

Multicultural Harmony Through The Arts

*Certain individuals have contributed
to make us great. It is now our time
to contribute to the greatness of our
youth for a better tomorrow.*

www.creativefoundation.org



**CREATIVE
FOUNDATION**

Special Project

Multicultural Harmony Through The Arts

Presenters:

Randy Guest (*Independent Filmmaker and Art Educator*)
Sue Hemphill (*Intercultural and Diversity Educator and Mediator*)
Becky Thiessen (*Visual Artist*)
Yisa Akinbolaji (*Interdisciplinary Artist*)

Keynote Speaker:

Douglas Riske

Executive Director, *Manitoba Arts Council*

Sponsored by

Manitoba 

Province of Manitoba, Multiculturalism Secretariat

Creative Foundation Inc Board

Sunday Akin Olukoju, Ph.D - *President*

Malinda Lee - *Vice President & Publicity*

David Fatimehin - *Publicity Assistant*

Yisa Akinbolaji - *Convenor Coordinator*

Don Amero - *Advisory Board*

Beatrice Watson - *Past President*

Keynote Speakers:

Douglas Riske (2015)

Andrew Wilhelm-Boyles (2004)

Russ Wyatt & Larry Partap (2003)

Leo Mol & Bruce Waldie (2002)

Dr. Jon Gerrard (2001)

Larry Partap (2000)

Dave Williamson and Larry Partap (1999)

Presenters 1999

Samuel Afolayan, Ph.D

Madeline Coopsammy (Author)

Karim Dharamsi, Ph.D

Mitzi Ezzat (Dentist)

Rosie Hernandez

Frank Reimer

Presenters 2004

Rick Baverstock

Chris Brower

Dean Cooper

Justin Deeley

Kenton Larsen

Garry Moir

Steve Vogelsang

Forde Oliver

Presenters 2003

Dr. Marcia Anderson

Mary Louise Chown

Bola Olorundare

‘Segun Olude

Presenters 2002

Karim Dharamsi, Ph.D

Kay Stone, Ph.D

‘Segun Olude

Bola Olorundare

Presenters 2000/2001

Pat B. Burns

Bola Olorundare

‘Segun Olude

We gratefully acknowledge the sponsorship
of our special project:



Province of Manitoba, Multiculturalism Secretariat

A Message from the Minister

Welcome all students and workshop presenters to the *Multicultural Harmony Through the Arts*.

Congratulations and thank you to *Creative Foundation Inc.* for organizing this fun and educational workshop. This event gives students in Grades 9 to



Hon. Minister Flor Marcelino.

11 an important opportunity to learn from Manitoba's most talented and experienced artists in the areas of visual arts, film production, mime theatre and intercultural education. It also provides participants a chance to discover the multitude of cultures and diverse background of the people who call Manitoba their home. Learning about multiculturalism

through the arts helps create a more inclusive society and leads to understanding, acceptance and celebration of diversity.

Best wishes for the continued success of the *Creative Foundation Inc.* projects.

Have a memorable and productive day.

Flor Marcelino, Minister
Manitoba Multiculturalism and Literacy

Mayor's Message

It is my pleasure to welcome everyone attending the 2015 *Multicultural Harmony Through the Arts* workshop, hosted by the *Creative Foundation Inc.*

Our greatest strength as a city is our rich diversity and tradition of celebrating together. Winnipeg is



Mayor Brian Bowman.

also home to a tremendously vibrant and innovative artistic community, and today's event is a fun opportunity that brings our diversity and art together. Exploring other cultures and traditions through visual arts, film production, mime theatre and intercultural education is a terrific way to learn about our world and each other and build understanding.

It takes initiative, vision, and hard work to make an event such as this happen, and I would like to recognize the contribution of the organizers and volunteers for making this event possible. Thank you all for continuing to positively enrich our community through sharing arts and culture – you help make Winnipeg a place we are all proud to call home.

On behalf of the City of Winnipeg and my City Council colleagues, best wishes for a great event.

Warmly,

Mayor Brian Bowman,
City of Winnipeg

The Value of Arts Is Unquantifiable

Transcript of the speech by Guest Speaker

Douglas Riske

Executive Director, *Manitoba Arts Council*.

Art is what is inside each of us and everything we do. Just for a moment, please close your eyes – think of an art experience you had within a week or two, like listening to music, attending a theatre event, reading a book, then think or reflect on how it inspires you, and now bring the memory to bear on here and now and on every day activities. Share with the person sitting next to you what the experience is like. In the process, you allow another person to share a compelling and dear story. Hence, “Arts” is a way of life that gives the opportunity to share experiences. It captures how we learn as kids. It helps us understand ourselves. It empowers us to understand others.

