

St. Stephen's College

Leading into Being: Enhancing Compassionate Imagination through Opera

By

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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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Abstract

This research, through a theology of appreciative voice, Presence and Service, used an Indigenous expressive arts-based approach in partnership with the Canadian Opera Company, to explore how a group of 15 vulnerable, immigrant and/or first generation immigrant youth live with their struggles while finding compassion and imagination. My goal was to engage the youth aged 18-29 years, labeled “at risk”, in writing, designing, staging and performing an opera. Through this experience they found their individual and collective voices and were able to realize their leadership and emotional intelligence capabilities.

Key words: Indigenous; Indigenous methodology; appreciative voice; arts-based research; Canadian Opera Company; compassionate imagination; emotional intelligence; theology

Dedication

If you were misguided, misrepresented or misunderstood,
If your world was coloured with pain and indifference,
If you were rejected even though you did your best,
If poverty and marginalization were your companions
If you had to live with indignation and repeated insult,
If spoken truth gave birth to ridicule,
If you were the last to be chosen and the waiting felt like eternity,
If you were hollered at boisterously, only for them to realize it was a mistaken identity,
If you fled war, and are up most nights hearing and seeing and remembering,
If love dismantled your identity and fate manipulated your serenity,
If you were orphaned,
If you began to parent at a tender age,
If you hesitated as you learned to put pen to page
And numbers left you in a daze,
You fill me with imagination
And Compassion brings me closer to the Creator Artist,
In turn, I dedicate my work to you.

Acknowledgements

Oh Creator/Artist,

I acknowledge with words that cannot express,

The full depth,

Of my gratitude for

My supervisor, doctoral committee members, academic institutions, editors and readers,

My thesis guide for "encouragement and possibility"

My children and husband for their creativity,

The youth and educational artists who worked alongside me,

My parents, grandparents, and those gone before me

For the many moons between, seasons and periods of growth,

I try to be thankful

To show how I feel,

To show how the Spirit

Has coloured my world,

With love, thankfulness, praise, writing & annotating,

My heart is open, my soul cleansed

I am grateful to all and to the

Creator /Artist

I am deeply appreciative of the youth who participated in this artistic leadership endeavour, and I am thankful for the artist educators from the Canadian Opera Company who shared their time and talent.

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Abbreviations

AI	Appreciative Inquiry
COC	Canadian Opera Company
EB	Epidermolysis Bullosa
EI	Emotional Intelligence
EQ-i	Emotional Quotient Inventory
GBC	George Brown College

Introduction

I am a Christian Indigenous¹ to India. I have been living in Canada for over 20 years. I have been working professionally in the field of community service and in particular with Emotional Intelligence (EI) since 1994. I helped refine the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i),² which is widely used in the private sector, especially in working with leaders and designing curricula, and training executives and business leaders. Further, I worked with the community, training executive directors and senior managers, and with the immigrant population, designing and writing curricula to include them in the mainstream. I have for the last 15 years worked at a community college with youth, students, immigrants and those with special needs. I work at living a compassionate life daily and using an appreciative voice.

I came to the Doctor of Ministry program on a journey to enrich my soul. This soul journey has taken me a long time, as it was a quest for deeper meaning, purpose and intimacy in my life. The journey has taken on various forms in different times in my life, including counselling, spiritual direction, attending a thought provoking integrative

¹ According to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (n.d.) the term “Indigenous” includes:

“• Self- identification as indigenous peoples at the individual level and accepted by the community as their member.

- Historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies
- Strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources
- Distinct social, economic or political systems
- Distinct language, culture and beliefs
- Form non-dominant groups of society
- Resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive

peoples and communities.” (para. 3)

The term “Indigenous” is capitalized throughout this paper unless within a quote.

² The EQi gives an overall EQ score, as well as scores in five composite scales and 15 sub-scales that offer a picture of capabilities in: self-awareness and self-expression; social-awareness and interpersonal relationship; emotional management and regulation; reality-testing and problem-solving; and self-motivation, general mood and optimism.

seminar or being inspired by a professor. Regardless of the form, I believe that like myself, each of us is here living on earth for one important purpose: to learn how to fully love self and others.

Along the way of living, I have been both offered and bumped up against many of life's challenges, lessons and teachers. Some have come in clear, organized packages; others are more chaotic and disruptive. In order to fully embrace my life with passion and integrity, I have learned that it is important to let go of the burdens I carry around from old hurts, disappointments, losses, anger, and shame that have kept me stuck and living in old survival patterns. In order to survive, I often made costly compromises and emotional pacts with myself and others, where a part of me believed that somehow I was responsible, inadequate, and unlovable or not good enough, keeping me a prisoner of possibility. By lightening my load, it has become possible to love more and live life more fully.

All the learning that has happened through my covenant with St. Stephen's College has allowed me to be creative and develop programs at my institute and for other organizations and institutions. What is most important is that I had someone care and walk with me through the years.

This research emerged out of my experience in infusing EI into a curriculum for training/coaching community organization leaders,³ often using drawing or clay. These leaders approached me and requested that I create a program for youth. As the Doctor of Ministry program required that I conduct a pilot project, I combined the EI with expressive art through work in a baking lab. I found that presenting the opportunity for

³ The leaders who participated represented leaders from nonprofit organizations in the City of Toronto, Ontario.

leadership development in the context of creative and unconventional activity was an effective way to engage these youth, that really brought out the best in them. I had the opportunity to practice the EI data collection and feedback method that worked best with marginalized youth for whom “test” or “psychological inventory” brought back negative and fearful experiences. The Project showed me how I could build community and create a safe, informal atmosphere, emphasizing group belonging, where “at all times we were all learners”.

The most significant learning from the pilot project that informed my research for this Project Dissertation was the success of this whole integrated approach: working with EI, using creative practices to showcase and enhance existing leadership skills in marginalized youth.

In this research, through a theology of appreciative voice, Presence and Service, using an Indigenous expressive arts-based approach, I explore how a group of 15 vulnerable, immigrant and/or first generation immigrant youth live with their struggles while finding compassion and imagination. My goal is to engage youth aged 18-29 years, labeled “at risk”, to showcase and celebrate their leadership and EI capabilities that I believe they already possess.

Since, in my experience, emotional states are seldom logical, the use of imagery and nonverbal modes allows you an alternative path for self-exploration and communication. This process is a powerful integrative force. Traditionally, psychotherapy is a verbal form of therapy, and the verbal process will always be important. However, one can rapidly understand the world of the participant when expression is done through images. Colour, form, and symbols are languages that speak

from the unconscious and have particular meaning for each individual. As I listen to a participant's explanation of imagery, I poignantly see the world as the person has viewed it.

Ultimately, my research explores the creative possibilities that empower the youth with whom I have worked to reimagine the world in fundamentally sympathetic and caring ways. By enabling these youth to utilize their emotional and spiritual intelligences, the staging of the opera ushered them into a transformative experience that radically changed their view of themselves and their relations with the world. The opera as an expressive art made them conscious of the fact that they can exert a positive impact on the world and rectify its wrongs only if they adopt a compassionate attitude toward all beings. Of course, such an attitude is rooted in grasping the wholeness of creation, the interrelatedness of all things in the grand scheme of things as the work of the Creator/Artist. Thus, the evolvment of compassionate imagination figured as a fundamental principle in directing both the youth and my own approach to the task of performing the opera. It proved as an effective way of engaging with the world while also providing a framework for my own inquiry. By alerting me to the dangers of ego-drama, the notion of compassionate imagination stressed self-inquiry. This meant that through the process of research, I, alongside the research participants, would also learn about the deficiencies of my relationship with the world and how I must try to rectify them. Thus, I also became a part of my research project as my consciousness was deepened alongside that of the participants. In the final instance, all this becomes possible only if we grasp profoundly how the Creator/Artist has shaped our world as an organic unity in which all aspects of existence must relate to and reinforce each other in terms of compassion and

sympathy. In the chapters that follow I spend some time explaining how the participants and I managed to replace our ego-drama with an encompassing theo-drama which in an extraordinary way, elevated our awareness of the meaning of our being in the world.

Chapter One: For the Love of the Artist

This chapter focuses on the creative possibilities within our souls as they become an expression of what I call "the Creator's artistic work," the work of a higher being which we can embrace through compassion, understanding and humility. I came across this idea while I was working with a group of youth to develop an opera. I wished to utilize the Creator's artistic work as a model to engage these youth with the opera in an imaginative way, which would also make them aware that all acts of creativity are fundamentally an expression of solidarity with an acknowledgment of all beings in the universe. This was also the basic idea that shaped my research project.

Within this framework, my research project was transformed into an instance of theo-drama, a drama which involves every being in the cosmos and acknowledges the role that every single one of us must play in the Creator's theatre by alleviating the pain and suffering on earth. This, of course, can be achieved only if we come to understand the universe as made out of love, the ultimate lesson which I wished the youth I worked with, as well as I, would draw from the experience of the opera we were staging. Since love is an attribute of the Creator/Artist, our opera, as the expression of the everyday, was touched with the sacred. This was also the starting point of my own inquiry as a participant of arts-based research.

Arts-based research engages in a creative process by emphasizing that the personal awareness and growth of the researcher, along with that of the participants, are also highly at stake throughout the research (Allan 1995; Bauman 2008; Levine, & Levine, 2011). That is why arts-based research negates self-absorption completely and, instead, embraces the infinitely variable expression of the imagination of the

Creator/Artist, an inclusive imagination which looks at all existence caressingly and lovingly. Only then can arts-based research generate new perspectives and understandings. In this sense, in arts-based research, personal inquiry transcends introspection for its own sake and, instead, stresses the notion of serving others. In arts-based research, alongside the subject of research, the researcher directly participates in the project and becomes a part of it. I, as the researcher, subject myself to inquiry because I stand in awe and humility before the entire creation by the Creator/Artist. I leave aside all arrogance because only then can I learn what is good for us all. I elaborate on these concepts within this chapter.

The Breadth and Depth of Artistic Creation

Just as a painter takes time to cover the canvas first with imagination, then possibility weighed with emotion, next with paint to create something that begs expression, so does the depth of an aspect of artistic expression. Some time ago I read an excerpt from *The Forgotten Brush Strokes of Painters* by George Davis (2015). It echoed for me the sentiment that we have a commonality not only with each other but with the artistic nature of the entire universe.

As the universe is composed of solar systems within galaxies, so do we exist as a swarm of molecules, corpuscles, and atoms. The essential building blocks of the stars are the same as those of human beings. We exist within a universe we did not create that was formed by dynamic events we are still trying to comprehend, within a planet that is the only one (as far as we know) among hundreds of billions with the right amount of hydrogen and helium to sustain life. (para 1)

This quote speaks to me of the very essence of a person; that is often seen through their self-regard. Why should a person be less than the other, the underdog, or anything associated with negativity? We are too just as bright and just as radiant and thereby just

as beautiful as the heavenly bodies.

The depth of creativity embodies the mysteriousness of dark and light, peace and violence, calm and chaos, disappointment and surprise, despair and contentment, belonging and loneliness. These are the paradoxical tensions we hold. Yes, this tension between the breadth and the depth allows us to tap into the mysteriousness of our depth. I believe that recognizing creativity in the midst of daily living is like taking a short break to fill one's soul with incense.

It is not always possible to spend much time in reflection or contemplation by itself; however it is possible to do what we are called to do with thought and spirit. We are then like the artists working between the visible and the invisible and draw the other into our work making it sacred, holy, a call to revel in the great mystery of depth with another. This reaching out or engaging the other moves us from the depth within ourselves to the work of breadth.

Theologian John F. Haught (2010) illustrates the breadth of artistic creation in a metaphor that captivates my attention and inspires my awe in creativity. Haught says:

Imagine that you have thirty large volumes on your bookshelf. Each to me is 450 pages long, and every page stands for one million years. Let this set of books represent the scientific story of our 13.7-billion-year-old universe. The narrative begins with the Big Bang on page 1 of volume 1, but the first twenty-one books show no obvious signs of life at all. The earth story begins only in volume 21, 4.5 billion years ago, but life doesn't appear until volume 22, about 3.8 billion years ago. Even then, living organisms do not become particularly interesting, at least in human terms, until almost the end of volume 29. There the famous Cambrian explosion occurs, and the patterns of life suddenly burst out into an unprecedented array of complexity and diversity. Dinosaurs come in around the middle of volume 30 but are wiped out on page 385. Only during the last sixty-five pages of volume 30 does mammalian life begin to flourish. Our hominid ancestors show up several pages from the end of volume 30, but modern humans do not appear until the bottom of the final page. The entire history of human intelligence, ethics, religious aspiration, and scientific discovery takes up only the last few lines on the last page of the last volume. (p.2)

I like to think that everyone who is on the last few lines of the last page of that last volume is a living shrine of the Creator's artistic work. This would then allow each of us to dwell fully in creative possibility both within our souls and externally with each other. This creative energy would become a capacity to build on each other's strengths through compassion and understanding.

I believe that this 13.7 billion year story of creation is the organic theater for the creative activity of opera that engaged the youth in my research. The late Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar (1988) often spoke of the "theo-drama." This is the drama written and directed by the Creator Artist, involving every creature in the cosmos. On the grand stage that is the created universe we are invited to "act": to find and play our role in the Creator's theatre.

I have come to know this spirit as the Creator/Artist, because I see each person as a wonderful testament to the Creator. The universe for me is like a canvas. In my travels across the world, I have seen the night sky as a wonderful statement to this belief; it is different in each country or city. On an excursion to Churchill I saw a brilliant full moon in the midnight sky at the same time as I saw the setting sun in its vermillion glory, bold and beautiful. Exploring nature through the lens of theology, arts-based research and an Indigenous methodology⁴ has further reinforced and informed my belief and experience.

Creator/Artist is the image by which I envision the God of my faith. I feel the passion of this Creator/Artist as I look at the softness of the moon, the sandy shorelines where waves caress the earth or rock. I recognize the Creator/Artist when I stand in the midst of lavender with humming birds and bees busy, and I feel slightly intoxicated by the fragrance. I am in awe of the Creator/Artist when I have peered out of a bedroom

⁴ The Indigenous methodology used for this research is discussed in Chapter Three.

window listening to the howling and screeching of a sand storm, unable to see anything. Or at times when I sat in the summer waters of the North watching the whales send their babies out into the ocean to glide along the warm currents right until they reach the Caribbean. I have marveled at the Creator/Artist when I felt the earth tremble in reverence, and then heard the frenzy of birds startled from their mid-day slumber as if all that was left of life was just that murmuring, quaking moment. I feel the smile of the Creator/Artist when I have watched a little Daschund stand up to a Great Dane. Or, a loving mother stopped in action by a tiny hand in a cookie jar, just before dinner. I see the work of the Creator/Artist in the tidying of a home, or in the etched lines on the face of Grandparents. To me this is sacred and this sacredness of simplicity is a profound daily acknowledgement of the Creator/Artist.

It seems that walking down an aisle in an art gallery and looking at the canvases beckoning interpretation is to walk in nature and be in awe of every detail that has been created by God the Artist/Creator. In my understanding I believe that that the universe was made out of love. Form gives shape to God's wisdom as we see in the outstretched wings of a Grey owl or in the countenance of a human being. When we take time to marvel at the wisdom that is infinitely perfect we recognize that love surrounds us and the feeling of awe is the spiritual blessing that restores and renews our spirits. Who else would have made this possible if not God the Creator/Artist? After all, "*God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good*" (*Genesis 1:31, King James Version*).

Having spent time reflecting on the Creator's work I see the artistry in the universe resonate within the soul of each person. What is poignant here is that artistry does not only have to be good and pleasant, artistry can come from the depths of

negativity, suffering and pain.

Matthew Fox offered me one of the ways of thinking about this and he describes people's theological temperament as they journey through life. While some people are positive, some are negative, some see possibility and some are resilient and bring about lasting change. For example, *Via Positiva* celebrates life by suggesting that God's creation lifts our spirit by filling us with "inspiration, joy and hope" (Judy, 2010, p. 113). In contrast, *Via Negativa* reveals those aspects of human existence, which "create pain and suffering," i.e., "health problems," "emotional struggles," or "suffering for the ecological, political, or economic health of the world" (p. 113). Fox (2000) contends that as we reflect on *Via Positiva* and *Via Negativa* and take in their significance, *Via Creativa*, or the creative energy in us, is released. *Via Creativa* is formed as the response of the spirit to the world's suffering as the spirit draws on "our sense of blessing as a creature of the universe" (Judy, 2010, p. 113). *Via Creativa* leaves one open to surprises; it is a "creative service," the manifestation of a creative compassion. Once again, we enter the realm of the compassionate imagination. After all, compassion in this context cannot exist without imagination, or what in Christ's parables appears in the form of an entrepreneurial spirit. One of the parables I remember concerns the fishes and loaves. A little person offered his lunch because he was moved by the hunger he saw in the crowd. While the crowd could have laughed and dismissed the generosity; the compassion became contagious. The Holy Spirit moved Jesus with compassion to bless this offering and make it abundant. The crowd waiting in anticipation was moved by compassionate imagination. They understood the opportunity of receiving abundant grace, through a meal which enabled an abundant community and an example of exponential blessing.

However, compassion becomes a full-fledged aspect of human understanding in the stage of *Via Transformativa*. According to Fox, “we are made by God to be discontent until we can see our own small efforts in the *Via Creativa* relating to the life of the world” (as cited in, p. 114). It is at this point that *Via Transformativa*, “our life of work and service” must “relate to the transformation—the health, the salvation—of the world” (p. 114).

If we look at Fox’s fourfold scheme in the context of the discussion developed throughout this chapter, we can see how the reflective space and healing power that these ways of relating to the world offer. They prepare us for embracing the compassionate imagination as a fundamental way of being in the universe. Here we may draw some parallels between the healing power of Fox’s fourfold scheme and the way Buddhism can allow us to grow through our suffering. In Buddhism, there is a “wondrous voice” that will open the universal door and make everything possible again. The essence of this comforting and healing voice is compassion. In Buddhism, Avalokitesvara is a bodhisattva “who looks deeply into the world and hears the cries of the world” in order to relieve our suffering and suppressed feelings. This is because this voice understands our anguish, despair and fear too acutely.

In the same way, Brahma is a noble voice that stems from the willingness to eliminate suffering and spread happiness. Indeed, love, compassion, joy, and impartiality are the *Four Brahmaviharas*, noble dwellings of buddhas and bodhisattvas. For those who wanted to be with Brahma, the Buddha said, “Practice the four noble dwellings: love, compassion, joy, and impartiality” (Nhat Hanh, 1993, p. 47). If we want to share

one teaching of the Buddha with our Christian friends, it would be the same: “God is love, compassion, joy, and impartiality” (p.47).

What is important here is that voice is in all of us. However using the voice that the situation calls for is the voice of compassion. This is the voice that restores hope in a person and faith in a community. It is this voice that I thread throughout my dissertation.

Spiritual Intelligence

Creativity, as an essential component of theo-drama, presupposes what Marsha Sinetar ⁵ (1995) describes as “entrepreneurial spirit,” a frame of mind that thrusts us continually into new territories. As an enhancement, Marsha Sinetar further explores the virtues that enable children to move into life with brightness and optimism. This is the exuberance that comes from the spiritual practice of play and is what she calls “spiritual intelligence.” This is the delight that comes from the Creator/Artist and becomes contagious to those watching.

When we speak of spiritual intelligence, we are referring to spirituality; an inborn need in us to connect with the ground of being that goes beyond limitations defining our materiality. As an emanation of spiritual intelligence, spirituality can assume either a vertical or a horizontal form: in its vertical form, spirituality entails relationship with the sacred, which is free from all constraints of time and place; in its horizontal form, it reveals human dimensions that prompt our care and attention to the well-being of all aspects of life on our planet. While forging a sense of inner and outer peace in us that no circumstance can unsettle, spiritual intelligence fills us with compassion and wisdom toward the whole creation and spurs us to regard it as the embodiment of love. Spiritual

⁵ Marsha Sinetar is a masterful writer who believes in the unique potential in each person. This is something that influences my work and life.

intelligence enables us to maintain our serenity regardless of what we face on a daily basis and allows us to offer compassion and wisdom to all we encounter. In this sense, spiritual intelligence can be regarded as the chief attribute of our spiritual leaders.

Some of the skills that are essential to spiritual intelligence and pave the way toward higher self-awareness, universal awareness, and social mastery are the following: awareness of one's own worldview; awareness of purpose of life; awareness of the worldviews of others; awareness of one's limitations; experience of transcendent oneness; compassion and wisdom; alignment with the flow of life should it be a positive experience or an experience of suffering (Sinetar 1995 & 2000; Myss 2006). Awareness of the shared essence of one's ego and a higher self ultimately shapes spiritual intelligence. Through spiritual intelligence, one can understand one's ego and its operations as a necessary step for establishing inner peace and balance while connecting to a higher mode of being. Only then can one recognize the voice of the Divine and achieve a sense of spiritual transcendence. In this state, the voice of "ego-self" merges with the voice of God or the Higher Self. If we understand that all voices emanate from the same transcendental origin, we can create a language that is not constrained by any single faith or belief. In this way, all sense of strife will cease as a faith-neutral language facilitates our spiritual growth by removing all the barriers that prevent us from opening up to each other.

Furthermore, the entrepreneurial spirit—openness to creativity and new dimensions rooted in one's trust in faith and grace—shapes the structure of Christ's parables in the *New Testament*. The risk-taking movement of Christ's parables, as they venture into unconventional realms, deepens one's insight and reveals unexpected

possibilities for perceiving the world, a condition which paves the way for the emergence of a transformed I. The theological dimensions of this experience are apparent in the symbolic act of Communion, a transformative experience which celebrates the sacredness of all beings by sharing. In the social sphere, the Eucharist or Communion finds its corollary in the dismantling of all gender, class and racial divisions which impoverish the soul, breed injustice, and alienate spiritual intelligence.

The Voices of Artists, Reflecting the Image of God the Creator

None can sense more deeply than you artists, ingenious creators of beauty that you are, something of the pathos with which God at the dawn of creation looked upon the work of His hands. A glimmer of that feeling has shone so often in your eyes when — like the artists of every age — captivated by the hidden power of sounds and words, colors and shapes, you have admired the work of your inspiration, sensing in it some echo of the mystery of creation with which God, the sole creator of all things, has wished in some way to associate you. (John Paul II, 1993)

This is when the sacred is seen in the everyday. It is also when a person is expressive in a field of music, poetry, dance, song, or story that they become the artist who draws the other to believe to want to know more to live in faith. To Japanese painter Makoto Fujimura,⁶ "The arts are a cup that will carry the water of life to the thirsty" (as cited in Faith and Leadership, 2011, question 4). He offers a perspective on the link between art and science:

When you empower a child to write or to paint or to sing – something that will awaken the senses to take in both the challenges and the darkness of our days, but also the hopes and dreams – you're causing a ripple effect in that child's life and for generations to come.

And that's why the arts in some ways are fundamental to even scientific research and mathematics. We talk about needing math and science education all the time, but we don't realize that they start with an intuitive process. Mathematics is not just this mechanism that you teach, but true math is this

⁶ See Faith and Leadership; Theology and the Arts <http://www.faithandleadership.com/makoto-fujimura-function-art>

creative process of re-examining these abstract concepts and not making things up. They are grounded in reality, but they have these margins that you question deeply, even the assumptions that these abstractions are really giving you. And so at the core level, all the disciplines need to have a grasp on the intuitive side of our experiential side. (question 6)⁷

Prior to proceeding, I would like to pay respect to the artistic innovators who have used art creatively, and have allowed me to think possibility. Some are healers, trainers, evaluators, and professors, and some have worked with art through reconciliation, rejuvenation and mediation. For example, Shaun McNiff⁸ informs us that we use the term arts-based research to affirm a community of art and artists including all of the arts (McNiff, 1998). Arts-based research in this respect contains and embraces the related terms of: “arts-informed research (Knowles and Cole 2008), arts-based research (Barone and Eisner 2012; Leavy 2009; Liamputtong and Rumbold 2008; McNiff and Speiser 2004) and artistic enquiry (McNiff 1999; Wadsworth Hervey 2000)” (as cited in McNiff, 2013, p.3). McNiff ultimately defines Arts-based research “. . . as the use of personal expression in various art forms as a primary mode of enquiry” (p.109). Pamela Smithbell⁹ (2010) quotes Cahnmann-Taylor and Siegsmund by adding:

arts based researchers do more than help us see an external reality that heretofore has gone unnoticed by reading images. They actively form a new visual reality by creating images. The visual is not just a tool for recording, analyzing or interpreting data; it has become a tool for creating data. The visual has reached a new dimension. It has become generative. (p. 99)

Tom Barone and Elliot Eisner (2006) tell us that:

First, Arts based research is engaged in for a purpose often associated with artistic activity: arts-based research is meant to enhance perspectives pertaining to certain human activities. For Arts-Based Educational Research (ABER), those activities

⁷ Faith & Leadership Makoto Fujimura Function art <http://www.faithandleadership.com/makoto-fujimura-function-art>

⁸ Shaun McNiff is an internationally recognized authority on the arts and healing, creativity enhancement, and arts-based research. In addition he is a painter and an author.

⁹ Pamela Smithbell is at the Taos Institute, Tilburg University, Tilburg, The Netherlands

are educational in character. Second, arts-based research is defined by the presence of certain aesthetic qualities or design elements that infuse the inquiry process and the research ‘text’. (p. 95)

Lenore Wadsworth Hervey (2000) has been the original voice on arts-based research in Dance/Movement and Therapy. She defines “Artistic Inquiry as a research that:

- (1) uses artistic methods of gathering, analyzing and /or presenting data;
- (2) Engages in and acknowledges a creative process;
- (3) Is motivated and determined by the aesthetic values of the researcher(s)” (p. xiii).

Sally Atkins (2012)¹⁰ speaks about the challenges and opportunities in working with arts-based dissertations. Some of the challenges are that the reviewers want to see that the dissertation includes the standard ‘five chapters’. Often arts-based researchers use evocative metaphorical chapter titles, share detailed and elaborated information about methodology and findings and interweave their literature review with their own conceptual framework. This offers both the opportunity and the requirement to learn about a new way of thinking about and conducting research.

Arts-based research enhances perspectives through an analytical approach to the themes of literature, music, opera, painting, and other arts. Every type of art expresses its theme through a specific language which consists of several elements. The language of literature, for instance, is comprised of three elements: evocative, contextual, and vernacular: the evocative element sharpens the reader’s critical faculty to fill the gaps and

¹⁰ Sally Atkins is Professor in the Division of Arts, Health and Society at the European Graduate School. She founded the Graduate Program in Expressive Arts Therapy.

silences in the text; the contextual element creates meaningful relationships among various aspects of the work; and the vernacular element infuses the text with lived experiences and personal histories (Barone & Eisner, 2006).

