

*Taken as Read:  
A Report of the Human Library*

**Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, November 3,  
2012**

**By**

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## Summary

The Human Library, although not without challenges, was a resounding success, accomplishing the majority of its stated goals. It provided a space for very different forms of learning to take place, expanded understandings of social issues and who educators were, provided information and overall, was a safe place for both Readers and Books to take risks. The Human Library encouraged openness, frankness, allowing people to name their biases and explore their own assumptions. The Human Library also provided a space for both Readers and Books to develop their communication skills in dealing with hostility, and answering and asking questions. In particular, although not organized as such, it allowed women, the majority of the Readers, who are often conditioned in to silence, to speak and leave feeling empowered and encouraged by their own engagement in the process.

In a world of escalating racism, poverty and environmental destruction, we need spaces that challenge the overwhelming doom and gloom scenarios. Terms such as positive, fun, interesting, fascinating, inspirational, peppered our conversations with the participants as they reflected on their experiences that lovely afternoon in the mansion.

The majority of Readers was Caucasian and well educated. Most were women. Few of the Readers or Books were members of the Art Gallery and most said they seldom frequented the space. On the one hand this is a problem or concern. However, it did bring very new people to the Art Gallery and few institutions have access to the middle and upper classes as represented in the Readers. This is a group of people most powerful and often in a position to perpetuate the stereotypes, racism and intolerance the Human Library aims to test.

The majority of Books and Readers felt this activity was highly appropriate for an Art Gallery. However, others were perplexed and although their reasons were diverse, the main concern was its relationship, or lack thereof, of their traditional and limited understandings of 'art'. Linked to this, only one Reader used the experiential identity-art-making space at the exit to the Portrait exhibition. So few opportunities to engage like this exist that adults are fearful of these spaces and/or simply have no idea what to do with them.

Concerns and challenges raised were around the length of time (20 minutes as too short), the space itself as not conducive to discussions as well as inabilities or limited views around 'art' in a number of ways. The least successful aspect of the Human Library was connections between the exhibition and the Human Library.

It is not at all uncommon for people who are angry, firm in their beliefs and determined to confront 'the enemy' or 'the other', to demand that the meeting take place on their terms thereby causing disruption. The Books handled this with skill and generosity, but we must also acknowledge Tania Muir's just and careful handling of a situation.

In light of these and other findings in this study, we make the following suggestions:

- 1) The Art Gallery perceive reaching out to the 'elite' or higher social classes as a contribution to social justice and change, rather than simply a shortcoming. This does not mean ignoring other populations, but rather acknowledges its unique role or niche in the quest for social change.

2) The inclusion of Books who represent even more ‘challenging/challenged’ sectors of society, such a person who is actually homeless, a gay/lesbian married couple, a single black mother on welfare, First Nations representatives, women who chose not to have children and so forth.

3) We recognize the Art Gallery did identify three homeless people who later declined and therefore, we suggest an organized conversation between the past books and new books around ‘identity’ and ‘subjectively’ would allay legitimate concerns about being ‘expected’ as a Book to speak on behalf of others.

4) Produce for the next Human Library a brief document that illustrates the Gallery’s more expansive view of ‘art’ and how the Human Library links to their vision and mission.

5) Bring in more volunteers (‘docents’) to do tours that day. Provide these volunteers with an orientation to the Human Library project, perhaps even a 20-minute conversation with a Book of his or her choice.

6) Use the actual exhibition space for the Next Human Library. This will enable Readers to see the connections between the art, identity and the Books.

7) Have an educator(s) located in the area who could talk about its purpose and encourage the non-artist adults, to be more aesthetically playful.

Through activities like the Human Library project, traditional adult visitors, as well as unrepresented audiences, can begin to re-imagine the Art Gallery as a critical, creative, vibrant and vital educational space it is for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **Introduction**

*Taking on an issue is none of our business – our museum has to be seen to be fair and impartial.*

(Museum executive cited in Janes, 2009, p. 61)

*Bringing important, challenging and controversial points of the view in a democratic, free-thinking society [is] seen as a key role for the museum by many.*

(Cameron, 2005, p. 21)

On November 3, 2012, the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria (hereafter called the Art Gallery) hosted the Human Library in partnership with the Central Library. Dr Darlene E. Clover and Fatma Dogus of the University of Victoria agreed to undertake an evaluative study of the event on behalf of the Art Gallery. This report shares the methodology and findings of that project. It also puts forward some suggestions, based on our own observations and those of the participants interviewed for this evaluative research project - the Books and the Readers.

The Human Library was first established in Copenhagen, Denmark in 2000 by a group of young people who wanted to do something to challenge the rising phenomenon of homophobia and anti-Islam sentiment they saw around them. Subsequently Human Library activities have been organised in approximately 65 countries around the world, making it an smart, frightening, innovative, international educational movement for social change and justice.

The Human Library is best described as an equalities project. Traditionally the mandate of a library is to provide information to public through written sources. The Human Library broadens this through a practice of Living Books who educate through stories of their real life experiences. The method is designed to promote active dialogue to break stereotypes, challenge intolerance, prejudice and ignorance. It uses a positive, intimate, non-threatening and engaging process, most often one-on-one dialogue with a person one would not necessarily come into contact with in her or his daily life. The Books offer a diverse range of humanity, varied in age, sex, employment and cultural background. They make themselves available to be 'checked out', to use a library term, for 20-minute intervals of informal conversation. Readers self-select the Book with whom they would like to interact, through this self-directed learning model, are exposed to distinctive ideas, identities, experiences, and backgrounds.

In the global sphere of the Human Library, Canada is doing something unique. Commonly, the Human Library is confined to a library. However, in Canada there are partnerships between libraries and art galleries or museums. The Human Library at the Art Gallery is a case in point, as is the partnership between the Canadian War Museum and the Central Library in Ottawa. Further, in many parts of Canada, the CBC – our public broadcaster - has played a key role in publicizing the event as well as identifying Books and interviewing some on radio.

### **Structure of this Report**

We begin this report by highlighting some of the complex debates around the

place and role of adult education in contemporary galleries/museums. This proves an analytical lens to discuss the data. Although this section of a report would normally include the findings of studies on the Human Library few exist to date save one from Australia, currently inaccessible. Following this, we outline the mission and goals of the Art Gallery, including the aims and objectives of the Human Library of November 3, 2012, the central aim and objectives of this evaluative-research project and the quantitative and qualitative methods we employed to collect the data for this report. The report then puts forward our findings and concludes with a discussion and some suggestions for consideration for the future. This report demonstrates that although there were challenges and changes need to be made, the Human Library met or even exceeded the Art Gallery's aims and expectations. That the Art Gallery continues to organize this particular, or a similar event type of event, is something the majority of the participants and we wholeheartedly endorse.

