

# O F H E A R T



# & H I S T O R Y

## 2016-2018

SUMMARY OF IMPACT

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# ABOUT

Heart and History was a two year youth development program, coordinated by HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development. This unique program engaged hundreds of Nova Scotian youth aged 14-25 to actively explore and strengthen their connection to culture, history, place and heritage through community engagement and community action projects. The program provided an opportunity for participants to develop community focused action projects. Youth were first immersed in sessions with inspiring local leaders and learned more about the work and actions they were taking in community. They were then provided a framework and supports to dream and develop their own interests and ideas into action. The projects all shared a common theme - they enabled participants to take action in a way that was meeting both a need for themselves, and a need in their community. Through these projects, the participants engaged hundreds of Nova Scotian youth in explorations of identity, place, culture, heritage and history.

# MAKING POSITIVE CHANGE

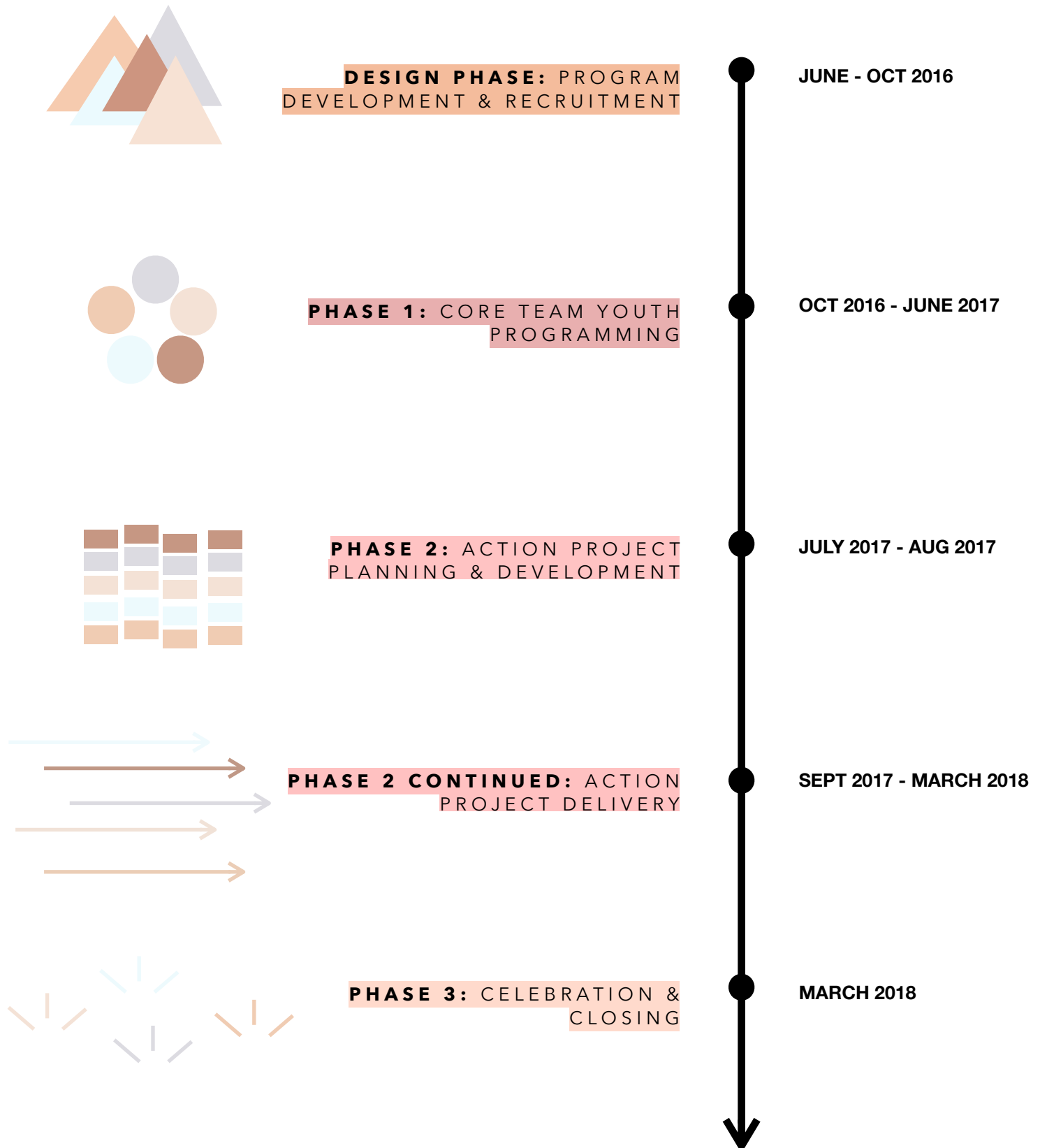
The program successfully demonstrated that intentional and deep work with a small amount of youth is an effective way of making positive change in our communities, and potentially strengthen youth connection to heritage and culture. Youth tackled difficult topics and took leadership roles in advocacy work. The program led to significant personal transformation for the youth participants and resulted in significant ripple effects into their communities.



