

TORONTO ARTS COUNCIL

# Culture Force

FINAL REPORT JANUARY 1994 - BY SHARON FERNANDEZ COORDINATOR  
INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT - BY RINA FRATICELLI

## **CULTUREFORCE SUMMARY**

### **Final Report by Sharon Fernandez, Coordinator**

Begun in 1992, as part of a strategy for cultural equity implementation, CultureForce had 5 main objectives:

- To bring artists, arts organizations, cultural workers and communities together to acknowledge, support and advance Toronto's diverse cultures.
- To provide consultancy services to developing arts organizations and individual artists.
- To provide strategies and methods for progress through networking among aboriginal communities and communities of colour.
- To provide relevant documentation and information regarding TAC's cultural equity initiatives.
- To hold a national/international meeting on cultural equity advancement and institutional change.

CultureForce's task was to put into action the 38 recommendations of the June 1992 Cultural Equity report. As of January 1994, work on accomplishing 98% of the recommendation was going forward and 60% were close to realization. Ms Fernandez's report succinctly documents CultureForce's activities in the areas of:

- Advocacy
- Outreach and networking
- Strategic initiatives launched - including Fresh Arts
- Conferences and mini-symposia
- Cultural Equity training
- Program self-monitoring

### **Independent Assessment by Rina Fraticelli**

Ms Fraticelli records a basically enthusiastic response to CultureForce and its activities, whose success she attributes to "the right combination of ingredients: the ideas, the people, the institution, the timing and the approach." Like Ms Fernandez, she gives particular credit to Lillian Allen, who devised the program and the Toronto Arts Council, its primary sponsor. She points out the indispensability of Ms Fernandez who shaped many of the practical initiatives undertaken.

She details the history of cultural equity involvement at TAC, 1989-1994, and praises the non-bureaucratic approach taken by TAC. Her assessment covers an examination of:

- Goals and objectives
- Programs and activities
- Assessment and analysis of the above
- Public reaction - artists and teachers

Her own feeling is that CultureForce succeeded because of

- A groundwork of understanding
- The high-level of TAC buy-in
- The quality of staff
- Programs based on trust and respect
- Ability to get money flowing quickly
- Lean, efficient, close-to-the-ground design

Ms Fraticelli points out the educational value of such programs for youth, deplores the brief project-life permitted by Federal one-time funding. She notes the particular difficulties faced by First Nations artists demand more specialized, culturally relevant attention than CultureForce was able to provide, but indicates that, in evaluating the program, Native artists were positive and enthusiastic.

## CULTUREFORCE (ORIGINALLY CALLED CULTUREWORKS) FINAL REPORT - PHASE I AND II

*"My people will sleep for one hundred years.  
When they awake, it will be artists  
that give them back their spirit." - LOUIS RIEL*

In October 1992, the Toronto Arts Council initiated *CultureForce* as part of a strategy for implementing its policy on Cultural Equity. *CultureForce* was designed to provide a practical way for the Council to work more directly with the city's diverse cultural communities. Built on the experience and success of the two summer art programmes (Artworks and Fresh Elements) which brought youth and cultural workers together, *CultureForce* was an action oriented plan emphasizing creative activity, its objective being to nourish cultural growth and the increased communication between the Toronto Arts Council and traditionally under-served communities simultaneously. In part, and as a first step, *CultureForce's* task has been to listen to the concerns of these First Nations, Black, Asian and Latin American Canadian communities, to understand their needs with a view to supporting their effort to sustain and develop cultural voice. Additionally, *CultureForce's* purpose was to widen representation within the Toronto Arts Council itself, enlarging cross-cultural networks and facilitating the two-way flow of information and knowledge through alternative as well as mainstream channels.

The TAC's willingness to change and its courage to be self-critical were essential ingredients in generating the momentum which has allowed the *CultureForce* project to flourish and effect genuine and mutual transformation. By openly including formerly excluded communities in decision-making processes which produce cultural policies that affect them directly, *CultureForce's* ambition was proactive rather than reactive. Not only did this effectively demonstrate a recognition of the structural and aesthetic effects of racism in arts funding programmes and a refusal of the usual pattern of deploying token gestures under pressure, it also signalled that the magnitude of the problem was being understood--and addressed. In this regard *CultureForce* was a unique partnership which broadened the process

The greater awareness and understanding of other cultures which *CultureForce* has engendered among individuals has had an impact on the policies, programmes, systems, attitudes and assumption of the TAC as well as the communities concerned. This has led to the solidification of a strategic commitment to developing and implementing inclusive policies and practices capable of adapting to the diverse and changing needs of a diverse and changing population. This kind of institutional change requires both internal and external support; the TAC needs a strong community base with which it has an active and flexible connection, and these communities in turn need a multi-levelled involvement with the TAC, its board, its staff, and its programmes.

*CultureForce* was thus a multifaceted approach to a complex social issue underlying a much larger social problem and cultural malaise. It challenged our collective capacity to face the truth with imagination while testing the commitment to equality of both the TAC and the cultural community at large. *CultureForce* went beyond lip service to the heart of the problem by providing resources and a framework for cultural participation, articulation by marginalized communities. Cultural equity is a matter of fairness and access; it is also a matter of public self-esteem, harmony and survival. *CultureForce* has begun a process.

## *Objectives*

*CultureForce* was designed by poet/consultant Lillian Allen with a team of senior TAC staff. The objectives were:

- . to create a focus which brings artists, cultural workers, arts organizations, cultural communities and a changing, responsive funding establishment into a closer and more dynamic and critical relationship, with the goal of acknowledging, supporting and advancing the diverse cultures of the city,
- . to make a useful and affordable consultancy resource available to fledgling organizations as well as individuals who are initiating activity to assist in the formulation and realization of cultural equity plans.
- . to provide concrete strategies and relevant methods for effecting cultural equity through the links and networks developed among communities of colour.
- . to provide documentation on access and equity as they relate to organizational change in the arts, consolidating information on equity issues in an effort to bring everyone up to speed.
- . to work towards a national gathering and conference in the summer which will explore implementation strategies, exchange intelligence and experience about organizational change and principles of cultural equity.

It remains the responsibility of the TAC to continue to work with its charter clients with regard to the sharing of resources and the elimination of fear and ignorance surrounding the issues of cultural equity. In the prevailing climate of cutbacks and freezes these organizations are naturally afraid of losing their "piece of the pie" and tend to regard cultural equity as an economic threat. This competitive attitude has to be challenged and changed if we are to accomplish cultural equity. Bridges need to be built and consciousness raised.

## Administration of CultureForce

The project spanned the 15 month period between October 1st, 1992 and December 30th, 1993. Shortly after funding was approved by the Ministry of Multiculturalism and Citizenship, an initial meeting was held and project coordinator Sharon Fernandez was hired to begin work on October 1st.

The coordinator proceeded to design the project in consultation with the TAC and Lillian Allen. The *CultureForce* Foundation document was drafted and an office and secretariat set up on the premises of the TAC to manage the project. This was completed by the middle of October. The coordinator immediately began developing a cultural equity committee at the TAC along with an action plan for broadening representation on all other committees and for including community input in the analysis and assessment of cultural self-determination strategies and programmes. *CultureForce* was launched on October 5th with a mini symposium on cultural equity which culled the experiences and insights of artists and cultural workers in various communities and disciplines regarding access. This helped to identify the barriers facing marginalized communities and to suggest strategies. Subsequently, fundraising was started at the federal, provincial and municipal levels as well as from the private sector, community initiatives were organized and the interactive communication process of the project set.

In November, Susan Beaver, a consultant from the native community was hired to provide administrative and advisoral assistance. The fact that the project was able to set up as quickly as it did is a reflection of the already strong connection to a wide base of cross-cultural community support and the administrative backing of the TAC. It also reflects the widespread and widely felt *need* for action on these issues by many people and many communities.

In February, Sandra Laronde replaced Susan Beaver as the Native advisor to the project and remained involved till phase I and II were completed in December 1993.