Considering that personal awareness and often art-making are the core of research in arts-based approach, one major prerequisite of the inquiry is to adopt a structured and systematic method that can both prevent self-absorption and affirm the infinitely variable, spontaneous and even at times chaotic nature of artistic experimentation, where the best outcomes often emerge through the process of emanation and struggle.

Although various professions in areas such as healthcare and education employ artistic expression to convey knowledge and share and intervene in life situations, when it comes to the formal process of conducting research, they rely chiefly on other disciplines. I think that there have been many instances of inter-disciplinary collaboration between arts and psychology; however there seems to be a mindset that gives arts a secondary role in terms of such collaborative efforts. The process of research involves finding and working out the information that is required for answering questions, solving problems, and generating new understandings. I have learned that arts-based research involves experimentation with the materials of expression and imagination as, for instance, they appear in creative writing, dance, drama and drawing. Arts, however, have unique ways of knowing and communicating. What arts emphasize is the impact of personal attributes in human understanding. At the same time, arts reveal a capacity for appreciating how personal inquiry can transcend introspection for its own sake and, thus, serve others. Furthermore I am drawn to Sue Books (1998) who suggests that, “Art is a vibrant second language that is universally available to all human beings” (p. 73)

According to Rudolph Arnheim¹¹ (1966), the decisive point regarding the value of research lies in two factors: first, the researcher must understand that the artistic inquiry, the very process through which it unfolds, is more important than the work; and second, it should be useful to others. These two factors make it clear that everything about artistic inquiry is empirical, as its unique nature emerges out of spontaneous moments of discovery, which often subvert even the most carefully developed strategies. Arts-based research does not merely observe and analyze recorded data; it actively plucks them from reality in order to recast them in new forms.

Elliot Eisner (2008) identifies five tensions in arts-based research:

1. “tension between using open forms that yield diverse interpretations and forms that produce a shared understanding;
2. tension between the particular and the general;
3. tension between desire to aesthetically craft form and desire to reflect reality as it is (tension between the aesthetical and the epistemological);
4. tension between desire to pursue new questions and a need to find answers with practical application in the real world;
5. tension between seeking what is novel or creative and what is regarded as verisimilitude.” (p. 11)

These tensions always pose the possibility that, during arts-based research, creativity may be sacrificed to usefulness, and this is a challenge that can undermine the very point of the research drastically. Arts-based research rejects the rigid and inflexible rationales that the academics, who have vested interest in their use, frequently promote. Instead, it focuses on deeds which give it force and credibility. This means that the researcher should get directly involved with her own work by participating in it, by becoming a part of it.

¹¹ Rudolph Arnheim is a path-breaking psychologist of visual experience in the arts. He combined psychology and the arts. Simplicity, balance and clarity were the aspect of art that appealed to him.

Melissa Cahnmann-Taylor¹² (2008) explains how Johnny Saldana transformed fieldwork data into scripts for live theater in the form of “ethnodrama”. One of the best-known works by Saldana is *Finding My Place: The Brad Trilogy*, a play based on research by the educational anthropologist Henry Wolcott (p. 10). In this ethno drama Wolcott, the researcher, and Brad, his research participant, become characters in a script that dramatizes the research findings as well as the complicated and, at times, controversial nature of the research process when the researcher becomes intimately involved with the participant (p.10). This self-reflexivity produces a dynamic ethos in which new knowledge is generated and complex questions are raised.

The most important aspect of arts-based research is perhaps its propensity to propel imagination into new territories. However as Wendell Berry (2012) suggests:

We have lived by the assumption that what was good for us would be good for the world. And this has been based on the even flimsier assumption that we could know with any certainty what was good even for us. We have fulfilled the danger of this by making our personal pride and greed the standard of our behavior toward the world – to the incalculable disadvantage of the world and every living thing in it. And now, perhaps very close to too late, our great error has become clear. It is not only our own creativity - our own capacity for life - that is stifled by our arrogant assumption; the creation itself is stifled.

We have been wrong. We must change our lives, so that it will be possible to live by the contrary assumption that what is good for the world will be good for us. And that requires that we make the effort to know the world and to learn what is good for it. We must learn to cooperate in its processes, and to yield to its limits. But even more important, we must learn to acknowledge that the creation is full of mystery; we will never entirely understand it. We must abandon arrogance and stand in awe. We must recover the sense of the majesty of creation, and the ability to be worshipful in its presence. For I do not doubt that it is only on the condition of humility and reverence before the world that our species will be able to remain in it. (p. 20)

To understand the magnitude of the impact that arts-based research engenders, I

¹² Melissa Cahnmann-Taylor is a Professor of Language and Literacy Education at the University of Georgia.

turn to two examples from literature and opera. The chief role of art is to challenge conventional wisdom and its value system, and that is a task that literature amply performs. Since literature focuses on the arts of interpretation, which heighten awareness and are critical to civic participation, it is essential to make the study of literature the core of a curriculum for citizenship. Let us consider some examples. Tragedy, for instance, awakens compassion for the sufferings of others in us. This compassion is produced by imagination as it contemplates the tragedy of a comparatively good person whose downfall is not the result of purposeful wickedness. By honing our compassion, tragedy enhances our fellow-feeling and tenderness for others. Thus, compassion is at the origin of a civic attribute that makes kind and neighborly coexistence with other beings possible.

Besides being an imaginative construct, literature is also a slice of life; it has its roots firmly planted in reality. From this perspective, literature can give voice to the plight of a “silenced people” who are oppressed and brushed aside by the society. Women, racial minorities, homosexuals, the poor and the powerless represent the groups whose silence can be overcome through literature. Literature dispels silence by disturbing us. In Martha Nussbaum’s¹³ (2003) words, literature broadens the reader’s capacity for receptivity and openness by exposing her to elements that appear as alien and frightening to her. Clearly enough, such capacities shatter cultural stereotypes of self-sufficiency.

In comparison to literature, opera is a total art form in which music is combined with singing, drama, poetry, sometimes dance, and even painting. A particularly suitable opera for the purposes of arts-based research is the story of creation which reflects the

¹³ Martha Nussbaum work emphasizes balance within Amartya Sen’s Capabilities Model.

expressiveness and beauty of the Creator, the magnificent artist. As told in the “Genesis” (Gn 1:1-28), when the Creator engages in the creation, the Creator looks at every possible human passion to complete His work. In the opera of creation, whose libretto spans from the first to the sixth day, love is the over-riding passion. Of course, love, death and tragedy are all parts of the plot, but the Creation Story is ultimately subsumed by a divine opera of love. Within the framework of this divine opera, although there are life, death and incidents of redemption, everything is conceived in terms of joy and transformation, as well as resilience and rebirth, which keep the libretto being written and rewritten all the time. In the divine opera of creation, every element contributes to the emergence of love as an overarching attribute. Talking about the loving time, the eternal time, I view love as the central motivator for our Creator, the most profound artist that brought the universe into being and continues to see it grow and change.

I believe that all of creation is a reflection of this Creator/Artist’s work and so in many ways we are the image and likeness of the Creator/Artist and so the dialogue between Creator and creation continues (Pope Benedict IV, as cited in Stroik, 1999).

Dear artists, as I draw to a conclusion, I too would like to make a cordial, friendly and impassioned appeal to you, as did my Predecessor. You are the custodians of beauty: thanks to your talent, you have the opportunity to speak to the heart of humanity, to touch individual and collective sensibilities, to call forth dreams and hopes, to broaden the horizons of knowledge and of human engagement. Be grateful, then, for the gifts you have received and be fully conscious of your great responsibility to communicate beauty, to communicate in and through beauty! Through your art, you yourselves are to be heralds and witnesses of hope for humanity! And do not be afraid to approach the first and last source of beauty, to enter into dialogue with believers, with those who, like yourselves, consider that they are pilgrims in this world and in history towards infinite Beauty! Faith takes nothing away from your genius or your art: on the contrary, it exalts them and nourishes them, it encourages them to cross the threshold and to contemplate with fascination and emotion the ultimate and definitive goal, the sun that does not set, the sun that illumines this present moment and makes it beautiful. (p. 2)

I call this power to make all things “the Creator, the most passionate Artist,” an artist that unites us by embodying our communal essence in itself. That is why, in Jones’ (2000) words, “We are the emerging soul of the universe,” the “midwives” that facilitate its birth (p. 253). To put it another way, we are all part of a “theo-drama”¹⁴ written and directed by the Creator/Artist. Only by re-living the communal form of this theo-drama, by playing a role that links us all together as a common body of humanity, can we overcome the ego-drama of consumer society, which is inextricably linked with greed, alienation and selfishness. Within theo-drama, we learn to perform our parts by manifesting consciousness, empathy and creativity.

To conclude this chapter, I must stress that within the scope of my research, the imagining of possibilities through a collective effort touches the everyday with sacredness, because all acts of creation ultimately emanate from the Creator/Artist. And since the Creator/Artist is the embodiment of compassionate imagination, every authentic artistic act reveals the same attribute. The next chapter endeavors to describe my theology and the pallet of hues I use to work with youth to manifest the Creator/Artist.

¹⁴ Balthazar is a German Theologian who is best known for his 16 volume on *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*. This Theory is divided into three parts: *The Glory of the Lord*, *Theo-Drama*, and *Theo-Logic*. *The Glory of the Lord*, the seven-volume work on theological aesthetics, introduces theology based on the contemplation of the good, beautiful, and true. The second part of the trilogy, the five-volume *Theo-Drama*, focuses on theodramatics, the actions of God and our human response. Balthasar particularly focuses on the events of Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday.

Chapter Two Innoweave: Where Story Becomes Theology and Story as Expressive Art Becomes Healing

One major aspect of my work has involved empowering youth to envision and create new possibilities by reimagining their world. By relying on emotional intelligence (EI), which will be discussed in this chapter, and articulating their concerns through expressive art, these youths engage in a transformative experience whose chief purpose is the creation of a compassionate imagination. Compassionate imagination broadens our perspective by liberating us from small-minded and selfish considerations, which stand at the intrinsic features of consumer culture. Driven by avarice and an insatiable desire for gain, the consumer culture stands as the antithesis to a hopeful communal vision. Negating the ego-drama of consumer culture, compassionate imagination is entirely concerned with the welfare of others and its motto is: “Do unto others what you would have done unto you.” It espouses an authentic dialogue, which depends on good listening, diversity, courage and simplicity.

This chapter builds on my understanding of the Creator/Artist and speaks to my theology and the pallet of hues available to facilitate compassionate imagination. The pallet is rich with a variety of colours; theologians, theorists, my experiences and ideas. Together these colours offer an innoweave from which emerges my way of being and informs the approach for the work that follows.

Theological/ Integration of Ministry Themes

My ministry has validated and informed the way I am. In this instance I use the words of Matthew Fox (1994) who speaks about work in a manner that resonates with me:

Work comes from inside out; work is the expression of our soul, our inner being. It is unique to the individual; it is creative. Work is an expression of the Spirit at work in the world through us. Work is that which puts us in touch with others, not so much at the level of personal interaction, but at the level of service in the community. (p. 5)

This explanation of work is consistent with my Theology of Presence and Service which is being present with those who are different, due to disability, race, age, or gender. This is similar to what I see as my daily ministry with those who have found themselves displaced and bear titles like refugee, immigrant, and newcomer. With this as my background, I hope to work with the youth who have been labelled in society as “high risk”, “delinquent”, or “disabled”. In my opinion they have been marginalized, oppressed and deprived of the opportunity to showcase their strengths and their resonant leadership.

Part of what haunts me is the idea of social exclusion which Giroux (2008b) and Hobgood (2000) use to refer not simply to poverty but to the connectedness of social problems, which may include poverty. . .¹⁵ The idea has also been used to broaden our understanding of how social problems are not simply the result of individual choices or abilities, but may also be linked to the ways in which other groups and institutions may actively exclude individuals and particular communities from mainstream social and economic life. The result may be a series of interrelated social problems including unemployment, low levels of education, low incomes, welfare dependency, poor health, physical isolation, criminal activity and inadequate provision of services. All this brings

¹⁵The theologian Mary E. Hobgood (2000) offers a compelling look at economic structures. “With our concepts and systems of markets and money, we ignore the relational and historical aspects of our economy. We keep ourselves ignorant of our connections to the people who make our clothes and provide our food. We find ways to talk about poverty in terms of the failures or weaknesses or bad luck of people who are poor, ignoring history and social structures that, as contributing factors, loom high above such minor considerations” (94).

me to the issue of community capacity and development: the desire to boost the capacity of excluded and disadvantaged youth in community.

In connecting my own story as an immigrant woman to social responsibility that links to the idea of community building, I begin to engage in the practice of witnessing and testimony. For Giroux (2008b) “this involves telling one’s story and listening to the stories of others as part of a broader social responsibility to engage the present” (p. 61). However, I did not want any story; I wanted story that could bring out compassion in people,¹⁶ and so I was drawn to a book called the *Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life* by Karen Armstrong (2011). Armstrong leaves aside debates about doctrine and history and zeroes in on the social benefits of compassion. This is what I want to capture.

Armstrong’s goal is to plant a deep-rooted desire for equity. She seeks to alter those who have hardened into partiality or righteousness. She counters the anxiety of cooling our confidence in our beliefs by promoting the wisdom of uncertainty: "Religion is at its best," she writes, "when it helps to ask questions and hold us in a state of wonder – and arguably at its worst when it tries to answer them authoritatively and dogmatically" (p.118).

Armstrong's process attempts to peel away the fetters of the ego and engage our compassionate capacity. I have tried living this for a while – it is not easy. For Armstrong, when we go beyond our likes and dislikes, our sense of self grows and our perspective fans out. Her commitment to this end is so fierce that long time Armstrong fans may bridle at her direct instruction. But her goal is sure. Compassion for her is not simply warm-heartedness; it is energetic:

¹⁶ Paul Zak’s (2013) research is uncovering how stories shape our brains, tie strangers together, and move us to be more empathic and generous.

Compassion impels us to work tirelessly to alleviate the suffering of our fellow creatures, to dethrone ourselves from the centre of our world and put another there, and to honour the inviolable sanctity of every single human being, treating everybody, without exception, with absolute justice, equity and respect (p. 6).

Her solution, her path to transcendence, is compassion embodied by the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have done unto you. Elizabeth Hobgood (2000) would add that the solution to racism is solidarity.

To live this way one needs courage. Parker J. Palmer (1999), in his book *The Active Life*, conveys a deep and graceful exploration of spirituality. Palmer tells evocative stories from a variety of religious traditions, including Taoist, Jewish, and Christian. He shows that the spiritual life does not mean abandoning the world but engaging it more deeply through life-giving action. He celebrates both the problems and potential of the active life, revealing how much these have to teach us about ourselves, the world, and the Creator. This has given me hope and hope transcends life's challenges.

In order to bring deep healing, we need to get at the source of our brokenness. There are stories people tell themselves and each other, unique to those people and their particular place, wherein teachings surface to live well and heal the spirit. Scholars refer to humans as *homo narrans* because of their innate need to tell stories. This reminds me of a story from one of the participants in my program.

I had to run away from Columbia. All was good until we came to the Mexican border. We were about a few hundred of us. The border patrol guards shoved us into a room about 14 feet by 14 feet and said if any one survives you will be lucky. It felt impossible to understand how we could fit in but we had to. The door was shut. He said the only thing he could do to ward off fear was to sing. He began to sing and the others took turns to do so and sang along. They were on top of the other so close that their breath felt like a moisture laden room. They sang and hummed their way into the morning. The guards came, opened the door

and fled in fear as every one of them was alive. (Anonymous)

When stories are constructed to organize the experiences people have, these stories shape and reinforce their worldviews (Koki, 2003, p. 1). Not only do our own stories shape our worldview, but others' stories are also powerful in reaching inside who we are. This is because, first, stories engage us. They are immensely interesting and hold our attention (p. 2). Second, stories address the whole of human experience: emotion, thought, feeling, heart, head, action, imagination (Chronological Bible Storying, 2003). Third, empirical evidence shows that stories have a strong impact on judgments and understanding (Rughase, 1992). Cognitive research shows that memorable information is more likely to be effective, and stories are very memorable (Haghirian and Chini, 2003, p.7). Since we humans are social creatures who regularly affiliate with strangers, stories are an effective way to transmit important information and values from one individual or community to the next. Stories that are personal and emotionally compelling engage more of the brain, and thus are better remembered, than simply stating a set of facts.¹⁷ Fourth, the use of stories in all cultures through all of history shows their power to affect humans. Finally, stories are used in all areas of the Bible to elicit change within people (e.g., Nehemiah's leadership, Jesus' parables, and Paul in Athens).

I have discovered that there are two key aspects to an effective story. First, it must capture and hold our attention. Second, it must transport us into the characters' world. I believe that there is a universal story structure. It starts with something new and surprising, and increases tension with difficulties that the characters must overcome, often because of some failure or crisis in their past, and then leads to a climax where the characters must look deep inside themselves to overcome the looming crisis. Once this

¹⁷ http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_stories_change_brain

transformation occurs, the story resolves itself.

Stories and Transformation

Storytelling enables human beings to articulate our relationship to our world. As John C. Hoffman (1986) suggests, human experience manifests a “narrative quality” (15e). Religious teachings use storytelling as a tool to convey their message. By telling stories, the storyteller seems to cast a spell on the listeners and fosters a faith. However, religious stories are told for different purposes: they either evoke the image of God to produce “concrete content” or reject that content by “shattering all understandings” (Crossan, 1973). In simpler terms, religious storytelling can either strengthen our already established beliefs or undermine them. Hoffman (1986) claims that the first type of religious storytelling gives us a particular framework, while the second type disrupts that framework. By questioning accepted positions and reassessing their value, religious storytelling can act as a “transformic moment”. According to Hoffman, religious storytelling that adheres to conventions and fixed beliefs has a mythic dimension. When religious storytelling disrupts our fixed assumptions it reveals a parabolic quality. Victor Turner (as cited in Hoffman, 1986) suggests that parabolic storytelling leads to a moment of “liminality”, enabling people “to stand outside the boundaries of their society’s world-taken-for-granted with all its accepted meanings” (p.10–11).

Parabolic storytelling is the necessary condition for the transformation of the individual and the community – its purpose is not just to disrupt accepted boundaries. A new faith emerges out of the collapse of old beliefs. Religious teaching should maintain a dialectical character that moves “between affirmation and disruption”, and “between

structure and anti-structure” (p.18), a process that is crucial to its effective performance. In this sense, religious storytelling should take into account both the mythic and parabolic dimensions to forge an evolving relationship between the individual and the community. Turner describes this effect as “transnomic” – as something which, transcending the limitations of social structure, redefines our relationship with our community in radically new ways (p.18).

John D. Crossan claims that Christ’s teachings were fundamentally disruptive (as cited in Hoffman, 1986). He points out that the parables of Jesus “oppose all images, questioning all religious visions” (p.15). Viewing Jesus in this light, Crossan presents him as “preparing the way for the encounter with the Transcendent and thus for the true faith” (p.34). Hoffman (1986) points to the parable of the Good Samaritan as an example of how Christ reverses norms and expectations. This parable teaches that a person should love and help her neighbour in times of need and difficulty. According to Dan Otto Via (1967), Christ blends comic and tragic elements in his parables. With regard to the parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard, Via suggests that, in terms of plot, this parable is tragic. The dissatisfied labourers, who have worked since early morning, view the action of the vineyard owner as unjust because he pays the same wage to those who started their work in the evening. This parable leaves the door for change and transformation open at any time. In this respect and from a thematic perspective, this parable thus reveals a comic structure. Crossan (as cited in Hoffman) suggests that we should not read this parable in terms of content or as a symbolic presentation of God’s grace. Instead, we must see it as an “assault on content” (p.19). The parable may speak about God’s grace, but that is not its main thrust. What is more important is the way in

which it reverses our expectations and surprises us. As Via (1967) rightly states, this parable challenges “our natural assumptions regarding God, human nature, [and] goodness” (p.18).

In Hoffman’s (1986) words, the shock that we receive by encountering these parables makes us conscious of limitations in our understandings and opens the way for “true encounter with the divine” (p.19). Only when we acknowledge our own limitations do we become receptive to other truths and the truth of God. According to Hoffman, parables function as an “epistemology of loss and therefore give God room” (p.21). By upsetting our expectations, parables remove our defenses and enable us to be touched by God. As Hugh Kenner (as cited in Hoffman, 1986) puts it, “whoever can give his people better stories than the ones they live in is like the priest in whose hands common bread and wine become capable of feeding the very soul” (p.34).

Parabolic storytelling liberates us from our moulds and prompts us to “dream dreams, imagine new possibilities, try new roles, dare to be different” (p.36). From this angle, no idea or principle can be beyond question and every moment is seen as a transition to a new phase of understanding.

Paul Tillich (as cited in Hoffman, 1986) believes that Christ’s stories are not simply parables but manifest a mythic dimension as well. According to this view, Christ’s stories try to both challenge and transform existing conditions and set examples that should be followed. Tillich calls this a “mythoparabolic” structure which blends both the Protestant element of human limitation and the Catholic idea of “substance” or “the concrete embodiment of Spiritual Presence” (p.37).

Within the framework of a transnomic theology, no idea or doctrine can exist as

the ultimate truth; instead, everything is considered as “starting points, guiding references to be transcended” (p.10). Correspondingly, we must also change with the times and transcend past experience. Tom Driver (as cited in Hoffman, 1986) points out that we “need to understand that Christ is the changing pattern of our relation to a living God” (p.37). God does not exist as a supreme or dictatorial entity that directs our action in a one-sided manner from above; we interact with Him. Otherwise, any notion of free will is absurd. In Driver’s words, what makes Christianity a transnomic theology is the existence of Holy Spirit “which is infinite and resists figuration” (p.10).

My Theology as a Way of Life

Theology of story allows me to connect, like John D. Crossan (1994) does, to the parables in Christian teaching. Much is done through metaphor. Most important for me is the Creation Story.¹⁸ It does not matter to me if the world was historically or scientifically constructed, and who might be right and whose thoughts are invalid. What matters to me is the artist behind the metaphor of the Creation Story as it is told in the book of Genesis. For me, the Creator and/or artist are one who can love unconditionally, and who made everything and it was all good. Human beings are made in the image of this Creator. To me, this quality of artistry has a central theme of compassion. It is this compassion that makes the story of creation inclusive. It is this story of creation that shows us horizons of sky and sea just too distant to reach, yet within the view of sight. It is this Creator/artist that underlined the score of music in the snow, and one day Vivaldi made come alive in his Four Seasons. It is the Creator who hid the

¹⁸ “Creation Story” is capitalized throughout this work as it refers to a specific Creation Story from the book of Genesis. Similarly the term “Creator” is capitalized throughout this work.

vision of the pieta to all except Michael Angelo, who saw within the rock of stone the tender love of a mother grieving the loss of her son as she holds him for the last time.

This same sense of compassion affirms what I am called to do in work. As Jean Vanier (2012) put it; it is a Theology of Presence, to be there to listen with profound care the story that is being strung like precious pearls on a string, one hesitating moment at a time. This Presence calls me to be fully present as a mother when I stay awake with a sick child, or when I pray longingly for another. It also calls me to be present when news of disappointment is given to a student that disrupts one's life, career path or one's life journey. It calls me to be present when a student is trying to inform me about her disability through layers of medication, just too intoxicating to remember the details, yet necessary according to her doctors.

In the Theology of Presence the space and silence is transformed by the sacred and this becomes the Theology of Service. It calls me to be of Service to those who have had the courage to be present with me and need encouragement or assistance getting back on the road again.

I believe that the Theology of Presence and the Theology of Service lead me to evolve a Theology of Feminine Organic Simplicity because I use that which has been given to me (Matthew 25:14-30). This includes religion, race, age, gender, etc., knowing that many of these are used by society to marginalize and oppress. I think that it is fair to say that I arrive at theology organically, metaphorically and prayerfully.

Experiences

I believe that struggle, like joy, is a part of life. This belief is grounded in my life experience and learning. I feel more like an immigrant woman than a Canadian woman, even though I have been in Canada for close to twenty years. I acknowledge the fact that I am a visible minority as a privilege. The privilege comes from a deep knowing of what it means to be in the world as the other, the different, the new, the coloured, and the one that does not fit in. However by faith and playful stance, I have found a sense of arriving at a place ordained for me in the work I do that is paid and that is unpaid. I have felt encouraged to dismantle this privilege.¹⁹ I learned to dismantle my privilege by: taking time to reconsider my path as a new immigrant; having to find work; and at the same time helping my family integrate into a new culture. I have found a way to reinvent my work by designing a program for the inclusion of immigrants into the profession of Career Counseling as Career practitioners. This allowed them to earn a salary that was equal to the others, and allowed them to use their respective languages in the work place in order to assist the other. This reinvention came from understanding what Matthew Fox (1994) says when he relates to the universe as a Sacrament. For him there is no unemployment, no galaxy is out of work. The focus is first on inner work and then the outer.

This cosmological context speaks to me of pleasure, joy, abundance and an ability to participate in the Great Work. This work has allowed me to write curricula for newcomers to Canada and to help immigrants integrate into college and university

¹⁹ For more information on dismantling privilege, see Elizabeth Hobgood (2000) *Dismantling Privilege and Accountability*.

programs. I have done advising to help them understand the opportunities for work from a new perspective. This often needed some unlearning in order for them to relearn.

I have deeply listened to experiences of war, famine, and many atrocities of human behaviour. I have been like the Elder for some who have had their first child here and were alone, or with those who moved into their first home. For others, I have advocated for subsidized housing, and for the dismantling of police and security records against those with mental health and other illness that were perhaps not understood in the heat of the situation. I have worked with a lawyer to bring estranged members of international families together from areas of civil war and strife. I have created support for young women who had been through the rite of circumcision here in Canada only to find them brutally mutilated. I have also had the opportunity to listen to youth reframe their activities in the underworld and try to relive values of simplicity, kindness and understanding. And in all this I never failed to imagine, feel joy and appreciate the universe. I could not do this work without my faith and belief that this is my calling through the creative process, as a prayer to the Creator/Artist.

