"Diversity or whatever": A look at queer DIY organizing in Edmonton arts scenes

by

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Abstract

This study investigates the ways some queer collectives have organized DIY (Do-It-Yourself) festivals in Edmonton to address the oppression faced by their communities in arts and music scenes. Focusing my research specifically on the Brown, Black, and Fierce! Collective (BB&F) and Not Enough Fest Edmonton (NEF), my primary goals are to explore the ways in which communities are negotiated through social media and their media appearances during the organizing process, and how organizers make sense of community or of their own personal experience. Through my involvement as an organizer with BB&F, and my experience as a community member at NEF 2016, I gained a personal knowledge of the organizing process required to make such events happen; yet, I still struggled to make sense of this organizing experience. Thus, figuring out how organizers go from a small group of individuals to what looks like a cohesive collective surrounded by a supportive and engaged community became a pressing question. On one level, this thesis aims to answer this question for myself. On another level, it will offer insight into the organizing process of DIY festivals as well as queer cultural production as resistance in a city like Edmonton. Framed by theories of community and grassroots organizing and gender politics of identity, this research comprises three facets: a discursive analysis of media released by the collectives, an analysis of semi-constructed interviews with organising members of said collectives, and an analysis of social media discourse.

Preface

This thesis is the original, unpublished work of Aurélie Gaëlle Lesueur. The research project, of which this thesis is a part, received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name "Community-building and grassroots organizing in Edmonton", No. Pro00066922, May 05, 2017.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

> *Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did, and it never will.*
> (Douglass, 1858)

In January 2016, NOW Magazine published a series of interviews titled "Real Talk About Racism in The Toronto Music Scene" (Gillis, Da Silva, Khanna, Tanja-Tiziana, & Siddiqui, 2016). This cover story offered a platform to 11 artists and musicians of color to share their experience of the Toronto music scene. For many of them, this included experiences of racism through lack of access, opportunities, and promotion. Racism here did not necessarily mean racist interactions but rather the many ways in which the music scene upholds white supremacy and perpetuates systems of oppression that can be found in broader society.

Even though the article foreword explicitly stated that the endeavour was, only a small attempt at starting a dialog by centering the voices and experiences of marginalized people, the backlash in the comments was swiftly felt. One after the other commenters decried the mischaracterization of Toronto music scene. Surely, the people sharing their experience of racism were simply lying, complaining for no reason, perhaps a lack of talent, or maybe the situation stemmed more from a class problem than a race problem (but not both, as readers seemed to consider only single-issue complaints as valid). Sarcasm and dismissal abounded, and it remains to be seen if change has been implemented meaningfully since the article publication (Gillis, Da Silva, Khanna, Tanja-Tiziana, & Siddiqui, 2016).

I have elected to share this story and a few others for the following reason; each of them illustrates the reality of oppression and what fighting back entails for those most affected. Cultural politics pervade all aspects of social life: language, food, the arts, etc. When marginalized people advocates for themselves to affect change in any aspect of their lives they experience backlash, no matter

how important or trivial the change may seem. Cultural production, if it is not simply the reproduction of the status quo, is a site where the oppressive dynamics of larger society are reproduced. Moreover, just as culture encompasses various aspects of life, the manifestations of oppression in cultural production are many.

Another example of racism in the arts comes from the Calgary-based band Preoccupations, formed in 2012 and formerly known as Viet Cong. Throughout their career under this name, they were often criticized for their offensive and appropriative name, specifically coming from a band with no member of Vietnamese descent to even justify such a choice. Critics often emphasized the painful history for many people in Vietnamese and other Asian communities, and how problematic it was for four white Canadian men to ignore the history and the trauma of others simply for the cool factor of a name with such a charged history of violence (Nguyen, 2015; Diblasi, 2014).

Despite several call outs, the band kept their name and went on to be nominated for the Polaris Prize in 2015. However, the protests escalated to the point were the impact could be felt by the members with things such as a boycott of the band and having performances cancelled and the band announced in September of that year that they understood what was being explained to them and as such would change their name. They did so in late April 2016 (Gordon, 2016). They are not the only example of such thoughtlessness when it comes to the music scene in North America, and not every instance ends in a band acknowledging the impact of their choices and boycotts are not always successful when the structure is willing to support sexism and racism even when called out on said behaviours (Slingerland, 2016; Hughes, 2016).

Even among marginalized populations, the power imbalances of oppressive dynamics find their place. In the summer of 2015, the Edmonton Reggae Festival, scheduled to happen in September,

came under fire for having three publicly homophobic Jamaican artists on their line-up (Maimann, 2015). Activists reached out to the organizers to find a solution to their issues. Their main issue was that Black LGBTQ community members, who enjoy Reggae and Dancehall music, are made to feel excluded by such programming choices. A human rights complaint was lodged at the Alberta Human Rights Commission by an individual member of the public, with no involvement in Edmonton Black LGBTQ community, and a meeting between black LGBTQ activists and organizers was set up. Despite this meeting, and despite the lost of a few sponsors, the situation remained unchanged and nothing was done to address the concerns of black LGBTQ members of the community (CBC News a, 2015; CBC News b, 2015).

Expressions of oppressive colonial violence are not always couched in outright aggressive terms, especially in Canada's neoliberal context; they can be hidden under the guise of apolitical exploration and enlightenment. In May 2017, in an editorial published in *Write* magazine issue about Indigenous writers, Hal Niedzviecki encouraged Canadian writers to write about cultures, stories and experiences that are not theirs, as he himself did not believe in cultural appropriation. The editorial was *aptly* titled "Winning the Appropriation Prize" (Dundas, 2017). When this editorial was made public, Indigenous activists, scholars, and community members were understandably outraged, to see cultural appropriation presented as a fresh new endeavor, especially in an industry that is overwhelmingly white and male (Lee & Low Books, 2016; Dundas, 2017). Niedzviecki quit his position as editor of *Write* magazine shortly thereafter. However, soon after this was announced, a number of Canadian journalists and writers on Twitter, shocked by what they perceived to be a "witch hunt" against creativity, decided to make their discontent known, and show support to Niedzviecki, by pledging to start a fund for the aforementioned "Appropriation Prize" (Kassam, 2017; Koul, 2017).

This incident was not the first time the Writers' Union had to deal with issues pertaining to cultural appropriation in an issue[1], and the reaction from the public engaging in this debate was similar and the debate suddenly surrounded the issue of censorship rather than an issue of racism. By ignoring the importance of cultural representation for marginalized people, who are often silenced, erased, or caricatured in the dominant discourse and by elevating the issue of censorship, the issue of racism can be ignored. This derailing expresses the "profound failure, if not refusal, to understand how thoroughly racism informs all aspects of society" (Philip, 1997, p. 99).

In June 2015, Zoe Todd, a Métis artist and scholar based in Edmonton-amiskwaciwâskahikan, tackled this very issue in a piece titled 'A manifesto for the (white) Edmonton arts scene (#boycottwhitesupremacyinyegarts)[2]'. The author paints the portrait of an arts scene and community rife with racism and pieces purporting to tell Indigenous stories while never allowing Indigenous voices to be heard. Just like every other example given here, Todd encountered swift criticism for voicing her ideas and experiences of racism as an Indigenous artist. These visceral reactions to criticism are a constant for activists and community members alike when denouncing the reality of oppression, be it racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and its impacts:

> "The failure to sustain a critique of race has been rightfully characterized as an extension of white privilege[3]. This critique is about much more than including people of colour and Indigenous people in an organization, which is tokenism at its best. It is about recognizing

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[1] In 1988, the Writers' Union started a debate in its newsletter regarding the decision by The Women's Press to reject stories by white writers that were judged culturally appropriative. The publishing company then changed its guidelines to avoid a similar situation in the future. This policy changes are what started the debate in the Writers' Union newsletter (Philip, 1997).

[2] This piece was originally titled 'A manifesto for the Edmonton arts scene (#boycottyegarts)'. The author amended the titled in May 2016 to better reflect the focus of the article, which calls for the dismantling of white supremacy in Edmonton arts scene and community.

[3] White privilege refers to the myriad of social advantages, benefits, and courtesies that come with being a member of the dominant race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 78).

that racism actually ---changes the way oppression exerts itself, and the need to develop theories that take this into account" (Chenier, 2015, p. viii).

Though it may appear as unimportant in the grand scheme of things, the racial and colonial violence that can be witnessed in an arts scene is nothing but a reflection of the violence happening on a larger societal scale. The violence that allows cultural artefacts and works of art from Indigenous people across the world to be exhibited without their consent in Western museums has the same roots as the violence that drove European colonialism and imperialism. They cannot be considered as separate entities and in the same way, the violence that devalues women's labour and participation in certain fields has the same roots as the violence that drives gendered sexual violence:

> (…) the ideology and practice of racism have as old a tradition as that of the "rights of man". (…) The ideological framework of Western democracies, erected upon the belief in freedom of the individual, is supported as much by this ideology (and its offshoots), as by that of racism. (Philip, 1997)

White supremacy[4] and heteropatriarchy are the underlying systems upon which Western societies are built. They dictate who can and cannot have access to power, resources, and the *privilege* of having your rights respected. Less than a century ago, and though slavery had already been abolished, black people in Canada and the United States of America did not experience the same rights as white citizens. They still do not. Indigenous people in Canada, though they were made eligible to conscription in 1917 (Jones & Granatstein, 2006), were not granted voting rights until

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[4] A racist ideology relying on the belief that white people are superior to racialized people and which justifies imperialism and colonialism

the 1960's unless they chose to serve in the military or lose their status. In this as usual there are different degree of experiences, Inuit people were granted rights much earlier but were not afforded the means to exercise them until the 60's (Leslie, 2016). Indigenous women, of course, were affected not only by racist colonialist rulings but also by misogyny; more than men, Indigenous women saw their rights as "Canadian citizens" grow at the expense of their Treaty Rights (Leddy, 2016).

Today, though Indigenous people account for just under 5% of the Canadian population and Black people for approximately 3.5%, both populations are overwhelmingly overrepresented in the justice system[5]. This inequality is also present in the art world where minority artists are vastly underpaid and underfunded, with minority artists earning on average 11% less than their white counterparts and Indigenous artists earning 28% less than other artists (Canada Council for the Arts, 2005).

These stories are not specific to the settler colonial states of North America as they are a cornerstone of Western society, and the same dynamics can be observed in Europe too, where discourse and cultural production are overwhelmingly white. They serve to defend and further the interests of the dominant group as well. "Culture is a key site in the political struggle to transform power relations" and it is the perfect site to witness the failures of liberalism and multiculturalism to really embrace and enhance diversity (Tator, Mattis, & Henry, 1998). Cultural imperialism produces a hegemonic discourse and reinforces it by continuously stereotyping, marginalizing, and

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[5] Indigenous children and youths are also over-represented in the foster care and juvenile penitentiary systems (Malone, 2018; Vowel, 2016)

excluding those whose identity do not fit with the dominant discourse, be it because of their gender, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, etc...

Art has always been a way for marginalized populations to challenge the dominant narrative and voice their resistance in a multitude of ways and mediums. Cultural production and cultural events then provide these populations with means to challenge not only the status quo but also to achieve representation. Major works of art have turned into pivotal cultural moments for different communities, like the release of the movies "Get Out[6]" and "Black Panther[7]" and the impact they have had in black communities worldwide. In Edmonton, the "City of Festivals", there is always an opportunity to experience the cultural life, be it theatre, music, public art or the celebration of a specific culture. However, a look at the Edmonton Cultural Hall of Fame[8] reveals that few people of colour and/or women have been included in the city's cultural narrative. Still, on top of this rich cultural history, Edmonton also boasts a vibrant activist scene tackling everything from rallies, protests to cultural events.

This combination, in a deeply conservative province like Alberta, explains why activists have started using art and cultural production to voice protest and affect change in their communities. Due to Alberta's history of homophobia and conservative politics, queer and racialized communities are among the most marginalized. In this context, when art can be used as a tool for change and empowerment, this work will explore the ways in which queer Do-It-Yourself (DIY) organizers in Edmonton who have used art festivals to enact change through their art communities,

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[6] "Get Out" is a horror movie directed by Jordan Peele. Branded as social horror, it portrays an interracial relationship, and relies on the varied depictions of racism as a horror device. It is also the first time Oscar winning screenplay written by an African-American director (Wikipedia, n.d).
[7] "Black Panther" is the first movie about a black superhero in the Marvel Cinematic Universe and it one of the most successful movies released in North America (Wikipedia, n.d)
[8] The Edmonton Cultural Hall of Fame can be found at the Citadel Theatre.

have negotiated community and collective identity through discourse, and what they took away from this experience.

When I decided to focus my research on queer community organizing in Edmonton, specifically the Brown, Black, and Fierce! Collective (BB&F) and Not Enough Fest Edmonton (NEF), my primary goals were to explore the ways in which communities were negotiated through social media and their media appearances during the organizing process, and how organizers made sense of community or of their own personal experience.

I chose to focus my research on these collectives and their work because I am interested in the ways people in Edmonton organize, for both community building and survival, to cultivate a space wherein a community can feel safe and grow as a group but also as individual members. Recently, there has been more attention given to the way organizing is a political action, weaving anti-racist, anti-colonial, and feminist ideas and ideals into the organizing framework. I seek to explore the ways in which a group of people try to affect lasting change in their community through providing care and emotional labour. Finally, NEF and BB&F also offered another interesting aspect, namely the initiative to create new festivals. As a community-funded DIY political arts festival, NEF 2015 was the first of its kind in the city. Although the BB&F festival would follow eight months later, the concept was still relatively new. Though Edmonton boasts a vast number of festivals per year, none of them has any similarities with the festivals being studied in this research. Festivals such as Edmonton Folk Festival and the Heritage Festival are city sponsored and government backed. Cultural production and representation both influence and are reflections of a societal belief. In a neo-liberal, multicultural society, cultural production is political, because access to space, resources and funding for cultural productions is managed by the State. The events studied follow

a very different format, as they are mostly about cultural production and representation, even though they are also political in their message and their organizing framework.

Through my involvement as an organizer with BB&F, and my experience as a community member at NEF 2016, I had a privileged position: personal knowledge of the organizing process required to make such events happen. Yet, I still struggled to make sense of this organizing experience. While I felt very connected to my fellow organizers after engaging in this process with them, I did not feel this same sense of connection to the community outside of the organizing team. Thus, figuring out how organizers go from a small group of individuals to what looks like a cohesive collective surrounded by a supportive and engaged community became a pressing question. On one level, this thesis aims to answer this question for myself. On another level, it will offer insight into the organizing process of DIY festivals as well as queer cultural production as resistance in a city like Edmonton.

The first chapter will provide a review of the literature on community organizing and the different organizing practices and on identity as constructionist grounded in feminist and queer theory. The following chapter will offer a description of the methodology used in this study. The third and fourth chapters will expound on my findings; chapter three will break down the ways in which the collectives have negotiated space, community and the collective identity. Chapter 4 will delve into the organizers experience of organizing both as a political and personal endeavour. The final chapter is the conclusion.