# MAJOR BENEFITS OF THE PROGRAM

- **Strengthened Connection to Place:** through exploration of history and identity
- **Built connection to community:** through new relationships developed in the program and partnerships with local organizations
- **Built empathy between communities:** through opportunities to safely explore difficult issues and taking time to understand the experience of many diverse groups of Nova Scotia
- **Confidence built:** through development of self-determined community focused projects, while being supported with the freedom to choose their focus, a project framework, trust, and resources
- **Practical skills development** through project planning, coordinating, and implementation, and a new appreciation for the organizational side of advocacy work
- **Youth engagement skills development** through project development and delivery, and the support of the HeartWood team

# TIMELINE





# DESIGN PHASE

## PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT & RECRUITMENT

JUNE - OCTOBER 2018

**Of Heart & History program was co-designed with 4 major contributing elements that shaped the program:**

1. Community design team - a 2 day gathering of 15 young community facilitators, leaders, and artists
2. Pop-up design days - Engagement with 180+ youth at the East Preston Rec Centre and the Halifax Central Library
3. Community partners - resource, wisdom, and network sharing
4. HeartWood Centre team - identified community standards and processes for working as a team

The purpose of this co-creation phase was to ensure that the program was designed with relevant content, process, and focus for youth. Through this co-creation phase, the community design team and pop-up engagements identified that the program would be best positioned to serve youth in marginalized communities, including indigenous, black, people of colour, and those who identify as two-spirited, or LGBTQ.

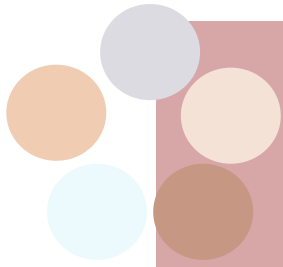
It is important to acknowledge the influence of local and international social and political context during this program co-creation phase. The summer and fall of 2016 was a time of heightened political and social unrest that included the campaign and election of Donald Trump, the Conference of the Parties (COP 22), a rise in white supremacist attacks in the US and Canada, protests of the North Dakota Access Pipeline, and questioning of Canadian identity as a result of Canada 150.

Throughout the initial youth engagement and program design phase, these issues were a the focus of many conversations, that were often characterized by fear.

The program co-creation phase ensured that the program was guided by the needs of youth, and responsive to the context of when the program launched.

After the program was designed, the intention was to recruit 25 youth to participate in the first phase of the program. After the initial 16 youth joined the program, the participants expressed that they felt comfortable with the number of people and who was now part of this “community.” The coordinating team honoured this request and the programming continued with the group of 16 participants.





# PHASE 1

## CORE TEAM YOUTH PROGRAMMING

OCTOBER 2017- MAY 2018

The program began with 8 months of weekly workshops for participants provided by local artists, activists, academics, and community members of diverse ages and backgrounds. These workshops helped participants explore ideas such as identity, culture, heritage, and personal development through multiple mediums; drawings, words, music, conversation and performances. The personal exploration and development in this program phase was an essential foundation for the inspiration and development of community action projects in phase 2.

Through these workshops participants explored and expressed their own relationships to place: what they like, want to change, remember, have learned, hold in mind from different places and times, wish for, and imagine.

*"I really got to learn about the history of here but also about other communities and develop dialogue and build connection through story sharing."*

They began to discover and identify personal practices and foundations for self-lead learning and self-care.

*"Youth could turn their feelings into art and bring it back home to their parents and then tell their parents and talk about it again when they met again. Conversations and what came from that, the Art helped open up to some vulnerability."*

The Heart & History team worked to create a safer space to have discussions about challenging and complex issues surrounding identity, history, and heritage.

*"I gained solidarity with people different from me and understand the conditions and understand my ignorance to certain things. There is so much that is not a part of me but the experience helped me be less oblivious."*

Through this initial 8 months of programming, the 16 youth participants were provided a foundation to explore the issues important to them, and begin to develop questions and ideas that they wanted to explore in their community action projects.



# PHASE 1

## CONTINUED

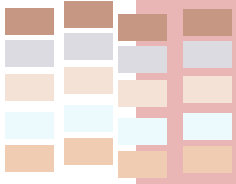
### PROGRAM TOPICS INCLUDED:

- Welcoming each other
- Care Teachings
- Program brainstorm and planning
- Setting intentions
- The importance of Self-Learning
- Race education
- Internalized Oppression
- Decolonization
- Islamophobia
- Black and Indigenous Solidarity
- Northern Indigenous Communities
- Treaties
- Allyship Personal Work
- Mental Health and Disability Justice
- Art and Action
- Celebration

### PARTICIPANTS ALSO ATTENDED CULTURAL EVENTS INCLUDING:

- Four Lands (Jumblies Theatre)
- Justice Pottery
- African History Month Launch Event
- Kristen Olivia Concert
- Walking With Our Sisters





# PHASE 2

## ACTION PROJECT PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT & DELIVERY

JULY 2017 - AUGUST 2017

Building on the exploratory work of phase one, participants developed youth-led community action projects were developed that explored themes of identity, culture, and connection to community and place. Youth were supported with mentors, funding, and logistics, to develop, lead, and implement these projects.

