

### **COLE ALVIS**

My name is Cole Alvis, I am an actor and a theatre creator, I am Métis from the Turtle Mountains in Manitoba. And I'm the leader of the Indigenous Performing Arts Alliance, an art service organization for indigenous performance in Canada. The Indigenous Performing Arts Alliance claims space for all indigenous performing artists. We have membership across Turtle Island, which is North America, in the form of indigenous performing artists and individuals, indigenous performing arts organizations, and allies. The allies are an integral part of IPAA and the work that we do. We create resources and service our community from the artists' and the organizations' perspective, but in order to see those individuals and organizations have their work tour, have their work be shown, it does require support from our allies. So we do also build certain resources that create access points for individuals that are interested in engaging in indigenous performance but perhaps don't know how to begin.

### **NINA LEE AQUINO**

I am Nina Lee Aquino, I am the Artistic Director of Factory Theatre. I'm also a freelance director and dramaturge, sometimes a playwright, not so much an actor anymore. I worked, first and foremost, my first real theatre experience was Carlos Bulosan Theatre, which is a Filipino Canadian theatre company. So I kind of see my career as a kind of ripple, like, you know the Filipino Canadian in me working with CBT. And then I founded a theatre company fu-GEN Asian Canadian Theatre Company, which is still the foremost, kind of, theatre company dedicated to the development of Asian Canadian theatre artists, who is now under the leadership of David Yee. And then I went on to Cahoots, which has been for... what? 30 years now or almost 30 years... kind of the flagship diversity theatre company in the country. So, you know, I kind of went there. And then now at Factory. The ripples of my career in terms of the reach, that my desire to really reach, you know, from myself and who I am to kind of being an Asian Canadian to being a diverse artist to now being a Canadian period. For me, being in these theatre companies and being able to reach more and more and more people and being able to put my passions at a larger stage, so to speak, has kind of been the goal, you know. And so yeah, it makes - hopefully - it makes sense, kind of where I'm trying to go. And bringing the people on my back with me.

### **LISA DE WILDE**

So I'm Lisa de Wilde, and I'm the chair of the board of TIFF. I also serve as Chief Executive Officer at TVO, and I'm on a couple of private sector boards as well. So I would say it was less than 10 years ago TIFF was embarking on some pretty big ambitious projects, like building the Lightbox in downtown Toronto, and you know, was looking at what kind of a board would we need to be successful going out the next 10, 20 years. And I think, you know, building a board is something that takes a long-term perspective. And, you know, we just got really clear that we wanted to have a skills-based board. So we created a matrix of the types of skills that would be relevant to a film organization and then we just started setting objectives of how do we recruit people to bring those different skills to the board. And at the same time, you know, bring different perspectives and to represent you know different groups within Toronto.

### **SAGE LOVELL**

Hi. My name is Nicka Sage Lovell, I'm called Sage. I graduated from Gallaudet University three years ago, and my major was psychology. While I was at Gallaudet University I really gained a lot of knowledge with regards to accessibility and social justice. And after graduation I moved to Toronto and I started experiencing a lot of frustrations, experiencing a lot of barriers in society here. And as I dealt with those barriers, I realized that things really needed to change. And I spent a lot of time growing up waiting for change to happen and experiencing frustration after frustration and then I realized that I had to be part of

that change. I had to be active to make that change actually happen. So I moved to Toronto after graduation, I got involved with ORAD - the Ontario Rainbow Alliance of the Deaf - I was there for two years, involved with that organization. I also spent time with SOY - Supporting Our Youth - volunteering for that organization. I've also been involved with Tangled Arts and Disability. And a variety of organizations, such as H3, International News, Hands On ASL, which is a program that teaches American Sign Language to queer and trans-identified people. I've also started my own initiative, and I'm really focused on accessibility for deaf through the use of American Sign Language. It involves creating vlogs that are online that are always captioned, that always have transcripts attached, and that shares information that really allows for a - pardon the interpreter - that really allows for accessible information for anyone in the deaf community because they can see these vlogs in their own language. And they don't have to struggle through English translations, English scripts, so they immediately have access to information via American Sign Language on my vlogs. So I spend a lot of time working with English scripts, translating them to ASL, which is something I'm very good at doing. And lately I've been recruiting more deaf people within the community as a way of empowering them and giving them the opportunity to help me and create these vlogs. So I've been partnering as best I can with the community at Large. You know, growing up my experience has always been English was the first thing you see and you have to work through reading that, it was never comfortable, but to have a vlog where the information is immediately there and the deaf person can forget the transcript and enjoy just watching a video that presents to them the information they want to know in their own language, makes a huge difference. So the idea came to me in terms of my initiative was that if we were able to set up something that allows for vlogs consistently they will avoid miscommunications and misunderstandings, because when you have a long transcript all in English there's you know there can be miscommunications and misunderstandings all the time. And it's really hard to read through that. Especially if you're looking for a specific piece of information within paragraph after paragraph in a language that's not your first, it can be really frustrating. So the idea of having a vlog makes the information immediately accessible and lessens any misunderstandings that could occur.