The response to *CultureForce* has been positive and substantive and suggests that there is a renewed sense among artists and activists that the well-being of the community is related to culture, that culture is being viewed as an integral part of social policy and fundamental to vision, healing and growth. Those involved have been encouraged by the opportunity to engage in equitable collaboration within their own communities in relation to the project. It is widely felt that this effort to break down the barriers between cultures as well as between individuals and institutions is as timely as it is *long overdue*. Moreover, it is apparent from discussions *CultureForce* has had with cultural institutions currently grappling with equity issues that many have been at a loss to know how to proceed. Their response to the project has thus been to welcome the ideas, for while many have talked about access few have courted change and even fewer have implemented policies or programmes which could boast even a modicum of success. In implementing this part of its mandate, *CultureForce* has constantly been confronted with arguments based on biased notions of "excellence" and the belief in artistic elitism, and met resistance in the form of polite toleration. These attitudes veil an ignorance of non-European culture, of the diversity within communities of colour and First Nations, and thus of the real meaning of cultural difference and Canadian culture in the world of the nineties. Of course, they also mask what is in essence a denial of the systemic discrimination which exists in the arts and cultural industries and the racism which runs through the system of cultural support we have established over the past three decades.

Thus far *CultureForce* has developed a framework and initiated a process for the Toronto Arts Council, in collaboration with its communities of artists and arts organizations, to repaint this picture and reword this story.

## Funding Report - October 1992 - December 1993

### *Revenue*

Federal	Multiculturalism and Citizenship	\$100,000
Provincial	Ministry of Citizenship (Ontario Anti-Racism Secretariat)	\$20,000
	Ministry of Culture, Tourism & Recreation	\$20,000
Municipal	Toronto Arts Council	\$195,000
Foundations	Laidlaw	\$2,000
<u>Total Revenue</u>		<u>\$337,000</u>

### *Expenses*

Cultural Equity Initiatives	\$189,500
Mini Symposiums (Equity Initiative)	\$12,500
Sami Yoni (Equity Initiative)	\$1,000
Consultancies/Workshops/Equity Training	\$29,575
Cultural Equity Conference	\$32,690
Administration (2 staff for 15 months)	\$45,375
Equipment (includes rental for training)	\$5,982
Documentation	\$6758.38
Mailing List/Data base	\$2,500
Travel/Transport	\$2,313
Supplies/Expenses	\$3,137
Postage/Courier	\$544.62
G.S.T.	\$3,125
Evaluation	\$2,000
<u>Expenses</u>	<u>\$337,000</u>



## **Advocacy**

As part of the fundraising as well as outreach for the various initiatives supported through this project the TAC, the *CultureForce* coordinators and consultant Lillian Allen met with a number of agencies, ministries and foundations to discuss cultural equity, and promote awareness of the issue and the project. Meetings were held with the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Recreation, Ministry of Citizenship, Metro Cultural Affairs, Mayor's Office City Hall, Harbourfront Community Affairs, Ontario Anti-Racism Secretariat, Ministry of Education, Laidlaw Foundation, Community Foundation of Metropolitan Toronto, I.D.P.A.R., Charles H. Ivey Foundation, Naruth Foundation and Arts and the Cities.

## **Mailing Lists/Data Base/Outreach/Networking**

In the process of implementing the objectives of this project *CultureForce* has been in touch with many artists, cultural activists and organizations and from these contacts is developing, mailing lists of artists in the Black, South Asian, Latin American, First Nations and East Asian communities by artistic discipline. To date we have over 1,000 names.

Organizations *CultureForce* has been liaising or working directly with include A Space, About Face:About Frame, Ad Hoc Access Committee, Arrofax, ANDPVA, The Afcan Group, African Canadian Cultural Camp, Akt Anime, Artscape, Anishnawabekwe Singers, ANNPAC, Artstarts, Arts and the Cities, Black Pages, Black Cap, Black Art Initiative, BASO, Ballet Creole, Cahoots Theatre, Carlos Bulosan Cultural Wkshp, CKLN, CARA, CARO, CANBAIA, Canadian Black Film and Video, Canadian Film Centre, Canadian Native Arts Foundation, CANASIAN, Caribana, Cross Cultural Centre, Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples, Cultural Support Services, Company of Sirens, Desh Pardesh, Dub Poetry Festival, Euclid, Each One Teach One, Earth Spirit Festival, Fireweed, Full Screen, Fresh Elements, Fresh Arts, Goals for Youth, Full Swing, Ground Zero, Harbourfront, Immigrant Women's Centre, InterAccess, LIFT, Latin American Artists Network, Music Alliance Project, Moment Project, Metro Word, Metro Cultural Affairs, Ministry of Culture and Communications, Nikkei Artists, Native Women in the Arts, Native Canadian Centre, Native Earth, N.I.F.

Studio D, Northern Visions, Ontario Anti-Racism Secretariat, One in Four, Ontario Arts Council, PACT, Second Look, Sister Vision Press, The Banff Centre, Theatre Ontario, Toronto Theatre Alliance, Toronto Women's Bookstore, Two-Spirited Peoples of the First Nations, V Tape, Visual Arts Ontario, Women's Press.

Through the summer programs and Fresh Arts, which is a youth art organization we have developed a list of young people interested and active in the arts and have made this list available to organizations.

### **Initiatives**

In line with the objective of inviting community participation directly, several strategic initiatives were undertaken with key groups in targeted communities to strengthen the base of arts service organizations within those communities. The following is a breakdown of their work and our work with them. *CultureForce* has been providing infrastructural support, resources and consultancy to all of these projects. Four of the groups we are working with have their offices directly across from the Toronto Arts Council, this has created cultural activity and communication that is in proximity to the Arts Council, from forums in the black community to youth theatre classes and has allowed for interaction on a ongoing and ever developing basis. *CultureForce* has arranged for consultants to conduct workshops and information sessions on grants, the writing of project proposals, arts administration, arts funding, arts advocacy and lobbying, finances and computer literacy programs. We have encouraged cross-cultural networking to break down isolation and to promote the sharing of resources and information. We have promoted partnerships between our initiatives and the more established cultural organizations to generate access, information and mutual collaborations. Consultants and resource people have been: Lillian Allen, Stephanie Allen, Anne Bermonte, Pat Bradley, Susan Crean, Rita Davies, Richard Fung, Denise Fujiwara, Monika Gagnon, Jacinta Goveas, Deepti Gupta, Tom Hendry, Kishwar Iqbal, Starr Jacobs, Betty Julien, Gwen Kallio, Myles Kesten, Punam Khosla, Tamai Kobayashi, Cheryl L'Hirondelle, Marrie Mumford, Steve Pereira, Makeda Silvera, Itah Sadhu, Rina Singha,

Lorraine Segato, Youri Thomas, Premika Ratnam, Beth Reynolds, Ricardo Rodriguez, Marta Vega, David Woods and JeanYoon.

The CultureForce Mini-Symposium gathered a diverse community for a one day session to talk about of cultural equity. There were presentations from Korean, Native, South Asian and Black artists working in Dance, Theatre, Film and Video, Visual Arts and Arts Administration. The roundtable discussion generated a critique and documentation on creating access and negotiating difference. This document is available and attached to this report.

The Black Arts Service Organization was a pilot project which facilitated the creation of an infrastructure that promotes black cultural expression and provides services to sustain the development of black art and culture and support for the emergence of young black artists. B.A.S.O. has now formally constituted itself and is engaged in long-term planning.

Desh Pardesh is an organization of South Asian artists and cultural producers in Toronto which facilitates new expression and encourages the growth of South Asian diasporic arts and culture. The group is currently working on its annual five day festival, developing ongoing initiatives in the South Asian communities as well. Desh Pardesh has grown into the first arts service organization for South Asian artists and cultural workers.

Native Women in the Arts is involved in projects relating to establishing a formal network of support for, and to promote the work of Native women artists. Its main objective is to establish a network of support to encourage and make visible the work and activities of Native women artists. Some of the initiatives are:

- organizing a forum to present their work and discuss issues,
- supporting the Anishnawbekwe Singers, a group of inter-generational Native women singers from many nations who are revitalizing traditional songs as well as doing workshops with the Native Sisterhood for women at Kingston's Women's Prison,
- assisting the Native women's writers collective which is organizing a series of

writing circles with the Native Sisterhood for women in Kingston.

