

Enriching Communities with Community-Based Arts Education

by

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Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Education

Lakehead University

September 2015

Abstract

This research aims to describe the value of community-based arts education. Community-based arts organizations focus on community concerns and issues as well as support individual development (Hoffman Davis, 2010), yet encounter challenges related to funding and support and are continuously asked to prove the value of their work. This research looks specifically at the arts education programming of three community-based organizations in the Thunder Bay area. This research uses narrative inquiry to interpret the stories of the leading figures in these organizations by looking specifically at their experiences working and participating in community-based arts education from an out-of-school context. This research describes how these organizations enrich this particular city and the communities within it by bringing mentorship, access to safe spaces and valuing care in arts education. Despite challenges with funding, space, and support, the leaders of these organizations are driven and inspired by the people with whom they work, the collaboration possible, and the changes observed and experienced. This research examines the ways in which community-based art organizations respond to the need for an education that supports well-being by valuing “community consultation” (Kay, 2000). Concurrently, as a form of arts-informed indwelling of the data, the author presents a personal art series that visually represents the themes within this research. This research provides recognition to community arts and community-based arts education within the City of Thunder Bay. Furthermore, this research advocates for the continued positive impact of, and ongoing research on, community-based arts education.

Acknowledgements

This journey would not have been possible without the help, encouragement, love and support from many people.

Firstly, I would like to thank my participants, Lora Northway, Alana Forslund and Judi Vinni. Thank you for welcoming me into beautiful projects and inviting me to magical events. It is because of the three of you that I found inspiration to begin this research. Thank you for your time, your kindness and your friendship.

I would like to extend a great thanks to Julie Rosenthal, for her lovely farm and fabulous sheep. Julie you are not only a wonderful resource of felting materials but also a terrific voice of experience and wisdom.

For standing by my side from start to finish, I would like to thank Ledah McKellar. For taking me out into the beauty of nature when an escape from writing was necessary. I am endlessly grateful to have been able to share this Master of Education journey together. I also thank Varainja Stock for all of your help, with many edits, pep talks, and most of all for listening.

For being a wonderful resource, and motivator I thank my supervisor Dr. Pauline Sameshima. Thank you for reminding me how much I love making art, thank you for helping me bring my art into the research. Thank you for our weekly gatherings to make art together, bringing laughter, creativity and support.

Thank you to my committee member Dr. Paul Berger, my internal reader Dr. David Greenwood, and external reader Dr. Beth Krenksy for your time, thoughtfulness and feedback.

Thank you to my wonderful family and my incredibly supportive partner, for believing in me.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This research explores the potential value of community-based arts education (CBAE). This research addresses CBAE from an out-of-school context, and examines the learning that occurs within it. While discussing the potential value of CBAE I direct my attention to educational visions that prioritize elements of care over teaching for ‘success.’ Orr (2004) suggests that the planet may not be in need of more successful people but rather is in need of “more peacemakers, healers, restorers, storytellers, and lovers of every kind” (p. 12). In an attempt to examine how education can address such concepts, I undertake an exploration of CBAE and the potential benefits it can bring to individuals and communities of people, as it performs outside of formal educational settings. Campana (2011) argues that, “there is a whole range of issues that youth and communities confront which schools cannot fully address or influence, at least not within current school education” (p. 20). I am concerned with the idea that people are looking for much more than what is provided to them by traditional education systems; I am concerned that people think that what they are searching for does not exist. These concerns have inspired me to look deeply into CBAE to examine what it can bring to individuals and communities that traditional education systems cannot. I do this by specifically exploring the commonalities and intentions of CBAE as described by leaders in three CBAE groups in Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada. I have chosen to focus on one particular location, in order to provide a deep investigation and to contextualize what is

happening in Thunder Bay. The stories of these leading figures in Thunder Bay bring insight and personal heartfelt descriptions of CBAE and its ability to focus collaborative learning and community-centered spaces for people. Furthermore these stories explain the possibilities that come to life when such spaces exist.

In order to open spaces for these stories I combine arts-informed inquiry (Cole & Knowles, 2008) with narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). I focus specifically on the values of empowerment for learners, strengthening community relationships, and safe spaces for learning by looking specifically at the presence of these values within CBAE in the City of Thunder Bay. My research question is: *What contribution does CBAE make to Thunder Bay according to CBAE leaders?* I approach this question with consideration of the following questions. What is CBAE, and how do organizations Thunder Bay engage in CBAE? How might they be working to enrich this particular city and community? What are some of the challenges that leading figures within CBAE organizations might face and what motivates these leaders to continue in their work despite these challenges? How can the stories of long-term involved leading figures in CBAE add to the literature of CBAE?

I present this research as a method to create a space for the leading figures of CBAE organizations in Thunder Bay to share their experiences being involved in community arts, looking specifically at memories and stories of projects and moments that have been meaningful. This research determines and defines the characteristics of community arts, community-based art centres and CBAE from a pedagogical perspective

looking at the educational agenda of CBAE in contrast to that of formal educational institutions. Specifically, it analyzes the teaching and learning space established within CBAE and the potential impact that space may have on the individuals involved. The memories and stories shared by the women in this research project reveal possibilities for community collaboration within community arts in connection to social resistance and social change.

From a qualitative research perspective I use narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) to interpret the stories of the leaders of organizations practicing CBAE and arts-informed inquiry (Cole & Knowles, 2008) to render my artistic engagement with this research. I created artistic representations that were inspired by and reflective of the data. Using qualitative interviews and time spent with the participants, I studied the stories of the leaders of these organizations who, despite challenges and barriers, persevere to provide learning opportunities and gathering spaces for members of their community. Using arts-informed inquiry (2008) I created a series of art pieces with a variety of felting techniques, using locally sourced fleece to explore the themes that arose throughout the research process. Each piece is a representation of, and engagement with, a different theme that surfaced through this work. The narrative texts in tandem with my art pieces represent my interpretations of the possibilities for CBAE.

Rationale

This research adds to the existing literature on community-based arts research by giving attention to the perspectives of leading figures within organizations engaging in CBAE. This research focuses on the benefits of CBAE and its values and can work to generate hope for educators and community leaders, who strive to create positive learning experiences for individuals and communities. The inspiration behind this research came from a desire to acknowledge three leading figures engaging in CBAE in Thunder Bay. I use the term leading figures, to highlight that these individuals are at the front lines of their organizations working as program coordinators, arts educators, funding applicants and much more. I will celebrate their work both in academic form as well as in public spaces by holding an art exhibit with the art pieces I created during this research process. I write with caution, aware of that not all community-based arts education organizations share identical intentions, and with an awareness that different people and communities of people will be impacted by CBAE in a variety of ways. It is important to note that this research does not make assumptions about organizations, but rather discusses their potential. Organizations' projects vary in accordance with a community's needs and demands. The intention of this research is to show the need for organizations such as these to continue their efforts and acknowledge the positive changes they can inspire.

It is my hope that this research can encourage others who either currently or in the future hope to be involved with CBAE. Kincheloe (2004) writes that, "countless good teachers work every day to subvert the negative effects of the [school] system but need

help from like-minded colleagues and organizations” (p. 8). This research will highlight the potential for making positive change and to provide an example for future organizations who also strive to make changes and are in search for “like-minded colleagues.” This research gives consideration to the restorative potential within CBAE by discussing its caring teaching and learning methods for individuals and communities of people. Krensky and Lowe Steffen (2009) suggest that “the arts play a unique and necessary role in fulfilling fundamental human needs that, when left unmet, jeopardize both individual and societal well-being” (p. 118). This work provides evidence of learning, within community-based art, that focuses on how people treat and perceive themselves as well as how people can participate in creative collaboration. Rosal (2010) argues “art is not solely for its own sake (although this is a perfectly sound notion); we believe that art is the cornerstone of exploring and building one’s self as a member of a community” (p. 2).

I engaged with this research using a qualitative approach. I chose to interview and shadow leading figures of three community arts organizations within the city of Thunder Bay. This approach allowed me to listen to stories of how each organization began, how it evolved, and how it has grown. I was able to take notice of stories that spoke to moments of change and inspiration in the lives of the participants. This qualitative approach welcomed space to discuss the challenges these individuals encounter as well as to discover what it is that inspires them to persevere. As I share these stories and shadowing moments I add to the literature of CBAE by discussing the benefits, and

provide acknowledgement and recognition for the people who make it possible. Woven into this research are photographs of a series of art pieces I created with locally sourced fleece. The photographs document the process of making as well as the final products to display what I was learning and discovering throughout my research process. These photographs demonstrate an importance in the process involved while making art and that my focus was not directed simply to the final art piece similar to CBAE valuing process and not simply what is created in the end. Chapter four describes this process and gives consideration to the notion that when making art, “since the actual work of art is what the product does with and in experience, the result is not favorable to understanding” (Dewey, 1934, p. 204). It is through this experience of making that I was able to immerse myself in the research. I created the art pieces with conscious attention to the writing of Maxine Greene (1995):

At the very least, participatory involvement with the many forms of art can enable us to see more in our experience, to hear more on normally unheard frequencies, to become conscious of what daily routines have obscured, what habit and convention have suppressed. (p. 122)

While creating the art pieces I was able to immerse myself in the research, by giving mindful attention to the words of my participants, to the literature that has inspired and challenged me, and to the intention of celebrating CBAE. The art pieces along with experiencing the process of making them created an opportunity to expand my research,

as well as engage with the data and information from a place of creativity and knowing through the making.

Personal Context

“Personal stories become a means for interpreting the past, translating and transforming context” (Holman Jones, 2005, p. 767). In positioning myself in this research, I understand that my interests as well as personal background have an impact on the research process and findings. That being the case, I approach this research with reflexivity which involves “an ongoing self-awareness during the research process which aids in making visible the practice and construction of knowledge within the research in order to produce more accurate analyses” (Pillow, 2010, p. 178). My personal connection and involvement in the Thunder Bay arts community brings an emotional investment, holding a personal care towards the participants, the organizations and the research itself. From this emotional investment comes inspiration and momentum.

In 2011, I moved to Thunder Bay. Arriving to a new city I felt a need to find my place in my new surroundings. I searched to find a place that welcomed me, encouraged me, a place where I could connect to the people within my city, and feel as though I was a part of a community, or simply a part of something. It was evident to me at first glances at the city that there existed a strong presence of community arts. Community arts was evident in public graffiti projects, public art, and community events. To me these projects were symbolic of a collaborative force within a city. I could see in these projects that

there was more happening than simply painting a wall. Shortly after, I became involved with three community organizations within the city that engage in community arts, CAHEP (Community Arts and Heritage Education Project), DefSup (Definitely Superior Art Gallery) and Willow Springs Creative Centre. My initial expectations were quickly surpassed by admirable events I witnessed and observed through my involvement with these groups.

As an educator I have always been concerned with nurturing feelings of belonging and self-significance. I believe in being a part of a community and I question how community needs can be addressed, and how community connections can be established. Through my involvement in CAHEP, DefSup, and Willow Springs Creative Centre I have learned that community arts can focus directly on such areas of concern. I have observed programming that has given voice to those who have been silenced. I have witnessed projects that have given confidence to people who have felt discouraged. Furthermore, I have seen safe spaces that invite collaboration and community dialogue, mentorship, and self-discovery. Over time I have developed relationships with three women who are the leading figures behind these organizations and I have observed the ambition and strength needed in their work. I approach this research as an invitation to create a space for these women to share their stories and experience in what they have observed and witnessed over time.

My connection to these organizations and the participants of this research has resulted in friendships and a belief in a necessary recognition for the leaders of the

organizations. Although this creates a degree of bias I believe that these relationships created a safe space for open communication and trust within the interviews. My direct involvement has led me to look favorably upon these organizations; it has also provided me opportunities to take on the roles of volunteer, teacher/facilitator, student and artist, allowing me to bring a variety of perspectives to this research. This involvement has given me an understanding that each organization that I address in this research is enriching the city of Thunder Bay in its own way and each one has a crucial role in this community. For this reason I invited the leading figures of three different organizations in Thunder Bay to be research participants. In Chapter Three I discuss the possible disadvantages of my proximity to these organizations and strategies I used to keep myself open to hearing things that went against my current understanding.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The educational practices within CBAE exist outside the realm of formal education structures, meaning that its merits are not defined by strict quantitative evaluation systems. Meier (1999) argues that “it is a scholarly quibble (or hopelessly romantic) to suggest that the ends of education do not neatly correspond to test scores” (p. 64). The “ends” of education in CBAE more closely connect to an education that does not focus on academic performance but rather on people’s relationships with themselves, each other, and the place around them (Campana, 2011; Geiger Stephens, 2006). In order to assist the reader in understanding the values and potential benefits of CBAE this literature review will provide a close examination of CBAE and its abilities to focus on the well-being of individuals and communities of people to further define the potential benefits of CBAE. I will later examine how long term leading figures (approximately 10 years of involvement) perceive, discuss and relate to some of the potentials described in this literature review, as a way to provide deeper insight into the value of CBAE.

