



E-Nellie

North Shore Women's Centre

Vol. 35, Spring '09



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The North Shore Women's Centre would like to acknowledge the Squamish Nation whose territory the Centre is located. We would also like to acknowledge the Tsleil-Waututh and Musqueam Nations.

The Future of Creativity: Renewing Our Imagination for Humanity

by Laiwan

I hope what I will talk about today will inspire you to see how every thing we do in our everyday life can contribute to how we imagine, create visions, and make possible a future of our dreams. A future that is nourishing, nurturing, kind, peaceful and sustaining to all on this planet.

I aim to describe the processes of self-discovery that is available to everyone, not just those known as artists. We are all creative beings and the immensely challenging times we currently live in -- with the financial collapse of Wall Street, of climate change and global warming, of wasteful consumption and materialism, of increasing violence and war fueled by greed -- encourage us to wake up, become active and creative, and imagine change.

The first place we can create change is here, where if each one of us makes a choice to be creative, to practice thinking outside the box, to awaken and access our imagination so as to envision a future we can all dream of collectively -- one of compassion and non-violence, of kindness and sustainability of communities and collaboration, a place our children can grow surrounded by flora and fauna full of wonder, great diversity and abundance. We can imagine it together, to embody our dreams, so as to make it happen, first inside ourselves, and here.

Before we can understand what we need to do, we need to understand what has shaped and constructed what we are currently in.

WHERE WE ARE

Why do we want to be an information culture? What set us on this path? What are the benefits? Let me begin with a quote from the German philosopher Heidegger where in the 1950s he already observed: "Calculative thinking computes. It computes ever new, ever more promising and at the same time more economical possibilities. Calculative thinking never stops, never collects itself. Calculative thinking is not meditative thinking, not thinking which contemplates the meaning which reigns in everything that is."

So today, we believe we have our utopia, our ideal world and that we are living it now. For some it is a prison, yet a prison holding an illusion of freedom and democracy. It is a world constructed into perfection, a vision, someone's vision, of what is perfect.

In this year of 2008, how far have we evolved in our vision of the future? In our collective imagination, our future looks bleak. The landscape barren, emotions violent, spirits aimless, hearts dispirited, motivations ungrounded. We see these landscapes in popular films such as *The Matrix*, *Terminator*, *Alien*, *Blade Runner* and hundreds of images that are created and designed in video games for example. They are entertaining, diverting, clever. But we cannot ignore that they are visions of future possibilities; all violent and bleak, all reiterate the same landscape.

As Heidegger cautioned, calculative thinking can become the norm. Now, we can forecast what you will become when you grow up, what perversions you'll develop, how you'll eat your breakfast, whether your eyes will be myopic, if you'll become a leader or a minion. A world predicated on predictability, predetermination, a controlled and manageable citizenry, a perfected world. A perfect loop feeding itself.

Whether a mall, a wilderness reserve, a camping site, an Internet site, my movements and my needs will have been forethought. My desires will be anticipated, predetermined, pre-designed. Just as the ideal refrigerator will determine the foods I will run out of and will order them accordingly through its built-in Internet link. Just as the ideal web site thinks ahead for you, calculating which products you will be interested in by your past visits to sites and making suggestions accordingly.

What Heidegger calls 'calculative thinking' -- aimed at 'definite results', calculating from the past toward 'ever new possibilities' -- describes the dominant approach in our cultural and social economy.

(con't page 7)

Farewell Anouchka

After five years of devoting time, energy and spirit to the North Shore Women Centre, Anouchka Nowicki, Resource Centre Coordinator, is leaving and embarking on new journeys. Anouchka spent her time working with volunteers, supporting women, coordinating programs and services and maintaining the resource centre. She contributed to establishing a strong volunteer base, strengthening resources and fostering a safe and meaningful connection with many women who frequented the centre.



Anouchka is known for her joyful presence, dedication to fairness and equity, multitude of talents, practicality, ability to relate to people of all backgrounds and experiences and her profound sense of humanitarianism. We will miss her stories, laughter, reflections and warm presence.

We thank Anouchka for her various contributions to the organization and wish her all the best in her new endeavours. We know that she will continue offering strength and inspiration to any project, team or organization that she's involved with.