-organizing a gathering of 30 Native women artists at Cape Croker Reserve.

-conducting a week-long workshop on arts administration that will incorporate aboriginal traditional values.

About Face, About Frame is researching and studying some of the central problems facing independent film and video First Nation artists and artists of colour in Canada. They will critically address issues such as funding, distribution, professional development, employment equity and the negotiation of difference. Specific to this initiative they were able to prepare a brief for the C.R.T.C. called Structural Changes; and to develop a proposal for Channel One, an alternative independent programming service.

Fresh Arts based on the success of the two summer arts project, Fresh Elements and Artworks, Fresh Arts, is a youth arts organization initiated through *CultureForce*. Fresh Arts is structured around six art collectives working in different artistic disciplines as well as involving youth volunteers in the cultural administration and development of the organization. Fresh Arts will be a significant training ground for young people of colour and aboriginal youth in the arts and in arts administration. Fresh Arts is a access point for young people in the arts. The organization is networking with as many youth groups in the city as possible in order to create an umbrella resource for youths to get information, plan activities and exchange ideas. Primarily geared to youths of colour and First Nations youth, Fresh Arts did work on a co-sponsorship with Harbourfront that presented a festival in the fall of 1993 showcasing the work of young people in the arts. Fresh Arts is continuing with its on-going programming of instruction for youth in the practical as well as artistic aspects of the arts and has worked with over 200 youth this past year.

Sister Vision Press organized a series of editing workshops for women writers of colour. Four editing workshops were held in 1993, along with the release of several new titles of works by women writers of colour and First Nations.

The Latin American Artists Network has organized alternative forums for Latin American artists to network among themselves. To connect, support and encourage the dissemination of the works by Latin American artists and cultural groups from different sectors of the Latin American communities. To date this group has formally constituted itself and has set up offices with the some of the other *CultureForce* initiatives and has developed different committees of local artists that will organize and plan activities related to the needs of their communities.

The Association for Native Development in the Performing and Visual Arts hosted a series of seven talking circles in several artistic disciplines in order to articulate and share experiences, to discuss needs, the sharing and development of resources for cultural creation and the barriers to access suffered by First Nations communities. A document titled 'A Gathering of Seven Circles ' has come out of this initiative and is included with this report. This year they will be organizing a Music project, along with on-going development of Film and Video, Visual Arts and Writing.

SamiYoni a journal for South Asian Lesbians was given limited funding to compile and publish their first issue of writings by lesbians of South Asian descent across Canada.

Two Mini-Symposiums were organized :

"Creating a Coalition Consciousness" brought together main stream artists, artists of colour and First Nations artists to discuss issues of equity and coalition in an informal debate. Prior to the gathering independent interviews were done with individual artists to generate ideas, issues and vision on the need for coalitions.

"Black Francophone Diaspora" is a one day forum taking place in February 1994 where Black francophone artists and organizations will come together to present and share their creative work, as well as to participate in a roundtable discussion on issues affecting them. It is anticipated that over thirty Black Francophone artists will contribute to this event. Equity issues coming out of this forum will be documented.

## **Conference**

An international forum was organized in June 1993 in Toronto on issues of Cultural Equity and Institutional change. *Facing the Future with Imagination* which took place over two and half days, brought diverse cultural communities and the funding agencies together, with about 200 participants from across Canada and abroad. This successful and informative gathering addressed a range of practical and theoretical questions, the papers and proceedings were gathered and distributed to all interested parties, and the document compiled is attached to this report. Organizers and Resource people for this gathering were: Lillian Allen, Carol-Anne Agard, Sharon Fernandez, Tom Hendry, Sandra Laronde and Punam Khosla.

## **Cultural Equity Training**

A two day session to train consultants and develop the thinking around issues of cultural equity and implementation was held in Toronto December 11th and 12th, 1993. Twenty participants, including two from across Canada and one from the United States met, discussed and drafted a collective statement. Presentations were made by Aboriginal consultant and artist Marrie Mumford, independent film maker and activist Richard Fung, and Executive Director of the Caribbean Cultural Centre in New York, Marta Vega. This training was felt by all participants to be one of the more useful and dynamic gatherings that they had attended in a while and the participant from western Canada, Monica Gagnon is going to organize a similar training in Vancouver in February 1994. Attached to this report is more detailed information on this training.

## **Evaluation**

Rina Fraticelli was commissioned to do an evaluation of this project, this document is attached.

## Conclusion

*CultureForce* has begun a process of change that is inspired by the experience of individuals and organizations actively working in their cultural communities. This multi-faceted and intelligent project continues even as phase I and II comes to an end, the values of collaboration, coalition, consciousness-raising, mutual respect, community development through the arts, training and interaction between the various initiatives, communities, youth and the Toronto Arts Council has evolved into a reciprocal relationship that has a life of its own. The *CultureForce* secretariat did a review of the 1992 Cultural Equity Report and established that 98% of all the recommendations were in process, 60% were close to being accomplished and recommended further action to ensure that critical mechanisms were in place to assure that the relationships were expanding, flexible and on-going. To date representation on all committees is 50% people of colour and aboriginal artists and on the Board, 35%. The Toronto Arts Council was selected as a model for institutional change by the Department of Canadian Heritage in its 1994 guide : "*Toward Full Inclusion : The Diversity Advantage*". Cultural Diversity in the arts is now better understood and acknowledged by the Toronto Arts Council and this has served to help increase the visibility of culturally diverse art issues both locally and nationally. This work continues a 500 year old struggle for equity, and despite great obstacles we carry on to envision and expand the range of possibilities that point toward a future where equality is the norm. *CultureForce* has been a step in that direction.

Sharon Fernandez  
CultureForce Coordinator

January 1994

## RESOURCE PEOPLE / CONSULTANTS TO CULTUREFORCE:

- Lillian Allen is a Toronto writer and cultural strategist, she is the author of the cultural equity report for the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Recreation, *From Multiculturalism to Access*. An internationally acclaimed dub poet she is a performer, activist, producer, publisher, writer and playwright.
- Stephanie Allen Member of the Mohawk Nation. Race Relations Officer for the Native Canadian Centre.
- Hussain Amarshi former Director of the Euclid Theatre, he is presently on contract at the Ontario Arts Council in their Film and Photography Dept.
- Susan Beaver Member of the Iroquois Nation from Six Nations, writer and Executive Director of Two Spirited Peoples of the First Nations.
- Pat Bradley Arts Administrator, Executive Director of The Professional Association of Canadian Theatres.
- Susan Crean Writer and Editor, former chair of the Writer's Union of Canada, she is currently sitting on the British Columbia's Status of the Artists' Committee.
- Rita Davies Executive Director, Toronto Arts Council.
- Denise Fujiwara Choreographer, performer and dance teacher. Artistic Director, Fujiwara Dance Inventions; member of the faculty, School of Toronto Dance Theatre.
- Richard Fung is a Toronto-based video producer, writer and community activist.



Monika Gagnon is a Vancouver-based writer and critic, who has published numerous articles and reviews on topics of feminism, cultural and race politics.

Deepti Gupta Indian classical and contemporary dancer, performer and teacher.

Jacinta Goveas Race relations activist and Administrator working with Metro's Multicultural and Race Relations Division.

Tom Hendry A Toronto Writer that serves as Policy Director for the Toronto Arts Council and as a consultant to Arts and the Cities.

Kishwar Iqbal is the cross-cultural coordinator at Theatre Ontario.

Starr Jacobs Designer and founding member of Each One Teach One, a Black youth mentoring program.

Betty Julian Writer of the TAC's Cultural Equity Report, Board member of the Ontario Arts Council and New Initiatives in Film.

Gwen Kallio Administrator and organizer, founding member of the Music Alliance Project.

Myles Kesten Administrator, budget management for the TAC, computer management.