Defining Community-Based Arts Education (CBAE)

CBAE is not homogenous from site to site. It is affected by specific needs and interests making it difficult to assign to it a single overarching definition: “one might initially envision organized community art programs to improve art skills, or alternatively, outreach programs to empower special groups of people” (Ulbricht, 2005,

p. 6). At the most basic level, CBAE can be described as bringing together qualities of community-based learning and community arts (Krensky & Lowe Steffen, 2009). Geiger Stephens (2006) describes community-based learning as, “a process that creates a collaborative environment of scholarship that holds individual differences, as well as similarities, in high esteem” (p. 40). Community-based learning prioritizes the interest of individuals and communities of people and works to achieve welcoming and supportive environments. Community art is “a form of public art that is experiential and inclusive” (Lowe, 2011, p. 459). As community-based education and community art join together, a focus on communal learning and participatory art is prioritized, with the needs of participants held in high esteem (Krensky & Lowe Steffen, 2009). CBAE is not a top down process and can be better understood by looking at the priorities and values within CBAE practices.

An important element within CBAE is the relationship between the ‘teacher’ and the ‘learner’. Krensky and Lowe Steffen (2009) believe that “in essence, CBAE is community art used as both a creative practice and a teaching method” (p. 12). The learning that occurs within CBAE is meant to be a collaborative process, meaning that “the artist or art educator facilitates, rather than directs, participants through a process that encourages them to dream and empowers them to create” (p. 20). The facilitators are not meant to merely direct participants but become participants themselves, further establishing a community of learners. Within this learning community each individual

participant is valued as everyone brings something unique and important to the projects at hand. An example of this is the Train of Thought Canada project. Train of Thought is:

an evolving community arts journey from west to east coast, with on-board activities and over 20 stops along the way. At each stop, a travelling company will get off until the next train comes through. Local arts organizations will host interactive events, and add to creative tasks. Additional travellers will hop aboard to join in conversations and art-making en route. (Train of Thought, 2014)

Within this community arts project the people involved are continuously learning from one another, welcoming participants to join on the train and share their knowledge, stories and talents. CBAE prioritizes participant involvement not only in their engagement in projects but in their direct involvement in the processes of CBAE. The educational agenda of CBAE is free from the restrictions of an imposed predetermined curriculum, and instead relies on the direct involvement of community members; as Kay (2000) suggests, “in art projects, community consultation is important as it solicits the views of members of the community in terms of need and interest” (p. 419). CBAE needs and values direct community input. This is also seen in the Train of Thought project as in each stop the train makes the invitation for community collaboration is encouraged and essential. By encouraging and requiring this community input, CBAE is able to devise programming that is community-, location- or group-specific. The focus of CBAE is to address community concerns; these concerns must then not only be heard but also given a

space for response. The agenda is decided by the participants and establishes ownership over projects before they even begin.

Educational Agenda

By presenting the educational focus of CBAE in comparison to the educational agenda of formal education I will show that there are potential harms in formal education that are not present with CBAE. This comparison describes what CBAE is able to provide while it practices education in an out-of-school context, speaking specifically of community-based art centres that engage with arts education. Hoffman Davis (2010), for example, argues that “young people who have not had success meeting the traditional expectation of school often find at community art centers creative activities in which to encounter their own importance – to themselves, to others and to society writ large” (p. 85).

Nurturing Individuality

While discussing the educational agenda within CBAE I give consideration to the notion of education for well-being, in response to Noddings’ (1992) question, “Can we make caring the center for our educational efforts?” (p. 14). I suggest that “care” can exist in this way within educational efforts when priority is given to an individual or group’s well-being, meaning moving past characteristics of education that might be perceived as harmful associated with regular schooling. Gallegos (2001) explains a model for education based on a system relating to factory workers and their schedules: “As a

result, education became a mechanical, standardized process, with instruction prevailing over education” (p. 26). Comparably, Kincheloe (2005) describes educational intentions that strive to create “a more ordered and efficient society” (p. 7). The goal of education, by these explanations, is to specifically shape individuals, while assuming that all individuals are able to conform to a given model. I feel uneasy with these goals and wonder to what degree schools such as these that regulate, “have served to categorize, punish, restrict, and restrain those students who failed to fit the proper demographic” (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 7). I hope for education and learning that allow for nurturing personal identity although that might appear challenging against these models of education. Winterson (1996) explains:

National life is the life encouraged by governments, mass education and the mass media. Each of those powerful agencies couples an assumption of its own importance with a disregard for individuality. Freedom of choice is the catch phrase but streamlined homogeneity is the objective. (p. 134)

I question to what degree care and well-being can be prioritized in educational models where the goals of education are to create people who are “suitable and beneficial” for society, with a disregard for those who might not “fit the proper demographic”.

CBAE offers an education that is dedicated to the interest and concerns of the people involved (Kay, 2000), and this focus may in turn respond to Noddings’ (1992) question of placing “care at the center of educational efforts” (p. 14). Noddings explains possibilities when “care” becomes a priority in education:

I, too, believe that a dedication to full human growth—and we will have to define this—will not stunt or impede intellectual achievement, but even if it might, I would take the risk if I could produce people who would live non-violently with each other, sensitively and in harmony with the natural environment, reflectively and serenely with themselves. (p. 12)

Educational ambitions within CBAE are not striving to excel in the realm of “intellectual achievement”. Hoffman Davis (2010) suggests that when the educational agenda is shifted away from “intellectual achievement” a type of learning can exist that focuses more on the needs, concerns and ambitions of individuals or community of people.

Meaningful Learning

The engagement in artistic practice within CBAE demonstrates an approach to care and well-being in CBAE’s educational agenda. Art lessons or projects can inspire feelings of ownership made possible through artistic creation. Within the art making process people are able to develop a personal connection to their creations, Dissanayake (2003) explains: “we make something special because doing so gives us a way of expressing its positive emotional valence for us, and the ways in which we accomplish this specialness not only reflect but give unusual or special gratification and pleasure” (p. 24).

Art education attempts to create meaningful learning with meaningful projects and tasks. This is in stark contrast to schooling critiqued by Freire (1970) for teaching he

called “narration sickness”, where he despairingly describes the teacher’s task “to ‘fill’ the students with the content of his (sic) narration—contents which are detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance” (p. 71). Community-based art centres focus on assisting and nurturing individuals by disregarding strict demands and harsh expectations found in formal education institutions; they work to discover personal talents through meaningful artistic projects (Hoffman Davis, 2010).

CBAE in Practice: Hugo House and its Educational Agenda

The Richard Hugo House writing centre in Seattle is an example of what CBAE can look like in practice. The educational methods, practices and values of Hugo House reflect those of CBAE. Founding member of Hugo House Frances McCue (2007) writes, “at Hugo House, non-credit, non-graded courses for writers along with other opportunities to produce and read literature make teachers into learners and writers into teachers” (p. 599). This type of learning is not driven by the need to meet curriculum expectations but rather to help students find means to respond to personal aspirations and discover their own individual strengths. Hugo House also demonstrates that the people involved are not restricted by hegemonic roles. Students and teachers are a part of an inclusive community, comparable to facilitator and participant roles.

CBAE allows for an educational environment that supports learners, but prioritizes maintaining a participatory model. Hugo House provides an example, “a new kind of teaching. It’s both formal and informal because Hugo House is not—at least

officially—a school and because attendance isn't mandatory” (McCue, 2007, p. 596). As mentioned, community-based art centres determine their educational focus based on the needs and hopes of the participants, who may be more inclined to attend because they have had direct input into the educational agenda.

The potentials for CBAE are evident in what is being offered and what is being sought out and achieved by the people who attend. McCue (2007) writes, “by coming together over a shared passion and creative process, we are all, children and adults alike, better able to navigate the complexities of contemporary life” (p. 596). CBAE supports a collective space while encouraging individuality through the acknowledgement that “variability is ok” (Eisner, 2002, p. 96). In examining traditional education systems and their potential impact on well-being, alongside the educational priorities in CBAE, I am inspired by presence of care in CBAE. I am inspired with how such a presence is able to connect to success in education beyond academic and intellectual achievements.

Establishing Community

Within CBAE care exists in the close attention and support given to the needs of communities of people involved. Community is not static; rather it is continually developed. Greene (1995) explains:

Like freedom, [community] has to be achieved by persons offered the space in which to discover what they recognize together and appreciate in common; they have to find ways to make inter-subjective sense. Again, it ought to be a space

infused by the kind of imaginative awareness that enables those involved to imagine alternative possibilities for their own becoming and their group's becoming. (p. 39)

The inclusive environments of community-based art education establish collectives of individuals with different interests, talents and stories and encourage them to collaborate. The welcoming atmosphere encourages participation. The spaces CBAE provides allow for people of different ages and backgrounds to be active in their communities and engage in artistic creation (McCue, 2007). While I discuss the “spaces” that CBAE provides I bring attention to Duncum's (2011) description of public space:

both actual and virtual, as a place of conversation and contestation in pursuit of social justice issues. This definition contrasts with a frequent use of the term to mean a space that we all share, one that is used for ordinary, daily activity, a civic space such as a beach or a railway platform but not normally employed for conversation. (p.349)

In consideration of this description I speak to “space” not as a specific location but rather as a place defined by specific intention.

Existing apart from home or school CBAE provides a different gathering space for people, one that invites dialogue and community interactions. The intention set within this is one that provides a free space learning environment, one not typical in formal educational institutions (Blandy, 1987). This setting offers opportunities for arts education and community collaboration. Such intentions are essential for the process of

nurturing community relationships. Due to the arts' direct connection to civic space, and people's need to be heard in the public sphere, there is an increase in community spaces for the arts (McCue, 2007). Art Bikers is an example of CBAE that provides "spaces" for arts education. Art Bikers functions as mobile art education, biking throughout Halifax and providing art education throughout the city (4CS Foundation, n.d). Creation, along with communication, becomes possible in spaces engaging in community-based art. Within these spaces a person or group of people are invited to express themselves freely in the process of creating art, as well as in gathering, and in conversation.

Creating Welcoming Spaces

Community-based art education can also be defined by looking at the organizations engaging in CBAE and the emphasis placed on prioritizing the spaces they provide for arts education. These spaces themselves offer something to the participants involved. Hoffman Davis (2010) describes these spaces as serving:

artists who need space for work or performance, students who crave instruction and direction, and the broader community that enjoys attendant cultural enrichment. At the core, they create safe havens for arts learning that has been marginalized elsewhere. (p. 82)

Community-based art education prioritizes "safe spaces" and therefore must create an atmosphere where individuals do not feel excluded or judged, and feel as though they are welcomed and supported. Lowe (2001) writes: "there must be a safe space for interaction,

a social setting that occurs as nonthreatening and relaxed for participants” (p. 460). A safe and trusted space opens possibilities for communities, opportunities to meet others, hear others and be heard.

An example of a community-based art organization creating such a space is Art City, in Winnipeg, Manitoba. This non-profit organization, founded in 1998, offers art programming to community members. Their mission states:

Our mission is to create a positive and expanding cultural impact on the unique needs of the community by:

- Fostering self-expression in participants, encouraging a sense of ownership, self-respect, and pride in their work and community.
- Being a part of the neighbourhood, a place that is safe, comfortable, and supportive.
- Being accessible by offering free-of-charge, quality programming with local, national, and international professional artists.
- Being sustainable and available to the community day after day, year after year.
- Being a model for future community art centers. (Art City, n. d.)

