronteau, Henry Pruden, Isobel Ramirez, Bill Richardson, Sheryl-lyn Rivers, Trevor and Emily Robinson, Roberto Garcia Roman, Javier Romero, Jim Sands, Saskia Schopman, Lynne Shepard, Donald Shumka, Priscillia Tait, Gena Thompson, Hanna, Mercy and Elisha-May Walker, Emile Wilson, Susan Poshan Wong, Councillor Ellen Woodsworth, Bernadette Wycks, Elwin Xie, Fanna Yee

Community Volunteers: Staging and Music Rehearsals: 23

Cleona Anderson, Penny Beggs, Magnolia Cairns, Taum Danberger, Edward Dayton, Yuanih Garcia, Kathleen Gowman, Karen Kallevik, Shannon Ling, Lily Loncar, Michael McCormack, Siobhan McCormick, Alex Martin, Haedy Mason, Jean Blais Matheiu, Ikuro Nagata, Chris Nelson, Teresa Ng, Aaron Pronteau, Mike Richter, Lynn Rutherford, Danielle Smyth, Robert Williams

Community Volunteers: Building (Costumes, Puppets, Props, Banners, Set, Historical Display): 70 +

Glen Andersen, Sarah Angus, Penny Beggs, Jason Bouchard, Julie Brassard, Roger Brouillette, Magnolia Cairns, Wendy Chew, Mickey Clark, Rosemary Collins, Brenda Dallaway, Aurora Dunkley, Magdalena Fekete, Ilona Ferenzi, Sarah Galuska, Tom Gleave, Susan Gordon, Michael Guenette, Demitri Harris, Naomi Harvey, Lorelei Hawkins, Daymon and John Krotez, Debra Lank, Deborah Lount, Doug Lusignans, Stephen Lytton, Greg Maxedon, Adrienne Macallum, Julia Marks, Jiivan Blais Mathieu, RH Maxwell, Elizabeth Murdock, Clayton Palmer, Bill Pope, Brenda, Dakota, Harriet, Raven and Todd Prince; Sara Ross, George Sakata, Jimmy Sands, Joan Seidel, Olga Sorenson, Miriam Stuart, Anne Suddaby and First United Church workshop (5); Koraley Tanner, Julie Thompson, Teresa Vandertuin, Debbie Ventura, Doug Vernon, Hannah and Karah Walker, jil p. weaving, Owen West, Bernadette Wycks, Fanna Yee, Elwin Xie, Andrea Zimmer, Alicia, Carmen, Nadim, Sophie, UBC theatre students; *Technical Consultant*: Bob Eberle

Community Volunteers: Backstage and Front of House: 16

Lighting board operator: Serena Gnomes; *Security*: Greg Liang; *Make-up*: Todd Prince; *Front of House*: Harold Asham, Jack Barry, Demitri Harris, Montana Hunter, Sara Jacobson, Preston Jobin, Carolyn Low, Martin Mellado, Naomi Narvey, Velma Paquette, Debbie Ramage, Martin Sears, Aden Sutton

Community Volunteers: Pre-Show Fair and Opening Ceremonies: 34 +

Caecilia, Devon, Barbara, Ethel, Shawn, Mary Ann Cantillon, Pat Chow, Steve Chow, Ingrid Mendez de la Cruz, Gustavo Carcus, Jose Christobal, James Cumming, Lisa David, David Eng, Frank Fukui, Susan Gordon, Mike Hoffman, Ken Joseph, Lisa Tam, Mary McCauley, Mr. and Mrs. Rudolfo Marrquin, Debbie Ramage, Alcvin Ramos, Julie Rogers, Sara Ross, Muggs Sigurgiersen, Ron Suzuki, Dan Tetrault, Paul Taylor, Kathy Walker, Gerald Wells, jil p. weaving, Muriel Williams

Community Volunteers: First Nation Consultants: 10

Downtown Eastside: Julia Marks, Rosemary Georgeson, Michelle Nahanee, Marlene Trick; *Institute of Indigenous Government*: Grandma Harris; *Squamish Nation*: Chief Janice George and *Language Specialist*: Peter Jacobs; *Tsleil-Waututh Nation*: *Cultural Researcher*: Marge George; *Musqueam Nation*: *Researcher*: Frank Point and *Language Coordinator*: Victor Guerin