Chapter 2: Literature review

"Without community there is no liberation, only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between an individual and her oppression. But community must not mean a shedding of our differences, nor the pathetic pretense that these differences do not exist" (Lorde, 1984).

In her essay *The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House* (1984), Audre Lorde establishes the important role that community plays in combating oppression. Systems of oppression are widespread and multifaceted in any society and enable individuals as well as institutions to perpetuate discrimination based on gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, ability and more. The prevalence of these beliefs and attitude are what make community a necessity in the fight for liberation, the work would be too heavy for a single person. Moreover, discrimination and oppression come with an array of dehumanizing stereotypes that aim to isolate people to make it easier for them to accept their condition and the violence they encounter. Community brings a sense of belonging, support, and a greater power over one's existence. "People generally want to find [or rather] create their own community, whether it be one of friends, neighbors, workers or believers" (Biklen, 1983).

Community can be anything, which makes it difficult to provide a single definition for it. A community can be both the smallest unit we exist in as individuals and the largest conceptual space in which we move. Community can be as small as a family, but it can also be the world at large. Community is the space where we find support and live, and no matter how small it is, it still plays an important part in our lives but also in our health: "the notion of community harkens a wide range of feelings and experiences, including trust, mutuality, commitment, and solidarity, as well as contestation, conflict and exclusion" (Pyles, 2013, p. 8). Community, however, does not have to be a physical space; people from across the world are in community with others for

different reasons. Society is a series of communities existing within and interacting with each other and as such community does not simply include what people have in common but also what divides them.

In most of the literature about community organizing, communities are usually defined by what the people among them have in common (i.e.: geographic communities, professional communities, cultural or ethnic communities). The individuals among them and their common characteristics (e.g. LGBTQ communities, communities of faith) can determine communities but communities can also be determined by the spaces inhabited (e.g. a city, a neighbourhood, a campus). However simply existing in proximity and sharing a space or experiences is not necessarily enough to define a community. Arguably, what makes a community is the acknowledgement by members that they are in community and that the things that affect their communities affect them personally. One of the most effective ways a group of people can acknowledge the similarity of their situation is by organizing to address their issues and affect change in their lives. The way social dynamics evolve has an influence on community organizing and its practices. There is much to learn about a society, its values, its failures and its members through the study of its community organizing.

In this chapter, I will review the existing literature and discuss my research within the scope of its conceptual framework. This literature review is divided in two sections. The first section will be a review of the literature on community organizing and the ways it has been studied so far and why, and will expand on what is known as DIY, or sometimes radical, organizing, its political foundations in anarchism. The second section will focus on identity as constructionist, specifically gender politics of identity as well as provide definitions of power and other social constructs central to this type of community organizing. The purpose of this chapter is to situate my research in the context of organizational studies, cultural studies, phenomenology and activist scholarship;

it also aims at providing a clear image of the conceptual framework used throughout this study of DIY art community festivals by some of Edmonton queer communities.

In this first section, I will start by providing a review of research on community organizing in North America, starting with a definition of community and community organizing and delve deeper into the many existing organizing frameworks; I will then expand further on DIY organizing. Most of the literature identifies three elements of equal importance in community organizing: the community, the organizing approach, and the organizers. In the context of social work scholarship, community is a very complicated term to define. It references both the population to serve and the actors driving the change. Many factors influence the formation of a community such as geography, class, age, or religion but one of the pivotal characteristics of a community is self-interest (Mondros & Wilson, 1994). People organize around topics and issues that matter to them and have an impact on their lives because "community organizing assumes that all people have some potential to present their own interests, to speak on their own behalf, to help as well as be helped and to make change" (Biklen, 1983).

In our age of global communication, a social movement like Black Lives Matter[9], which aims to denounce and combat police brutality, the over policing of black bodies, and institutional antiblackness, can have chapters across the United States but also internationally wherever black communities are experiencing the effects of racism and antiblackness. There may not be a single global black community, as there is no single global black experience; however, these communities still organize under the same banner even when faced with very different circumstances.

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[9] Black Lives Matter, founded by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi in 2013, was started after the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's murderer. It has come into the global spotlight after the murder of Michael Brown by Ferguson police in August 2014 and now counts 22 chapters in North America (Black Lives Matter, 2018).

"Wherever a society fails to guarantee basic social goods, or where a society forces people to beg and compromised themselves, their pride, and their dignity for such goods, then that society fails to guarantee justice" (Biklen, 1983). This shared experience allows for a sense of community that is not rooted in geographic space, as well as for a sense of solidarity.

Geographical communities tend to be the most easily identified, be it people living in the same neighbourhood, and sometimes residence, or people living in the same city and encountering the same problems. However, community can be "about both the people who live within particular geographic locations and about the services, facilities and physical environments that people experience" (Richardson, 2008, p. 56). When an issue arises in a collective space, and many can feel the impact, a certain cohesion is needed to address the problem. It is then that community members will band together and organize to affect change. This allows for community organizing to not be only the prerogative of community members but to be open to external intervention, for instance when an organization takes over advocating for a population (Mondros & Wilson, 1994; Rothman, 1968; Richardson, 2008). Online social networks have had a direct impact on the concept of community; indeed, people are able to connect with like-minded people across the globe to plan a social action. Furthermore, policies to facilitate global corporate free trade have an impact on communities spanning continents. Thus, it is common nowadays for people to organize without geographic ties to a specific country or place (Pyles, 2013). Additionally, communities of interest and communities of values exist, complicating further the notion of community. In this work, we will agree with Dasgupta's statement that "community involves people" (1996) and adopt a minimalist definition of community as a group of people with something in common.

Though fundamentally community organizing is about affecting change in one's life and community and requires a community and organizers for the process to begin, the approaches to

organizing are diverse. However, because the work is essentially the same, these approaches are very similar, and the authors' interpretation is what differentiate them from each other. As an academic field of research, community organizing practice takes roots in social work, education, and public health, where it plays a part in changing and challenging the status quo. Because there are different types of communities, there is also a vast array of community organizing practices.

Practices have always depended not only on which community is organizing but also on what the purpose of this organizing is. Rothman introduced three approaches to organizing, or models: locality development, social planning, and social action (1968). Locality development applies to organizing looking to affect change within a community and requires widespread participation from community members. Social planning is more concerned with welfare issues in communities and is geared towards public policies and programs. Social action focuses on marginalized group and their relationship with institutions and seeks to redistributes power and resources to those who need it most (Rothman, 1968). Mondros and Wilson (1994) are more interested in the type of groups doing the organizing and have identified three kinds of community organizing models: grassroots, lobbying and, mobilizing. These models are characterized by the belief that the purpose of organizing is not only about change, its purpose is to gain and wield power. In grassroots organizing, marginalized communities gather to target those who hold power over them or their situation and organizers ensure that the efforts are sustainable and effective, keeping the momentum and the community's involvement going. Lobbying organizing is concerned with defending the interests of a community and pressuring the government and other institutions to ensure that their interests are protected. Finally, in the mobilizing model, political activists gather to fight against reluctant governments and institutions for rights (Mondros & Wilson, 1994; Pyles, 2013). These practices rely on the use of numerous tactics (striking, demonstrating, occupying,

etc…) however, these tactics are not fixed, they can be changed, discarded and adapted to what is most relevant to the community. Rothman (1968) and Mondros and Wilson (1994) have established that community organizing practices are mostly defined by the tasks they aim to accomplish, who the stakeholders are, and how they, with the help of organizers, go about reaching those objectives. Community organization does not, however, necessarily have to be tending to the needs of the many, nor the good of society; it is characterized by self-interest.

It is that self-interest that studies on organizing brings to light. Stinson, Ross & Duncan (1979) took a deeper look at Canadian case studies of citizen participation and Stinson defined eight new models of community organization practices. According to Stinson, case studies are contemporary, and sometimes ongoing, history. The authors recognized that case studies, by exploring the ways in which a community defines its problems and organizes to affect change, provide others, outsiders and community members alike, with knowledge, help and faith for "[if] their efforts appear to be successful, our hope is fortified. Even if they fail, we may learn from their failures in our own struggle" (Stinson, Ross, & Duncan, 1979). Thus, they not only expanded on Rothman's models but they also made explicit the interest of studying community organization for learning purposes and because of their political value:

> Research into community action is contemporary political history, interpreted for its relevance to future action (…). [T]hese experiments are propaganda for the importance of the issues they explore, and their final justification, outside the communities where they work, is the quality of the debate they can provoke" (Stinson, Ross, & Duncan, 1979).

When researchers write about case studies, they are not objective. The cases they select are of importance to them, in one way or another, and the purpose of writing then, is to impact others,

whether it be on a political or personal level. There are then two categories of approaches to studying and learning from community organizing case studies: "micro to macro" and "multiple cases for macro analysis". The first category focusing on the study of a single phenomenon to apply teachings to a larger scale and the second one allows authors to explore various cases to "test or generate some general principles" (Stinson, Ross, & Duncan, 1979).

For the most part, community organizing is seen as the work of paid organizers. Even in grassroots organizing, with marginalized populations with less access, it is somewhat expected that organizers will be professional organizers. However, for some communities, this is not possible; this is when DIY organizing can come into being. Taking roots in grassroots organizing, DIY organizing is linked to anarchism and punk subculture. Though anarchism originated in the late nineteenth century in working-class socialist movements, it really developed in the 1990's, inspired by the work previously done by revolutionaries such as the Civil Rights movement and other liberation movements of the era (Dixon, 2013). Anarchism rejects capitalism and stands against all forms of domination. It is informed by black feminist theory[10] which "suggests that systems of racism, capitalism, hetero-patriarchy, and ableism operate with and through each other— they are interconnected. Truly revolutionary politics, in short, necessarily involves fighting against multiple forms of oppression" (Dixon, 2013, p. 3). Systems of oppression work on different levels, and though all people of color living in a white supremacist society encounter forms of racism, their experiences will still vary depending on race, gender, sexuality, class, ability, etc... (Crenshaw K. W., 2003). Although Edmonton is a deeply conservative city, it has a

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[10] Black feminist theory, the concept of intersectionality specifically, differs from mainstream feminism in the idea that for feminism to be truly effective gender discrimination cannot be divorced from other forms of oppression as identity is complex and multifaceted. "Although racism and sexism readily intersect in the lives of real people, they seldom do in feminist and antiracist practices. And so, when the practices expound identity as "woman" or "person of color" to a location that resists telling" (Crenshaw K. , 2004, p. 282)

rich history of anarchist organizing (Hlatky, 2014) which makes it a favorable terrain for DIY organizing.

DIY organizing is best exemplified by the Riot Grrrl scenes of the 1990's popular in the United States as well as the United Kingdom. Started in the summer of 1991, in Washington, DC, Riot Grrrl was a form of DIY feminist cultural activism (Downes, 2007), which sought to encourage and promote the participation of girls and women in punk rock music scenes. Though it started in the U.S, it later spread to the U.K. Riot Grrrl offered loose guidelines instead of a clear set of rules to allow those who would participate to create a space in tune with their identity and personal experiences (Downes, 2007). DIY enables participants to simultaneously contest a situation (i.e. erasure from an art scene) and carve a space and a better option for themselves; it also makes for communities that are not strictly bound by geography and identity.

Rodriguez (2003) tells us that:

> Identity is about situatedness in motion: embodiment and spatiality. It is about a self that is constituted through and against other selves in contexts that serve to establish the relationship between the self and the other. (…) The discursive space does not establish, which identity practices are available, but it does provide a frame through which these practices are received in context. (p. 5)

Identity is complex because it is both personally and socially constructed (Georgalou, 2017). There are two schools of thought when it comes to identity: essentialist and constructionist. The essentialist interpretation of identity is that of a fixed thing that exist at the core of each of us, a natural state. On the other hand, constructionism understands identity as not just a state that human beings are set in for their entire life but rather as something that is influenced by every interaction a person can have not only with society and its institutions, but also with individuals.

Social construction theory establishes that society and the world as we know it are not the products of unquestionable truths. On the contrary, construction ascertains that the way we form opinions and perceptions, the we construct our realities is not natural but constructed, specifically through language and discourse. Language is the way we institutionalize, sanction, and condone ideologies and behaviours and it impacts every aspect of our lives:

> […] Constructionist inquiry has demonstrated how claims to the true and the good are born of historical traditions, fortified by social networks, sewn together by literary tropes, legitimated through rhetorical devices and operate in the service of particular ideologies to fashion structures of power and privilege. (Gergen, 2001)

Social construction also argues that because language is the medium we use to communicate, create and make sense of things, that we are the product of our society and the beliefs it favours. Language is powerful in social construction because it is the foundation of what makes a society, it serves to define our values, our belief system, our morals, it is also how we relate to our histories and our cultures and the way we define and make sense of power and social hierarchy.

It is important to explore certain links between power and discourse to understand the ways discourse can not only be used to ascertain and validate the power of some but to also maintain power imbalances. We hierarchize discourse in the same way we hierarchize our society by ensuring that the interests seen as most important are those that are more widespread and more easily accessed:

> Control does not only apply to discourse as a social practice, but also to the minds of those who are being controlled, that is, their knowledge, opinions, attitudes, ideologies as well as other personal or social representations. […] Those who control discourse may,

indirectly, control the minds of people. And since people's actions are controlled by their mind (knowledge, attitudes, ideologies, norms, values), mind control also means indirect action control. (van Dijk, 2008)

Marginalized populations are often kept outside of discourse, their behaviours and beliefs are the source of legal discourse, and their cultures are erased and/or othered. This is how discourse enforces hierarchies of gender, race, sexual orientation and other categories that we use to identify with each other and ourselves. It is important to know that those hierarchies do not exist at a single level only. In the same way that there are various identity categories, it is possible for a single individual to experience oppression on multiple levels.

Race, gender, and sexuality are social constructs often mentioned in the context of identity politics. Someone's identity cannot be reduced to a few essential attributes while ignoring other aspects and how this impacts their experience. The concept of intersectionality introduced by Crenshaw (Crenshaw K. W., 2003) expands on a reasoning already enounced by Lorde (Lorde, 1984) and hooks (hooks, Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center, 1984), that for any anti-oppression work to be effective, it needs to use a framework that accounts for the ways the intersections of someone's identity directly impacts their experiences of oppression and privilege.

While referencing the specific way African-American women are victimized by the judicial system in the U.S., Crenshaw says the following: "because the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated" (Crenshaw K. W., 2003). This principle is true in every aspect of life and is especially important in the context of anti-racist and anti-oppressive organizing and activism. This framework allows one to organize

around issues of identity while acknowledging the experiences of those living at various intersections of oppression, experiences that may not be our own but are still a necessary standpoint to ensure a more inclusive environment.

