



Review of the Move'Em Program

What was Created?

Three works of art were developed: the Mural, the Youth Painting, and a mountain of Video material. These each reflect what children and youth think and feel about how things were, the current moment in history, and how things can be in the future.

Child and Youth Participation

Dozens of children and youth from Elsipogtog participate in making three large canvas paintings that represent how the young people feel about their lives.

The youth certainly seemed to be enjoying our expert, energetic and enthusiastic visiting program staff: Victoria Mata and Natalyn Tremblay. Many of the youth showed up before time for the program to start, and had to be coaxed to go home at night! Several of the kids were using "Mom" to get Victoria's attention by the second day. The kids also swarmed Natalyn regularly, asking to be taken on yet another video excursion around the community.

The daily sit-down meal was a VERY popular feature. We ate through a mountain of food!

In general, every possible effort was made to keep every child and youth in the program "Circle."

Due to the amount of work involved in preparing for the closing Feast, on the final day we had to keep some children out until our 4 pm Celebration and Feast time. Only those 12 and over, and who were willing to volunteer for cooking/cleaning/etc., could enter prior to opening time. On that day, our program staff simply could not prepare for the community event and also accommodate all the kids in the Youth Centre successfully.

During the gap in time, Derwin and Nancy Milliea kept an eye on the faithful little ones holding vigil outside. Meanwhile, inside, more than a dozen youth worked non-stop to make the Celebration successful. Most of these youth volunteers were previous participants in BBRC's *OS116 Drop-in* and *Open Space Players* activities.

Through-out the week, many creative peaceful strategies were used for bringing the group to focus (or re-focus) on the work or listening we were doing. Helping in the kitchen was a welcome option for some of the children who were struggling with their own issues. Having some options for self-directed activity, as well as our collective art projects, was another successful approach. Our morning Talking Circles were very successful for helping the children and youth shift their attention and become oriented towards the day's work. After that, we tended to divide into small groups focussed on sketching and painting, video-making and cooking.

Community Outreach, Cross-Cultural and Interfaith Efforts

Throughout August, Paul Francis (BBRC's Youth Coordinator for Move'Em) and Ann Pohl (BBRC's Community Learning Coordinator) did extensive outreach for the **Move'Em** program.

Of course, we **also** did outreach through BBRC's email list -- the same list that is bringing this message into your computer today. We also posted flyers in "neighbourhood" stores and offices.

Our first major personal outreach effort was to attend the New Brunswick Day celebration in Rexton on August 6th. More than 100 flyers were distributed personally by Paul and Ann working together. Everyone who showed interest in the flyer was personally invited to take part in the community history-building aspect of **Move'Em**.

At the New Brunswick Day celebration, we found Premier Shawn Graham. Of course, Shawn is also a local boy for many oldtimers around here. And he is also our local MLA, representing Kent Centre in Fredericton. As a result of joining in the New Brunswick Day celebration, BBRC received a strong letter of support from Shawn. He said our program was "an exciting and positive initiative that will appeal to a broad segment of youth, strengthen community spirit and enhance the communities we live in."

"Community spirit" was "strengthened" by Move'Em. And people are saying that BBRC's work is already

enhancing "the communities we live in." Sad to say, however, the gathering and activities BBRC offered did not "appeal to a broad segment of youth." Despite, extensive outreach efforts in Bass River, and additional efforts in Saint Charles and Rexton, no child or youth from outside Elsipogtog First Nation attended any part of our week-long gathering. When asked why she thought this happened, one of BBRC's most committed "Open Space 116" supporters from Elsipogtog said, "Well, what do you think? This is an Indian Reservation. They're not going to come in here. It's too scary... Of course, they have no reason to think that way, but they don't know that."

It was not just non-Native youth who were reluctant to "break barriers." Despite very strong outreach and invitation efforts by Paul and Ann, our program was affected by the very low level of "visiting" or "guest" adult involvement. At least a dozen oldtimers and elders --both from Elsipogtog, and from surrounding Acadian and Anglophone communities-- agreed to come share some local culture and history stories with the children and youth. (That number does not include the many who said "no" for one reason or another.) Only **one** of those actually showed up! (Thanks Sarah!)

The absence of these local community teachers (historians, artists, oldtimers and elders) caused the program to shift at its core. After the second day, it was clear that the kids would not have the opportunity to learn from local informed adults about their oldtime traditions and culture, nor about the social history of the cultures that have settled side-by-side in Kent County. In lieu of this learning, our program staff worked **very** hard to stimulate the children and youth to bring all their own information and perspectives into the art and video work.