Punam Khosla Administrator, grassroots organizer and former coordinator of Desh Pardesh and CKLN community Radio.

Tamai Kobayashi Writer and performer. Member of Wasabi Daiko Drumming Group.

- Sandra Laronde** Member of the Anishnawbe from Temagami, Ontario; performer and community worker, member of the Anishnawbe kwe Singers.
- Cheryl L'Hirondelle** is Metis from Alberta, she is the new Executive Director of The Association for Native Development in the Performing and Visual Arts.
- Monique Mojica** is a Toronto-based Native actress, playwright and performer.
- Marrie Mumford** is a Chippewa-Cree from the Cypress Hills in Southern Alberta, who has worked in theatres across the country, she is an actor and has been active in her community on issues related to cultural self-government. Member of the Association for Native Development in the Performing and Visual Arts. She is currently a Field Service officer with the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Recreation.
- Caroline Outten** is a student of radio and television as well as an actress and playwright.
- Steve Pereira** is the current coordinator of Desh Pardesh, South Asian Diasporic Arts and Culture, he is also a playwright.
- Premika Ratnam** Former President of the Independent Film and Video Alliance, Film Maker and member of About Face About Frame.
- Beth Reynolds** Grants officer for the Toronto Arts Council.
- Norman Richmond** Writer and broadcaster. President of Black Music Association, Toronto chapter.
- Ricardo Rodriguez** is the president of the Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples, he is a musician and is involved with Latin American Artists Network.

- Itah Sadhu** Story-teller, author of children's books, doing development work in the cultural sector. Currently consulting with the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Recreation.
- Lorraine Segato** Performer, songwriter, recording artist. Co-founder, Parachute Club. Writer, video director and occasional university lecturer.
- Rina Singha** Dancer, choreographer and educator. Founding director, Kathak Institute; author of Indian dance text; member of Ontario Folk Dance Association.
- Veronica Sullivan** Is a Toronto-based visual artist and teacher.
- Youri Thomas** Dancer, choreographer, teacher. Founding Artistic Director of Akt Anime.
- Verle Thompson** is the youth coordinator of Fresh Arts, a youth arts organization.
- Althea Trotman** Author and educator teaching at the University of Toronto's Transitional Year Program.
- Mansa Trotman** is a youth involved with Abstract magazine and Fresh Arts.
- Jean Yoon** Writer, director. Co-Artistic Director, Cahoots Theatre Projects. Former Cross Cultural Coordinator, Theatre Ontario.
- Marta Vega** Executive Director, The Caribbean Cultural Centre in New York City.
- David Woods** is an actor/director/artist/poet/playwright and video maker who has been active in the Black communities of Nova Scotia for eleven years.

# **CULTUREFORCE EVALUATION**

## CultureForce: An Assessment

CultureForce (originally called CultureWorks) is a cultural equity initiative of the Toronto Arts Council. It was conceived during the summer of 1992, went into operation in October 1992, and is due to wind down in December, 1993. CF was financed by the federal Department of Multiculturalism and Citizenship, the provincial Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Recreation, The Ontario Anti-Racism Secretariat, Ministry of Citizenship, the City of Toronto, and the Laidlaw Foundation.

Designed to advance cultural equity in both the policy and practices of the TAC, the project was multi-layered: in addition to launching and supporting a number of art projects directly, CultureForce advanced its goals indirectly through advocacy, outreach, information-gathering, networking, mentoring, conferences and consultancy programmes.

This report was commissioned by Sharon Fernandez, director of CultureForce, to provide an "outside" assessment of the project. I was provided with a range of documents related to the history and work of CF and its spinoff projects, as well as a list of contacts to begin my interviewing.

I quickly discovered that my assessment was looking more and more like a one-note report card. In interview after interview CultureForce was given virtually unqualified raves. According to those I spoke with, it seemed almost magical in its accomplishments. I extended the list a couple of times, with the same result.

Of course, it isn't magic at all that leads to such results but the right combination of ingredients: the ideas, the people, the institution, the timing and the approach. Given the importance of cultural equity in our society, and given the high degree of frustration and dissatisfaction often associated with initiatives of this kind, it seemed critical to try to describe *why* this programme was so successful, and to consider how this success came about, in order that this experience might be shared with the widest possible audience and if possible reproduced by others.

What follows, then, is a description of the project, its evolution and accomplishments, in an attempt to analyze some of the factors behind the success. I briefly describe part of the process which led up to CultureForce because in that process seem to lie some of the clues to its success.

## CultureForce: Background and History

In 1989, the TAC commissioned from Elizabeth Julian "... a comprehensive examination of artistic communities underserved by the TAC, and the reasons behind this exclusion." This commission grew out of a longfelt concern on the part of the TAC's senior staff and especially its director, Rita Davies, that the Council was not successfully "reaching all the qualified artists of Toronto because of barriers of race, language, gender, cultural difference and perception." "Above all," we are told in the Report's preface, "the Council wanted to have advice on action to be taken so the Toronto Arts Council would be -- and would be seen to be -- no longer part of the problem but part of the solution."

### June 1992: TAC's Cultural Equity Report

Released in 1992, Cultural Equity made a number of suggestions and recommendations to the Council and to the City, intended to accelerate the process of broadening access, while strengthening the delivery of TAC services to artists. The Report addressed questions of both policy and practice; and its recommendations focused largely on redressing questions of equity in representation, and in increasing access to resources. The Report identified the Black/African, Asian and First Nations artists as particularly underserved; and underlined the importance of improving and expanding the two-way flow of communication between the TAC and its constituency of artists and arts organizations. The Report called for a \$1 million budget increase to allow the TAC to implement these recommendations; however, the TAC was not able to secure the recommended increase to its funding from the City.

### Summer 1992: ARTWORKS and FRESH ELEMENTS

After the release of the Cultural Equity Report, the administration and board of the TAC, despite these financial constraints, were anxious to sustain the momentum and extend the sense of constructive change that the Report had helped generate. The Council wanted immediately to begin, and to be seen to begin, to be acting to put into practice as many as possible of the study's recommendations. They engaged multidisciplinary artist and consultant Lillian Allen to help the Council turn their intentions into concrete action; and ARTWORKS was launched only weeks after the release of the Cultural Equity Report.

ARTWORKS was a summer "Arts and Culture Job Strategy" for inner city youth implemented by the TAC with the support of the City of Toronto and the Province of Ontario through Jobs Ontario Youth. The specific aim of this project was to "allow young people to empower themselves by providing them with the opportunities and the environment to develop and build on their artistic, cultural, and organization skills." "This project was undertaken as a pro-active initiative to engage a community process in a practical way." Under the direction of Sharon Fernandez, ARTWORKS ran for six weeks, providing employment and training for 70 young people drawn primarily from the First Nations, Asian and Black communities, as well as professional engagements for 30 Art Instructors and Mentors working in seven arts disciplines.

In spite of its very rapid start-up schedule and its short duration, the programme was considered a resounding success. In addition to providing professional employment to artists from a wide range of disciplines, the programme offered inner city youth summer employment whose benefits -- in terms of increased self esteem, the acquisition of a range of artistic and administrative skills, and a sense of inter-community respect and understanding -- seemed likely to endure long past the summer.

FRESH ELEMENTS, also initiated by Allen, was another important arts and culture job strategy programme which took place in the summer of 1992; this one sponsored exclusively by the Province. Both programmes gave young people between 15 and 25 salaries as well as an opportunity to gain confidence and experience in the practice and administration of the arts within an anti-racist context. Although independently funded and administered, the two programmes were made possible through a provincial employment strategy, and shared a similar spirit and target communities

The response to these programmes from participants as well as from community members was overwhelmingly positive. (And apparently continues to be. Teachers, for example, continue to contact the TAC to comment on the positive changes visible in students who participated in ARTWORKS). The evident success of these programmes led the TAC to move quickly to build on this experience and momentum.