Through the experience of designing, developing and implementing community action projects, the program participants strengthened their connection to their own and other communities, realized their own potential for organizing projects, and built upon existing and new skills for advocating on behalf of the well being of their communities. Given the freedom, trust, and support they needed, the program participants thrived.



*"I'm super proud of actually organizing a project, in the past I've had trouble following through so it felt really great to accomplish this. I'm more confident in my ability to do projects like this. I've always seen myself as an activist but struggled with organization."*

*"One of the most important aspects of the program was feeling trusted to implement my own program and be given so much freedom. From Heather, Melissa, Raven and Heartwood. And the Youth so willing to learn new mediums and share and be in those conversations. They trusted me to that I could bring these conversations to this space."*

*"It was a testament to what a years worth of work can manifest in terms of relationships. I have greater confidence that I can manage and bring people together to have cultural moments."*

# PHASE 2

## PROJECT PROFILES

The following section outlines the community Action Projects developed by the youth participants

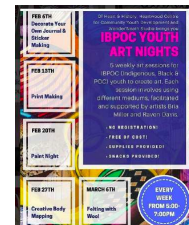
### THE TRANS IS ART SHOW



### IMMIGRANT YOUTH OF HALIFAX



### EXPLORATORY ARTS PROGRAM FOR INDIGENOUS, BLACK AND PEOPLE OF COLOUR



### SANKOFEST



### WOMEN OF NORTH PRESTON



# THE TRANS IS ART SHOW

## A PHOTOSHOOT AND EXHIBIT OF NON-BINARY PEOPLE

This project showcased the existence, resilience and beauty of Transgender/Non-Binary (Trans/NB) people. It consisted of 8 portraits of local Trans/NB people taken by a professional photographer Brad Jones. The rarity of positive portrayals of people who identify as Trans/NB contributes to the isolation common to those beginning to question the concept of gender, and/or their own gender.

The project coordinator said that the project aimed to increase awareness surrounding Trans/NB existence and acceptance, especially as a reaction to the fact that, *“a lot of trans people as they are transitioning they stop taking pictures because they’re in an in-between place. You don’t have to be done the transformation to be seen, welcomed this in transition / transformation in process. I wanted to do an affirming and positive example of trans people just living.”*

The project activities included a photoshoot with 8 people, and a photographer, that all identified as non-binary. A photo exhibit was displayed at Plan B (local gallery and shop) for a week and an opening reception.

*“I’m not alone. Non binary is more common than I thought where I am in my transformation and my confidence. We are real, we are valid, we are enough and we matter.”*

### WHO WAS ENGAGED:

Over 100 people

Trans/NB people and their families

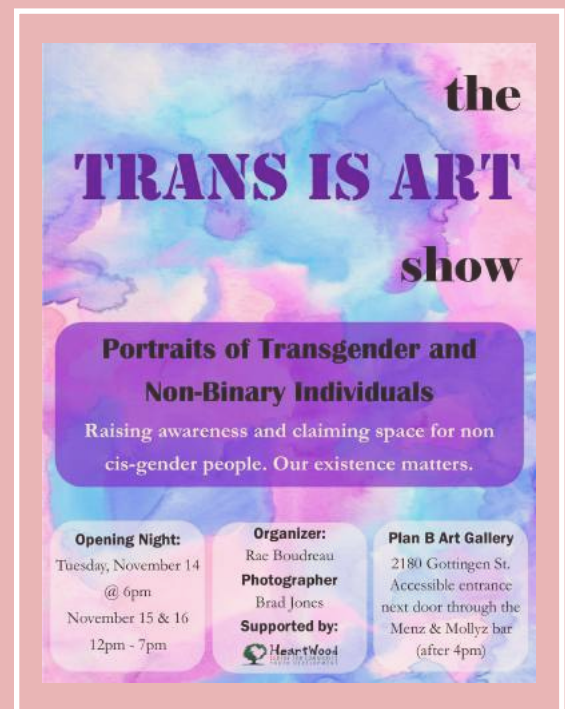
### PROJECT PARTNERS:

South House, Plan B, Atlantic Photo, Loaded Ladle

### WHAT’S NEXT?

The project is on hold as the project coordinator is going back to school to finish their first year in undergraduate studies.

“I’m thinking about making this happen again, potentially as a pop up gallery for PRIDE, in different settings, in rural settings.”