### **DEFINING INCLUSIVITY (Cole Alvis)**

Inclusivity is a better word in my mind than diversity, because diversity can separate whereas inclusivity does require a certain amount of space afforded to all people.

### **ADDRESSING PRIVILEGE (Sage Lovell)**

Often I feel like people, hearing people or people with power, they really need to take a moment to check their privilege. They, you know, they need to take a moment and really think about how privilege affects everyone, how systematically we see this oppression and how certain acts or lack of accessibility oppress small, marginalized groups.

### **LEADING THROUGH INCLUSIVITY (Nina Lee Aquino)**

For me, I'm really passionate about inclusivity and being able to really reach out to artists and potential employees that don't normally think that they have a chance at working here at Factory. But because it's me and they see me in this role, I think it allows for these artists and employees to actually come, and they think that it is possible. Because for me they are my priority, and that's just natural being who I am, right? So I not only practice inclusivity and diversity, I am that. I am a walking poster of that. So, because Factory has done that. When it comes to, kind of, you know, the overall messaging when I became the artistic director of Factory, it was important that, you know, when they hired me or even before they hired me that was something that I put on the table. My priorities would be staging diversity. That I would be putting on the stages the Canadian experience in a very prismatic way. Those terms, you know, we use in our mandate, in the vision. Again, you know the TTC bus kind of analogy has been kind of adopted by some of the theatre artists here because, yeah, you know, you can't tout being Toronto's theatre community if again if what you see on the stage and your audiences and the staff, if it doesn't look like

the inside of a TTC bus. That's... and that's huge. And that's really accessible to our general public to get an idea of the kinds of stories we tell here at Factory. And the kinds of plays that I'm interested in investing in, and the kinds of artists that I'm interested in investing in as well. So, you know, we also... it's also helpful to define diversity. And so I often say you know, yes ethnicity, skin colour, but that also includes gender, sexuality, class - that's a big thing and I think that's taken for granted as well. When we are looking for artists to nurture, to grow, that next generation of artists and storytellers, and even established or veteran artists, I always ask them - you know, try and think of the Canadian experience in full colour. Like, really don't bound your imagination in just, kind of, typical, conventional way. You know really imagine your world in full colour.

### **MAKING IMPACTFUL CHANGES (Cole Alvis)**

A mentor of mine said "If you are working on systemic change, sectoral change, and it's going well, you're not doing something right." This is hard work. There's a reason why people are less inclusive and it's not just because of, not just because of ignorance or just because of prejudice. It's hard work, and often what it requires is the structure of the organization shifting, evolving, a rethinking of how is it that we do the things we do. And from what worldview are we doing them? And that can be a challenge, particularly when funding is an issue and particularly when resources are an issue, it gets really tempting to cut corners and just go for the easiest route. And often diverse practices are not easy, and therefore it makes sense to me why folks may not prioritize it. But I think the benefits of meaningful engagement with various communities will outweigh those cut corners, I think, in the long run. And that's something that I would like to impress upon is, thinking about working in a way that doesn't seem efficient at the start in order to get somewhere much greater than where we are at now.