Much love to her and her family -- we hope to see you all soon!

All the best,

North Shore Women Centre Staff, Board, Volunteers & Friends



Crimson Cabaret: Celebrating Creative Women

We are proud to present an evening of vibrant creativity, passion and excitement, drawing performers from all artistic genres. Don't miss the event of the year on the North Shore!



Thank you to our sponsors, the performers, silent auction donors, volunteers, technicians and all who came out to support an exciting evening!

The event raised over \$13,000!

Last Year's Sponsors

North Shore Outlook
OmniCity
Greg Pearson
Moustache Café
BCGEU

Last Year's Performers

August; Folk/Bluegrass Quartet,
Cris Derksen & Jillian Deri;
Cellist & Aerial Performer,
Hot Flash Hoofers; Tap Dancers,
Julie Blue; Soul Singer/Pianist,
Lorita Leung Chinese Dance
Academy; Traditional Chinese Dance,
M'Girl; Folk Singers,
Ndidi Onukwulu; Blues Singer,
No Shit Shirleys; Acapella Soul Choir,
Sisters of Alchemy; Bellydance,
Toni Latour; Multimedia Artist,
Vancouver Pars National Ballet;
Persian Folk Dancers,
Vidya Kotamraju; Bharat Natyam Dancer

**GET INVOLVED
NEXT YEAR!**

- › BE A SPONSOR
- › PERFORM IN THE SHOW
- › DONATE TO OUR
SILENT AUCTION

**DON'T MISS NEXT YEAR'S SHOW ~
~ SATURDAY, MARCH 20TH, 2010!**

Strong Choices - Real Power Register Now!

Thursdays

Program is free of charge

July 9th - August 13th, 2009

Call to register:

6:00pm - 9:00pm

604.984.6009

~ light meal provided ~

Girls Will Discuss & Explore

relationships

body image

self esteem



developing
healthy
boundaries

confidence

This program offer girls ages 15-17 years the opportunity to connect with others their age in a non-threatening, supportive and engaging atmosphere.

Call us to register a young girl!

Ph. 604.984.6009

www.northshorewomen.ca

Program Activities Include:

art

movement

music



theatre

voice

journaling

i am enough

i am enough

i do not need

to change my hair

put on some make-up

or loose some weight

the way i am

right now

i am great

no need for alterations

healthly

loving

breathing

enjoying life and its gifts

just the way it should be

because today

i am enough

- by Sita S.

This poem was written for a collaborativezine in our 2007 'Strong Choices - Real Power' program. Each participant contributed a piece of writing, drawing, or collage representing something they learned from the group.

Be a part of this year's
Pride Parade &
march with
the North Shore
Women's Centre!



On October 18th, 2008 we celebrated the North Shore Women Centre's thirty-fifth year of providing services and support to women and girls on the North Shore. Sixty people including, staff, volunteers, supporters and friends came to honour the momentous landmark with us. We ate great food, heard speeches, reminisced, and shared visions for the future of the North Shore Women's Centre.

Thanks for a great evening!



Christina Rzepa joined us and played cello throughout the afternoon. Her music contributed a rich ambience to an unforgettable evening.

Thank You Christina!

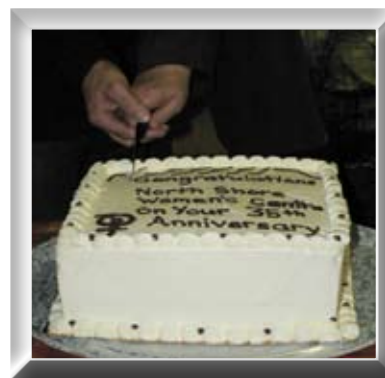


CNV Mayor Darrel Mussatto (seen here with NSWC Board Chair Miriam McClellan) as well as Board Treasurer Deanna Ogle and Centre member Faye Cooper all gave speeches shedding light on the Centre's contributions to empowering women and strengthening our communities.

During the fall season, the North Shore Women's Centre and the North Vancouver City Library collaborated in presenting a three-part lecture series.