Community Volunteers: Community Play Consultants: 9

Vancouver: Susan Gordon, jil p. weaving; *Enderby*: Cathy Stubington, Rosalind William, Lynn Emde, Murray MacDonald, Joan Cowan, Barb Dutot; *Toronto*: Ruth Howard

Community Contributors: Script Research: 414

Questionnaires: 180

Students and staff at Seymour and Strathcona Elementary Schools, Britannia Secondary School, and patrons of the Raycam and Carnegie Community Centres, Crab Tree Corner, Community Directions, Aboriginal Friendship Centre, Portland Café, Radio Café and Union Market (including Linda Boyle, Montana Hunter, Neil Gerrard, Angeline Jack, Charlotte Johnson, Sandra Keshane, Quentin Milord, Vincent Phan, Mark Tobiasson, Brody Williams)

Story Collecting Sessions: 6 venues + 37 interviews and storytellers +82 guests

Carnegie Community Centre (Mario Bellgentir, Sue Blue, Denelle and Herb Hulbert, John (Preacher Man), Denny Joseph, Andy Kostyniuk, Stephen Lytton, Dennis Olson, Priscillia Tait, Grant Watson, Terry Williams, Peter, Ron), the *Sun-Yatsen Classical Chinese Gardens* (including Harry Goldberg and Jennifer Moss), *Breaking the Silence* (including Valencia Byrd and Tia), *Ukrainian Hall* (including John Atkin, Dianna Kleparchuk, Audrey Skalbania, Joan Kowalewich), *Strathcona Artist at Home Festival* (Yugoslavian ladies Angie Vuksic, Helen Cvitanovich, Carlie Pupovich; Regina Brennan, Earle Peach, Sandy Cameron), and *Watari Latin American Friendship Group* (including Charles Almenendariz, Jorge Colindres, Jesus Esteban, Sherri Johnstone, Luis Hernandez, Guadalupe Mena, Monserrat Munoz, Martin Ojeda, Larry Pancevic)

Interviews: 115+

Anonymous, Elaine Allan, Reverend George Archer, Fred Arrance, John Atkin, Marie Baker, Jean Barman, Sheila Baxter, Regina Brennan, James Burton, Sandy Cameron, Marie Ann Cantillon, Grant Chancey, Gertie Chow, Randy Clark, Wade Compton, Bruce Congola, Ron Cora, Lynn Crompton, Dara Culhane, Libby Davis, Marie Davis, Paul Decarie, Lou Demerais, DES Media (Jayce Salloum), Dave Dickson, Beverly Dobrinsky, Melissa Eror, Tina Farmilo, James Fischer, Patrick Foley, Bonnie Fordyce, Chief Janice George, Marge George, Rosemary Georgeson, John Endo Greenaway, Stephan Gray, Jay Hamburger, Leith Harris, Nancy and Harvey Hee, Barbara Hodgson, Darren and Lorraine Holubowich, Terry Hunter, Colin Anthony Ito, Carole Itter, Luka Jolicoeur, John Juliani, Marcella King, Sharon Kravitz, Jin Li, Mark Leier, Peter David Little, Jason Logan, Larry Loyie, Bruce MacDonald, Julia Marks, Pam Martin, Ramona Marr, Ruth Martin, Lora Masotti, Tina Matthews, Ruth Meta, Joan Morelli, Bryan Mulvahill, Delia Nahanee, Ahjala Nelson, Kat Norris, Zola Novak, Tom Oleman, Lou Parsons, Earle Peach, Todd Peterson, Christine Peori, Sheryl-lyn Rivers, Joy Russell, Phillipa Ryan, Robert Sarti, Dayle Schettger, Irene Schmidt, Joan Seidel, Lillian Sheng, Muggs Sigurgeirson, Frank Smith, Jeff Sommers, Nancy Stubbs, Cathy Stubington, Paul Taylor, Colleen Tillman, Colleen Tsoukalas, Colleen Uyeda, Teresa Vandertuin, Herb Varney, Dan Vie, Hayne Wai, Margaret Webber, Kelly White, Darryl Wildcat, Muriel Williams, Bing Wong, Susan Wong, Karen Wong, Larry Wong, Todd Wong, Paul Wright, Caesse Wyss, Takeo Yamashiro, Paul Yee, Paul Yeung, Peter Yeung, Cora, Peter and Ron.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