Intersectionality, as central to a research methodology and framework, enables us to look not only at the way someone may relate to the world but at the way they relate to their own identity as a result. Indeed, two women may be able to relate to each other around their experience of womanhood. However, the addition of race, class, and gender can drastically change someone's experience of their identity. For example, if we imagine two black women in Canada, one cisgender and the other trans, they both experience gender and race-based violence but the way this violence is experienced will depend on these aspects of their identity. Moreover, if their sexual orientation, their ability, or their class differ this will have a direct impact on how they will be impacted.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter, I will discuss my rationale for choosing this topic and these collectives, my process for selecting participants, my methods of data collection and my methods of data analysis; I will then conclude with a section on my double position as researcher and community member and its implications for this research.

In this section, I will discuss a few participatory research methods and my reasons for not choosing these methods for this research. Community-based research (CBR) and community-based participatory research (CBPR) are involved processes that require a time commitment from researchers and involvement with a community as members and organizers work on community building and community development. Some key principles of those approaches are the recognition of community "as a unit of identity", building on a community strengths and resources, working in equitable collaboration with community partners throughout the research process, focusing on the issues of a community and providing relevant solutions (Israel et al. 1998, as cited in Roche, 2008, p. 3). This work recognises the fact that, like individual identity, community identity is negotiated through discourse and interactions, specifically using media and social media. This core idea, however, did not justify using CBR/CBPR.

CBR and CBPR require that trust between community and researcher be built up as time goes on. These requirements often dictate what methods might be best suited to the purpose and the needs of a community. Potential methods used in CBR and CBPR include interviews, ethnography, cluster analysis, survival analysis or multilevel modeling among many (Frabutt and Graves 2016). My work is ethnographic, and somewhat semi autoethnographic; however, it lacks the participatory aspect central to CBR.

As the subject of this work is community organizing, CBR or CBPR seemed like suitable research methods, as they are becoming the "research strategy of choice" for the community sector (Roche, 2008, p. 2). However, it became obvious early on that they were not a good fit for my research and neither could they be adapted to my study. The purpose of CBR and CBPR is for researchers to assist a community in addressing their issues. Researchers work collaboratively with communities through the entire research process, at first to determine which issue is most potent and requires action. From this point on, researchers will work with these communities to develop relevant research methods to address their needs and issues, consult with them through the data analysis, the search and implementation of solutions, and the dissemination of research. These approaches are popular because they aim to prevent research being conducted solely from an academic standpoint with no involvement or deeper knowledge of the communities being studied, and limit the occurrence of inappropriate outsider intervention. Unlike in expert-led academic research, the input of the community and its members is not only sought after but also fully necessary to the process (Root 2011).

My interest for this research project arose in February 2016 after both the NEF and BB&F festivals organized in 2015 had ended. At the time the proceedings for NEF 2016 were already well underway. Though I might have been able to rely on either CBR or CBPR while studying NEF 2016, I was at the time still in the process of reviewing literature and had not yet undertaken data collection or data analysis. Moreover, as this endeavor also contains an element of auto ethnography, these approaches would not have been a good fit. Indeed, though I might have been able to work closely with the community I wished to study (i.e. organizers), the work accomplished would have been entirely different if the methods, research questions, and hypothesis had to be developed in collaboration with my participants. For these reasons, it would not have been feasible

for me to look at organising through such approaches. Though I could not use these methods, I was still inspired by them. I chose to privilege a mixed method approach, though my research is mostly qualitative with some quantitative elements. I choose to combine different methods because of the different aspects I planned on studying, and because this research is ethnographic, as such the methods selected needed to reflect this complexity.

NEF, the first group I focused on for this study, came together in the summer of 2014. Two of the original organizers had just come back from attending the Shout Back! Festival in Vancouver, "[an] anarcha-feminist, queer, radical, anti-capitalist DIY music festival for anyone who wants it or thinks they might want it. A celebration in smashing patriarchy, showcasing artists who are underrepresented. This festival is for everyone who is disaffected or disgusted by the current independent music culture, dominated by straight, white males" (Shout Back! Fest, n.d., para. 1). Observing and critical of the lack of gender diversity in the Edmonton punk scene that they loved and engaged with, these people set about creating a space that would allow them to make and play music. In a similar way, BB&F came about after two of the organizers met at a Social Spaces Summit. One of them had attended the INCITE's Colour of Violence conference in Chicago before this meeting and had a desire to create something as people of colour for the enjoyment of other people of colour. When they both met again to talk about the type of event they envisioned and what it would entail, they realized that they were inspired to make more radical, queer, and Indigenous and racialized communities come together in the city. They imagined a community event "using art as a tool for transformation, healing, community strengthening" that would be created by and for Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour (IBPOC) and that would be inclusive of Queer, Trans, Two Spirit gender non- conforming people within those communities and their resistance to oppressive constructed social norms (Personal communication, April 2015).

Both the 2015 edition of NEF and the BB&F festival were initiatives started by a small group of central organizing members, who reached out to a community through their message and the project they were envisioning. The communities that rallied around these events were not necessarily built around a specific geographic space but rather around a shared lived experience; specifically, oppression on the basis of race, gender, gender identity, sexuality, religion and at the intersections of these identities. People found kinship in sharing experiences of having their legitimacy in a space questioned due to their gender or the color of their skin or as an anonymous contributor to a BB&F art installation expressed "DIY means I spend my time fighting for safe space for myself and my community. It means instead of making music like I want to, my time is eaten up by organizing for autonomy, self-determination, access, and opportunity" (BB&F, February 2016). Because of this community organizing format when a specific community did not exist before being called upon, looking into each collective's media use makes the most sense as communication played the most important part in both getting their specific message out to the community. It also helped foster a sense of community and engagement from the people outside of the core organizing committee. An analysis of the discourse held by the collective can give us an insight into the way they envisioned the creation of affiliation as well as into the space they had envisioned too.

In this section, I will discuss how I selected the participants and the techniques I used for doing so. The parameters of this research helped determine who the participants should be. Non-probability mixed sampling was used and purposive and convenience sampling[11] techniques were combined. This allowed for snowball sampling, though this part of the selection process did not yield any participants. Eligible participants were defined as members who had been involved with

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[11] Convenience sampling refers to a sample made up of people that can be conveniently reached (Roberts, 2014)

either BB&F or NEF while organizing efforts for a festival were ongoing and who stayed involved until the festival was wrapped up. Members who had left the collective before the festival came to fruition were not interviewed, however in the case of NEF, participants who had taken part in the organizing efforts for the first event, and who had withdrawn from the second one, were still included; participants having taken part only in the second NEF festival were included too. This constituted the purposive aspect of the sample, as; Not Enough Fest publicly announced their disbanding in November 2016 and Brown, Black, and Fierce! social media has been virtually silent since the summer of 2016. As a result, I resorted to convenience sampling techniques. Thanks to my involvement with BB&F, I had a personal relationship with most of the participants or, if I did not, we were at least acquaintances evolving in the same circles; this allowed me to have access to participants more easily and in turn, simplified the recruitment process.

To recruit participants, a recruitment email was sent to each collective's email address as well as to organizers' personal email, when I knew this information. Some participants were contacted through their social media, Facebook and Instagram; in the rare case, I did not have another means of contacting them. The message in the email also included a blanket permission allowing the person reading it to forward it to other participants. Participation in the study was voluntary. Participants were to reply or get in contact through different avenues if they were interested in taking part in this project. They were provided with a tentative timeline of when interviews could be scheduled. However, it was also explicitly stated that if required, accommodation could easily be made for those who could not adhere to the schedule. Because both collectives have released a certain amount material easily accessible on the Internet, it is difficult to guarantee anonymity to participants. Participants were kept apprised of the risks and benefits associated with participating in this research. Through the consent form, they were also made aware of the possibility to either

answer anonymously or be identified in the dissemination of the research. This decision was driven by a desire to protect and respect participants' emotional contribution, and to ensure that participants would feel comfortable sharing even the most difficult aspects of their experience, while also honouring and respecting their agency. Marginalised people and communities are often silenced and/or erased in dominant narratives; therefore, I chose to leave the final choice in the hands of participants.

In the following section, I will introduce my methods of data collection and justify these choices. This research comprises three facets, a discursive analysis of media released by the collectives, an analysis of semi-constructed interviews with organising members of said collectives, and an analysis of social media discourse and use. These data collection strategies were, in the spirit of CBR and CBPR, selected because they were the methods best fitted to respond to the research questions. To explore the ways in which community building unfolded for these three festivals, I decided to study some of the media released by each collective, when accessible; media here refers to written interviews in newspapers and magazines, radio apparitions, promotional video materials, as well as zines[12]. When studying written interviews, only those that featured direct responses from collective members were used for analysis, narrative left too large a part for author bias, for this reason such articles were discarded. I also studied their use of social media as both a promotional and communication tool as well as a community-building medium, by looking at the frequency of posting, planned and promoted events related to the festivals, whether they happened before or after, as well as community engagement with posts and organizers via social media. This will not feature a study of comments but simply look at the numbers of share, likes, and comments, in order

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[12] Zines are self-produced publications, an alternative media, often used in DIY, anarchist, and punk circles. They are a "cultural expression of love and rage lurking underground" (Duncombe, 1997, p. 15).

to establish a community-building timeline. I developed a set of questions for in-person semi-structured interviews with organizers. An important part of the discursive analysis was dedicated to each collective mission statements, values and safer space guidelines. Safer space guidelines are a staple in queer, feminist community organizing as a way to delimit and define the communal space. It highlights the values that the space will uphold and is a way to stay accountable as well as hold people accountable.

When it came to gathering media to create a corpus, I looked for the interviews that each collective had released in the process of organizing. I chose to gather texts through collecting social media data, as interviews were released to both collectives' audience via Facebook. Written interviews, though they may sometimes be the work of a single individual, are for the most part vetted by each collective. Though I had originally planned to collect radio appearances, I was unable to do so for both collectives, though I had access to BB&F single radio appearance; I was unable to gain access to NEF radio interviews. Thus, I elected to not include this interview in the analysis.

The hypotheses that were developed for this research informed the design of the data collection process. One of my hypotheses concerned the use of social media in DIY organizing and its importance in negotiating a community identity and its impact on community building. Based on the work of Mattessich, Monsey and Roy (1997), I started my data collection by focusing on the community building aspect of organizing. My purpose here was to assess the strength and success of DIY community building as implemented by each collective. Using the list of characteristics of successful community building, I wanted to develop a way of assessing community building through social media, as it has been used by the collectives studied here. Because this list was developed using exclusively geographic or residential communities, it could not be used to the letter for the basis of this research and had to be adapted. Out of the 15 characteristics of successful

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community building, I chose to focus on the following four: 1) a "good system of communication",
2) "focus on product and process concurrently", 3) "linkage to organisations outside the
community", and 4) "progression from simple to complex activities" (Mattessich, Monsey, & Roy,
1997, p. 15).

Out of the varied social media platforms used by each collective, I focused on Facebook. Created
as a communication platform for Harvard students in 2004, Facebook has now become the largest
social networking site in the world, hosting over a billion users worldwide, over 18 million of
which are in Canada (Statista, 2018). Because of this prevalence, Facebook was the most suitable
choice for an analysis. Though each collective owned account on a few platforms, such as
Instagram, WordPress blogs, Tumblr and Twitter, these were discarded either because they did not
allow for expansive texts, like Twitter and Instagram, or because they only served as an alternate
platform of communication for people who did not use Facebook. Indeed, posts on a collective
blog or Tumblr were always reposting of the information available on Facebook. This widespread
use established Facebook as the principal communication tool for these collectives. Though I did
not include YouTube as a platform in the analysis, it was still included in the research as a platform
hosting collectives' promotional videos shared on Facebook. However, outside of those videos, no
data from YouTube was collected.

I argue that much like personal identity, community can be negotiated through social media. This
in turn informs community building in that it helps determine and define what the community and
community space would ideally be. Discourse as we know it plays an important part in our social
construction and, of course, in identity construction. I elected to delve deeper in this matter through
an analysis of each collective's posting patterns on Facebook, throughout their organizing process,
combined with a content analysis, as social media is not only completely controlled by the

collective, and as such the most raw and accurate expression of their image and identity, but this data can provide insight in their vision of community. To collect my data and create my social media corpus, I first created a form using Google Form. The form was made to collect the following data: date of posting, name of collective, name and edition of festival, type of post, post content, and numbers of likes, shares and comments. This data was collected in a spreadsheet for easy analysis and any publication of photo albums was discarded.

Finally, a set of open-ended questions was developed for the interviews; the questions were designed to broach specific topics around organizers' experience of their organizing process and community. Questions can be divided by themes, though during interviews the order was not fixed, nor was the interview thematically constructed. The themes explored were the following: community, community organizing, community-building, and emotional involvement. There were 18 questions and after participants expressed a desire to participate in the study, they were offered the option to receive the questions beforehand. Interview times and place were set up to accommodate participants as much as possible, quiet and intimate meeting spaces were favoured. Each interview was then recorded and participants were made aware that they could chose not to reply to specific questions and that the order of questions did not matter. In one instance, a participant struggled with face-to-face interaction so we devised a way for them to complete the process in a way that would feel comfortable. The participant elected to write down the answers to each question in an email. An exchange followed to obtain clarification when needed and to ensure the data would be as close to data gathered through an in-person interview. Initially 10 participants expressed interest in taking part in this study, and only eight were interviewed. Once the interviews were concluded, the transcription process started. Each interview was transcribed verbatim and was then submitted to each participant with the audio recording for member

checking, to ensure that the transcript reflected accurately the participants' ideas and opinions. In some instances, follow-up questions were asked to participants. The transcripts were the basis for conducing the analysis. During member checking, none of the participants elected to modify or retract part of their interviews. As such, I was quickly able to move towards analyzing and interpreting my data.

Once all data was collected and processed, the analysis process started. In this section, I will discuss the various methods I used through this process. Like the data collection methods, the approaches used for data analysis varied depending on the aspect being studied. For the discursive analysis of each collective's public image in the media, I explored the discursive choices made by the collectives to present and delimit their community politically and spatially.

A first step in my study of social media as a community-building tool, once the data had been collected, was to complete a preliminary superficial analysis of the content to categorize the posts and simplify the process of creating a timeline of organizing and a corpus, to make in-depth analysis easier. Based on the four characteristics I described earlier, I adapted my method of analysis. First, I intended to assess the quality of the system of communication through an analysis of the collectives' Facebook publications. As such only posts that were considered as fulfilling a community building imperative were included in the corpus; community building imperatives reference fostering a sense of belonging and connection in community members. The preliminary analysis led to the creation of the following categories, depending on the assessed purpose of each publication: solidarity work, event promotion, providing resources, event organization/logistics, media appearance, and page maintenance. The creation of these categories was based on the three other characteristics taken from Mattessich, Monsey, & Roy's work and the questions they have developed for each of these criteria. When every publication was collected and categorized,

overlap was accepted, a timeline following the communication patterns of each collective surrounding the organization of their festival was assembled. Each point referencing the category the post fell in as well as statistics from community engagement with each publication through comments, likes, and shares. The point was to study not only the publication patterns and what they taught us about the collectives' communication strategy, their effectiveness in keeping their audience engaged throughout the organizing process, as well as the community building aspects explored through the social networking site.