Arts gives the platform to tell stories in different kinds of ways – via music, visual arts, tradition, writing, and story-telling among others. Manitoba is a hotbed of arts and cultural activities, and these continue to drive the vibrancy inside our communities. We are called to connect with arts wherever it exists - inside ourselves, in our schools, in the community, even in bowling alleys, and we will soon realize that arts is very inclusive. The value of arts



Mr. Douglas Riske.



Participants listening to the keynote speaker.

is unquantifiable. It makes our world interestingly amazing. A practical example is obvious if we take a closer look at Winnipeg Jets. If you take arts from a sporting team like Winnipeg Jets, you have nothing left. Look at the

colors. Listen to the music that blares during games in the arena. Check out the designs. Then you will agree that sports and arts have always been together even from the ancient civilization! Music

turns you on to get going at Jets games. Arts people use music, color, and designs to get sports going. Arts and arts people are now been used to sell products, to advertise, and even to position cameras at creative angles to produce convincing creativity to sway people. Arts touch passions and emotions.

Arts and culture drive the economy and improve quality of life. Cities are creating cultural districts in their city centres to celebrate multiculturalism and bring life to their downtowns. Examples like “Fringe Festival” and “Folks Fest” are living testimonies. Some cities are now using creative arts like music, paintings/drawings, dancing, story-telling and others to bring people to their cities to enjoy every day aspects of arts at a single location like a cultural district. Arts in Manitoba is labour-intensive, cost-effective, and very vibrant. Arts has

constant renewable resource. An investment in the Arts will create more jobs. Millions of people attend arts events every year in Manitoba. Arts has made a significant difference in our



Unveiling reception of "Peace and Purpose" at CNIB. photo by Taylor Summach 2011.

community – it deepens people's understanding. It promotes acceptance. It enhances empathy. It encourages each one to share imagination by entering into the thoughts and feelings of others. Exposure to, and participation in the arts help people to be better neighbours. People who participate in arts build better relationships, and this gives insight to see inside. A good example is an actor who mesmerized an audience, and spectators/participants are caught up emotionally – they are enthralled, engaged, and fully involved in sharing the amazing energy, attraction and depth

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created in the process. The theatre as an arm of arts builds harmony with and among people, just like visual arts, music, dance, and others do, through shared stories. Therefore, use



Art encourages each one to share in the imagination of others.



Mentoring to contribute to the greatness of our youth for a better tomorrow.

your artistic capacity to bring harmony to the world. Strive to understand differences, and respect them, just as they respect you.

Chart the path for a beautiful earth through the arts!

by **Dr. Sunday Akin Olukoju**

President, *Creative Foundation Inc.*

In our differences, we can see colorful and culturally creative uniqueness. In every adversity, there is always an opportunity. While strife is rife, and many are currently taking flight in the face of murderous fight in some parts of



Dr. Sunday Akin Olukoju.

our troubled world, we cannot afford to lose sight of the vantage position we stand, and the advantage we could tap from the current state of restlessness and distrust in the world. This is where and when harmony comes alive. Harmony distills every iota of acrimony. Harmony punctures every vestiges of hegemony. Harmony nullifies every lingering spirit of disharmony that could result in unnecessary alimony. Harmony promotes sanctimony that celebrates human matrimony. Harmony makes a huge ceremony out of a great testimony! But how can we build harmony in this day and age when some will prefer to scatter rather than gather, break rather than build, and destroy or mar rather than mould and make. It was therefore very fitting and appropriate to seek better ways of building upon the gains of yester-years.



Mr. Douglas Riske with presenters and board of the Creative Foundation Inc.

In hosting the “Building Bridges” conference this year, Creative Foundation’s founder, Yisa Akinbolaji has proved one more time that CFI is an organization that is in tune with the times.