Art City is a community-driven centre that provides space for free and accessible arts education. The centre’s mission statement encourages that arts education is empowering for learners, and has programming designed to respond to community interest and needs. Art City demonstrates the goals of community-based art centres to provide a safe,

welcoming and inclusive environment for learners while maintaining a direct community arts focus.

Potential benefits of community-based art education can be seen in the spaces for learning that it provides. The spaces are defined as safe and free; they act as communal meeting grounds. Community-based art invites people to live well with each other, be trusting of one another, and share ideas and hopes for their communities, bringing potential for communal gathering and creation. “Art still edifies people. It can maintain and improve their collective existence. Art, directly and indirectly, may bolster the morale of groups working to create unity and social solidarity” (Chalmers, 1987, p. 4). These spaces create opportunities for creative expression as a response to concerns, needs and interests allowing participants and facilitators to attentively guide arts programming.

The spaces for community-based art education highlight the importance of art making as well as fostering space for connections between people and collaborative relationships. Lowe (2001) explains, “Two goals seem to be most important as the explicit foci of community art projects: creating a piece of art and establishing a sense of community” (p. 464). The benefits of community-based art education from a community building perspective are evident in its efforts to build and nurture community relationships and create spaces where people feel safe to do so. The following section will explain select potentials that become possible when such spaces are available.

Inspiring Critical Consciousness

CBAE's prioritization for safe space encompasses the element of being a welcoming conversational space meaning inviting opportunity for communal dialogue. Listening to the needs of others around you or sharing your concerns or passions brings a conscious awareness towards others and ones' self. Communal dialogue is also welcomed in the initial planning phases for community-based art programs and projects while discussing community issues, interests or concerns. Ginwright and Cammarota (2007) explain:

Often, community-based organizations facilitate what we call the critical civic praxis, a process that develops critical consciousness and builds the capacity for young people to respond and change oppressive conditions in their environment. In other words, critical civic praxis is the organizational processes that promote civic engagement among youth and elevate their critical consciousness and capacities for social justice activism. (p. 699)

Supporting people in developing critical consciousness within a community-based setting furthers possibilities for change or community action as people are given options for what to do with this consciousness. CBAE works to be a community resource, in that "community organizations can provide critical knowledge to community members and offer them ways to respond to neighbourhood and community problems" (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2007, p. 698).

Rhoades (2012) describes an example of critical civic praxis in combination with the arts, specifically in reference to youth: “Combining critical civic praxis and artivism components has provided a model for inviting marginalized youth to implement arts-based interventionist efforts” (p. 319). Artivism, as Rhoades describes it, is “a convergence, a hybrid of artistic production and activism that embraces their symbiotic relationship for transformational purposes” (p. 319). In situations where communities or groups of people are looking to make change and are searching for a means to respond to critical consciousness, community-based art provides a supporting safe and free space to create a communal strength.

Community-Based Art as Resistance

CBAE can take on a variety of forms such as informal teaching, organized community teaching, outreach, ethnography, and public art (Ulbricht, 2005). Although public art is only one of the forms of CBAE, it can be seen as an example of critical consciousness put into action, or CBAE as inspiring the strength to make change.

In a climate where a sense of community is problematic and where environmental concerns have been ignored, making public art, whether in a rural or urban setting, is to stake out a claim, a physical declaration of both resistance and a forwarding of a different vision. (Duncum, 2011, p. 353)

Understanding that the term activism evokes different responses for different individuals

I value Campana’s (2011) description of the term:

Though the term activist is commonly used in art and visual culture education regarding advocacy for art programs in schools, in this case activist is not synonymous with advocate. Nor is it limited to individuals protesting in the streets. Rather, it encompasses a variety of work toward social and political consciousness, empowerment, and change. (p. 281)

Activism within CBAE can be understood as a creative response to critical consciousness. I liken this to Greer's (2011) term craftivism, which is said to be "more than just craft plus activism; it meant something more akin to creativity plus activism. . . . It was about using what you can to express your feelings outward in a visual manner without yelling or placard waving" (p. 183). Community-based art projects may be linked to craftivism this way while considering the process of making as well as things made. An example of "craftivism" is a project by Marianne Jorgensen (2006) and the Cast Off Knitters, in Copenhagen, Denmark (Fig. 1). The project involved covering an army tank with a series of knitted squares in demonstration of resistance to the war in Iraq.



Figure 1. Marianne Jorgensen with the Cast off Knitters. (2006). *Pink M.24 Chaffee* [Yarn, thread].

Joergensen (2006) writes, “For me, the tank is a symbol of stepping over other people's borders. When it is covered in pink, it becomes completely unarmed and it loses its authority” (para. 5). This art piece acts as a statement about a particular issue; however it is also symbolic of a group of people joining together as a collective of individuals. Each square covering the tank was made by a different set of hands, demonstrating unity and collaboration amongst people speaking out for a common cause.

Community-Based Art as Generative

Community-based art holds potential to influence those who observe or witness it. People may be participants in community art, witness it taking place, or see the change it inspires. Rollins (2009) describes art has having the potential to be “restorative”. He suggests that “for many communities, art is simply vision made visible and hope made manifest” (p. 6).

The Maille à Part yarnbombing collective based out of Montreal is a poignant example of community arts giving voice to collective needs. The collective displays hand-made knitted or crochet projects in public spaces as a response to a variety of social struggles. The Maille à Part street art is described as symbolic of a “reappropriation of public space by the citizens” (Maille à Part, 2012, Who are We section, para. 6). Some of the works Maille à Part have addressed are, Occupy Montreal, Montreal Student Strike (Fig. 2), International Women’s Day, Earth Day, the incarceration of the band Pussy Riot

in Russia, the Idle No More movement and justice for missing and murdered Indigenous women (Les projets section, para. 3).

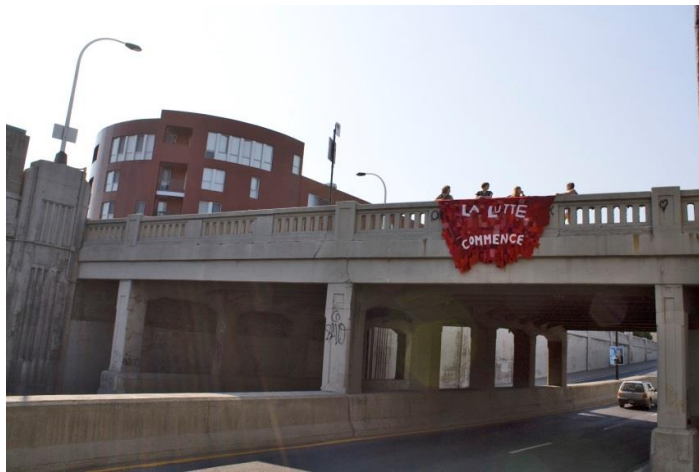


Figure 2. Maille à Part. (2012). *La lutte ne fait que commencer* [Yarn]. Montreal, ON. The banner reads “The Fight Begins” and was created by various individuals and used by Maille à Part during protests to support the student strike against rising tuition.

Maille à Part most closely connects to CBAE in the community art sense. The projects, or installations, are inviting of participants who share similar concerns. This collective depends on collaboration as pieces are sewn together and displayed. The art pieces created are then displayed publically as an act of standing one’s ground for a particular cause. This group’s work is displayed throughout the city, not necessarily for artistic recognition but as a means of taking action to communicate a message to other members of the public (Maille à Part, 2012). Maille à Part is an example of community arts and its potential to act collectively to respond to issues of injustice using the arts.

Community-Based Art as Social Justice

In connection to CBAE and social justice, Dewhurst (2010) proposes “as long as the process of making art offers participants a way to construct knowledge, critically analyze an idea, and take action in the world, then they are engaged in the practice of social justice artmaking” (p. 7). Social justice artmaking provides an avenue to be heard and to do it as a collective force.

Art allows me to take something in deeper, imagine the consequences, and dream of alternatives. It allows me to make a “statement” in ways that words do not, to empathize with strangers, to struggle with my roles in issues of social injustice. (Beyerbach, 2011, p. 3)

As people search for places to vocalize concerns and be heard, community-based art and the centres for learning it creates can be seen as a form of resistance helpful for individuals if it leads to speaking up against injustice, and inspires action among others. This engagement is crucial for those whose voices are silenced, or those who search for spaces to gather with others who share interests and concerns. Not only do community-based art practices open spaces for artistic expression and creation but they establish spaces for people to connect with one another. Sustainability of social movements through community art can be achieved not only through public art pieces but in the relationships that form for those to gather to engage in an artistic practice. Geiger Stephens (2006) discusses community-based learning as participatory public art, in that it “welcomes community members as active partners in the creative process, participatory

public art strives to break away from the conventional roles assigned to artists and viewers” (p. 44). What becomes possible as people gather to create is not in the final product itself but the process it takes to get there and the momentum it creates to continue.

Community-Based Art as Sustainable

Sustainability within CBAE can be approached from various angles—from a financial sustainability viewpoint, community art programs are generally focused on social purpose, meaning they are generally not built on the goal of making large scale profit or revenue (McLeod, 2011). As a result CBAE organizations often rely on outside funders and granting agencies to support their programming financially. This raises the question: When the funding disappears do the programs disappear with it and how then can CBAE organizations be sustainable?

I also want to give consideration to sustainability within CBAE while thinking about ongoing impacts CBAE can have. Winterson (1996) describes:

If truth is that which lasts, then art has proved truer than any other human endeavor. What is certain is that pictures and poetry and music are not only marks in time but marks through time, of their own time and ours, not antique or historical, but living as they ever did, exuberantly, untired. (epigraph)

Although programming can end and projects reach their final product, I suggest that the after effects of CBAE are ongoing: “The arts alone cannot change society; but the arts

give voice and form to individual and collective needs that motivate and sustain social movements” (Milbrant, 2010, p. 8). It is important to think of CBAE outside of temporal moments, or the creation of an art piece, the beauty in its potential for sustainability comes from the moments that exist in the creation of the art as well as in the gathering to create it.

Concluding Thoughts

This literature review addresses the educational values and learning possibilities within CBAE (Hoffman Davis, 2010; Kay, 2000), describes specific community art projects (McCue, 2007; Geiger Stephens, 2006; Joergensen, 2006; Maille à Part, 2012), and presents essential characteristics needed to engage individuals and communities of people within community art programs (Krensky & Lowe Steffen, 2009). Research on CBAE, however, is lacking in addressing the impact of CBAE according to leaders of ongoing (sustainable) CBAE programming. I have identified this gap by searching JSTOR, ERIC, and the ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Database using the keywords: community-based art and leaders; community art leaders; community-based art education and leaders; community art organizers. Present research does not address the perspectives of leading figures of community-based art organizations who have been involved for extended periods of time.

In order to help fill this gap, this research offers the stories of leading figures engaging in CBAE, specifically within three organizations in Thunder Bay, as a means to

enrich the current field. Each of the individuals participating in this research has been involved within her organization for over nine years, bringing experience and extensive knowledge to this research. The participants' organizations are Definitely Superior Art Gallery (DefSup), Community Arts and Heritage Education Project (CAHEP) and Willow Springs Creative Centre. These organizations offer unique programming but all share a connection to CBAE. DefSup is an art gallery in Thunder Bay that "emphasizes mentorship and education of students and new generation artists so that they may gain experience in the research, production and presentation of contemporary art in a professional environment" (DefSup, n.d). CAHEP describes its work as "working in collaboration with local artists and heritage programmers, we offer accessible multidisciplinary arts education programming for children, youth and families in the schools and community of our city" (CAHEP, n. d.). Willow Springs believes community development:

can occur when we recognize and build upon the strengths, skills, and assets of individuals, groups, neighbourhoods, and communities, and use those assets to strengthen our communities. We seek to use the gifts and skills of local artists and together with groups and communities, empower and enhance people's lives.

(Willow Springs, 2014)

My past experience has allowed me a glimpse into the powerful work of these organizations, as well as the deep investment of the participants. This research creates an avenue for the leading figures of these organizations to share their stories. In examining

these stories this research aims to unveil motivation, personal and organizational growth, change, and influence in a particular community. I am familiar with the commonality in community art organizations' benefits and intentions. What I look for now is commonality within the stories of the leaders within these organizations to provide further insight into the research of CBAE. This research posits that these stories are valuable to the research of CBAE as they bring a perspective of long-term, ongoing lived experience.