However, the analysis of the contents revealed some issues. Out of the 587 posts collected, 423 by NEF and 164 by BB&F, 455 were identified as fostering community building. From there any post that did not relate to a festival was discarded; 297 posts remained after that, 215 by NEF and 82 by BB&F. The remaining posts were divided as follows: 96 posts about NEF 2015, 99 posts about BB&F, and 102 posts about NEF 2016. After going through the content of these publications, I removed every participant profile[13] and repost bringing the number of posts down to 228 (68 about BB&F, 90 about NEF 2015, and 70 about NEF 2016). A further analysis of these posts revealed that the posts with promotional event posts offered the most information, so I chose to focus the analysis on those, bringing the total of posts to 28; 4 for BB&F and 24 for NEF.

To analyze the interviews, I choose an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach. First developed by Jonathan Smith in 1996 for an article, IPA is a qualitative research method approach combining phenomenology and hermeneutics used to study personal lived experiences of participants. In its infancy, it was primarily used in applied psychology but has since been used in a wide array of fields such as humanities, health sciences and social sciences (Griffith, et al.,

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[13] The profiles of facilitators and performers participating in the festivals.

2017, pp. 287-289). Phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography- the theoretical backbone of IPA- interact to create a framework that enables researchers to look in depth at the way a specific group of people experiences a phenomenon, without shying away from the subjectivity inherent to such endeavour (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009; Chan & Farmer, 2017). On the contrary:

> IPA shares the view that human beings are sense-making creatures, and therefore the accounts, which participants provide, will reflect their attempts to make sense of their experience. IPA also recognizes that access to experience is always dependent on what participants tell us about that experience, and that the researcher then needs to interpret that account from the participant in order to understand their experience. (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 3)

Phenomenology is concerned with the study of experience, hermeneutics with interpretation, and idiography with the particular (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). IPA requires that researchers look at the specific experience of a particular group and not only listen to their interpretation of this experience, but also provide their own interpretation of the group's- and its constituents- experience. Researchers need to adopt a double hermeneutic, in which they are both insiders -due to the fact that they are privy to the participants interpretation- but also outsiders- in their position as a researcher questioning and reinterpreting this experience through a theoretical lens (Alase, 2017; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). To guarantee a solid interpretation of the data, the data analysis should leave ample space for a layered analysis from the researcher through a process combining iterative and inductive phases to encourage the researcher's reflexivity with regard to participants' accounts (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

My data analysis process consisted in listening to the interviews and reading transcripts several times while making notes on what seemed to be important to each participant in the margins as a first step. I followed this step by reading each transcript but this time making "exploratory comments" (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 85) focusing on three aspects of the texts: 1) descriptive "describing […] the subject of the talk", 2) linguistic "exploring the specific use of language", and 3) conceptual "focused on engaging at a more interrogative and conceptual level" (p. 84). The different aspects of analysis were differentiated through colour coding. An analysis of the comments followed to establish similarities and differences to identify overarching themes when possible, and highlight the specificity of each experience. This reflective analytical process helped centre the participants' words and relocate me to the position of researcher, which proved to be sometimes difficult.

In this final section, I will discuss the peculiar position I occupied as a researcher, as both insider and outsider. Because of my personal involvement with the collectives, my position as a researcher was often complicated. My interest in this research and my intimate relationships with the participants are inherently linked. These relationships, which have been developed through organizing work as well as through a commitment to cultivate community, easily granted me access to willing participants and afforded me supplementary knowledge in some situations, from personal conversations or simply shared experiences. This reality establishes an important aspect of this work: that it is not unbiased and does not pretend to be. My involvement with the BB&F collective implies that, at least part of, the work described in this study embodies values that I agree with. Not only is my choice of topic political, it also illustrates what Stinson claims to be a truth of any case study: they are inherently biased and political as they are an expression of the

researcher's interest (1979). However, the fact that this work is biased does not mean that it is simply the work of the author's bias.

At several points while conducting this research, my position as researcher proved to be shifting one, I would find myself firmly positioned as a researcher one moment, and as an insider the next. This dual position felt like it could become an issue at several steps during the interviewing process. I found that I would sometimes engage in half-articulated conversations on some topics with participants, with very little need to make things explicit, simply because we understood that the experience we were talking about was a shared one. Because my participants all frequent the same circles and are friends with each other, I was also confronted with curiosity about other participants' contribution or the progression of my research and my writing. However, the real issues seemed to emerge during the data analysis process.

The main issues I felt needed to be addressed while analyzing my data were the necessity to ensure that my personal knowledge and prior experience of situation and events would colour not my interpretation and the difficulty to sometimes step away from the material. For this purpose, I kept records of my analysis process as well as document my findings and interpretations. Moreover, I decided to stop using Facebook while conducting this research; I also purposely excluded any material I had access to as an organizing member. I made those decisions because, to me, they solidify my position as a researcher. On one hand, my interactions with the platform and the data collected through it were established research procedures. On the other hand, though my interactions with my participants eventually ended, my relationships with these individuals did not end after that. Ultimately, this work is not only about the experience of these organizers, it is also about mine.

Chapter 4: Negotiating community, collective identity, and space

> *"As racialized peoples, and as queer folks, all of us organizers have struggled to make ourselves small enough, palatable enough, and quiet enough for our own survival in [Edmonton]" (*Ruby as quoted in *Berhe 2015).*

On June 6th, 2014 and May 25th, 2015, NEF and BB&F respectively made their entrance into social media by creating a community page on Facebook. Prior to these dates, work had been accomplished behind the scenes by organizers to determine the identity of the organization and their purpose. The intention of both collectives was to challenge the status quo in various Edmonton arts scenes. NEF wished to provide a safer and more inclusive music scene for women, queer and trans people and to foster a community that would make learning, creating, and experiencing music more accessible to these populations[14]. BB&F had its gaze turned toward Edmonton visual and performing arts scene at large. Their goals were not so much to transform the existing scenes per say. They seemed more interested in challenging the landscape to provide and create a space where artists of colour, especially those part of the LGBTQ community, could showcase themselves and interact with each other[15].

Each organization had its separate goals. Although they shared similarities in how they organized and communicated, their use of social media differed. In its organizing model, NEF offered a series of capacity and competence building events leading up to their final event, the festival itself. As

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[14] On February 28, 2015, after 8 months of organizing, the first edition of NEF took place at McKernan Hall for a full day of programming. In May 2016, the final edition of NEF spread out over two days (21-22) at Richie Hall. Both spaces were accessible. In total, NEF displayed 36 new bands with women, queer, and trans representation in every band.

[15] BB&F Festival took place on November 7th, 2015 at the Stanley Milner Branch of the Edmonton Public Library. It hosted 19 workshops and 14 performing acts.

for BB&F, they organized single day events for the most part, and only organized one event leading up to the festival.

The arrival of both collectives on social media ushered a new aspect of organizing for them, by allowing a direct path for communications between the organizers and the community they wish to serve. The work of organizing does not start and finish with public interactions and community events. Queer DIY organizing heavily relies on communications to supplement the ongoing concrete organizing efforts. A social media presence allows organizers to move from the private to the public sphere and provides them with their principal communication and community-building tool. Moreover, as the organizing efforts are ongoing, several media outlets reached out these successful collectives. Through this venue, collectives define, curate, and negotiate not only the type of community they are striving for but also the space itself. Interviews are the best way for organizers to take control of the narrative not only of the work that they are doing but also of their community as they envision it. Individuals are unique and shaped by various personal experiences; as such, there is no way to portray accurately a single community, no matter how small. People's singularities made it even harder then, to serve precisely the needs of a community, unless one is to adapt their definition of community to that of the nuclear family[16], as it is embraced in Western society. As such, it is important to note that the views of each organizer may differ from the others and that though the narrative projected may be the result of those multiple opinions, they may not reflect the opinions of other members in those communities.

In Edmonton queer organizing, community is negotiated "from the inside out". What I mean by this is that NEF and BB&F organizers alike chose first to gather with friends and acquaintances.

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[16] Even in the context of a *nuclear family*, I would argue that everyone's needs cannot be addressed in a single way. Children needs differ that of adults, ability, capacity, even self-awareness influence what our needs may be.

The work did not come from the needs of an entire community making themselves heard at the same time (like in the aftermath of flooding or massive fire), nor did it stem from a large number of seemingly isolated instances forming a pattern that people feel need addressing, like police brutality and environmental racism[17]. The decision to get together and work came from a small group of individuals deciding to address what they saw as the source of their problems, and once this problem was identified they then reached out to the outside, to their community in search of help and support. This format of organizing means that organizers are not in charge of leading the charge and managing the efforts of the community, the way they do in other organizing models. Here, organizers have to appeal enough to the community, or rather the community members, they wish to be a part of, for their work to be somewhat successful.

Communication then becomes the way to negotiate community with those community members. Through social media discourse and through the discourse disseminated in their interviews, and other media appearances, BB&F and NEF presented not only a specific narrative of their community and the work that they were doing for and with their community, they also provided representation for community members or community adjacent people who may need either to access the space or simply hear the message that they can themselves do this work. By being in charge of the means of communication, they ensure that they have complete power over the narrative that will seep into the dominant discourse.

Discourse takes on multiple functions here; it is both a way to represent oneself and a way for others to identify with the politics behind the organizing work. Discourse is used in a variety of

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[17] Environmental racism refers to the belief that "environmental problems are social problems; the two are inseparable" (Mascarenhas, 2012, p. 18) and that the reason some population are more affected by environmental injustices is inherently linked to racism and white supremacy, such as long-term water advisories on First Nation reserves across Canada, the contamination of the French Antilles islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe with kepone, and the Flint Water Crisis in Michigan.

ways to accomplish different results that do not tell us a lot about the actual community who engaged with the content and the festivals but reveal a lot about how organizers envision their communities. Through the discourses held through various medias, these collectives seem to establish their specific approach to what community means in this organizing framework. In this section, I will expand more on their use of discourse around notions of space, identity, resistance and community.

When attached to queerness, space is always a contested site, its mere existence providing a source of tension within heterosexist society by challenging and questioning its validity. "Queer space is virtual space" (Désert, 1997, p. 19) in two distinct ways. It is first virtual in the sense of an existing space, yet waiting to be recognized, reflecting the ways queer identities and bodies themselves exist in spaces but recognized only as disruptions. Moreover, queer space is often times synonymous with digital communities, as they are more accessible but also more easily kept safe and private. In both cases, however, queer space is a space that allows for the variations of the spectrum of gender and sexualities, an inherently disruptive space.

Queer space has always been a site of contention in Alberta. Indeed, throughout the years, Alberta has established its reputation as a deeply conservative and homophobic province (DeGagne, 2015) and this tendency is best illustrated in the ways public spaces, and more specifically, queer spaces are being policed. Police raids targeting gay bathhouses led to Edmonton's first pride rally in 1980 and, since 2016, heated debates have raged on about Bill 24, a bill protecting the privacy of youths joining Gay-Straight Alliances and other LGBTQ friendly clubs in Albertan schools. This demonstrates the desire of our heterosexist patriarchal society to police, legislate, and litigate our spaces and by extension our communities. By dictating the ways in which certain bodies may move through space, what spaces they may access and on what terms, it is easier for a society to enforce

marginalization and oppression. This is best illustrated by the "public debate" surrounding the presence of trans bodies in public bathrooms. By publicly questioning the legitimacy of trans people in public spaces, such as bathrooms, the dominant discourse justifies suspicion and violence towards those bodies. It is however important to note that this capacity to confine people to the margins is also present inside queer spaces as though queer spaces embrace a certain awareness of gender and sexual orientation and identity, there are still tensions within. Queer liberalism, and its endorsement of capitalism, consumerism, and the nation-state reinforces a normative idea of what queer should be, thus policing which bodies and voices should be seen, heard or hidden away (Eng, 2010). The backlash felt across Canada by racialized queer people protesting police presence at Pride has come on one hand from outside these communities, in the form of homophobic violence as well as politicians threatening funding and access on an institutional level. On the other hand, the most virulent critics have been liberals within the LGBTQ community calling the actions and demands "divisive" or "inappropriate" and chastising racialized people for what they perceived to be a senseless demand to an inexistent problem.

In their efforts to address the problems they faced, BB&F and NEF discursively negotiated space in three ways: as a site of tension, as imagined space, and as appropriated space[18]. Space appears to be a site of tension when in its original iteration, when it embraces the values of mainstream society. The local music and arts scenes represent space as a site of exclusion and/or marginalization. There are many reasons why people may feel excluded in a space such as issues of racism or accessibility. The community becomes the conduit to challenge these attitudes. In

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[18] Appropriated space draws on Ingram, Bouthillette and Retter's definition of "[queer] appropriation [of space]: The transformation of formerly homophobic and heteronormative social and physical space (whether public, private, or derived from the electronic media) for social relations that support or enhance opportunities for homoerotic and allied communality and eroticism." (Ingram, Bouthillette, & Retter, 1997, p. 449)

presenting the festival, as a site where resistance to the mainstream narrative, a narrative that encourages and maintains the lack of representation from the margins, organizers calls to the emotions of their public, relying on these shared experiences to build connection. The festival becomes an affective imagined space where one can create and explore cultural production as resistance. It also becomes appropriated space when it finally come into existence, by directly challenging a narrative of erasure and reclaiming not only physical space but cultural space as well.

In a way, the idea of community is conflated with space. Community is being negotiated at the same time as the ideal space is being negotiated. To ensure that the space really challenges the dynamics prevailing in dominant discourse, there is a discourse surrounding safety in space. Queer spaces often tout the notion of "safer spaces", a set of guidelines used to uphold important values in a space. Safer spaces guidelines are not simply rules, they are a clear political statement, and they are first a way to establish a new social contract for the new community, the things that are acceptable and those that are not:

> Harmful behavior includes but is not limited to: making racist, classist, transphobic, homophobic, fat antagonist, ableist comments; catcalling or sexual harassment; failing to respect the physical/emotional safety of others; cultural appropriation; being too intoxicated to monitor your behavior and your impact on others and being generally disrespectful of other attendees' right to participate and have an enjoyable time. (NEF, Not Enough Fest Edmonton, 2016)

By stating clearly their expectations for the space, organizers establish two things: the politics of the space and a clear image of what their community should embrace. Systems of oppression have been clearly name. These systems ensure that the status quo is maintained and that only normative behaviours are celebrated; however, in this space, "harmful behaviours" are rejected and are most importantly being policed, as they are the type of action that would result in one being expelled

from the space. Safer spaces guidelines are a contract that requires obedience from participants, and while it is not possible to affirm that all community members accessing the space believe and share these politics, it does establish that if they wish to remain in the space they will have to conform to these rules.