I have noticed that the youth do not have the opportunity or the time to reflect on this and come to an understanding of their role in this universe. As Henri Giroux (2008) says, they have become a youth crime-control complex:

the cultural and structural elements that subject young people to disciplinary mechanisms within the broader society, including their criminalization and involvement with an expanding youth criminal justice system. The growing presence of police and security personnel in public schools means that schools become containment centers for populations of disposable youth, especially those marginalized by race and class, who are portrayed as dangerous and hardened criminals destined for incarceration. In contrast to other youth who are lured into a culture of consumerism, these youth face discipline for minor infractions and are ushered into a school-to-prison pipeline that offers little opportunity for escape. Youth facing social problems such as pervasive racism and poverty are

thus often seen as “problem youth” rather than as youth with problems. (p. 62)

My intent in this work was to work together with youth and turn this situation around, one youth at a time.

Image: Struggle as Storm

I think that my thoughts and experiences on struggle are similar to those of Sister Joan Chittister²⁰ (2003) who looks at struggle as ministry that allows one to build the capacity for resiliency. For me building resiliency is similar to experiencing weather storms. Born and growing up in Kuwait I grew accustomed to the power of sandstorms. The power of the storms prevented any visibility as it was happening, and one dreadful night in its fury lifted up our garage and bowled it over our home and into an entertainment yard a few miles away. The sound of it made my brothers and sisters and I think it was the end of the world. It was only the following day that we felt thankful to be alive and unharmed. In Canada, I have seen the deluge of rain storms and found my home overcome and soaked in many feet of water. Finally and most recently, I have admired the beauty of an ice storm that unfortunately cut off all heating and electricity for many. Nature in its fury is unstoppable, yet in its beauty never fails to awaken the ‘awe’ in me. Matthew Fox (1996) expresses the difficulty or the brutality of the storm as the ‘via negativa’,²¹ and likens it to our ability to be open to the intensity of pain and loneliness.

²⁰ Joan Chittister is an internationally known writer and lecturer and the executive director of Benetvision, a resource and research center for contemporary spirituality. For more information see *Beyond Beijing: The Next Step For Women* (1995) and *Heart of Flesh: A Feminist Spirituality for Women and Men* (1998).

²¹ According to Matthew Fox (1996) “via negativa” is the exhortation to be empty, emptied and content to be nothing, but without annihilating oneself. It asks us to welcome silence, let pain strip us of our cover-ups

Idea: Difference, Play

All is not dark, for there is in me a playful side. This allows me to imagine, create and take into account differences in style, facilitation, teaching and learning. In most of my previous research and work, I have had the opportunity to do things differently from the conventional way of facilitating groups. I use a more eclectic or creative approach. For example, in my previous research with new immigrants, I was fortunate to bus the participants away for four days to a retreat centre by a lake. On the way this little convoy sang in their own languages, while those not singing found ways to keep time or add melodic sounds and laughter. What was most uplifting was when one person began to sing a verse from the Koran in Arabic, then another sang the same verse in Gujarati, another in Swahili, and still another in Pushto. The others on the bus hummed and bowed and the meaning of the stanzas never needed an interpretation because each person on the bus spontaneously rendered reverence. This experience invited us to reconsider our relationship to that variously-named reality beyond the human: God, Goddess, Spirit, Krishna, Allah, Brahma, Higher Power, Universal Mind, the Tao, Atman, the One. We negotiated without the need for strict group guidelines, for the participants bonded over this bus trip with respect, by being non-judgmental and open-minded. All the guidelines we could possibly ask for were inherent in this act.

In the pilot project for my present research, I took a group of youth to a baking lab and they baked many hundreds of muffins. The dough was just as excited as the youth. The youth found that baking these cinnamon, bran and raisin muffins was tantalizing. As the trays came out of the oven it looked like the sun kissing the morning dew and the steam arose and filled the baking lab. Butter and jam made these muffins a delicious

snack, every sense was held captive by these creations. The excitement and energy could hardly be described. The students, leaving after late night continuing-education classes, went home with an irresistible box of freshly baked muffins. The youth had enough to take home and to give some to everyone they met. Taxi drivers at the crosswalk were given these boxes. Every caretaker in the building was given a box. After the acts of generosity and spontaneous kindness, attendance in the program was never a problem; in fact, the participants' enthusiasm was contagious.

So too in my work as a trainer with the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i), I have used clay, building blocks and tinker toys to bring alive the emotions. Matthew Fox (1996) would say this is the "via positiva", or recognizing the good, and enhancing it by becoming the "via creativa" which uses creative ways of maintaining this goodness.

The author, scholar, and Catholic evangelist Fr. Robert Barron (2014) says the problem is that the vast majority of us live in the "ego-drama".²² We think we are the directors, writers and, above all, stars of our own dramas. We are convinced that the cosmos provides a pleasing backdrop to our own performance. Other people function as either our supporting players or our villains, against whom we shine all the brighter. I concur with what St. Thomas More "assumes is the profoundly spiritual truth that the only audience worth playing for is the divine audience, and the only drama worth acting in--even in the smallest role--is God's" (cited in Baron, 2000, p. 179). The image of the Creator as artist is embedded in my research, as it lives in my life.

²² For more information see <https://dogmatics.wordpress.com/2014/05/25/fr-barron-introduces-balthasar/>

Theory: Emotional Intelligence

As previously mentioned, I have been involved in work with EI since 1994. Initially, I was collecting data to refine a psychometric inventory by Dr. Reuven Bar-On. Later, I began to assist with the training and certification. It was here that I began to work with psychologists, psychiatrists, trainers, consultants, principals and government officials nationally and internationally. I was called to different venues to train and certify people on the use of this instrument. One of the venues I was called to train and run feedback sessions at was in Chicago, just after the Columbine shooting. There were over 600 professionals, medical doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and other professionals. They all came to find an answer to what could be done. In the evenings when everyone was busy winding down after a tough day, I pondered the question of what could have been done differently for these young people who took it upon themselves to get even. Since then my life has not been the same, as I have been busy training or coaching leaders. I began to infuse EI into the curriculum that I used. I follow Gandhi's statement: "be the change you want to see." I began working on the change with what I knew – EI, building community capacity while enhancing authentic and resonant leadership. My soul was deeply touched.

I have come to the understanding through my work that it is important for youth to learn to recognize, understand, use, and manage emotions. People who recognize and can manage their attitudes and feelings, and empathize with those of others are far more likely to function effectively in a range of diverse situations. They are more likely to reach their own potential, as well as contributing more effectively to the success of the organization. In short, EI measures one's "common sense" and ability to get on in the

world. The theory of EI provides a valuable framework for developing emotional skills, describing an array of non-cognitive abilities, skills and competencies that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures. I have learned by working with EI that:

- When youth learn to recognize emotions, they have the ability to detect and decode emotions in faces, voices, movements, etc., including the ability to identify their own emotions.
- When youth can recognize other people's emotions they have developed a basic aspect of Emotional Intelligence, which facilitates other aspects of EI.
- When youth understand emotions, they can comprehend emotional language and grasp complicated connections between emotions. For example, understanding emotions encompasses the ability to be sensitive to slight variations in emotions and the ability to recognize and describe how emotions progress over time.
- When youth use emotions, they have the ability to work with their emotions to facilitate various cognitive activities, such as thinking and problem solving. The emotionally intelligent person can get the most out of his or her changing moods in order to best fit the task or challenge at hand.
- When youth learn to manage emotions, they can recognize emotions in both themselves and in others. Therefore, the emotionally intelligent youth is a leader who can control emotions, even negative ones, and can use them constructively to achieve goals.

To connect the theory of EI with the image of the Creator as artist is to re-imagine our canvas. The process of learning together began as the young people bravely described

their struggles through the spoken art of language. They came together to experience expressive art as a way to develop new understanding, with the assistance of myself and artists/trainers from the Canadian Opera Company. Through a vocabulary of EI and the work of many forms of expressive art the young people collectively created an opera. The libretto was their story strung together from the pieces of their individual stories. The end result is hardly important; what matters were the processes, the lived experiences of their creativity that brought about transformation towards a compassionate imagination.

Theory: Appreciative Voice

Gervase Bushe (2009) is an organizational consultant and scholar who uses Appreciative Inquiry (AI). AI can be defined as the cooperative search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them. It involves systematic discovery of what gives a system “life” when it is most effective and capable in economic, ecological, and human terms. His work on AI helped validate my way of thinking and being for using an appreciative voice in the world. It is about seeking out the good a person does while minimizing the person’s negative traits. This is of foremost importance as the struggles young people face bend them into stances of abject humility and dejection. This lends its self to what I call the Appreciative voice.

I use the language of “clear leadership” to acknowledge the strengths that young people have and beckon them to use this as their “risk taking”. I let the youth know that they have been striving to be “resonant leaders”; individuals who create resonance with others. Through this resonance, leaders become attuned to the needs and dreams of

people they lead, creating conditions in which people can excel.²³ These are individuals who manage their own and others' emotions in ways that drive success. Leaders everywhere have recognized the validity of resonant leadership but struggled with how to achieve and sustain resonance amid the relentless demands of work and life.

Intertwining Theology and Theory

We perceive “the patterns and themes” of our life in arts and release our tensions and “painful memories” as we communicate them to others. This aspect of sharing in expressive arts is what connects us to others. Every teller of stories needs a listener or a community of listeners and storytelling, in this sense, is an intrinsically social act. Christ, too, told his parables to his audiences to build a new society of believers, the Kingdom of God.

Since I have established that “story” is part of my theology, it is fair to say that stories are based on the model of narrative inquiry to help me understand the background of the participants in my research. In a model of narrative inquiry, the theory holds that by looking at a person's experiences and analyzing how they view the world through their own eyes, a better understanding of how to instruct can be reached (Freeman, 1998). This was not necessary in my study as I do not need to instruct. Instead it was necessary for me to provide the youth with the space to explore their possibilities.

I would like to focus a bit more on what was briefly mentioned earlier in this chapter. A group of youth, ages 18 to 29 were given the opportunity to work with a chef and make muffins. We did not do formal interviews in recruiting this group. We asked

²³For more on resonant leadership, see Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee (2002), *Primal Leadership*; and Boyatzis and McKee (2005), *Resonant Leadership*.

for those who considered themselves leaders to attend. Each student was given an apron and a chef's hat and a hair net. Each one had their own station. There were bins of the ingredients and weighing scales at the end of each station. They followed the process, washed their hands and got down to work. This seemed so natural to them. I sensed it was like they were little children once again enjoying the engagement of every sense throughout the process.

We did not subsequently conduct interviews. Further and most important, our goal was evolving relationships through the safety of the task. Our premise was that those who are being interviewed, even in the presence of someone attempting to cater to their wellbeing, are completely honest in their own telling of past events. In many cases, those who have dealt with hardship, pain, and loss will attempt to cover up their own feelings to the point that their own exaggerations and changes to stories are believed (Conle, 2000). This meant working with these students to allow them to get to know each other through the safety of a task. Relationships evolved as the work changed from measuring ingredients, to following a process, to reaching a tangible finished product, which in this case is a muffin.

Creativity is a bridge to our authentic wisdom and to our ability to heal ourselves. It is available to everyone. It is a universal language that cannot be restricted by ethnicity, education, or economics. Art provides a much needed opportunity to see that we are not limited by our immediate circumstances and that by accessing and seeing our unique wisdom, we can choose to be fully expressed in our own communities and create a better life for ourselves and for those around us. I see art as a healing tool not to "fix" someone but to engage with them clearly and without judgment as they walk in their own

process. Our stories can become guidance and wisdom for one another as we are faced with new challenges. Often I see a letting go process that stops self-blame and instead engages us to the present and to what is possible. Creative action allows for mindful interaction with whatever circumstances we find ourselves in.

Throughout this interaction we are finding our authentic wisdom and can begin to recognize its shape and characterize ingredients, to mixing, to creating a new product that in its unfinished state came together, all the ingredients one by one. So too did each student come together to know the name of the others, to talk informally about perhaps the texture of the unfinished produce, to smell the essence and to use the machinery to beat, mix and fill in the trays, their conversation deepened. It was as if small talk was not necessary, deep listening was happening as stories were being shared. When their muffins were ready, the aroma filled the lab, the quiet and deep listening changed to joy and excitement. First for a few and then for all of them, the process of packing the muffins and then cleaning the lab came just as easily. A new found energy allowed them to share with excitement the many boxes they baked with every one they met. No instructions given, no space for tell-tale signs of exaggerations and hiding behind falsifications of factual events in their own lives. The youth did not have to be wary of this kind of change to the story. It did not create a false impression for future work. Rather, it validated the power of team work, of honest work, of exploring new work, of being curious about the work, and then work became play; play that gave energy and created relationships. There was no need for their work to be called into question or whether it was to be successful. They owned a feeling they could describe and enjoy. Was this success? Time will tell a greater part of this story.

A second way that theory and theology combine is that the youth can understand the implications of creation in terms of both religious and personal outlooks. In the pilot project and this research study, the goal was to use theological practices and images of creation to allow for the students to see the possibilities of future change through their own actions and powers of the mind. Prior research has shown this to be possible through empowerment techniques where the student was able to learn that they could create a change just by trying hard and being as effective of an individual as possible (Schiff, 2006). However, at the same time, thoughts of self-doubt can cause problems with this process and so they should be addressed accordingly. Interestingly, this was not necessary for the baking project, since everyone became a helper. Those who found that it was better to measure the ingredients for the muffins decided to do so, and those who had the strength to mix did so with delight. The youth did not need to be pushed to understand their own abilities or the ways that they can work with others to effect change in the world around them. More importantly, they used the skills they always had while being given the space and context for them to do so. Assuming that they are able to see this as a possibility is necessary, and the space for failure was eliminated by choosing something engaging. Everyone had to use math to create multiple recipes, as they baked close to a couple of hundred muffins. Everyone had to read, and they did not fear their ability to do well. They did not sit and wait to be asked, nor did they dread the moment of being called out individually and feel uncomfortable. Here they came together as a group and soon a community.

A third way in which theology and theory intertwine concerns the assumption that the majority of those who participated in the pilot and the research with me want the help

that is being offered and were willing to do what was necessary to make sure that the changes that they wanted in life could be reached. Some might argue that students in these kinds of activities often are doing so because they are being forced to by another person or outside imposition. However, even if they did not initially want to take part, or vehemently opposed the entire process, it is still possible to help them to realize that change can occur (Collier & Morgan, 2002). By being firm and yet kind with the youth, this process can be empowering to even the most unlikely of young people. In the spirit of ‘appreciative voice’, this research worked with marginalized youth, and did not ask ‘those who needed help’ to come; rather asked leaders to join. And every one took a different part to arrive at their destination and, as a result, is a leader. I firmly believed in the possibility of giving them the space to imagine their possibility.

This space has come from my understanding of the Creator as Artist, where the universe has enough in it for each one of us. All that we must do is to look after it. When I think of these youth and look at their lives, I realize that they are no different than any other youth; hardship and difficulty have been with them. With no asking or prompting I know youth who have engaged and imagined possibility in the realm of social justice and community building. This is what has led me to believe that this is possible in every young person. Wendell Berry (2012) puts it this way:

I will say, from my own belief and experience, that imagination thrives on contact, on tangible connection. For humans to have a responsible relationship to the world, they must imagine their places in it. To have a place, to live and belong in a place, to live from a place without destroying it, we must imagine it. By imagination we see it illuminated by its own unique character and by our love for it. By imagination we recognize with sympathy the fellow members, human and nonhuman, with whom we share our place. By that local experience we see the need to grant a sort of pre-emptive sympathy to all the fellow members, the neighbors, with whom we share the world. As imagination enables sympathy, sympathy enables affection. And it is in affection that we find the possibility of a

neighborly, kind, and conserving economy.

I offer the following as a prayer to close this discussion of the intertwining of theological themes and themes from my practice that are foundational to the work I want to do with marginalized youth:

Contain your experience with the divine so that it does not escape you but rather shapes you. Be silent. Silence will help you avoid engaging in the games of competition and illusion that regularly seduce us in the outside world. Silence also helps you avoid distraction. It helps focus the busy mind – the mind that always has to be doing something, thinking something, the mind that always has to be otherwise engaged lest it become introspective and allow the soul's voice to override its own. The silence I am describing is a silence that you use to contain the grace you receive when you enter the Castle of your soul. This quality of silence allows you to engage in discernment. You carry this silence within you, even when you are with others. It allows you to hold your center amid the chaos of your life; it keeps you clear so that you do not do or say things you will regret or make decisions out of fear. (Myss, 2006, pp. 38-39)

Through learning, dismantling my own privilege and through experience, I have been guided to this place to do this work with youth, knowing that through the Creator, we will all be forever changed.

The next chapter offers the methodological research paradigm through which I articulate my own approach to the whole affair, and define the part I would perform in facilitating the work with a group of young leaders who planned, wrote, rehearsed and performed an opera. I choose Shawn Wilson's "research is ceremony" as a methodology to shape this research and articulate my relationship with these youths. My motivations were to be twofold: to do a research project about the experience of these young leaders as they carry through their project; and to facilitate the conditions by which they could accomplish their task through collective efforts. These conditions enabled these youths to forge a more solid sense of selfhood as their individuality underwent growth and maturity.

Chapter Three: The Path to Finding Voice

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful speech, and the inability to listen to others, I vow to cultivate loving speech and deep listening in order to bring joy and happiness to others and relieve others of their suffering. (Thich Hanh, 1993, p. 6)

Cultivating the love of verbal and non-verbal speech and deep listening is what I call opening the universal door to relationship (Thich Hanh, 1993). Never in the history of humankind have we had so many means of communication—television, telecommunications, telephones, fax machines, wireless radios, hot lines, and red lines—but we still remain islands. There is so little communication between the members of a family, between the individuals in society, and between nations. We suffer from so many wars and conflicts. We do not know how to listen to each other. We have little ability to hold an appreciative and meaningful conversation. We have not made time to cultivate the arts of listening and speaking. The universal door of communication has to be opened again.

When we cannot communicate, we get sick, and as our sickness increases, we suffer and spill our suffering on other people. We purchase the services of psychotherapists to listen to our suffering, but if psychotherapists do not practice the universal door, they will not succeed. Psychotherapists are human beings subject to suffering, just like the rest of us. They might have problems with their spouses, children, friends, and society. They may experience a great deal of suffering which cannot be communicated to even the most beloved person in their life. How can they listen and understand our suffering?

This chapter builds on the key concepts of the Creator as Artist discussing the methodology for cultivating deep listening and finding voice. Here, I return to the details

of the pilot project, in which I tested my assumptions about the research questions and the approach and methodology. The discussion continues with the questions and methodology I used to open the universal door through opera. The details are included about the data collection analysis and validation, as well as the ethics protocols that were implemented to ensure informed consent.

Finding Voice through the Art of Baking

Prior to preparations for the creation of the opera, I conducted a pilot project to clarify and practice the multi-faceted approach that I intended to use to create the opera. The pilot project was funded by the Toronto Housing Community, and enabled me to work with 10 youth, between the ages of 18 to 29. The youth were from local Toronto agencies and were immigrants or first generation immigrants to Canada. The pilot entailed having the youth involved in the art of baking. The pilot project included: development of an eight module leadership training curriculum based on EI, to be incorporated into and practiced in creative activity in three baking labs; establishing a partnership with the George Brown College (GBC) baking faculty; collecting and analyzing EI data from each of the 10 participants at the beginning of the Project; organizing and facilitating three separate group baking labs: making muffins (e.g., building community and interpersonal skills); baking lasagna (following directions; handling stress; how they make decisions and follow through); and making cookies (general mood, and happiness); developing a method of “just-in-time” appreciative feedback to each of the participants on aspects of their EI skills during their baking experience; recording data on examples of their leadership behaviour and EI activities, with participant feedback; and producing a group developmental EI report so that

participants felt safe (i.e., not a deficit approach, with individual pre-post scores, but living out a philosophy of everyone leading and learning), and could see a comparison of themselves with others their age.

The main goal for me was to learn what was involved in conceptually and actively integrating into practice: aspects of EI work, with a positive, appreciative voice concerning leadership development with marginalized youth, through creative activity (baking), in order to provide the practical opportunity to showcase and enhance their existing intrapersonal and interpersonal skills.

My assumption as researcher, facilitator, and participant in the pilot was that I would not need to instruct; instead I would provide them with the space to explore possibilities. Each student was given an apron, a chef's hat and a hair net. Each one had their own station, with bins of ingredients and weighing scales at the end of every line of stations. They followed the process, washed their hands and got down to work. The process allowed them to get to know each other through the safety of a task, and as the work changed from measuring the ingredients, to mixing, to creating a new product, all the ingredients came together. So too did the students come together to: know the name of the others; talk informally about the texture of the unfinished product; smell the aromas throughout the creative process; and use the machinery to beat, mix and fill the trays.

Another major outcome for me in the pilot project was that the youth came to understand the implications of Creation in terms of both religious and personal outlooks. For example, having them come to experience the act of creating gave them the opportunity to also experience and see themselves as created beings. My intent was to use

theological practices and images of creation to allow students to see the possibilities of future change through their own actions. Some had never baked a muffin at home. So we were all learners together. Some of the youth from this pilot project would subsequently participate in the creation of the opera.

This experience shaped my research questions and methodology that follows.

Research Questions

There were two research questions in the main project. First, how can a group of 15 vulnerable, immigrant and/or first generation immigrant youth live with their struggles while finding compassion and imagination? Second, how can the sacredness of story and the use of expressive arts lead these youth towards compassionate imagination?

Key terms in these research questions that require definitions, presented below, include: the terms immigrant; compassion; and imagination. Further, the youth through the sacredness of story moved towards compassionate imagination. Thus, the meaning of compassionate imagination is also defined.

Immigrant is defined as “Persons residing in Canada who were born outside of Canada, excluding temporary foreign workers, Canadian citizens born outside Canada and those with student or working visas.”²⁴

“Compassion literally means ‘to suffer together’” (Thich Hanh, 2014, p. 68). For me, this means being awakened to the suffering of the other and to be present to it. In Buddhism, compassion (karuna) is defined as a determination to liberate others from their grief, something that is impossible if we do not admit to our own unhappiness and misery (Armstrong, 2011, p.81).

²⁴ Retrieved from www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-004-x/2010004/def/immigrant.eng.htm

I am particularly fond of the quote on imagination offered by Wendell Berry (2012).

The term 'imagination' in what I take to be its truest sense, refers to a mental faculty that some people have used and thought about with the utmost seriousness. The sense of the verb 'to imagine' contains the full richness of the verb 'to see.' To imagine is to see most clearly, familiarly, and understandingly with the eyes, but also to see inwardly, with 'the mind's eye.' It is to see, not passively, but with a force of vision and even with visionary force. To take it seriously we must give up at once any notion that imagination is disconnected from reality or truth or knowledge. It has nothing to do either with clever imitation of appearances or with 'dreaming up.' It does not depend upon one's attitude or point of view, but grasps securely the qualities of things seen or envisioned. (para 11)

When reading *Art Is a Way of Knowing* by Pat Allen (1995), I learned:

Our imagination is the most important faculty we possess. It can be our greatest resource or our most formidable adversary. It is through our imagination that we discern possibilities and options. Yet imagination is no mere blank slate on which we simply inscribe our will. Rather, imagination is the deepest voice of the soul and can be heard clearly only through cultivation and careful attention. A relationship with our imagination is a relationship with our deepest self. (p.3)

Dr. Christine Carter (2011, June 11), a sociologist and "happiness" expert for science-based parenting, says in her video that the bottom line in her research with young children is that "the fundamental skill for happiness is compassion, and our task is to foster 'compassionate imagination'" (5 minutes). She claims compassion has three components: empathy or emotional literacy; kindness and generosity of spirit; and creativity (5 minutes). The Creation Story is an example of compassionate imagination where the Creator/Artist emphatically understood the needs of every creature animate or inanimate and through kindness and generosity breathed creativity into the universe.

An Indigenous Expressive Arts-Based Approach

My decision to create an opera as the Project Dissertation came from my own life experience. I grew up with a dad who was a violinist. He played most often in the choir loft and on occasion for Ghandi when he visited the city. My youngest child was very shy and found a way to express herself through music. It was through her extracurricular activities that I met many of the educator-artists. These experiences led me to believe that opera would engage all the senses of the participants, and therefore would allow all to find a place in the project, regardless of mobility or vision difficulties, or any other impairment.

This project required an approach that could help me articulate and facilitate the realization of the opera. I chose Shawn Wilson's (2008) Indigenous research methodology as a guideline to shape my own research project and articulate my relationship with these youth.

Wilson sets Indigenous research methodology in opposition to a Eurocentric research paradigm which, he suggested, aimed to colonize and oppress people. Often in Eurocentric research, little or no relationship exists between the researcher and the participants of research, and no explicit transaction takes place between them. In contrast, an Indigenous research paradigm emphasizes relationship where power is equally distributed.

For example, in this Indigenous research paradigm, the participants recounted their stories. They told the narratives of their lives, but they are not the only ones who had a story to tell. As an Indigenous researcher, I, too, took up the storyteller's role. In this capacity, I was not a knowing agent who stood inexorably above the participants of

research classifying their stories in fixed categories. This paradigm taught that all of us had stories to tell; it acknowledged that truth is varied and multiple and without any grand narrative. In this sense, as my narrative interacted with the narratives of the participants of my research, this dialectical relationship turned into the very principle that shaped both my methodology and the participants' approach to staging their opera.

As Wilson suggests, Indigenous research should help us understand “that knowledge, theories and ideas are only knots in the strands of relationality that are not physically visible but are none the less real” (p.87). However, the opera that these young leaders wrote, rehearsed, choreographed and performed was not merely a manifestation of their personal experiences; it pointed to the direction of their future growth, where their sense of self and community became inextricably enmeshed. What these youth and I learned through the experience of writing, rehearsing, and performing the opera was that this experience was relevant to our lives.

Wilson points out that when “listeners know where the storyteller is coming from and how the story fits into the storyteller's life it makes the absorption of the knowledge . . . much easier” (p.32). The narratives of the young leaders, illustrated their diverse backgrounds and the way their ethnic, class and familial relations shaped their personalities. My approach to these youths and their project was in contrast to the dominant system of research. Rather than assuming a single overarching reality whose laws apply to everything, my approach assumed multiplicity of realities that the youth brought.

I anticipated that the youth were coming with energy that was optimistic and open. My consciousness, too, was awakened by sitting with them in a circle and

participating in every stage of their work. This process also awakened a side of my personality as I came to appreciate the value of self-narrative in conjunction with collective story in a more profound way. Basing my approach on an Indigenous research method, I was no longer the owner of knowledge, but an interpreter of it. Having no privilege over these youth meant we had access to a higher form of knowledge, in which we began to perceive a reality to which we all have access. This is a point that Wilson eloquently makes. He suggests that in Indigenous research methodology, the ultimate goal is not knowledge, but “the change that this knowledge brings about” (p. 87). Unlike a Eurocentric research paradigm that views knowledge in fixed and static terms and seeks it to establish its hegemony over the subjects of research, knowledge in an Indigenous research paradigm is a tool for initiating change and transformation.