## CultureForce

### Start-up Phase

CultureForce was conceived by Lillian Allen for the TAC, as an *implementation strategy*, designed to build on the Cultural Equity report and the summer youth projects; and to allow the Council to work more directly and more successfully with the city's diverse cultural communities. CultureForce was specifically designed within the context of the funding constraints which existed at the Council at that time. " It would have been a very different - more extensive - programme had the recommended funds been available," said Allen." " As such, this provided a beginning."

Much of the thinking behind the programme grew out of Allen's long experience in cultural community building and cultural equity, and specifically her recent experiences. Along with Marrie Mumford and Itah Sadhu, Allen was instrumental in the creation and design of the youth arts employment programme, FRESH ELEMENTS and had recently completed a study on cultural equity for the Ministry of Culture and Communications. These experiences among others fueled Allen's conviction that the TAC needed to depart from the recommendations of the Cultural Equity Report in one regard: contrary to the Report's view, some measure of designated funding (or 'strategic funding' in Allen's terms) to traditionally underserved or underfunded communities was critical to the success of a serious cultural equity initiative in its early stages.

Funding for CultureForce came from the City of Toronto and the federal Ministry of Multiculturalism and Citizenship, the provincial Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Recreation, the Ontario Anti-Racism Secretariat, and the Laidlaw Foundation. Sharon Fernandez who had run ARTWORKS so successfully was hired to administer the programme on October 1, 1992.

Working with Lillian Allen and the TAC, Fernandez drafted a foundation document, established an office and administrative structure and set about to raise additional funds. Within days, a multidisciplinary Cultural Equity Committee composed of members of the TAC Board, committees and the community at large was created to oversee and support CultureForce, and an action plan for



broadening representation on all other committees of the TAC was drafted.

CultureForce was officially launched on October 5 with a mini-symposium which drew upon the experiences and insights of artists and cultural workers from a variety of disciplines and communities to inform, clarify and ground the work ahead.

## Goals and Objectives

CultureForce' foundation document articulated an ambitious and extensive list of goals and objectives, among them:

1. To sustain the momentum and extend the network generated by these highly successful summer youth programmes;
2. To build a base from which communities traditionally excluded or underserved could articulate and sustain their cultural definition;
3. To further the growth of an arts infrastructure in diverse cultural communities; to allow members of those communities greater access to the TAC;
4. to render the existing structures of the TAC more fully literate with respect to the understanding of difference and therefore more receptive to varied arts and cultural practices;
5. to initiate an ongoing process for implementing the recommendations of the Cultural Equity Report

Running through these ambitious and complex goals and objectives, and implied in much of the CultureForce documentation, seemed to be two key notions:

- that CultureForce was to be active and concrete as opposed to reactive and theoretical. That is, that it would actively reach out to artists in identified communities with strategic funding and a range of professional resources from the TAC;
- that CultureForce was to set off an ongoing, two-way process. On the one hand, funds and a full range of resources would flow from the TAC to underserved arts constituencies; on the other hand, the cultural wealth of those constituencies would flow back into the Council. In both directions, the flow would strengthen, enrich and transform.

## The Programme and Activities

The various activities and projects of CultureForce were organized under 4 key components.

### COMPONENT 1: Building Ground (July 1992- March 1993)

In order to advance its goal of strengthening the base of arts service organizations in targeted communities, CultureForce provided small amounts of funding, as well as a range of support services and professional resources to several community-based arts and cultural projects.

Project funding ranged from \$3,000 to \$35,000 with the majority of grants in the \$5,000 -10,000 range. The professional support services covered a wide spectrum and were tailored to the specific needs and goals of each group: the services included training in general arts administration; funding; strategic planning; grantsmanship; and computer training. It also provided for a pool of professional consultants to be available to the groups. (See below, component 2.)

An important aspect of the approach CultureForce took is the value it placed on facilitating networking among the groups as a means of amplifying the resources and experiences of each through sharing and exchange.

The initiatives created or funded under this component include:

#### 1) BASO: The Black Arts Service Organization

CultureWork provided start-up funding for a group of artists from the Black community who had been meeting and organizing for some time to create a pilot art service organization devoted to promoting the development of black arts and culture and the emergence of young black artists. This group, once formed, called itself BASO: The Black Arts Service Organization.

The start-up assistance has allowed this group to constitute itself formally, to acquire shared office space with three other fledgling arts groups, to begin to develop an infrastructure, to engage in long-term planning and to investigate immediate as well as operational funding options.

## 2) Desh Pardesh

Desh Pardesh is an organization of South Asian artists and cultural producers who had originally come together to sponsor two popular festivals of South Asian arts. Funding from CultureForce allowed this group to move beyond single event planning to establishing itself formally as an ongoing organization producing a variety of cultural projects. The funding and professional advice provided by CF allowed Desh Pardesh to set up a small office and acquire basic equipment, and to hire part-time staff. The office space is shared with four other CF projects ( BASO, LAAN, Fresh Arts and the NWA) and this gathering has allowed each of the new organizations to benefit from the exchange and exposure with the others. In addition to putting the future of the festival ( which is scheduled to take place every 18 months) on a more secure basis, Desh Pardesh has grown into the first arts service organization for South Asian artists and cultural workers.

## 3) Native Women in The Arts

This initiative was designed to establish a formal network of support for and to promote the work of Native women artists. They have a staff of one part-time woman.

In addition to bringing together a strong core community of Native women artists to forge such a network, CultureForce provided this group with funding for a number of specific projects including: a National two-day forum, a soldout concert at the Euclid Theatre, as well as several workshops and singing circles. A Native Women's writing collective has developed and current activities include the publication of a Native Women's Journal and an Anthology of writing by Native women. The work of this group has extended to offering writing workshops to the broader community including the Native Sisterhood in Kingston P4W.

## 4) Fresh Arts

An outgrowth and development of the two summer youth employment projects ARTWORKS and FRESH ELEMENTS, Fresh Arts was created to provide year-round training in the arts. Primarily geared (but not exclusive) to youth of colour and Native youth, Fresh Arts is structured around collectives who meet weekly with adult instructors in 4 different art disciplines. Fresh Arts has involved over 200 young people over the last year and is staffed by six young people working part-time under the supervision of two co-ordinators.

Showcases are held periodically to share the work of each group with the other collectives and with the community at large. Fresh Arts also conducts rap sessions on subjects which the participants have requested; these sessions, which draw between 40 and 70 people, are facilitated by the young people and often feature a performance or other art event to trigger and animate discussion.

A range of special programmes and events is planned according to the needs and requests voiced by the group as well as to take advantage of available resources. For example, guest artists from Toronto and elsewhere are sometime invited to meet with the groups; in one case, a South African playwright in Toronto on a tour came to spend a day with Fresh Arts. It was considered important that two units be specifically dedicated to Native youth, planned and staffed by the Native community.

Fresh Arts ran the summer '93 Artworks programme which employed over 100 young people working with 8 adult and 4 youth instructors. The programme offered work in 12 art discipline-areas, including arts administration and events planning. The events planning group organized Youth Fest, a day and evening long event at Harbourfront at the end of the summer to showcase the work of the programme. Youth Fest featured workshops throughout the day and a performance in the evening.

#### 5) Sister Vision Press

CultureForce provided funds for a series of editing workshops for women of colour organized by Sister Vision Press. This workshop grew out of the recognition in these communities that one of the key factors separating published and unpublished writers is access to high quality editing; in this light the editing workshops were considered a matter of access.

#### 6) The Association for Native Development in the Performing and Visual Arts

This organization was given funding to host seven talking circles allowing Native artists from several disciplines to share experiences and discuss professional needs, barriers and resources. Eight Talking circles, in fact, took place. Each had 20-30 people in attendance with an Elder, a facilitator and two presenters from the discipline. The talking circles culminated in a gathering of all eight talking circles to share the results of their discussions with each other and the

community at large. Over 200 people attended the final meeting. These talking circles have allowed ANDPVA to prepare a five-year strategic plan.