- **September:** Dr. Sunera Thobani, Associate Professor at the Centre for Women's and Gender Studies, UBC Speaking on "Women, Media and the War on Terror"
- **October:** Dr. Afua Cooper, Ruth Wynn Woodward Professorship in Women's Studies, SFU Speaking on "Black Women's History in Canada: Opportunity or Dead End?"
- **November:** Laiwan, Interdisciplinary Artist/Writer/Educator Speaking on "The Future of Creativity: Renewing our Imagination for Humanity"

Thank You for Celebrating With Us!



Thank You to 'Sweet Cravings' for the delicious cake!

E-Nellie Featured Article

The Future of Creativity: Renewing Our Imagination for Humanity (con't from p.1)

In my search to not be machine-like, to not be shaped and constructed by our technocratic and information loving culture, I was intrigued to discover that over the years, philosophers and engineers alike have observed that the difference between a human and a machine is that a human can improvise. Wanting to find out what improvisation is so as to unlearn any machine like habits, I identified nine values I believe are essential for improvisation

1. Bodily Presence & Engagement in Every Moment in 'Real' Space
2. Attentive Listening (Mindfulness)
3. Lack of Predetermination (Horizontal Thinking Without Hierarchies)
4. Ungrasping (Non-possession)
5. Unconditionality (Non-expectation)
6. Curiosity
7. Playfulness
8. Generosity (Open Perception)
9. Collective & Responsive Ethics & Judgment

BECOMING HUMAN

We can see we have not succeeded very well in our aspirations toward being good humans and stewards of this earth. We know what the values are to be humanitarian, yet it seems difficult to put them into practice.

We see how information culture distances us from our own bodily being, from each other, from our senses, and senses of location and place, of tactility and touch, of things vulnerable, fleshy, sexual and earthy. Information caters to the eyes and the intellect and everything we do prioritizes that, from driving cars, to watching TV, to using computers. All emphasize the passivity and obsolescence of bodily being, and discourages our accessing and listening to bodily, emotional and intuitive intelligences.

For me, becoming creative means accessing these intelligences so as to balance the calculative, informational construct that dominates around us. This is what in academia they call 'embodiment studies'. It is not solely a return to bodily being at the rejection of the intellect, but it is an awareness and practice of all forms of knowing and unknowing of bodily, emotional and non-linear, intuitive intelligences, and approaching them without hierarchy, but inter-rationally, equally, to understand that the whole world shapes and informs phenomena around us, and our actions and feelings in turn are all inter-relational.

Our first step to becoming human would be to slow down where we could begin to engage the first two values needed for improvisation, that is, being bodily present in real time and space, and practicing attentive listening.

As information technology speeds up our lives so that we know longer experience tenacity and duration, one the most political activities we can do is to slow down. We can be active and engaged in the world, tending gardens, ensuring the safety and resources for our most needy – including all wildlife, and tending to good stewardship of land and resources. We can be slow and contemplative in the world, and look after things that nourish, nurture and sustain us in kind.

We can witness such movements in projects such as

<http://www.slowmovement.com/> and

<http://www.theworldinstituteofslowness.com/>

HEART & ESSENCE

At every beginning of study with my students I ask: What is your essence, your heart? Who are you? How did you survive all this time? Show us, without the protective layers we have learnt so as to pass in this world, who is at the heart of this precious being that is you?

To access our essence (and in this act, simplifying), we practice breathing exercises to remind us of the intricate process that enables breath to enter our lungs, feeding our blood with oxygen, keeping us alive. With this we remember how simple it is to breathe, how simple breath is, yet how our lives depend on it. We are vulnerable and easily extinguished if we breathe incorrectly or if we fall prey to an accident or if another steals our breath. To access our heart, we feel empathy and compassion for our vulnerability, fragility and mortality as we are reminded of the tenuousness of our breath.

To understand our essence allows us to understand our survival and the approach where we ask ourselves "if there is no tomorrow, what do we really deeply want to say?" Some think survival is about the large sense of speaking out against war or famine or racism or against injustice. It can mean these things yet for now I'm interested in a more elementary and internal idea of survival.