### **Art Galleries, Museums and Adult Education**

Some of today's most pressing social issues include racism, homophobia and other type of cultural and religious intolerances. Further, recent decades have seen increases in socio-economic inequality and environmental deterioration. A primary aim of adult education is to opportunities for people to explore these issues and to acquire the skills and knowledge to navigate positively, effectively and purposefully in the world (English & Mayo, 2012). Wilson (2010) refers to this as gaining knowledge power, or the capacity to think critically, more deeply in order to help, rather than perpetuate, the world's most difficult problems.

Over the past decades, as key sites of adult education and learning (Thompson, 2002), art galleries and museums have felt the pressure from both governments and the public to augment their social mission (O'Neill, 2002). These aesthetic sites are now called upon to utilize their resources and institutional spaces to contribute to social change, combat isolation, and develop a more critically educated and enabled citizenry that can defend and advance democracy, social justice and social change (Crooke, 2007; Taylor & Parrish, 2010). Indeed, if museums can be thought of as mirrors of social belief, then it is reasonable to assume that they have an obligation to give back what their communities put in front of them" (Janes, 2009, p. 61).

While many embrace this new challenge, there are concerns around their capacity to deliver on these new demands. Historically, museums and galleries have been primarily elitist and exclusionary sites, despite efforts to develop educational programmes to civilise, uplift the spirits and/or educate the lower classes through the arts (Borg & Mayo, 2010; Perry and Cunningham, 1999). Indeed, far from engaging with the everyday stories and challenges of the world, they have persisted as "traditional sites where knowledge and truth are displayed by the socially powerful and consumed by the powerless" (Golding, 2005, p.51). For example, in 1956 adult educator Bigman found the "museum-going group consisted largely of professionals, white-collar workers and students with very few workers" (p.28). Studies today show that in many places, little has changed, meaning the work of museum and gallery educators remains oriented towards an elite population who often shun change, preferring more traditional pedagogical practices and art forms (Borg & Mayo, 2010; Golding, 2005). Although education departments were formalized in the 1970s, their place within the institution has been

complex and often, marginal (Chobot & Chobot, 1990; Hooper-Greenfield, 2007). Perhaps as a consequence many galleries and museums still make little provision for adult education, as Anderson, Gray and Chadwick found in their 2003 large-scale quantitative study of Europe. We support these findings. Our study of Canada shows an overwhelming emphasis on the education of school children, seen to be future, through organised visits (Clover, Sanford & Dogus, 2012). This has led Burnham & Kai-Kee (2011) to refer to the adult education work of galleries and museums as frequently “without design...the result not conscious long-term planning or theory, but of ad hoc, step-by-step responses to public demand” (p.25).

Grenier (2009), however, argues that change is afoot. New attention to learning has led to a growth and diversity of activities in art galleries and museums today. She argues that these institutions attract a much more diverse audience through more creative and engaging learner focussed and self-directed activities. Hooper-Greenhill (2007) applauds this movement away from traditional controlling, pedagogical practices where curators lectured people through organised walking. Roberts (1997, p.8) concurs and takes it a step further: “education has become too restrictive and misleading for the museum setting...There has been a conscious shift toward “learning” (emphasising the learner), “experience” (emphasising the open-endedness of the outcome) and “meaning-making” (emphasising the act of interpretation).” Others add to this the notion of ‘play’. They argue that galleries and museums have the potential to offer novel, playful learning environments to enhance creative thinking and generate opportunities for new learning (Grenier, 2010, p. 78). “Play, along with curiosity, confidence, challenge, control and communications is one of six components of intrinsically motivated museum experience” (p.77). Yet although Kolb and Kolb (2010) “view play as the highest form of learning”, they note that adults are often shy to engage in environments that encourage play.”

Other scholars see problems around the contemporary rush towards the term ‘learning’ (English & Mayo, 2012; Martin, 2003). Lahav (2003) believes “releasing the shackles of elitism associated with the traditional one line story of art [educating in galleries and museums] for new, more people-centred, transparent and pluralistic understandings” has led to a fragmented, individualized learning experience that lacks intentionality. This “trip to the supermarket [where] we are invited to choose which story or theme we fancy” can leave people feeling increasingly insecure and undirected” (p. 23). Building on this, other adult education scholars express concern that in our rush to see education as a demon and learning as the answer, we neglect the fact that there are many problematic assumptions and social concerns in the general public that individualized self-directed learning is unable to challenge. In order to truly combat social injustice and bring about change, we need more ‘international’, nonformal educational opportunities that are creative, critical, risky and challenging although these must also be respectful and inspire (Clover & Stalker, 2007; Kilgore, 1999; English & Mayo, 2012). With these debates in mind, we turn to the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria and their Human Library.

### **Vision/Goals of the Art Gallery**

The Art Gallery of Greater Victoria was founded in the 1950s. The current mission is to be:

An essential cultural centre serving the global community and encouraging dialogue and engagement. A dynamic presence with outstanding exhibitions, collections and programmes, developing creative partnerships in a unique facility dedicated to innovative approaches to the understanding of visual arts. A contributor to the cultural infrastructure and economy of B.C.'s capitol region, attracting international audience, an active participant in multi-disciplinary dialogue across the arts, enhancing the understanding and education of our communities.

This mission, according to Tania Muir, Educator, Public Programmes, "gives you a sense of what we're trying to do in terms of our public programming." Using the words of William Thorsell, CEO of the ROM, Tania describes the Gallery metaphorically as a modern day Agora', meaning it is

a public square, a space where divergent communities can meet, and engage and have conversation and dialogue not just about visual arts but also about culture being a medium by which we can determine who we are as individuals, but also as a community as a society, and so going back to the more traditional notion of the public sphere.

### **Goals and Objectives of the Human Library**

For the Art Gallery, the Human Library "offered an opportunity to 'check out' a graffiti artist, a city planner or even a Buddhist monk", to name but a few of the Living Books who took part on November 3.

