



MAKING A SCENE 2016

# THEATRE ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

**Fueling social engagement and relevance for theatre in  
Metro Vancouver**

**Our Purpose:** The Theatre Engagement Project is local theatre practitioners working together to make Metro Vancouver a vibrant, collaborative, diverse theatre hub – for audiences and for the theatre community.

**Our Values:** Collaboration, Diversity, Relevance, Risk

**Special thanks to:**

- *The Canada Council Leadership for Change Program*
- *The Vancouver Foundation*
- *The Greater Vancouver Professional Theatre Alliance*
- *Jim Peskin*
- *The Ignite and Theatre Engagement Project Steering Committees*
- *The hundreds of theatre practitioners who have participated since November 2011*
- *The members of the Theatre Engagement Project, who in 2015 and 2016 have included: Aliyah Amarshi, Allison Bottomley, Alvin Sanders, Andree Karas, Breanne Jackson, Chris Gatchalian, Christine Quintana, Claire Sakaki, Daniel Martin, David Mann, Dawn Brennan, Diane Brown, Heidi Taylor, Howard Jang, Jay Dodge, Jo Shin, Kathie MacKenzie, Margeret Specht, Richard Wolfe, Rohit Chokhani, Sebastien Archibald and Sherri Sadler.*

## **Before today**

The Theatre Engagement Project grew out of an informal conversation at the November 2011 MAKING A SCENE conference. Through a series of large and small community conversations since that time we have developed shared community priorities.\* We, as a community, intend to define and design our future.

The conversations have been focused around **four pillars**:

**Art:** The practice, performance, and development of theatre

**Diversity:** Ensuring relevance through diversity of people, places, and practices

**Infrastructure:** Building a foundation for community, connection and creativity

**Public engagement:** Engaging, educating and mobilizing our audiences and our supporters

## **And now**

The work now is to form those priorities into a plan and carry on the great work of making Metro Vancouver a vibrant, collaborative, diverse theatre hub, for theatre audiences and for theatre makers.

### **What have we learned?**

Through community consultation, we identified the following overarching issues:

- Our work onstage and off is out of touch with the composition of our community
- We want bigger audiences and deeper engagement: with the artists and workers in our community; with each other; with our audiences
- We want to work together to share: resources, information, marketing initiatives, critical discourse
- We struggle with Spaces & Places: location, affordability, safety, quality
- We want to learn – about inclusion and representation, about the business and practice of making art

## **Environmental changes – 2012 to today**

Over the years since the initial conversation in late 2011, there have been significant changes in the cultural and theatrical environment in and/or impacting Metro Vancouver.

There is a deeper awareness of issues related to equity and inclusion; 2015/16 in particular has been a defining year with the community galvanizing around two high-profile open letters and two well attended town halls on topics related to Inclusion and Representation. One outcome has been the Jessie Richardson Theatre Awards launching a Representation and Inclusion Award.

Vancouver saw the folding of its regional theatre company in 2012. The Vancouver Playhouse went out of business due to financial difficulties.

The Arts Club Theatre is now the largest theatre company in Western Canada with a budget of over 16 million dollars.

Important shared spaces have opened, including Progress Lab, the Post at 750 and the BMO Theatre Centre. These three venues alone have significantly and positively impacted the marketplace, launching five new rehearsal spaces and two new small scale performance spaces. Artscape has opened a BC branch. SpaceFinder BC will launch in the fall of 2016, providing simple, free matchmaking between arts venues and artists/producers.

The National Arts Centre has announced the founding of a major Indigenous Theatre company, to launch in 2019.

The budget for the Canada Council will be doubled over the next five years and the Canada Council has announced sweeping changes to their funding programs. Some of the changes have already taken place – additional support for diverse companies, indigenous artists and artists with disabilities. Additional major changes will be taking place in 2017.

## **What we'll do today**

On the last page you'll see a Vision Statement and a pair of Goals for each pillar.

At today's conference we aim to identify community priorities and identify community members interested in moving these priorities forward.

### **You'll be asked to consider:**

What is the highest priority for you as an artist / administrator?

What do you believe is the highest priority for the community?

## **What's next?**

Following today's conference, the Theatre Engagement Project will support the work of developing teams or working groups, who will then develop objectives and actions to move the goals forward.

We want to continue to ensure that at each stage the work is consultative, and that collaboration and community engagement is actively sought.

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*\*A 28-page document containing the qualitative data collected through several series of consultations in 2014 and 2015 is available online at [gvpta.ca/TheatreEngagementProject](http://gvpta.ca/TheatreEngagementProject)*

## **Pillars: Vision Statement and Goals**

### **Art**

**Vision:** Collaboratively strengthening our processes

**Goals:**

- Engaging in critical discourse
- Mentorship and training

### **Diversity**

**Vision:** That our theatre industry is representative of the diversity of peoples who live in our region

**Goals:**

- Education for the theatre industry
- More diverse art to more people

### **Infrastructure**

**Vision:** Building capacity through education and collaboration

**Goals:**

- Capacity building
- Advocacy

### **Public engagement**

**Vision:** A deeper theatrical experience for more people

**Goals:**

- More bums in seats
- More direct involvement / public ownership of the art form