When the young leaders came to me and introduced their project to the Canadian Opera Company, they held discussions in talking circles in order both to get to know each other and to exercise a democratic exchange about their ideas. A talking circle consists of a group of people who sit in a circle and express their views in turn. Visually, the circle is non-hierarchical and everywhere in its circumference is equal.

Embracing communal spirit, Indigenous research is a source of enrichment. Stripped of its dynamism and fluidity it is void of the spatial relationships created between Elder and youth. It becomes generalized and depersonalized. It is separated from the land, from the worlds of spirits, from its source and its meaning, and from the methodologies for transmission that provide the rigor that ensures proper communication. It becomes coerced and manipulated into a form that cannot possibly transform or decolonize. (Simpson, 2004, p. 55)

This process of fragmenting subjects and severing their connections with each other disregards their complexity and renders them mute and distorted. The opera challenged this Eurocentric tendency by enabling the youth to tell their untold stories.

For me, there is an affinity between Indigenous ways of knowing and arts-based research. According to Diane Conrad (2008), who quotes bell hooks who says this “new paradigm” approach to community-based research is viewed as a means of producing knowledge, a tool for community dialogue, education, raising consciousness, mobilizing for action, and amplifying needs, demands and critiques from the “margins” (p. 248). From this perspective, art forms such as drama or opera are both pedagogy and research; we can both teach and learn from them. In Conrad’s words, we must see truth and knowledge as “individual, contextual, contingent, and always in process” (p. 258). In the case of the youth, the opera created a context of new knowledge for them that set in motion a transitional stage that led to new consciousness. This new context facilitated the emergence of a socially critical work that gave expression to the voices “most often silenced by our society” (p. 257). According to Conrad, the “research is ‘for’, ‘with’ and ‘by’ the people rather than ‘on the people’” (p. 248). As Conrad and Gail Campbell mention this approach:

commonly incorporates alternative methods such as oral traditions, cultural art forms that are already part of community life such as story-telling or songs, and other popular arts forms including documentation of life stories, photography or photo/voice projects, radio, poetry, music, myths, drawing, sculpture, puppetry, drama . . . (p. 252)

The opera provided the young leaders with the essential space that they needed for reconstructing a more positive reality. Thus, as Conrad points out in another context, these alternative forms “become meeting spaces for cultural exchange” (p. 252). Within the space of this interpretation, collision with reality and the emergence of the chance to transform became inevitable.

In Conrad's words, the "task of research is to make sense out of what we know"; this enables us to strive "to find new ways of looking at the world" (p. 258). This offered an opportunity to break out of the clichés and the categories that ordinarily define us. This point is reinforced by the fact that drama was itself an investigatory tool because, as Conrad points out, it "helps us to re-look at content to draw insights and make new meanings" (p. 259). The act of interpretation undermines reality in its various aspects, and therefore also opens a space for multiplicity. In this sense, drama, more than anything else, was "a way of generating understanding about [our] experiences" (p. 261).

Let us now return to my Indigenous research methodology which in Wilson's (2008) terms is "relational". Indigenous research methodology tries to link parts together while preserving the sense of wholeness. In this sense, the dialogue that the Indigenous research paradigm prompts is not adversarial; it does not unfold in terms of competition. It does not seek to find fault with subjects within a fixed system of definitions in order to establish its own hegemony over them. Instead, the dialogue that it unravels promotes equal participation in the event. This was the approach that I pursued.

A collective effort is at the heart of the Indigenous research paradigm. What is crucial here is the equal degree of knowledge that each participant contributed to the creation of a communal sense of release in the end. Indigenous research advocates a knowledge that emphasizes the spirit of community that "goes beyond this idea of individual knowledge to the concept of relational knowledge" (p. 74). Within this framework, no one knows more than others because inequality in knowledge leads to the domination of the person who has a higher claim to knowledge. After all, knowledge is a source of power. For this reason, as a researcher working with Indigenous criteria, I

avoided creating a separate and authoritative area of knowledge to which the participants in my research had no access. As Wilson points out, research must rely on relational accountability, that is, it must be part of the community if it is to be counted as Indigenous. Relational accountability entails respect for others by listening to them; it means not insisting on one's own idea as the sole source of truth.

The young leaders in this project chose their roles and engaged opera, a highly ritualized form of music, to express their relational accountability to each other, with the coaches and myself. This fits well with the conception of Indigenous research as ceremony. Not only does ceremony derive its significance from a respectful acknowledgement that all things are connected; it also manifests a capacity to bring about a life changing experience. This latter aspect is the ultimate goal of ceremony, as it produces a condition by which participants step beyond the everyday and embrace a raised state of consciousness. The ceremony had a transformative effect because it marks a transition to another stage of consciousness. The Indigenous notion of ceremony awakened this enthusiasm by opening us up to new experiences which had a dominantly communal character.

Researchers who work within the Indigenous research paradigm enact this ceremony in their own research as well. In fact, a major task of Indigenous research is to bring about a change in the researcher herself. According to Wilson, "if research doesn't change you, then you are not doing it right" (p. 83). I became a part of a ceremony that transformed the perspectives of all of us, within this non-hierarchical structure.

As a result, the ethical question that an Indigenous researcher always confronts is how and in what fashion to relate to the participants of his or her research who have

unique experiences peculiar to them. The researcher should always adopt the approach that can forge the strongest possible relationship with a participant for future shared ideas. The particular story of each participant became embedded in the theme of the opera, and in that sense my own research methodology and the opera coincided perfectly. As Wilson suggests, “The more relationships between yourself and the other thing, the more fully you can comprehend its form and the greater your understanding becomes” (p. 56).

Another characteristic that the opera shared with my Indigenous research method was the tendency to bring the participants together by reducing the space between them. This approach tied in closely with the notions of reciprocity and ceremony which frame participants who share the same space. My goal in employing an Indigenous research methodology was to foster a cooperative relationship with the participants of my research. It is for this reason that Wilson calls Indigenous research paradigm a “sacred ceremony”, because it builds relationships and “bridges this sacred space” (p. 137). The opera became a sacred ceremony and the workshops became a sacred space for reflective learning; that we came to every session leaving behind our tiredness, our competition, with an openness to continue our inner work. There was a point when my research and the performance of the participants in the sacred space came together as ceremony, when all connections were transparent and a sense of spirituality and hope emerged.

The Relationships

A group of young leaders came with me to carry out a particular research project. The project entailed a plan to write, rehearse and perform an opera. The group comprised up to 15 students with diverse ethnic and social backgrounds. This meant a great deal of

effort was required to establish harmony among these youths whose experiences differ radically from each other. My motivations were twofold: to do a research project about the experiences of these young leaders as they carried through their project, and facilitate the conditions by which they accomplish their roles through collective efforts. These conditions enabled these youths to enmesh a more solid sense of selfhood as their individuality underwent growth and maturity.

The relationships were between and among the youth, with the coaches of the Canadian Opera Company and with me as the facilitator, researcher and participant in the process. As previously mentioned, the community organization leaders facilitated the recruitment of the 15 young leaders. Four were confirmed from the pilot project. All were between the ages of 16 to 29. The majority came from different ethnic backgrounds and presented with unique and diverse abilities. Held in common was that they were all immigrants or first generation youth. This meant that a great deal of effort was required to maintain harmony between these youth, as their experiences differed from each other.

I approached the staff of the Canadian Opera Company, all artists and educators in their own right. There was no difficulty, as I had an established relationship with the Canadian Opera Company through my children. My request for their participation included the voice coach, the music coach, the movement coach, the costume coach and videographer. I secured funding from the Toronto Housing Community once they agreed to participate (Appendix A).

The Process

This process included an eight month time commitment for all of us. The youth participated in nine workshops (Table 1). Half were held at George Brown College

(GBC) and the other half at the Canadian Opera Company. The workshops followed the following format and each required three and a half hours. Food was provided at each workshop.

Table 1. Workshops

Module	Title	Purpose and Background
1	Awakening the Dreamer (all participants, artists/coaches and George Brown College staff)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To understand that each of us has a place in this universe - To find our role in protecting this universe
2	Leadership and Encouragement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifying key traits of a leader, a successful role model and capacity building leader is critical to personal development. - Understanding personal patterns through EQ-I testing to identify areas of improvement.
3	Leadership and Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This segment is critical for participants to understand the importance of networks – friends, colleagues from work and other acquaintances. - Importance of strategic alliances to ensure continuous support network to find common themes in leadership growth over time.
4	Leadership and the Path of Letting Go	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The purpose of this module is for participants to understand the importance of leading through the process of delegation. In order to focus their energies as leaders on the bigger picture, leveraging the resources available around them is critical for seamless execution.
5	Opera 1: Singing the Dreamer’s Story: Operatic Storytelling (Spoken word artist - Sun)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To allow the participants to find their inner voice, and be comfortable expressing themselves. - To understand the importance of their personal struggles and how they have shaped them.
6	Opera 2: Singing the Dreamer’s Story: Operatic Storytelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The purpose of being involved with the opera behind the scene allowing participants a creative medium to express their journey or their personal story through the arts.
7	Opera 3: Singing the Dreamer’s Story: Operatic Storytelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learning to use their own stories to create material for the libretto (the text) of their own opera. - The workshops presented included information on storytelling, creative writing and spoken word.
8	Opera 4: Singing the Dreamer’s Story:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review the libretto created from their stories. Work in small groups to begin composing the

Module	Title	Purpose and Background
	Operatic Storytelling	music and creating the overall design.
9	Opera 5: Singing the Dreamer's Story: Operatic Storytelling	- To focus on the creation of characters; and the vocal performance.

The design of these workshops was informed by my prior work conducting leadership workshops with Not-For-Profit organizations. The content for the opera came from the participants. The youth also selected the roles they wanted to play in the opera.

The intent was for the coaches to work with the youth to refine their story. Each session began with a briefing about their experiences and feeling. This led to the content for the opera. At the end of each workshop there was dialogue and a discussion circle. The result was a 15 minute opera that was video-taped with their consent. After creating the opera, the participants decided how to bring closure to the process and began realizing their dream: their own real life opera.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected by the youth and by me throughout the project. The data informed the type and nature of characters and their respective lines and music in the opera. The youth were co-constructors of the data throughout this project. The youth did an individual EQ-i which consists of 133 items that provided a story about the five broad areas that make up the total EI. These are the Intrapersonal, Inter Personal, Stress Management, Adaptability and the General Mood scale. Following this, each participant was given their own report and also an individual feedback session with me. From the individual reports a collective group report was compiled. This was used as the backdrop for most debriefing sessions. Ultimately the purpose of the opera was for the youth to

find their voice and create the libretto for the opera which was the prelude to their individual real life operas.

The other part of the data collection was the short video documentary that chronicles the sessions leading to the opera as well as the video of the performance itself. Once the project was completed, participants provided feedback about their own experiences and I reflected to describe some of the findings and implications.

Validation

Trustworthiness is the trust that each youth has with them, each other, the coaches, me and the process. This trustworthiness was built in throughout the project by engaging the youth in individual and group reflective practices. The individual and group EQ-i was the basis for initiating the reflective practice. The workshops were intended to build the trust amongst us and the opera was the manifestation.

After the youth had created their opera, they had a chance to view the video and reflect on their creative process. It is hoped that they used the same creative process with their lives.

My approach to this effort was designed to minimize the impact of my biases. For example, the use of the standardized EQ-i enabled the young people to rate themselves on essential skills in the inventory and received individual and group results. A non-hierarchical structure and an interactive design were used in the workshop and sessions to promote dialogue and equal participation and collaboration. The emphasis was on building relationships and relational accountability through: the sharing of their stories and lived experiences; and the creation of their opera. Foremost, the youth worked

with the vocal coach, the music coach, the movement and dance coach, the spoken word artist, the costume designer and each other. This lessened influence I might have had on the participants and their results. For example, as part of the students' skill development, through the use of opera they frame their stories with the help of a Spoken Word artist, who used objects of art and movement to help evoke their stories. They then pieced these stories together to write their libretto. This removed me from influencing them.

Ethics

Research ethics involves the application of fundamental ethical principles to research involving human participants. George Brown College (GBC) follows the guidelines set out in the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2). These guidelines were released in 1998 by the Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics (Centre for Information in Health Research, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council).

Research ethics are put in place to protect study volunteers with respect to:

- Human dignity and vulnerable persons
- Free and informed consent
- Voluntary participation
- Privacy and confidentiality
- Justice and inclusiveness
- Balance of potential harms and benefits
- Minimization of harm and maximization of benefit.

Research Ethics Board

The Research Ethics Board at GBC was established to ensure the protection of study volunteers in research projects. The board follows the guidelines set out in the TCPS 2. The GBC Research Ethics Board reports directly to the President of the college. However, it receives administrative support from the office of research and innovation.

Before any research that involves living human subjects can take place at GBC, the proposal for research must undergo a review and approval process by the Research Ethics Board to ensure that the research complies with the highest ethical standards.²⁵

This participatory research project was presented to the Ethics Review Board at GBC. An informed consent form (Appendix B) was developed based on the requirements of GBC. The form included the following elements:

- a. Participation is voluntary and participants have the right to withdraw without prejudice.
- b. Confidentiality is their right should they wish to exercise it.
- c. It is assumed that the benefits of this study will outweigh the costs to the participants.
- d. All participants have the ability to sign the Consent form and have the right to withdraw at any time.
- e. All participants agree to have the sessions and the opera video-taped.

The ethics application was approved and the same was accepted by St. Stephens College (Appendix C).

²⁵ <http://www.georgebrown.ca/research/ethics/>

To conclude this chapter, I must stress that within the scope of my research, the imagining of possibilities through a collective effort touches the everyday with sacredness, because all acts of creation ultimately emanate from the Creator/Artist. I endeavoured to work towards understanding that the Creator/Artist is the embodiment of compassionate imagination, which gives meaning to every authentic artistic act and reveals the same attribute.

Chapter 4: Opera Our Collective Story

This chapter tells the story about the creation of a community in which sharing, compassion, sympathy, understanding and imagination are central themes. The story unfolds as the youth engaged in imagining, creating, writing, designing, and staging an opera. Important is that the youth turned to storytelling as an instrument which forged solidarity and togetherness among them; they told their own life story to others and, in turn, listened to the stories told by others.

In the following discussion, I offer an introduction to the youth and the members of the Canadian Opera Company. I illuminate the Creator/Artist at work through the stages of creating the opera. Those stages include: the prelude; imagination; creativity; writing; designing; and staging the opera. The process subsequently unfolds for doing the Creator's work and sharing the dreamer's story. This chapter concludes with all the voices of the young leaders prepared for the performance of the opera; the performance of life. To experience the Creator as Artist at work with and among the youth, a documentary can be viewed at <https://www.dropbox.com/s/5aqjhfsk7ebn59s/Singing%20Dreamer%20Final%20Cut%20HD.mov?dl=0>. This documentary tells the story in their words.

Introduction to the Youth

As previously mentioned, the youth were between the ages of 16 and 29 years of age. They presented and I observed their unique and different gifts. They also spoke a variety of languages and dialects. They were from immigrant or refugee families or were first or second generation Canadians. They had various educational successes and were

joined together by a sense of belonging. Each one had a spirit that brooded, wept, felt pain and yet each one had the wisdom within to know that they needed to change aspects of their experience. There were: Lydia, Kevin, Shari, Paul, Stephanie, Jerome, Jeremy, Janine, James, Nan, Nadia, Luke, Misbah, Ameera, and Wendy. Lydia, and Kevin brought the gifts of imagination to the detail of elaboration. Shari and Paul added meaning to what was important by coming up with examples and ideas that resonated with the others. They created ways for the others to remember through beat boxing techniques, hilarious story telling with a resilience that enhanced the non-verbal expression. It made the idea of creating an opera a reality.

Stephanie and Jerome helped with repeating the content over and over until it was memorized. This allowed the others to elaborate on the meaning, while still others helped with a cue to reconstruct and recall. This facilitated the rehearsal with the collective recitation of the libretto. As a result, each youth found their individual voice.

Jeremy and Janine generated information through pictures, stories, songs, poems, to the cues that were given by the educational artists. This helped the youth visualize what they were creating. Paul and Shari generated insight for everyone through movement by retrieving and reconstructing the information. All of this helped inform the set designs and costumes for the opera. Their designs and costumes seemed to enable a safe place for their voices to sing.

James and Nan came up with the enactment of action phrases in dance from their respective training in martial arts. Their understanding of the spoken word through movement was embedded into the final performance of the opera.

Nadia and Luke led the group as they engaged singing or in using theatrical

techniques to help remember information that needed to be recited initially and then sung. It helped each one learn all the lines of the libretto yet gave the other the time and patience to say what they had chosen to say in a way that felt right for them. They quickly learned to understand the score of music when they were taken to see the opera.

Misbah and Ameera took time to briefly overlay the meaning of emotional intelligence and tried to figure it out while helping the group of participants find meaning in becoming a group of collaborative people.

Wendy brought with her enthusiasm and energy that added emotional content and generated higher levels of emotional arousal amongst all the participants and promoted memory for content that became the libretto. Her energy was spontaneous, and the happiness she brought was contagious. When participants had an opportunity to write a poem about a personal experience that related to a cultural or social issue that they felt the need to address, and do a performance to represent their knowledge and feelings about the topic, Wendy led the way. Her fearlessness enabled each to take their turn.

My observations were that they read the signs of emotion in a deep and profound manner. Some had never sung a note before. Yet, each youth undertook a calculated risk to sing. Some came to the research after staying up all night keeping their young siblings safe while there were harrowing dramas that even the worst nightmare could hardly compare. Some in the group looked out for the others always texting or making sure they were on their way or going out to pick them up. Others hardly had much to eat for the days that passed between the sessions. Cornflakes and coke made up most of their diet. Yet when we sat down together to eat they made sure that everyone had something before they could enjoy a morsel. Self-reflexivity was immeasurable and in abundance. The

libretto held snippets of their cries that they found courage to write down and then reading aloud what they had written chose and re-chose their spots in sequence that led them to poetically complete their libretto. They wasted no words or sentences, adding silence, pause and thought.

Introduction to Cindy and the Canadian Opera Company Educational Artists

Cindy is an independent consultant, whom I had worked with before. She has worked in the social service sector for ten years, including eight years as a senior manager in a community agency. Cindy works toward fulfilling her personal vision, which is to inspire and enable people to mobilize their resources to better the conditions of this city's most vulnerable and challenged citizens. Toward this end, Cindy facilitated three of the workshops on leadership in preparation for the opera. She ensured everyone had a voice.

Each member of the Canadian Opera Company brought special gifts to the process and willingly and joyfully shared those gifts with the youth. Their divine presence and support for these youth was integral for their transformation; a libretto of living. A modified excerpt from their respective biographies follows.

Vanessa was the Canadian Opera Company School Programs Manager, Education and Outreach and the lead staff liaison for this work. Vanessa possesses many gifts, having been an actor, stage manager, part of a backstage crew, and led dramatic workshops for children. She has worked for the Windsor Symphony Orchestra's education team, for the Arts Council ~ Haliburton Highlands, and for the University of Windsor. Further, she spent two years teaching English in Japan, including one year at a drama-based school with locations all over Tokyo.

Kyra, offered her skills as a vocal specialist. She is a soprano and has been a voice coach in Canada and abroad since 1997. Kyra has worked as a voice and singing coach for productions for Canadian Stage, Crows' theatre, Stage West, and for international touring productions for Warner Bros. As an artist Educator, she represents the Canadian Opera Company leading many of their outreach and education programs, as well as facilitating workshops for Opera Atelier, Workman Arts, (an affiliate of Centre for Addiction and Mental Health), and most recently, Abilities Arts Festival.

Lina offered her gifts as a specialist in set and costume design for theatre and opera. She has contributed her gifts in various capacities on a number of productions, including:

- Costume Designer: *XXX: Live Nude Girls* (Toca Loca), *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* (Randolph Young Company) and *The Master and Margarita* (theatre@York);
- Assistant Set and Costume Designer: *Canada Steel* (Canada House Artistic Co-Op);
- Assistant Costume Designer: *Cendrillon* (Royal Conservatory of Music).

Lina has also worked in various positions for ShakespeareWorks, Theatre Columbus, and Seamless Costumes, and currently works in the Wardrobe Department at the Canadian Opera Company.

Nicole contributed her drama/storytelling skills. She believes that the arts are a powerful force that can be harnessed to inspire growth and emotion in people of all ages, in all places. Nicole is a Mentor Artist with Learning Through the Arts (LTTA) and has facilitated teacher and artist professional development in the UK, USA, Germany,

Finland, Sweden and Cambodia and across Canada. Currently she is the Music Champion Program Leader, managing a team of 20 artists in two cities and coordinating, artist visits, teacher and artist training and a concert series. As a dancer, Nicole has performed and toured with several Canadian Dance companies including The Karen Jamieson Dance Company, Dance Theatre David Earle, Kaeja d'Dance2, The Newton Moraes Dance Company, REASON d'être and Foundation Jean Pierre Perreault. Nicole's secret love is world culture and this keeps her busy adventuring everywhere from the Amazon jungle to the Sahara desert to the Arctic Circle.

Cathy contributed her skills as a musician, composer, musical director and artist educator. Her musical training began as a classical pianist and her love of creative collaboration led her to work in dance, theatre and scoring to picture. As an Artist Educator she has worked in programs for Ontario Artists In Education, Learning Through The Arts with the Royal Conservatory Of Music, the Create-An-Opera Program for the Canadian Opera Company, the Children's Peace Theatre and Jumblies Theatre. She has also created scores for over eighty productions for regional and independent theatres across Canada. She was Assistant Conductor/Keyboardist for the Toronto Company of *Jersey Boys*, and was a founding member of theatre company Canadian Content Theatre which toured Canada performing for school and family audiences. She also scores documentary films including the animated trilogy *Dark Years*, co-composed with her partner Mark Korven.

Sun (a.k.a. The Real Sun) offered skills as a poet, singer/songwriter, and visual artist. As a multitalented and all-around artist, Sun crafts and expresses her thoughts, dreams and emotions through words, voice, piano, guitar, and canvas. For Sun, music is

a healing form of release. She is a strong advocate for balance, healing and humanitarianism. She pays particular attention to her lyrics, always making a conscious effort to embody a positive message, no matter how negative the topic may be. Sun has two passions: (1) the arts and (2) building positive change. She combines the two as much as possible, and as a result, Sun has devoted much of her energy and soul into many grassroots movements and community organizations in the Jane-Finch, York and Korean Communities in Toronto that aim to create positive change and build solidarity.

Prior to discussing our collective process, it is important to clarify my role in this effort. My role included: bringing the idea to a project and securing funding; securing the participation of the Canadian Opera Company; designing the curriculum for the workshops; reviewing the individual and group results of the EQ-I with the participants; facilitating the process; and observing the youth as they transformed through their libretto.

Our Collective Process: The Operatic Stages

This section illuminates the stages beginning with the prelude, and working through imagining, creating, writing, designing, and staging the opera; our collective work, as artist educators, young leaders and researcher. Table 2 offers an overview of the components for each stage, and each will be discussed in turn. Important is that as the process unfolded the work was adjusted by the group. The process was not linear, for art embodies each person as artist and is the reflection of the artist as the Creator. When I have facilitated training and workshops, I always give glory to the Creator and honour the Creator in each of us.

For me, art is a way of thinking, being and doing, and is what I believe I have been called to do in the spirit of the moment. I have learned the art of employing bricolage, meaning “a combination of methodologies for a customized application” (Kincheloe, 2001, p 279) through my work with Dr. Vance Peavey in constructivist counselling. Art is the main process that I draw most heavily from as I work in the field of education to manifest the work of the Creator. The art forms vary and include through storytelling, the use of collage, clay and paint, role play, use of film or poetry, drama, and now opera. Each of these art forms was used in the process of learning and creating the opera. My ways are simple and I try to emphasize the gifts of the Creator; more importantly, together we try to make the goodness that is hidden within each of us visible. I believe the words of the youth in the documentary make this point visible.

Table 2. The Stages of Imagining, Creating, Writing, Designing, and Staging the Opera

DATE 2011	ACTIVITY	PLACE /TIME	PERSONNEL/ RESOURCES	WHAT HAPPENED
The Prelude				
June/July	Outreach to various internal and external programs and organizations.	GBC*	Rose-Marie	Recruitment of 15-20 youth participants.
August	1. Confirmation of participants 2. Information and consent forms 3. EQI online for new participants to complete.	GBC	Rose-Marie	Confirmation of participants. Consent forms distributed for signature.
Stage One: Imagination				
September 14	1. Orientation/Convening participants 2. EQI group debrief for participants 3. “Awakening the Dreamer”	GBC – location TBD	Rose-Marie COC ** resource staff – artist educators (4) and Education staff (1) Report Writer Videographer Participants	Orientation of all participants, resource people and staff and inclusion in Awakening the Dreamer session. This set the framework for creating a shared experience – prior to immersion in an operatic context. Debrief New

DATE 2011	ACTIVITY	PLACE /TIME	PERSONNEL/ RESOURCES	WHAT HAPPENED
				participants re: EQI – group report Individual debriefings scheduled over the duration of the project.
Stage Two: Creativity				
September 21	Leadership and Encouragement (Leadership Theory, styles, and tools such as mentorship, coaching)	GBC	Rose-Marie Facilitator/ Presenter Writer Participants Mentors invited	Workshop delivered which provided the context for individual and community leadership development.
October 5	Leadership and Collaboration	GBC	Rose-Marie Facilitator/ Presenter Participants Mentors invited	Workshop delivered which presented actual/practical examples of working with other individuals, communities and organizations – best practices and/or lessons learned.
Stage Three: Writing				
October 16 (9:30-4:30 pm)	Exploration: Operatic Story Telling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to opera • Exploration of 3 elements – libretto-writing, design, vocal performance or composition. • Homework – personal story (conflict or success) • Attend a matinee performance on mainstage 	COC	Rose-Marie Writer COC Videographer Participants	Action Learning Project undertaken – using Operatic Art form for developing the story.
October 22 (3-6pm)	Your Story Through Opera Part 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artist Educators (4) drama/improvisation; spoken word; vocalist. • Videotaped exercises 	COC	Rose-Marie Writer COC Videographer Participants	Theatre based or improvisation based session re: 3-4 personal stories Special guest – spoken word artist Review of video and creation of libretto.
Stage Four: Design				
October 29 (3-6pm)	Your Story Through Opera Part 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of score 	COC	Rose-Marie Writer COC	Creation of score. Costume design/set/props

DATE 2011	ACTIVITY	PLACE /TIME	PERSONNEL/ RESOURCES	WHAT HAPPENED
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costume design/set/prop • Homework – area of interest and sourcing wardrobe concepts 		videographer Participants	
November 2 (5-8pm)	Your Story Through Opera Part 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design/create core props • Continue with score • Vocal group –Acting and singing techniques 	COC	Rose-Marie Writer COC videographer Participants	Ongoing development of opera. Videotape On-line assessment developed as part of evaluation of program.
Stage Five: Staging the Opera				
November 6 (3-6:00pm) 6:30-8:30	Your Story Through Opera Part 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working rehearsal in costumes • First staging rehearsal • Group discussion of process and • social activity for debriefing (6:30-8:30pm) 	COC	Rose-Marie Writer COC videographer Participants	Rehearsal and videographing of overall production. Debriefing of the overall activities with COC.
November 16, 21 & 28	Leadership and Path of Letting Go	GBC	Cindy Rose-Marie Writer Facilitator	Videographer works on documentary during this period Workshop delivered which focuses on understanding signs/dynamics of change and some of the personal and individual strategies to address these.
*George Brown College **Canadian Opera Company				

Prelude

The prelude to this project began following a two-day training program I facilitated with internationally trained Career Practitioners. At the conclusion, they requested a training program for youth. This led to the design of this training program and the subsequent recruitment of youth. The Career Practitioners, who represented more than 25 different organizations, were instrumental in recruiting the youth.