The primary goal was to provide people/readers with the opportunity to learn from the subjective experiences of the "living books" and the stories told through a temporary portraiture exhibit that had been mounted in the gallery space. The portraiture exhibition titled *Beyond Likeness: Contemporary Works from Library and Archives Canada*. *Beyond Likeness* explored the evolving concept of portraiture from more traditional representations of likeness to works that challenge the conventions of the genre. In examining issues of history, popular culture, autobiography and perception of self, the works demonstrated that identity is complex, constructed and unfixd. In relating this to the Human Library, contemporary portraiture goes beyond the traditional capturing of likeness, immortalizing or providing a public glimpse o private life. The portrait becomes an articulation of changing concepts of identity, both individual and collective. Together, the works in the exhibition form a narrative which reveals how human character is shaped by personal biography, engaging the artist, the subject and the viewer in the active construction of meaning.

The objectives of the Human Library were to:

1. Provide a safe space for participants to have conversations with different individuals in the community

2. Develop greater understanding of “others” in the community through conversations and story telling
3. Break the prejudice and stereotyping, “do not judge the book by its cover”
4. Introduce a different way of spreading and sharing knowledge and understanding (storytelling, interacting, curiosity)
5. Promote human rights, and social justice
6. Create awareness to welcome the diversity in our community
7. Learn to look at portraits differently in order to understand how we shape and are shaped by discourses of identity

The outcomes of the Human Library, as articulated by the Art Gallery, were to:

1. Increase the ability to question and explore our own biases towards “other”
2. Meet with people who we do not easily interact in our lives to gain a more in depth of understanding of their realities
3. Rethink the concept of identity in a social context
4. Explore social justice issues through stories of others
5. Develop self-awareness; books and the readers
6. Learn to ‘read’ portraits in new ways

### **Evaluative Research**

Evaluative research in education is an approach that involves stakeholders and their perspectives as fundamental to understanding the impact and/or value of an educational programme or activity. The emphasis is on gaining knowledge about what people have learned and to explore differences and commonalities. Further, evaluative research examines the relationship between the objectives set for a particular education programme or activity and its relationship to the perspectives and impact on the participants or learners (Anderson & Anderson, 2002).

Before we undertook this evaluative research project, we (Clover and Dogus) met with Tania Muir. In that meeting, we discussed the objectives of the Human Library, agreed upon the objectives of evaluative-research activity, identified the roles of the ‘team’, and the instruments/methodology of data collection. We also agreed to full anonymity of the participants and that the study would fall within the framework of a larger Canada-UK study of which the Art Gallery is a part. The Team also discussed the issue of ‘reciprocity’ in terms of wants and needs from the various locations. We agreed



the UVic researchers would attend and observe the event, including the evening orientation, interview the Books and Readers and produce a report of their findings for the Art Gallery. The UVic researchers will use the data from this study for academic publications and presentations.

### **Goals and Objectives**

The primary goal of this evaluative study was to understand the impact of the Human Library and interaction with the portraits, on visitors to the gallery on November 3 and its implications for the social justice and change orientation of the Art Gallery. In addition, the evaluative study aimed to:

1. Provide a profile those involved (both Readers and Books)
2. Identify ideas that could form the basis of recommendations for future social justice-orientated activities

### **Qualitative and quantitative aspects**

The researchers used two main approaches in order to reach its aims. The first was quantitative. We developed six quantitative questions to gather personal information on both Readers and Books. The questions were:

- 1) Age (0-20; 20-30; 30-40; 40-50; 50-60; 60 and higher)
- 2) Gender
- 3) Ethnicity
- 4) Frequency (to the gallery)
- 5) Type of employment
- 6) Educational level/background

As this information is highly personal study participants were informed that they should not answer any questions that made them feel uncomfortable. Two participants did query why we were requesting this information. However, all were pleased to supply the data when its usefulness to the Art Gallery and our study was explained.

The second and primary approach to data collection was qualitative. We created 13 key questions for both Readers and Books (see amendments for the latter) that aimed to uncover key learning through their inter-actions with the Living Books and the portraits. A number of Books actually took part as Readers as well. The questions asked were:

- 1) What brought you to human library project at the gallery today? (Book: Why did you agree to be a 'Living' Book)
- 2) What book did you 'check' out and why that particular one? (Book: Who did you speak with?)
- 3) What was something of importance that you learned today from your conversation with the 'human book' about that person's life? (Book: in your conversation with the Reader)

- 4) Would you say that learning through dialogue was different from learning through reading a book? If yes, how or why?
- 5) Did your participation challenge any past assumptions you had about (the Book)? If so, how?
- 6) What was the most important part of your experience as a reader (a book)?
- 7) What social issues emerged to you from the conversation for you?
- 8) What did you learn about your community today?
- 9) After speaking with the human books (Book: talking to the reader), did it change how you think about/look at the portraits in the gallery?
- 10) Do you think that is the kind of activity the Art Gallery should be involved in or organise again in the future?
- 11) Do you see the Art Gallery as a place to explore social justice issues?
- 12) Is there anything you can or will do with the knowledge or new understandings you have gained today that might have an impact on the community?
- 13) What recommendations would you make for future Human Library activities?
- 14) Did you see yourself as an educator (Books)? Did you see this as an educational process?

As this activity was organised in relation to the Portrait exhibition outlined above, we also had five inter-woven questions that related to its objectives:

- 1) When I say the word identity (or identity politics) what comes to mind?
- 2) Did you go through the Portrait exhibition? If yes, what connections did you make between the Living Books and the portraits?
- 3) Did speaking with the Book(s) assist you to think differently about the portraits?
- 4) What connections did the volunteer educator(s) make between the portraits and the Human Library activity?
- 5) Did you engage in any of the hands-on activities at the end of the exhibition?

### **Methods and process**

We used three methods in this study. Firstly, after the Readers had spoken with the Books, we asked them a few questions from the above list to obtain initial reactions. During this conversation, we invited them to be part of the study and to provide us with email and/or telephone contacts. All save one Reader agreed to the follow-up interview, however due to holidays and an incorrect email, we were unable to connect with two of those who had agreed. We did not interview of the Books during the event as they were too occupied. We did, however, ask each one for a later interview– to which they too all agreed – although some did shared a few reflections on the experience at that time. Due again to complications we interviewed all but one of the Books. Four of the Books actually took part as Readers as well and one was at both the Central Library and the Art Gallery.

The second method was individual interviews. Twenty people too part in depth interviews. Most were interviewed over the telephone at their request but four were interviewed in person at a location of her or his choosing. As we read through the data, we occasionally contacted a Reader or Book for clarification or an expansion on the idea.