It is not possible to conceive a space properly, without considering who will not be granted access, and though it may seem strange to consider the necessity of exclusion when talking about an inclusive space, I would argue that because of the nature of a truly inclusive space, exclusion is a necessity. To provide a space that will prioritize the needs and safety of those marginalized, it becomes primordial to ensure that threats, harmful behaviours and toxic people are clearly excluded from said space. After all, "the process of collective identity formation involves both generating a sense of cohesion or *''who we are''*, and as a necessary corollary a sense of otherness or ''*who we are not*''" (Fominaya, 2007, p. 244, *emphasis original*). With NEF and BB&F, the willingness of organizers to provide resources on oppression and its impact on people, whether through providing articles on a specific topic such as cultural appropriation or consent to participants and attendees, or through crafting clear guidelines and a list of self-reflecting questions for the community, is a testimony to how accepting the space can be. Indeed, by providing education, organizers offer an opportunity to anyone wishing to join the community to do so in the best way possible. The goal is not to create an exclusive or elitist space, rather to encourage the participation of every community member in attendance to make the space as safe as possible, especially for the members who are constantly confronted by oppression. Becoming/being in community can also mean sharing lived experience with each other.

Shared lived experiences are also embraced as a community-building device and play a part in shaping these communities' identity. There are two types of shared lived experiences referenced

in the discourse, each serving its own purpose in shaping community and the collective identity. On one hand, there are past lived experiences of trauma brought in by systems of oppression. These experiences of sexism, misogyny, racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, and classism, among others have an impact on how one can engage with a community or culture. In Ruby's own terms at the beginning of this chapter, those instances of oppression that leaves one wary of being noticed or deemed unworthy or unfit for the scene are a constant struggle for affected community members. Those negative experiences however, become the basis for identifying with the community. The community becomes less about specific aspects of an individual's identity and more about a desire to address those negative experiences and ensure that they are not perpetuated in the idealized community. Thus, NEF may be prioritizing the participation of women, queer and/or trans people, but only that of those who identify with the experience of "want[ing] to make music or be in a band but f[eeling] excluded or unable to." By choosing to honour and center the narrative around these shared lived experiences, which tend to be portrayed as either fictitious or extremely rare in the dominant discourse, it also shifts the focus from the negative experience imposed upon certain bodies to a more active position when one can choose to challenge oppressive dynamics by proposing to embody a new mode of interaction.

On the other hand, we find shared lived experiences to counterbalance experiences of oppression. NEF organizing model is a testament to that. Community events are organized to realize this new idealized space fully. In the case of NEF, skill-share workshops where participants could learn the skills needed to create and play music, from learning to play an instrument or screaming to getting access to a practice space or even an instrument, allowed participants to build community through sharing the experience of a supportive space in which they could safely create. Participants agree to share the space and accept their part of responsibility in creating and maintaining a space that

"will prioritize the safety of individuals regularly made to feel unsafe due to their race, gender, sexual orientation, class, ability, age and/or size".

In this context, community has two functions: it is the site where community members get together to meet one another and emulate the type of community they are striving for; it is also the site of their shared experiences. Community events help fostering a safer communal space where one can learn, teach, support, and experiment. By establishing the importance of shared experiences and politics over identity only, organizers send the clear message that they prioritize the lived experiences of marginalized people, while striving to offer the opportunity to experience new and more positive experiences. Lack of access is a serious barrier for community members whether because they are dealing with microaggressions or because they cannot afford the experience for lack of financial means or other resources. However, because DIY implies that one can create their own version of things, there is a large focus on access and accessibility. The community will "work together to provide community supports, skill shares, and access to practice spaces and instruments", offer all ages and sober spaces for every community event and focus on hosting these events in physically accessible spaces. Accessibility is key and allows the community to challenge erasure and oppression by shifting the narrative, from one of subjugation to an active one. Organizing facilitates access and participation through tangible ways by providing knowledge, experiences, and fulfilling emotional needs, through honouring and validating personal stories and experiences. This shifts the focus from the shortcomings of a community to the needs that need to be addressed to enable participation. Thus, new cultural practices become acts of resistance and the space where they take place becomes a site of resistance too.

Through their public discourse, both collectives focused their community-building efforts on establishing their collective identity. Though, at first, it may seem like racial and/or gender identity

was the gathering element, shared experiences and political values were the real points of connection.

Chapter 5: Organizing, a transformative journey

> *"I feel like in a city like Edmonton, the conversation about community is so necessary and so difficult, and I feel like... I feel like almost every friend I have, I have conversations around community, like it always comes back to, and it's not just like defining a community that exists but rather a yearning for community, or more community. And I think the reason for that is that Edmonton is a city that, I guess it's like engineered to isolate, you know. […] It's like our urban design philosophy is isolation!"*
> (Leila)

Community organizing tends be assessed on how successful it has been in tackling the issues organizers and community members set out to address and on what impacts have been felt by the community, the organizers, allies, etc… (Lee, 2011). NEF and BB&F set out several goals for themselves in organising their festivals, and we have seen the ways in which they established and shared those goals with their communities. However, because of the informal structure of these events, and the lack of specific communal spaces attached to them, a full assessment would require major means and funding to be conducted adequately. Although for all intents and purposes, BB&F and NEF were both successful in their endeavour: they set out to create a festival to provide a cultural space for their communities to learn, create, and share. As such, the simple fact that those festivals were successfully organized and attended by community members is a testament to their success. There are however different ways to look at and assess organizing depending on what the focus is. As DIY organizing relies entirely on the work and motivation of organizers, they provide an interesting point of view not only on their experience of the festival as a community event but also on the process of organizing and what they learned from it; they are arguably the best angle to assess this specific experience.

I discovered that for participants, organizing had been a multilayered and unique experience. In this chapter, I will explore the main themes revealed by organizers when discussing their journey:

community and community building, (emotional) labour, intimacy, safety and space, and finally challenging oppression.

Community as the most difficult to define

Interviews with participants revealed vastly different experiences and deeply personal accounts of community organizing. Participants answered questions around what they took away from their experience organizing DIY festivals in Edmonton, what was their drive for creating spaces centering their experiences of marginalization and challenging an oppressive status quo. Community organizing seems to have been a rich experience for participants and though in many ways experiences coincided, the take away of each participant was unique. Though the set of questions asked participants were identical, the things that they each chose to focus on were sometimes vastly different. This reality was never made clearer than when participants were asked to describe what community meant to them. Organizers made sense of their experience of community as ever shifting, a necessary space for existence, sometimes a site of resistance, and the site of painful experiences.

One would imagine that if someone could provide a clear and concise definition of community, it would be community organizers. However, this was not the case, and this ended up being one of the most complex and difficult things to define for them.

> *Corby*: Yeah! *(laughs)*…Just starting off with the easy question, right?! Soon as I saw that *(laughs)*.
>
> *Steph*: Whoa! *(giggles)* I feel like the first question is the hardest! *(laughs)* […] It's funny what a difficult question that is to answer!

Almost all the organizers struggled with this question and neither having successfully organized community events in the past, nor having access to the questions beforehand seemed to make answering it any easier.

> *Leila*: That's like I don't know…that's such a hard question. Like I think that's why I stopped reading through the rest of the questions, I was like "Oh my god! I can't even answer the first one!"

Being an organizer or having experience organizing one's community did not make organizers experts in knowing what community means. Putting the concept of community into words proved difficult; however, participants had no issues exploring what it concretely meant in terms of its "components", the people who made up their communities, and how they made sense of it in various ways through organizing.

Most participants noticed a shift in their view of community and what it meant for them, this does not always mean that it changed to a drastically different idea of community but organizing brought a nuance to the experience and influenced how participants defined it for themselves. Community is not simply seen as a group of people who have something in common but rather as something more layered. Community is a choice, a commitment, to values and ideals, and it requires a similar commitment from those with whom you find yourself in community.

> *Steph*: Yeah, to me community is also co-created… I don't know there's like the idealized version of community and there's almost like a pessimistic version of community and I feel like my feelings about it are somewhat in the middle. Yeah… I think like there's a lot of contradictions to the idea of community. Yeah, there's this idea that you have community around like a shared identity, but I also think that community is actively maintained, and yeah, just being is not necessarily like, being in community.

Community is a place of belonging but also a place where one can exist and resist mainstream society and the way it confines us to certain roles and spaces. In community, participants felt a

strong connection, or rather, connections. Community often meant several things simultaneously: the communities that one feels a sense of belonging towards because of various aspects of identity or there are geographical communities with strong emotional attachments. In every case, there was the community that rallied around the festival, and the community the organizers developed while organizing. Community is very complex to participants, as it coexists in different forms simultaneously and requires this complexity to truly make sense.

> *Kendra*: Like the specifics of my communities? Yeah, well I feel like I belong to a couple different ones. Some of them are like concentric communities that overlap and sometimes they're very separate, sometimes merged but I would say that like the music community is a huge part (*inaudible*). And actually, most of my communities are around some sort of creative expression, be it creative expression through art or creative expression through relationships, or identity […] So yeah. I'd say the music community, a little less so in the last six months which is something to interrogate, the like radical queer community, and another community which I don't talk about often is out of my cabin. And it's funny because I don't consider it necessarily to be very important to what I am at this point in my life but to who I was for the first 22 years of my life, it's a very important community and I'm still tied to it, in some tentative ways.

> *Kahn*: I feel like I'm in like a different couple communities and also that they're kind of a bit disjointed. Yeah, just like, kind of what parts of my identity I'm connecting with, with that community. So, I feel like, there is one community that I'm part of which is kind of like your queer, activist-y community, very like feminist informed practices, and then I feel like, as much as I don't acknowledge it in my day-to-day life, the community of my family which is Chinese and Vietnamese, and not being entirely attached to that in the same way that my parents are, which is knowing quite a lot of people from there but still having like that linkage through my parents and stuff.

Participants noticed points of tension in their communities, moments were though they felt this sense of belonging to a specific artistic community, their presence was questioned, or a different aspect of their identity was perceived as delegitimizing. From that moment, they imagined a space where these exclusions would not be tolerated and where they could happily and fully explore their creative processes. In sharing this vision of what their community could be, participants felt a

connection to a larger population in Edmonton, a population that identified with the goals and/or

the politics of the festivals and collectives. Participants also felt a deeper sense of community to

fellow organizers, who not only envisioned this new community space with them but also shared

in the organizing experience and all that it entails. Finally, after turning this idealized community

space into a reality, the festival becomes the embodiment of this community. However, this

community is not ideal just because it was heavily politicized during its inception.

> *Jordan*: […] Community was really complicated. […] Additionally, I think some people
> didn't really want to be involved because of our political stances. I think in trying to have
> solid politics, some people were intimidated and didn't want to fuck up; others didn't want
> to be seen as siding with a feminist organization[19]. We spent a lot of time and energy trying
> to work with two very different scenes (privileged music people who weren't exposed to
> politics before and a radical queer organizing community) and that was tricky.

In the process of organizing, community also becomes a painful experience, for some participants,

it revealed serious discrepancies in how they perceive community and how they see it embraced

or performed by those not involved in organizing. Those discrepancies create conflicts from those

outside the participants' circle, who question the legitimacy of the organizing efforts and goals,

but also coming from participants who question the motives and commitment of part of their newly

created community. This led most organizers to realize that though identity is a salient point when

it comes to community and organizing, it is not necessarily the foundation on which they wish to

build their community. There is a sense of betrayal in a way because organizers for the most part

felt a deep sense of loyalty for those they identified as sharing community. They considered that

responding to issues, needs, or requests from these community members was primordial but

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[19] During the organizing process, collective members embodied intersectional feminist practices. The prioritization
of marginalized communities was at the core of the organizing. Decisions were made through consensus building
and involved the participation of every member. In the same way, interviews involved every member of the
committee and the voice of everyone was heard before a final decision was taken.

struggled with a fair amount of criticisms and demands from people to whom they felt a sense of responsibility.

> *Leila*: Community to me was like how it felt to organize with this collective. It did not feel like community really on that weekend in the same way at all.
>
> *Corby*: It's so, so hard, yeah. We had some really, really, really negative comments coming from some people in the queer community, that I think came from a really, really ugly place. That I think came from just jealousy that they weren't involved and some of the criticisms were that they were no trans organizers in our collective because they weren't visibly <u>trans enough to know</u>. […] It was incredibly gross! And, they said that our group was doing violence towards trans people for not any trans organizers. […] So, that was really, really hard. And, then, when you get criticism like that, I personally I have, I am in a relationship with a man, and I have hetero-passing privilege. I don't look queer, you wouldn't know if I didn't tell you, and I felt this huge pressure to just be like "I'm not queer enough! I need to step back because maybe I am doing violence to these communities!"
>
> *Ruby*: Oh gosh! *(laughs)*… I think on an individual level my biggest challenge has been dealing with like the fallout of the festival. And *(inaudible)* not as organizers but just in the way that I experienced people just like badmouthing and making things up and gossiping about me and I know other organizers as well. That people never approached to say to our faces. At the end of the day, I was just kind of left feeling like "why did I try to do this? Why did I work so hard for like so many months to make something that it feels like sometimes people don't appreciate, or that like, at some point in time, I regretted doing.

Organizers feel that they are part of an almost different community than the one they expected to create. Community seems to be more about feelings, or about how one feels towards others, politics, and shared values. Therefore, through activities and various community-building endeavours, the collectives have connected with a community that will identify with and support their project; the act of organizing itself built community between participants. In this inner circle, community is built on the politics and the vision that organizers share and through sharing in the organizing experience.

Organizing as a labour of love[20]

Organizing a festival is a labour-intensive task. This labour when compounded with the realities of DIY organizing, lack of funding, resources, and support, makes the task more complicated. Furthermore, most participants had either prior organizing experience or were involved with their communities in one way or another.

> *Jordan*: Prior to the fest, I didn't have any real radical organizing experience. I was always involved in my community growing up, whether that was on student council or leadership roles in sports or in my farming (4-H) club. Haha
>
> *Khan*: It (*my organizing experience*) was very limited. The only thing that I had organized was Golden Prairie Marketplace[21]. Yeah, and that was so different, like I worked predominantly with one other person. Like it was my first thing, and it felt more like event planning instead of trying to have all these multiple events along the way that would lead up to one bigger event. […] So yeah, didn't have a lot of experience.
>
> *Jenni*: I would say none. The only thing the closest thing would be like, that I did not organize, participating in something organized by someone else, which means showing up, volunteering, or like, that's about it.

These prior experiences with organizing instilled in organizers the knowledge that organizing is a time-consuming and draining experience, however it did not really equip them with the skills to deal with the specificity of organizing a festival nor did it prepare them for how demanding it would be for them[22]. The timeline for organizing these festivals varied from six to eight months, with an organizing crew of five people in BB&F and 7 to 10 people in NEF, and though organizers did have some prior experience, none of them had any experience organizing an event such as

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[20] This reference is inspired by Sara Ahmed's work on feelings of love in The Cultural Politics of Emotions (Ahmed, 2014).