Despite the literature review's demonstration that the work of CBAE is acknowledged publically and academically, the challenges for community-based art organizations are ongoing, specifically in terms of funding, and organization evaluation. McLeod (2011) explains that

the majority of funders still eschew testimony in favour of quantitative data. It can be frustrating and demoralizing to see a year of work, a year filled with stories, challenges, successes, artistic innovation and unexpected outcomes, reduced to a series of figures in a table. (p. 81)

This research provides evidence that the stories of such leading figures' are valuable. It demonstrates that quantitative evaluation systems cannot consist of general organization assessment criteria and funding agencies need to consider this when designing their funding criteria. Such evaluation systems are problematic for many reasons; for example, organizations that practice CBAE will function differently based on a variety of factors such as projects determined by varying community needs as discussed in the literature

review. Furthermore, CBAE does not focus on assessment criteria within its educational practice and as such should not be asked to prove its worth and value based on this type of evaluation method. McCue (2007) explains:

But why not consider the arts essential not because they teach us to weld or to draw a botanical depiction of pollination, but because the arts offer less practical and even more important skills. They teach us to be human, a notion difficult to measure with the outcome-driven assessment. (p. 592)

In order to accurately describe the benefits of CBAE such as care and well-being, strict assessment must not be the priority. Regarding assessment and measurement Hoffman Davis (2010) notes:

we say that we only value or value most that which can be measured on standardized tests: tests that help us see in black and white whether learning is successful – as if learning should be reduced from what or why to right or wrong. (p. 87)

In consideration of methods for measurement of success for CBAE organizations I invite in this research an avenue for long term leading figures (over nine years of involvement) within CBAE to share their stories. Leaders of these organizations provide programming to their communities because of the beautiful moments they have observed and been a part of. This research presents their narratives.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter will begin with a rationale of the methodology chosen for this research, the methods section will then briefly introduce the reasoning for the methods chosen, followed by a description of ethical considerations. The data collection and analysis section of this chapter reflect back on the methods within the research to provide further detail of the process used. In-depth detail is then provided about the data collection, looking closely at the interviews, shadowing day, and art making.

To reiterate, the purpose of this study is to examine the potential benefits of CBAE in the city of Thunder Bay from the perspectives of the leading figures of three community-based organizations; Definitely Superior Art Gallery, Community Arts and Heritage Education Project, and Willow Springs Creative Centre.

Specifically, I am addressing the following:

- 1) What contribution does CBAE make to Thunder Bay according to CBAE leaders?

At the beginning of this research I had set out to answer this question with consideration of the following questions. What is CBAE, and how do organizations in Thunder Bay engage in CBAE. How might they be working to enrich this particular city and community? What are some of the challenges that leading figures within CBAE organizations might face and what motivates these leaders to continue in their work despite these challenges? How can the stories of long-term involved leading figures in CBAE add to the literature of CBAE? As the research progressed I discovered themes beyond my set list of questions. Although I remained conscious of

these questions throughout the research, I welcomed new ideas and concepts that were brought to me by the participants.

In order to address the research question, I use narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and arts-informed inquiry (Cole & Knowles, 2008). The benefits of CBAE are best suited to be explored through a qualitative research approach, since they are often subtle and not amenable to counting:

And while benefits such as these [personal and interpersonal relationships, cultural awareness, and commitment to community] cannot be measured on standardized tests, they are echoed with resonance in narratives throughout the field and measured within particular centers by self-sustaining outcomes such as community interest and support and student attendance. (Hoffman Davis, 2010, pp. 83-84)

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) define qualitative research as “a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world” (p. 3). When research is directed at making changes in the world, research becomes a means of taking action, meaning “research becomes praxis –practical, reflective, pragmatic action – directed to solving problems in the world” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 21). Research has the potential to make movements towards change, much akin to the goals of CBAE to make and inspire change. An arts-informed narrative inquiry methodology will create meaning and bring accessibility to this work as, “qualitative research has long attracted researchers who hope that their studies will matter in the public arena as well as in their

disciplines” (Charmaz, 2011, p. 359). Through the use of an arts-informed narrative inquiry I meaningfully engage methodologies to communicate the important work within CBAE.

Narrative Inquiry

Although I have taken on the role of facilitator, volunteer, and participant within organizations practicing CBAE, my experience is limited to a few moments, mere glimpses into the potential of CBAE and the change it inspires. Keeping these organizations running are program directors, artistic facilitators, and participants who engage in CBAE daily. Each of these roles provides for unique experiences, understanding and memories. Using narrative inquiry, this research looks at the stories behind the experiences of three leading figures of CBAE in Thunder Bay. This method of inquiry provides an avenue to, “explore the stories people live and tell. These stories are the result of a confluence of social influences on a person’s inner life, social influences on their environment, and their unique personal history.” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 11).

This research focuses specifically on the stories of the program leaders who make programming and opportunities for CBAE in Thunder Bay possible. These leaders provide unique perspectives as they take on multiple roles as organizers, artists, mentors, and facilitators with extensive insight into the benefits and difficulties. Chase (2011) explains, “narrative inquiry revolves around an interest in life experiences as narrated by

those who live them” (p. 421). Narrative inquiry invites stories from the leaders of these organizations to bring new perspectives through this research. Connelly and Clandinin describe story as “a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful” (as cited in Clandinin, Pushor, & Murray Orr, 2007, p. 22).

Narrative inquiry brings the heart to the mind, “heartwork is headwork, such that through the unification of their relative experience, wisdom has a chance to arise, since what comes to be known is known both experientially and reflectively” (Smith, 2012, p. xv). I engage with the stories of the participants to reveal their journeys within CBAE in order to add to the body of literature discussing the possibilities and challenges of providing CBAE.

Arts Informed Inquiry

“Arts-informed research is a way of redefining research form and representation and creating new understandings of process, spirit, purpose, subjectivities, emotion, responsiveness, and the ethical dimensions of inquiry” (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p.59).

This research involved engaging in arts-informed inquiry to enrich the narrative process (Cole & Knowles, 2008). I have been working as a fiber artist for the past ten years, using natural local fleece to create felted art pieces. I have chosen this artistic practice as my medium to engage with arts informed inquiry because of my knowledge of and connection to the material used as well as the passion I have for this art form.

Arts-informed research, like CBAE and qualitative research in general, is guided by a moral position that research can and should make positive contributions, not only in academia but in the larger community as well (Cole & Knowles, 2008). Research restricted to a particular form lacks in its “ability to capture the complexity of human experience in all its diversity” (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 57). Arts-informed inquiry methods enrich this research, as they reach beyond the academic space, create research that is accessible, and open a space to communicate at a scale not restricted to a particular form of representation. Marshall and D’Adamo (2011) explain that art as research:

highlights and extends the research process, and opens up these processes to include creative, non-verbal ways of understanding a subject. Moreover, art practice introduces ambiguity, complexity, emotion, intuition, lived experience, and the celebration of personal interpretation or subjectivity into a realm that often strives for clarity and objectivity. (p. 12)

The artistic creation within this research adds a “natural process of engagement relying on commonsense decision making, intuition, and general responsiveness to the natural flow of events and experiences” (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 61). The process involved in this methodology looks beyond the production of a completed artistic piece as Cole and Knowles (2008) explain, “Arts-informed research representations, then, are not intended as titillations but as opportunities for transformation, revelation, or some other intellectual and moral shift” (p. 66). Arts-informed inquiry opens space for discovery

during this research acknowledging that this methodology invites the art to take on meaning in the making, the product, and what follows.

Methods

This research is based on interviews with and observations of three leading figures in the Thunder Bay CBAE scene and the creation of four art pieces I felted throughout the research process. The participants chosen for this research have long-term relationships with their respective organizations ranging from nine to fourteen years. Through semi-structured interviews the participants shared their stories, their experiences, memories, and feelings of CBAE throughout their involvement. Over the years my various roles as a volunteer, facilitator, participant, and board member within these organizations has allowed me to develop relationships and informally observe the participants as they work. However, in shadowing the participants explicitly for this research I was able to give my attention to their actions and behaviors, observing details that may otherwise go unnoticed and be missed in participant self-reflections. As part of the research process I created a number of art pieces using different felting techniques made from local fleece I sheared and dyed. This form of arts-informed inquiry allowed me to engage in an artistic practice in a holistic manner as a way to arrive at ideas and conclusions, explore data, and create space for reflexive inquiry.

Interviews

To welcome space for participants' stories, the dialogue between the participants and myself created "exchanges [that] lead to the creation of a collaborative effort called *the interview*" (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 696, emphasis in original). The interviews were face-to-face and semi-structured, providing opportunities for discussion and conversation. The participants chose the time and location for these interviews. Each of the interviews and follow up interview lasted between 60-90 minutes, was audio-recorded then transcribed verbatim.

The interview questions (Appendix A) were open-ended—for example, participants were asked to share past and present successes both personal and organization focused, and were asked to define how they understood the need for CBAE within the Thunder Bay area. The interview questions were designed to encourage participants to share their stories and experiences within CBAE. In narrative inquiry "it is not simply someone telling a story; it is someone telling a story in response to the queries of another; it is the dialogue that shapes the interview" (Shopes, 2011, p. 451). The dialogues created with participants were varied and unique as they spoke of their personal experience, yet similar themes arose across interviews with participants inspired by shared experiences and the questions asked. Shopes (2011) suggests that "interviews record what an interviewer draws out, what the interviewee remembers, what he or she chooses to tell, and how he or she understands what happened, not the unmediated facts

of what happened in the past” (p. 452). These interviews provided an avenue for sharing of personal experience providing insight into CBAE.

Shadowing

After completing a preliminary analysis of the interviews, I scheduled a shadowing day with each participant at their organization at their convenience. The shadowing day involved my spending between six hour and eight hours with each participant. With this process I sought to provide richness to the narrative inquiry process by seeing the stories lived. “Narrative inquiry aims at understanding and making meaning of experience through conversations, dialogue, and participation in the ongoing lives of the research participants” (Clandinin & Caine, 2008, p. 3) The shadowing component contributes to the data as it allows for a direct view into experiences of participants in a “holistic way that solicits not just their opinions or behaviors but both of these concurrently” (McDonald, 2005, p. 457). My preexisting relationships with participants meant that they were comfortable with my presence as they worked. Throughout the shadowing day I recorded my observations, the things I heard, saw, and felt. I then revisited the journal the following day after reflecting on my time spent with the participants; I recorded any new thoughts or things I remembered that I had missed the previous day.

Felted Arts-Inquiry

Throughout this research process I created a series of art pieces to develop an “alternative approach to knowledge” (Cole and Knowles, 2008, p. 7) to explore the themes that frequently arose during all phases of the research, from the collection of data, through analysis, interpretation, and the final representation.

I embrace that all stages of the artistic creation are purposeful. Cole and Knowles (2008) suggest that “the processes of art making inform the inquiry in ways congruent with the artistic sensitivities and technical (artistic) strengths of the researcher in concert with the overall spirit and purpose of the inquiry” (p. 61). Over the past ten years of creating felted artworks I have developed familiarity with the felting process. This familiarity allowed me to work in detail with an understanding of the possibilities for felted artwork as well as an awareness of the difficulties that working with this material encompasses. As the maker, my identity as well as my care for CBAE and my participants is embedded in the art pieces, yet the art pieces are “not exclusively about the researcher” (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 61) and are a reflection of the ideas and understandings that arose through interviews and observations with participants.

The material and form chosen for the research informs and shapes the inquiry process (Cole and Knowles, 2008). For the art pieces I worked with locally sourced fleece to reflect the research focus on a local community. For each piece I engaged a different method of felting. Although I have worked with fleece and have developed an understanding of the material, I did not have full knowledge of some of the processes I

engaged in. This inexperience in the alternate felting processes was a metaphoric reflection of the limited knowledge I had of the participants and their life stories prior to the interviews and observations. The learning process in the felting methods is connected to my learning process in the research; I will explain this further in Chapter 4.