TERRY HUNTER, ARTISTIC PRODUCER

A resident of the DTES for over twenty-five years, Terry has been active in the performing arts for 30 years as a theatre producer, director, performer, creator, bandleader, and teacher. Most recently, he produced *Tales from the Ramayana* and the Fifth Annual Strathcona Artist at Home Festival. A six-time Canada Council Arts Award recipient, Terry is the co-founder and Executive Director of Vancouver Moving Theatre (1983) with whom he has toured to more than forty national and international festivals throughout Canada, the United States, Europe, Australia, Japan, Korea, and Indonesia. Mr. Hunter is also a co-Founder of the Terminal City Dance (1975), the Vancouver Dance Centre (1983), the co-recipient of the Jessie Richardson Award for Significant Artistic Achievement in Spectacle Design (1998), and a co-nominee for Jessie Richardson Award for Significant Artistic Achievement in Touring. Most recently, he was the 2002 co-Artist in Residence at the Strathcona Community Centre where he implemented the Strathcona Community Marimba Project. He is also a co-founder and member of Shangara Marimba, Director of the Strathcona Kid's Dragon Band and the former Artistic Director of the World Rhythms Youth Ensemble (Jabulani).

SAVANNAH WALLING, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR/CO-WRITER

Savannah Walling is the Artistic Director of Vancouver Moving Theatre, a company she co-founded in 1983. Active in the performing arts for over 20 years as a director, writer, choreographer, interdisciplinary performer, stilt dancer, musician, lecturer, and teacher, she has created over forty interdisciplinary and dance works. Since 1983, she has collaborated with performers, composers, designers and directors to create physical scores for VMT's theatrical repertoire - over 2000 performances presented to over half a million audience members in Canada, the USA, Asia, Europe and Australia. She also contributes her skills in the art of theatrical spectacle to co-directing collaborations with groups such as Ruby Slippers, Touchstone Theatre, Axis Theatre, and Mandala Arts & Culture.

Highlights of her directing career include *Samarambi: Pounding of the Heart*, *Ab audire: Gifts of the Heart*, *Runners' Tale*, *Drum Mother's Gifts*, and *Blood Music*, all of which have received critical and popular success in Vancouver and on the international touring circuit. Equally successful and innovative text-based co-productions include *Rhythm in Theatre: The Dramatic Beat* (with Axis Theatre), and Brecht and CO's *The Good Person of Setzuan* (with Touchstone Theatre and Ruby Slippers). *The Good Person of Setzuan* won 1998 Jessie Richardson Theatre Awards for Outstanding Production of a Play or Musical and Significant Artistic Achievement in Spectacle Design. The production was also nominated for Outstanding Original Music Composition and Outstanding Costume Design.

A co-founder and performer with the Mime Caravan and the avant-garde movement collective Terminal City Dance, Ms Walling toured through out B.C. and across Canada from 1973-1983. From 1971-72, she also performed in New York City with the Phyllis Lamhut Dance Company, Jamie Cunningham and the Acme Dance Company and toured New York State with the Merle Lister Dance Company. Over the years, she has worked as a freelance performer for Great Britain's Welfare State International (character roles and music), Public Dreams Society, Mortal Coil (stilt dancer, singer), and the acapella Balkan choir Razom Sestre (singer).

JAMES FAGAN TAIT-DIRECTOR/CO-WRITER/CO-SET-DESIGN

James Fagan Tait is a native of Cornwall, Ontario and trained at Ryerson Theatre School and the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto where he worked as an actor and director for several years. He also studied theatre at Ecole Jacques Lecoq in Paris where he worked as an actor and director for four years. He was co-artistic director of Dialogue Theatre Company in Cornwall, Ontario, a company dedicated to theatricalizing topical issues and local histories. He was the artistic director of the Fly on the Wall Theatre Company in London, England, which received acclaim for its production of *The Watermelon* at the Edinburgh Festival. He co-authored and directed Shadowland's *Lysistrata and the New Age*, a community play, on the Toronto Islands a dozen years ago before establishing himself as a regular actor/director at the Caravan Farm Theatre in Armstrong, B.C. He is a regular performer for all the local theatres in Vancouver, and co-authored and directed *Not the Way I Heard It* in Enderby, B.C., a community play about and created for the residents of Enderby. He has toured the province in *A Change of Heart* for The Hospital Employees Union and *The A.I.D.'S Informer* for The World A.I.D.S. Group, both of which he co-authored and co-directed. He directed the acclaimed productions of *The Forced Marriage* and *The Hotel Play* at Studio 58 at Langara College.

