



PROJECT: HUMANITY
COVID-19 ARTIST
PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM
FEBRUARY 2021 IMPACT REPORT

PREPARED BY **PROJECT: HUMANITY** WITH **QUILIN** PERFORMANCE CONSULTING

A MESSAGE FROM DANIEL CHAPMAN-SMITH



"This has been a long period of daunting problems and increasingly strained resources at every level of our society. As we all continue to face our own personal challenges, COVID-19 has exposed the weak spots in our social fabric.

How, in this moment of great stress, do we respond? How do we care for ourselves? How do we care for others, especially those who have been hit the hardest? Can the act of caring for others be a part of caring for ourselves?

The COVID-19 Artist Partnership Program is a story of bringing two hard hit groups together to find meaning, connection, and growth during difficult times."

**- DANIEL CHAPMAN-SMITH, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
PROJECT: HUMANITY**



PH'S PRE-PANDEMIC ACTIVITIES WITH YOUTH

Since 2008, Project: Humanity has meaningfully engaged with over **19,000 youth** through our drama workshops and performances in schools, shelters, and other youth-supporting organizations such as SKETCH Working Arts.

BY THE NUMBERS: OUR LAST 12 YEARS OF WORK WITH YOUTH

2 Long-term community partners: **SKETCH Working Arts** and **Youth Without Shelter**

4 Core workshop facilitators for Drama Drop-In workshops: **Andrew Kushnir, Daniel Chapman-Smith, Catherine Murray and Antonio Cayonne**

190 Pro-bono drama workshops conducted at YWS and SKETCH, which **mitigate barriers to arts access** for youth on the margins and activate theatre as a tool for **social change**

1330 Youth-on-the-margins who accessed our **drama workshops** at SKETCH Working Arts and Youth Without Shelter

MORE THAN EVER, YOUTH-ON-THE-MARGINS NEED WAYS TO CONNECT, CREATE, AND BUILD RESILIENCE AS THEY NAVIGATE THE PANDEMIC. AT THE SAME TIME, THOSE OPPORTUNITIES HAVE DIMINISHED.

Prior to COVID-19, the youth we encountered at SKETCH and YWS were already facing **significant barriers to arts access**. Our Drama Drop-In program helped them engage with social justice topics, build communication skills, and discover new grounds for connection. COVID-19 halted our in-person sessions as well as other avenues of support for these youth, exacerbating the isolation and heightened stress they regularly face.

In this time of crisis, youth need programs that **meet them where they're at** — not only geographically, but also in terms of time commitment, skill level, and capacity for engagement during stressful, precarious times.



SPOTLIGHT ON COVID-19

When COVID-19 hit, we sought to help youth retain space in their lives for **creativity, curiosity, and safe socialization**. We also sought to **offer care to artists**, whose employment disappeared with the onset of the pandemic.

We pivoted from in-person drama programs to offer online multidisciplinary mentorships. The **COVID-19 Artist Partnership Program**, which started as a 6-person pilot with YWS, now offers 12 weeks of 1:1 online creative mentorship to youth at **7 shelters and community organizations**.

CAPP evolves to best **meet the changing needs of youth**. We mitigate barriers to access by offering flexible mentorship formats, creating a lending library of tech/arts supplies, and recruiting mentors who align with the interests and identities of youth.

BY THE NUMBERS: COVID-19 ARTIST PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

- 18** Distinct **disciplines being taught** to youth through the COVID-19 Artist Partnership Program
- 42** Youth living in shelters and/or accessing support through community organizations who have **received artistic mentorship** through CAPP
- 43** Professional artists who have been **meaningfully employed** by Project: Humanity as CAPP mentors and teachers of their craft
- 218** Hours of **1:1 online mentorship** that have taken place between professional artists and youth-on-the-margins as of February 2021

"1:1 mentorship is definitely a benefit. A lot of (the youth) don't have friends or family they're super connected to. This adds another support person in their life, someone outside the shelter ... and the donated supplies really makes it accessible."