The art created as well as the felting processes were directly inspired by the themes that arose within the research. As each piece was created I documented the process through photos and journal entries, to provide a detailed description and my understanding of each individual piece, Winterson (1996) explains:

We have to admit that the arts stimulate and satisfy a part of our nature that would otherwise be left untouched and that the emotions art arouses in us are of a different order to those aroused by experience of any other kind. (p. 135)

I allowed my artistic process to awaken emotions and ideas and documented these along the way. I created these art pieces with creative focus on the stories I heard, the words I read and the experiences I have been fortunate to be a part of.

It is my goal that this research will find a space within academia through writing and in the wider community through art exhibitions. The exhibition of this work in the community will bring the research back to the community in a form that is approachable and accessible. My art pieces will both represent the findings of the research and serve to acknowledge the passion and positive contributions the leaders of CBAE organizations make to the city of Thunder Bay. This research opens a discussion on the potential for

establishing healthy community relationships and therefore must exist beyond the realm of academia.

The central purposes of arts-informed research are to enhance understanding of the human condition through alternative (to conventional) processes and representational forms of inquiry, and to reach multiple audiences by making scholarship more accessible. (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 59)

Ethics

The Lakehead University Research Ethics board approved this study prior to data collection with participants. Upon receiving approval, an invitation was sent via email to facilitators from the Definitely Superior Art Gallery, the Community Arts and Heritage Project, and Willow Springs Creative Centre all in Thunder Bay with a brief explanation of the study (Appendix B). Upon receiving a confirmation of a willingness to participate, the organizations received a more detailed description of the research study (Appendix C) and a formal consent form to participate (Appendix D). These letters were delivered in person or sent via email. Once the letters of consent were returned we set a time and location for the interviews to take place.

Prior to analysis participants were provided with copies of their transcripts for their review to ensure accuracy and the opportunity to review, and redact any of their statements. The participants responded via email with flagged very personal and confidential sections of the interviews to omit from the research. One of the participants

requested a second interview, to provide further depth into topics in the first interview.— both requests were met. All participants and their respective organizations chose to be identified in the research rather than remain anonymous with the use of pseudonyms. There was not any known physical or psychological harm or potential risk to the participants during the study. There was no deception involved in the study. Data will be securely stored at Lakehead University in a password protected dropbox shared with Dr. P. Sameshima. The findings of the study will be available to participants upon the completion of the project upon request.

Data Collection and Analysis

The main sources of data for my research are the interviews with my participants and the days of shadowing and the creation of felted art pieces. The participants involved in this research are Lora Northway, youth-outreach coordinator for Definitely Superior Art Gallery (DefSup), Alana Forslund, Executive Director with Community Arts and Heritage Project (CAHEP), and Judi Vinni, Coordinator for Willow Springs Creative Centre. These individuals were invited to participate in this research project based on their passionate and ongoing involvement in CBAE in Thunder Bay, Ontario. My experience as an arts facilitator in CAHEP and DefSup and my role as a board member for Willow Springs have given me the opportunity to get to know these three women in various capacities. These individuals were asked to participate in a 60-90 minute interview with me in a location of their choice that holds meaning to them and is

connected to the research. Lora chose the Definitely Superior Art Gallery, Alana's location of choice for the interview was a community house where CAHEP offers programming, and Judi selected the Willow Springs Creative Centre house. Each site provided a rich context to help situate the work these participants engage in. While we talked, phones rang, people toured the gallery, sounds of current exhibits echoed in the background, and at one site coworkers baked bread in the adjoining room. Although rich in context, conducting interviews at these locations provided challenges for interviewees prompting one interview to change locations for comfort. We worked together to create a welcoming space for the interview, engaging in open ended questions to support conversation in our time together.

In the past, I have shared many moments with Alana, Lora, and Judi. I have listened to them speak about their organizations' projects and programs as well as their personal relationships to their work, yet the interviews invited a new dialogue between us resulting in unexpected conversations. My relationships with the participants created the foundation for a welcoming and safe space for conversation within the interviews. In this space we shared our feelings relating to the roles we take on and the challenges that come with them. I shared personal feelings of insecurities relating to the idea of a formal and serious researcher persona accompanied by pressures to meet academic standards. The participants shared what it is can be like when they talk about their work in contexts connected to funding and pressure to meet the certain expectations. We talked about the possibility of slightly shifting away from our worries to allow for possibilities in our

dialogue, we reminded each other that we are friends and we could leave the pressures behind.

The interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed. They were then coded using a process informed by work of Saldaña (2009). While transcribing I listened to the recorded interviews, with a specific focus on the emotional undertones and sounds of passion in the women's voices. I read through the interviews in concert with listening to the recordings. Attention to the emotional undertones in the voices of the participants guided me in the creation of the codes for the data. Moments, sentences and sections of the text that reflected emotional tones were assigned a code. The coding methods of Saldaña connect to the context of the work, whereby "qualitative codes are essence-capturing and essential elements of the research story that, when clustered together according to similarity and regularity – a pattern – they actively facilitate the development of categories and thus analysis of their connection" (p. 8). The codes I assigned were: passion, investment, dedication, compassion, advocacy, and responsibility. "Just as a title represents and captures a book or film or poem's primary content and essence, so does a code represent and capture a datum's primary content and essence" (p. 4). Each of the participants spoke from a place of passion and I wanted to discover what in their work as well as what in their lives was making them feel this way. I searched for the stories in the interviews that evoked these emotions and looked for patterns across the interviews. I then generated new codes that exemplified themes within

the stories, such as personal histories impacting the present, and perspective on the term community, which became the primary codes for this research.

The second stage of data collection was a shadowing day with each participant. I asked each of the participants to choose a day where I could accompany them at their place of work. The shadowing days were recorded in the form of “a continuous set of field notes” (McDonald, 2005, p. 456) informed by my previous coding of the transcripts. I gave attention to their intentions, energy and interactions as they worked. Similar to hearing the passion in the voices of the participants from their interviews, I looked for the moments of passion in their behavior. I focused on recording these moments as well the details that the interviews could not reveal for “a shadower can follow where it would be impossible for a participant observer to go themselves” (McDonald, 2005, p. 457). I selected excerpts from sections of the field notes which are included in Chapter Four that echoed the codes derived from the interviews with the participants.

The artistic inquiry was a continuous working process through data collection and analysis. The purpose of making the felted art pieces was to create a place for continuous personal reflection in the research to inform my way of knowing. “The processes of art making inform the inquiry in ways congruent with the artistic sensitivities and technical (artistic) strengths of the researcher in concert with the overall spirit and purpose of the inquiry” (Cole and Knowles, 2008, p.12). I began this process with an art journal, recording a list of themes generated from the literature review and my personal reflections. This art journal informed the content of the art pieces. As I moved further

along in the research the list was altered and modified, based on what I was learning from the interviews and shadowing days. For example I wrote about the codes that arose from my analysis of the interviews, and thought about ways to artistically create them. I began creating an art piece symbolic of the conversations in the interviews that connected to the code ‘community’. I struggled with how to “make community” as an artistic representation, while the interviews presented conflicting thoughts on the “construction” or “formation” of community in reality. The making introduced new questions for me—it invited me to “enhance [my] understanding” of the participants and their experiences (Cole and Knowles, 2008, p. 59). I continuously reflected back on the interviews as I adapted and worked through my ideas in my art journal to guide the art making. I photographed the pieces throughout the stages of making.

I reflected on the process of art creation documented in photography as well as journal entries while working to connect them to the codes created from the interviews. The art pieces brought in new themes as well as echoed themes found within the transcripts, all of which I discovered in the making as the pieces were created. The interviews informed the shadowing field notes and both forms of data collection informed the art pieces. All of these sources of data worked together to co-create the findings for this research.

Trustworthiness

My involvement in the CBAE scene in Thunder Bay brings me close to this research. Although a level of bias is present, so is a level of trust and understanding. This research study looks specifically at one location in Ontario and involves three participants. This is a small research sample; however the participants involved in this research provide a unique richness to the data with their experience in their organizations each extending over a period of more than nine years. The participants were selected because of their abilities to reflect on their relationships with CBAE in particular organizations over time. I used member checking (Creswell & Miller, 2010) to provide an opportunity for the participants to review the transcripts, in doing so I was able to ensure that the transcripts were accurate representations of the participants' values and ideas.

Lora's involvement with DefSup began as a teenager, as a volunteer and participant, later resulting in an employed position as Youth-Outreach Coordinator for Definitely Superior Art Gallery. Alana began her involvement with CAHEP as a student and arts facilitator and evolved into her current position as Executive Director with Community Arts and Heritage Project. Judi's involvement in Willow Springs began in a collective of artists, gathering to create and teach art, and has now become the Coordinator for Willow Springs Creative Centre. Each of these women possesses the perspectives and experiences of a participant, facilitator, and leading figure. Their time within their organizations is layered and full of knowledge. This research sample allows

for stories to be shared of personal experience, experience over time, and experience from a perspective of investment in one's work, bringing awareness to the layers of CBAE's enriching potentials in the city of Thunder Bay. This research further invites thinking beyond this local space.

Chapter 4: Findings

I return to my original question "What contribution does CBAE make to Thunder Bay according to CBAE leaders?" To build on this question I also ask "How do the stories of the leaders of CBAE organizations provide insight into the contribution CBAE has in Thunder Bay and the need for CBAE to be sustainable? This chapter responds to these questions by drawing from the words of the participants, the observations recorded during shadowing, and the journal entries created while art making. I draw connections between the literature review and the observations I have recorded. The themes and concepts coalesce to create a life narrative of the participants. What follows is an explanation of each of the four art pieces I created. A detailed description of the process involved in creating the art pieces, "is infused into the researching procedures in ways that make inherent sense and enhance the possibilities for gathering a different quality of information and interpreting and presenting it creatively" (Knowles & Promislow, 2008, p. 519).

The Blanket – A Foundation

The blanket piece shapes the foundation that creates the tone of the research. This art piece was created using a needle felting technique on a wool blanket. Needle felting binds fleece to another material (in this case a wool blanket backing) by poking through the fleece and blanket with a felting needle that integrates and felts the fibers together. I used a blanket given to me by a woman I met a year prior at a craft sale. Seeing the felted art pieces I was selling, she gave me two loom-made wool blankets asking only that I share with her the artistic creations that I made out of them. A year later I wrote to her asking about the history of the blankets. She wrote me back telling me the stories of who wove the blankets, and the meanings they held to her. From this I began to think further about the stories and histories of my participants and wanted to use one of the blankets with its rich history to be a reflective story in the art piece created with it. This blanket became the physical manifestation of the welcoming space of the interviews. As I spoke with the participants about the presence of story in our interview dialogue, I was reminded of the importance of creating spaces for stories to be shared.

As Alana from CAHEP reflected back on the meaningful moments in her work she paused and asked, “I can think of so many other stories they just keep coming to me. Another one . . . is this too many? I have so many.” She spoke about the stories connected to her work and explained that without these stories she would forget why she continues to do this work. As Judi from Willow Springs Creative Centre and I began our interview I made sure to tell her that stories were welcomed. She was pleased to hear this

and responded “stories are encouraged, perfect, that’s not often.” Lora from DefSup and I spoke together at the Definitely Superior Art Gallery while members of the public were circulating through the gallery space. Lora reflected that having people present at this time and in this space helped her “keep a clear head instead of melting down at everything I say, because I am very passionate about it. And I forget that I am because people don’t talk to me enough about it.” The participants’ responses to the notion of story enforce the importance in creating a supportive and safe space to welcome their stories. The story behind the blanket inspired me to use it as the backing for this particular art piece. It became a welcoming space bringing together the story of the woman who gave me the blanket with the stories of the participants.



Figure 3. Slingerland, D. (2015). *Unworked blanket* [Photograph]



Figure 4. Slingerland, D. (2015), *Blanket* [Felted wool].

These images show the early stages of this piece with the beginnings of the needle felting process onto the wool blanket.

During the interviews, personal histories unfolded through stories of past projects illustrating the personal connection these women found in their work. Judi reflected on being a part of a community of women “making things” together, people who lived in her area, who gathered together as a collective. “It was more of a fun adventure, it was where our hearts were” she said. It was this informal communal making that brought a group of women together and eventually formed Willow Springs Creative Centre. Judi reflected on past employment and the work she did before Willow Springs, “I need to be outside of the system because that [the system] doesn’t work well for me.” Lora reflected on her

work as a coordinator for a youth collective and explains how it was connected to her past. She spoke of inspiration, struggle and her perspectives as a youth.