At our last morning Talking Circle, Stephen Augustine and Marilyn Simon-Ingram joined us to share stories about history and culture with the group. The kids listened very carefully to what was shared, and we were all grateful for their gifts of time and knowledge.

Several parents and grandparents from Elsipogtog also joined in through the week. We had some star volunteer supporters! Thanks especially to Mary, Derwin, Cyril, and Keora. (And please forgive me, if I left any of our stars out of this list! It's all a weeklong happy blur to me... Faces and names are not easy for me to remember.)

Two local faith leaders who support BBRC's work, Cecil Symes and Ian Shapter, arrived as Blessings at much-needed moments. When Ian was with us, one youth was having great difficulty in the group and feeling "very lonely." Ian took him out for a walk and talk. Another youth later mentioned Ian's timely presence. Cecil came early in the week and helped Victoria and the children prepare the canvasses. On Saturday, just before the Feast, Cecil returned with his wife Shirley -- and a team of skilled "church supper" workers from Miramichi! They sure helped us get the Feast on the table -- and they even stayed to clean up afterwards!

The Mural

More than 50 younger youth and children worked together to produce two canvasses that are designed to hang together as a gigantic mural (once we frame them properly). Traditional images, conceived and painted by the children, show the past, present and future of Elsipogtog. Running along the bottom of those canvasses is the Richibucto River -- the "River of Fire," which is the meaning of "Elsipogtog."

A thousand words cannot describe a painting . :) ... It is currently stored in BBRC's Family Resource Room, and everyone is welcome to come see it (call 785-2998). ...Just to give a hint, in the centre of this mural is a Dream Catcher. And on the right is a bright green tree. That imagery resonates with the "World's Largest Dream Catcher" and the Tree of Hope produced by participants at BBRC's first event, the *Focus on Change* workshop in April 2006.

Another Painting

A small group of youth who have been working with BBRC for several months collaborated on a separate canvas. It presents a view from their favourite swimming hole, the Molus River bridge. The youth said they chose this space because it is "safe and still."

The Video

The video is very much a "work-in-progress."

To begin with, more than 10 hours of raw video footage was created by Natalyn and the children and youth she worked with. This is a heck of a lot of material to work with. The footage ranges from endless bumpy "shots" of kids waving and grinning at the camera, to interviews with parents, grandparents, community history-keepers

and traditional teachers. There is also much footage of places in Elsipogtog that were important to the youth using the cameras. Some of these places were documented to show issues in the community today. Some of the places videoed offer tranquility and comfort to the youth. Some are places that represent the community's history.

Overnight on Thursday and Friday, Natalyn worked tirelessly to assemble a rough-cut version of the video material to show at our Community Celebration on Saturday August 25th. The guiding principle Natalyn used as a community videographer was to celebrate the children's commitment to the overall project. 40 minutes long, the rough-cut Nat produced overnight showed what the children and youth had been doing all week long. It was created only to show at the August 25th event.

Natalyn, Ann and Victoria met with Katrina Clair (BBRC's Vice-Chairperson) for a program de-briefing session on Sunday the 26th. The major issue discussed at the debriefing was: "What to do about the video?" Ann was not part of the video-making work, however Nat, Vic, and Katrina (who were central to the video work) agreed that a great deal of socially useful information and perspective has been captured in the raw video footage.

There are major issues to be resolved around **who makes the decisions** about **what goes into the final video**. These social research and journalism ethics issues include: the appropriate telling of Mi'kmaq cultural information (TIK -- traditional indigenous knowledge); informed consent (due to both age and literacy issues); and editorial control.

However, bringing the video material to the screen for community use is important. Many children, youth and adults who contributed to it are very eager to see the video completed so that the information can help the community. As well, some of the material will help advance BBRC's social history curriculum project, and also support our youth wellness and literacy goals.

We are fortunate to have documented a lengthy interview with Stephen Augustine, an acclaimed Mi'kmaq historian and scholar from Elsipogtog. The footage of Stephen covers the full time span of our social history curriculum project -- from time immemorial to the future for our children. As Stephen has signed a full consent for BBRC to use the material he contributed, we are recommending that we begin screening that piece (and others for which we have full informed consents) in the Fall. No edits will be made for these initial screenings.