The third method we used was observations. We watched people interacting with the exhibition as well as facial expressions and interactions between the Books and the Readers. Although the Art Gallery did not request that we keep a photographic record of the event, a few of the Books requested we take photographs of them, and the Reader verbally agreed to be in the photo. This fact prompted one Book to suggest: “One of the things that happened at the university [where a Human Library was hosted] was photographs of the living books were taken. I felt like documentation got missed in this one. I was surprised that they did not do photographs. Your colleague was the only person who took a photo of me. The...art gallery missed out in terms of their promotion later on by not taking photographs.” While documenting this event the next time is a suggestion we will make at the conclusion of this report, the photographs taken by request on November 3, and as agreed to verbally, will only be used for academic presentations and never be published in print or online without the written permission of all subjects.

To analyze the data, we began by creating a template, using the questions outlined above as headings. Under each of these, we placed the responses from each participant. Once the corresponding responses were in place, we read through these moving away from the question to identify common words, ideas, and learning. From these, we created the ‘thematic’ categories we outline below. Although we have categorized the data, there is much interweaving amongst them. Further, some of the quantitative data actually has qualitative explanations so although we separate the data below they are not isolated from each other as we illustrate under the themes.

## **Findings**

We turn now to the findings of this study. We begin with a presentation of the quantitative data, using a combination of numbers, statements from the participants and Figures to visually illustrate the numbers. We then outline the qualitative findings, categorized thematically to make the information more meaningful and accessible in terms of our later discussions and suggestions. When relevant, we make a distinction between the Books and the Readers. The final section of this report is a discussion of what we outline here.

### **Ethnicity and Education**

#### **Figure One: Ethnicity**

#### **Figure Two: Education**

The majority of Readers were born in Canada, with a few from Europe but who

had lived in Canada for many years (see Figure One). One was from China (a student studying at the University of Victoria) although we were unable to interview her. One Book was Muslim of South Asian heritage born in Canada; another was born in China and immigrated. The remainder of the Books identified as Caucasian.

All but two of the Readers had university degrees, an undergraduate and often a Master degree. Of those without higher education degrees, one worked in a coffee shop but the other had had excellent employment in the forestry industry and as a consultant for the government. All but one of the Books had a university degree (although he did have advanced training) and one had a PhD. A number of Readers and Books identified as practising artists (musicians, writers, visual and graffiti artists). Four were retired and others were or had been professionals such as teachers, adult educators, psychologists, librarians, medical doctors, and museums workers. What this data means is both the Books and the Readers were highly educated, predominantly white, and upper middle class (See Figure Two).

### **Age and Gender**

#### **Figure Three: Age**

The majority of the Readers were over 35 years of age, with most in their 50s, 60s and even one over 80 years (see Figure Three). This latter was the only one identified as 'disabled' (in a wheelchair) as it was not a question we had asked although it perhaps should be in the future. The ages of the Books, as visually illustrated in Figures three and four were primarily between 20 and 40 years, with only one in his late 40s and another in her 50s, making the Books consistently younger than the self-selected visitors.

The majority of the Readers were women. Equally, the majority of Books were female with only four males, one of whom we were unable to interview. One of the Books actually noted the gender imbalance, as did one of the Readers: "A lot of the people who were coming as readers were women. I thought that was interesting." Neither, however, could explain why they thought this was case, and we do pick up the gender threads at other times in this report.

#### **Gallery Visitation Practice**

The most common response to the question of how often a participant visited the gallery was 'periodically' and by this most meant "once a year." However, two Readers and one Book were members of the Gallery. Two lived in the area and all visited frequently as this statement suggests: "I go a couple of times a month. I am a new member and I am just learning a bit about the gallery. I am reading the monthly

newsletter and taking advantage of the annual membership I have paid for by going to the various offerings.” While the art exhibitions were certainly an important motivation for frequenting the gallery, the collective events or what one called “the social engagement spaces” carried the most importance and we will return to this shortly.

A reason for seldom visiting the Art Gallery is best illustrated by this statement: “I do not think of it, really, it is out of the way. I saw the advertisement [for the Human Library] at the library and the person I wanted to speak to was at the Gallery so I came here.” For others, it was a combination of economics and a residual belief of ‘elitism’ as this statement captures: “Hardly ever. I have been there two or three times in 20 years. Funny because I am an artist but I do not think to go, maybe because it costs so much to get in. So that makes the gallery a place where rich people can enjoy works of art, but not a place for artists like me.” We will also return to this later in this report.

### **Naming Bias; Expanding Understanding**

James and Shadd (2001) writes “it is often said that ‘everyone stereotypes’ because it helps us to categorize a vast amount of received information about others” (p. 6). What is not common, however, is to actually have the opportunity to admit or speak aloud these mis- labels and misconceptions. Adult educators argue it is difficult to transform problematic biases and assumptions unless can name them. To do so in an effective manner, creating a safe and respectful environment that is also challenging (e.g. Lopez & Thomas, 2006; James, 2001). This naming of bias - this speaking out loud in order to better understand ‘the other’ - was precisely what the Human Library aimed for as outlined in their objectives and outcomes: To increase the ability to question and explore our own biases towards “other”; To provide a safe space for participants to have conversations with different individuals in the community. This aim is also linked to make a contribution to social justice and change, and for adult educators, this means the opportunity to explore issues that affect society more deeply.

Many of the participants when first questioned immediately following their conversation with a Book were unable to articulate an assumption they had come with, as this quotation demonstrates so succinctly: “I cannot answer that question.” Yet in the in depth interviews over the next month, they spoke candidly about preconceived assumptions.

One of assumption, perhaps not surprisingly given the majority of Books and Readers were women, was around gender. As one male Reader noted: “you know, when you say burlesque I think strip club. But she [the Book] was a social worker, going for a PhD and I said wow, did I miss that one! Taking it further, other discussions focused on “body image and stereotyping....What is beautiful and what part of us is beautiful? One woman suggested this opportunity to talk about issues such as “gender roles, masculinity, women, aging, sexuality and generally what is attractive in our society in addition to a million other things” would be good for her son. Linked to this, other Books gently but firmly called in to question preconceived notions of who prostitutes were, framing their world through a discourse food, shelter, health and safety to challenge the more dominant moralising discourse that that one Reader suggested was how she had looked at the issue before. Readers were also exposed to conversations about “feminism, marginalisation, sexism and acceptance.”” As so many noted but is best captured in this statement, “these are not topics I talk about in my everyday...they really give you a new way, to think

about.”