### 7) The Latin American Artists Network

CultureForce brought together a few individual artists from the Latin American community to support the creation and dissemination of work by Toronto artists from different sectors of the Latin American community. This community was the least well-defined and organized of any identified and targeted by CultureForce. The assistance provided by the project permitted a core group of three animators from the Latin American artists community to organize public meetings to establish a network, discuss common needs and strategies and plan a calendar of events and programmes for 1994. The CF support also brought the newly formed LAAN into contact with the members of BASO, FRESH ARTS, Desh Pardesh, and Native Women in the Arts - an exposure which allowed the Latin American Artists much valued links into other local arts communities.

### 8) About Face, About Frame

CultureForce provided funding for this visible minority caucus of the Canadian Alliance of Film and Video Artists to undertake research and lobbying for improved access and representation for videos and films by artists of colour and First Nations artists. Specifically, they were able to prepare a brief for the C.R.T.C. called Structural Changes, and to develop a proposal for Channel One, an alternative independent programming service.

### 9) Mini-Symposia

CultureForce planned and conducted several small workshops, conferences, and learning sessions in order to promote the exchange of information and expertise among those working in the area of cultural equity. The first mini-symposium, in October of 1992, was a gathering of about 20 artists and community representatives whose views helped to inform the final design of CF. The final one, in December of 1993 was a national two-day workshop for cultural equity workers which brought together a number of professional resources including "practitioner/expert", Marta Vega. The seven "talking circles" for ANDPVA (6 above) are other examples of these workshop-conferences. (Other mini-symposia were held by other CF groups, including BASO, LAAN and Fresh Arts.)

**COMPONENT 2: Enhancing Our Resources (October,1992-September,1993)**

This component provided the services of professional consultants to the groups and projects listed above, as well as to other arts clients from targeted communities. A pool of consultants with expertise in arts and cultural policy and practice, as well as in arts administration, was made available to groups on a tailored and as-needed basis. Consultancies dealt with general aspects of arts administration as well as specific sessions on fundraising, planning, grantsmanship, government relations and computer training.

**COMPONENT 3: Sharing our Strength (June1993)**

CultureForce third component was the planning and organization of a conference on cultural equity and institutional change which was held in Toronto in June of 1993. **Facing the Future with Imagination** brought the CultureForce community together with some 200, mostly invited, participants from across the country and abroad. This forum addressed a range of practical and theoretical questions. The event drew considerable media attention and its papers and records of proceedings were distributed to all interested parties.

**COMPONENT 4: The CultureForce Secretariat (October,1992-December, 1993 )**

This component consisted of the services and time provided by CultureForce co-ordinator Sharon Fernandez and Native consultant Sandra Laronde to the other three components and to the ongoing work of the programme. Fernandez and Laronde were able to draw upon the support and guidance of Lillian Allen in her capacity as consultant to the overall programme.

The Secretariat was responsible for all aspects of the planning, organization and administration of CF. These individuals raised the budget of \$142,000 for the strategic funding and dealt with funders from all levels of government as well as the private sector. They also were responsible for ongoing communication and outreach with the general community about all aspects of CF.

Beyond providing the overall financial and administrative structure and continuity of the programme, the CultureForce' Secretariat provided critical support to each of the projects sponsored or assisted by CF . The Secretariat responded on a daily basis to a wide range of requests for information, assistance, support, training and expertise from individuals and groups, helping them to secure office facilities and assisting in artistic and administrative training and planning. The Secretariat also acted as a "hub" through which individual groups could connect to and collaborate with one another, could relate to the TAC administration and to the broader community.

Another function of the Secretariat was information-gathering and exchange. Through the various activities of CultureForce, a mailing list/databank was gathered and an informal network generated, connecting the TAC with an expanded constituency and vice-versa. Important networks have been generated within communities as well as among the targeted communities. The Secretariat has carried information about the Toronto Arts Council's resources and programmes and its commitment to cultural equity out to communities where they were insufficiently known and understood; and carried information about the artistic and cultural resources, requirements and aspirations of these communities back to the Council.

Still another aspect of this resource gathering and exchange is the documentation generated through the mini-symposia and June 93 conference. This body of research, now available through the Toronto Arts Council, constitutes an important new base of literature on Canadian issues of cultural equity.

Advocacy was another ongoing function of the Secretariat. In their extensive discussions and meetings with other artists and cultural workers, bureaucrats, educators and community leaders, Allen, Fernandez and Laronde acted as ongoing advocates and lobbyists for the principles and practices of cultural equity.

Finally, the CultureForce' Secretariat, through its relationship to the Cultural Equity Committee of the TAC, also has had an ongoing role in tracking and advancing progress in implementing the recommendations of the Cultural Equity Report.



## PART II: Assessment and Analysis

One of the most intelligent and efficient programmes I've seen for a long time. So many people, of different ages, different cultures, different artistic disciplines doing their own work but profiting from the contact they've had with each other.

What CultureForce is doing is exactly what needs to be done. They got it exactly right.

This is your genuine article crosscultural work. It's not motivated by bureaucratic goals but by cultural aspirations and artistic vision. Somebody finally decided to stop telling people what they ought to be doing and let them get on with it for themselves. All that was needed was this tiny precious window of opportunity.

This isn't just culturally and socially smart, it's economically smart. This is how we should be investing in the future. The economic future of this city is in the kind of talent and ingenuity that's being developed in this programme.

Youthfest at Harbourfront was terrific. I went expecting it to be, you know, goodhearted and well-intentioned. I just wasn't expecting such good art work.

This is one of the most artistically exciting programmes I've seen. It's set off a kind of renaissance that reminds me of the explosion of energy and creativity around early feminism.

CultureForce made a space, a cultural space, available to groups who weren't around in the 70's when the other, now mainstream, arts communities were enfranchised.

The Native evening at the Euclid was one of the most memorable artistic events I've known.

The blend of people and projects, the cultural mix, set off an energy that was just electric. You just wanted to work, wanted to do great work.

It seems clear from these comments, and they are typical, as well as from the limited catalogue of activities and accomplishments above, that CultureForce went a long way toward meeting its stated goals and objectives.

**Objective #1:**

- *To sustain the momentum and extend the network generated by these highly successful summer youth programmes;*

The spirit and momentum of the summer youth projects were carried on in the many and various youth and adult art projects of CultureForce. In addition to generating a structure from which future summer programmes could be planned, FRESH ARTS has created a flexible structure for the year-round extension of these artistic activities.

The various activities and arts training programmes in Fresh Arts received very high praise from all quarters. Those who attended the public performances and showcases commented on the impressive quality of the artwork in evidence. Those young people who joined expecting something casual and recreational were initially surprised, even overwhelmed, by the demands on them and the rigorous approach to the work. In the end, though, those I spoke with felt buoyed by what they had been able to achieve in meeting the challenges that had been set. The programme was seen as successful in reaching young people who would not otherwise have access to cultural and educational programmes of this kind.

A number of young people spoke about the practical experience and skills they had gained which they felt made them better able to consider pursuing professional opportunities in the arts. Indeed several of the young people from ART WORKS and FRESH ARTS had already moved into part-time employment in other CultureForce programmes.

In addition to providing training with professional artists, Fresh Arts and its summer '93 programme, ARTWORKS, placed a great deal of organizational responsibility on the young people themselves. Youth instructors were paired with the adult professional teachers. Although this was more successful in some cases than others, overall the approach was thought to be a good one. The combination of responsibility for creating their own programme and the constant flow of support and practical assistance the young people received from Sharon Fernandez and the TAC management created an atmosphere of great possibility and energy for the young people.

In the case of Fresh Arts, as in the case of other CF-generated programmes, the only question is the new group's capacity to survive after funding for CF ends. This question will be dealt with later.

**Objectives #2 & #3:**

- *To build a base from which communities traditionally excluded or underserved could articulate and sustain their cultural definition;*
- *To further the growth of an arts infrastructure in diverse cultural communities; as well as to allow members of those communities greater access to the TAC;*

The strategic funding of targeted groups in order to allow them to begin to develop infrastructures was singled out in most interviews as one of the most precious and possibly enduring achievements of the programme. If CF must come to an end, (which all felt was unfortunate and premature), people said, at least it has left behind the beginnings of an arts service infrastructure for artistic communities which had been left out of existing mainstream arts support services.