### **NURTURING AND INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION (Nina Lee Aquino)**

Well, there's not a lot of us out there. I think that is the big challenge. Sometimes, no matter how far I cast the net there are not a lot of artists of colour are willing to step up. Especially in the theatre administrative side. You know, you have a lot of actors that want to be on our stages, but the people working behind, you know, producers, marketers, development people, like, that's still... we fail to nurture those kind of theatre creators. And to me, they're still creators, but just in a different division of theatre. It's hard, and there's still far and few in-between, and I'm not liking it. So again, it's about inspiring the next generation of theatre administrators that will kick ass. Again, if we continue to, you know, if people see, you know, they go to my website and they see our staff, you know, being as diverse and inclusive as, you know, as we can be, then hopefully that'll give the future, you know, people who are thinking about going into theatre business in this way, will be inspired and be hopeful that they have a chance of working here with us. I'd love them to, it's just where are they? You know, sometimes it's a challenge and again, if they're not in the limelight it's like what's the point? How can I make theatre a viable profession. You can. Like, I am literally living proof of that, and you know, so all I can do is provide mentorship, a sense of Factory being a training ground, a stepping stone. And that too is another challenge, in that yes, you know, a kick-ass person can come in here, of colour, lots of potential, and then two, three years working here, and then they get snatched by a bigger theatre company. So it's like, ugh, you know. So sustainability is one thing, because again, the third challenge is compensation, you know. We're a mid-size theatre company with our own financial struggles. Theatre we already know doesn't pay well, you really need to be here... you're here because you love it, and you're passionate about it. And money shouldn't matter, but it does, and so we often do become a training ground or kind of the first doorway into theatre and then they go off to someplace else that can pay them better. So yeah, I would say that would kind of be the third challenge when we do get the right people.

### **WIDENING YOUR TALENT POOL (Lisa de Wilde)**

I think that everything starts with a commitment around, you know, what outcome are you seeking to obtain. And, you know, I think that an organization will want to get really clear on why they want to

increase the inclusiveness of their board. And start with that really clear commitment, and then from that place you can then put in place processes that will produce a really robust board recruitment process. This is not rocket science, we live in an amazingly diverse city in an amazingly diverse and open country, and you want to really tap into the full talent pool that is available. And you know, I think that it is... it's all about just getting on with it. I think it does come back to, you know, the question of marshalling all available talent to serve the organization and its objectives. I think it is about being relevant to your community, so reflecting the community that you serve and that you work as part of. I think it's, you know, it's important to be seeing inclusivity as really just a fundamental part of the way that talent across all parts of the organization are recruited, retained, and developed.

### **INVESTING IN THE LONG-TERM (Cole Alvis)**

I think best practices around inclusivity initiatives often start with what are the goals of the organization and particularly as it pertains to the community that that organization operates within, and perhaps the communities that haven't had, for whatever reason, a level of access to that organization or to that arts practice. I think some folks respond well to a bottom-dollar pitch, and that can be a challenge I think. It's not always an efficient way when you're reaching out to an underserved community or a community that has not had the same level of access to education and opportunity. Those candidates, while they may be strong in certain areas, have been operating under likely a certain level of disadvantage. And so there's, there's often some professional development and training opportunities that are required. When you do invest in those types of hiring practices and when I have, what I've experienced with my organization is there's a level of engagement with the broader community, or rather the specific community, that that individual comes from. Through that connection comes the opportunity to have more access to the cultural knowledge, more access to individuals from that community participating in whatever events it is that you're doing. And so when it comes to audience development for performing arts or increased engagement in whatever artistic practice you're looking at, that's where I think you can start to develop new audiences or engagers. When communities see themselves represented in the art or represented by the organization they are more likely to participate.

### **VALUING YOUR COMMUNITY (Sage Lovell)**

Well, I'd want to approach it with asking about the value of the community, and how much they value their community. Because usually you're going to get a positive answer. You know, most hearing people form the board or otherwise are going to answer "Yes, of course." And every community, when we are talking about the, have deaf people in them. So if you really value your community, from my perspective, there are deaf people in every community so you also want to value deaf people. Because it's equivalent.

### **BRINGING THE BEST TALENT TO YOUR BOARD (Lisa de Wilde)**

I think it really does come down to "Why wouldn't you want to tap into the full talent pool?" You know, it's the point that has been used to good effect when we talk about women on boards, and those types of initiatives. But you know, I think it really goes back to first principles. In most organizations, the human capital, the talent, is one of the most important if not the most important part of running a successful organization. So of course you want to tap into the best people.

### **LOOKING TO COMMUNITY LEADERS (Cole Alvis)**

Often, I recommend an engagement process - a consultation process - with the desired community that you would like to see an increase in engagement with. One of the main things that I think of around best practices is seeing artists or leaders from that community being given the opportunity to be leaders within your organization. So by that I mean having the opportunity to make decisions, or to think critically "What

is the programming?" or "What is the direction that we're going?" so that they're able to bring their cultural knowledge and their understanding of what the community responds to and is looking for.

