



ArtsEngage Learning Community Resources from Lifelong Arts Spotlight (Breakout Nooks)

Oct 30, 2020

Nook A: Creative Ageing: Programming With, By & For People Aged Over 55 (Elizabeth Lynch)

- Elizabeth shared her experience with the [Age Against the Machine Festival of Creative Ageing](#), for which she was an evaluator
 - Age Against the Machine was co-created with the community of Lewisham, a very culturally diverse community
 - Trust enabled the festival to be experimental and take risks - Elizabeth was struck by the boldness of the program
 - Involved different generations, as well as many forms of art (performances, craft sessions, formal and informal experiences, etc.)
 - Some areas had "cultural champions" who would have their ear to the ground and "gather intelligence" from their peers, but also know what's out there in terms of cultural offerings ("go and sees", gallery visits, etc.)
- People want to go out and have fun, as well as having an "artistic experience"
 - For example, AAM had a 21st century tea dance (drag acts, dancing, drinks)
- Programs "for seniors" are often put into silos (either for seniors, or for seniors and young people)- but life isn't really like that. People want to meet other people right across the lifespan
 - AAM included opportunities for the older participants to meet children, teenagers, and other people who they wouldn't normally have a chance to meet
- Kathy Smith of [Creative Age](#) shared her experience with the [Creative Age Art Studio](#), which allows for ongoing engagement with a diverse range of seniors
 - Creative Age is a catalyst network with a mission to improve the quality of life of older adults in London, Ontario and surrounding areas.
 - We have to remember that "seniors" are not a homogenous group - there are different ages within the senior population, as well as of course different individuals, preferences, etc.
 - Had to build capacity – to train artist instructors to work with older adults



- Debra Chandler of [Concerts in Care](#) has worked with both residents' councils in long-term care facilities, and directly with retirement communities. Very different experiences
 - In long-term and memory care settings, it can be challenging to know what really resonated with the residents
- Alyson Martin shared her experience as both a volunteer presenter and professional working in geriatric care
 - As presenters, we have to be careful not to make assumptions about our audiences. For example, older audience members have thanked presenters for not assuming that they wouldn't like a certain type of humour, or that something is too "edgy" for them
 - Can be so great when you are able to attract a diverse age group. Young people often don't attend, but when they do and audience members aren't used to having young people in the crowd – it's electric, it's a real community experience. People are forever changed by the experience
- Emily Pearlman – trying to figure out how to move forward with artistic experiences for seniors during this COVID moment
 - All the programming so far has been "to" them as opposed to "with" them
- Isolation is such a challenge for seniors right now, we need creative solutions
 - Telephone could be one answer, but also a danger because of spammers
 - The TSO has youth members talking to older people and then playing for them on the phone
 - Elizabeth observed that a lot of older people use WhatsApp - again, we shouldn't make assumptions about the best ways to engage. But trust is always needed
 - Debra - with Concerts in Care, sometimes certain individuals only get to see 2-3 songs with a personal care worker, but even that helps
- Patricia Kinghorn - recently ran an outdoor project in a small community - most seniors were not able to attend in a safe way. Older adults and kids attended in person, but the recording will be made available through the library and long-term care homes
- Important to develop relationships that can get you in the door (as discussed in Nook D)
 - Alyson - Especially in small communities, we are really good at the "no wrong door" approach – if you don't know, someone else will



- Project example from Elizabeth - [The Posh Club](#) takes glamorous events to care homes and community centres. Seniors are able to dress up, feel special and have fun! Were able to do this this year outdoors and distanced when the weather was good.

Nook B: Co-Creating with Children & Communities (Lisa Marie DiLiberto)

- Tim - working on engaging kids in the songwriting process during virtual concerts
- Liz - working on community engaged arts project in Delta
- Nicole at Roseneath Theatre, which usually tours into schools, but right now working on creating some new pieces that are created specifically for a virtual platform like Zoom, that still follow Roseneath's aesthetic
 - Used to be judgemental about parents who had an "excuse" to leave work early. But now she is a parent also learning about people who are caretakers in our communities (for kids, for elderly parents, etc). Creating space for caretakers.
- Monica ran a virtual performing arts camp over the summer that was successful and were able to try different things over the two sessions
- Sam is working on a project that collects families' stories, but also trying to talk about safety in terms of talking to strangers, sharing personal information, etc.
- Theatre Direct's current project is "[Halloween Hullabaloo](#) - a Haunted Castle Community Art Project - for kids, by kids!"
 - Engaging 60 or 70 families who can participate in the haunted castle - each kid/family decorated a "brick" in the castle and once it's built they can come visit (by booking a timeslot so there is no overlap)
- How do you let go of control but keep control? I.e. how do you have kids participate in the creative process while still maintaining an artistic vision?
 - One approach is to have templates - a chorus or something that's already structured so there are places kids can fill in. Like a Mad Libs format in a way.