- Shelter Staff

BUILDING CONNECTION IN PRECARIOUS TIMES

87.5% OF YOUTH PARTICIPANTS AND 91.6% OF ARTIST-MENTORS REPORTED FEELING LESS ISOLATED AS A RESULT OF THEIR TIME IN CAPP.*

CAPP fosters deep and meaningful mentorship relationships. The 1:1 dynamic enables each artist-youth pair to set out their own learning goals, find a pace/style that suits both parties, and alter structures where needed to make CAPP accessible to some youth (examples have included connecting over text or phone, shorter check-ins throughout the week, or file sharing instead of a weekly hour on Zoom).

The learner-centredness of CAPP supports a culture of youth agency and consent. Youth and artists share skills as well as dialogue about their worlds. The shared arts focus leads to more intimacy in the mentor-youth relationships, and increased openness to exploring ideas, disclosing aspects of identity and experience, and exploring visions of themselves & others. Our shift from indefinite mentorship to 12-week mentorships creates space for youth to decide whether CAPP is for them, and to make agentic decisions about their continued involvement in the program.

CAPP helps youth stay technologically connected. Organizations responding to a recent Canadian Observatory on Homelessness survey reported that only 9.4% of their youth clients have access to technology 100% of the time, while 25% have absolutely no tech access. PH has amassed a small 'lending library' of phones, laptops and tablets; youth in CAPP express excitement at not only being able to get online for mentorship, but also for full participation in school and other support sources that have migrated online.

***"The experience of witnessing him play and sing with freedom and form was such a gift for me. We had a moment of silence after. I told him I was moved. He said "Ya, I could feel your soul."
- Artist-Mentor***

*All data obtained from exit surveys and interviews completed by youth and artists. Data analyzed with the assistance of Data Consultant Lindsay Valve (Quilin).



SUPPORTING ARTISTS THROUGH THE PANDEMIC

25 OUT OF 26 ARTIST-MENTORS WHO COMPLETED MENTORSHIPS IN 2020 MENTIONED CAPP HAVING A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THEIR WELLBEING.

CAPP creates valued employment opportunities for artists. According to the TAC, in Toronto alone, an estimated 25,000 performances were canceled/postponed and \$145 million in artist revenues were lost between Mar-Dec 2020. CAPP responds to heightened precarity by creating meaningful employment for professional artists as teachers of their craft. 100% of surveyed artist-mentors expressed interest in mentoring additional future cohorts of CAPP.

CAPP has benefits for artists that go beyond employment. The meaningful exchanges taking place during CAPP mentorships are valuable to youth participants as well as the artist-mentors employed through the program; both receive an emotional and creative lift and many are co-identifying areas of interest for their futures. The experience has helped some artists realize their interest in pursuing dedicated careers as mentors or teachers.

Artist-mentors are better equipped to advocate for their labour's value. Paying artists by week instead of per-activity creates a framework for artists to be properly compensated for less-visible (and often underpaid) labour involved in mentorship and teaching. Artist-mentors learn structures for documenting this labour, and become likely to employ them in the future to advocate for their work's value. Community artist Chelsea Woolley has already successfully designed her Mixed Arts Performance Partnership Program using CAPP's existing framework.

***"I felt like he was my friend. I started to know what was going on in his life as the weeks went on. We shared a lot of laughs, which is satisfying to me as a teacher. I learned about the styles of masks that he likes and I felt like a collaborator in discovering which techniques would support creating in his style. We got to be artists together."* - Artist-Mentor**

USING ONLINE SPACES TO MAKE OFFLINE CHANGE

84.3% OF ARTISTS AND 75% OF YOUTH REPORTED FEELING MORE CONFIDENT IN THEIR CREATIVE SKILLS AND ARTISTIC PRACTICE FOLLOWING CAPP.

The benefits of online mentorship 'transcend the virtual'. In Spring 2020, many organizations set about adapting their in-person programming to work in virtual spaces. One of CAPP's greatest strengths is that it was designed for virtual engagement, making the online environment a strength rather than a compromise. CAPP helps youth facing barriers to arts access build confidence, resilience, and a sense of connection through their arts practice; these vital takeaways make tangible differences in youths' 'offline' lives.