I developed Die Active in my mind when I was a 17 year old girl in high school.

For me, only having high school teachers who didn't know shit and didn't care, you had to create your own things in your bedroom because [art] classes are expensive and limited and the teachers are usually such a step away from you.

Lora and Judi described schools as having an inability to address particular concerns, similarly Campana (2001) explains,

Given the complexities of complexities of contexts and social structures in which people negotiate their responsibilities, dreams, obstacles, and values, to focus almost solely on schools is to limit the field and potential for art and visual culture education. (p. 280)

Alana spoke of her attendance in art programming as a youth,

I know when I was a kid, going to a new program gave me so much anxiety because I was thinking about what's the space going to look like, who is going to be there, where do I sit, where is the bathroom.

These personal narratives identify how these women searched for spaces for themselves and their art. These experiences now inform their decisions as organizers. The blanket piece is the most durable of the pieces I created in terms of the material and method of creation. Each piece of fleece is felted in tightly and closely, materially representing the close personal connections these women have to their work. The interwoven layers are

symbolic of the layers of stories that shape and define the work of these women. In this piece, I created lines and shapes to reflect the stories within the research, some stories taking on a larger role, and some small but always present and integral to the larger piece. This piece was created using a needle felting technique.

To needle felt, I lay one piece of fleece on top of the blanket and then poked through the fleece and the blanket together with the needle, binding the fibers together. Binding the fibers together depicts how as individuals we are bound to our histories. They shape and define us. Our stories are unique, and over time they blend into each other and evolve into something new. I began this piece early in the research, while working on it I remained mindful of the women participating in this research and the strength they exhibit. This piece became a reference point “encouraging [me] to dream and empowering [me] to create” (Krensky & Lowe Steffen, 2009, p. 20). It demonstrates my need to engage in this research, to celebrate CBAE and the people making it happen. It allowed me to reflect back on my stories with the participants, how I came to know them and what I had to share of my experience working with them in CBAE.



Figure 5. Slingerland, D. (2015). *Final blanket felt* [Felted wool].

The Woolen Scraps – Community

This piece speaks to my past and my present as it was created using scraps of fabric pieces from a past workshop with CAHEP. I brought these scrap pieces into this research, my continuing work with these organizations, to create something new. While working through this research I struggled with the term community. I questioned my relationship to this community, who I am, sometimes including myself or excluding myself while I grappled with defining this term. I realized that I could not make one piece while focusing on this theme but rather needed to combine several pieces.



Figure 6. Slingerland, D. (2015), *Early wool scraps* [Felted wool].

Each of the participants caused me to question the term community, what it meant to me, what it represented and question my use of the word within Community-Based Arts Education. Reflecting back on my review of the literature prior to research with participants, I did not believe that I addressed this quandary in enough detail. For example, I used the term ‘community’ interchangeably to talk about “communities of people” and the “community of Thunder Bay”. I began this research asking how “CBAE is enriching the city of Thunder Bay”. I then began questioning my use of the word “community” and how I had used it in an all-encompassing way to represent the “city of Thunder Bay”. In listening to the participants I began to question the over-generalization of the term “community” and its ability to be thought of as representational of Thunder Bay and in turn disregarding the many communities of people within it. Lora’s reflection

on the term community brought insight and invited a clearer definition of community when discussing CBAE.

The community. I don't know. My mind is really in pain right now about the idea of community because I always think that organizations exist out of need like mine but sometimes they are serving themselves so I don't know who community is. When you say community I picture my die active members, that they are the community. They are the community I care about, and when we do our projects. I don't want to say this but it's not for the city of Thunder Bay and it's not for, my dad, or for your sister who comes to town. It's for them [the participants].

Each of the participants spoke about whom CBAE serves. As organizers and facilitators they emphasized the importance of CBAE being directly connected to the hopes and needs of the people participating in their programs. Judi shared her concerns about the term community and how it can be received.

When I think of community art projects, or community art in general, in putting the word community in there, you are saying this is about more than art for art and who cares what comes out in the end. It's about developing community bringing people together, breaking down stereotypes and providing access. That's why you do it.

Alana's words stress the importance of knowing who the community is, similar to Kay's (2000) discussion of the importance of "community consultation".

Just take the time to listen, and learn about people. With community arts, you do really have to be responsive to who you are working with, and know what works for one group, doesn't always work for everybody.

I attached each circle to another circle, with a thin piece of fleece. While doing this I reflected on the human connection created through CBAE; as each circle of wool disconnects from the surrounding ones, the fleece reaches out to connect with the pieces beside it. The felting process brings the individual pieces of wool together while allowing them to remain distinct.



Figure 7. Slingerland, D. (2015). *Emerging wool scraps* [Wool and fleece].

This piece gives consideration to the process of bringing people together, while paying close attention to each individual's (or each circle) differences while being supported.

Discussion of mentorship arose for the participants when sharing moments of personal success, giving rise to the sustainability of CBAE, beyond the creation of individual art pieces. Alana, Lora, and Judi considered success in relation to the ongoing impact of their programs and the relationships they developed with their participants. Alana's feelings toward success highlight her connection to the youth with whom she works, "[One thing] I've been getting asked to do, is be a job reference for youth I've worked with. I am always so happy to be asked and to help out." Lora spoke of a concern for her participants' self-perception.

I love connecting young artists with money because that makes them see themselves as having a potential future in the arts. Why the hell not have a job that is related to what you love, while you are trying to find a job in what you love.

Judi spoke as well to hopes for individuals to believe in their potential, "[It would be successful if people could see] that art is a valid career path and that there are people who will support them." These reflections show that their work has a lasting impact beyond the space where art is created, and they value building their participants confidence and feelings of validation. The artistic mentorship is an example of Milbrant's (2010) writing on art as sustainable in relation to social movements. This piece reflects the possibilities when mentorship relationships happen, when spaces are created that allow individuals to reach out to others and build connections. It represents Lora, Alana and Judi's deep concern for the people involved [the communities they create and nurture] and their

efforts to continue to support them in unexpected ways and directions. This art piece is a demonstration of support, encouragement, connection, and possibilities for growth.



Figure 8. Slingerland, D. (2015). *Growth in wool scraps* [Wool and fleece].

The Nuno Felt – Acceptance

This felted piece invites examination of the art component within CBAE. Nuno felting is a wet felting technique that involves laying fleece flat over a piece of silk, then rolling these together repeatedly, several times to create friction that binds the fleece to the silk. While making this piece I encountered many moments of struggle, moments of questioning, and moments of discovering my assumptions. This piece raised questions

regarding the perception of art education for the purpose of creating a finished art product.

While navigating the interviews, reflection was needed on how to define art education. I considered the question ‘what is education supposed to look like?’ as I struggled with what the nuno felt piece was meant to look like. This was my first attempt at nuno felting, so while I worked I consciously kept an image in my mind of what I knew about nuno – what I have seen and how it is supposed to look – yet I could not create it.



Figure 9. Slingerland, D. (2015). *Making assumptions* [Nuno on cheesecloth].

This photo shows my first of many nuno felting trials. In this trial I used cheese cloth as a backing assuming this would work and assuming I had an understanding of nuno felting. During this attempt, the fleece would not bind to the backing and the fleece fibers soon

fell apart. This piece is reflective of the beginning of many efforts to create an art piece; with focus directed on the final product it is important to remember and pay attention to the challenges and processes along the way.

The participants discussed art education as more than a final art piece. When asking Lora about art education within her organization she responded,

That's a really weird question because going to an art exhibit is art education. We hold monthly art exhibitions. We hold a lot of programming outside the gallery and have an art crawl for all ages. There is every kind of art present. There are live music shows and there is a wearable art fashion show. In all the programs that we do I consider arts education but they are not traditionally. [Arts education] would be when I attend conferences for youth where you are teaching how to mentor youth and when I am invited to a gathering for northern professionals in the arts.

Lora's vision of arts education encompasses connection, community, and learning, it is not simply about creating a product. Judi questioned the idea of art for art, meaning that education must result in a final art piece. She spoke about the process of art creation and what that might bring to someone who is creating; she described the importance of providing support along someone's process of making. Judi asked "how can you just do art for art? That could be the biggest thing that's happening in their life on that piece of paper." In an artistic creation process a participant may hold emotional connection to their work comparable to what Dissanayake (2003) describes as "making special". Judi

explained a need to acknowledge the possibility of this presence in art making and the need to nurture that. Alana also reflected on art education being more than just the art product. She explained that CAHEP focuses on “building strong relationships through the arts, seeing our participants as individuals, viewing them as artists, and making sure they are proud of who they are, the art they’re creating, and the community they live in.”

Alana words reflect CBAE potential to nurture community connections, comparably Krensky (2001) writes, “educational practices that engage students in community issues hold the possibility of developing the skills necessary for social responsibility and critical consciousness” (p. 430).

The second trial of the nuno felting process was also unsuccessful. For this piece I had purchased a piece of silk, again making the assumption that it would work. However I learned the fibers in the silk were woven too tightly too allow for the fleece to bind to the silk fibers. Again I had created a piece that would not stay together. These first two art pieces depict an assumption of knowing. I had assumed I knew this process and that it would work in any way that I wanted.



Figure 10. Slingerland, D. (2015). *Unattached* [Fleece and silk].

I had a vision for what I wanted these art pieces to look like, based on physical structures. I had to accept that the material would do what it wanted to and I did not have complete control over that. I see this same process in CBAE and its ability to “work” based on a knowledge and relationship with the participants involved. This art piece corresponds to Alana’s discussion of the importance of participant input into the projects in which they engage.

Before anything else, you need to build up trust and establish strong communication with them, and then you can get strong input that will really drive the programming. Participants then come out and they feel like the project is theirs. They feel committed, engaged, and excited by it and they are lot more proud of what they end up creating in the end.

While making the nuno piece I focused on Lora's words about not forcing artwork out of people, and the importance of letting people do what they need to do. I created this piece to demonstrate Lora's, Alana's and Judi's letting go, their emphasis on letting people decide what they want to do and not trying to control them as well as establishing a space that is as Lowe (2001) describes "nonthreatening and relaxed for participants." Lora described,

I've become a kid and a learner and more than anything a listener for the whole thing, and I didn't foresee that at all. Like such a smart ass I thought that I knew how to run every youth program but I don't have any reason to run anything. I just have to provide the resources and set up the hidden infrastructure so that they can create what they need and I don't know what they need. Only they do and every time we have one it becomes revealed to me by listening.

Lora's ability to understand her learner position speaks to spaces between learner and facilitator being less prominent. The relationship Lora describes here connects to what Lowe (2001) describes as a "community building process that involves working together, collaborative decision making, and celebration" (p. 462). While working through the nuno process I reflected on Judi's values of being a resource and being someone who provides access to the art and to the materials. The nuno piece focuses on acceptance that art pieces may not be created as planned, and that individuals need support in those cases. Judi explained that "many people that we meet in our art programs have never been given access to the supplies or even a basic technique. When that happens, then you've just

watched that was all they needed and their spark was ignited”. Judi’s words highlight the importance of support for participants, being there as a resource when someone is trying something for the first time.

The process in making this art piece is symbolic of the care and attention Alana, Lora and Judi give to their participants. It reflects the thoughtfulness present in listening to the needs and wants of the people engaging in the art, and speaks to nurturing and supporting the process as well as product. The nuno art pieces embrace the experience in making art (Dewey, 1934). The nuno process and struggles I encountered while trying to make the pieces are reflective of the need in CBAE to let go of the pressures connected to creating a perfect pre-conceived art piece. Alana reiterated:

You have to find ways to adapt to that and respond to the individual people you are working with. You can’t just force a product out of the people you’re working with. It’s important to build up a trusting environment and that safe space for kids by honoring process.

Lora said something similar: “Younger people in general they need nourishment and encouragement and it’s not something that you can sell or shove down their throats, you just have to be with them”. “Community art is a transformative experience that distinctively meets human needs and alters community life” (Krensky and Lowe Steffen, 2009, p. 14). Judi spoke to this attention to respond to people’s needs, she hopes for a place “Where people can feel, people don’t. They are not given a chance to feel, and it’s

not valued, people are told to just make it stop, or keep it in, or that's not appropriate here. But where?"