# THE TRANS IS ART SHOW

## CONTINUED

### PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION

*"I'm super proud of actually organizing a project, in the past I've had trouble following through so it felt really great to accomplish this. I'm more confident in my ability to do projects like this. I've always seen myself as an activist but struggled with organization."*

*"This project has been inspiration to go back to school at Mount St Vincent, that art is more than a hobby, and that I could make money doing gender justice work, I just need to be dedicated."*

*"I learned how to speak to various audiences about transgender and non-binary, This project helped me break it down for people. I learned about managing different people's opinions and feelings, while trying to lead a project."*

### RIPPLE EFFECTS

*"One of my friends just transitioned and hadn't had any photos until this and then had something to send to their family and friends about their transformation. A lot of people's friends and family came out to the exhibit and it helped them be legitimized and have allies."*

*"The program brings together diverse people that wouldn't have met and connected, develop common ground. Bringing together completely different communities all involved in activism but such different kinds of activists."*

*"Eye-opening to see how intersectional it all is. The trans people with other people who aren't taking it seriously. There's so many people who wouldn't have met if it wasn't for this."*



# IMMIGRANT YOUTH OF HALIFAX

## A PHOTO & WRITING PIECE HIGHLIGHTING IMMIGRANT YOUTH EXPERIENCE IN HALIFAX

The objective of this project was to give a platform for the perspectives of immigrant youth: highlighting for people outside of their own communities the many accomplishments they have been able to achieve while living in Halifax. The youth coordinator of this project describes their inspiration for this project: “As a second generation immigrant, I find myself in between various communities and thought of this project as a great way to incorporate both my identities to create bridges of exchange. The intention of this project is to create dialogue and relationships between people of all different backgrounds. Furthermore, this project is also a way for the Halifax community to learn about different ways in which they can make this community more inclusive for immigrant youth by listening to some concerns that some of the youth have chosen to express. The photos and interviews were conducted on unceded, unsundered Mi'kmaq territory.”

### WHO WAS ENGAGED:

- Engaged 10 Newcomer Youth ages 14-22 from various countries such as: Ethiopia, Nepal, Kurdish Syrians, China, & Congo
- Limited to 10 to be able to give an honorarium to each participant
- Photo and Writing exhibit at central library will engage hundreds more

### PROJECT PARTNERS:

YMCA

### WHAT'S NEXT?

I have completed the conversations and the printing. it's still a matter of confirming a time of putting it up at a library. It is a moveable exhibit that can live on beyond the program.



*“Learning about things that don’t directly influence me helped me come out of ignorance and understand oppression of certain marginalized groups and then I could know if or how to advocate for.”*



# IMMIGRANT YOUTH OF HALIFAX

## CONTINUED

### PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION

*"I really learned that we shared some common challenges as newcomer youth. Different people have different life experiences, and it can be difficult to get a job. Of course there was struggling with language barriers as well."*

*"What made it really meaningful for me was getting to meet other youth and learn more what they're doing in the community. I learned a lot about different events the other youth are involved with, volunteering with that I didn't know about before. It's so easy not to mingle with communities different from my own. I got to learn so much about communities not like mine."*

*"It really made me think about how my junior high experience would be different if I had to learn English too as a first language."*



### RIPPLE EFFECTS

*"There was a ripple effect of the project, which was to highlight the perspective and the experiences of youth who don't feel like they belong to different communities."*

*"Because of being part of the program when I went to community events around Halifax I would often know the speaker or have an interaction with organizers and friends would be shocked how I knew them. It felt like the embodiment of community that I was now connected to so many people. I'm still very connected to the program coordinators at Heartwood. I'm so thankful and now go to different events and see familiar faces because of this program."*

*"This was so impactful to be doing this during my last year of high school. I got to meet a lot of people in the community I wouldn't have been able to meet. I got to know people I knew about from social media or online, more intimately and got to directly engage with them. The transition from high school to university is a symbolic moment and even though I didn't know what it would be like, the program did help me connect with different youth of different age spectrums."*

*"The collaboration with the YMCA was really cool for me because I got to learn so much more what they did as an organization. I learned how to partner with other organizations, their protocols, etc."*



# EXPLORATORY ARTS PROGRAM FOR INDIGENOUS, BLACK & PEOPLE OF COLOUR

**A FREE, MONTH LONG, WEEKLY EXPLORATIVE ART'S PROGRAM FOR INDIGENOUS, BLACK & PEOPLE OF COLOUR**

Creating space for IBPOC people in Halifax to explore different mediums of art and craft making is rare. In collaboration with Wonder'neath, this exciting and imperative project prioritized culturally specific and dynamic arts programming. In Halifax, as a result of limited access to space and funding, this has not been a possibility until now!

The program ran for five weeks in January and February 2018. During the program, participants had access to art mediums such as: screen printing, felting, sewing, painting, object building, drawing, sticker making, clay and woodworking.