RENAE MORRISSEAU, CO-WRITER

Renae is of Cree/Saulteaux ancestry and originally comes from Manitoba. She has worked in theatre and film for most of her life. Renae played ELLEN on *North of Sixty* for five years. She has had guest roles in *X-Files*, *Cold Squad*, and *Neon Rider*. She had three seasons on *Nothing Too Good for a Cowboy*, and hosted four half-hour television programs called *All My Relations*. In 2002, she hosted Aboriginal filmmaker Tracey Jack's 1-hour special for CTV, *Crying in the Dark*. For more than 10 years, Renae has worked within Aboriginal communities in Manitoba and B.C., focusing on theatre and community development. She created regular programs called *Within The Circle* with the Winnipeg community cable TV station. These were designed as teaching tools for the Mama Wi Chi ItaTa Centre in Winnipeg's North End. Renae became co-host with Tom Jackson and writer/producer/correspondent for the national program *First Nations*.

In 1992, she joined forces with Motion Visual Communications, a national production company, to create segments for her First Nations program through the CanWest network. In 1994, Renae wrote *Indigeni, Native Women: Politics*, a series pilot through UTV in Vancouver. This program was broadcast nationally and throughout New Zealand. In 1993, Renae won the Native American Journalists Association Awards for Best Documentary, and Best Cultural Material. At the American Indian Film Festival in 2000, Renae won the Best Actress Award for her role as ELLA LEE in the Shirley Cheechoo's film, *Bearwalker*.

Renae is a member of the Leaky Heaven Circus, a Theatre Company that provides Christmas and spring performances in Vancouver. She teaches and facilitates popular theatre for Aboriginal communities across Canada and is working on a short film on an Okanagan Creation Story. Renae is deeply committed to Aboriginal youth and uses her skills in theatre to promote concerns and issues that impact on Aboriginal youth through a series of youth gatherings.

ADRIENNE WONG, CO-WRITER

Adrienne Wong studied theatre at Simon Fraser University. She has lived and worked in East Vancouver for 8 years. She says, "*When I moved to Vancouver from Calgary, I was*

attracted to the Downtown Eastside, and especially Strathcona, because my grandmother grew up here. My Dad has told me stories about walking along Hastings Street and sitting on the roof of the Dominion Building, where one of his relatives worked, to watch the fireworks. I like walking the streets of Chinatown and imagining that I'm walking in the footsteps of my Grandmother, who died before I was born."

Some of Adrienne's accomplishments include: 2003 Artist-in-Residence at the Firehall Art Centre. Performance credits: *The Yoko Ono Project* (Firehall Arts Centre), *Tales from the Ramayana* (Vancouver Moving Theatre), *Foreign Bodies* (Tangled Tongues Performance). Writing credits: *Other Women* (Rumble Productions); two radio plays *Another Cup of Tea*, co-written with her sister, and Kat Norris's *Dream* (CBC Radio). Adrienne has worked as a dramaturge with Savannah Walling, Heidi Taylor, Noah Drew, Jacob Zimmer and John Graham Lee. She has collaborated as a director with Donna Spencer on *An Enemy of the People*, with Norman Armour on *Three in the Back, Two in the Head*, and *War of the Worlds* and in the paper theatre with Andreas Kahre on *x,y: A Soldier's Tale*. She directed Wendy Chew's play, *The Red Dress Girl* at the Firehall Art Centre as part of the Rare Earth Arias. Adrienne has a BFA from Simon Fraser University's School for the Contemporary Arts, is an Associate Artist of Rumble Productions and co-Artistic Director of Tangled Tongues Performances.