### **ADDRESSING A BROAD SPECTRUM OF NEEDS (Sage Lovell)**

First thing I would do would be to suggest to the organization that they should set up a meeting and that they should bring in people who are deaf, they should bring in someone from the blind community, a wheelchair user, perhaps people representing other communities such as people who are very sensitive to smell, the autistic community, people of colour, perhaps a trans man, a trans woman, as well as perhaps someone who represents the non-binary community. So really set up a meeting where you have a variety of people who identify in diverse ways and start asking questions. Because if you're starting from ground zero, you know you have to start with questions, you have to ask the right questions. That the first thing you have to do, and you have to get responses from people who are speaking from lived experience. But in terms of when we talk about full accessibility and inclusion, I think the most important thing at a meeting such as that would be to ask "What are your accessibility needs?" And then they can give answer like "I need interpreters" or "I need live captioning" or "I need, you know, FM systems in the room so that sounds is higher." Or accessible washrooms, large-print materials. It also, answers may also include such things as high-contrast paper because white paper may not be suitable for certain people who have certain visual impairments. Wheelchair accessibility in terms of location and buildings. You know smells that are reduced in the environment. And that's just the beginning. It's the first thing I think of. I think beyond that there really needs to be focus on diverse identities because everyone's experience is unique and different, there's no one person who can speak for everyone. And if you're able to have a meeting with that many different people there I think that would be hugely beneficial to an organization that's just starting out. And it would be nice if there was something to offer those folks at the end whether it was an honorarium or something to offer them, just to honour their inclusion in this meeting and their willingness to attend. Because, you know, I lot of the people that I just mentioned come from marginalized and oppressed communities, and to be able to honour their... their, presence in that meeting would be a good thing as well.

### **STARTING WITH THE COMMUNITY YOU SERVE (Lisa de Wilde)**

When an executive wants to open up the conversation with their board about how do we start to embark on an inclusivity project, I think it can be pretty simple to look to the audience, to look to who is the community that your organization is set up to serve. And you know, take them for a walk down the street in Toronto. Just start to ask really simple, basic questions about how do we reflect this amazing city that we are a part of.

### **REACHING OUT TO THOSE WITH EXPERIENCE (Nina Lee Aquino)**

Talk to people like me, I think. I think there's not enough... I mean we're beginning to now... but in at least in the city of Toronto our theatre community - we tend to be isolated from one another. I mean we do talk, and again it's starting now, but I think you know a stronger networking of you know artistic directors and general managers and business managers I think can really benefit from a good dialogue of how to really make both on the stage and off the stage as diverse as a TTC bus. Do you know what I mean? And I think you know, again, we tend to by our defaults and for a lot of the men that are sitting in these powerful positions that can actually make those decisions their default list of people or roster of artists are really a reflection of who they were back in the day. And that list needs to change and the roster needs to evolve. So I think that's one thing. I think you know having a dialogue with theatre companies in particular with you know leaders that are new to the game, like me for example - I just kind of got started here at Factory - but also speaking with younger leaders, and women leaders, and asking for our advice and what we think because then I have to power to recommend people that they might actually consider. Like I have a roster of people that I think I can go "Here's my list, how about you suss them out, check it out, and see what, you know, what... who knows?" Right? Who knows? You can only try. But I think that for other