To get the finished product the youth want, a lot of work is required. Some of the major challenges are: the amount of excellent material on hand; obvious gaps in the material (i.e., diversity of community perspectives); TIK, consent and control issues mentioned above; BBRC presently has no funding for technical, creative, and other mentors to work with the youth on this; and lack of equipment (hardware and software). The debriefing session on August 26th agreed that the youth must be given all the support they require to bring this video to completion --*in A Good Way*-- as soon as possible.

The Food Theme (part 1)

Under the actual operational circumstances we did not make much progress on the Food theme. However, we did share a healthy meal together each day. A number of kids were involved in cooking and other food-related tasks. Victoria brought ingredients for a Venezuelan dinner, and the kids enjoyed hearing about the food from her.

Our Feast was incredible! More than 100 people ate from our table, and we never ran out of really tasty food!

The Princess Jasmine 2004 crew donated a pile of beautiful lobsters for the Elders, who were invited up to eat first. (Thanks again, Mr. Dedam!)

Most of the kids started at the dessert table, of course! Some readers might have already met Sylvie Berube, the new child psychologist at the Health & Wellness Centre, at our *The Lost Three* performance. Sylvie was back in force on Saturday, with a traditional Acadian pastry, and a lovely maple syrup sauce to top it off! We also had cakes, fruit, puddings and more!

Next Steps..?

There are at least eight elements to the **Move'Em** project that are connected to ongoing BBRC priorities and projects. I (Ann) have written a lot of this section in the first person, using "I" -- because much of what is written here are just my ideas, alone, at the present time. They are written here for further consideration by our Directors, members and supporters.

The Mural

Vic, Nat, Katrina, Margaret, Nancy, others, and I agree that BBRC should ask Elsipogtog Chief and Band Council if the mural could hang somewhere in the Band Office or another space where Elsipogtog community leaders can see it.

I had nothing to do with the painting of the mural, so I was awestruck and delighted to see what was produced. The kids' work has a clear and powerful message. Yet, I find it lacks detail. There are no people in the picture, for one thing, and BBRC's work is all about the people -- all the various Peoples, and how we relate to one another and the Living World, across faith, cultural and other boundaries, for the sake of the children and future generations.

I am imagining another creative stage before the mural is ready to frame and display. This creative stage might go like this... We would extend an invitation, through local schools and agencies, and our own Open Space youth network, to anyone in Elsipogtog to:

- 1) view the canvasses and then submit sketches of about 4 X 6 inches (photo size), of details that can be added to the mural to build awareness about the lives and concerns of the Elsipogtog people, the relationships between Peoples locally, and historical and cultural matters -- for the past, present and future
- 2) establish some sort of youth and artist peer review process to decide how to incorporate these creative suggestions
- 3) on a chosen day, there would be a big painting event, at which the details would be painted in, and some little things about the existing mural (like all the hasty drip marks) could be smoothed out

I have to figure out how to get funding for this, as we will certainly want to make the Paint-In Day a fun one with various other activities, and also to acknowledge all participants with a Feast. Also there are organizational and materials costs involved in this kind of finishing work.

The Youth Painting

I haven't asked the artists yet, but I would like to hang the Molus River "safe and still" painting in BBRC's Family Resource Room. It also lacks people, curiously. But if hung in our studio space, I imagine the invisible people would start to show up on the painting in an very organic way. Also, I believe that the youth find the Family Room studio space to be a "safe and still" environment, and in that way, this painting will fit here well. :)

The Video

At the debriefing session on August 26th, Nat, Vic, Katrina and I discussed the need for BBRC to help develop a Youth Circle who can edit the video material so that it gives the youth's "youth wellness" perspective on community history and current issues.

Youth already involved in BBRC programs will be encouraged to take part in this program, as they have become familiar with our friendship-building goals and our community-based approach to education. The Youth Circle that forms around this editing project will be encouraged to approach local community members, especially elders and oldtimers, to get involved as mentors and advisors for the video production. Like other BBRC youth activities, this program will focus on development of youth leadership and individual self-expression skills.

For various reasons, some of the material collected might work better in audio format than in video. This fits well with a percolating idea that *Open Space Players* produce a weekly **YouthSpeak** segment for local community radio broadcast.

Collecting Local History & Relationship-Building

It is evident that we have only just begun to scratch the surface regarding what needs to go into a local social history curriculum resource. It is equally evident that we have not yet successfully resolved the challenge of how to bring Peoples of the local differing cultures together on this initiative. And it is equally evident that oldtimers and elders from all local communities do not feel comfortable about walking into a gaggle of kids and trusting the youth to respectfully care about the stories these "walking libraries" are holding for them.