Fifteen youth were welcomed to the project. Specific criteria were used including;

1. youth between the ages of 18-29 years of age
2. Actively involved in Greater Toronto Area youth community development initiative.
3. Leads or has the potential or aspires to lead an organization
4. Willing to commit time over a five month period to be part of this project
5. Has the support of their Board of Directors/Management/employer/committee/immediate supervisor, if necessary; in order to participate in this process.

We informed them that they were not here by chance; rather they had something to teach us and something to learn. Each of them signed a Consent Form, allowing photographs and videotaping. They also were informed of their right to leave the project at any time without penalty.

The youth were provided with an orientation that included: an explanation of the project and the process; and an explanation of the EQ-i and that the information from it would be threaded throughout the program. This is where the youth were informed about the process for the opera which included being videotaped and photographed. The youth were given a password to complete an online EQ-i inventory. I explained that it was important for them to complete the inventory by themselves prior to the start of our sessions. They were also informed that there would be an individual feedback session and a group feedback session. The individual sessions were booked out of their busy hours and outside of the group time at a mutually agreeable time.

As I proceed to the next stage, I caution the reader that the following stages are not separate and distinct per se, but are fluid and synergistic.

Imagination

The first stage of the process unfolded with our coming together. Together we were 25 participants. An orientation was held to: formally explain the nature and purpose of the research; to inform them of their options, including leaving at any time; and to explain the process that we were embarking on. Each participant received: a consent form; the password for the EQ-i online; and the program with the date for 'Awakening the Dreamer'. After each session each participant had the opportunity to share their experience about the topic, collectively we discussed the next session.

We began by introducing ourselves to each other. Each person said his or her name and each hoped to get to know the other better in the sessions to follow. We followed introductions with a debriefing of the group EQ-i report by looking inward and honouring ourselves for the strengths we possessed. I presented the EQ-i, the goodness factor, using different colours of clay. This goodness had a set of five main colours. The five colours complimented the five areas of the EQ-i. Red was for the intrapersonal scale, blue for the interpersonal scale, green for the adaptability scale, yellow for the stress management scale, and orange for the general mood scale. Each participant selected the colour of clay that they believed best represented their understanding of self. I emphasized that if a colour in one area was very bright it might be just as difficult for us to recognize it in life. Alternatively, if it was dull or faint it might make it just as difficult to see. I clarified that higher numbers on the EQ-i scale were not always better just as lower numbers on the EQ-i scale were not always better. Important was the identification

of the skill, as awareness of one's skills can enable success.

A group analysis of the EQ-i inventory was subsequently completed which included both the youth and the Canadian Opera Company artists who requested that they too have a chance to do the EQ-i (Appendix D). This analysis was done using clay in red, blue, green, yellow and orange. Here each participant was given the opportunity to create what they were coming to know through the EQ-i. The colour of the clay corresponded to a scale within the EQ inventory. Their choice of colour and how they shaped the clay brought new awareness. With this awareness, it was time to begin the collective process for unfolding the story. Success was defined by them on their own terms.

For some, success could be waking up in the morning and getting to the job that helped them provide food for their family. For another, it could be minimizing a relationship that caused them pain, ate into their time, and narrowed their thinking. For others, it could be motivation to make that album, or cook that vegan meal. Success, they learned, was different for each one of them.

The debriefing was followed by a workshop on "Awakening the Dreamer" by looking outside of ourselves. This consisted of a documentary that was interspersed by a dialogue led by a pair of conscious environmentalists. *Changing the Dream, Awakening the Dreamer* (2005) was created in response to an invitation from the Achuar people of the Ecuadorian Amazon to work in partnership to shift the dominant culture of consumption and alienation to one that honours and sustains all life.

After each five minute segment, we stopped the film and spoke with the person next to us about the information we just viewed and the questions that were posed. The information presented led from conversation, to discussion to dialogue. This allowed

each person to get to know another in a deep and personal way. No one knew who the other was; artistic educator was unknown to youth, and youth were unknown to educators. By moving beyond self, this began the transformational educational program that explored the challenges facing humanity, and the opportunities we as a human family have to create a new future.

We began with an examination of the ways in which the current “dream” of the modern world was impacting the environment, our relationship with one another, and our own sense of purpose. Together, we explored how this all came to be, and confronted the powerful unexamined assumptions that are at the heart of the current crisis we are in—as a species and as a planet. This is where the group shifted from just individual names to sharing ideas about the planet, by looking for consensus on ideas, and by appreciating the others and their innovative options. We then heard about the new story emerging at this time in history—a story that recognizes how profoundly connected everyone and everything is.

It seemed to me that we collectively came to see that a new future is possible and that a huge, unstoppable movement is already emerging and in action, committed to creating a new story for humanity. We looked at actions we could take, on our own and with others, and new ways of being that are consistent with our individual vision and stand. Imagination had been touched within and amongst all. Both educators and youth could not wait for the next sessions.

Creativity

Creativity, the second stage concerned developing interpersonal skills by building and maintaining relationships based on mutual respect and hearing each other through

deep listening. This stage included the first three modules on Leadership which were delivered through role play and group work. Following a discussion about leadership styles (i.e., autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire), participants were divided into small groups according to the styles of leadership for further discussions about that particular style. Each group was subsequently given a social justice scenario, in which they used that particular style, for developing and presenting a project for funding to the rest of the group.

In the final module on leadership, each participant prepared and presented their respective 'Grammy Award Nomination' speech. This speech was about how their dreams could become reality. Participants were given two minutes, at which time the music came on and the lights dimmed slowly to darkness. This stage allowed them to artfully live the experience of coming to know accountability, responsibility, and social interaction through compassion and understanding.

Writing the Story

The focus, in the third stage, was on adaptability skills, making decisions, problem solving skills, putting everything together, and agreeing on a specific strategy to manage writing the opera. These traits corresponded with the third stage of EI which concerns adaptability and consisted of (creative) problem solving, decision making, and being flexible. The purpose of this stage was to create a space for these young leaders in which they could manage the essential steps toward change and transformation. The emphasis was on how to manage and resolve differences of opinion, and how to create a condition of adaptability by which these young leaders could strive toward a shared goal. Thus, this stage continued with more elaboration of the concept of storytelling and what

spoken word and libretto writing are.

First, the youth were asked to define their notion of opera. The point was not to constrain them by the dominant notions of what opera is, but allow them to develop their own definition through their intrapersonal skills, and the new found interpersonal relations that were established between them. When these youth were asked to express their individual definition of opera, each emphasized a particular aspect. While one young leader identified opera with lavish costumes, another referred to it by pointing to its historical settings. A third youth stressed the modes of singing that are specific to opera.

After the young leaders offered their definitions of opera, Nicole, the lead artist and librettist of the Canadian Opera Company, explained to the young leaders that opera is an art form. They learned that what they would perform was based entirely on their own creativity, intentions, outlooks, and concerns. She suggested that the opera they were going to produce would be modern, open and playful. Thus, it was entirely up to the young leaders what the final product looked like. The opera would be the expression of their thoughts and feelings. It would give them the chance to give form to the inner dialogue and communication within and amongst them. Nicole reinforced or amplified the gist of this project:

This group of young leaders have been highlighted to challenge themselves and their leadership through the opera. Today, we allow them to experience what opera is. Opera is the art of storytelling through all other art forms, through music, through drama, through movement, and through visual arts.

Nicole helped the youth to perceive opera as an art of storytelling. The young leaders listened to each other's words, strung together with rhyme, and rhythm, and appreciated the contributions their peers made to the opera. Their relationships enabled

them to develop an appreciative voice through which they could value the creativity, generosity and goodness that existed in others in the group.

Second, Cathy, the lead artist, played a segment of Rigoletto for the young leaders and asked them for their response. Thrilled by this magnificent piece, the students described how they were inspired by the amount of collaboration that performing of an opera involves.

The opera was new to these youth; some even suggested that they had never thought they would see an opera through their life. One young leader stressed that the opera made him open up about himself and now, someone that was hidden inside him, was out. Another young leader said that what she knew about opera was restricted to what she had seen on TV, lavish “wigs, costumes and fat ladies with big voices.” Because of her background, she thought only privileged people could watch the opera. She was grateful that I had opened a venue for her to absorb an experience that could radically change her outlook on life by investing her spirit with an affirmative vision and the value of collaboration and togetherness. As this young leader put it so suggestively, she had been given “a chance to come here and experience opera for its beauty and history.”

Third and in her introductory remarks, Sun, the spoken word artist, emphasized the axial point on which this whole pilot project hinged, the support that the young leaders should lend each other without judging each other. Sun pointed out that the young leaders were there to tell a story, a task that would require them to learn the techniques of the spoken word. She then instructed on the techniques and strategies of communicating through the spoken word and how they could express themselves

effectively.

Subsequently and fourth, the students wrote their poetry, and shared it with the group. Here, storytelling both revealed its communal essence and relieved each single youth of the weight of silence they had held for a long time. One youth had written about the contempt and indifference that the poor face every day in our society: “No one cares, you look down on me as I beg for change . . . no one cares.” Another youth asserted her determination to fight for the integrity and value of her identity: “I am worthy, I have faith in myself, I will not give up the fight, this is a fight for love, for life, I choose life.” I felt, through this sharing of poetry, the awakening of compassion within these young leaders to listen deeply and make changes to their own lives.

Nicole subsequently composed the libretto from the youth's storytelling session. Despite using some artistic license and mixing up and, sometimes, changing the word choice, 90 to 95 percent of the youth's words were retained intact. As the young leaders recited the script together, they also made various propositions for improvement. Here, I sensed a powerful feeling of harmony and collaboration emerge and an entrepreneurial spirit. For example, while one student articulated the similarity between the prologue and the epilogue, another said that the solo part in the script could be done in some sort of vocal and then the chorus could answer back in a monotone. The youth sought innovative ways of expressing themselves by questioning, critiquing, and offering alternative visions and versions. Another young leader stated that the opera should start with everyone wearing black, and then, as the soloist came on stage, the personality of all those on the stage should undergo a transformation, a change that would be signaled by them being wrapped in coloured scarves. In her words, this change of colour would

manifest the rise of a more hopeful vision. At the end of this stage, Lina, the lead designer, asked everyone to sing the lyrics as Cathy played the piano. One youth said, “I wasn't exposed to singing, a creative and joyful process happened here.” And still another said,

We all had our own say and then we added to it, us working together, it's a safe environment, we all created the song so fast and spontaneous, a positive energy that came out in our environment, in such a short time.

Designing the Story

The design stage corresponded with the fourth stage of emotional intelligence, which focused on stress tolerance, and control of impulse. These qualities were the necessary elements of a positive outlook, which these young leaders inevitably needed to engage in composition, design and rehearsal. Tolerance, self-control and empathy were the force that made their collaborative work possible. The young leaders needed to understand the crucial importance of these elements. There was no need for them to contain their anger and overcome all immediate negative impulses. Appreciative understanding and empathy allowed these youth to understand and interact with one another productively by seeing things from the other's perspective. Thus, they were able to talk with one another and exchange their views in a tolerant way in order to create the set by using black fabric, and then sing and rehearse on stage. One of the young leaders said:

I didn't know it would be possible to take a bunch of street kids and bring them here to teach them about the opera, things that we never knew about. In 20 minutes, we were able to compose such a beautiful song, create melody.

Staging the Opera

The final performance consisted of a harmonious cooperation between the

individual vocals and the chorus. Holding hands in solidarity, all young leaders took part in this dialogue by chanting the words: “I will not be afraid to see.” Watching this overpowering sense of unity on the stage, Kyra said:

What amazed me about this group was their willingness and the support they gave each other. The lack of ego and real interest in doing something new gave their performance a human depth and vibrating energy that was rare. They worked collectively and some amazing stuff happened, and it wasn’t shallow.

This project had awakened in these young leaders a feeling of confidence they had never experienced before. Many of the young leaders did not have experience singing, and yet, they were able to find the confidence to overcome stage fright and sing solos. The self-assuredness with which these young leaders defined their creative moment on the stage was extraordinary. Putting the performance in perspective, a young leader suggested:

There was no judgment, and we did not feel vulnerable. We did not care about what people thought; we were pumped, and the exhilarating moments we experienced throughout writing, rehearsal and performance, took us to a totally new level. Everyone was happy, and we were happy doing it.

Cathy was so impressed by the youth’s scintillating performance that her appraisal of them assumed a celebratory tone: “The young leaders were generous, collaborative, creative, imaginative, excited and passionate, and their performance surpassed my own joyous anticipation.”

Ultimately, the purpose of this project was to tap the potential that had remained dormant in these youth. Not having been given the chance to realize their potential, they needed only the encouragement of an appreciative voice and the existence of an affirmative and healthy environment to realize their inner worth and potential self. One youth suggested that the opera created the opportunity for him to express himself through

art, an experience that he would now use to help others as well to find themselves through art.

Singing the Dreamer's Story

I observed the youth as they engaged in imagining, writing and performing their opera. They seemed to come together, as a caring and compassionate group, able to appreciate each other and take risks. This opened a path of new possibilities to explore and liberate their potential as caring, compassionate and creative leaders.

This act of sharing, of opening oneself to others, by exchanging the stories which provided the basis for their opera, allowed the youth to imagine a community which stood in an antithetical position to their experiences. As the youth told their stories through the opera, they became an abundant community, where understanding, caring, sharing, compassion and imagination became dominant themes. These stories, which related the pressures and pains that these youth had faced throughout their lives, made them acutely aware that they were all parts of a common humanity, that the suffering and plight of one could well be the suffering and plight of all of them. In this sense, the impact that their act of storytelling generated resembled that of Christ's parables, as these stories enabled the youth to transcend the narrow social boundaries that had oppressed their potential for growth, compassion and inventiveness.

This awareness set the stage for change and transformation in these youth. By understanding that there was always another story of oppression, injustice and marginalization besides their own, these youth succeeded in grasping the idea that there was an unspoken bond between all of them. At the same time, the multiplicity of their

stories demonstrated to them that there was no ultimate truth that every moment was just a starting point for going further. They realized that there was always some other story, another angle of vision, next to their own. By having the youth take ownership for dismantling their existing frame of mind, these stories acted as a source of renewed emotion for them. Methodologically speaking, the relationships had grown from just acquaintances to a group of young people who cared and were concerned about each other. I sensed that their stories, through the art of opera, released their tensions and painful memories and connected them to each other through a profound sense of compassion. My observations were validated in debriefing sessions in which participants expressed their experiences. As previously mentioned, this process, which conveys their truth and authenticity and embeds within it their libretto, is preserved in a documentary.

Chapter 5: When Art Speaks for Itself

Art, which is the transformation of raw materials into a form that reflects meaning for both the artist and the user, is equally a reflection of an elemental transformation. Indeed art in its highest forms of expression is a kind of magic. And in this magic of creation, the artist becomes immersed with his media and the mind of creation. (Cajete, 1994, pp.149-150)

Through creativity in art we give expression to our dreams and invest them with recognizable forms. Art as a process of self-discovery is a spiritual journey that leads us to a new wisdom, just as Christ's parables lead us to new paths in life. We perceive the "patterns and themes" of our life in the arts and release our tensions and painful memories, as we communicate them to others. This aspect of sharing in expressive arts is what connects us to others.

I learned this from my Grandmother who lived alone, and everyone who rendered her service revered her. She was blind and saw life through her heart and senses. Her smile and warmth touched everyone as did her prayers. With time my love for story grew from the warmth and closeness of my Grandmother to my work with my children. I made up a story for each child every night. I realized this gave me energy and after the lights were out in their rooms; I had energy to complete the chores around my home singing and praying.

Another amazing thing about my grandmother was that she was clinically deaf. Yet she intuitively knew what we said and taught me lessons in deep listening. This was the start of my work with people who are differently abled. This is where I designed my label of theology called "Cinderella." The Cinderella archetype sums up my own story. It allowed me to listen deeply and catch the nuances that were unspoken. Then the chores that Cinderella performs are not isolated acts; they contribute an added value to

the sacredness of everyday living. This became my organic theology of everyday living.

This chapter brings forward the voices of the youth and members of the Canadian Opera Company, as they speak about their experiences of the process and performance of the libretto. I call on the work of Vicki Kelly (2015), an Indigenous artist, who describes four distinct yet interconnected stages. Those stages include: to see; to know; to shape; and to stage. Her work of artistry deeply resonates with me as an Indigenous artist. Kelly informs us that she experiences the artistic process “as a complex web of reciprocal inter-rationality, a living wholeness” (p. 46). For me, this is a living inquiry; a process that requires “deep attention and contemplation” in everyday life (p. 47).

Each of Kelly’s stages is described in turn, the voices of the youth and members of the Canadian Opera Company are heard, and theory and practice amplifies what is said. Important to this process is that the stages are not linear but fluid. In other words, the participants enter where there is meaning and move back and forth through the stages until they become fully alive, arriving at their own way of seeing, knowing, shaping and staging to create the opera.

To See

The first stage is to see. In Kelly's words, to truly see is to "step over the obstacle of oneself in order to serve or attend to the other" (p. 55). In other words, the creation of art is a "selfless" act as the artist absorbs and gives herself to the "experience of the other" (p. 55). She interchangeably uses "to see" with "to behold," which she defines as holding what we perceive "within our innermost being" (p. 55). Beholding requires an "undivided attention" on the part of the artist toward the object (the other). Such an unmitigated attention or "indwelling" ensures the unity between the artist and the object

of beholding. Only through such unity can the artist succeed in "seizing wholly" and "seeing all the way through" (p. 55). This unity with the object through the act of seeing, through embracing the object selflessly, also figures as the artist's humble recognition of the truth that they are connected to the "wholeness of creation." Through perceiving a particular object, the artist finds a deepening insight into a universal truth through which all existence is connected together. In Kelly's giving, through seeing a particular object, the artist discovers "the mysterious wholeness which lives elusively at its very center" (p. 55).

Art has a mysterious way of making the unknown known. One young participant had seen much loss. At the age of sixteen his best friend died suddenly during a game of squash. A few years later he sang at the funeral of a classmate's sister not realizing that six months later he would sing at the funeral for his classmate. I thought he would be out of sorts when he sat beside me to debrief his EQ-i, having apologized for rescheduling the appointment. When he began to speak I wondered if I would have the strength to deal with this. Then he opened a folded piece of paper and read with the pride and purpose these words.

Creed on Death
I believe in death,
I believe that we are born to die
 To die that we may live more fully
 Born to die a little each day
 To selfishness, to pretense, to sin.
I believe that every time we pass from one stage of life
To another, something in us dies,
 The innocence and spontaneity of childhood dies
 The daring of youth,
 To the reasoning of maturity.
I believe that death is the way of nature in-
 A flower that fades, a leaf that falls,
 A raindrop that evaporated, a breeze that passes by.

I believe that I taste death in the moments of loneliness
Of unlove, sorrow and disappointment
When I am afraid, lose courage and give up
See my broken dreams
And every time I say goodbye.
I believe that I am dying before my time when I live in
Bitterness, hatred and isolation.
I believe that I create my own death by the way that I live.
I believe that life and death are one:
That in one and the same moment
I can say that I am living and I am dying.
I believe that Jesus walked toward His death out of life
And that he invites me to do the same.
Amen
So may it be.

He informed me he felt confused in church, and upon finding this poem he slipped the piece of paper in his pocket. He said, as a result of reading the poem, that he resolved within himself to be a good and generous person, to have just what he needs, and to enjoy life in simple and thoughtful moments.

The air was heavy. Youth have a way of making the invisible, visible with little pomp and ceremony. I sensed, within this young man, an honesty and integrity with a resilience to see the world differently from that moment onward. I observed courage and a dance with life and reality. I witnessed the transformation from self-pity to practicality and accountability and the graciousness of acceptance. This, for me, is embracing Kelly's way of seeing. As was true for this young participant, the youth took risks to be fully alive in the process of creating the opera. They left behind negative self-talk, inhibition, and anguish. This allowed them to witness within themselves and collectively the process of transformation.

Jean Vanier's (n.d.) work amplifies Kelly's way of seeing and, for me, gives voice and dispels the misery and unhappiness of those who suffer physical and intellectual

differences and in the story that follows he shares his profound insight:

I once visited a psychiatric hospital that was a kind of warehouse of human misery. Hundreds of children with severe disabilities were lying, neglected, on their cots. There was a deadly silence. Not one of them was crying. When they realize that nobody cares, that nobody will answer them, children no longer cry. It takes too much energy. We cry out only when there is hope that someone may hear us. (Dufresne, n.d, para 3)

Vanier knew that when a suffering person stops crying, the magnitude and gravity of pain has broken him/her under its weight. This, he said, was not because the person was no longer suffering, but because he/she was suffering too much. This conception of pain is connected to two of the major strains of Jean Vanier's thought and action: belonging and anguish.

Belonging is the living connection to a living environment that is itself living. The feeling of belonging takes shape when a person is understood and accepted by others. That is why as the sense of belonging grows, it deepens "inner healing" and fosters "wholeness." Belonging in its theological sense, at least as I and many Christian feminists understand, does not merely consist in belonging to others and to a community; "it is a sense of belonging to the universe, to the earth, to the air, to the water, to everything that lives, to all humanity" (Dufresne, n.d., para 5).

This anguish is most torturously felt by those who suffer most and are most isolated; however, to enter into communion with them is to become conscious of the same vulnerability and frailty in ourselves. After all, anguish is the general condition of our existence. By entering into communion with suffering individuals, we can know ourselves and become aware of the anguish that abides at the core of our being. It is a bond that connects us all together and reminds us that all of us belong to a common body of humanity. In this light, anguish should foster empathy and compassion in us for each

other. Our compassion and empathy, however, should not remain mere abstract entities; instead, they should generate an impact similar to that of the actions of the Good Samaritan.

To Know

The second stage in the process of artistic creation is "to know." The artist knows that there is a "meaning that is written into each and everything" that they can only grasp (Kelly, 2015, p. 57). The artist comes to know the meanings wrapped in the phenomenology of the world by discovering the patterns of creation everywhere. Within the framework of their art, the individual knowledge of the wholeness of all being is enacted, as their insight finds embodiment revealed in every element of their work. Through their insight into the interconnectedness of all creation, the artist's work does not have a merely individual dimension; it renews and revitalizes the community (p. 57). Within this parameter, these artists act as the instrument of a higher will whose recreative and healing power they articulate. Their work also becomes the receptacle in which "the ecological and cultural knowledge of a nation" find expression (p. 57).

The youth were encouraged to re-imagine the Creator as Artist. Insights gleaned from the individual and group EI sessions contributed to giving individual and collective voice. This started as youth and trainers courageously expressed their challenges through the spoken word. The articulation of these challenges assumed a creative form through expressive arts, the writing, rehearsals and performance of the opera, which functioned as the threshold to a new understanding. The story from another youth offers insight.

And in the end, we all end up quoting our mothers. So here I am recapping my journey through the Leadership Capacity Building program with George Brown College, by starting with something my mom always reinforced –

Always leave any person, place or job in a better position than it was, when you first started with it. Do something for someone, who can do nothing for you. I was born and raised in Mumbai, India before my family moved to Canada in 2002. As far as I can recount, my family has always been involved (directly or indirectly) in building up communities and educating those with limited economic means. My grandfather, Adam Noor, was the perfect example. He spent over six decades of his life dedicated to the education, empowerment and employment of Muslim youth and women in India. My mom spent the better part of her life in Canada, working in different roles towards improving the settlement and economic situation of new immigrants. Our dinner table conversations were spent discussing how blessed we were, as a family.

My differentiating factor – my biggest source of strength and weakness – was that I was born with a rare genetic skin condition, called Epidermolysis Bullosa (EB).²⁶ EB is a rare group of genetic skin disorders causing blistering and shearing of the skin from even the gentlest friction and sometimes spontaneously. This meant that as a child, I always had to be careful. I blistered easily, I was extremely sensitive to changes in weather and I was in bandages a lot. I wore full sleeve dresses to school and knee high socks to protect my skin. I had very limited participation in extracurricular activities that were sporting in nature. My skin had mottled pigmentation that made me look like I had freckles. All the outward signs that I was different.

At 5 years old, the ignorant principal of a pre-school institution, took me in a dark, unlit room and threatened to punish me and kick me out, if I ever returned to the school. At 7 years old, a girl refused to hold my hand in the playground because she thought my blisters were contagious, immediately making me self-conscious of how I looked. I became withdrawn and reserved as a person, holding mom close whenever in social situations. I made friends very easily because of my sensitive and understanding nature but I almost never went out. I knew of nobody else with EB, who I could reach out to and even just talk to – about the emotional or physical pain I experienced at a very early age. In my mind, however, I resolved to never be like the girl who excluded me. I had a goal in my mind that one day, I would be a source of inspiration for kids who were affected by EB.