people considering it'd be great for them to network and reach out to other theatre companies that practice the same thing. And Toronto in particular, we have a great kind of array of ethno-specific theatre companies, smaller than Factory, that I go to sometimes you know, for help. If I am really looking to put out a call for auditions for a production and you know my lists isn't good enough I will call the AD of Cahoots Theatre Company, or Obsidian Theatre Company, you know, that theatre company is dedicated to the black Canadian experience and artists. Native Earth Performing Arts, Aluna... So Those are great living breathing resources that people can actually - and you know, we're good Ads we're not snobs! We answer our emails promptly, and are always willing to be there and you know, take us out for coffee. Have a conversation with us. I'm always welcome, I have an open door policy, I'm always open to talking about what the scene is like here in the city and what is is like to hire and practice inclusivity and diversity. So I think that's kind of my one thing that I would recommend is pick up the phone, we're all Google-able in that sense, pick up the phone and talk to people who are living that experience and practicing it on a daily basis. And again, you know, create an advisory board of, you know, artists or, you know, theatre companies. Again there's something to be said about being able to call me, or Marjorie Chen from Cahoots or Philip Akin... like, we are all connected in this community. And you know, I know that Fringe, the Fringe Festival for example started up the culturally diverse kind of fund because they really wanted to increase the diversity of the people applying to the Fringe, and they got money to you know, actually fund culturally diverse applicants. And so Gideon who was the ED at that time called me up and said "Hey I have a posting out and this is a call for artists of colour. I will be honest with you, I don't know if this is PC or not, if it gonna offend. But can you just. I need help. Can you just read it over, guide me, tell me if..." And you know, he did this with other Artistic Director's of colour as well, to make sure. And sure enough, it's like yeah, its like we helped him. And now it's like what, fourth year running that funding program? And it's been great. It's actually a great funding program that encourages more artists of colour to participate in the Fringe. Because again there is this perceived idea that Fringe is only open to so and so, and sometimes the artists of colour need that leg up to get into the Fringe and be inspired. So again, if you're scared or when in doubt, consult. Ask for help. We're right here. And we are your resource. So, I don't take offence to any of those, it's better to kind of be honest than to be paralyzed by your fear of never knowing what to do. Like how, then how do you progress if you don't take the leap of faith and take a risk, right? So, and you know, it's better also to ask for help and ask for an opinion rather than like "Oh, ok we're just gonna do that one thing." Because again, you know, tokenism can play a big game in that. Then you've really F'd up and like, offended all of us at once. You know? You know, just because you have that one thing in the sea of... you know... doesn't cut it. You know? So if I'm looking at your program and all these beautiful headshots of your company, and there's that one... and it's like Spear Carrier #75, that's still not good, that doesn't not make you inclusive or diverse, right? Like there needs to be... it needs to be better than that. And you can do better than that.

### **CREATING NEW RESOURCES (Cole Alvis)**

IPAA now houses a list, it's nearly 300 works long and counting. It's an uncomprehensive list, we are asking all the time for folks to add to this list. And this is a way to begin to claim space to say we were here, we are here, we remain to be here, and this is the work that we're doing. It's a bit of a call to action for folks that have heard of Tomson Highway, that have heard of Drew Hayden Taylor, and Marie Clements, but perhaps don't realize that there are up to 300 other works that they can be engaging with. We're partnering with Performance Wiki, which is a wiki, which we understand from Wikipedia, where individual artists and their work can be placed on a map. And anyone can add to this wiki. And so what we're doing is taking this impressive list, which we hope inspires people to want to know more, and provide them with the opportunity to click on the hyperlinks within the list to learn more about those individual playwrights, dance creators, performance creators, or their work.

### **Encouraging Your Board's Growth (Lisa de Wilde)**

Well, I have one story that I'm really proud of, where I had been instrumental in convincing somebody to join our board and then I wanted her to take on a bigger role, to chair a committee. And I spent some energy really convincing her that she had what it took to take it on. And I think that the organization is better for it and it was a really nice moment in her career as well to, you know, see that she was ready for perhaps what she thought was a bigger step than in her mind she was ready to take. And you know I think it worked out. For her it was wonderful and for the board it was wonderful. The turnover on boards can be a powerful way to accelerate and get momentum more quickly. So looking at things like term limits on boards is a good way to help to redevelop your board more rapidly.

### **USING A SKILLS BASED APPROACH (Lisa de Wilde)**

I mean, I think one of the things I'm proud of with TIFF is, is it was a deliberate choice using a skills-based approach to the boards, so really trying to understand what the skills were that the board needed. So from, you know, tactical, financial acumen, legal, understanding technology, understanding people management. And so it was really using that template and then going out and really looking for, and being happily able to find, really great people.

### **INVOLVING YOUR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS (Nina Lee Aquino)**

So Factory actually has a healthy volunteer database. We have about 80-plus people. Very diverse very different, you know. Like some are really, kind of, in their elderly years and some are really young and still in theatre school. So that's kind of been something we've been really proud of in terms of our roster. But again it's hard to maintain a volunteer base because they're volunteers and so they come and go, and the best that we can do, again, is kind of just be an example of, and carry ourselves with dignity when we work with them. And I try and be as accessible to the volunteers as possible, because some of them are artists that want to get into Factory in a different way and this is kind of their way in. I think, you know... Ellen, who is our Front of House Manager, because she's embedded in the company and the company's vision she naturally, again, tries to select volunteers that do reflect, you know, the city of Toronto.