Room C: Relaxing Your Performance to Create Welcoming Spaces for All Ages & All Abilities (Rachel Marks)

- Start with a visual guide
 - Step by step, clear short and succinct guide from leaving your home and getting to the show
 - What you do to get there: parking, getting tickets, showing appreciation
 - Visual is the first language
 - Choose appropriate Voice – first person for children, 2nd for adults
 - Use lots of maps – alerts about bells going off that might be a sensory distraction
 - TSO Guide created by Rachel can be found [here](#)
 - Tips: if you have floor that is slippery when wet, put that in the guide – you want to create a successful event. Ditto if there are stairs are involved
- Fact Sheet
 - E.g. the TSO developed a Repertoire sheet – provides cues of loud musical events (cymbals crashing, etc.)
 - Should be short and succinct – to be read by the caregiver so that they may prep the child or adult accompanied
- Basics:
 - Houselights left on at libretto level or at least 30%
 - Recorded sound – cap at 90 dBL
 - Point out where Quiet Room is located – darkened room where someone sit quietly
- It is about deconstructing the myth that the performance event is exclusive – it needs to be made welcoming
- Reach out to community consultants (e.g. wheelchair, blind)– pay them for time to come into venue and trial the Guide – include the community for whom the guide is intended in the creation of the guide.
- Prep the audience about the service with a note in the house program and from the stage or voice-over at start of event



ROOM D: Through the Gatekeepers (Tom Carson)

- Topic: How to work with or navigate institutional gatekeepers who may not share values with the participants you are trying to reach.

Key Point 1: Communication

- Mental exercise:
 - Think of a project you are working on that takes place in an institutional setting – care home, school, etc.
 - Picture a 23 year-old Black woman who we take to be creative, middle class, educated.
 - How would you talk about or describe your project?
 - As you do this, what are your assumptions about that person?
 - Now mentally zoom out from that person until you see that she is standing over a person in a wheel chair, caring for them.
 - How would you speak about the project from this new perspective? Does it change the value or story?
 - You notice that it's a 90 year-old man in the wheel-chair. Would you change your language? How would you talk to them? How are you actually there?
 - Examine your perception and your communication tools?
 - Point: how we talk about our project depends on who we are talking to. What are the different ways we reach our assumptions about communicating to different audiences/participants.
 - The 23 year-old recreation specialist possibly won't know a personality from the 90 year-old's past (e.g. Lucille Ball)
 - Need to reflect - how do I communicate with that person to gain access and interest?
- Difficulty is that we are not selling to audience/participants for project, but to the gatekeeper. Have a layer of bureaucracy to manage. Can lead to feeling that nobody trained me for this. Because we are constantly preaching to the choir (arts community) how do we move out to the broader community...get beyond our initial ripples in the pond.
- How to get around negative gatekeepers – our project is not going to matter to them, may even cause them more work.



- Appeal to them on their way of connecting to their charges, wellness, etc. Work on those values where they can connect. Get to root factor so they'll do it.
- Other factors that can motivate gatekeeper: The project may be highly beneficial to gatekeeper, e.g. keeps charge busy for 30 minutes, etc.

Key Point 2: Understanding Context

- Understand the contexts in the institutions – care settings – education
- COVID 19 and gatekeepers, need to understand protocols and technical equipment required in some settings.
- Where do we start? → The more you understand how the institution works, the more easily you can get in to deliver your program. Learn how things work in the care home/school, for example don't run programs that conflict with times when participants not available, e.g. 11:30am lunch, 3:00pm Bingo
- Also need to understand staff rotations in care homes – programs need to run on minimum/maximum times – 30 to 40 minutes – part of the environment.

Key Point 3: Make it easy fo the gatekeeper

- What can I do for you so you just need to open the door. (e.g. "We'll set up the room, you don't need to do anything.")
- Learn how to adjust in real time (e.g. COVID restrictions – dance performance outside in parking lot)