When I moved to Toronto in 2002, I was blessed enough to make new friends, go to University of Toronto and complete my undergraduate degree in Business from one of the Top 10 Universities in the world. I was able to find a full time job and now I felt the time was right to give back. While browsing the internet one day in 2009, I found a local charity called DEBRA²⁷ Canada that supported kids affected by EB (debracanada.org). I was quite elated at the discovery, and placed a call to them to see if I could volunteer in any capacity. The staff was very welcoming, took my information down and got me on board and working fairly quickly.

This assessment reinforced a lot of areas of improvement for me

²⁶ Those who experience EB “lack a critical protein that binds the layers of skin together.” For more information see <https://ebresearch.org/what-is-eb/>

²⁷ DEBRA stands for Dystrophic Epidermolysis Bullosa Research Association.

personally, so I decided to take action to overcome my fears. For example, public speaking gave me serious jitters because I was extremely self-aware and was convinced I looked different and talked quietly. I decided to enroll myself in the Dale Carnegie course – Effective Communications & Human relations course offered downtown at the Royal York hotel. This program forced me break a lot of walls I had created for myself, and present in front of larger crowds. It forced me to take the attention away from myself, and focus on the message I would be getting across to an audience. Being a prospective leader – it is important to know your own fears should not overshadow the need to make a change (in whatever area you may see the need for change).

Within 6 months, based on the insight from the EQ-I, I was able to host my first “Awareness night” for DEBRA Canada where I invited my close friends and family to hear me speak about my experience living with EB. I also invited a few doctors and parents of children with EB, to share their experiences. My goal was to inform and hopefully direct the attendees to future fundraisers that were scheduled to be hosted by DEBRA Canada. We had a few people in tears by the end of the night, and within the following 6 months, almost all attendees had donated their money or time to the organization to help spread the word – in a small way, I had already accomplished my goal.

Based on my work with DEBRA and with an open board member position for Treasurer, the DEBRA board nominated me in 2010 to stand for election. I was the youngest board member to be elected, and I was excited by the opportunity to do something I am good at (managing accounting and finance) for a cause that I am personally connected to.

As this young participant mustered the courage to speak and write her truth, I pictured in my mind the art work of the Creator on her body and those of the others. How the warmth of the Creator’s care engages love and compassion in the youth; their hair, a common feature, all groomed differently, spoke to their individuality. Their skin hues were different colours, yet each hue of colour shone with the vivacious energy of their youth. Then moving to thoughts of their experiences that lay within, I could see more clearly through their work, the fine art work that the Creator enabled. This was the expressiveness of the goodness that was deep in their souls.

What made this group of youth different? In getting to know themselves and each other better and focusing on their strengths, they looked and saw what they enjoyed about life and what gave them their purpose and set out to achieve it. Some really liked school;

some found school a place where there was no hope for them. Some preferred to organize a group of youth in their housing area or in the “hood” as they called it, to attend to the difficulties that face youth. They set up an organization to address the issues. Another worked as an apprentice with an electrician. Since he had little to do with his father, as he was one of 27 children, he felt this apprenticeship was good learning and mentoring. He creatively framed his work as someone who was called to “light up the darkness”.

Part of “knowing” includes learning, a lifelong process. For example, EI, represented by the emotional, personal, social, and survival dimensions of intelligence, is often more instrumental to successful coping with environmental demands and pressures than more traditional cognitive aspects of intelligence. Emotional Intelligence is represented by five broad skills. They are:

- How well does one know their self?
- How well does one build and maintain relationships?
- How does one manage change?
- How does one make decisions?
- What is one’s attitude to all that is happening to and around them?

These skills can be enhanced through training, an attribute which makes EI a particularly suitable instrument for surfacing the resonant leader within.

As previously mentioned, the youth participated in three modules on Leadership. In preparation for the work, the youth were assured that there would be no video recording or note taking during these sessions. This was their opportunity to try on leadership styles to understand their own and to know what would work better for them.

Through interaction and role play, the weaving of theory and art, learning was palpable. I sensed the polishing of the resonant leadership skills, by the positive outlook and optimism among this collective. As one participant said, “I felt very liberated being part of DEBRA Canada. Like I was taking charge of the very emotions that seemed to cripple me from seeing each day as another success.”

Another one of the young leaders, enthused by her learning in the opera project, researched and applied for her first grant. Her successful grant enabled her to buy books for young teenage girls in one of the priority neighbourhoods within Toronto. These were young girls who had no one to read to them, and she remembered what it felt like when she ached for someone to read to her. She read with the youth and then became their mentor. This led to a second grant in which she imparted pertinent information on dating, sex, drugs etc. using movement and hip hop dance to engage the richness of their kinesthetic sense. This also was information she wanted as a young person, and again there was no one to share this with her. She felt energized by doing this work, and has subsequently received three additional grants. She has found and created the work she loves as an authentic leader.

In my experience of more than 20 years’ of working with training and coaching people in EI capabilities, I have found that leaders who are emotionally intelligent are more self-aware and gracefully assertive. In the context of EI, assertiveness implies defending one’s rights and opinions in a non-destructive manner while maintaining respect and appreciation for other people’s viewpoints. A leader both preserves her independence and gives recognition to the initiatives and views of others. For me, this is intricately connected to Kelly’s stage of coming to know.

Shaping the Artistic Work

The third stage had to do with shaping the artistic work. In this stage, the medium of artistic expression assumed a primary importance as it "engages the artist in a reciprocal relationship" (Kelly, 2015, p. 58). From this perspective, the process of artistic activity is a co-creation that, as much as it shapes the work of art, it also shapes the artist and their identity. The artist's main task is to reveal what is invisible, unsung or unspoken, the secrets of creation of which their medium offers glimpses. In Kelly's words, the artist always waits in a "liminal space," at a threshold, to catch hold of the moment or inspiration that provides her with a profound understanding of the "invisible inklings," that lie behind the appearances of reality (p. 58). This is basically an act of "courage" as artists open themselves up to an "illusive reality" that "trickles" into their consciousness and is articulated by them in the shape of a word, a melody, or an image. What makes such articulation possible is the power of imagination by which the artist "learns how to embody the object or subject, how to shape its essential nature into the contours of form so it speaks its voice, its inner reality" (p. 59).

From Kelly's perspective, the chief responsibility of the artist is to "shape this illusive reality into a substantial semblance or representation" (p. 58). This, of course, requires openness to the other, a condition through which the artist's identity is also altered. But it is not only the artist who is changed by acknowledging of the other. The medium and substances that the artists gather for their work also undergo change. Through the artistic process, Kelly indicates that the artist's substances and media "are transformed to embody realities beyond their own existence" (p. 59). In this sense, a tree, for instance, is transformed into a totem pole to "tell the story of the genealogy of a

family or nation" (p. 59). As one educational artist said:

I focused always on music - on the music that came from and through each of us, every time like a beautiful small seed. I felt compelled to nurture that seed, to give it a chance to become whatever it wanted to become.

Another participant said, "It was easy to keep exhaustion out of the equation because there was such exhilaration!" Their energy inspired one of the educators who said:

I felt fortunate - the biggest challenge for me was in my own mind when I was first informed of the plan for the workshops. Initially I was reticent because I hadn't created music collaboratively before with adults - I had done so with children and young people within the school system only, so this was a new challenge for me.

Because the invitation to do create collaboratively was so appealing, my fears were lesser than my curiosity and excitement. Also, I knew Kyra already, and Katherine at the Canadian Opera Company. - I adored and trusted them both and met Vanessa, Nicole and Lina through them, so I was open to whatever might happen. Thankfully, after we had our first meeting I felt sparked and excited about working with this wonderful group of people!

Definitely Kyra and Katherine to begin - and as the process continued there was a lovely cycle of support that flowed between all of us. We also felt very welcomed and supported by Rose-Marie: from the first session there was a feeling of trust and caring.

In reflection, I don't recall receiving any feedback that wasn't delivered with a sense of empathy and support so I appreciated hearing the thoughts and ideas of everyone involved.

I don't remember any failures or disappointments! It felt to me like a steady string of small successes. . . . not that everything was going perfectly or smoothly - but that everyone was open and giving and trying to create together.

We were very lucky - Vanessa at the Canadian Opera Company and Rose-Marie at the George Brown were WONDERFUL! Very supportive and positive from the beginning through to the culminating presentation. I remember sometimes feeling badly that I wasn't a bit more attentive to time during each session - often Vanessa would gently remind me that our session was over and time was up for that day but I had been so 'in the moment' that I completely forgot about keeping on schedule. I recall once that instead of stopping at her prompt, I asked if the group I was working with could sing their new song for everyone.

So it may have messed up the schedule, but I still recall our excitement and the energy in the room when we sang and shared our newly created song!

Many great memories and more confidence in continuing to believe in all that I believe in.

Because the experience was so enjoyable overall for me, I felt that the internal strengths I called upon were ones that have been forming since I was a child. They are long familiar and deeply engrained: to keep practicing, to be patient and remember that the work doesn't always come all at once, to persevere in our creative process: to be gentle and joyous as we create and to appreciate and be thankful for the gift of our time together.

I am usually loathe to be in a 'leader' position: I have always considered myself and felt most comfortable as a solid side-player. However, whatever ability I have musically to facilitate collaborative music creation felt more like a gift than ever before. I also (re-)learned that music has a powerful effect on people of all ages.

That I don't need to fear and worry if I am 'good enough, trained enough, experienced enough etc.' to work with adults in collaborative music-making. I just need to maintain my health and my faith and KEEP GOING! Ultimately it's the process that is important far more than the product - but the end result of an honest and positive creative process is always interesting and it's a kind of gift for the friends, family and community of the people involved.

For me it's important to focus on what I can do to affect change instead of worry and rage against the long list of senseless things that are happening on the planet. While there are many things I don't understand or agree with, it's far better for me to focus on the many positive things that are happening and to keep my sights on what wonderful things MIGHT happen.

The artist educator went on to say “I look forward to whenever I cross paths again with the participants in this project! It will be fun to reminisce and to find out where their paths have taken them since.”

I sensed this artist educator understood how courageous these young people were; like warriors for goodness. Through this realization the artist educator counted herself lucky, really lucky, to be in the midst of these youth.

Presentation: The Showing

The fourth stage of artistic process has to do with presentation; the showing. Although every one of us occupies a unique position in the world, although each of us looks at objects from our particular situated awareness in the world, "the greatest test of an accessible work of art is that it is accessible for each one of us from our utterly unique position" (Kelly, 2015, p. 61). But an artwork's accessibility does not mean that it reduces those who see it to mere passive observers. In fact, by showing us their work, the artist enables us to assume the position of active participants in relation to their work. After all, art does not simply capture reality; it also penetrates into the layers behind that reality to grasp its essence, a realm that can no longer be perceived by senses. Instead, it requires the imagination to interpret and unlock its secrets. At the same time, since a work of art relies heavily on imagination to give it substance and meaning, it also offers the freedom to the audience to interpret it, since imagination is itself ultimately the origin of freedom.

According to Kelly, "the realm of imagination does not coerce but leaves us ultimately free to form our own understanding, our own truth" (p. 61). This double quality of accessibility of the work of art and the freedom to form our own understanding of it is its most salient feature in this stage. The act of showing invites the observer to share the knowledge and experience of the artist. Thus, the aesthetic process fundamentally alters the artist and their audience. The work of art creates an awareness of deeper truths which reveal the wholeness of creation. For example, one youth began to discern this through music, and he wrote this:

Like any language, music has a set of symbols unique to itself. From bar lines and crescendos to clefs, quarter and sixteenth notes, one must develop knowledge

of the musical "alphabet". Further awareness comes in the form of musical "phonics". Specific letter sounds can be likened to intervals (the space between one note and the next), while combined letter sounds are correlated with chords (a group of notes usually sounded together).

These forms can be reduced to the minimal units that convey meaning. In language these would be phonemes; in music, single notes. Just as phonemes only make sense in context - when strung into words; so to in music are notes strung into phrases, which collectively comprise larger works. Like artistic language has its forms (haiku, sonnet, novelette etc.), so too does music (sonata, fugue, symphony etc.).

Both music and language require practice to master. One must study both from a young age in order to procure the technical competence that allows for imaginative, creative expression. If one is not exposed to music, (particularly a certain style of music) it will be difficult to appreciate it or come to a deeper understanding of it. Learning a new language can be likened to learning a new style of music.

Just as some languages are related more closely than others (Italian, Portuguese, Spanish) some musical "languages" are more closely related (Rock and Roll, Alternative, Metal). Nonetheless, they are vastly different from other languages (Funk, R&B, Hip-Hop). However, they all share the same root language. In the case of Italian et al. Latin is the common denominator. In the case of Rock, et al. and Funk et al. they collectively originate from Blues and Jazz. Both musical and spoken languages have dialects as well. In Hip-hop there is East and West Coast, in alternative there is Sub-pop and Emo. Thus, some skills learned from Latin or Jazz and Blues can be applied to numerous other forms of expression.

For me, the "showing" is the Creator/Artist at work through each of us. As told in the "Genesis," (Gn 1:1-28) when the Creator engages in the creation, every possible human passion is looked at to complete the work of art. In the opera of creation, whose libretto spans from the first to the sixth day, love is the overriding passion. Of course, love, death and tragedy are all parts of the plot, but the Creation Story is ultimately subsumed by a divine opera of love. Within the framework of this divine opera, although there are life, death and incidents of redemption, everything is conceived in terms of joy and transformation, as well as resilience and rebirth, which keeps the libretto being written and rewritten all the time, a continuous process. In the divine opera of creation, every element contributes to the emergence of love as an overarching attribute. Talking

about the loving time, the eternal time, I view love as the central motivator for our Creator, the most profound artist that brought the universe into being and continues to see it grow and change.

In the showing, the space was allowed for every participant to grow and create. By this I mean that the space between each one is that of honour and trust, and the space above and around is that of imagination and compassion. Together they become the space for compassionate imagination. One youth expressed her experience this way:

Thank you so much for sending the link. I finally had a chance to watch it today, and I was extremely moved. I had forgotten about a lot of the different elements, and this video captured the process and product perfectly. What a delight to relive those precious moments! Thinking back, I remember how 'easy' the whole process felt as a student. I don't know if it was the video format including teacher interviews, stepping back to an outside perspective, or just age, but I was struck by how delicately the teachers guided us to make the whole process feel easy, even though so much work was being done to prepare the music, the space, the set, and ultimately us. The teachers were so wonderful.

When we were working on this project in 2011, I had recently finished teachers college, and I was working as a teacher's aide in a Kindergarten classroom. At the end of that year, I moved to London to work as a supply teacher. While working there, I was reconnected to an old colleague I had met while working at a theatre production company in the UK. She reintroduced me to the arts field with a few part-time promotional gigs. Upon returning to Canada a year later, I decided to pursue a career in the arts, as I had enjoyed this field so much. After high school I shied away from the Arts, as a Drama teacher had told the whole class that the arts meant inconsistent employment, and you would be rejected constantly, so only go into the arts if you need it to survive. Many years later, I was finally returning to the arts, as I realised how important it was in my life. I am currently combining my love of working with children with my love of the arts on my third Mirvish production as a child chaperone. I work with the child actors to make sure they are safe and happy both onstage and off. Thanks again for the whole process, and for the prosperity of the video.
Best wishes

I found myself reflecting on the word 'prosper' and find it interesting that in Hebrew, the word for "prosper" can mean to advance or make progress or succeed. The Hebrew word "shalom" can also be translated as 'prosperous' meaning health, completeness, safety,

contentment. The Greek for 'prosper' may be the best one, since it means to have a successful journey through life.

The project has changed and impacted me. For example, the experience of designing the modules for the curriculum has given me the inspiration to expand each one into a Leadership Program for my employer. The experience has also confirmed for me the power of expressive arts in a pedagogy informed by collaborative, non-hierarchical Indigenous methodology with young people experiencing difficulty with the mainstream system. Third, I experienced a profound understanding when I came to accept and embrace my own Indigeneity. Fourth, through my research and work with the participants I came to embrace art as my way of thinking. This will be discussed further in the final chapter. In essence this process has validated what has been in my heart and how I am called to be in the world.

The project has also had an impact on the Canadian Opera Company. They were so pleased with the process and the result that they have used it as a model for the summer sessions that they now hold with youth.

To create, ties the Old Testament with the new, and Antony Visco (2003), who is a theologian and President of the Institute of Sacred Architecture, echoes what is in my heart: that the act of making is central to our faith. He traces this to the Old Testament where it began with the Creation of the world and in the New Testament where it begins with the incarnation of Christ.

The act of imitating Creation and its Creator has been with humankind since the earliest of all recorded forms and images, and so as architects and artists, we recognize ourselves as the "created," imitating our Creator in this great attempt to pay homage to our God, to our "Cause without Cause." Thus what is "man made" begins as a small part, a means to seek and find ourselves at first as separate from our Maker. Yet the second and

greater part is to make in order to seek and find ourselves again within the greater “God-made” whole, our communion. Our hopes are that what we make will fuse with what we believe, and both process and product will bring all closer to our Maker. To imitate Creation is to celebrate the very entry of the Mystery into its own Creation (p. 25).

Through learning, dismantling my own privilege and through experience, I have been guided to this place to work with youth, knowing that through the Creator, we all are forever changed. The last chapter of this effort is really its first, as each of us continues on our respective life journey . . .

Chapter Six: Reflections on Art as a Way of Thinking

This chapter highlights some of my reflections about this collaborative project with the youth and educational artists. I have claimed that the Creator is an artist, and that everyone is a blessing of the Creator's Artistic work. I sense that the Creator must have experienced a deep sadness. This sadness allowed the spirit within the Creator to brood; to brood and make sacred the feelings of compassion, anguish, neglect, desolation, forsakenness, and then to cry with the emotional essence as if the whole person was being wrung by torment and death. I believe that this is what gave energy to put away the darkness to speak the word, the word that brought forth a universe, whose natural laws and the patterns of those laws we are only just discovering. I reason that if the Creator could feel the need to weep, then when the weeping was done, healing happened, the darkness or the void disappeared and the universe came into being.

I experienced this same sense of deep sadness with the youth. As previously mentioned, many youth worked just as hard at work, and school as they did at home. For many, home was just another place that did not understand them. Perhaps their need for quiet was too much to ask in a home riddled with what seemed like a schizoid affective disorder, untreated, for lack of funds, and the need to keep working just to get by, as an act of compulsion. To ask for a desk to study was thought of as insane, as one was from a family constellation that allowed the youth to count as one of 27 siblings. For another, living in a neighborhood deemed impoverished created a culture where there was a need to barter their bodies and emotions in exchange for food for their siblings. Yet, each of them was a beautiful artwork hidden to themselves. Time and space had not offered them the opportunity to reflect, or the space to voice their thoughts, to hear them deeply, or to

decide what needed to be done. This became our process of art, thinking and giving expression to each voice in our collective libretto.

It was as if the pedagogical moments came alive and that their performance became an inquiry into their lives.

[We] dwell in performative moments, realized through performance. Performance embodies our lived experience and the imaginative evocative worlds we create through our engagement in the arts—theatre, dance, creative writing, visual arts, multimedia, and other forms of creative endeavor. Performance may startle, astonish, or puzzle us. Performance calls us to wide-awakeness. Emergent moments of recognition reveal, or conceal, our fears, joys, misconceptions, preconceptions, vulnerabilities, ambitions, despairs, yearnings, desires. Fragments of silenced stories may be given voice. The unsayable, the unspeakable, the unsaid dwell within moments of performative action, *presence performed through absence*. (author's emphasis, Fels, 2014, p. 112)

This wide-awakeness resonated within all of us, participant, artistic leader, and researcher. It deepened within us a 'silence' that gave us time to feel the grace and prayer that surrounded us. In tracing the experiential nature of compassionate imagination, the American philosopher John Dewey reminded me that art as a means of knowledge production has a resonant experiential dimension, or as Dewey puts it, "art is the most direct and complete manifestation that there is of experience as experience" (as cited in Jacob, 2004, p. 100). This is because art unfolds through a "dialectical" process, that is, it emerges out of interaction between "acting and reflecting," or "making and thinking" (p. 100). The artist's relation to their work is dialectical because, "we do something to the thing and then the thing does something to us" (p. 100). Thus, the process of artistic creation, in terms of the artist's relation to their work has both an "active" and a "passive" aspect (p. 100). The artist acts on the work, and thereby transforms the work through the work and the work, in turn, transforms the artist. Dewey calls the active aspect of the process of artistic creation "trying" and its passive aspect "undergoing" (p. 100). The

artist tries to transform an aspect of the world and, through this process; she undergoes transformation (100). As such, artistic activity can be defined in terms of “learning by doing” (p. 100).

‘Learning by doing’ has gravity that is profound, multifaceted and is articulated in the depth of performative inquiry. Lynn Fels (2014) draws from philosopher David Appelbaum’s concept of the “stop”, saying a stop is

a moment of risk, a moment of opportunity. A stop is simultaneously, a moment of interruption, a pause, a listening to the as-yet unnamed. A stop is not a moment in which one literally stops, but rather is an embodied realization within which dwells possible recognition of as-yet unknown choices of action. We cannot grasp tightly to a stop moment; a stop, like the breadth, is a moment within action. . . . A stop, ephemeral, temporal, elusive, calls out to us, listen, this moment matters. A stop may, like performance, surprise, astonish, puzzle, or startle us. A stop is an unexpected stranger that call our attention to what is hidden-a vulnerability, an intimacy, a curiosity. (p. 112)

A curiosity of learning by doing, in many ways, was also the goal we set for ourselves through the opera. The point of the opera was to interpret the world of the participants, the condition of being in which they had found themselves, in new ways, and then allow the process of working towards the opera to transform that condition of being.

Thinking as experience is also a “relational process,” that is to say, it involves defining the inescapable connections between our acts and their consequences (Dewey as cited in Jacob, 2015, p. 101). While writing and performing the opera, the young leaders had time to reflect and then to question the validity of the social order that had marginalized and rendered them voiceless. The more they questioned the existing order through their act of artistic creation, the more they came to realize its inadequacies and unjust structure. In Dewey's terms, their path of inquiry towards knowledge, a

knowledge by which they could transform their condition of being, was “progressive” (p. 102). Their path forward was a continual attempt to create new knowledge and perspective in order to act on the world.

A necessary step in transformation is understanding knowledge in terms of a deepening consciousness that becomes aware of its own circumstances and adopts interpretive tools to formulate them. In Dewey’s terms, the very sense of progression in thinking, as an inseparable dimension of inquiry, makes “the path of inquiry toward knowledge uncertain” (p. 102). Thus, inquiry can never take place in the calm space of clarity. Clarity, or relative clarity, may be the end result of inquiry, but the process of inquiry “passes through a disturbed, troubled, ambiguous, confused state” (p. 102), that is to say, thinking begins when we encounter something “uncertain, doubtful, problematic” (p. 102). Seen within this framework, the young leaders had experienced their life within an environment which reinforced passivity, conformity, and lack of thinking. However, when they engaged in writing and performing the opera, they entered a territory which was unfamiliar to them.

To me, who was both functioning as the facilitator of the opera, and carrying out the task of the inquirer, the opera was uncharted territory. In this sense, both the young leaders and I experienced uncertainty in regards to undertaking and constructing the opera. We understood that the opera was just not a momentary escape into the realm of fantasy, or a means of breaking out of the conformity and oppressive condition that the environment had imposed on us. We knew that the opera had the ability to transform us as individuals and as a collective. There were, of course, no clear answers. Throughout the process in which the opera was coming into shape, we went through a transition

whose mechanisms, effects, and complexities were unknown to us. In other words, the very process of thinking that was triggered by our engagement with the opera conjured up a number of troubling questions and ambiguous situations; instances that via thinking, while severing us from our existing circumstances, essentially plunged us into a new state of being. For example, as the youth shared their past experiences, they cried, kept still or silent for awhile, expressed anger and then released the emotion through creative movement, word and song.

As Dewey puts it, thinking compels us to maintain “the rhythm of loss of integration with environment and recovery of union” in order to surface new knowledge (p. 102). Our engagement with the opera catapulted all of us into a “creative chaos,” an uncertain phase of experience which, in Dewey's words, offers a potential for confronting our consciousness with something new (p. 102). And yet this chaos, this loss of integration with our environment, is the very basis on which a new relationship with the environment can be defined and enacted. As Dewey suggests, after the creation of a work of art, a new relationship is established with the environment in which the artist lives (p. 102).

One of the points of my own inquiry was to explore the formation of art as a thinking process, which would lead to the production of knowledge necessary for the creation of an abundant community. Since I was using a model of inquiry in which I was also a participant, the process of inquiry also enabled me to enter into a new relationship with my environment. However, I envisaged the opera as the main setting of my inquiry and as the object that could capture the transformative moments of artistic creation for the young leaders as merely a stage which, in Dewey's words, “no sooner stated than it is a

light radiating to other things” (p. 102). In other words, I viewed the opera as part of a “continual process,” a stage in art as a thinking process where the knowledge that is produced “initiates new inquiries” (p. 102). In this light, the opera was not just an isolated phase in my and the young leaders' lives; it was the initiation of a dynamic and open-ended process of knowledge production whose intensity and scope would alter with the change of time and space. The opera provided a preparatory site of knowledge production that would point to other horizons of knowledge production beyond itself.

By the same token, art as thinking process acts as a transforming agent that generates consciousness not only in the artist, but also in those who come into contact with it. Although art arises from the artist's experience, it “affords” the experience to others (p. 103).

From an Indigenous methodological approach, the main problem with Dewey's model of art as a thinking process is its sole emphasis on the individual and how it impacts and transforms her. My interest and purpose was employing Dewey's model by integrating it within a framework that would go beyond the mere individual and reach others.

The model presented by Ikijiro Nonaka and Royoko Tayoma (2015) does just that. They adopt all stages of thinking which Dewey describes in the process of art creation (i.e., its dialectical, continual and dynamic character) through which “one spiral triggers new spirals, each leading to new knowledge” (p. 105). However, they then graft these stages onto a collective model “wherein the knowledge held by individuals, who each have different points of view, is shared [among them] to form new knowledge” (p. 105). I found real resonance with both these models with my Indigenous approach which

acknowledges the relationship and interactive synergy between individual and collective knowledge development and experience.

Being both the agent of inquiry and a participant in bringing about the opera, my own Indigenous inquiry also relied heavily on co-constructing with the young leaders a broader narrative and environment that was to free the hidden gifts each possessed. What I intended to achieve was to facilitate a condition through which the young leaders could synthesize their multiple, and at times, diverging viewpoints on a given subject through dialogue. Obviously, the sharing of perspectives within a dialectical and continual process was the very cornerstone of the opera, as the youth created a community which operated by their equal participatory status and democratic exchange of experiences and life stories. This process of the convergence of different views, integrated what Jacob calls the “explicit” and “tacit” knowledge (p. 105) of the participants; that is to say, the knowledge that they expressed in clear terms and the knowledge assets that they possessed, was transmitted through silence.