## WHO WAS ENGAGED:

50 + IBPOC youth and parents

## PROJECT PARTNERS:

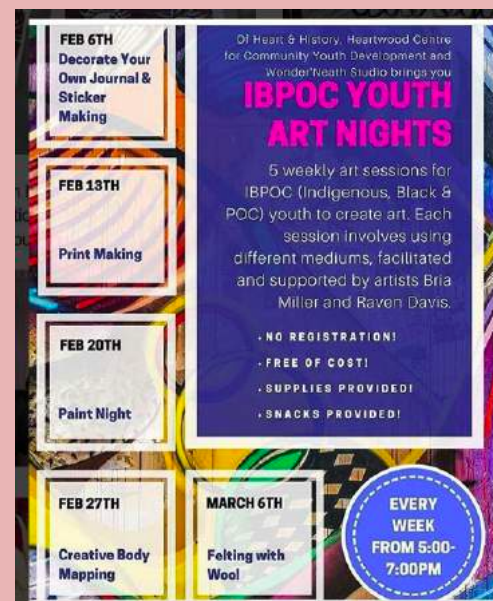
Wonder'neath Art Society

## WHAT'S NEXT?

"I would definitely do it again, but not sure if I would do it exactly the same way."

"I'm interested in doing more especially if this could be an established drop in space and continue to build relationships."

*"It was so helpful it was to have space to talk about my own experiences and the experiences of my friends. It was a space to bring up questions that I don't always feel comfortable bringing up. I could talk about what I was going through."*



# EXPLORATORY ARTS PROGRAM FOR INDIGENOUS, BLACK & PEOPLE OF COLOUR

## CONTINUED

### PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION

*“One of the most important aspects of the program was feeling trusted to implement my own program and be given so much freedom. From Heather, Melissa, Raven and HeartWood. And the Youth so willing to learn new mediums and share and be in those conversations. They trusted they could bring these conversations to this space.”*

*“It helped me feel motivated that they wanted to be there and felt comfortable trusting it. In my experience I never had a space like this!”*

*“I didn’t know any of the young woman before they started come in. It was precious how people were so willing to share. It was incredible to be able to foster this space to explore and be validated!”*

### RIPPLE EFFECTS

*“There were 4-5 girls that came to all of the workshops who now feel comfortable in that space as they continue to come to WonderNeath’s open studio. I see one of the girls sometimes, she keeps asking when more of this event will happen again. She keeps bringing more friends to Wonder’neath.”*

*“We had intergenerational Kim Cain, a well known visual artist, would bring her daughter every week. Had so many people from different parts of the city that were connecting from different places from different neighbourhoods.”*

*“A couple parents that were too busy to bring kids but they learned about art nights as a results of the program. Opened curiosity for people in the north end.”*



# SANKOFEST

## 3 DAY CULTURAL FESTIVAL; AN IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE TO SHOWCASE BLACK BRILLIANCE IN NOVA SCOTIA

Sankofest was a mini-festival centring Black brilliance and the work of Black artists, writers, speakers, activists, and performers in Halifax. The festival's name refers to the Akanian Twi phrase "Sankofa" which means "Go back and get it". Sankofest celebrated and uplifted the power of Black Lives in Halifax, so it never may be forgotten.

Sankofa was a sample of Black music curators and DJs in Halifax, featuring DJ Calypso, DJ DOUVET, and DJADE. The public was invited to "come and move your body through the rhythm of music, continuing the tradition of liberating the body through dance, sweat, and powerful music"

The keynote conversation of the festival was LIVE with Black Power Hour, a live taping of the CKDU radio show with co-hosts El Jones and iZrEAL Jones, featuring special guests Ifo Ikede and REALZ. Held at the Halifax North Memorial Public Library, this event was free and for all-ages and saw 50 in attendance and more than 30 viewing from the Facebook live stream, with over 300 views after the event. Audio was recorded by local musician Nick Dourado and Francella Fiallos for CKDU. Sounds of Liberation was a performance night featuring music by local artist Kirsten Olivia and a poetry reading/publication launch with visiting artist Mugabi Byenkya. This event was free and for all ages. Video documentation of the event was recorded by local filmmaker Yalitsa Riden.

Sankofest started after a Black Lives Matter reading group wanted to expand to more audiences and mediums. It brought together and celebrating African diasporas and African Nova Scotian communities, making space for different black experiences here. The organizers (two who were Heart and History participants) wanted to create accessible cultural events different from just a panel and just a party.

**WHO WAS ENGAGED:**  
300+ people engaged with the festival

**PROJECT PARTNERS:**  
Halifax North Memorial Library, Common Roots Urban Farm, Khyber Centre for the Arts, Gold Island Bakery, Individual donors of BLM HFX Reading Group

**WHAT'S NEXT?**  
"While I might not be doing this again this year it provided a blueprint for me of bigger things I want to do in the future."