### **ENGAGING EXPERTISE (Cole Alvis)**

So IPAA has the great fortune of being able engage Dr. Mique'l Dangeli. This is an indigenous woman from the west coast who runs the Git Hayetsk Dancers. She's a traditional dancer, she has training in the visual arts, and now has her PhD. And her PhD was on the intersection of indigenous protocols and performance. So she spent the last many years of her life being steeped in learning and developing the vocabulary around this. And so she was an excellent candidate when we have resources to hire

someone that understands indigenous protocols and performance. And so she works with us as a consultant, so that as we're coming up with these resources to share and create access points for non-native or indigenous folks that maybe aren't from that particular nation to be more familiar with protocols. There's the trust there that she understands the sensitivity around these things, and the vocabulary in such a way that she can guide us through this process. One of the things that's quite sensitive about this type of resource building is that ceremony and tradition are living things that aren't necessarily meant to be written down into a document, from a traditional, oral tradition, perspective. Folks in the community can be concerned around institutionalization of ceremony and tradition, and that's a concern of mine. And that's why we look to Mique'l and various other leaders and mentors to ensure that as we're moving towards something that will create more access points and encourage more inclusivity, we're doing it in such a way that it doesn't sell out a community or make light of something that is very personal and very sacred.

### **Creating Partnerships for Growth (Nina Lee Aquino)**

Our season, last season - which was our 45<sup>th</sup> season - all our productions that we presented ... we presented 5, I believe. All of them were in partnerships with another theatre company. And that was super important, because a) you know, with the way our theatre scene is now, never mind in Toronto but in the entire country, you know with funding being cut consistently and resources money-wise and venue wise and being you know shrinking by the minute, partnerships and collaborations really play an important part. Not just for survival but in order to really grow and thrive. And so last season, um yeah, we partnered with awesome theatre companies like "b current", again quite diverse. So, again, in the partnerships I look for, I look for sister/brother companies that are in line and believe in the same things we believe in here at Factory. Because again, it's kind of like having two megaphones instead of just one. And their audience then is able, you know, like their reach which, you know, is sizeable, plus ours, you know then the net just gets wider. And their audiences can come into our building and become our audiences and our audiences get to know their theatre company. So again the sharing just becomes a little bit bigger. And that's important because, again, being able to send that message out that theatre in full colour and staging diversity is you know... again, you have to you know just have to do it. You know, you gotta, it has to reflect in your programming choices and it has to reflect in your partnerships. We decided for last season to produce works but also partner up with indie theatre companies that believe in the same thing that we do, so. Again, cross-pollination, um sharing of resources, not just money but, um, ideas on how to reach certain target audiences that we have per production. That's huge, because again our brain is like we have our loyal factory audiences, but how do we cultivate outside of that. Being able to, because you know again we partnered with smaller theatre companies and all of them for the most part are venue-less, being able to be a home for these theatre indie companies. Which again allows them, the smaller company, to kind of, with our name promote their... promote the shows that we're producing together in a larger - at a larger - scale. And you know, the staff of that theatre company and our theatre company, yeah being able to cross-pollinate ideas and have a great exchange of you know, to do lists, and... which is important. But also the one AD and then me would, like, be able to kind of, exchange roster of artists to consider who to cast. Um, not just on stage but again the creative team, the designers, or you know people that I didn't know are now on my radar or vice versa. So yeah, I think that the impact is huge and should be done more often.

### **Building Relationships & Being An Ally (Cole Alvis)**

A challenge that I've faced when working on inclusivity initiatives is having light-skinned privilege. As a Métis person who can pass as my Irish ancestry, when I walk into a room I am given a certain level of privilege. When, when I speak certain people listen differently than when someone who doesn't look as light-skinned as I do speak. Privilege is a, is a tricky and ever changing thing depending on who it is that you're engaging with. But a challenge that I think many people who are engaging in issues of inclusivity for the first time is the level of distrust that is out there in certain communities. And that comes from years of, of being shut out and excluded. Particularly in aboriginal communities, um, it can



be a challenge to, uh, to be the new person on the scene that would like to engage with the community. I think that's where I would like to speak about relationship building. Um, I think to be inspired to have inclusive practices is of course an early, an early step, but it is a long road. And it requires, um, meaningful engagement, meaningful relationships, and a dedication that I'd like to describe around ally vocabulary. Being a good ally. The way that I understand that is being an ally isn't something that you do once and then you get to wear the ally hat. Every day you have to, um, prove that you are an ally. Particularly, um, depending on your, your degree of privilege in whatever relationship you're engaging in. That's a challenge and an opportunity for organizations to everyday, even when it's not convenient, um, check someone when they say something that may be inappropriate. Or perhaps just aren't thinking of how that vocabulary or that verbiage is received from, from cultures that aren't necessarily they're own.