BASO, Desh Pardesh, Native Women in the Arts and Fresh Arts all evolved to the point of being able to begin to apply for sustaining, organizational funding. As a result of acquiring modest (shared) office space to serve as a community meeting and exchange point, as well as through the short period of CF funding, each of the groups felt they were in a stronger position from which to plan and organize future activities. The consultancies as well as the miniworkshops brought their members specific skills and expertise they required to approach potential funders and to communicate more effectively within their own communities and with other arts communities and audiences.

In some cases, the support of CF was seen to provide an opportunity and context within which groups could generate new organizational approaches reflecting the experience of their own communities. Native Women in the Arts, for example, cited the importance of evolving an organizational framework for the group which would reflect the traditions and values of their members while meeting the requirements of funding agencies.

The CF Secretariat helped organize shared office space for BASO, Desh Pardesh, Fresh Arts, Native Women in the Arts and LAAN in a space directly adjacent to the TAC's/CF's offices. The close proximity and steady flow back and forth between TAC and the community groups did a great deal to help break down the previous isolation

that existed not only between various groups and the Arts Council but also among the community groups. Several of the projects commented on the value they saw in this daily exposure to a broad range of community arts groups; of building coalition and a shared resource base.

#### Objective #4

- *to render the existing structures of the TAC more fully literate with respect to the understanding of difference and therefore more receptive to varied arts and cultural practices;*

When CultureForce began, the administration and board of the Toronto Arts Council knew they wanted the Council to keep evolving steadily in the direction of cultural equity, but felt they did not have a clear enough grasp of the "how" and "who." They felt they needed to know more about where/to whom to take their message about the Council's mandate and resources; and that they did not have extensive enough knowledge either of the individual artists or the arts practices of several underserved communities, especially the Native and Latino communities.

During the course of CF's year, the Council felt it had become much more familiar with these communities. Because CF and its many spinoff programmes and activities involved so many people, by literally bringing them through the doors of the Council, part of this objective had been achieved. Furthermore the growing network and databank which the CF Secretariat developed would serve as ongoing information for Council outreach and communication.

Both Council staff and Board members and CF participants cited the high degree of personal involvement in CF's activities by Council staff and members. Toronto Arts Council's Executive Director, Rita Davies personally attended an impressive number of the CF activities as well as related programmes in various communities; and she usually brought along one or more members of the Council's staff and board. As policy consultant of the TAC, Tom Hendry made himself fully available to CF for advice and support.

As a result, the contacts and knowledge in both directions came at a personal and experiential level. Beyond an expanded mailing list, the members of the Council had a new experience of the "wealth and

breadth of talent" in these communities. The other part of the equation was that artists in these communities had the Council's existence and function brought home to them in a personal way which helped to overcome both the sense of cynicism and skepticism that existed in some cases and alienation and mystification in others.

In concrete terms, the Council was able to call upon artists and representatives from these cultural communities to sit on its Board and to participate on its committees and juries; similarly, they pointed to a marked improvement in the number of applications from designated communities. According to the Council, as of November '93, 40 % of the Board of the TAC will be drawn from the targeted communities; as of December 93, 50% of the members of the Council's Arts Discipline Committees were drawn from the targeted communities.

To cite one example: the TAC had identified its failure to attract and hold successfully Native members as participants on its Board and committees. At the start of CF, there was only one Native representative to the TAC board/committee structure; as of December 93, that number had increased to 7.

While most of the individuals interviewed were quick to warn that what has been accomplished is only a good beginning, and one which could not be taken for granted, there was a clear consensus that there has been a considerable growth in mutual understanding between artists from targeted communities and the Council. While there was a sense from many I spoke with that a real change had begun to take place in the culture of the Council, several people wondered how vulnerable this new direction was and worried that more time was needed to devote to this enterprise.

#### Objective # 5

- *to initiate an ongoing process for implementing the recommendations of the Cultural Equity Report;*

While the creation of CultureForce and Artworks in themselves fulfilled a number of the recommendations of the Cultural Equity Report, several more are addressed by the generation of spin-off projects. In meeting its first four objectives, CF advanced the Report's recommendations that the Council accept cultural equity as a

basis of policy and practice to be achieved through an improved and expanded two-way flow of information and resources between the TAC and its constituency of artists and arts organizations.

One of the first actions undertaken by CultureForce was the establishment of a Cultural Equity Committee composed of TAC Board, staff, volunteers and community members. This committee's mandate was to oversee the work of CF in its implementation of the Julian report. It was also responsible for implementing other cultural equity initiatives approved by the board .

CF began a process which is seen as ongoing. According to the Secretariat, implementation has begun on 98% of the recommendations. While work on most of these recommendations is considered to be of a continuing nature, approximately 40% have been completely realized. In December '93, after the formal mandate of CF had come to an end, the Secretariat completed a review of the Report and made further recommendations in the light of the CF experience. This review has suggested critical mechanisms and further action to help the TAC ensure that the work of cultural equity continues in a proactive and flexible manner.

## CultureForce: How and Why It Worked

The first thing that needs to be said about the programme is that it seems to have generated an enormous sense of hope and creative energy. There is a palpable sense of relief here. It's as if the experience of disappointment is so usual in the communities targeted by the programme, that it's difficult to believe that things actually happened here more or less as intended.

CultureForce grew out of an understanding that there was a critical and urgent need for concrete action. The question of access has been under discussion for some time in a number of different arts forums across the city; but one of the things that distinguished this process was an acceptance of the fact that there was a failure of access in two directions: communities had limited access to the resources and services of the Toronto Arts Council; and the Toronto Arts Council had limited access to the cultural wealth of these communities. The recognition of this -- and of the *mutual* benefit to be gained by direct, engaged initiative-- generated the atmosphere of respect that seems to me to be one of the central ingredients to this success story.

There were other critical elements contributing to this success and they are worth noting, briefly, for the benefit of other future experiences.

### 1) Groundwork:

CultureForce did not happen in a vacuum. It came as a logical next step in a process that had begun at the TAC before the commissioning of the Cultural Equity Report. This meant that a groundwork of understanding had already been laid which informed the atmosphere and context in which the project was undertaken and individuals were brought into the TAC.

### 2) High Level of Buy-In by the TAC Power Structure:

As one of the consultants to the programme put it: "The key to the matter is management's attitude. They (senior staff, committee members) were very engaged; they actually came, participated, experienced the energy first hand." This sentiment was echoed time and again. The effect inspired confidence in the participants and helped engender a belief that the words were backed up by real commitment.

### 3) The Quality of Staff

Sharon Fernandez, Sandra Laronde and Lillian Allen were highly praised by everyone interviewed. They were considered by those I spoke with to be remarkably committed, capable and supportive in their efforts to help each of the spinoff groups achieve their goals. More than simply excellent administrators and co-ordinators, it was felt that these three knew the work that needed to be done and just how to do it. The Secretariat (Fernandez and Sandra Laronde) and Allen were seen to be very effective at identifying obstacles to the smooth functioning of projects and finding ways to remove them.

Because the key staff had enormous credibility and expertise within their artistic and cultural communities as well as in the specific field of cultural equity work, CF was able to move directly and efficiently into operation. One individual commented, "The Council had the good sense to begin with knowledgeable, trusted people in the community. It started the ball rolling. It was as if an institution was finally saying, 'Let's work with the communities to build on what exists.'" Another observed, "We didn't have to train the staff, you know what I mean? And they - -Lillian and Sharon -- didn't have to do research to find out who we are and what we need. They know who we are and what we need is money."

### 4) A Programme Informed by Trust and Respect:

One of the things which distinguished the non-bureaucratic approach TAC took with CultureForce is the remarkable level of trust and confidence that prevailed. Simply put, the TAC displayed confidence in the individuals they had appointed and permitted them to operate free from the usual constraints. The accountability structure (through the Cultural Equity Committee) seems to have worked well, providing valuable feedback, advice and approval of major decisions, but for the most part the staff and consultants of CF were considered to have the expertise needed to do the job and, within the constraints of the programme, were given the freedom they needed to do it.