# SANKOFEST

## CONTINUED

### PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION

*"It was a testament to what a years worth of work can manifest in terms of relationships. I have greater confidence that I can manage and bring people together to have cultural moments."*

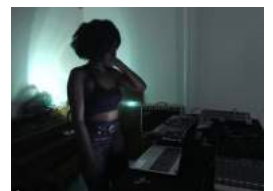
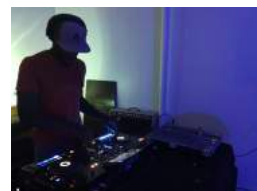
*"Nice and surprising to see how meaningful it was for people. An older woman came up to me and explained that it was so meaningful to see young people organizing something like and that she named her daughter after the proverb*

*Sankofest (a West African proverb: when you leave home give back resources).*

*"There is space for different black experiences and to celebrate each other, it doesn't have to be one over the other."*

### RIPPLE EFFECTS

*"It inspired younger people to take on other projects. It showed people that it's possible to do this stuff. Sometimes it seems like its so hard to do this here. We live in NS and feel so far away from what progressive big cities have. Important to celebrate ourselves."*





# WOMEN OF NORTH PRESTON

## CAPTURING STORIES AND LEGACIES OF NORTH PRESTON WOMEN

Oral storytelling and teaching has been an important part of African Nova Scotian history. Passing down knowledge from one generation to the next is key to maintaining and building a strong sense of community in the Preston Area. Through the use of technology, the of Heart and History activities in Preston focused on capturing stories and legacies of North Preston by hosting a series of discussions with women in the community.

Two young women from the North Preston community organized an elders circle/gathering on a Sunday afternoon- in the spirit of the tradition of Sunday gathering. They worked in the kitchen with their grandmother to prepare a meal to host the women who would be joining them for the session.

### **During the sessions the topics that were identified and discussed:**

- Historical institutions such as the church (concerns for the church with aging population)
- Leadership in the community (secession, need for younger generation to lead)
- Conflict resolution and healing within families
- Legacy

### **LIVING RESIDENTS LIST: AGE 70-100+**

Data collection and a process for archiving important community information was identified as a direct need coming out of the session. As a way to begin this work, the youth coordinators interviewed women in the community to compile a list of residents currently living in North Preston.

The list mapped first name, last name and age by geographical location every living resident in North Preston between the age of 70 and 100+.

### **WHAT'S NEXT?**

This data from 2018 will be used as a starting place to build. The simple act of writing down the names of our elders is profoundly powerful and useful for preserving the cultural heritage of the community. The plan for the next phase will be to map by geographical location, name and age of community residents aged 40 - 60. The final category will map everyone under the age of 30.

# WOMEN OF NORTH PRESTON

## CONTINUED

### AUDIO RECORDINGS:

Throughout the duration of the Heart and History project the youth coordinators set out to find opportunities to capture and archive audio recordings of day to day things in North Preston. The audio captured from the kitchen table talk session highlights a raw and uncensored way of communicating. Other audio collections feature history lessons and sermons and singing in the church choir. There is a recognition that each time something is captured- it instantly becomes a historical artifact that provides an opportunity for future generations to hold on to the sounds of Preston.

### VISUAL RECORDINGS:

Through the duration of the Heart and History Project in North Preston, the youth coordinators worked on capturing visuals of community with a focus on day to day life with youth in their program and photos from the dinner session they hosted.

\*Unable to conduct interviews with project coordinators, as they were too busy doing other amazing community based projects

# PHASE 3

## CELEBRATION



The final phase was a celebration of work accomplished and new knowledge and skills developed. The Heart & History team hosted a gathering named BRILLIANT where 42 youth and 20 adult supporters from across the province came together to share stories and experiences about their change-making work. The hosting team, made up of young leaders within Heart and History, facilitated conversations and connections to amplify the brilliant reality and possibility that lives in the hands and hearts of youth in Nova Scotia. These possibilities were shared through the lens of connection to local and regional cultures and histories.

Brilliant was a meaningful and important part of the Of Heart and History program as many of the youth reflected the sentiment that it was the first time they had been together with so many diverse, yet like minded, youth in their lives.

A 2 day planning retreat for the youth facilitation team and their adult supporters helped prepare for the gathering. At the final event, they facilitated conversations and connections to amplify the brilliant reality and possibility that lives in the hands and hearts of youth in Nova Scotia. These possibilities were shared through the lens of connection to local and regional cultures and histories.

**95%** of participants indicated that they better understand the importance of taking part in activities that help their school, town, or community.