When I talk about survival, I am talking about essence. It's about learning internal creative skills to understand and become aware of the nature of one's own survival and essence. It's about learning to listen to oneself, to let unwanted patterns such as fears, stresses, neuroses and anxieties surface, so you can reshape and re-invent yourself creatively. These internal skills are subtle and not often taught in our schooling. Yet they are central to a creative practice, an attentive intuition and a deep listening that is crucial to our self-discovery and creative maturity.

Essence is feeling and breathing, it is an awareness and conscientiousness to the very basic things that let me be here. Essence is clearing habits and patterns that block or distort or complicate a simple and clear vision - and this is: each breath is your life... and we live life for love so as to love... there is no other good reason for it.

To get to this simple idea is not easy, but to do so we must find out: why you as a person breathe, what inspires you to breathe, what drives you to be passionate in what you do, what makes your blood surge and run through your body with such energy, passion and conviction?

The trick is to make it so you are fed, nurtured, cared for, given to with generosity, gentle in your judgment of yourself and how you keep yourself busy. If you feel judgmental about this, remember, what Pema Chodron, the contemporary Buddhist nun writes: "Label it as thinking. Then let it go" as we learn to practice a process so as to let go of calculative and predetermined thinking. It is an unlearning that is on a cellular bodily level, and this is where breathing comes in. We learn to listen to breath so as to learn a new cellular bodily memory. Instead of running out of breath or holding our breath we learn to be steady with peace and calm.

In this is what will allow us each to learn to listen to our intuition deeply and with full attention, rigour and discipline, to live love, creativity and vision 24/7 everyday of the year without losing awareness or observation of process, without zoning or stressing out.

It is wonderful such activism does exist and through such activity or non-activity we begin to unlearn the Western predisposition to overwork, over think, always intent with will and motivation, doing and making according to one's will. It would encourage a balance where we come to know the practice of letting something reveal itself, not making and doing because of feeling propelled due to training and habit, or a sense of self-fulfillment or immortality (the myth of why we make Art). Instead gently to let go of our current contemporary rush to do and make and consume, and/or to explain, rationalize and name, so as to enter a new open space of consciousness and perception. For that is what Art really is about -- expanding consciousness and perception, showing a way to think outside the box, and seeing something from a new angle, with a fresh light, being inspiring so as to transform in holistic and integrated ways.



(con't from p.6)

A return to bodily being along with emotional and intuitive intelligences encourages an understanding and appreciation of some basic elements of being human. These can include:

LOVE & CREATIVITY

In returning to this theme of survival and essence, it useful to examine the centrality of love in our being and in our creative process. Love is the central reason, the heart and soul, for why we should make art or to be creative. If we do not make art for people we love, or inspired by people we love, or resulting from the challenges of love, then it's not worth making whatever it is one is making. This is what I also mean by survival. Without love we would not survive, and without love centrally motivating and feeding one's art, it too will not survive.

James Baldwin in *The Fire Next Time* writes "Love takes off the masks that we fear we cannot live without and know we cannot live within. I use the word love here not merely in the personal sense but as a state of being, or a state of grace – not in the infantile American sense of being made happy but in the rough and universal sense of quest and daring and growth."

So our creative quest would be to further investigate the intricacies of human relationships and each of our relationship to love.

In growing awareness of the inter-relationship of everything where there is no separation between art and life, between home and work, between family and community and self... we learn to simplify, where what we love becomes simple. The energy you send out is returned to you. And this is true for everything around us, environmentally, ecologically, in relation to sustainability, healing, and creating a future that is lovingly kind, compassionate, sustainable and healthy for future generations.

It is through human relationships where we grow and are challenged the most. Life and relationships are always amazing and dynamic. Things change every moment with every breath in and out. Love changes and shifts in every moment. It is like a trickster, testing what we can understand and perceive in every moment, showing us our foibles and limitations, challenging us to open up and move beyond those limitations so as to broaden perception and consciousness, challenging us to become fluid and follow the flow.

It's the same as forcing us to transform so that our love can stay alive. Within this we can look to our relationships to inspire and feed our creativity. And with our relationships with loved ones, family, friends and with life... all too can be explored to feed, inspire and challenge art and learning. And the complexities of love and the threat of losing great love often force us to learn to simplify and pare down, transforming us as we get wiser and older.