Figure 11. Slingerland, D. (2015). *Letting go* [Silk and fleece].

As I reflected on the words of these women I learned that I needed to understand my materials in the nuno felting process; it was essential that I listen to the materials and accept the shapes they wanted to take on; only then was I able to create a final nuno piece (see Fig. 11). The process and attempts at creating nuno demonstrate the need work at understanding the materials (or people) one is working with; to accept them for what they are and avoid trying to mold them or force them into something they are not.

Natural Art Piece - Care

The theme of care was recurring within the interviews and shadowing days; it became a primary code in the analysis and is at the heart of this research. While listening to the participants speak I was reminded of a question mentioned earlier in this research, “can we make caring the center for our educational efforts?” (Noddings, 1992, p. 14). I was moved by the deep commitment the women have to their work. Their roles within their organizations encompass a dedication that moves beyond a set list of tasks within a job. This next art piece is an attempt to investigate the deep sense of care and compassion that connects Alana, Lora and Judi to their work.

For the *Natural art piece* (see Fig.21), I wanted to use only raw fleece as well as fleece dyed from natural locally sourced materials. I wanted to use natural dyes from the Thunder Bay area to emphasize the importance of local place within this research. The natural dyeing process is symbolic of gaining an understanding of surrounding environments, similar to leaders in CBAE gaining an understanding of the communities with whom they work. I collected the materials used for dyeing in a place I often walk, a place familiar to me. I documented this walk by taking photographs of the materials I used for dyeing. This next section weaves together excerpts from my field notes from the shadowing days with photos from my time spent collecting natural dye materials. As I searched for natural materials to use for dyeing I needed to pay keen attention to my surroundings, and focus my energies on being physically and mentally aware of my environment. This process echoed the days I spent shadowing my participants as I

searched for new insights in familiar spaces. I had walked through these woods before and yet had not noticed the mosses growing; similarly I had watched Lora, Alana and Judi working and not noticed the intricacies of their actions. I display the excerpts from the shadowing days with the natural dye collection photographs to celebrate close connections as well as demonstrate my essential embodied time within this research.

Excerpts from Shadowing Judi

The day with Judi is full. I watch her work at her desk, talking about hopes and plans for the future. I see the importance of community partnerships for her, and her efforts to ensure that Willow Springs is returning support back to those they work with.



Figure 12. Slingerland, D. (2015). *Moss* [Photograph].

She talks about programming ideas for an upcoming group she will be working with. I listen to her thoughts, her concerns, what has gone well with this

group in the past, the things they have enjoyed. I listen to her words of care, of wanting it to be something wonderful for them.



Figure 13. Slingerland, D. (2015). *Lichen* [Photograph]

I watch her paint with a group of small children, I see her smile, I watch her encourage. I think about our interview and her passion for showing people that their work is good, in every moment at every brush stroke. Her desire to make people feel proud of the work they do, I heard it in the interviews and I see it here now in her actions. I think back to what she hopes people get from art programming, what she knows can be possible; I see her working to achieve that.

In the evening, I accompany Judi to a board meeting. As a board member I listen and discuss, but today I listen to Judi a little differently. I hear her propose an idea, challenging the board. I listen to her energy increase and see her become an advocate. She talks about what she thinks the project will bring, and I think

about her passion in the interview, her ongoing desire to keep things growing to keep improving on current work.

Excerpts from Shadowing Lora

After going to a meeting with Lora, we walk back to the gallery where we set up for the evening art program. She focuses her attention on making people feel comfortable, coordinates her volunteers, converses with the artists, fixes the sound, and arranges the room. She moves back and forth between the workshop and her office, I notice her many responsibilities and her ability to spread herself evenly. During the workshop Lora's eyes are attentive; I notice care and attention for detail as she searches for seats at the arrival of new participants. She asks a question to the artist leading the workshop. I think about how she frames her question. I think about her speech, her delivery, her welcoming hospitality. She mentions a particular participant's talent and presents the leading artist this question as a way to engage a certain youth's participation. She brings it all together somehow. All the while, she is taking photos to share, celebrate, and acknowledge the moment.



Figure 14. Slingerland, D. (2015). *Mushroom dyes* [Photograph]

The workshop is emotionally positive. I reflect on the artist she has brought to this workshop. Why did she invite him? What potential impact can this artist have on the participants at this workshop? I need to think about what is happening here and how this connects to her interview. I must also state my position and explain my presence here. Perhaps I cannot look deep enough because I have been an art facilitator here and volunteer here. I remember past moments and think about how those memories affect the things I am able to see. In her interview, Lora said: “I am a learner, and I am a listener” and I remind myself of this while I am here.



Figure 15. Slingerland, D. (2015). *Old man's beard* [Photograph].

While watching Lora, I am reminded of her words in our interview that speak to her ability to make a room feel like everything is ready, everything that is needed is there. There is not any sign of the set-up process, or the time spent organizing. As Lowe (2001) explains, the tone must be safe and relaxed. This way, the kids can just come in and feel as though the space is theirs. At the workshop there are parents and children of all ages. Lora, watches, moves things around, talks. She catches up with people but all the while still ensuring that things run smoothly and are always accessible. Her joy is notable and her presence stands out in the room. She notices the small details, the placing of the chairs, wanting to move them out of rows so that we can all look at each other, sit closer together. She is calm, natural and caring—whispering to the artist the name

of a child-participant who is eager to show his talents but too shy to ask. The artist calls on him. She looks to me and smiles. A beautiful evening.

I have not encountered in the literature details such as these that look deeply into the leading figures who make CBAE happen and give attention to their dedicated roles involved in the planning, the preparation and compassion for participants' interests and talents.

Excerpts from Shadowing Alana

Alana has shared stories with me about her role in the community space we are in for this evening art workshop. She has talked about her presence in this space and how it has changed and evolved. I as an outsider feeling an awkwardness. I am new—the parents and children look at me with unfamiliar eyes. I can see the relationships she has formed with the people here as they greet her and are happy to see her. She sets the art activity up in a way that is welcoming. People come through, passing in and out. Family members, snacks, paint and paint brushes are laid out.

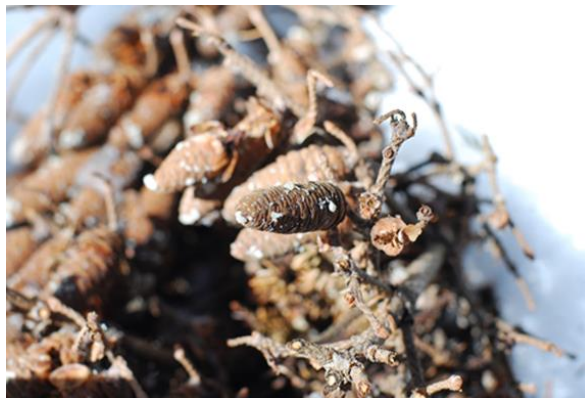


Figure 16. Slingerland, D. (2015). *Acorns* [Photograph]

There is no class, no lesson, just a welcoming space, for people to come sit as they please, doing as much or as little as they please, and then moving out. They come back and revisit. They sit down. Some mix colors and others just sit to chat. I watch Alana as she attends to all people's movements, words, and actions. She sees when the paint is empty, when chairs need to be moved or when someone is trying to get her attention to share a story with her.



Figure 17. Slingerland, D. (2015). *Orange lichen* [Photograph]

Alana talks about her night ahead, attending a grant review. She tells me that a few of the kids she works with will be attending. She talks about their presence at the review, both proud that they want to be there and also nervous for them. She wonders if they will be too shy to talk, or if they will have anything to say. As I listen to Alana talk about the night ahead, I hear again her passion for

this work. I hear her close connections to her participants. I hear her worry for them and hope for them, and her need to be there to support them.

I remember Alana talking about the trust needed in her work, the consistency in her presence needed. I remember her interview and listening to her stories of the relationships she has, the connections I can now see happening. I think back to her talking about art pieces that I now see on the walls in this space. This moment brings Alana's words to life. It allows for conversation to become alive.

Without these shadowing days I would not have seen this energy in these people while they work. What they are doing is beyond a job, beyond a list of tasks—the laughter, the attentiveness, the care. My intention in the shadowing days was to look for things I might have missed in the interviews. I felt as though I was watching Judi, Lora, and Alana for the first time. In the interviews I was able to hear their commitment to and joy in their work. In the interviews, I had asked questions regarding what fueled them when they felt discouraged. While I watched in the shadowing moments I could see what fueled them. I had not come across these characteristics in the literature and while observing this commitment I realized that this was something I needed to hear and witness for this research; I needed to appreciate the three women for this. I needed to pay attention to the small details, to look carefully in these moments so as not to miss something. Similarly as I walked through the woods I looked at the things surrounding me, pausing, questioning, wondering what was possible in the natural materials I thought

I knew. Would the materials surprise me with a colour I did not know they were capable of?

The next stage of this art piece was the dyeing of the fleece. I boiled the materials I had collected and then placed the fleece in dye baths. I was unsure of the colours these natural materials would create, just as I was unsure of what I would see in the shadowing moments.



Figure 18. Slingerland, D. (2015). *Dyeing process* [Photograph]

For this final piece I wanted to engage in a process that required time, from the shearing of the sheep, to the washing of the fleece, to the natural dye collection, to the dyeing of the fleece, and onward to the felting process. I wanted this piece to embody the time and dedication the three women exhibit towards their work.

Lora first became involved in DefSup as a participant 14 years ago at the age of 17. Judi has been involved with Willow Springs Creative Centre since before it incorporated in 2006. Alana began her involvement during an internship with CAHEP in 2006. Their roles as employees within the organizations as well as the organizations themselves have changed over the years and their length and breadth of involvement brings depth and experience to this research. As I waited and watched for the colours to change I reflected on the time Lora, Alana, and Judi have spent over the years, watching things and people within their organizations change, grow and evolve. Judi shared a story of one of her participants and his connection to his artwork over time as she worked with him. She noted the stages of change in his perception towards his artwork, wishing she could have captured the moments of his change, “It would have been amazing to have photographs of just him, working under the table, to bringing it up onto the table, to then exhibiting his work.” Lora’s ongoing relationships with past participants also allow her to observe them over time. She explained, “there’s a lot of members that you get to watch go off and pursue it [art] but my favorite part is the relay back like they are always emailing back asking questions.” Alana shared her joys in observations as she reflected on what she is able to witness and be a part of, “but you see it in their faces, in the way they act with each other and their community, in how incredibly proud they are of what they’ve made in the program.” Each of the participants described their personal observations, noting the small details in people’s behaviors; their observations provide a deep insight, as Rollins (2009) explains, “hope made manifest”, a reflection of the

relationships built and time they have dedicated to the communities and people they work with.

The backing for this piece was made from undyed locally sourced fleece. I am grateful to a dear friend who has welcomed me to help her on her farm when her sheep need to be shorn. For this process we work together while one of us holds the body of the sheep close to ours and the other trims the fleece off the sheep. I then take the fleece home to wash it and be cleaned of the year's dirt and dust. To create the backing for this work I laid out pieces of this fleece. This wet felting method requires energy to roll out the fleece several times to create the backing. For this process I laid out a piece of raw fleece. I then rubbed it with soap and rolled it into a mat. I then needed to roll the mat several times in order to felt the fleece into a flat sheet using friction. I wanted this piece to again emphasize the amount of energy, commitment and sincerity in Judi, Alana and Lora's work.



Figure 19. Slingerland, D. (2015). *Natural process backing* [Felt wool].

This long term commitment to their work was reflected in the interviews as they spoke of future hopes for their organizations. Alana envisions CAHEP as having lasting impression for the people involved.

After the program had wrapped up, they got together without any help from us and without any guidance at all. They designed and created the entire mural on their own. It was amazing to see that they had developed the skills to be able to facilitate something like that on their own, and that's what I really want to see happen.

There is an honesty in their voices in their hopes they have for their participants, Lora explained:

I don't want to be a liar, I don't want to ask people to participate in things because I want my numbers to be up, I don't want to ask people to do things even if they are slightly not interested.

Judi spoke of honesty as she discussed invitations to art programming, "if you advertised it to the public you have to be prepared to deliver it to the public and the public is everyone. If you are not prepared then don't advertise it that way."