**86%** of participants indicated that they felt a stronger connection to their community



# PHASE 3

## CELEBRATION

*“It was a wonderful experience, met wonderful people with ideas and different backgrounds and stories. 10 out of 10.”*





*"I loved this and felt so validated by the end. I would love to come back as a facilitator in the future."*







*“Love HeartWood!  
Hope to get involved  
one day! Loved open  
conversations and  
creative spaces.”*



*“Positive vibes. Lots of  
smiles. New skills”*



*“Brilliant was an  
amazing and valuable  
experience, that was  
very well planned and  
organized. Thank you!”*

## STRENGTHENED CONNECTION TO PLACE

Through exploration of history and identity

*"I really got to learn about the history of here but also about other communities and develop dialogue and build connection through story sharing."*

*"It's so easy not to mingle with communities different from my own. I got to learn so much about communities not like mine."*

*"Sometimes it seems like its so hard to do this here. We live in NS and feel so far away from what progressive big cities have. Important to celebrate ourselves."*

## STRENGTHENED CONNECTION TO COMMUNITY

Through new relationship developed in the program and partnerships with local organizations

*“The collaboration with the YMCA was really cool for me because I got to learn so much more what they did as an organization.”*

*“This was so impactful to be doing this during my last year of high school. I got to meet a lot of people in the community I wouldn’t have been able to meet. I got to know people I knew about from social media or online, more intimately and got to directly engage with them.”*

*“The program brings together diverse people that wouldn’t have met and connected, develop common ground.”*

*“I gained solidarity with people different from me and understand the conditions and understand my ignorance to certain things.”*

## BUILT EMPATHY BETWEEN COMMUNITIES

Through new relationships developed in the program and partnerships with local organizations

*"I'm not alone. Non binary is more common than I thought where I am in my transformation and my confidence."*

*"I really learned that we shared some common challenges as newcomer youth. Different people have different life experiences, and it can be difficult to get a job."*

*"There is space for different black experiences and to celebrate each other, it doesn't have to be one over the other."*

## CONFIDENCE BUILDING

Given a framework, trust, support, and resources the participants developed meaningful projects, and confidence in themselves to tackle a big challenge

*“I’m super proud of actually organizing a project, in the past I’ve had trouble following through so it felt really great to accomplish this. I’m more confident in my ability to do projects like this. I’ve always seen myself as an activist but struggled with organization.”*

*“One of the most important aspects of the program was feeling trusted to implement my own program and be given so much freedom.”*

*“It was a testament to what a years worth of work can manifest in terms of relationships. I have greater confidence that I can manage and bring people together to have cultural moments.”*

*“It was incredible to be able to foster this space to explore and be validated!”*



## PRACTICAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Through project planning, coordinating, and implementation, and a new appreciation for the organizational side of advocacy

*“This project has been an inspiration to go back to school at Mount St. Vincent, that art is more than a hobby, and that I could make money doing gender justice work, I just need to be dedicated.”*

*“While I might not be doing this again this year it provided a blueprint for me of bigger things I want to do in the future.”*

*“I was greatly supported. Orchestrating the resources getting to us. Giving us space to troubleshoot ideas.”*

## YOUTH ENGAGEMENT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

through their projects learned, practiced and shared ways of meaningfully engaging youth and the public in general

*“HeartWood has a strategic way to do engagement. It helps how i run engagement since i learned about their frameworks. More strategic youth engagement than i’m used to this happening. Feel thorough and in a human way.”*

*“Great program, because it gives an alternative learning setting that empowers young people. Shows different ways to care and learn from each other.*

*“Framework itself that they use for facilitation. uses very specific to making sure people’s voices are represented, giving people meaningful contribution whatever you’re creating, doing something they feel meaningful, able to contribute and that they’re doing something.”*

# LESSONS LEARNED

# TRANSITION

## WORKING WITH YOUTH WHILE IN TRANSITION FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO UNIVERSITY

Running a program for youth as they finished high school, applied to universities, and prepared for the next phase of their lives was incredibly valuable for the participants, but also presented a challenge to keep them engaged. The program participants spoke to the value of the experience while in this transition time; it deepened their connections to people in their own and new communities, it provided time and support to develop practical skills, and contributed to new social confidence. It helped them see where they already had strengths and where they wanted to grow. It helped them become more confident as they stepped into a more independent phase of their lives. At the same time it was ambitious to expect that the same group of youth would stay engaged for 2 years. The Heart & History team knew it was a big time commitment, but anticipated that the emergent and self-organizing structure of the program would keep participants engaged throughout. In the end, the time commitment remained too large an obstacle to retention of youth for the entirety of the program: the initial core team of 16 youth diminished to 8 by the at program completion.

# LESSONS LEARNED

# COMPLEXITY

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## **SUPPORTING PROJECTS WITH SOCIAL AND CULTURAL COMPLEXITY**

As in all our work endeavouring to explore and engage with the realities of diverse people within a complex and inequitable system, we are constantly learning. Of Heart and History provided space for youth and staff to explore together how intersections of identity, community, culture and heritage show up in and impact our individual and community experiences. This demonstrated where work still has to be done within our own organization, and HeartWood continues to commit ourselves to cultivate our competencies in navigating cross cultural spaces, in our roles supporting this work, and in providing future programs like this. A part of this commitment is an assurance that future programs of this nature will be developed in partnership with the communities and people the programs will serve.