These issues must be addressed by BBRC. Experience working on the video suggests that oldtimers and elders might feel more comfortable talking with adults documentarists, or with only one or two youth working with an adult mentor. To break down barriers among emerging youth leaders in all local communities, a project specifically designed to engage non-Mi'kmaq youth in the friendship-building part of our youth wellness work must be designed and carried out as soon as possible.

Space and Transportation Issues

As BBRC has known since our April 2006 workshop, one of the greatest barriers to youth wellness in mid-Kent County is the lack of accessible space for the youth to use. All of BBRC's youth programs to date have been affected by this community deficit: the struggle of getting kids from Elsipogtog to Bass River, the reluctance of some parents to drive their kids into Elsipogtog from neighbouring communities, and the almost impossible search for space for *Open Space Players* in Rexton and Richibucto. (Thanks Father Bernard, Stephen and Joan!)

In regards to *Move'Em*, we were very fortunate to be offered space at both the Bass River Country Fair Hall and the Elsipogtog Youth Centre. The Bass River space was a bit better for our precise needs. Yet, BBRC did not have enough funding to hire a schoolbus for transporting youth from Elsipogtog to Bass River, and Elsipogtog is where the vast majority of 116 youth live. As BBRC was unable to get support from EFN to contribute the cost of youth transportation to Bass River, we chose to use the Youth Centre space in Elsipogtog. From our past experience running a cross-culturally oriented program at Elsipogtog, we knew this meant it would be far less likely that non-Mi'kmaq youth would attend. But, what could we do? Funding, space and transportation are major issues for youth wellness programming in this area.

Each programming effort BBRC has made has resulted in a renewed call from BBRC for a youth community centre in a centrally accessible space, which would offer a full range of activities and services in a "safe" cross-cultural and interfaith environment. The centre we envision must also have the ability to help youth with transportation issues, due to poverty levels and other travelling challenges.

The Food Theme (part 2)

For the past year, BBRC has been building a collaborative relationship with Ryerson University's School of Social Work (Dr. Cyndy Baskin) and Centre for Food Security (Dr. Cecilia Rocha). A June 2007 planning meeting was attended in Toronto, by two of our past Youth Coordinator interns (Katrina and Duma Dean) and Ann. BBRC is committed to further work on "food security" and other food issues, with our Ryerson partners and their young indigenous community partners from rural Brazil. This is one of the reasons that the "Food" theme was chosen for the *Move'Em* project.

For various reasons, mostly totally beyond our control, the "Food" theme was not developed into the week's art and video work. However, BBRC is committed to work around food issues and knowledge sharing at the community level. Food and shelter are the most basic needs of children. Nutrition is a huge issue locally, and the issue is of course compounded by poverty levels and other challenges. Finally, human need for "food" is universal "common ground" and therefore a uniting force in family and community, and between Peoples in general. "Food" continues to be a worthwhile theme for inclusion in our local social history curriculum resource.

Local "Needs" Assessment

Due to the lack of personal detail in the paintings, there is little new information from this program for the Program Needs Assessment that BBRC is working on. However, a lot was learned about how to run a program successfully in Elsipogtog. Hopefully these learnings can be applied to upcoming BBRC-Elsipogtog agency collaboration re: youth wellness program development. At the same time as we ask Chief and Council to view the canvasses and to support its final placement in a public space in Elsipogtog, we will also propose some areas for further collaboration.

The video-taped material undoubtedly speaks to some program needs, but what of that is important and how it will be used is up to the youth who edit the material.

Network-building for Youth in General

We gained many strong allies and supporters among children, youth, parents, grandparents, oldtimers, elders, direct service staff, and community agencies through this program. The Hispanic Development Council in Toronto is interested in our experiences and outcomes with this program, as the youth in their programs constantly struggle with issues around identity, culture, oppression, privilege, and prejudice that are similar to the issues that plague youth in this area. I believe there is a strong possibility that the Council, whose logo slogan is *building together*, will be a partner for *Breaking Barriers* in our future work on youth wellness performing and visual arts and leadership development.

Thanks

On the last day, Victoria handed around personal, homemade cards for every young person who attended. That was A LOT of cards she stayed up late making! The designs on the front were made from potatoes carved by Victoria, and then dipped in paint. In the handwritten message on each one, Vic and Nat thanked each child and youth for getting involved and teaching them so much.

Thank you as well to everyone who contributed, in oh-so-many ways! It was a good week, and will lead to more good things.

Nogemag. We Are All Related.

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