[21] The Golden Prairie Marketplace was "a one-day, family-friendly community market celebrating the works of vendors who are Indigenous, who identify as racialized, or who have disabilities, especially those within the queer, trans, gender-diverse, and Two-Spirit communities" that took place on November 28th, 2015 in Edmonton (Share Edmonton, 2015).

[22] The feeling of being exhausted is a complex one and shaped by different factors, some of which are too personal to be revealed in this thesis for ethical reasons.

those. Their prior experience was not enough for them to extrapolate how exhausting organizing a DIY festival would be, and even when they knew to expect exhaustion, the scale and the burden of it remained unexpected.

> *Corby*: (*My organizing experience was*) Super minimal. I had participated in some events, you know, like protests. I had been to protests. The biggest organizing I'd done was, actually, in a labour dispute that I was involved in, which was super hard and super exhausting, and for <u>some reason</u>, I didn't think <u>this</u> would be! (*laughs*)

To an extent, every organizer I interviewed had experienced burnout from organizing their festival. Organizer's burnout is in no way a novel phenomenon and is known to be one of the pitfalls of organizing work (Pyles, 2013). One of the most interesting things about the burnout experienced by these organizers was the fact that it seemed to have shaped their experience of organizing in some way, though it did not seem to have an influence on how they feel about the festival it did have an impact on how they reflected on this experience. For most participants, there is a sense that burnout is to be expected, the price one pays for organizing.

> *Corby*: The biggest one (*challenge*), the <u>really</u>, really big one was not burning out, and I feel we really failed at that.

Burnout plagued organizers whether they organized a single event festival like that of BB&F, or a series of events leading to a bigger one, like NEF. The amount of work provided has been unquantifiable for participants, and even when they tried to provide a count, a number does not seem to really do justice to the sheer amount of work, nor does it convey the importance of the work.

> *Interviewer*: So, how much of your time was spent on organizing the festival?
>
> *Steph*: Oh my God! So much! We estimated that everybody put 400 hours in. Which is like probably conservative, that was more like an average.

Interviewer: Yeah, I was gonna say, how did you come up with this number? It seems so small!

Steph: *(laughs)* Well, overall for the first year, cause, I mean it went on for seven months and we met every week and then outside of meetings, there were usually like…

Interviewer: Tasks?

Steph: Yeah! There were probably like 3 to 10 hours of tasks depending on the week so. Yeah, when you break down 400 hours, it's actually pretty significant in that amount of time. And then, to have everyone be putting that in, yeah. It's pretty wild. It was, I have no, I can't remember how we came up with this number so I can't say it's totally accurate right now. It was, like you said, at work that's what I was working on, it was always open on the side of my desk. The amount of correspondence required, email sending, Facebook messaging, that stuff that never ties up. Like, it's one thing to be like "I'm gonna work on Not Enough Fest for three hours on Tuesday evening" but that's like not how the tasks worked. It was like always ongoing, there's always a thread, there's always like a loose end that can't wait too much longer. Yeah, it was an enormous amount of hours! *(laughs)* Yeah, it was basically a second full-time job, for sure.

So even when the work could be quantified, it is not the way organizers made sense of this experience, rather it is through having shared and experienced this work with others. For participants, organizing is characterized by how one felt about the work not only in the sense of personal motivation or desire for organizing and affecting change, but also in the way the work is not strictly physical. The work needed to organize these festivals is so enormous that only those who are part of the inner circle can understand it and tallying up an estimation of time dedicated to organizing is an attempt at sense making for both organizers and community members. Breaking it down into numbers, months, and hours moves the experience from an emotional one to a more palpable one to counteract the fact that the labour, both physical and emotional, has been rendered invisible, not just to community members sharing the space but also to participants.

Interviewer: Do you think, and that's just for my own personal curiosity, but do you think, cause you did a bunch, you did so much like resources organizing, you know what I mean. You did so much work around creating the archive, like the bands archive, so do you feel

like because you were, you did such a huge thing, and all so visibly cause it was up on your social media and everything, and you were so vocal about it, do you think that's kind of why promoters and people like this felt, you know…

Corby: Yes! Yeah, absolutely! I think that like the… It's funny, until you mentioned it, I totally forgot about that. The spreadsheet "here are bands that aren't just dudes. That's it!" Yeah! We had to make it as easy as possible, *(laughs)* as easy as possible. Basically, so that there was <u>no</u> excuse. There's no excuse!

Interviewer: Yeah, no exactly! No that's the thing right cause now it's literally what you can say, there's no excuse, this resource is available.

Corby: And I think even now I… once you mentioned that, that's so funny cause I'm like. I think I do take it for granted that things are just a little different. Like things are very different now, and to me it feels like "oh! that's how it always was." But thinking back in how it wasn't and the reason we did the festivals "oh yeah! It wasn't always like this!" It really wasn't and yeah, having that yeah *(laughs)*. That's so funny! That spreadsheet of bands that was sent out to promoters *(laughs)* […] The work was real! Yeah! And in our case, emotional labour was absolutely a huge part of it! But god! So was physical labour! It's <u>just so much time constantly</u>. And then, time that wasn't being used to work on the festival was emotionally being spent on the festival. *(laughs)* so yeah, a lot has changed for the better. And yeah, it is hard to see that when things are just different now.

As time goes, it becomes easier for participants to minimize the work that they have provided, the problems that they were addressing and even their contribution and impact on their communities. Negative emotions and experiences are attenuated and do not seem so prevalent anymore and as such tend to be dismissed from the narrative. To some extent, this is one of the failures of this organizing, a lot of time was dedicated to confidence building in community members, on taking up space, and countering the effects of socialization on women, queer, and trans people and the way they access and move in creative spaces, however, it did not prevent organizers from dismissing and minimizing their own work. As we were talking about the impact of the festival, every participant agreed that it was a difficult question, that it was hard to assess what may have been the results of their work because who is to know if those changes are really the result of the organizers efforts. The funny thing here is that even when concrete actions can be linked to tangible

results, the reflex of undervaluing emotional labour and any kind of labour associated with women, queer, and trans people is still prevalent. This trend does not mean that participants minimized their work and how heavy the load had been while organizing.

> *Jordan*: There were a lot of challenges, but it's easy to remember the one that had the longest effect, and that was burnout! The first year of organizing the fest was invigorating and exciting. We were flying by the seat of our pants and didn't know if it would all work out, but it did! It felt like such a success. The second year on the other hand was a real challenge. We experienced less hype/excitement in the community, more backlash that sucked so much energy from us; we expanded our organizing committee to try to create more capacity to organize, and that was a super big challenge. We were really just trying to keep the spirit alive, but it was so hard, as I think a lot of us really struggled with our own mental health and capacity. We were burnt out but had to follow through. By the final event, it wasn't even a catharsis (for me, anyways); I was just a blithering incoherent mess! It has been over a year since it ended, and I still don't feel like I have the capacity to be involved in organizing or even really volunteering- I am still trying to find my equilibrium.

> *Ruby*: […] And then as a collective, I would say capacity. Overall capacity I think we put so much momentum into making it happen and I think afterwards we were all kind of like tired for various reasons both in our own personal lives but because so much of our time had been put toward making this festival happen it felt like we all kind of all were, kind of just like, so lacking energy to do any like, really good long debriefing within a short period of time even talking about what our next steps would look like if any, and yeah, as a collective, addressing I guess colourism, white skin privilege, and anti-indigenous behaviours that were complex but also not that complex and I guess people coming from different analyses that were really damaging especially considering that we were organizing on indigenous territories as settler people.

> *Kahn*: I have not been putting myself in situations where I am organizing or even like supporting much of anything lately, just because the burnout was pretty intense.

To a certain extent, burnout is how organizers embodied their work best. The weight of the work while organizing was obviously felt but it is in dealing with burnout that it is really acknowledged. The exhaustion lingers and becomes the most tangible reminder and expression of this work. As it cannot be witnessed from the outside, and though actual events are arguably the embodiment of the emotional and physical labour, it fails to accurately convey the toll taken on individuals.

However, Kahn offers us a small and powerful glimpse into the intensity of their experience and its impact on them still, more than a year after the final event concluded. Moreover, the energising effects of organizing felt the first year, could not be reproduced by organizers. The energy not only disappeared, it could not be matched by the community, implying that the relationship may have shifted.

Organizing as intimacy and relationship building

The process of organizing is fundamentally about building relationships, whether it be as a community or between a community and the "outside world". Therefore, it makes sense for participants to have experienced a shift in their relationships and in how they viewed and/or performed intimacy.

> *Ruby*: Yeah, and I think community building is also extremely important because it builds so much trust. Like yes, people might be working on projects, on common goals and things together but it's a whole different thing to be able to sit down and have dinner with somebody and get to know them, and like feel, just build that empathy between us, I think. I've noticed a huge difference even in my own experiences when I've been fundraising for you know folks that are on the frontline of a blockade and, you know, feeling so strongly about it, but then I go up there and meet people and eat with them, and chill with them, and feel so much more of a pull for commitment afterwards, which is a function of community building is like building strength between each other and strength and also making our movements stronger is a thing I think community building does.

Relationships are primarily about capacity-building, whether within the collective or outside of it. They are necessary to do the work at an organizational level because no action can take place if there is no community behind the momentum or if the organizers are not building these relationships between each other. They are also a strong motivator, not just because they are proof that people support the work being done, they also provide allies and supporters with motivation. Relationships allow individuals to build capacity and community, explore and define ways to go

forward with the organizing, and to make the organizing more personal. Relationships are important because they illustrate the idea that the personal is political perfectly.

Corby: I made a lot of really close friendships, which was really unexpected actually because I had a lot of friends and I don't really see them anymore. They're around, they're in the periphery, and I still hold a fond place in my heart for all of them but it kind of made me realize how much was lacking in those relationships, which was basically a common ground in a lot of ways. And that, yeah. That was something I didn't realize before in some ways, an inability to relate with a lot of the relationships that I had in my life until I had other relationships I found more deep and meaningful. And what more can you ask for out of a community is deep and meaningful relationships. That's it! And people, just meeting people that I could have a conversation with and just know they got it, you know. They don't have to go home and just think about the things that I said, really, like have to come back to me and tell me how much they thought about it and maybe they've come around because that's a perspective they never thought of before. And that's totally valuable! That's great. We should be able to talk to people that don't have the same life experience, but it's tiring to do it all the time. And to just be able to have a conversation with someone, and be like "oh, they get it! I don't have to explain myself to them!" And you can still have super long, amazing, meaningful conversations with those people, probably more so, but it's less exhausting, it's more like bonding. And I think a lot of people found that, they just found people that felt the same way that they did. *(whispers)* That's so awesome! […] Some of the criticisms that we got as a fest was basically something we tried really hard to avoid, although, I don't know how you would totally avoid it. Not to say, we couldn't have done a better job of it but, that we were insular. We were an insular group and it's hard to become a part of that group, and that we're friends, and we made bands with each other, and all those kinds of things. But…we weren't friends when we started *(laughs)* […] We became close because we were doing all this work together, and we just found a community in each other, and in people that weren't involved as well, so. […] But, as for the friendships we formed, *(laughs)* those were super real friendships that we formed through doing that work. We weren't just pals who knew each other ahead of time!

Jordan: We wanted to be a safe haven for folks to connect and feel supported, but to be honest, that was really difficult for many reasons. You meet people and they are really great, but that doesn't mean that you have the capacity (at least we didn't as we were spending so much energy organizing and trying to maintain our own work/lives/selves) to be their friends on a more meaningful level outside of the events. We also grew really close as an organizing unit and I think that made a lot of people feel excluded. We didn't mean to be cliquey, and we emphasized trying to be warm and approachable at events, but bottom

line, we were a group of friends doing a thing and people felt we were "too cool" or whatever.

Organizing is an intense and unique experience. It takes its toll on organizer mentally, physically, emotionally, and sometimes financially. As such, the first relationships organizers developed were between each other. Through the process of organizing, participants started embodying the community they hoped for. Sharing personal stories and building relationships is integral part of organizing, meetings are not strictly about work in itself; they are social occasions and opportunity to care and support each other. After complicated or negative experiences, participants have mentioned having meetings or debrief to process and support each other. Those experiences create a multilayered experience of community for organizers. On one hand, there is the community that the festival calls upon, it is being developed through community events and actions and as people identify with the values and the message being promoted. People connect during events, build community there, and keep supporting the project, until the community finally rallies for the festival. On the other hand, there is the smaller community created by the organizers, and whereas the public attends events to show the community supports, organizers attend meetings to show support for each other. In doing so, organizing becomes an extension of the personal relationships, pre-existing or developed. Because so much of their time is spent on organizing, these relationships are centered in organizers' lives. In a way, it serves to isolate them, as the thing that makes them community, the thing they share is the ongoing act of organizing, as such, festival participants, attendees, and supporters will always be excluded from this community.

The friendships developed however seem to create a shift in the way organizers experience their relationships. These "deep and meaningful relationships" offer a space for vulnerability and deeper

connections for organizers and overshadow the work and the festival in how important they seem to participants.

> *Leila*: I mean I think that one thing you're gonna notice about this interview is that I probably won't talk about the actual festival very much at all, cause it's so, I deprioritize it completely like for me, my greatest sort of priority or what I feel most strongly about is the process of getting there. Like that particular day was cool but, I mean, well some of it was cool, some of it was awful, but I don't know, what's <u>so</u> important to me are the relationships between ourselves as organizers, really is so paramount so I mean in terms of success I don't know I feel like a broken record but our biggest success as I see it was in actually learning how to work with each other with care and understanding and honesty and just so much love and forgiveness and all these things that I really all these things that sort of define what I would like in community I feel like in the process of organizing I think we embodied some, so many of those things. And you know, it wasn't without, it's not like life wasn't happening, it's not like people weren't going through hard things.

In a capitalistic society that strives on isolating individuals, making connections is a revolutionary act. Neoliberal society fractures communities and isolates individuals creating precarious people who will work harder and longer to gain some stability and security. A sense of kinship can be born through the process of organizing, when organizing is experienced as an extension of intimate relationships. In addition to living through the organizing experience, and being able to support each other in their work, organizers have also the possibility to share in the emotional load of organizing. Relationships are at the core of community organizing, they hold a community together and allow organizers to keep their efforts going but they are complex and always complicated.

<u>Organizing as survival and resistance</u>

For those of us subjected to marginalization and various discrimination, the burden of defending personal interests or basic human rights is often too heavy. It is through community and through organizing that such endeavour can be undertaken. Surviving and resisting a system that denies your humanity can sometimes be a daunting experience, but it can also bring a lot of joy.

Organizing is a very political act that serves a variety of purposes depending on the people involved. For participants, organizing has been a challenging experience, the work can be physically and emotionally demanding but also very rewarding.