In some cases, Readers were at a loss to explain why they brought certain perceived notions at all: “I expected the Muslim Canadian artist to be middle-aged, don't ask me why, so I was surprised that she was so young.” In a follow up conversation to explore the deeper meaning behind this confusion, the Reader queried “it probably had to do, with the images of elderly Muslim women crying over dead relatives in places like Palestine that you see all the time on television? So I guess I had that in my subconscious and that is kind of frightening, don't you think? The media has a lot to answer for. But then again, so do I.”

A second area of bias and new understanding was around art, and this too was linked to social or environmental issues. There is of course much debate about what art is and its ‘use’ (Mullins, 2003). Through conversations with writers and visual artists, one Reader “learned how art can be used as a vehicle in terms of personal growth and to straddle two cultures. She [the artist] uses art to explore the cultural divide...I am not an artist so it was a whole new world for me. It was a whole new idea to see how she uses art as her life.” Another learned that art “comes from adversity” and how it could be used to visually re-imagine that adversity in a more accessible way. Another realised she had little or no idea about the depth of art in society, assuming it was merely of entertainment value and we return to this point shortly.

Building on this was the astonishment and mind-expanding learning around the very controversial practice of graffiti. As one participant noted, my conversation “certainly challenged my pre-conceived ideas about graffiti. I didn't have any idea that graffiti was about the image and not just the word. To me they seem to be the same world and I did not really see art in it. Yet he called himself a graffiti writer so it is complex. When he talked about the history of graffiti it had never occurred to me anyone would know the history.” This participant was not alone. Many others saw new sides to graffiti and were able to articulate very different visions from where they began, such as moving from “thinking they [graffiti artists ] are a bunch of idiots” to this:

Public spaces, graffiti art, sustainability are the social issues that emerged from the conversations. Me and [the Book] also talked about street art. There are people who go out and make a difference, make a beautiful image out in public space. It might change someone's opinion about street art. There are also people who want to write their name everywhere. There are different motivations that drive people to create images on the street. But, still we need a space for art and for people to express themselves.

To be honest, I did not see it as art. But he called it street art. He talked about the fact that for him graffiti is a political act – it is about making a political statement. He talked about the fact that by putting his writing on the wall he was claiming that wall. This practice is about saying, “I am here.” He compared it to advertising on billboards. They pay for that space and there it is in front of you and you are not given the option of it being there. So why should graffiti, street art, not have the same rights to claim public space? He is also not ever paid to do what he does. He does it for political and artistic reasons. Fascinating...

Perhaps the greatest testament to the learning is this comment by a Reader, although the data is peppered with similar comments from others: “I learned [try] not to make too many generalisations or assumptions. You are probably wrong.”

### **Taking Risks**

A thread that wove its way through the fabric of the data is the idea of risk and risk-taking. Another of the fundamentals of adult education – and we would argue the objectives of the Art Gallery in hosting this event - is a belief in the educative potential of taking risks (Eccelstone, 2004). There were many examples of risk-taking in the data, both by the Readers and the Books.

To begin by connecting, with the first category, it is a risk for people to speak aloud their problematic assumptions and biases. As one participant stated: One of the reasons I went to the event was that I wanted to put myself out there a bit... That made me nervous. It was kind of nice to realize I could do that.” Others recognized “for some people it is a challenging thing to do, to interview someone.” Many, and we pick up on this later in this report, had come unprepared to be alone with the Reader, assuming there would be the anonymity of a group within which to find safety. But as the quotation we just highlighted notes, Readers took the risk.

The greatest risk was to the Books for they had little or no idea with whom they would be speaking. And in fact most of the day was calm, exciting learning opportunities but predominantly, non controversial. However, there were two ‘controversial’ occurrences during the Human Library and they were, not surprisingly, around art and religion. Art is powerful, it is not neutral, it is often very subjective, it invites controversy and it brings out emotion. The same can be said about religion. The first example was the Zen Nun:

The first reader was little bit more interested, but the second reader did not agree with me and she made it clear that she did not agree with me. She was a different person. She was in her 80s and she came from a religious background. She said she had a brother who was a priest and a brother-in-law who was a priest. She was from a very Christian background. It was a little bit of a challenge, but I like that. [But] why would she come to learn about somebody who was teaching Zen when she was very determined not to except it I do not know? But it was good that she was at least interested enough to find out what it was.

This Reader also demanded, although the Book acknowledged the Reader could have had hearing due to her age, they move to another location [sofas in the foyer as we observed] where she seemed constantly distracted and inattentive to the Book’s responses. However, the Book insisted she enjoyed the challenge of it, and spoke of her techniques to manage the situation, choosing to be a listener, and just hear what the woman had to say. She, like others, also felt that it helped her to reflect on who she was. It is also a chance to really think about things, about her work with a person “I would never have met like that... in my everyday life.”

The second was the graffiti artist, quite naturally given that many municipal governments actually have ‘anti-graffiti’ departments. Similarly, this Book was forced to change location to accommodate a visibly hostile Reader who, as he noted, “was coming

from a place of real resentment and pre-conceived ideas and judgements.” However, after 20 or so minutes of conversation, he felt “we were able to both challenge each other a bit. At the end I felt good and we agreed more discussion was needed on the topic and that this was a good way to involve people in a difficult dialogue.”

When we spoke with this Reader as she was rushing from the Art Gallery, she quickly explained how she was one of the people who cleaned the poles of graffiti art. We observed that she was very nervous, agreeing to be interviewed but hoping it would “not be with me alone. I want to do it with a group.” We did however, interview her individually albeit very briefly as she was still nervous and claimed to be in a hurry. Yet while “she came with an agenda”, we need to see her too as having taken a risk to come and confront a stranger about something she, like he, cared deeply out - in his case freedom and public art; in her case, public cleanliness and order. Her explanation, however, about her encounter with the artist shows that the risk paid off: “[My understandings] expanded rather than were challenged. I learned about his point of view about the graffiti art. I learned from him, he said things that I had not expected. She also told the Book she would be “thinking on how to bring the community and the graffiti artists together”, suggesting to him “community needs to understand who graffiti artists are and why they do that.”

### **Education and Being Educators**

Education and learning are central aims of all Human Library projects. From the above, we can see that people learned a great deal. But there are epistemological tensions and questions around what education is and who educators. Not surprisingly, these arose in a variety of ways in this study when we questioned whether or not the Human Library was as educational process, what education meant, and/or if the Books saw themselves as educators.