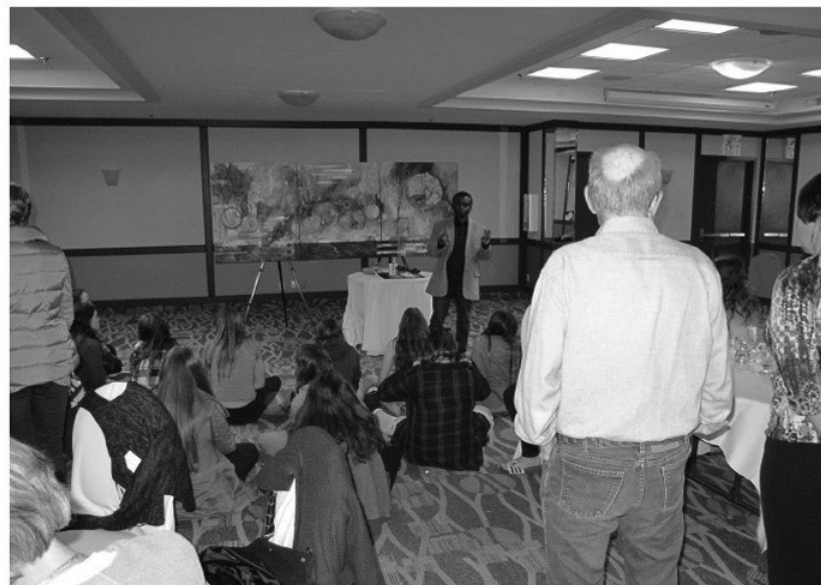
The four presenters at this year’s “*Building Bridges: Multicultural Harmony Through the Arts*” conference did a fantastic job of calling the world back to the way forward through a common denominator that is not only uniting but ever so entertaining. The Arts: music, dance, writing, theatre, visual arts/painting/drawing, film/video, and crafts, or all other art forms enjoy universality of acceptance. Simply put, “the arts” is a universal language of love, beauty, patience, creativity, and appreciation. The Arts is a unifying force. It is a rallying power. It is the mother of unity and grandmother of compassion. At this year’s conference, it was amazing to see Sue Hemphill demonstrate



how the power of intercultural awareness is breaking down walls and building bridges. Randy Guest led a very interactive session in showing how framing in film-making could be an agent of empowerment, enlightenment, and active involvement. Randy showed how framing could turn the excluded to included, the



forgotten to the remembered, and the unappreciated to become highly appreciated. Becky Thiessen, through her collaborative drawing approach, dazzled participants on how a collective, but creative group of people could build a metaphorical “Tower of Babel”. From her highly interactive hands-on facilitation, every three or four participants participated in creating a human portrait – a direct power of art in teaching the world that when humanity unites, through creative leadership, open acceptance of others as they are, humble appreciation of others for what they have or bring, and given the opportunity to be part of the game, our universe will enjoy the harmony of a symphony orchestra once



again! Yisa Akinbolaji described the process and concept of his innovative painting technique, demonstrating how life intersects, and how the “flow” and “glow” in his paintings reflect the way people meet at crossroads of life each day, leading to new hopes, new dreams, and new possibilities.

Let us strive to reach out to those who are different, even as we demonstrate to the younger ones that our universe is meant for all of us ...

Without doubt, the “Arts” has the artistry to pull people together in building bridges instead of walls, in providing ladders where none exist, and in creating opportunities where adversities thrive. Let us strive to reach out to those who are different, even as we demonstrate to the younger ones that our universe is meant for all of us to protect, preserve, and enjoy. Let everyone with courageous hearts start to use the arts to chart the path for a beautiful earth!

The Worthiness of Creating A Harmonious Society

by **Malinda Lee**

Vice President, *Creative Foundation Inc.*

Working alongside the *Creative Foundation* team to create the *Building Bridges: Multicultural Harmony Through the Arts* event for middle and high school students was

a thoroughly rewarding experience. The interactive and innovative workshop allowed professionals in the arts and in the field of intercultural education the opportunity to integrate and guide our youth to use their creativity to promote cultural harmony. In today's world, we are still seeing a cultural



Malinda Lee.

divide and more significantly, misunderstandings between various cultures. With events like this, the *Creative Foundation* can help bridge the gap and work to teach youth how to live a life of peace and embrace multiculturalism.

This project began with *Creative Foundation* founder Yisa Akinbolaji's vision of giving back to the community. Yisa built a team to bring forth many terrific initiatives through this not-for-profit organization. While still an active foundation, youth events were put on hold for a few years. With new funding from



Board of CFI from left: David Fatimehin, Malinda Lee, Yisa Akinbolaji and Dr. Sunday Olukojú.

the Government of Manitoba's Multiculturalism Secretariat, the *Creative Foundation* was able to revive an events program for youth. As mentioned, this was Yisa's vision, but along the way it became the entire *Creative Foundation* team's vision. Yisa embraced our contributions and allowed us all to work as a creative unit with varying roles. Therefore, Yisa, Dr. Sunday Olukojú, David Fatimehin and I are so proud of the



Malinda Lee, Becky Thiessen and Sue Hemphill.