The same attitude prevailed in the relationship between the staff of CF and the satellite projects. Key decisions about staff and projects and funding were made relatively quickly and in an atmosphere of considerable confidence. Once funded, projects were given great support with very little interference.



### 5) Money *Actually* Flowed:

These two comments capture a sentiment commonly expressed about CultureForce.

"You *actually* do the work when you *actually* flow the money. Before that it's all talk. Our communities have had too much talk, too many briefs, task forces, papers, forums, committees. That's research -- sometimes its good research, sometimes its not. But that's not the work. Mostly what it's about is teaching *them* about us. Again. For free. You need money, money to the community, to do the work. This project spent the money, not tons, but enough to get some good things going; and people could see that the intentions were backed up by dollars. This cemented the commitment."

"The success of CultureForce just shows what happens when resources come to our communities."

"We know what the work is. We know how to do the work and we know how to do it cheap. We have the will. We have the discipline. We had the ideas. We have the talent. Finally somebody gave us a little bit of money and some back- up to do it."

### 6) Good Design

The programme design was lean, efficient, close to the ground. There were no middlemen. The "administration" ( The CF Secretariat) were actually part of the programme. This was an important element of the approach: all activities fed the actual cultural process and were seen as intrinsic to it - for example, administration and research were not separate but a part of the programme.

Money was flowed quickly and directly. Very little time and energy was spent on conventional administration. Virtually all the money and resources were flowed and seen to flow directly into cultural activity in the communities. An enormous amount happened in a very short period of time. There was no attempt to be exhaustive ; nor any attempt to spread the very limited funds over a wide constituency.

In this regard the programme was compared to the federal OFY and LIP grants of the early 70's. This might seem a surprising comparison given the difference in scale and size of grants; but there is a sense in which the comparison makes sense. LIP and OFY grants were flowed

quickly with a minimum of paperwork and once granted, projects were relatively free to do the work with very little time spent in recording, reporting, monitoring. As a result, a whole generation of Canadian cultural producers credit these federal programmes for having made possible important early stages of their development.

The design acknowledged and took advantage of the existing expertise; there was an assumption that people knew what to do and only needed an opportunity. As a result, the programme did not bog down in an initial design/research consultation phase. Similarly, the strategic funding went out very quickly and very directly; the application procedure was highly streamlined. This too was a reflection of the basic assumption of confidence; the operating principle was "These people know what they need to do; let's just see they get the resources to do it."

#### Areas for Future Development

There were a number of minor areas in which room for improvement was cited. For the most part these were areas where the trial and error approach of this initial experience had uncovered better ways, more appropriate or different strategies which participants felt would lead to better results on future efforts. What was needed was more time, people felt, to benefit from this learning and these experiences, and to share this learning with others.

In one area, suggestions concerned a more fundamental element of cultural equity, and proposed the continuing need to situate Native programmes within a context which reflects and responds to the current realities and exigencies of the Canadian Native experience.

The sheer vulnerability of Native culture and identity due to an enormous range of socio-historical factors, the relatively small remaining Native population, and the threat of impending and permanent erasure of their languages and culture were cited as arguments for a continuing attention to strategic support for Native cultural development as a priority of arts and cultural institutions.

There was genuine support and enthusiasm for CultureForce from the Native participants I spoke with, and agreement with the overall analysis and assessment above. The opportunities provided under

CultureForce were considered invaluable. In discussing the future, Native participants felt they had gained much from the coalition of cultural communities and the self-determined Native projects which CultureForce had permitted, and hoped that CF would be extended to allow this work to continue. They felt that future initiatives needed to continue to develop new models and to set new standards for balancing the benefits of coalition while addressing the distinct situation of Native cultures.

In general, jury systems were not yet felt to be working effectively for First Nations projects; there was inadequate First Nations' representation in positions of authority as arts administrators, lobbyists, power brokers, at the TAC as elsewhere. For these reasons, some felt that the coalition approach needed to be balanced with initiatives specific to Native communities: strategic funds, designated quotas on juries, positions on committees, boards and senior staff.

## Conclusion

Although (or perhaps because) CF has been seen as having worked extremely well, a great deal of concern was expressed about the future of the projects and initiatives undertaken.

Few of the people I spoke with felt that what was needed was to make the programme permanent; in fact, most acknowledged that the temporary nature of CF was one of the factors in its success. Many of those I spoke with were very clear that the responsibility for the ultimate success and continuity for the programmes lay with the community of users. Nonetheless, there was unanimous agreement among all those I spoke with that one year was simply too little time for the initiative to really take hold and settle into shape, much less fully reap the benefit of its achievements. "You don't change things overnight," is what I heard again and again.

A number of matters were cited. People had learned a lot in a number of areas from art production to arts administration; time was now needed to consolidate those lessons and to apply them to future efforts. Most people argued that a second year was necessary if the effects of the programme were to be extended to the larger community.

The changes in the culture of the TAC, as well as in the marginalized communities' experience of the TAC, need more time, people felt. There hasn't been enough time to assess the effect of this programme on applications and success in different art disciplines. Wait until the new appointments, new constituents have been in place for a year and see what effect this has on application and success rates from various communities, people argued.

Others argued that the value of CultureForce could not be overestimated. They saw it as an important model, an example and even inspiration; and stressed that what is needed is enough time for other communities, other institutions, to hear about it, see how inexpensively, how efficiently, how painlessly cultural equity programmes could be introduced into existing institutions -- given the right conditions and attitudes.

A few spoke quite forcefully of avoiding the perpetual trap of starting up and shutting down. The people I spoke with felt this was

particularly true for the youth programmes; they spoke of needing to avoid the all-too-familiar pattern of setting kids up for a fall, of reaching out a hand only to whisk it away when the youths responded. The youth programme has, with great effort and ingenuity, won an increasingly large and committed group of disenfranchised youth to its activities. Having invested so much energy and resources in the design and launch of a successful programme, it seems wasteful to risk jeopardizing the gains made. Speaking of Fresh Arts one said, "The word is just starting to spread. People in the larger communities are just starting to hear that something exciting is happening down here. Kids are hearing there's something more interesting to do with your nights and weekends than hanging out on street corners getting into mischief."

Several people made the economic argument: "This programme's cheap any way you cut it. It's good for the city any way you cut it. Maybe it won't be right forever, but it makes a lot of sense for right now."

My own feeling is that CultureForce does need more time to consolidate its achievements; and furthermore that it deserves more time to continue to show us the ways it is discovering to marry theory to practice, art to culture, community to community. A rare combination of factors contributed to the impressive success of CultureForce, and while I have argued above that by using CF as a model, others can now learn from the experience and possibly reproduce it, I wonder why a programme as valuable, scarce and inexpensive as this should be afforded such a short life span.

Submitted by

Rina Fraticelli

## Interviewed

Among those I spoke to as part of this assessment were:

Rita Davies, Executive Director, Toronto Arts Council  
Lillian Allen, multidisciplinary artist, consultant  
Sharon Fernandez, Co-ordinator CultureForce  
Sandra Laronde, Native Advisor, CultureForce  
Lynne Fernie, multidisciplinary artist, editor Paralleogramme  
Susan Crean, writer, consultant  
Marrie Mumford, Cultural Equity Consultant, MCTR  
Itah Sadhu, Cultural Equity Consultant, MCTR  
Lorraine Segato, singer composer, cultural worker, TAC  
committee member  
Steve Pereira, Desh Pardesh  
Verle Thompson, Co-ordinator, Fresh Arts  
Gwen Kallio, Consultant, Metro Cultural Affairs  
Carolyn Outten, Youth Participant, Fresh Arts  
Premika Ratnam, filmmaker, About Face, About Frame  
Olivia Rojas, artist, LAAN  
Kate Lushington, writer, director, Artistic Director, Nightwood  
Theatre  
Pat Bradley, Executive Director, PACT  
David Barnard, Public Affairs Programmer, Harbourfront