One view of education from the data was a common conditioned technical and ‘institutionalized’ interpretation: “Interesting question. When I think of education sometimes it is only linked to school [or maybe] job training and not about educating yourself and someone else in a different way, like through the dialogue in this project.” There were other equally limited understandings as this Book noted, “I am not sure I would say that. Education is about facts and figures.” Others believed it was an educational experience because it had the hallmark of the teacher who ‘knows’ and the learner who is ‘taught’, although many also struggled with this as they clearly felt there was some kind of reciprocity in the teaching/learning relationship, a power imbalance that needed to be questioned: “It was an educational experience in the traditional sense where the book is the teacher and the reader is the learner. [But] I felt like there was an exchange. That can be educational experience, but it was mutually beneficial.” Along this same line, other Books struggled with whether or not being an educator was their role in the Human Library: “I do not think I went into it with that intention. I think of it more as community building.” However, later in the interview this understanding was amended: “I had an opportunity to talk about my job, my motivations for choosing this career, some of the training that was required. Certainly it was educational for them and for me as well.” Other books were simply unclear as to whether or not they were educators: “I wanted to play an educational role but I do not know if I accomplished it or not. They [Readers] ended up talking more about themselves. My answer to that question is I do not



know.” However, continued probing did provoke this reflection from one of the Books: “But maybe another aspect of education is engaging and encouraging. If so, then yes, I played an educational role.” Others, however, were both clear and proud of the educational role they played as this comment illustrates: “Certainly for the young woman I was a role model and it was nice to be able to help guide someone. I spend a lot of my day educating people about things so yes I am an educator.”

For some of the Books the project was equally an education of self, both a learning and a teaching moment. One learned how to communicate or articulate herself better as a result of the role she played: “Because I could see if I could convey my skill and my knowledge in a short period of time and answer any questions. It was a good learning experience for me.” For others, it validated their skills to deal with difficult situations: “I was prepared to talk with anyone and it was not the first time people have had harsh reactions to my topic of graffiti...I have dealt with a lot of people so I realised I am pretty comfortable with a broad range of people – across the spectrum.”

Some Books saw their role as providing resources, further reading on a topic or area for the Readers because “this was a library project after all...Education is about providing facts, some actual information. While providing resources is important, it is a limiting view that can lead to some problematic statements such as this one: “If you want to know more here are some websites, books, authors...just read Vandana Shiva and your life will change.” Of course changing the world and/or one’s life is never so simple, and other Books and even Readers questioned the value of providing information or handing over a book and expecting it would result in fundamental transformation. “I cannot say it was educational experience. The first person I talked with had lot of knowledge about China...[But that is not] an educational role...Education is a mutual exchange...a conversation...a dialogue and [engaging] with a different point of view respectfully. I do not know how change happens, but I know it is not simply by providing people with information about something.”

### *Hope and Inspiration*

In a troubled world, adult educators argue that through the educational process, we need to dig more deeply into problems in order to encourage new ways of seeing the world, but equally importantly, provide a sense of hope, a reason for people to feel change can and does happen and a sense of empowerment in their own capacity to make a difference (Clover & Stalker, 2007; Freire, 1992/2005; English & Mayo, 2012). This educational aim was very much the mandate for many of the Books because “people are concerned about the world they live in. One has young children and she really wanted to make the extra effort...The idea was to help them feel empowered amongst all that can feel overwhelming – so they don’t shut down.”

In some instances, Books validated people worries about, for example, the planet and encouraged them to feel a sense of power in their own lives against an onslaught of conflicting information:

My key message was really to have that person come away feeling that if she could just do a bit in their life and be aware of her food choices that would create the ripple effect necessary for the change needed. So that it does not seem so

overwhelming. There is a huge misinformation campaign about food and global climate change.

Words that were used repeatedly by Readers when asked about the teaching styles of the Books and the educational process itself were positive, inspiring, fantastic, open, and inviting. This comment by a Reader captures many of the things we have been talking about up to now in this report, but also touches on identity, which we discuss shortly:

What was great about the experience is I thought the books were completely open – “ask me anything. I want to hear your thoughts on what I do too.” It was very refreshing. We actually got into a conversation about this. A lot of time people fail to make a connection because we do have a preconceived notion. But with someone saying I am open you begin to question your own assumptions and beliefs and through the questioning the person does become three-dimensional. I told a bunch of fellow writers I was going to this event and their responses were quite lukewarm. But after I explained the experience they gave a completely different response and they hoped it would come back next year.

When asked what she had learned about her community, one of the Books enthused: “I learned that there are people who are serious about sustainability and creating change. That gave me some hope for future.”

### **Carrying On?: “Yes, absolutely”**

Well over three quarters of the participants, when asked if this Human Library activity or something similar should continue in the future, stated emphatically: “absolutely, it was so positive”; “oh, goodness me, yes”; “most certainly, this was very valuable.” Many Readers and Books felt that in organising this event, the Art Gallery was “providing an innovative service to the public. It was a neat idea.” Eighty percent enthusiastically endorsed an event like this again in the future: “yes, this the kind of activity an Art Gallery should be doing. I loved it. It was very clear. If there is another one I will go again. It made me think and it was inspiring.”

An equal number of Readers and Books said they would recommend it to friends, family, colleagues and “if it comes up again I will try to book appointments to speak with other books.” One book talked about how he himself might organise something similar to the Human Library for his own workplace. Going further, as alluded to in some of the quotations above by Books and Readers, fully two-thirds believed this type of opportunity was something the gallery should be doing more of. As one Reader enthused: “they [Readers] got an opportunity to experience different way of learning because they went to...the art gallery and] met with someone they had never met before.”

Only a very few Readers were perplexed about the activity and suggested it did not belong in an Art Gallery. Their reasons revolved around the concept of art as these two comments illustrate:

As an artist, I don't know. When you call it a human library or a living book you associate it with the library.

I wondered what would people get out of it [the book project]? Reading books has nothing to do with the gallery.

Another Reader questioned the relationship between this event and the vision/mission of the Art Gallery: “I was not sure what the gallery wanted to get out of this project. They have to decide how it fits with their mandate I guess. But maybe I don’t know what their mandate really is? I thought it was just to show art?” Of course, this raises the question of what is in fact, art but also, reminds the Art Gallery that finding opportunities to share their very broad and creative aesthetic and social vision and mission is critical.