For the next stage of the felting I took small pieces of raw undyed fleece and wrapped them in a piece of the naturally dyed fleece. I made each ball individually while directing my focus on the heartfelt care that these women place in their work.



Figure 20. Slingerland, D. (2015). *Natural process perspective* [Felt wool].

As Judi reflected on one of her programs of making willow furniture with a group of women, she described success as noticing something beautiful that she observed in someone else. She spoke of a particular moment of a woman and her relationship with the willow chair she had created.

One woman said “I can’t get in my car with my chair” and I said we can fit that in. We can fit that chair into any car. Don’t worry we can tie it in and she said “no I can’t get in because my head is so big” because she was just so proud of herself you know and she didn’t (pause) and they didn’t feel embarrassed. They were like, ‘oh, I am going to take this home and show him what I did’. And so that drives me.

Alana reflected back on a rapper performing at a community event, and the joy she experienced while watching the kids get up to dance with him. I highlight this story to provide a look at Alana's response to the event, rather than the event itself.

I cried I was so taken aback and moved by it. I tried to take as many photos as I could of the entire thing going on because it was such a beautiful moment. I didn't expect it to happen. I didn't know how much the kids had wanted to learn to dance, but had thought 'Oh it's worth trying.' I was just blown away by it because I didn't expect the group to take the reins like that. It was such a good moment in our program. I think it's like just letting a project breathe and making sure there is room for something like that to happen, is really important.

As Lora discussed the potential impact of her projects, she explained:

But I don't think it's doing enough. I want it to get to the point where the youth that participate find their strength in art to the point that they become politically motivated and become activists with their work, and their voices are a strong and beautiful presence in the city instead of just being a healing tool. I want them to get beyond that and have strength.

Lora's words express a potential of CBAE that opens possibilities beyond the space of gathering and creating art; the implications of the art practice resonate with Dewhurst's (2010) description of "social justice art making" (p. 7).



Figure 21. Slingerland, D. (2015). *Natural process final piece* [Felt wool].

Concluding Thoughts

Lora, Alana and Judi and the stories they share of their work reveal the complexities of providing one definition for CBAE and its potential. These women emphasize that the value of community-based art education is not found in or defined by one final art piece. It is the process, the people involved, the safe and nurturing spaces created, for CBAE to occur. The implications for how the term community is defined and what the community needs is important for those who wish to attempt CBAE programming. “Community” can be a small group of people gathering together and community need is determined by the voices of the people directly involved within that

community. This research highlights the motivations behind grassroots organizations such as DefSup, CAHEP and Willow Springs. Lora, Alana and Judi, describe an education of care in CBAE, one that is motivated by being able to provide safe spaces for communal gathering. A learning space that welcomes a celebration of process and a letting go of strict expectations. Leaders of these organizations are inspired by the people who surround them, by the hopes and wishes of the participants who motivate them to find ways to make those hopes reality.

Organizations such as these are working towards sustainability in their programming while trying to maintain low cost and accessibility to participants. If these organizations are asked to respond to generalized evaluations that ask questions regarding number of participants attending, or exit surveys for participants, such evaluations will not come close to providing accurate depictions of the significant impacts these organizations are making in people's lives. This research invites consideration for methods to access the heartfelt data that exists within CBAE and other grassroots organizations.

In creating a space to share the stories of Lora, Alana and Judi, this research provides a window into the perspectives of three community leaders with strong connections to the programs and work that they do. It opens a space for sharing stories that need to be heard in the realm of CBAE research as well as within the city of Thunder Bay. These stories demonstrate lasting connections, lessons, and relationships that are built through CBAE and go far beyond and far deeper than learning skills. These leading

figures are and have to be passionate about the work they do. They believe in the people they work with, and in their capacity to create and drive these programs. Organizations must be given space to share the stories of why they are doing this work and these narratives must go beyond acknowledgement of one particular program or project. As funders work to develop evaluation standards and procedures for CBAE and grassroots organizations they must take into consideration the possible insight that story and in-depth descriptions, such as the narratives of these women, provide.

The art processes and pieces embedded in this work embody a personal need to understand and learn through the materials used in this artistic practice. This art practice is therefore able to bring attention to the essential understanding and connection to “community” within CBAE. These pieces and projects celebrate the work of CBAE leaders within Thunder Bay by bringing an awareness to the importance of their work. The art pieces reflect the impact of these organizations within specific communities of people, as well as in the lives of individuals and participants themselves.

This research is location-specific both in the artwork as well as the participants involved and must be, in order to more fully understand the benefits and people involved in CBAE. The depth of this research is possible because of the long-term involvement and commitment the participants in this research have to their organizations. This depth and understanding is represented within the art pieces which will be exhibited within the city of Thunder Bay. A public display of the art pieces will provide accessibility and invite a further questioning, a space to materially think about and represent connections,

relationships, and processes. The art pieces are also reflective of positive work that must be celebrated and invite consideration of connection to place and context to learning as well as research. The art pieces bring attention to a need to nurture sustainable practices and communities.

This research brings into light incredible work done by three amazing women. Their stories draw attention to dedication, commitment, and deep investment within CBAE. It is from these stories that this research is able to invite consideration that CBAE literature can move beyond the space of project description. The recollections these women share bring experience of struggle alongside hope, allowing readers to see that the potential of CBAE can be explored by listening to the stories of these women. The stories show that the inspiration and dedication these women have for CBAE is driven by the sincere care they hold for the people with whom they work.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide

Note: These questions are only to exist as a guide to the interview but the interview is encouraging of story sharing, open conversation with the participants.

1. How long has your organization existed in Thunder Bay?
2. How long have you been involved with this organization? At what point in your life did you become involved and why? At what point did you begin employment here and why? Were you doing any work similar prior to working here? How would you define your role and position within this organization?
3. How has this organization changed since you have been involved? (In terms of programming offered? People involved). Has your role changed? If so how? Why?
4. Who coordinates the programming for your organization? Who decides the type programming that will take place?
5. What do you think your organization brings to the Thunder Bay community? Individual level? Community level? Please explain. Stories are encouraged here. You can provide an example of what is it bringing, what it is capable of bringing or what you would like to see happen here.
6. How would you define success within your organization? Personal level as well as organizational level.
7. Although I am aware of a range of educational programming your organization offers, how is your organization involved in arts education? Do you believe arts education is prioritized? Why or why not?
8. To who is your programming offered? Or also who is it available to? Would you consider this accessible? Why or why not?
9. What feedback have you received from others regarding your organization? What are people asking for? What are they missing? What are they enjoying? What programming has been repeated? What programming has been removed?
10. What art projects or programming have you received community acknowledgment for? Publicity? Why do you think these have come up over others? What do you wish received more publicity? Feedback? Acknowledgment.

Appendix B

Introductory E-mail to Participants

Date, 2014

Dear [name of potential participant],

Hello! I hope this message finds you well. I am sending you this email to introduce you to my Masters of Education thesis research project, and to invite your participation in this initiative.

The study is entitled “Enriching Communities with Community-Based Arts Education”. The purpose of the research is to explore the potential benefits and possibilities of community-based arts education. This research seeks the perspectives of leading figures within community-based organizations within the city of Thunder Bay, Ontario.

My experience being involved with your organization has allowed me to witness many wonderful possibilities for community organizations, and I would like to hear from you about your experiences. Although I am aware that your organization offers a variety of wonderful programming, my research will be looking specifically at community-based arts education. I believe your knowledge and experiences to be of significant relevance and importance to this research. I would like to invite you to participate in this study. I hope to create an opportunity for you to reflect on your experience, and to vision further possibilities for community-arts in Thunder Bay and beyond.

If you choose to participate, your commitment would involve one 60-90 minute audio-recorded interview, in person and in a location of your choice. The interview would take place during the month of February 2015. We will also plan a shadowing day where I will spend a day with you at your place of work. During this time I hope to see what a day at your place of work involves and I will take observation notes. If you so desire, you would also have the opportunity to review the transcript of your interview and shadowing day for accuracy, and to review the analysis of the research prior to its submission. By participating, you would have full right to decline to answer any interview question, and/or to withdraw from the research at any time. In my writings, particularly related to the shadowing day, my interest will be focused on your responses and reactions and thus will not need to include permissions for others you may interact with.

This research has been approved by Lakehead University’s Research Ethics Board. If you would like to further discuss your potential participation, and/or speak to my supervisor Dr. Pauline Sameshima, please do not hesitate to contact either of us through the channels

outlined below. As well, if you are interested in participating, please let me know by contacting me through email.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this invitation, and have a great day!

Dayna Slingerland
dslinge1@lakeheadu.ca; 807-707-2046
Faculty of Education, Lakehead University

Supervisor: Dr. Pauline Sameshima
psameshima@lakeheadu.ca
Faculty of Education, Lakehead University

Follow up Letter

Date, 2014

Dear Potential Participant,

I hope this letter finds you well. You are invited to participate in a study to examine and explore your experience being involved in community-based arts education. This study is a part of my Masters in Education thesis project entitled, “Enriching communities with community-based arts education”. The purpose of this research is to examine the potentials and possibilities for community based-arts education. It is my hope that the success of these organizations can be heard through stories and images of positive experiences, in order to inspire community leaders, artistic facilitators, educators and students.

Your participation in this research would involve one 60-90 minute interview that will be audio-recorded, and will take place in person. The interviews will take on a semi-structured format so as to allow your active engagement in directing the interview towards ideas that matter most to you. As well, if you choose to participate, I will ask you to select a location for the interview. This location should hold connection to your work with community arts. We can then work together to arrange transportation to and from the interview location, as needed. We will also plan together a shadowing day, where I will accompany you to your work place. During this time I will take field notes and have conversation at your leisure.

If you so desire, you will have the opportunity to review the transcript of your interview for accuracy prior to analysis, and to review the analysis of the research prior to its submission. By participating, you will have full right to decline to answer any interview question, and/or to withdraw from the research at any time. You will also have control over the level of anonymity concerning your contributions to the research. All data collected will be kept confidential and, if you so wish, pseudonyms will be employed in my thesis and any associated writing and presentations. However, if you wish for your name to be associated with your contributions, then I will present the research in this way.

The Lakehead University Research Ethics Board has approved this research project. There is no foreseeable risk or harm pertaining to your involvement in this study. Data collected in the context of this project will remain securely stored at the Faculty of Education at Lakehead University for five years and then destroyed.

The findings of this project will be made available to you at your request upon the completion of the project. The completed thesis will also be available at the Education Library at Lakehead University. If you wish to participate, please complete and sign the attached consent form. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me (phone: (807)707-2046, email: dslinge1@lakeheadu.ca). You are also welcome to contact my faculty supervisor, Dr. Pauline Sameshima, email: psameshima@lakeheadu.ca. Sue Wright, Research Ethics and Administration Officer, Lakehead University at 808-343-8283, is also available for contact.

Thank you very much for considering this letter.

Sincerely,

Dayna Slingerland

Appendix D

Consent form for Participants

Date, 2014

I, _____, agree to participate in the study, Enriching Communities with Community-Based Arts Education. I have read the attached cover letter. I understand the purpose and intent of this study. I realize my participation is entirely voluntary. Should I choose to participate I may decline to answer any question. I may choose to withdraw from the study at any point without repercussions. Should I wish to remain anonymous in this study, I understand that I cannot withdrawal once analysis and thesis writing has begun.

I see no foreseeable risk to participating in the study. I understand that I will be audio-taped as part of the study. I understand that the data will be securely stored at Lakehead University for a minimum of five years.

I recognize that it will contribute to the available research on community-based arts education. I understand that the research may be presented at academic conferences and in academic journals. I understand that I will receive a summary of the research results at the completion of the research.

Please check the appropriate box below. You may change your mind at any time by contacting any one of the research team. However, should you wish to remain anonymous in the study, you will be unable to withdraw post-submission of the research.

I choose to have my name and the name of my community organization named in the dissemination of this research and statements made attributed to me.

I wish for my name and my community organization to remain anonymous.

Signature

Date

If you are interested in receiving a summary of the research, please check the appropriate box, and provide the corresponding information. Thanks!

Name: _____

I would like to receive an electronic copy of this research by email

Email Address:

I would like to receive a hard copy of this research by mail

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