CAPP builds new bridges for youth to connect across differences. Some past participants now spend time co-creating in the art forms they learned through their mentorships. One youth reconnected with her mother through resuming her dance practice in CAPP, and another met in-person with their mentor to work on an outdoor mural. By bonding over shared arts practices, youth learn collaboration, creative risk-taking, and personal expression. PH encouraged the development of new artistic communities by hosting end-of-year online 'solstice parties' at three shelters, where artist-youth pairs had the opportunity to share their work and ideas with others, as well as by hosting one socially distanced in-person jam session at YWS when weather and public health guidelines permitted.

"I told my mother about my dance mentorship and she started to cry." - Youth Participant

"He is started to build the idea that he is actually talented in his mind, and it's manifesting itself in increased commitment to music." - Artist-Mentor

**"[One youth] emails me songs they recorded... [another] has a bet to play a song in front of the entire shelter by Christmas break, which he wouldn't have been able to do before."
- Shelter Staff**

ARTIST-MENTOR SPOTLIGHTS

Meet **Natasha Adiyana Morris**, **Andrew Penner**, and **Pranavi Suthagar** – three of the **43 professional artists** mentoring youth through CAPP.



"Natasha Adiyana Morris is a playwright of Jamaican-Canadian descent. Recognized for founding PIECE OF MINE Arts, a platform for presenting works-in-progress by Black play creators, she has overseen the showcasing of over 200 artists since 2013. Natasha is the playwright and director of *The Negroes Are Congregating*, which received a Dora nomination for Outstanding New Play (2020) and won the SummerWorks' New Performance Text Award (2018). The satirical drama touches on internalized racism and has been produced internationally, including Canada, the United States, and Europe."

Natasha led her mentee through the process of creating a dramatic monologue about his life.

"Andrew Penner is an award-winning musician, performer, composer, sound designer, music director and producer. He can be heard on over 50 albums of various styles and has performed throughout North America and Europe. He is a member of the bands Harrow Fair and Sunparlour Players. He has worked in theatre for The Stratford Festival, Souleppper, Canadian Stage, NAC, Obsidian, Musical Stage Company, Native Earth, and many others. He is a founding member of the award-winning collective Kitchenband, who create stories inspired by obscure history. Andrew recently performed/music directed "Ghost Quartet" (Crows) for which he won a Toronto Theatre Critics Award."

Andrew has helped his mentee write and record his first-ever songs.



"Pranavi Suthagar is a designer and artist with over 5+ years of experience. Prior to graduating OCAD U she began her career in her second year - designing for successful local companies such as Peace Collective and iQ Food Co. All while building her personal illustration series turned brand Not Sari - an exploration of identity, culture and personal reflections. She also continues to work in the arts sphere, creating illustrations for city wide banners, custom mixed media artwork and much more. You can learn more about her work at: www.notpranavi.com."

Pranavi has been leading a mentorship with a split focus between graphic design and arts marketing.



FUTURE FOCUS: WHAT'S NEXT IN 2021

As the **COVID-19 Artist Partnership Program** continues to grow and evolve, our overarching focus is to apply what we have learned about barriers to arts access for youth in shelters and **work toward radical accessibility** in addressing their needs. **This focus breaks down into three priorities.**

1. FURTHER THE GOAL OF CREATING LONG-TERM ARTS ACCESS FOR YOUTH – THROUGH OUR OWN PROGRAMMING AND THAT OF OTHER ORGANIZATIONS.

- Make the established framework of CAPP available to other organizations as a tool kit and resource for their own work with youth.
- Develop new resource relationships in order to convert CAPP from a temporary program into PH 1:1, a permanent offering for youth who need programs that will 'meet them where they're at' post-pandemic.

2. ENSURE ALL YOUTH HAVE GUARANTEEABLE ACCESS TO THE RESOURCES THEY NEED FOR PARTICIPATION IN CAPP.

- Broaden material lending libraries to further encourage participation from youth who feel their lack of instruments, supplies or money is a barrier; secure sponsorship or community support to this end.
- Further develop our tech lending library so that it is sufficient to outfit every youth participating in CAPP with the technology they may need to access our mentorships; secure sponsorship or community support to this end.

3. EMPOWERED ARTISTS AND EMPOWERED YOUTH.

- Through training and the development of long-term working relationships, produce artist-advocates who, as a result of their experience working in the CAPP framework, approach future employment with an understanding of how to measure, report on, and confidently ascribe value to their own labour and arts practice.

WITH THANKS TO CAPP'S SUPPORTERS



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