# LESSONS LEARNED

# ADAPTIVE

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## **ADAPTIVE PROGRAMMING IS NECESSARY FOR A HIGH QUALITY AND EFFECTIVE PROGRAM**

A program based on authentic community partnerships must be open to shift in direction and scope. The Heart and History program concept aimed to engage a core team of 25 youth committed to a program development phase. This development phase engaged an advisory team of community partners and youth who shaped the design of the program to ensure relevance and a meaningful experience for the participants. Under the guidance of the program development team, and in reaction to a changing social context, the program design was adjusted to support marginalized youth of NS rather than focus on the full diversity of NS youth. A 2nd program adjustment was the shift towards smaller group size and a focus on guest speakers who represented the diversity of the participants. As an organization learning and growing in this work ourselves, the ability to adjust and shift like this is integral for ensuring that youth and community partners are included, valued and a part of the work.

# THANK YOU

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PROGRAM

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NOVA SCOTIA

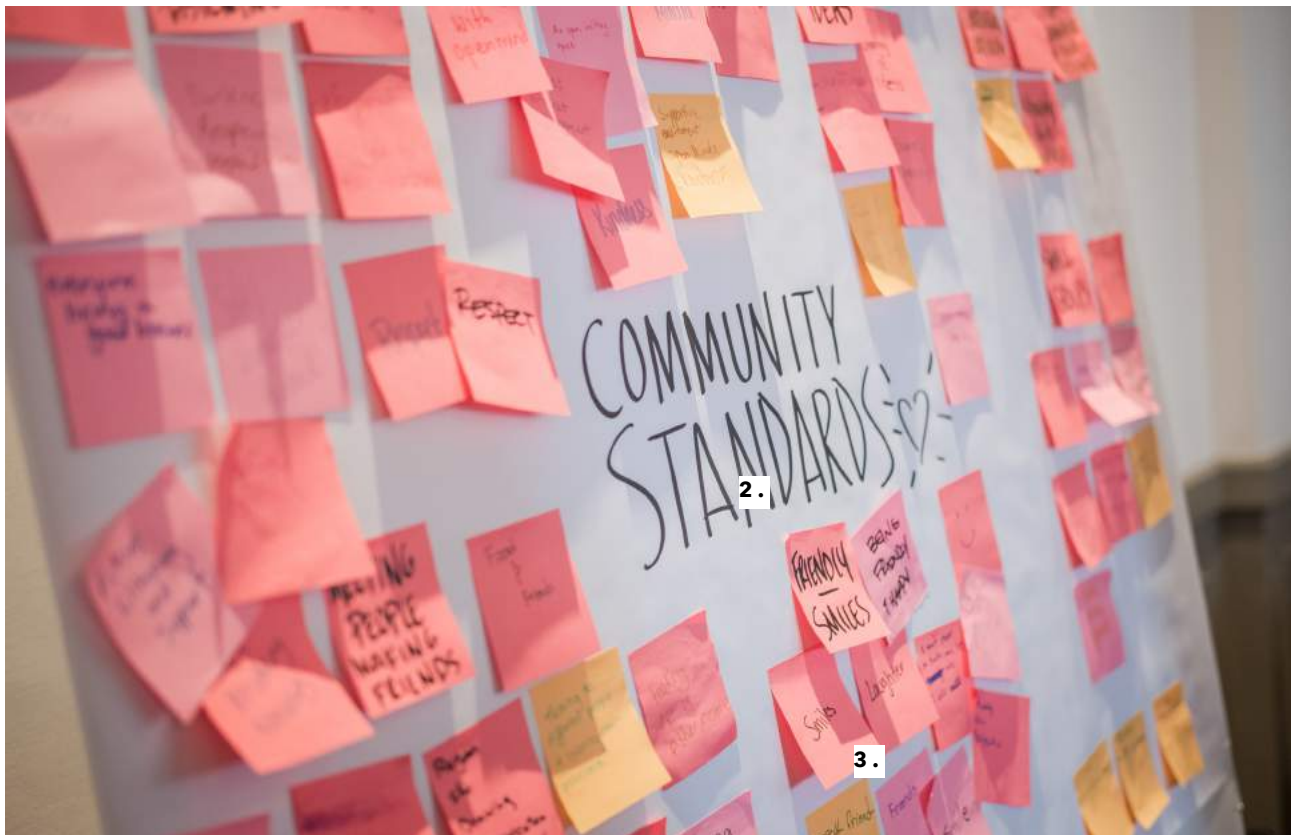
COMMUNITIES,  
CULTURE, AND HERITAGE

## PARTNERS

ATLANTIC PHOTO  
BLM READING GROUP  
COMMON ROOTS URBAN FARM  
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HALIFAX CENTRAL LIBRARY  
HALIFAX NORTH MEMORIAL  
LIBRARY  
ISANS (IMMIGRANT SERVICES  
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KHYBER  
LOADED LADLE  
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