> *Corby*: The worst part about being a minority in a community isn't even necessarily the way that I felt to be I don't know in some instances tokenized, or belittled, or not taken seriously, like that sucks but the worst part for me was always people not listening when I said anything. Was basically being told that I'm too sensitive, or that isn't real (*laughs*) just because it's not the experience other people have had, or they can't put themselves in someone else's shoes. And that total lack of empathy from other people. So, to me it means that people feel, ultimately it would be great if those problems were totally erased but I don't think <u>that will ever happen!</u> (*laughs*) So, to me it means people both feeling empowered to speak up for themselves and just <u>know</u> that <u>they're not crazy</u> for felling this way but also taking up enough space that people that have done those shitty things and told other people that they're crazy, or just have been totally unable to listen, can see enough numbers or hear people be loud enough that they realized that it's real and maybe be forced to put themselves in someone else's shoes, or to take an internal look at themselves and how they're contributing.

> *Ruby*: I think to me that's, what made the festival really important is that it was like by our terms, and we did challenge these things, and we did challenge capitalism and talked about all these things that affect our lives as people of colour, as queer folks, as gender nonconforming and trans folks and create spaces where like, you know, indigenous folks and folks of colour could feel like they could come to, regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation. because that's also another place where we don't find these intersections even within our communities.

For organizers, challenging systems of oppression is at the core of the organizing work, and though, challenging oppression can take many forms, for our participants, it came primarily from challenging the dominant narrative when it came to their community. On one hand, organizers challenged their day-to-day oppression by publicly challenging it. Because oppression serves to isolate individuals, by creating a space around those specific experiences, organizers legitimized them not just for themselves but for everyone who has had the same lived experience. Moreover, the fact that those common experiences are centered and validated by the community itself without

acknowledging the wider Edmonton community, is a challenge, as it situates the community in charge of its own narrative. On the other hand, the festival itself is a challenge to the dominant narrative because it is a space that embodies the community politics and ideals.

Organizers create a new space and challenge the landscape of the cultural scenes in which they are involved. This space allows organizers to directly challenge the narrative in concrete ways first by providing a space where community members could come experience a safer space that would prioritize their experience and their needs. The success each festival experienced, with more than 33 new bands created through NEF and over 30 workshops and performances with BB&F, directly challenge the preconception that if marginalized communities do not access certain level of success or visibility it is because they lack the skills or interest. Moreover, the behaviours and politics preached during the organizing process as well as the festival have been internalized by some members and have effectively impacted in some ways the different art and music scene involved originally. This experience while deeply moving and emotional for organizers was not necessarily a euphoric one but it did reveal a lot about what organizers felt characterized their experience of the festival.

> *Ruby*: I think what I and…I think what we had hoped to accomplish was to have a space to meet each other and to meet each other under our own terms as racialized, black, indigenous folks. where we didn't have to play into a colonial narrative, into white gaze, into being quieter or softer or not saying certain things just having a space where we can be witnessed and say those things freely without worrying about whether or not we're gonna lose funding, or whether or not somebody's gonna cry because their feelings are hurt because whiteness is named. So I think creating a space for that existed, creating connections between each other, building alliances between each other, between different racialized communities, sharing our art with each other, and also just building connections so that we can organize more effectively in the future, and to make our presence known in this city as well, that we are not gonna be passive or submissive, and that we are here to counter the narrative of you know, this multicultural narrative that serves colonialism primarily in Canada.

Leila: I think connection was my primary motivation. Yeah, yeah, I think it was cause we, honestly, we could have decided to do this like arts festival, we could have decided to do like I don't know, like hold just like a dinner, we could have decided to do some other event and I would have been down. Like I wasn't thinking very specifically beyond having dinner with you like once a week. (*laughs*) […] I think what was most important to me was like that organizing felt nourishing and that it felt supportive, and that if felt I guess more nourishing than it felt exhausting, and I know […] that exhaustion is kind of part of organizing, and yeah by the end of the day I was like literally screaming at people to go home (*laughs*) cause I was <u>done</u>! (*laughs*) […] but also it was important to me to organize something that was relevant to not just ourselves but also to the larger community that we were hoping to bring together, it was also important to me to do it in a way, like in a good way as like settlers on these territories, it was, it was important to me to, I don't know, to not, to like organize a festival that was about connection and expression, and celebration in so many ways, in ways that didn't sort of celebrate our role in ongoing colonialism but rather in ways that sort of drew connections between people of colour, black people and indigenous people.

To organizers, the festival has not been experienced necessarily as the most empowering experience. This does not mean that organizers did not feel positively towards the event, but they saw it more as an accomplishment than a moment in time where they experienced cultural resistance. However, they did express those emotions toward their experience of the organizing process. The organizing felt like an act of resistance for organizers, it was for all of them the first time they could experience what living their own politics felt like. Though the festival was promoted as a community event, it is through honouring their politics through their day-to-day interactions that organizers experienced this the most. Throughout the organizing process, participants challenged the dynamics that they usually experienced, they did not change their message or soften their tone when stating their needs, sharing their realities, or applying for funding. The festival was being imagined as a space where marginalized people, especially those with intersecting identities, would be able to create and share their art in a supportive environment. This space was promoted as active resistance against the discrimination and erasure that is usually experienced by community members. For organizers, however, the festival in a way failed to fulfill

this role, but the experience of directly challenging and resisting oppressive dynamics and actively embodying relationships that deprioritized neoliberal values throughout the organizing process was a transformative one. Though every organizer I have interviewed has mentioned the exhaustion they still haven't recovered from, they have all made note of how life-changing and revitalizing the experience was. Having been able to experience relationships that prioritized connection and care, while collectively attempting to build a politically aware community without bargaining their values has changed how organizers perceived the relationships that they have built during the organizing process, but it also changed how they relate in their life.

> *Leila*: I think what made community in that, around organizing, was the organizing itself. I became, you know, I think in a way, that is, what I had hoped for was that it would be…I mean I remember, I remember when like Ruby talked to me about it and was like "yeah *[name redacted]* and I got together and we're talking about this thing, and like, are you interested?" We were in Remedy and it was so loud and I didn't know what we were talking about kind of but honestly, just the idea of getting together and sharing meals together and like having just non-white friends hang out was <u>so</u> appealing to me. It was, it just felt like…It made me realize just how thirsty I was for that, you know. It's like, I just, for the first time realized like how dry I was, you know (*laughs*). And I think I don't know so yeah and then in the process of organizing, man, I think we, I mean we certainly weren't perfect, but I think in so many ways we did so many things well. And I've organized things before for <u>years</u> but, I just never been part of an organizing collective that actually knows one another, like genuinely as people, as friends, as family, where we, where it was possible to talk about capacity, and support each other and like for literally the process of you know, when one person's capacity shrunk for other people's capacity to get bigger, and just, it felt like a set of lungs, like a living organ just in how that support moved. […] I guess what I was saying before, about just practicing what liberation feels like, I think <u>that</u> (*organizing with this collective*) was like the closest example that I have ever experienced.

> *Corby*: I think the experience while being completely exhausting and really, really hard in a lot of ways it did make me think that after this I know that I can contribute more. […] Now I know boundaries better too!

For many organizers, there is a sense that organizing this festival has been necessary to their survival. Organizing is an organic process and participants still feel deeply about it even years after

the fact, it is relevant to their survival both in terms of what it brought to their life at the time and since then, but also because it has enshrined the knowledge that change is possible, and that participants can really affect change in their communities at any time. The supportive experience that is organizing experience works in this way because it demands the same commitment and vulnerability from each collective member. Despite the exhaustion, this experience provided organizers with the knowledge that organizing can be deeply affirming. Most organizers struggled with mental health issues and/or personal situations as the organizing process was ongoing and the support they received from other organizers was crucial in helping them deal with their personal lives. In this way, organizing was important to their ongoing survival in that it provided them with a solid support system. Moreover, organizing in this very political way, not only weaving their politics in the festival but also embodying these politics in every interaction and relationship, is the living proof that these ideals can be applied to life. Organizing not only offered participants an opportunity to experience relationships that are cognizant with their politics but it also showed them that this desire is not theirs only, and that support and interest can be found in others, and finally that there are concrete things that we can do as individuals to fight against our conditions and that these things are very liberating and rewarding.

Organizing has been a transformative journey for organizers. It has challenged their vision of the world and their community. However, no matter how rewarding it has been, the work is not necessarily sustainable.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This study has investigated the ways some queer collectives have organized DIY festivals in Edmonton to address the oppression faced by their communities in Edmonton arts and music scenes. I explored this topic to, on one hand, make sense if my own experience organizing the BB&F festival, and on the other hand to gain hindsight into queer cultural resistance in Edmonton. Through the analysis of their social media content and other medias, I have explored the way these collectives negotiated their community and collective identity. Organizers have attempted to create a community that was based not only on identity but also on shared values and experiences. Community in this type of setting is difficult to define because it is being constantly negotiated throughout the months preceding the events. Organizers championed intersectionality at the core of their organizing framework and, at the same time, negotiated community space. Community space has three different aspects: it is first a site where once can experience tension in the form of oppression, it then becomes imagined space as the organizing process is ongoing and finally, as an appropriated space, on the day of the festival and, sometimes, beyond.

In the second part of this study, we explored organizers' experience of their organizing process through interpretative phenomenological analysis. The purpose of this chapter was to gain a better understanding not only of what their intent and motivation were but also of what it feels like to look back on this experience. Organizing has had a deep impact on all participants. On one hand, participants have gained a sense of fulfillment whether because of their accomplishment or because of the kinship they have developed among their respective collectives. A shift seems to operate in the process of organizing because organizers are involved in creating the ideal space, tying it to intersectional feminist practices, and sharing this deeply political and personal experience, they form a community of their own. Organizers have developed deep relationships that have

fundamentally changed their definition and understanding not only of community but also of intimate relationships. Community is perceived as multilayered and ever shifting. Though organizing happened around notions of identity, political values seemed to be the rallying theme for organizers, and those values played a large part in relationship building within these collectives, making it difficult to seamlessly connect with their larger community.

Moreover, though the festival aimed to provide a space where resistance could be enacted and embodied to the community, it failed in a way to provide such a space for organizers. The site of resistance organizers most easily identified was the organizing process when they were able to not only experience support and care in their relationships with each other, they also were empowered in their relationships to institutions. They felt strength at being part of a group who ensured at every step decisions were made in accordance with their values, they stay fiercely and vocally attached to their politics and to what their vision was. However, this did not make this experience a failure, it simply reinforced these core values in organizers' lives and relationships.

Studying the work of these collectives provides us with a certain image of Edmonton, as lived by these organizers. It paints the portrait of an Edmonton where race, gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation have a deep impact on how one can hope to access cultural spaces. It also shows the various Edmonton arts scenes depicted here as willing to undergo change. Indeed, the involvement not just of marginalized people but also of supporters and allies who may not have experienced these oppressive dynamics gather to directly challenge the status quo. In some instances, a change of attitude has been observed. In certain music scenes for example, a rise in more diverse shows has been witnessed and there has also been more visible cultural production by people of color. And though these changes cannot be directly linked to these DIY festivals, they have been noted by organizers, and can be witnessed in Edmonton cultural life. It is important to

note that this does not mean that Edmonton has been transformed into a haven where difference and diversity has suddenly been embraced. Instances of cultural appropriation, racism, sexism, and other forms of oppressive systems still flourish, but it means that now actual resistance to it is more visible in a way.

Completing this research has been a complicated process. My position as both an organizing member and a community member afforded me a lot of personal knowledge about certain topics. When talking with participants, a lot was sometimes left unsaid or rather unexplained, because we shared a common understanding of certain experiences. I am aware that my personal experiences play a role in the way I interpret the world, so in this sense, this research process was also complicated by this knowledge and the influence it implicitly had on me already. I do not think that this disqualifies the importance of this work, not simply as an academic work, but as a piece of contemporary history, as a challenge to the dominant narrative.

This work also helped me make sense of my organizing experience, in sharing their stories, organizers enabled me to co-create meaning of this experience, especially regarding embodying relationships. Having been unable to engage in any kind of good reflection post-festival, it became complicated to make sense of everything that had happened. I did not find meaning in exploring my experience of the festival as a moment when I actively took part in cultural resistance. Through these interviews and the sharing of personal accounts, I was able to identify what held the most importance, but I was also able to deepen my personal relationships with participants. Indeed, every participant expressed excitement and curiosity for my project for my sake and for the sake of the work itself.

I want to stress here that this only reflects a very small and very specific experience however it can provide a good account of the realities of community organizing, especially DIY organizing.

As more neoliberal politics are being enforced, it falls more and more on the shoulders of marginalized populations to defend their interests. Focus on free trade rather than on social services leave the responsibilities of caring for communities in the hands of community members and their allies and supporters. I believe it is important to document the efforts we engage in to fight against oppression, first to counter the narrative that we submit to dominant discourse and oppression without resisting. Marginalized people have always organized to fight against their condition however systemic oppression makes it easy to erase their contribution and I think this type of academic work is one of the ways in which to resist this narrative. Secondly, it is important because even without providing specific advice, these testimonies might be a useful source for future organizers looking into DIY community organizing. It offers us a glimpse into the ways they have pulled through and succeeded in these endeavours. Knowing how others have managed is not only a good source of inspiration, it is also a strong motivator. Finally, this is also an attempt at portraying the unquantifiable amount of emotional labour required from community organizing. This should not deter would-be organizers but rather provide them with an idea of what this type of work entails. There is a lot of pain involved in organizing but also a lot of joy and an accurate portrayal of these dynamics based on the lived experiences of former organizers is invaluable.

The work of these collectives is important and necessary not only because they resonate with so many people in the community but also because of how transformative this experience proved to be for organizers. It also proved that building alternative communities that center the needs of marginalized people is possible if not sustainable. One cannot help but noticed the toll that organizing took on participants, not only based on the experiences they shared but also based on the fact that of these two endeavours, only NEF saw a second edition, and by all accounts for the participants involved both years, the emotional and physical labour became overwhelming to the

point of interfering with their participation and involvement. Future research might involve exploring ways to attenuate the burden of DIY community organizing on individuals and mitigate burnout.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. What is community to you?

2. How do you define your community?

3. What is the function of organizing and community-building for you?

4. In the context of the festival, what makes or made community?

5. What motivated you to take part in organizing the festival?

6. What was most important to you in working on the festival?

7. With regard to organizing, what has been your biggest success, as an individual and as a collective?

8. What has been your biggest challenge, as an individual and as a collective?

9. What was the community reaction to your event?

10. What did you hope to accomplish with this event?

11. What does empowering your community mean to you?

12. What does taking space mean and involve, to you?

13. While organizing, what was your experience of community like?

14. Prior to this festival, what was your organizing experience?

15. How much of your time was spent on organizing the festival?

16. How was this festival funded?

17. What impact has your event had on your community and Edmonton at large, in your opinion?

18. Would you like to add anything?

Appendix B: BB&F Safer Spaces Guidelines and Capacity Announcement

<u>BB&F Safer Spaces Guidelines:</u>

Brown, Black, and Fierce! centers the leadership of women of colour, two-spirit people, non-binary, trans, and queer people of colour. We aim to create and hold a space that is safe for all those who wish to attend this festival, and especially for those who are often made to feel unsafe. While we know this will never be at 100% we are committed to nurturing a culture of care, safety, accessibility, and accountability.