We know how love relationships are the one thing that can transform us on the deepest most profound level. It inspires us to go beyond what we know, to be vulnerable and take risks, expanding our emotional boundaries and what we know of life. It is this that intrigues me about making art from this transforming place. It can be earth shattering, groundbreaking, heart wrenching, spiritually uplifting, and all it is simply love. And we can embody in our creativity these abilities where our work, embodied by the love we feed into it, similarly embodies and transforms the viewer as it did when we made it.

To quote Rob Breszny: In her poem *Pure*, Kate Knapp Johnson speaks of "those who made me real to myself." I invite you to take an inventory of the people in your life who've made you real to yourself. That would be excellent homework for you to do during the phase of intensified intimacy you're now in -- a time when your allies are making even you even more real to yourself than you've ever been, as well as a time when you will be returning the favor to them.

And this is the kind of creativity we need to build our future, to make us real to ourselves.

IMAGINATION

All images, real or imagined can be seen for its value as vocabulary and this includes dreams. Filmic imagery and dreams hold scenes that stay vivid in our mind because they work solely as images without rational logic or words. They are images that we understand even if they are nonsensical on a rational plane. This is how dreams are the perfect source for our creative imagery and imagination.

Becoming attentive to dreams practice skills in observation and listening. To write of a variety of situations where environments, relations, humans, and, activities all play roles, as if each are a separate character while at the same time in how each character are a part of you being processed, developed, growing and maturing through the act of dreaming.

"For that is what Art really is about -- expanding consciousness and perception, showing a way to think outside the box, and seeing something from a new angle, with a fresh light, being inspiring so as to transform in holistic and integrated ways."

By feeding and nourishing imagination we can also return to our childhood selves. Through story, drawing and painting, we recover, re-embrace and re-embody the liveliness of a child, a joy filled child you can reinvent for yourself and can now become.

This too emphasizes a few values within improvisation of play and curiosity. To play with joy as a child -- before adult anxiety or stress, before becoming a responsible adult -- allows open and generous energy to flow organically and freely in delight, insight, intuition, imagination, discovery, adventure, and expansively quick learning. Imagine what it is to be two or three or four years old where joy and curiosity filled your life before adult responsibilities set in. Here we can renew our imagination and experience of how wonderful the world is.

As adults we absorb much hardship and suffering from our world's judgmental prejudices, negativity, controlling rules, and limitations of perceptions and consciousness. It is rare we are taught to imagine beyond the narrowness of what is given or forced upon us and we suffer and grieve deeply. Our child self hides and becomes neglected. Yet, as adults we also have the where-with-all and ability to be in this world and inspire change, within ourselves and outside of us. We have the added skills of awareness, responsibility, physical mobility and self reflection to take a child's skill of play, delight, imagination, adventure, curiosity, learning and discovery beyond child's play and turn it into metaphysical beauty and transcendence toward an empowerment of humanity – that which Maria Bethania spoke of.

My approach encourages an owning of one's passions and emotions, to encourage further exploration of internal imagery, internal landscape, in childhood, in adulthood, in new imaginings, through one's own poetics. This includes the non-linear, non-functional, non-practical, non-useful, unknown, unknowing, and pure dream state of poetics. It celebrates bodily being, emotional and intuitive intelligences whether rooted in darkness or in radiant joy. It has no purpose but itself, not trying to discover anything but to allow poetic spirit and brightness to just be and to flourish.

Become a New Member

or

Renew Your Membership

- Be a part of a diverse network of women
- Be informed with the current ongoings of the larger women's movement
- Support our efforts to empower and support women and girls on the North Shore
- Vote at our Annual General Meeting
- Receive our quarterly E-Nellie Newsletter



Thank You!

The North Shore Women's Centre has been voted 2nd place in the 'Best Charity' category of the North Shore Outlook's 2009 "Best of the North Shore" online contest.

*Thank you to our spring
Special Contributors!*

*Loren & Nanke;
Certified General
Accountants*

*North Shore
Outlook Newspaper*

Sat Nam Yoga

*Soroptimists
International of North
and West Vancouver*

*Successful Women
Always Network (swan)*

Have a Beautiful Summer!