When individuals with different backgrounds and outlooks enter into a shared project, their activity transpires through a creative chaos, which is necessary for transforming their already acquired knowledge into a new knowledge. But this creative chaos can get out of control if it is not contained within the space of what Jacob (2015) refers to as “*Ba*” (p. 106). *Ba* provides “a safe space where things can be tested from which new knowledge can arise” (p. 106). During the project, the opera produced the space of *Ba* where the young leaders could experiment with new ideas without endangering themselves or making themselves vulnerable to the assaults of the outside world. In other words, *Ba* is a continual motion which “transcends time, space, and

organizational boundaries to create knowledge” (106). This does not mean that the impact that is created in the space of *Ba* will remain isolated and cut off from the wider context of the world and society. In fact, if such experiences yield healthy and emancipating results, they must be adopted in the daily life. This was the premise on which the opera was initiated as a pilot project in the first place. The energy that *Ba* generates is an effective way of producing in my research the collective knowledgeable voice through creative chaos and its array of conflicting opinions. Ultimately, the open space of *Ba* allows the exercise of a creative potential that can find social resonance. More importantly, it was the courage that led all of us to find our respective voices.

The Venetian arts collective presents a variety of perspectives by artists on art as a way of thinking. These artists overcome the “either-or” stance of the individual or collective. For art as a way thinking, a synthesis of different points of view can occur both “within the self, or among persons” (Jacob, 2004, p. 108) in order to produce new knowledge and achieve a heightened awareness. According to art as a way, art is a “responsive” activity which, starting by “observation,” leads to “co-generation” and then “action” (p. 108). From this perspective, art finds its ultimate expression in the realm of praxis, because its very ability to create new knowledge invests it with a transformative power (p. 108). That is why *Ba* is really a space of potentiality, a “hybrid creative thinking space” where the individual and collective potential is given a chance for realization (p. 108).

Can what seems like creative chaos lead to a moment of realization through performative inquiry? There is no easy answer; however, Lyn Fels (2014) identifies the space for ‘interstanding’ which is that “moment of recognition” that comes into being (p.

114). For me, this space of interstanding holds the concept of “Ba” and Spiritual Intelligence. It is a rich domain that weaves their Spiritual Intelligence, the nurturing of their pedagogical and performative moments, and their emotional intelligence. Although the artist educators and myself had planned beforehand the stages through which the young leaders could write, rehearse, and perform their opera, we also conceived a space of unplanned creativity and contribution in which each young leader could articulate his/her unique artistic giftedness. Coming from diverse ethnic, social and cultural backgrounds, each of our young leaders infused his or her own unique vision into what Ted Aoki²⁸ (2003) describes as “curriculum-as-lived” (p. 1). As the curriculum-as-lived unfolded, the experiences of facilitators, educational artists, and young leaders flowed into and defined each other, and as a result, a living curricula came into being. This was the place for the youth to indulge in compassionate imagination. This process is akin to what Carl Leggo²⁹ says about himself. “To write poetry, I have learned, is to enter a long, never–ending conversation” (as cited in 2015, p. 140). It created possibility for the young leaders to infuse and enhance the opera with their individually distinct talents and visions and most importantly to live in the never ending process

As mentioned in an earlier chapter, each leader came with gifts. While one young leader was adept at the spoken word, another was skilled in martial arts, a third was endowed with a creative imagination, and a fourth had a penetrating insight into reality. Curriculum-as-lived released these often diverging potentials and invested them with the chance to modify and transform curriculum-as planned. Aoki describes this condition as

²⁸ Ted Aoki is a curriculum scholar of prominence. He is of Japanese descent and taught at Universities in Canada.

²⁹ Carl Leggo is a poet and professor at the University of British Columbia, Canada. He was one of the collaborative authors who contributed and edited *Arts-based and Contemplative Practices in Research and Teaching*.

a “pedagogic struggle in the midst of the plannable and unplannable, between predictable and unpredictable, between the prescriptible and non-prescriptible” (2). This is also where Lyn Fels (2014) talks about performative moments, and I observed the grace within the youth “To Stop.” Through the fusion of curriculum-as planned and curriculum-as-lived, birth is given to a “space of ambivalence;” a space fraught with potentials and possibilities (Aoki, 2003, p. 2). Although the realization of these possibilities does not violate the principles of curriculum-as planned, it extends its boundaries by opening it up to a living curriculum. In a sense, the space of ambivalence that the unfolding of curriculum-as-lived into curriculum-as-planned generates, resembles the space that Christ's parables forge as they embrace an entrepreneurial spirit whose risk-prone tendency exposes it to multiple alternative paths and possibilities. I think this is an awakening of spiritual intelligence in purpose. It was within this dynamic that I, as the facilitator, acted as a bridge between the artist-educators from the Canadian Opera Company and the young leaders. My task was to create a space in which, the artist-educators were able to work within the specific parameters of their mandate. That mandate was to provide the young leaders with the necessary instructions about the basic principles of the opera. The young leaders would subsequently take those instructions and overlay them with their own unique visions. It was like stringing together the strands of artful, poetic, spiritual, and contemplative living (Leggo, 2015, p. 141): the seeds of compassionate imagination.

Within this space, or as I would like to call it ‘ScholARTistry’³⁰, the instructions of artist-educators presented the young leaders with a point of initiation into the world of

³⁰ Nielsen’s term “scholARTistry” means interweaving art and written text (as cited in Siegesmund & CahnmannTaylor, 2008).

opera. The guidelines they provided gave the young leaders a sense of structure and insight into the capacity of opera as a vehicle for representing one's thoughts and emotions. It was, however, up to the collaborative efforts of the young leaders to shape the form and determine the content of their opera.

I, as the facilitator, was able to provide a condition in which the inventiveness and creativity of the young leaders could unfold into, build on, and reshape the structure that the artist-educators had set in place. It was in this way that curriculum-as-planned and curriculum-as-lived came together, a merger through which the young leaders could appropriate the existing knowledge as a basis for producing new knowledge. As the facilitator and researcher, I occupied an in-between space that could bridge and connect the mandate of the artist-educators with the latent possibilities and alternative visions that the young leaders could bring into the opera. I used the debriefing sessions with the artist-educators and the youth specifically for this purpose. This in-between space was a widened space in which the young leaders could safely express their concerns and preoccupations. The spirit of ambivalence and entrepreneurship that prevailed in this space paved the path toward growth and transformation. This in-between space enabled the young leaders to articulate and test their values, and then transform those values into new ones by becoming the very art they were creating. This meant that within the safe perimeters of this space, the young leaders gave artistic expression to the reality of their lives and experiences in such a way that it was no longer possible to separate those realities from their artistic manifestations. It is in this sense that the young leaders themselves became the work of art they were creating.

They turned this in-between space into the site of a performative inquiry, where

they were able to embrace what had come before and what will come after. They courageously engaged the “Stop”. Here, the similarity of this space to *Ba* becomes apparent, through creative chaos and its array of conflicting priorities. Being the space and the artwork, the opera was itself a *Ba*, “a zone, a shared and open context,” where communication and understanding” occurred, and where “change and new knowledge” was formed.

The use of EI in this process cannot be understated. Emotional Intelligence is like poetry to me. It gives me the opportunity to connect with the other with wonder and mystery. Learning from EI gives one a way of knowing and being and becoming (Leggo, 2014, p. 145). What Steffler (1995) says of poetry is what I say of EI: “poetry is first of all a state of mind. Before it’s a verbal structure, it’s a way of perceiving and interacting with the world, including oneself, one’s own life” (p. 48). Steffler understands how poetry “reorganizes and deepens our awareness of our past experience and kindles our appetite for future experience. It sharpens our sense of vitality and morality” (p. 49). Hence I call it the goodness factor. I open the EQ-i into a story that has a “. . . multiplicity of lines of movement and what seems urgent is the recovery of the fullness of language” through “poetry, story and rumination” (Aoki as cited in Leggo, 2015, p. 149).

My understanding of “EI” promotes the value of diverse discourse. I am encouraged by Aoki (as cited in Leggo, 2015) who was concerned that; “teaching tends to be reduced to instruction and is understood as a mode of doing” (p. 149) while he strongly promoted “an understanding of teaching as a mode of being” (p. 149). EI holds the powerful use of language. It opens one to the profound and mysterious. Through its use we are allowed to take time to leave behind the culture of instantaneity, immediacy

and media (Tomlinson as cited in Leggo, 2015). EI is best when it is balanced, and Tomlinson deconstructs balance and “refers to finding a sense of personal equilibrium within the disorienting hurry of life, of locating one’s emotional and experiential ‘centre’” (p. 150). Tomlinson goes on to say that personal balance implies the reflexive monitoring of practices and experience” (p. 150). We are encouraged to take responsibility, and Tomlinson calls us “to experience ourselves as capably and sensitively attuned to our fast-moving environment and so as existentially flexible, responsive and resilient” (p. 150). Thus, the five days of working with the Opera corresponded to the five scales of the EQ-i. The space was created as an art form where the old become bearers of memories, authors of fictions, and characters in stories, their own stories and the stories of others.

As a researcher participant, I have grown to learn that my work too must change, from being and working with one person at a time, to caring for the family of the individual. My next project leads me to define this more succinctly as I work towards “healing one family at a time through Indigenous art”

This individual spiritual, compassionate imagination when facilitated as a collaborative project, brings in the collective goodness of their personal reflections as rendered by their collective voices in the libretto. Within this libretto I found the hidden genius of the youth. It was like receiving the gift of wisdom, and because Wisdom is a gift from the Creator, it gave shape to everything that exists. It led to *The Untold Truths* Created by the youth and edited by Nicole Fougère which was the libretto. While the words follow, the honesty is portrayed in the video.

Prologue
Chorus

We are the river running
roughly round this city's soul.
We pour our stories
of wishes whispered
of lives licked clean.
Laughing softly as we tickle through the traffic undertow.
Kissing the concrete caverns
where the silvered subway sleeps.
As the billboard beckons, bashes brightly
we boldly tear our untold truths
and share our spirit
with this city's soul.
of Wisdom

Chorus

We are the river running
roughly round this city's soul.
We pour our stories
of wishes whispered
of lives licked clean.
Laughing softly as we tickle through the traffic undertow.
Kissing the concrete caverns
where the silvered subway sleeps.
As the billboard beckons, bashes brightly
we boldly tear our untold truths
and share our spirit
with this city's soul.
We are the river running
roughly round this city's soul.
We are...

Act I

I am

Solo

I am lost.

Solo

I'm a puzzle.

Solo

I'm a princess.

Solo

I'm unseen.

Solo
I am worth it. Worth the fight

Solo
Forgotten

Solo
Found and lost.

Solo
I scream

Solo
I 'm vegetarian

Solo
Humanitarian

Solo
A member of a team.

Solo
I am anger,

Collective Chorus
sorrow, suffering, survival.

Chorus
I am tomorrow's dream.

Solo A
No one cares

Chorus
No one

Solo A
You look down on me as I beg for change

Chorus
No one cares

Solo A
My mom works three jobs just to feed me and my lil bro
So I started hustling
Now my body's outlined in chalk

Chorus
No one

Solo A
I cry and cry on the subway, tears rolling after every stop.

Chorus
No one cares

Solo A
When I sleep at night, I feel alone and sad despite my blessings.
Why does no one care?

Chorus
No one

Solo
As a child I felt challenged by simple things
Change all around me
In my mind
My body
My life
My family

Solo
My dad hated Nike so he left
He couldn't do it
Kinda felt neglected so I turned to Music
The words I spit so colourful are optical
Brain matter obstacles
Left or Right are optional
And in between is CHOICE
That's what you got to know

Chorus
Soar off
like a Frisbee on a crisp windy day
and find my own identity.

Solo
Being the only girl in my family
and the youngest
all I wanted was attention
Wanted to be like the boys
Walk, talk, dress like the boys
But I wasn't a boy.

So I had to...

Chorus
Soar off
like a Frisbee on a crisp windy day
and find my own identity.

Solo
The freckles on my skin
The scars on my body
Represent a different battle
But none the less a win

Solo
I puzzle all the time
See new fragments but old designs
Can I escape?
Float away above the signs?

Chorus
Soar off
like a Frisbee on a crisp windy day
and find my own identity.
Throw the dice.
I live a life without knowing what's gonna happen next.

Act 2

struggle

Solo
If intention was power then I'd self actualize
No one can tell what's behind my eyes
I mean sure you're supposed to live your life
contributing,
thinking then evaluating,
then doing.
Doing is always last.
Who changed that forecast?

Solo
I am hardened like the brick, BENT steel, SCRATCHED glass,
of this UNGLUED METROPOLITON MAZE.
I am a flower burst up between unforgiving sidewalk cracks

Chorus

There are cracks in everything³¹
Solo
Frustration sets in.
Anger
Why can't it let me go?
Why can't I let myself "fail,"
Feel less than perfect?
Walk to my own rhythm
No one else underscoring my step
That boil
That festering pulse
To always do THE right thing
But not MY right thing

Chorus
There are cracks in everything.

Solo
Why'd you have to say a thing like that?
Words falling out of your mouth
Sneering, teasing, shrugging
Do you notice the uncomfortable
STARE?
Gay is not a synonym for bad. Black does not mean poor. Disability does not
mean you can't.
Do you notice the uncomfortable
STARE?

Chorus
There are cracks in everything.

Solo
History repeats itself and repeats itself and repeats itself
Racism is re-packaged
Sexism is still sold in up-dated ad campaigns.
Classism continues to permeate popular culture.
Able-ism
Age-ism
Less visible oppressors continue to leech.
History needs to change.
We need to change history.

³¹ I have been given to understand that this line could be a line from a song by Leonard Cohen called The Anthem. So I give it recognition. In listening to the song I like the line that comes after that saying "that's how the light gets in" However, this line was voiced by one of the youth to express the beauty she saw even in the crack of the pavement where a flower bloomed.

Chorus
There are cracks in everything

Solo
NOISE, distractions, multitasking, messages, emails, texting, schedules.
Double booking
I can do it, I can do it, I can do it
Why!?!
Not.
Be still

Solo
For a moment,
I ignore the noise,
the honking, the electricity, the bills, the rent, the parents, the babies, the lack of
babies, the pills, the Kleenex, the yelling
The deafening silence,
the overwhelming sadness.
For a moment,
I am invincible.

Act 3
love

Chorus
I will not be afraid

Solo
Love is

Chorus
I will not be afraid
Solo
Love is
knowing that when I wake up
I am loved
not only by my parents
but by a brother that's three,
a God above,
and a dog that's twelve.

Chorus
I will not be afraid.
I will not be afraid to laugh, to cry, to play.
I will not be afraid to fight.
I will not be afraid to speak.

Solo

I am worth it.
I am worth the fight.
I will not give up or lose faith in myself.
This is a fight for love,
a fight for life.

Chorus

I will not be afraid
Grounded in goodness
Direction unknown
Fresh air, sun, water, unconditional love. These are the things that make life.

Solo

Love one another
As you wish to be loved
Love one another regardless of where you are from
Colour, caste, age X, Y or Z
Break these chains and set us free
Free like a dance
Free for a chance
To sway like wind kissed trees

Chorus

I will not be afraid

Solo

I had the choice to walk away.
Perhaps it was my stubbornness
Perhaps it was my passion to help
Or perhaps
I just don't believe in failures.
I just don't believe in failures.
Failure is the best present life offers.
I had the choice to walk away.

Chorus

I will not be afraid

Solo

What really matters
are the people you meet,
the experiences you have,
how those people change their life
and how you change these.

Chorus

I will not be afraid

Solo

I will speak.

I will speak for all those who cannot.

I will sing.

I will dance.

I will live.

I will love and I will never stop.

Chorus

I will not be afraid

Solo

Love is

Epilogue

Chorus

We are the river running
roughly round this city's soul.

We pour our stories
of wishes whispered
of lives licked clean.

Laughing softly as we tickle through the traffic undertow.

Kissing the concrete caverns
where the silvered subway sleeps.

As the billboard beckons, bashes brightly

We boldly tear our untold truths
and share our spirit
with this city's soul.

We are the river running roughly.

Roughly running river.

We are

I observed the spirit awakening within each youth. This spirit seemed intelligent and holy, and I experienced that it was different at different times. There was no unnecessary fear and each blossomed in their own right. It was pure, authentic, courageous, and good. It was quick and kind. It was dependable and sure with no worries. There was a zest that filled the hearts of each with thoughtfulness, respect for their work and the work of the artist educators. I believe that these youth developed their

skills of self-knowledge and interdependence. More importantly, they are youth gifted with the spirit of compassion and wisdom.

The opera can be found at:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/knkwieqjyt88w2/Final%20Performance.mov?dl=0>

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Appendix A: Toronto Community Housing Funding

Toronto Community
Housing Corporation
931 Yonge Street, 2nd Floor
Toronto, ON
M4W 2H2



Rose-Marie Nigli
George Brown College
215 King St E
Toronto, ON

January 5, 2010

Dear Rose-Marie,

On behalf of Toronto Community Housing Corporation, I'd like to express our support for and interest in the Leadership Capacity-Building EQi Research Project.

As part of our Community Management Plan, TCHC has prioritized economic opportunities for tenants by way of promoting sustainable livelihoods for youth. The Sustainable Livelihoods initiative is rooted in core asset development (personal, financial, physical, employability, social) and for young people in order to facilitate their transition from adolescence to adulthood. We believe this initiative will assist us in achieving our goal and we look forward to its' outcomes.

We are optimistic that despite of the financial challenges presented by the economy, 2010 will be a great year for youth engagement and innovative thinking on community capacity-building and this initiative will start us off in that direction.

Sincerely,

Gladys Okine
Manager, Community Economic Development
Toronto Community Housing Corporation

**George Brown College Research Funding
BUDGET**

Principal Investigator: Georgia Quartaro, Rose-Marie Nigil & Lina Ramkajawan Singh
 Project Name: Assessing the Potential for a Leadership and Organizational capacity Building program using the EQ4 Assessment Tool (Phase II)

	Collaborators		Other GBC		Requested Funding	
	In-kind	Cash	In-kind	Cash		
Students	0	0	0	0	981	
Faculty	0	3,000	0	12,000	2,100	
Other salaries	9,600	1,200	0	3,000		
Equipment	5,400	8,000	0		800	
Materials	0	400	0	0	3,465	
Misc/Comm	0	0	0	0	2,680	
Dissertation	0	0	0	0	0	
Other	0	0	0	0	0	
TOTAL	15,000	12,900	0	15,000	8,986	62,786

Academic Manager approval:
 I confirm I have read and understood this project proposal and will provide resources mentioned, including faculty release time.

Sign: _____
 Print Name: Georgia Quartaro

Date: June 1st 2011

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

P.O. Box 1015,
Station B, Toronto, ON
M5T 2T9 Canada
www.georgebrown.ca



George Brown College,
200 King Street East, Rm 582C
PO Box 1015, Station B
Toronto, Ontario
M5T2T9

Primary Investigator: **Rose Marie Nigli**
Tel: 416-415-5000 x 4587
Fax: 416-415-2272
Email: rnigli@georgebrown.ca
October 5th, 2011

Assessing the Potential for a Leadership and Organizational Capacity- Building Program using the EQI Assessment Tool (Phase 2)

Dear Participant,

You are invited to take part in the research project identified above, conducted by **George Brown College's School of Preparatory and Liberal Studies and Student Affairs**.

This research project builds on the management and leadership collaborative initiatives in the city of Toronto over the past 10 years. These have involved a number of key players including: The Schulich School of Business/York University, the United Way of Greater Toronto; the Melcalf Foundation and the Maytree Foundation. These Leadership and Management program initiatives have focused on Executive Directors and Middle Managers in the community and the Social Services/Non-Profit sector in the Greater Toronto Area.

Phase 2 of this research project hopes to focus on approximately 15- 25 youth leaders. Specific criteria used to identify and select participants will be the following:

1. Youth between the ages of 16-29.
2. Actively involved in GTA youth community development initiatives.
3. Leads or has the potential or aspires to lead an organization.
4. Willing to commit time over a 5 month period to be part of this pilot project.
5. Has the support of their Board of Directors/Management/Employer/Committee/Immediate supervisor, if necessary; in order to participate in this process

Approved by Board of Governors Motion # 06-03-02, 10 January 2007 Publication 2007-02-01



Key Information for Participants:

Who can participate in the research?

Youth who fit the above selection criteria.

What choice do I have?

Participation is entirely voluntary. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the project at any time. The researcher(s) may also withdraw a participant if it is considered in the participant's best interest or it is appropriate to do so for another reason. If this happens, the researcher(s) will explain why and advise you about any follow-up procedures or alternative arrangements as appropriate.

All information collected will be confidential. All information collected will be stored securely with the researchers and kept for a period of five years in the College. At no time will any individual be identified in any reports resulting from this study.

What will I be asked to do?

You will be asked to complete The EQi assessment tool. This will take approximately 30 minutes. The focus groups and the debrief groups will take place at George Brown College, and will be conducted by Rose-Marie Nigli. The EQi assessment tool is used specifically to compile individual and group leadership reports and profiles. Each participant will receive a report combined with personal career and group program planning. This will be used to assess areas of skill and areas that may be developed to increase capacity both at an individual and at an organizational level.

Through input and feedback from you as participants, along with the results of the EQi assessments, and the results of the 3 priority modules which focus on skills development, we hope this project will enable the development of a management and leadership capacity building program which is affordable and accessible to individuals in the community services and non-profit sector. In addition there may be the potential for international applications and exchanges.

October 5th, 2011

P.O. Box 1015,
Station O, Toronto, ON
M4N 2T8 Canada
www.georgebrown.ca



Primary Investigator: Rose Marie Nigli
George Brown College 200 King
Street East, Room 532 Toronto,
Ontario

Tel: 416-415-5000x4587
Fax: 416-415-2272
Email: rnigli@georgebrown.ca

CONSENT FORM

Assessing the Potential for a Leadership and Organizational Capacity-Building Program using the EQI Assessment Inventory (Phase 2)

I, *(please print)* _____ have read and understood the information on the research project: **Assessing the Potential for a Leadership and Organizational Capacity-Building Program using the EQI Assessment Inventory (Phase II)** which is to be conducted by Rose-Marie Nigli, Georgia Quartaro, and Luna Ramkhalawansingh and all questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to voluntarily participate in this research and give my consent freely.

I understand that the project will be conducted in accordance with the Information Letter, a copy of which I have retained for my records.

I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time, without penalty, and do not have to give any reason for withdrawal.

I consent to:

- Complete The EQI assessment inventory. This will take approximately 30 minutes to complete
- By completing the EQI assessment inventory I am consenting to having my individual report generated and an individual debriefing
- My individual report being used along with the other participants to generate a group leadership report. The strictest confidentiality will be maintained and age and gender along with any other personal identifiable information e.g. Name or name of the organization will be withheld



I consent to (cont'd):

- The overall group report along with my participation at the focus groups to be used to assess areas for developing individual and organizational capacity strengthening. It is expected that this will result in 3 priority modules which focus on skills development
- Attend a management and leadership capacity building program which will be of no cost to myself

All focus and debrief groups will take place at George Brown College, and will be conducted by Rose-Marie Nigli.

Name (Printed):

Signature: _____

Email address:

Phone Number:

Date:



Please be informed that we at George Brown College are requesting your consent to:

- a. Video tape the entire Opera process
- b. Video tape additional information if necessary
- c. Use the information from the process for the research study
- d. Photos taken to be used for Educational /Professional purposes
- e. All information on the EQ-i will be shared without identifying information e.g. name, age, gender etc.
- f. Each participant will be given a copy after the final edit of the video taping

This information will be used to help us create a new Leadership program.

Do you agree to this yes no

If yes then please fill out the following:

I (name) Consent to the above request.

Signature Date

Witness:

Signature Date

If no then we then we thank you for your time.

/

Appendix C: Ethics Board Approval



Office of Applied Research & Innovation
Research Ethics Board

REB File # 000105

November 26, 2009

Rose- Marie Nigli

Via email to rnigli@georgebrown.ca

Dear Rose-Marie,

Re: Your research ethics application entitled, "Assessing the potential for a Leadership and Organizational Capacity-Building Program using the EQI Assessment Tool (Phase1)"

Ethics Approval

Original Approval Date: November 26, 2009

Expiry Date: November 26, 2010

We are writing to advise you that the Research Ethics Board (REB) has granted approval to the above-named research study, for a period of one year, under the REB's expedited review process. Please note that approval is based on the following:

- a) The REB must be informed of any protocol modifications as they arise.
- b) Any unanticipated problems that increase risk to the participants must be reported to the REB immediately.
- c) The study is approved for one year: if needed, apply for a renewal before the expiry date.
- d) A study completion form must be submitted to the REB upon completion of the project.

The following documents have been approved for use in this study: Consent Letter and Information Letter. Please insert the ethics approval number (000105) into these documents. Each participant should receive a copy of his or her consent form.

Please quote your REB file number (000105) on future correspondence.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your project.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jaswant Kaur".

Jaswant Kaur, Ph.D.
Chair, Research Ethics Board

cc: Office of Applied Research and Innovation, George Brown College



Applied and Institutional Research
Research Ethics Board

REB File # 00105

December 22, 2010

Rose-Marie Nigli
Via email to migli@georgebrown.ca

Dear Rose-Marie,

Re: Your research ethics application entitled, "Assessing the potential for a Leadership and Organizational Capacity-Building Program using the EQI Assessment Tool (Phase1)"

Ethics Approval

Original Approval Date: November 26, 2009
Approval Renewal Date: December 22, 2010
Expiry Date: November 26, 2011

Thank you for submitting an Annual Renewal of Ethics Approval application form. The Research Ethics Board has granted the above-named research study continued approval for one year. Please note that approval is based on the following:

- a) The REB must be informed of any protocol modifications as they arise.
- b) Any unanticipated problems that increase risk to the participants must be reported to the REB immediately.
- c) The study is approved for one more year; if needed, apply for a renewal before the new expiry date.
- d) A study completion form must be submitted to the REB upon completion of the project.

The following documents continue to be approved for use in this study: consent letter and information letter. Please insert the ethics approval number (00105) into these documents. Each participant should receive a copy of his or her consent form.

Please quote your REB file number (00105) on future correspondence.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your project.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jaswant Kaur".