In the context of this festival we are also prioritizing the participation of those who identify as Indigenous, Metis, Inuit, Black, a Person of Colour, or mixed race, and who are women, queer, trans, two-spirit, and gender non-conforming. We recognize that how we identify does not always visually match to how others would identify us- and so we ask that this be a self-selecting process.

If you "self-select" to participate in Indigenous, Black, and People of Colour (IBPOC) only workshops you agree that: You experience racialization and racism be it through the whitewashing of your identity, hypervisibility, erasure, systemic racism, etc.

We welcome the support and participation of white allies but ask that you be mindful of not participating in workshops that are designated as **IBPOC only**, which will be communicated in our program, through signage, and our volunteers.

Here are some steps you can take to help us foster a culture of care, safety, accessibility, and accountability:

(in no order)

- Please refrain from using scented products while attending the festival:
    - Products such as strong detergents, scented shampoos, perfumes, cologne, etc, can cause strong reactions in people that can make them really sick within a couple minutes
- Always ask and use the correct pronouns for people.
- Please respect the gender neutral/all genders toilets. Do not police anyone who chooses to use these toilets.
- If you are not IBPOC, you may not attend workshops designated for **IBPOC only**.
    - If you are white, you may attend workshops that are designated as "open to all", however please keep in mind that if they are at capacity, spots will be prioritized for those who are IBPOC. Additionally, within all "open" workshops, please be mindful of the amount of space you are taking when talking; the space is still prioritized for the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Two-Spirit (LGBTQ2S) IBPOC**

If you need support, please look for our volunteers. They will help you with what you need or find the appropriate person to do so.

<u>Capacity Announcements:</u>

We will be making announcements intermittently and as needed regarding capacity:

Capacity Announcement re: Open Workshops

At this moment we're reaching capacity for this workshop. As there may be others wishing to enter the space at this time we ask everyone to reflect on our safer spaces guidelines and our self-selection process to prioritize the attendance of IBPOC folks. As well, if you are taking part in a workshop with no limit on participant number and only floor space is available, please keep in mind that giving up your seat is another way to prioritize IBPOC folks.

Capacity Announcement re: Performance

Our performance theatre seats 200 people. If we reach capacity we will again ask folks to consider helping to open the space for those women, trans, non-binary, queer, and two spirit IBPOC who this festival is for. There is a foyer where folks are welcome to mingle, as well as a merch booth with items from our artists.

Appendix C: NEF Safer Spaces Guidelines and Capacity Announcement

NEF Safer Spaces Guidelines:

During all NEF events, organizers and volunteers will be present to help make the space as safe, anti-oppressive, and accessible as possible and to address any concerns attendees may have.

Safer Spaces team members can be identified by a patch and are available to help all folks attending the event. The Safer Spaces Team will take action to address violations of consent, violations of NEF safe(r) spaces guidelines, and other harmful incidents that might occur at the event. We will be available to help mediate conflicts, provide support/solidarity, intervene in harmful situations and/or remove individuals if necessary to maintain the safety of the space. The Safer Spaces team will prioritize the safety of individuals regularly made to feel unsafe due to their race, gender, sexual orientation, class, ability, age and/or size over the comfort of those acting in harmful ways.

Harmful behavior includes but is not limited to: making racist, classist, transphobic, homophobic, fat antagonist, ableist comments; catcalling or sexual harassment; failing to respect the physical/emotional safety of others; cultural appropriation; being too intoxicated to monitor your behavior and your impact on others, and being generally disrespectful of other attendees' right to participate and have an enjoyable time.

We are hopeful that participants and community members will remind each other of ways we enact and/or perpetuate harmful behaviors and to call each other back in when we stray (and to call out oppressive practices when we witness them). We want to create a culture of care, openness and learning in which generative conversations can be had without the fear of imminent alienation and/or expulsion.

Having said that, we would also like to state explicitly that we believe survivors' accounts of harm without question. We are not a community court and are not here to pass judgment, but in order to support survivors we will be centering their experiences and will do our best to create spaces in which they feel safe, supported and comfortable. This may mean asking people to leave the event.

We expect everyone who is engaged in Not Enough Fest activities to take it upon themselves to adhere to the following guidelines:

1. We understand that intimate partner violence, sexual violence and other forms of gender-based violence are prevalent in our communities, and if there are concerns raised about someone engaging in these behaviours we'll believe the person coming forward and take appropriate actions, including asking the perpetrator to leave.
2. Any individual or group engaging in violence or threatening the safety of others will be automatically excluding themselves from the space and asked to leave.
3. Respect the physical and emotional boundaries of others. Feel free to move, dance, thrash but be mindful of the safety and comfort of others. Share the space.

4. Take responsibility for your actions and realize that your actions have an impact on others.
5. Try not to use oppressive language. If you make a mistake (and we all sometimes do), be open to being called in and/or apologizing.

    > *Oppressive language includes language that uses an identity or trait belonging to a certain group as a negative quality, or that trivializes experiences of violence or marginalization.

6. Respect everyone's pronouns and try not to make assumptions regarding gender and sexuality.
7. Be mindful of how you are impacting the accessibility of the space, i.e. keep the accessible seating area clear, try not to create tripping hazards by leaving stuff on the floor, be mindful of allergies by not wearing strong scents, etc.
8. If something is making you feel uncomfortable or you need help, please feel free to seek out a Safer Spaces volunteer for assistance.
9. Take an active role in the collective responsibility of maintaining a safe and inclusive environment by looking out for each other, leading by example and prioritizing the comfort and experience of those who are rarely given priority (because of race, gender, sexual orientation, class, ability, age, size, etc).

NEF Capacity Announcement:

Just want to let everyone know that we are at capacity, so if you were considering leaving any time soon, or you have already seen the band you are here to support, this is a good time to make that exit so we can let other people in before the next band goes on.

We also have a couple of questions that we would like attendants to reflect on when deciding whether they should stay or if they might like to make room for someone else. The point of these reflections is not to check off one thing and stay or leave solely because of it, but consider these points and their implications in their entirety:

1. Is NEF providing you with the rare experience of having (parts of) your identity reflected and validated in the music environment around you?
2. Are you here to support a particular band and have they played already?
3. Do you regularly feel safe, welcome, and comfortable in the music scene?
4. Are you committed to helping build a more inclusive music scene by actively supporting the participation of women, queer trans and non-binary community members
5. Remembering that NEF has, from the start, been by, for, and about women, queer, trans and non-binary people, and also keeping in mind that these bands will (hopefully) play other shows, do you feel that attending this show is a uniquely valuable experience, or could you support a more inclusive music scene by supporting these bands in the future?

Original Questions:

1. Are you here to support a particular band and have they played already?
2. Does the goal of creating a more inclusive music scene by actively supporting the participation of women, queer trans and non-binary community members resonate with you?
3. Have you been looking forward to this show for some time?
4. Are you committed to seeing this community continue and grow?
5. Is NEF providing you with the rare experience of having (parts of) your identity reflected and validated in the music environment around you?

Appendix D: Event Posters

Not Enough Fest Edmonton 2015 by Jill Stanton ©Jill Stanton

https://www.facebook.com/NotEnoughFest/photos/a.509026762532230/523460384422201/?type=3&permPage=1

Not Enough Fest 2015 by Kaylin © Kaylin
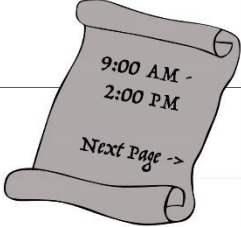
Brown, Black, and Fierce by Daniel Hackborn © Daniel Hackborn

BROWN BLACK AND FIERCE WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

	9:00 AM	10:00 AM	10:30 AM	11:00 AM	12:00 PM	1:00PM	1:30 PM
EDMONTON ROOM		Getting Elemental | Jules Nyx (10:00 AM - 11:30AM)					
PROGRAM ROOM		Crafting a Meaningful Territory Acknowledgement Trish Pal (10 AM - 11:30 AM)					
SE CORNER					Working Behind the Scenes (Event Organizing) Kristina (12:00 PM -1:30 PM)		
ROOM 5		#WritingWhileBlack | Medgine (10:00 AM - 11:00 AM)		More than Playing Dress Up: The Appropriation of Home Jessica and Surabbi (11:30 AM - 1:00 PM)			
ROOM 7				BBHMM: Advocating for Ourselves as Artists and Organizers (11:00AM-12:15PM)	Authors of Our Own Truths: Raging, Writing, Healing | Lynx (12:30 PM - 2:00 PM)		
CENTENNIAL ROOM		Anti-Oppression Workshop | Tammi and Vanessa (10:00 AM - 11:30 AM)		Am I an Immigrant? Elsa (11:45 AM - 1:00 PM)		Anti(Patria)arca | Beatriz (1:15 PM - 2:30 PM)	
BSMT FOYER							

9:00 AM - 2:00 PM

BB&F Workshop Program by Lauren Crazybull © Lauren Crazybull

https://www.facebook.com/BrownBlackFierce/photos/gm.1731135263776481/507743402739892/?type=3&permPage=1

BROWN BLACK AND FIERCE

	2:00 PM	2:30 PM	3:00 PM	3:30 PM	4:00 PM	4:30 PM	5:00 PM	5:30 PM
EDMONTON ROOM								
PROGRAM ROOM								
SE CORNER	Indigenous Youth in Urban Context — Kirsten and Toni (2:00 PM - 3:30 PM)							
ROOM 5	aPOCalypse | Skye (2:00 PM - 3:30 PM)				The Memory and Legacy of Black Canadian Urban Space | Shane (4:00 PM - 5:00 PM)			
ROOM 7	Black Lives Matter (Connecting to a Global Movement for Black Lives) | Rodney (2:15 PM - 3:30 PM)				Emotional Topography | Rowan (3:45 PM - 5:00 PM)			
CENTENNIAL ROOM	Anti(Patria)arca Beatriz (1:15 PM - 2:30 PM)	Elements of Kulture | Kaz (2:45 PM - 3:45 PM)			QTPOC Support Circle | Lynh (4:00 PM - 5:30PM)		Rental Space for Vendors	
BSMT FOYER					Food Service			

WORKSHOP SCHEDULE (Continued)

BB&F Workshop Program by Lauren Crazybull © Lauren Crazybull

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BROWN BLACK AND FIERCE
PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

ACT 1 - 7:00 PM

Elsa Robinson (live painting)
Deshana Bennett-Daley
Lynx Sainte-Marie
Verbasive
Alison Clarke
Kaz Mega
Shima Robinson
Quantum Tangle

ACT 2 - 9:00 PM

IHUMAN
Karla, Comanda, and Richard
Marena
Sierra Jamerson
Kim Nacita
Kimmortal

BB&F Performance Program by Lauren Crazybull © Lauren Crazybull

https://www.facebook.com/BrownBlackFierce/posts/507742639406635?__xts__%5B0%5D=68.ARCj9M
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2OlZJCTjuZnTvpU9DyBYsg97P5w-
XZTAkanUeHbRszJCG4t1Ukew4d5A5roYY4wU0sbBDscUOuSIMmNOfHNID-
CSNIVDIz3n3l8iD7Q19iXnN7-p&__tn__=-R

Not Enough Fest Edmonton 2016 by Jill Stanton ©Jill Stanton

https://www.facebook.com/NotEnoughFest/photos/a.509026762532230/752857918149112/?type=3&permPage=1

NOT ENOUGH FEST YEG! DAY 1

SATURDAY MAY 21, 2016

4:00 PM	UKULELE ORCHESTRA
4:30 PM	LA CANADIENNE
5:00 PM	UNTITLED AF
5:30 PM	BASIC SPICE RACK
6:00 PM	PRINCE BUNNY
6:30 PM	FEMME WRECK
7:00 PM	HEAVY MEADOW
7:30 PM	FRANKLIN ROMANCE
8:00 PM	POLTERHEIST
8:30 PM	ELLA COYES
9:00 PM	REVOLUTIONARY HEAVEN ANTI-GOD FORCE
9:30 PM	BOY SPROUT

NOT ENOUGH FEST YEG! DAY 2

SUNDAY MAY 22, 2016

4:00 PM	UKULELE ORCHESTRA
4:30 PM	KONZY VIDA
5:00 PM	THE ELUSIVE MOOSE
5:30 PM	DESERT ROSE
6:00 PM	WISH FISH
6:30 PM	TRUSTER
7:00 PM	HARSHMELLOW
7:30 PM	RATKING
8:00 PM	ESTROGENESIS

Not Enough Fest 2016 Bill © Not Enough Fest Edmonton

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https://www.facebook.com/NotEnoughFest/photos/a.513413362093570/789640511137519/?type=3&permPage=1

Appendix E: Links to Resources, Media Links, and Facebook Profiles

NEF's "Edmonton Band Archive: women, queer and/or trans artists" :
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1oB7O3he4-2AUUM3tLSvakJw8tBB-WYMVmHZ_WNiGAy8/edit#heading=h.5sbbqkzfhxyq

NEF Documents for Public Access:
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B3H4Gfr_n4fGTEJxMEhWMVZyeTg

NEF Resource List:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1LBfTJUngxXigLOUxo30DOORA9bc5hwxRMh7B3CxYegA/edit

NEF Zine: https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B3H4Gfr_n4fGeTZ4RlJwR01Bdzg/view

NEF 2015 Media Links:

https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/not-enough-fest-edmonton

http://edmonton.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=553292&binId=1.1203428&playlistPageNum=1

http://beatroute.ca/2014/07/28/activist-festival-not-enough-fest-breaks-down-barriers-to-participation/

http://www.edmontonjournal.com/entertainment/Festivals+concerts+wrestling+things+this+week/1005634/42/story.html

http://metronews.ca/news/edmonton/1109950/edmontons-first-annual-not-enough-fest-amping-up-the-local-music-scene/

http://www.edmontonexaminer.com/2014/10/08/not-enough-fest-aims-to-bring-more-women-queer-trans-and-genderqueer-people-into-making-music

http://femwaves.tumblr.com/post/89699253605/if-you-havent-heard

http://www.edmontonjournal.com/Enough/10056322/story.html

http://www.edmontonsun.com/2015/02/19/edmonton-festival-challenges-hetero-male-domination-of-the-musical-scene

http://idigyourgirlfriend.com/2015/02/not-enough-fest-edmonton-lets-make-noise/

http://gutsmagazine.ca/blog/not-enough-fest

http://www.vueweekly.com/enough-not-enough/

NEF 2016 Media Links:

http://edmontonnextgen.ca/blog/2016/2/2/not-enough-fest-musical-skillshare-event

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NEF Facebook Community Page: https://www.facebook.com/NotEnoughFest/?ref=page_internal

BB&F Facebook Community Page: https://www.facebook.com/BrownBlackFierce/?ref=page_internal