### *The question of play*

Alluding back to Kolb and Kolb (2010) and Grenier (2010) around the importance of creating spaces for play, the Art Gallery did create such a space as one exited the exhibition area where visitors could creativity explore their own identity. However, only one interviewee used this space. All of the others said they either did not see it, or were unclear how to use. A number claimed it as because they were not ‘artists’, returning us to the problematic limitations society sets, and the way in which it conditions around, who has the right to create. But it also speaks to fears around ‘play’ as frivolous and either not worthy or not ‘educational’.

Building on this was an interesting term used by both a Book and a Reader - “edutainment.” The Book and the Reader had taken part at both the library and the gallery. The Book made this comparison: “The gallery had more of an atmosphere that was almost entertainment but...the library it was an incredibly important service in their lives - to get them out and interacting. As one woman more or less said, it is a lifeline. I do not think anyone feels that way about the Art Gallery.”

### **Picturing Identity**

A few Readers visited the exhibition either before or after their talk with the Books, but this was perhaps the least successful aspect of the Human Library. To begin, some took in the exhibition because “I thought the portraits were proposed as something to do while you were waiting on your next book. It was nice it was free though.” However, the majority said “no, I did not.” Ninety-five percent who visited were unable to make the link between the Portraits and the Human Library suggesting, “perhaps we should have been told that?” As we, the researchers, began to hear and observe this disconnection between the two spaces we activity engaged Readers in a dialogue about both the connections and the concept of identity. This statement illustrates the result:

You were the one who made me think about this. You made the connection for me. Once you talked to me I went in thinking what you said. So...the portraits in the gallery were a varied portrayal of many identities and it spoke not only of the identity of the subject but also the way in which it was tackled. It spoke of the artist who was doing the portraying. I particularly liked the five videos of the authors and how they were portrayed – it actually brought each of the author’s identity more to you.

Others, following our conversations and explanations, said they wished they had spent more time with the exhibitions afterwards and that there had been someone there to help them make the links and open a dialogue about identity.

When we asked the few who had taken the tour if the volunteer educator had made the connection for them, all argued she had not and this is clearly articulated by this Reader: “The person who took us through the exhibit – I cannot bring myself to call her a ‘docent’ as that is such an awful word with no meaning in this country - did not make the connection for us with the project. Did she know there was one or does she just do this all the time and so does what she does?” We would argue this does not mean that people were unappreciative of the volunteer’s tour because some were, it only notes, as expressed by this Reader, that “I did not get too much out of the portrait stuff. I did not bond with it... There was a guide and I listened as she explained what was in them. But I said, so what? The pictures did not grab me either way. Did not mean anything to me. I didn’t care. There was no personal involvement [like with the Books].” This comment was actually from a couple who had used terms like “fantastic” and “wow” when speaking of their interactions with the Human Books. Another Reader made this interesting comparison between the Portraits and the Human Books: “The Books had soul. Most people don’t know how to read the soul in a painting. Most educators don’t know how to educate about the soul of a painting. That was true today.” And yet Readers and Books also spoke poetically or metaphorically about identity following their experience. One woman, for example, defined identity a ‘mosaic’ as we spoke with her amongst the pictures in the gallery.

For others, there were insufficient tours in general that day and they did not coincide with the breaks between the Books: “There were not too many tours. It is always great to have a guide. I always get a guide to know what I am looking at. But the tours did not coincide with when I would have been able. So I did not do the tour.”

### **The question of space and time**

We discussed under the section on risk how two people forced the Books to move outside the area set up in the mansion. While there reasons were more complex, others suggested the space was a problem for a number of reasons but in particular, because they were too close to each other and could overhear others. Many moved out to the sofas in the foyer. Some suggested that in terms of making the Human Library project and the exhibitions more connected, that the conversations be held “in amongst the artworks and the artists do the tours.”

A number of participants were satisfied with the time they had with the Books but most wanted longer, so engaged were they: “Twenty minutes was not enough for the one on one so with a group you would need to double that time which might not be possible. I guess that 20 minutes was trying to strike a balance between having time and making sure others have time. But really, I was just getting started when time was up.”

There were interesting discussions around the format of the day. Approximately half of the Readers appreciated the one-on-one conversations with the Books. However, the other half said they would have preferred a group format. One reason was they did not realize they would be alone. Other noted, and showed through their body language, that they were shy and lacked confidence: “when I saw it was one-on-one I was pretty

worried. But it was not difficult at all.” Linked, others suggested they would have learned even more about their community if it had been a larger group process and they would draw attention to anonymity: “What I would like is to have a group of 8 or 10 of us around the dining room table. Sometimes you want to sit back and observe – be more passive. With the one on one format there was no sitting back and you had to be fully engaged. I would like to just be able to listen to other questions and learn a bit about other Readers as well. But it was all good and I enjoyed it immensely and learned a lot.”

Finally, this Reader suggested the best way to make the link between identity, the art (and not just the exhibition) and the Human Library was to:

put the books amongst the artworks. They were just an empty room with a person talking to only one person. It could have been anywhere since it was not linked to the exhibitions. I mean, you’ve got Emily Carr...this is a larger than life personality. That woman had an amazing identity well, identities.

### **Discussion, Further Thoughts and Suggestions**

Janes (2009) writes that galleries and museums “have far greater value than is currently being realized” (p. 23). We can argue through the Human Library, this value clearly came into focus for the Art Gallery. Indeed, although not without challenges, the Human Library was a resounding success, accomplishing the majority of its stated goals.

The Human Library provided a space for very different forms of learning to take place, expanded understandings of social issues, provided information and new ideas and was a safe place for both Readers and Books to take risks. The Human Library encouraged openness, frankness, allowing people to name their biases and explore their own assumptions. While two people came with hostilities, aiming to confront practices or views they did not share, for at least one of those, the conversation encouraged an action for the future that was quite different from what had at first been intended (to simply speak her mind). There are simply not enough spaces like this, and the Art Gallery, as so many suggested, must continue to create these opportunities.

The Human Library also provided a space for both Readers and Books to develop their communication skills in dealing with hostility, and answering and asking questions. The latter brings us to how Readers in particular had to overcome shyness and fears. Although this is the 21<sup>st</sup> century and things ‘should’ have changed, this public fear is very gendered. Women, and here we need to remind ourselves that the Readers were predominantly older women, have been conditioned to keep quiet, and to mistrust their own knowledge and abilities (Heng, 2006; Manicom & Walters, 2012). So while the lack of men attending the event is a concern, this type of educational opportunity for women, although this was not how it was designed to be such, is both important and valuable. Some many of the women came in trepidation but left empowered and encouraged by their own engagement in the process.