Jaswant Kaur, Ph.D.
Chair, Research Ethics Board

cc: Applied and Institutional Research, George Brown College



Applied and Institutional Research
Research Ethics Board

REB File # 6003507

November 9, 2011

Rose-Marie Nigli, Georgia Quartaro
Via email to rnigli@georgebrown.ca

Dear Rose-Marie,

Re: Your research ethics application entitled, **Assessing the potential for a Leadership and Organizational Capacity-Building Program using the EQI Assessment Tool (Phase1)**

Ethics Approval

Original Approval Date: November 9, 2011
Expiry Date: November 9, 2012

We are writing to advise you that the Research Ethics Board (REB) has granted approval to the above-named research study, for a period of one year, under the REB's expedited review process. Please note that approval is based on the following:

- a) The REB must be informed of any protocol modifications as they arise.
- b) Any unanticipated problems that increase risk to the participants must be reported to the REB immediately.
- c) The study is approved for one year: if needed, apply for a renewal before the expiry date.
- d) A study completion form must be submitted to the REB upon completion of the project.

The following documents have been approved for use in this study: Self-rating questionnaire, consent form, information letter and self-rating mobility test. Please insert the ethics approval number (6003507) into these documents. Each participant should receive a copy of his or her consent form.

Please quote your REB file number (6003507) on future correspondence.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your project.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sarah Evans".

Sarah Evans

P.O. Box 1015, Station B, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5T 2T9 416-415-2000 www.georgebrown.ca



Applied and Institutional Research

Research Ethics Board

REB File # 6003507
January 21, 2016.

Dear Ms. Rose-Marie Nigli,

Re: Your research ethics application titled, "Assessing the potential for a Leadership and Organizational Capacity-Building Program using the EQI Assessment Tool (Phase1)"

New Renewal Date: January 21, 2016
Expiry Date: January 21, 2017.

Thank you for submitting an Annual Renewal of Ethics Approval application form. The Research Ethics Board has granted the above-named research study continued approval for one year. Please note that approval is based on the following:

- a) The REB must be informed of any protocol modifications as they arise.
- b) Any unanticipated problems that increase risk to the participants must be reported to the REB immediately.
- c) The study is approved for one more year: if needed, apply for a renewal before the new expiry date.
- d) A study completion form must be submitted to the REB upon completion of the project.

Please quote your REB file number (6003507) on future correspondence.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your project.

Yours sincerely,

S. Evans

Sarah Evans, RN, MN, EdD
Chair, Research Ethics Board

cc: Applied and Institutional Research, George Brown College
It is the responsibility of the Principal Researcher to keep the file complete and up-to-date at all times.

Appendix D: Emotional Intelligence Group Report



BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory
By Reuven Bar-On, Ph.D.


Resource Report

Name:

ID:

Admin. Date: October 17, 2011 (Online)

Duration: 13 Minutes 49 Seconds

 **MHS** Copyright © 2002 Multi-Health Systems Inc. All rights reserved.
P.O. Box 950 North Tonawanda, NY 14120-0950
3770 Victoria Park Ave., Toronto, ON M2H 3M6

Introduction

EQ-i is intended to help people better understand their emotional and social functioning. After completion of EQ-i, a Resource Report like this one can be produced, allowing individuals to explore their skills across many different areas. Ideally, a counselor goes through the report with the person who has taken EQ-i, in an effort to maximize the benefits of the information provided.

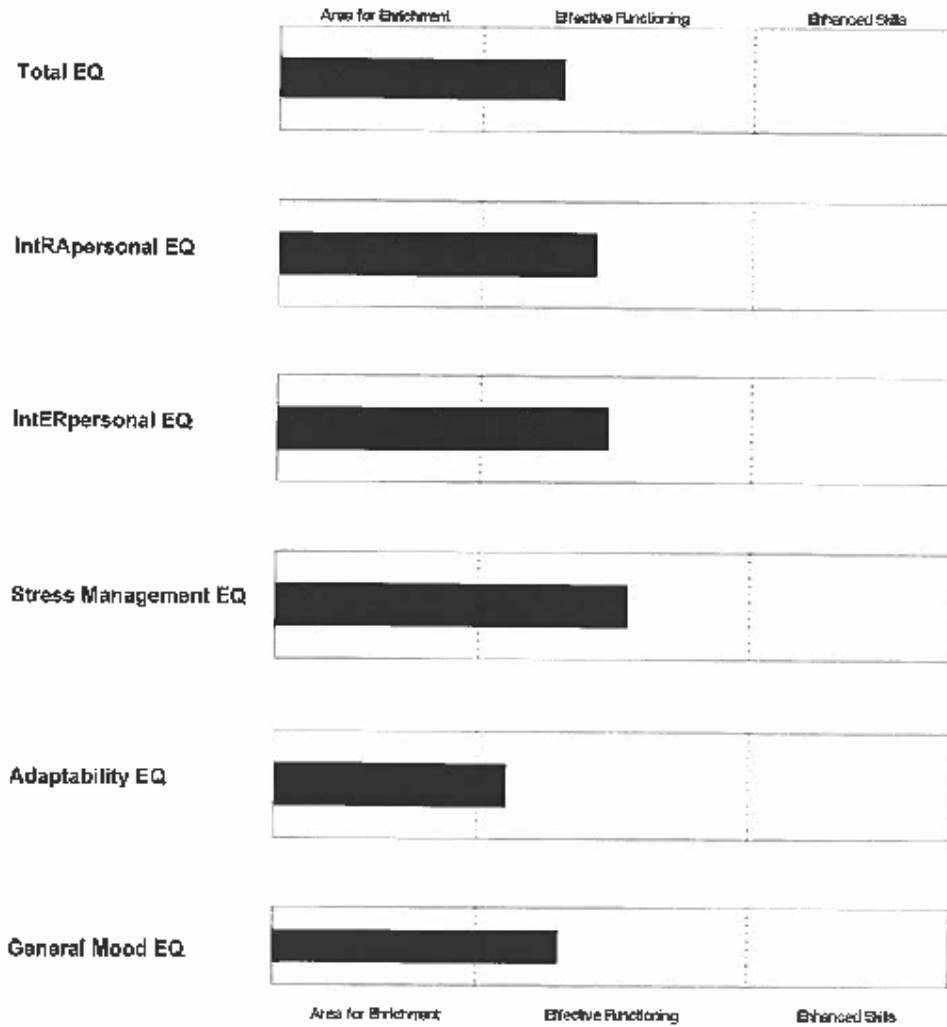
This Resource Report contains several sections. The report begins with graphical displays of the results for Total EQ, the 5 composite scales, and the 15 subscales. Total EQ describes the broadest area of skills looking at overall emotional and social functioning. The composite scales break Total EQ into the 5 domains of Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, Stress Management, Adaptability, and General Mood. The 15 subscales then provide very focused information about specific skills within each of those domains. The report provides several pages of text that describe the results. This text provides general information that may serve as the foundation or starting point for discussion.

The Resource Report also supports the initiation of positive change by offering simple development strategies. These strategies are useful tips to improve targeted skill areas. Discussions with a counselor of the strategies listed in the report and the scale results will help determine the best course of action. Sometimes, after thought and discussion, strategies other than those listed (or supplementing those listed) will end up being used. The tips provided in the report are action-oriented and often provide a quick effective means of initiating improvements that can be embellished by adding other approaches, or by developing a more elaborate program.

There can be some surprises and occasional anxiety associated with EQ-i feedback, but most people experience the process as highly rewarding and enlightening. With thought, areas of higher skill may be used in more situations or more frequently to make the most of them. The identification of lower skill areas should be taken as an opportunity for enrichment. In short, this report summarizes all of the information from the administration, and presents it in a manner intended to maximize the benefits derived from EQ-i.

Composite Scales

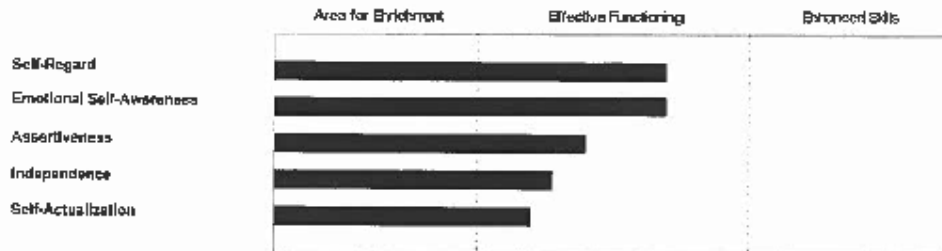
This page shows Total EQ, and the results for the five composite scales.



Content Subscales

The following graphs show the 15 subscales grouped according to composite area.

IntraPersonal



InterPersonal



Stress Management



Adaptability



General Mood



Cautionary Remarks

This computerized report is meant to act as an interpretive aid and should not be used as the sole basis for placement, intervention, or other kinds of decision making. This report works best when combined with other sources of relevant information. The report is based on an algorithm that produces the interpretations most common for the scores that are obtained. Unusual interpretations must be explored with other instruments and on a case-by-case basis.

Interpretation Guide for EQ-i Composite and Content Subscale Scores

The following sections describe the meaning of scores for the Total EQ-i scale and each of the EQ-i content scales. In general, high results identify areas of relative strength. Results in the midrange on these scales indicate satisfactory functioning and are obtained by the majority of those in the population who have taken EQ-i. Low results indicate areas that need to be improved in order to increase overall emotional and social intelligence. If all the results are high or all results are low, it is useful to identify the scales with the highest and lowest results; this will help pinpoint areas of relative strength or weakness.

Total EQ

The Total EQ for _____ indicates someone who is effective in some or most aspects of Emotional Intelligence, but emotional and social functioning could be improved by focusing on one or more areas. A more detailed description of these areas is given in the next section.

Intrapersonal

This component of the Total EQ-i score pertains to the assessment of the inner self. The subcomponents of the Intrapersonal EQ scale include Self-Regard, Emotional Self-Awareness, Assertiveness, Independence, and Self-Actualization. The Total Intrapersonal score indicates adequate intrapersonal functioning overall, but one or more components of intrapersonal functioning were low and could be the focus for improvement of emotional intelligence. The section below describes the scores from these components in more detail.

Self-Regard

The results for this scale indicate accurate self-regard and effective self-confidence. _____ has a reasonable understanding of her strengths and weaknesses. Her ideas and attitudes will be presented with confidence.

Emotional Self-Awareness

The responses suggest effective emotional self-awareness and indicate an individual who knows how her feelings and emotions impact on her own opinions, attitudes, and judgments. She is able to facilitate interactions by appropriately monitoring her own emotions during exchanges with others.

Assertiveness

Overall, assertiveness will be adequate in some or most situations. However, there are likely certain situations where _____ is unable to present her ideas, feelings, or concerns in the best way. Contributions to conversations/discussions may be somewhat limited. Refinement in this area could be of some benefit.

Independence

Independence is a bit lower than average. Others are probably frequently consulted for advice and relied upon, and decisions may be deferred to others. _____ probably prefers group activities and collaborative efforts to individual activities.

Self-Actualization

The responses are indicative of someone who feels she is underachieving and who would like to be getting more out of her life. This person may lack adequate motivation for self-improvement and self-betterment. Sometimes a change in attitude or a change in dealing with particular circumstances is all that is required to improve feelings of self-actualization. Currently, this individual feels somewhat unsuccessful in her pursuits. If she is seemingly successful, then she is likely the type of person who sets very high standards for herself.

Interpersonal

This component of the Total EQ-I scale taps interpersonal capacity and functioning. The subcomponents of the Interpersonal scale include Empathy, Social Responsibility, and Interpersonal Relationship. Interpersonal functioning is satisfactory in general, but at least one of the subcomponents of this area was low and could be an area for improvement. Sometimes there is no problem relating to others but, occasionally, understanding and cooperating with others becomes a struggle. The summary of the subcomponents given next may be helpful in understanding why some interactions are handled better than others.

Empathy

The responses indicate problems understanding what others are thinking and feeling, and giving due consideration to them. The inability to see other people's perspectives can impair interpersonal exchanges, group interaction, and inhibit cooperative efforts. Empathy may be targeted as an area for development.

Social Responsibility

The results indicate an individual who is considerate and responsible often or most of the time. Sometimes self-aspirations are put ahead of the needs of others, but overall she will be a satisfactory contributor to the "community at large" (society, the corporation, team, etc.).

Interpersonal Relationship

Results on the Interpersonal Relationship scale are similar to the population norm. This is the scale that ties most directly to the ability to interact with others. Just about everyone experiences some degree of difficulty in interpersonal functioning, but the responses here suggest that, if difficulties are experienced, they are not particularly unusual. Overall, the responses indicate acceptable social skills and a reasonable ability to form agreeable relationships and alliances.

Stress Management

The Stress Management component of EQ-I consists of the Stress Tolerance and Impulse Control Subscales. One or both of the two subcomponents of Stress Management are low. This finding may indicate a tendency for nervousness or anxiety, and difficulties handling stressful situations. Descriptions of the subcomponents are given below.

Stress Tolerance

Stress Tolerance is slightly higher than average and suggests the ability to withstand adverse events and stressful situations. She generally copes with stress actively and effectively. She is probably a calm person and rarely gets overly anxious or agitated.

Impulse Control

Impulse control ability is about average relative to others in the population. There may be times when she acts or makes decisions prematurely and without proper thought. Overall, impulse control ability is not bad, but also could benefit from some improvement.

Adaptability

This part of EQ-i is composed of the Reality Testing, Flexibility, and Problem Solving Scales and examines how successful one is in coping with environmental demands based on one's ability to effectively size up and deal with problematic situations. The responses of this individual suggest some important limitations in terms of adaptability. Sometimes the limitations can be due to an impractical approach to certain types of situations. In other cases, the limitations are due to the inability to adapt to changing demands. An examination of the subcomponent scores described below will help pinpoint the areas that are in need of improvement.

Reality Testing

Reality Testing is an area in need of improvement. There may be a tendency to pursue unrealistic goals, instead of sticking to practical and attainable goals. frequently loses focus on the task at hand, and/or lets her mind wander and becomes distracted.

Flexibility

The responses for this scale indicate rigid thinking or behavior, and a need to become more open-minded and more adaptable to changing circumstances. The deficit in this area will be most noticeable given variable task demands. From a more favorable perspective, she may be quite comfortable and perform well when repetition, consistency, and stability are needed.

Problem Solving

The responses to the Problem Solving scale indicate that approach to solving problems is moderately successful. Improvement is possible and may center around trying to take a more methodical approach, taking the time to consider alternative solutions, and by carefully thinking through each step of a problem resolution.

General Mood

The subcomponents of this composite scale consist of the Optimism and Happiness subscales. These components of EQ-i measure one's general feeling of contentment and overall outlook on life. High scores on these components indicate a positive outlook that can help bolster oneself and those around. It may be beneficial to try to improve one or both of the components of General Mood. Descriptions of these components are given below.

Optimism

is slightly low on the optimism scale. This finding indicates that, like most others, there are probably times that this individual feels pessimistic. It is likely that she assesses prospects of the future by keeping expectations relatively low.

Happiness

The responses indicate a low to moderate ability to maintain a positive mood or attitude, and the potential need to improve overall outlook. The responses show reasonable happiness, but she did indicate feeling depressed at times. Occasional moodiness occurs in just about everyone and is not usually a problem. More extreme mood swings, however, can impede functioning/performance.

Profile Summary

The results suggest the recognition of some problems in emotional and social functioning, and the need for improvement. There are one or two subscales that are weaker than the rest. Until these component skills are improved, optimal performance will be obtained in tasks or jobs that do not place a great emphasis on these areas of functioning.

The highest subscales are Self-Regard, Emotional Self-Awareness, Stress Tolerance.
The lowest subscales are Flexibility, Reality Testing, Empathy, Self-Actualization.

Simple Strategies For Development

Strategies for improving the areas that yielded the lowest EQ-i scores

Flexibility

- Emphasize activities/tasks that require reliability and consistency
- Ensure there is sufficient preparation time to help mitigate the impact of significant change
- Brainstorm, preferably in a group context, to harvest ideas for handling dynamic, changing demands
- Be sure adequate training is received to prepare for new activities and roles; Use change as an opportunity to learn and develop
- Consider how past experiences and skills are applicable to new challenges

Reality Testing

- Make sure goals are concrete and attainable
- Increase focus on practical actions; Ideals are desirable but sometimes not feasible
- Ensure that observations/opinions are verified with alternate sources of information and by asking others
- The inability to stay focused on the situation at hand is sometimes related to attention deficits or concentration lapses; If so, consider increased novelty in activities/assignments to improve attention, or use breaks more effectively to improve concentration and focus when "on task"

Empathy

- Make clear the duties and demands on others; Understanding others is a key step to appropriate empathy
- Train to refine observational skill to attend to facial expressions and body language; These cues are often just as important as what is being said
- Train to be "inquiring" in interactions; To be sure that a message has been correctly interpreted, it is important for the recipient of the message to ask about the thoughts and feelings being conveyed
- The key point is to "put oneself in the other person's shoes"; Job exchanges, job shadowing, or even role-playing can be useful in better understanding others

Strategies for Improving other low areas

Self-Actualization

- Set goals that are challenging yet clearly attainable; Goals should be objective and, preferably, measurable
- Examine career/life plans and aspirations in terms of current position
- Train to improve skills and move closer to achieving full potential
- Personalize goals to fit personal aspirations, but avoid unrealistic or fanciful ideals
- Examine goals and aspirations regularly to determine ways to be better; Set intermediary goals to facilitate reaching longer-term goals

Independence

- Build confidence in independent problem resolution through the involvement in simpler, manageable tasks
- Break down activities into smaller parts; It may be that help is only necessary with one small aspect of the task rather than with the entire task
- Match skills to activities/tasks more carefully so that independent work is possible
- Increase skills through training so activities/tasks can be managed independently
- Build confidence by recognizing successful efforts and independent achievements

Happiness

- Make sure achievements are properly celebrated and rewarded
- Examine career/life plans and aspirations in terms of current activities and position
- Properly balance work/life demands with rest and relaxation
- Determine activities that are enjoyable and, if possible, allow more time to be spent on them
- Promote increased activity level and improved health, if appropriate

Optimism

- Minimize negative thoughts related to trivial or temporary problems
- Adjust goals so that they are more attainable
- Celebrate accomplishments and use positive feedback
- Be solution-focused rather than problem-driven
- Use positive feedback for goal attainment and constructive and supportive feedback when goals are not successfully met
- If appropriate, increase empowerment to avoid the pessimism that often results when people feel helpless to change the status quo; This feeling is often overcome if one's own judgment can be used to change circumstances

Closing Remark

This narrative report is meant as an aid to help understand the results of the BarOn EQ-i. Combined with other information, EQ-i can help identify areas of strength as well as areas that could be improved. This report describes the emotional and social functioning of the respondent in accordance with the responses provided.

Counselor's Section

This section provides a complete scoring summary including sections on assessment validity, raw scores, and item responses.

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Female

Administration Date:

October 17, 2011

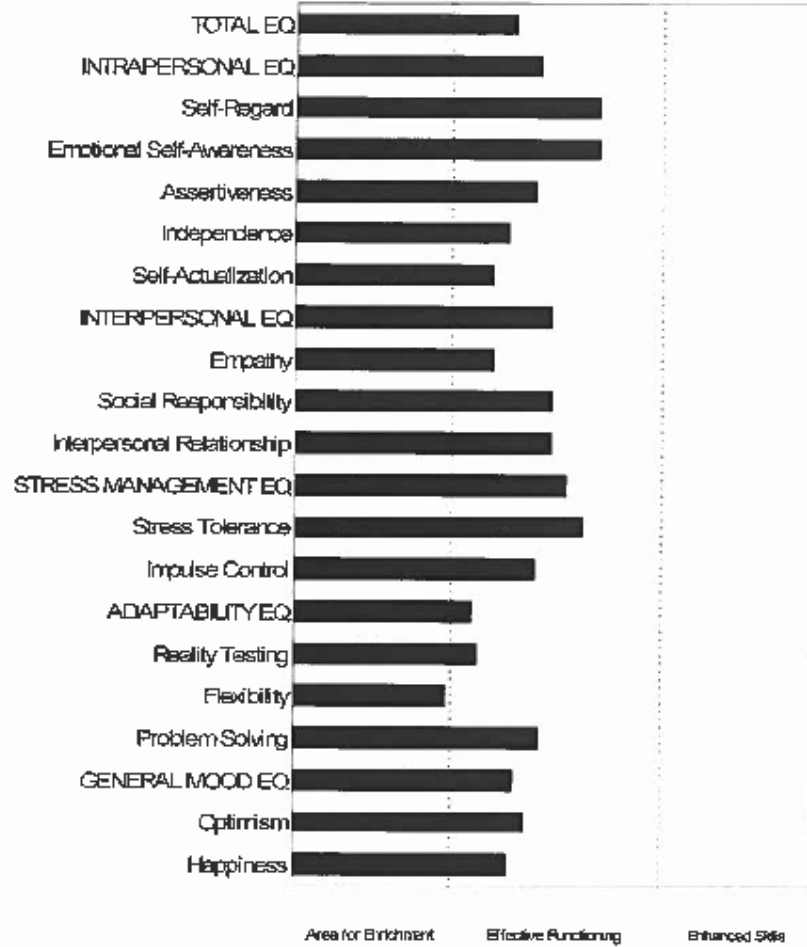
Nom Type:

Female under 30

Score Summary	Adjusted Score	Unadjusted Score	Guideline
Inconsistency Index		3	OK
Positive Impression		93	OK
Negative Impression		119	OK
TOTAL EQ:	92	90	Average
INTRAPERSONAL:	97	96	Average
Self-Regard	108	104	Average
Emotional Self-Awareness	108	107	Average
Assertiveness	98	95	Average
Independence	91	91	Average
Self-Actualization	88	85	Low
INTERPERSONAL:	99	98	Average
Empathy	88	89	Low
Social Responsibility	99	95	Average
Interpersonal Relationship	98	95	Average
STRESS MANAGEMENT:	102	98	Average
Stress Tolerance	105	104	Average
Impulse Control	95	92	Average
ADAPTABILITY:	84	82	Low
Reality Testing	85	83	Low
Flexibility	79	78	Very Low
Problem Solving	97	96	Average
GENERAL MOOD:	92	88	Average
Optimism	94	92	Average
Happiness	91	87	Average

Graph of Total EQ, Composite Scales, and Subscales

This graph shows Total EQ followed by each composite scale with its subscales.



Validity Indicators

Several sections follow that present and describe the validity scale results.

Validity Comment:

The validity indicators are all in the acceptable range suggesting valid responses and results that are not unduly influenced by response style.

Inconsistency Index:	3
Impression:	Positive = 93 Negative = 110
Correction:	Type I = 1.2, Type II = 1.59, Type III = 3.83, Type IV = 4.23, Type V = 2.83

Inconsistency Index

The responses to items with similar content are consistent with one another.

Positive Impression (PI) and Negative Impression (NI) Scores

The score on the Negative Impression scale (NI) was somewhat elevated. Although the NI score indicates responses that were somewhat negative or self-critical, the tendency was small and should not have a major influence on the results and interpretation of the other scale scores.

Correction Factors:

The correction factors are used to fine tune EQ-I scores on the basis of validity scale scores. The adjusted (or corrected) scores take into account response style. Corrections of greater than zero mean that points have been added to the scores, and corrections less than zero mean that points have been taken off the scores. Because EQ-I scales are affected differently by response tendencies, different types of corrections are applied as follows.

Type I applies to Total Intrapersonal, Emotional Self-Awareness, Problem Solving, and Flexibility.
 Type II applies to Total EQ, Total Adaptability, Reality Testing, and Stress Tolerance.
 Type III applies to Social Responsibility, Happiness and Impulse Control.
 Type IV applies to Total Stress Management, Total General Mood and Self-Regard.
 Type V applies to Total Interpersonal, Interpersonal Relationship, Optimism, and Self-Actualization.
 There is no correction for Independence, Empathy, and Assertiveness.

Summary of Validity Scale Results

Overall, the validity indicators described in this section suggest that the EQ-I results should be considered valid.

Profile Summary

The results suggest the recognition of some problems in emotional and social functioning, and the need for improvement. There are one or two subscales that are weaker than the rest. Until these component skills are improved, optimal performance will be obtained in tasks or jobs that do not place a great emphasis on these areas of functioning.

Scale Raw Scores

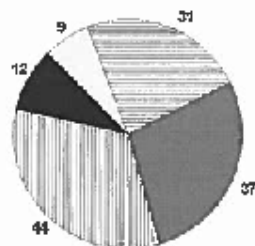
For research purposes only.

TOTAL EQ	423	STRESS MANAGEMENT	64
		ST	33
		IC	31
INTRAPERSONAL	147	ADAPTABILITY	62
SR	36	RT	32
ES	32	FL	21
AS	24	PS	29
IN	23	GENERAL MOOD	62
SA	32	CP	29
INTERPERSONAL	98	HA	33
EM	31		
RE	42		
IR	44		

Item Responses

Item	Response	Item	Response	Item	Response	Item	Response	Item	Response
1	4	28	3	55	4	82	4	109	3
2	3	29	4	56	2	83	4	110	4
3	3	30	1	57	2	84	5	111	3
4	4	31	4	58	3	85	4	112	5
5	3	32	3	59	3	86	2	113	4
6	3	33	4	60	4	87	4	114	5
7	4	34	3	61	5	88	4	115	3
8	1	35	2	62	4	89	4	116	2
9	5	36	4	63	4	90	4	117	3
10	2	37	3	64	3	91	3	118	2
11	3	38	2	65	1	92	3	119	2
12	2	39	4	66	2	93	3	120	4
13	1	40	3	67	4	94	1	121	2
14	2	41	3	68	2	95	4	122	3
15	4	42	2	69	3	96	4	123	3
16	4	43	3	70	1	97	4	124	4
17	2	44	4	71	1	98	4	125	2
18	2	45	4	72	4	99	4	126	2
19	3	46	2	73	3	100	5	127	2
20	3	47	3	74	2	101	3	128	2
21	2	48	3	75	5	102	2	129	4
22	2	49	2	76	1	103	4	130	2
23	2	50	3	77	3	104	5	131	4
24	3	51	3	78	5	105	5	132	3
25	2	52	3	79	1	106	4	133	5
26	4	53	4	80	4	107	2		
27	5	54	4	81	4	108	4		

5 = Very Often true of me or true of me, 4 = Often true of me, 3 = Sometimes true of me, 2 = Seldom true of me, 1 = Very Seldom true or not true of me, 0 = Omitted Item



= Response 1
 = Response 2
 = Response 3
 = Response 4
 = Response 5

Date Printed: October 18, 2011

End of Report