MARINA SZIJARTO, COSTUMES, PROPS AND CO-SET-DESIGN

Originally from England (where she obtained a Foundation Arts Diploma and a Fine Art Embroidery Degree), Marina designs and builds costumes, sets and props locally and internationally for dance, theatre, celebrations and parades. She has lived in the Downtown Eastside and has been involved with several community projects here, namely, *The Footprints Community Mosaics and Banners* with the Carnegie Street programme in 2001, the *Circus of Dreams* with Public Dreams Society and Strathcona Community Centre 1996-1998. She also co-ordinates, designs and builds many other types of community public art projects including murals, tile & pebble mosaics, banners, giant puppets and lanterns with a variety of communities in B.C. and the Yukon. She has worked with many professional theatres in Vancouver and B.C., has been nominated for 4 Jessie Richardson awards, and in 2002 received one for best costume design in small theatre.

Marina has worked both as a director and collaboratively to create large-scale outdoor multidisciplinary events and smaller personal rites of passage rituals, involving the community and implementing visual spectacle and celebration art techniques such as, *Luminara* (Victoria), *The Arctic Winter Games* (Whitehorse, Yukon), *Illuminares*, *Parade of the lost Souls*, *Circus of Dreams*, (Vancouver). Marina has performed (most often on stilts or with fire) at parades and festivals in B.C. and in the USA. (*The Leaky Heaven Circus*, *Burning Man-Nevada*, *Freemont Solstice & Halloween parades-Seattle*, *Vancouver Folk Music Festival*.) She is a co-diva in the Bad Altitude Stilt Collective and has performed with them throughout Vancouver (Word on the Street, the Vancouver Pride Parade). Since 1984, Marina has exhibited her paper-mâché, fabric appliqué and mixed media works in Galleries and Museums in Canada, England and Japan. Marina is currently working on *Funeralia*, an ongoing project exploring creative responses to death and dying, plus 'green' and alternative funerals. She is presently co-writing a book on the subject with Paula Jardine.

VALERIE METHOT, DOCUMENTATION OF CREATIVE PROCESS

A Director/Playwright/Playwriting Facilitator/Visual Artist and Artist-in-Residence since 2001 at the Roundhouse Community Arts and Recreation Centre, Valerie is also the Artistic Director/Developer and Project Director of the Roundhouse Youth Theatre Project, a recent recipient of a Canada Council for the Arts grant. Valerie has exhibited her paintings in Montreal and Vancouver. Her show of paintings, *Monkey Portraits* was part of a duo show with the North Vancouver Arts Council, and was a solo exhibition in celebration of the Year of the Monkey at Blackberry Gallery in Port Moody and at Chutney Villa in Vancouver.

Valerie graduated from Concordia University in Montreal with a BFA in painting and drawing. She exhibited her installations and paintings in group shows and with *Artists Against Aids* in Montreal. During that time, she was also directing various theatre productions and teaching youth/children and adults both movement and acting. As part of the Quebec Drama Federation Festival, she co-directed *Le Tango des Vampires*, with La La La Human Step and Graffiti Tango dancers. Following this, she created the solo exhibition of paintings, *Phosphorescent Seeds*, to honour the women who were murdered in the Montreal massacre. Valerie went on to achieve her MFA in theatre directing from UBC and directed several shows including *The Maids* and *Warhol Images* at the Vancouver Art Gallery and the installation piece with paintings, *A War in Heaven*. She also wrote and directed *Treated with Tango*, *Getting the Trendies*, *X-POSE*, and *Marbles*. Valerie is currently Artistic Director/Director/Playwriting Facilitator of the upcoming community play entitled *Take a Breath* at the Roundhouse and is leading a youth theatre project in conjunction with Vancouver Coastal Health. Valerie is also an Arts Programmer at the Shadbolt Centre for the Arts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to jil p. weaving, Savannah Walling and Barbara Mey for their editing support.

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Special thanks to Jeremy Baxter for his ongoing support.

Thanks to the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation and the Roundhouse Community Arts and Recreation Centre for funding this project.

Many thanks
to all of the wonderful people involved in the Downtown Eastside Community Play
In the Heart of a City.

To all those who are missing their loved ones,

In memory of the loved ones we have lost.

A very special thanks to my dad
who, despite his recent death, remained a big presence in my *journey*
writing this book