Creative Foundation and the impact it will have on our community for years to come.

On behalf of the *Creative Foundation* team, thank you to all the students, educators, presenters and special guests for joining us for this important and fulfilling event.

Fostering Harmony Through 'Unity-in-Diversity' Mindset

by **Sue Hemphill**

Intercultural and Diversity Educator and Mediator.

Building and maintaining cultural harmony is one of the most crucial goals that all ages in today's society should aim for. Why? Because of the seeming disharmony and fear that linger in the air at this point in history! Therefore, intercultural competence is a fundamental skill and activity that our youth need explicit education about. This will provide an abundance of opportunities (both in and out of school) to be actively involved in transforming their world for good. Collaborative creative environment and methodology help in developing necessary tangible skills, and in fostering a *harmony through 'unity-in-diversity'* mindset. The most effective and powerful way to build intercultural or diversity awareness, understanding and appreciation is through the arts. Whether it is: writing, theatre, dance, music, film and video, visual arts and crafts, or any combination or fusion of multiple art forms; any and all art forms can create "*safe spaces*" to foster respectful dialogue and exploration. These safe spaces empower students and educators to engage with each other, sometimes across inherited or imposed barriers and divides, to learn and share about their diverse cultural identities and backgrounds.

Artists and cultural animators, by their openness and open events, non-judgmental, creative, imaginative, and constructive nature are uniquely powerful at breaking down those barriers and divides. However, exposure to cultures or communities or identities other than our own is one aspect of becoming a successful intercultural communicator and global citizen. Exposure alone is not enough! Unrecognized and unchallenged stereotypes or



Sue Hemphill.



Healthy Hive Consulting
engagement • collaboration • innovation

Sue Hemphill Principal Consultant
1015 Ingersoll Street Winnipeg MB R3E 2M1
o: [204] 774-7742
e: sue@healthyhive.ca
w: www.healthyhive.ca



"*thought viruses*" hurt us all when they act the lens through which others (individuals, groups or communities) are judged and measured. These thought viruses limit the individuals and groups they are applied to as well as limiting the potential for healthy and positive relationships. By engaging together in arts creation and presentations, students and educators (with the guidance and facilitation by teaching artists or cultural animators) are able to identify both what they have in common and in what ways they (we) are distinct from each other.



Sue Hemphill.

Cultural identity is complex and multi-layered. Sometimes we are aware of only some parts of our cultural identity but not others, or we may feel good about some aspects of our identity and not good about other aspects or factors. Arts activities foster increased self-awareness. Being involved actively over time in the arts develops many means or methods of expression and self-discovery, resulting in self-confidence and the development of healthy self-esteem. Self esteem and self awareness forms the foundation for the development of a cohesive and respectful group dynamic.

A great society is one for all humanity

by **Yisa Akinbolaji**

Convenor coordinator, *Creative Foundation Inc.*

Realizing the increasingly diverse cultural demographic of our city and province, our new initiative is designed to help promote the benefits of multicultural integration and to work to minimize racism. With more than 65 percent of Manitoba's population based in Winnipeg, the board of CFI is driven to challenge professional artists and people from various professional backgrounds to use their skills to help discourage racism and all forms of social intolerance. The branding of Winnipeg as the most racist city in Canada by *Maclean*, a national magazine in its January 2015 cover story is still fresh in the minds of many citizens who wish for a city that is peaceful and one that engenders great innovations.



Yisa Akinbolaji.

Taking into consideration the urgency of addressing prejudice and racism in our multicultural society and considering the feedback we received from the participants of the workshop, 'Multicultural Harmony Through The Arts' held on October 21, 2015, the *Creative Foundation* board has now decided to take this project to the next level in the coming year. We plan to enlist outstanding professionals that can help this generation become proactive in finding a positive way to promote inclusion without creating a pressured or stressful environment or heated atmosphere. We believe that with the support of good citizens of our city and province, we can help empower young people by deploying our knowledge and the universal language of art and creativity in forging a united front where collaboration, understanding, and mutual respect prevail.



**CREATIVE
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Creative Foundation Inc engages established professionals to help foster inter-cultural understanding and art appreciation in all diversity amongst youth of different cultural background and social groups so that they will be motivated to use creativity in all areas of life including problem solving and developing healthier life choices.

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