In a world of escalating racism, poverty and environmental destruction, we need spaces that challenge the overwhelming doom and gloom scenarios. We need educational spaces that bring a sense of hope and inspiration Adult education scholars argue this later in particular is vital if we are to challenge the retreat in to the ‘there is nothing we can do to make change’ attitude that settled on so many (English & Mayo, 2012; Clover & Hill,

2003). Terms such as positive, fun, interesting, fascinating, inspirational, peppered our conversations with the participants as they reflected on their experiences that lovely afternoon in the mansion.

The fact that the majority of the Readers were Caucasian and well-educated can on the one hand be seen as a problem or concern. If the idea of the Art Gallery is to attract a more diverse population, then this event was unable to do that, although this was the first time it was held and that must be taken into consideration. However, the lack of diversity in Readers (and Books but we return to this), particularly around an event that aims to challenge stereotyping and prejudice in society, does little to quell the charges of elitism that continue to plague arts and cultural institutions, whether founded or otherwise. However, as adult educators we believe this should also be viewed through another lens. In adult education we have a maxim: “Dig where you stand.” Where the Art Gallery stands is still on the cusp of elitism and they can use events like this to their advantage. Few if any other social institutions have such access to the middle and upper classes as represented in the Readers. This is a group of people most powerful and often in a position to perpetuate the stereotypes, racism and intolerance the Human Library aims to test. *We would recommend, therefore, that the Art Gallery perceive reaching out to the ‘elite’ or higher social classes as a contribution to social justice and change, rather than simply a shortcoming.* This does not mean the Art Gallery should not seek to encourage engagement with a more diverse population, but rather acknowledges its unique role or niche in the quest for social change.

Building on the above, overwhelmingly, the Readers found the Books to be fascinating and as noted various times in this report, a very valuable learning experience. Many enjoyed what one called “the eclectic range.” We also recognize, as did one of the Readers that the Art Gallery had to use the Books who agreed to take part on November 3 and that an effort to representatives from a specific population, in this case the homeless was thwarted. *However, we would recommend the inclusion of Books who represent even more ‘challenging/challenged’ sectors of society,* such a person who is actually homeless, a gay/lesbian married couple, a single black mother on welfare, First Nations representatives, women who chose not to have children and so forth. Given the unique audience the Art Gallery attracts, the contribution to social justice/change would be enhanced by additions of the most misunderstood/stereotyped people in society and allowing them a voice. This could be done by bringing together various Books from November 3<sup>rd</sup> to share their experiences with those who may still be cautious about being part of the event. A conversation about ‘identity’ and ‘subjectively’ would also allay legitimate concerns that one is ‘expected’ as a Book to speak on behalf of others.

As noted, some people were perplexed that this type activity would be held at the Art Gallery. Although the reasons were diverse, the main concern was its relationship, or lack thereof, to ‘art’. Art continues to be defined as ‘visual’ art – paintings in particular – and this limited view is why galleries experience so much push back when they introduce genres such as performative arts (Pollock & Zemans, 2007; Janes, 2009). However, many others did see this activity as appropriate to the Art Gallery, thereby, supporting what Janes sees as “the opportunity [for these institutions] to honour the trust and respect that the public afford them, in part by engaging in the interests and aspirations of their communities – irrespective of how seemingly remote these issues may appear” (p. 22). *We suggest for the next Human Library, the Art Gallery could produce a brief document*

*that illustrates expansive view of 'art' and how the Human Library links to their vision and mission. This could be provided to all the Readers and even, the Books at the beginning. We also suggest that more volunteers ('docents' and others) be brought in to do tours that day, and there be an orientation with them to make the links between the Human Books and the exhibition, whatever it may be since one person noted the multiple identities of Emily Carr and how that could be used. Perhaps the Volunteer educators could even have a 20-minute conversation with a Book of his or her choice before the visitors arrive.*

It is not at all uncommon for people who are angry, firm in their beliefs and determined to confront 'the enemy' or 'the other', to demand that the meeting take place on their terms thereby causing disruption. Their sense of powerlessness and lack of control is palatable. The skill and generosity showed by the Books needs to be highly applauded. But so too does the care taken to allow people to move to spaces of comfort by the Gallery staff, particularly, Tania Muir. Although we are sure this was destabilising for her, she rose to the challenge and thereby ensured the controversy was eloquently managed.

This leads us to the question of space. We concur with the interviewees that the space was not ideal, as did the Gallery staff, who noted the very different and far more convivial and comfortable set up of the library. *But rather than recreating what the library does/has, we concur with the Readers and Books who suggested the Gallery space be used for the event. Why not have the Books and Readers engage amongst the portraits or other exhibitions? This would in fact, as noted above, make the link easier, stronger and deeper to the art.* One reason to not organise it this way may be not to interfere with 'regular' gallery goers who are not interested in the exhibitions and want a quiet, contemplative space. However, we would argue that on this particular Human Library day, the aim is very different from normal – it is to educate, to invite the curious, to draw attention to social issues and/or how we 'other'. This means the legitimate use of that space for that afternoon is the Human Library and importantly, neither the majority of the Readers, nor the Books, were members or frequent visitors of the Gallery. For them to see this space used in this way would enable them to see the art as less elitist and less disconnected from their own lives and the identities and those of others.

In her study of museums, Grenier (2010) admits that simply creating playful aesthetic spaces that challenge traditional practices and help people to construct knowledge and understanding indifferent ways, are often neither well crafted nor self-explanatory. We are not convinced this was the problem with the 'experiential' area at the exit of the Portrait exhibition, but there was clearly a problem, if the hope of the museum was that the Human Library participants would use it. Rather, we would argue from the data that it had more to do with the fear of 'artistry' – of who has the right to make art. Opportunities to create art, for those who are not artists, are few and far between. *While we recognise the self-directed creativity aim of the space, we would encourage the Art Gallery to have an educator(s) in the area who could talk more about its purpose and encourage the 'non-artist' adults to be more aesthetically playful/risk-taking.*

To conclude, a survey in 2003 of approximately 2,400 Canadians indicated that 60% of the respondents believed museums (including galleries) could "play a more significant role in Canadian society, although that role was not defined" (Janes, 2009,

p.61). We add our voices to those of the majority of participants in this study who believe the Human Library played a significant role in breaking down stereotypes, uncovering and challenging biases and bringing community together. Through activities like this, traditional adult visitors, as well as unrepresented audiences, can begin to re-imagine the Art Gallery as a critical, creative, vibrant and vital educational space it is for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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