### **Taking Risks (Nina Lee Aquino)**

I think the art of taking a risk is a challenge that, you know, you need your board and you need your audiences to really, kind of, fully embrace. Because it is challenging, for example: our set in, live in, Nova Scotia and the first thing you think of is they're... the default would be like they're all Caucasian. Because that is for some reason white is the default, uh, for, you know, for most of directors in the city here. And taking a risk and kind of going "No I'm going to, I'm going to make this fully... like again, the spectrum of colour on stage." That, that in itself you know, the idea that like "Oh, but will the audience get it? Or is it stretching the imagination too much? Or is it, you know, if the audience doesn't get it will we get bums in the seats? Or will that turn away potential audiences because they don't believe, that, that character... you know that black Canadian actor is from Nova Scotia from 19-somethingsomething?" Like, do you know what I mean? So, that is always kind of, um, the fear. I think, I think we're right now, the fear is a big struggle because it's connected to box office, it's connected to money, it's connected to audience numbers. And you don't know if it's going to be received well critically. And also, you know, will it translate to good box office numbers. So I think, um, taking the risk is a big... is a big issue. Luckily, I'm supported by a board that is completely on board with this vision of being able to stage diversity on our stages. And they're like "Well, sometimes it takes one audience at a time." Right? And, and it's educating and re-educating every production. It's challenging the notion of, you know, what it is to be Canadian, that it's not just one colour, one perspective, one facet. That it's multi, it's prismatic, it's all colours. But, it's um, I get again, a lot of our audiences are not used to that. And, um, we just need to keep, we just need to keep plowing through. And we need to, uh, persevere and you know, be determined and vigilant to keep staging the way we want to. Because sooner or later, again, those audience members are going to be replaced by a new generation of audience members that will, to them, it's standard. You know, it takes a lot courage to be inclusive, like believe it or not again, we're in the year 2015 and you know, sometimes I do question why? Why am I like, one of six artistic directors of colour? Or women artistic directors? You know? So it means that we have a lot of work to do still.

### **Supporting Your New Board Members (Lisa de Wilde)**

Well, I think they're the same risks that exist when all decisions about people are made. You know? You're, in a sense, trying to, um, bring people into a new organization. You want them to be successful. You need to have a really deliberate approach to onboarding or orientation. You want to make sure that they get access to the information that's going to allow them be successful. I think with any new person coming onto a board, um, it is fundamental that the organization contribute to them being successful in that new role.

### **Determining What Success Means (Cole Alvis)**

Measurement and evaluation makes me think immediately of world-view. Um, through which lens are we looking to decide when something is a success? And this is something that many of the indigenous performing arts organizations and individuals that IPAA represents, uh, encounter. Particularly when it

comes to reporting for funders or various other bodies that require a certain kind of bottom dollar "how-well-did-you-do-this-year" type of response. And this relates to any and all inclusivity approach where the outcomes are not necessarily going to look great on a graph for the CADAC chart that you might be filling out for your operating, or the various other reporting you might do. Um, and I go back to world-view here because if we're thinking about community first, if we're thinking about meaningful engagements, and developing work and art that has all of us moving forward together, that may not necessarily fit within a capitalist model. And so that's where certain amount of creativity is required, um, and articulation as far as telling the story of the work that you've done thus far or the successes that you perceive and see in your organization and in the communities that you're engaging. Um, that, that may not fit within those metrics. I think a certain amount of advocacy is required, I think that we have some work to do as far as, um, explaining this to the funders and various powers that be. So that, that we do acknowledge contributions and efforts and outcomes that may not show up on pie charts and graphs.

### **Adapting Your Measurement Tools (Sage Lovell)**

One thing I would say from my experience is feedback forms, not so much. Um, face-to-face discussions are a much better way to go about getting feedback when you're when you want to ask deaf people how they felt about an event. Whether that's with an interpreter or not. But when you send out feedback forms it's based on English and you're writing answers, versus if you have someone face-to-face and you're able to express in American Sign Language, in their own language, it goes much better and people are, from the deaf community, are much more comfortable. Um, we recently had an international film festival here in Toronto and at the end there was a survey sent out and it was in English. And there was so many deaf in the audience, but they were from, you know, all around the world. There were deaf people from Europe and from various places in Canada and the States. So in terms of accessibility, English wasn't accessible for them coming from other countries, much less having American Sign Language as a first language. There were people on site who were volunteers, and so they were approached and uh, many deaf people told them that the feedback forms weren't understood and they were asked "Could you sign these feedback forms to me?" In which case that was done and they were able to access the questions in a signed language, in a visual language. I actually approached the director and said "Could I sign some feedback to you, I have some ideas?" and the response was "Do you mind just getting it down on paper, or getting it down, you know, in text and giving it to me?" And I, uh, at that point I sort of felt that the, the idea that expression for deaf people in terms of comfort and first language is American Sign Language, it wasn't really being thought of. You know, having to work through English, and you know, is the grammar right? Is the structure right? Does that actually make the point that I want it to make in this other language? It's really stressful. And it becomes a barrier. So it, it you end up feeling... it's too demanding. When you get to that point where, you know, you have this feedback and you feel it's really, really important and you have some really good ideas but you don't feel comfortable putting it in that other language. So first language, native language, is always best. So in terms of the deaf community that would be face-to-face, in Sign Language.

### **Moving Beyond Tokenism (Nina Lee Aquino)**

You can have the one or two, kind of, the South Asian actor or the Chinese actor on stage. But, you know, when you read the program you go "Oooh! Lighting designer was also culturally diverse! And the Stage Manager was." That, that means there's something well-rounded and holistic about that. You know? And then we're not doing tokenism. Then we're not doing like, "Ok, the one Asian is cast, we're done!" kind of deal. Because again, I'm... one is not enough for me. It has to be 50/50 or 51% at least. Um, so that's a way of measuring for me. When I program the season, that is my checklist. It's the 51 or the 50/50. So are there enough women playwrights? Are there enough playwrights of colour? Are the directors... again, the key positions are usually also important to note. Not just actors, but the key, power positions. Are there enough women directors? Are there directors of colour? So that's kind of

how I assemble and select my programming. And a measure of success is when people love it. When critically, you know, the reviews are good and either - there are two ways... Either they don't highlight it and the reviewers don't say anything about, like "Hmm, I wonder why they cast the Chinese Hamlet?" or they do highlight it in a positive way. Then, that's something. Then, you can go "Ok, this is, this is good. We're going somewhere. There's a dialogue that's going to happen." And so, yeah, critically like, if that's even mentioned or highlighted. Um, and if our audiences, yeah, audience feedback is, is good. And inspiring. And we have audiences that come our inspired, and are talking about it. Again, either not specifically about, like "Oh! The Chinese actor was great as Hamlet!" or just like "Isn't that a great actor who played Hamlet?!" Like, do you know what I mean? That, that can, that says a lot in terms of success. Again, if audience love it and the box office numbers... That's a typical way of measuring success. I think that if we hit, you know, our, our box office targets it says something for sure. Recognition in the community, you know? If a particular company, um, has been recognized with nominations for awards, I think. I use that as a measure of success. Definitely not, like, an obsessive goal. but, it's nice to be able to go "In my season, five plays were nominated for this and that..." And, and if especially if the plays that were highlighted, again, were you know, written by a playwright of colour or had a, a really big ensemble of actors of colour or our Asian Canadian set designer was nominated. That, that's huge and that means that we're doing our job well, you know? So, I think that's as far as I can tell in terms of measures of success. It's hard, because art is such an intangible thing!

### **Setting Clear Objectives (Lisa de Wilde)**

Well, I think a highly engaged board would be a good indicator that you're, uh, your board recruitment had been successful. Uh, I think all boards recognize that you want to be measuring how engaged your board is, how effective your board is, you know with a survey. Um, and you know ultimately a high level of participation around the boardroom table will tell you that, um, you know, your inclusivity has worked. Well I'm a big believer in having objectives, having them be measurable, and then making sure that you do it. That you look critically at, at your performance.

### **Reaching Wider Audiences (Lisa de Wilde)**

Well I think there are a couple of really tangible, um, advantages. I think that in terms of the organization's own staff it becomes a very powerful message to the, to new employees, to more junior employees about the level of aspiration that is reasonable, that is a good idea. Uh, I think it helps people validate their own personal ambitions and I think it can open you to new markets, to new customer bases, to new communities. And you know, any organization wants to be more impactful with more people.