



Final Report
November 2020

 **GENERATOR**
Pilot Project



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Introduction

Transform Dance was a project about finding ways into healing and transformation—both at the individual and at the collective level—within the dance sector in Toronto. In particular, we were interested in addressing harassment (sexual, gender-based and otherwise) and transforming the culture of the dance sector.

The project was initially envisioned in winter 2018. Generator received funding in early 2019 from the Toronto Arts Council's Open Door program, and the Project Coordinator was hired in April 2019. We initially anticipated that the project would wrap up by December 2019, but it ended up continuing until summer 2020.

Open Door is a stream within the Toronto Arts Council that is specifically designed for Big Ideas: projects that respond quickly and innovatively to contemporary concerns. Open Door was a great support for this project as it is expressly dedicated to transforming what exists, and to inspiring new options.

Transform Dance was designed to support three Transformative Justice (TJ) processes for individuals or groups of individuals who had experienced workplace harassment within the Toronto dance community. Transformative Justice is a non-punitive approach to justice and healing that grows out of the experience, wisdom and practice of communities of colour who seek to resolve harm without resorting to policing structures and the judicial/legal system. TJ processes seek to create opportunities for people who have been harmed to heal, for those who do harm to learn, change and grow, and for repair and transformation of the relationship to occur if/when possible and desired.

Generator incubated Transform Dance as a pilot project. Generator is a mentoring, teaching and innovation incubator that works to expand the tools, capacities and skills of independent artists, producers and leaders. As with any pilot that seeks to work with human harms, we were mindful of the risks of engaging in very complex issues with limited resources. Because of the gravity and scale of the problems of workplace harassment, we knew it was possible that the project would touch on harms requiring more resources than we had access to. At the same time, we saw significant need in the community, strong potential in the use of TJ, and ultimately felt that it was worth undertaking the project in spite of these resource constraints. We ensured that all participants were aware that the

I didn't want to hurt anybody because I was feeling hurt, and court kind of felt like that to me. The options that were initially presented to me didn't feel right...And then this amazing thing fell into my lap. It felt like an opportunity to process this negative experience that I had, and to turn it into something where not only I can heal from it, but where other people involved could also heal and evolve from this experience.

PARTICIPANT, Case #2



project was a pilot and that funds were therefore limited. It would be very positive if this work could continue on by being funded in an ongoing way.

We believe this report shows that the TJ approach has considerable merit as a means of providing healing and transformation for the dance sector as a whole, as well as other parts of our culture.

This report highlights learnings from the Transform Dance project and makes some recommendations for how this work could grow and serve the arts sector.

We are optimistic and hopeful that all participants in the arts sector, including funders, governments, arts organizations, and artists themselves will see the value in this approach and continue to invest in it.

Appropriation and Accountability Statement

Transformative Justice (TJ) is a body of practice that grew out of the experiences of racialized communities facing state violence and oppressive institutions. The majority of TJ work is unpaid and happens informally, organized at a community level.

Restorative Justice (RJ) is a body of practice that grows out of Indigenous knowledge and frameworks for healing; it is practiced in some institutional contexts (in schools, for example, and some youth justice settings). Many RJ facilitators are volunteers, but there are growing numbers of professionalized RJ services.

Both TJ and RJ frameworks provide extremely valuable countercurrents to the problems of the criminal model; as such, they are of great interest at this historical moment. At the same time, this 'interest' can easily lead towards further colonial violence, in the form of appropriation and exploitation. It is a very real danger that, as mainstream institutions try to solve their own problems by reaching outward, they do harm by drawing on knowledge, people and traditions that they do not understand and are not in relationship with.

We initially envisioned that Transform Dance would be shaped by oversight, input and implementation from Indigenous as well as racialized voices. We wanted the project to have access to the most effective and nuanced praxis available, and we also wanted the funding to make its way to the communities who have built this knowledge. This vision was partially realized. Below is a summary of the barriers we encountered in trying to implement TJ in a way that is accountable, just, and reflective of its philosophical origins, as well as some suggestions as to how future work can wrestle with this danger in an honest and productive way.

There's a way of resolving conflicts and problems without making people discardable.

**HIRUT MELAKU, TJ Facilitator
& Advisory Group**



- For the facilitation work, we reached out to four Greater Toronto Area Indigenous TJ and RJ facilitators, and eight non-Indigenous facilitators, the majority of whom were racialized. Everyone we reached was supportive of the project, but many were busy with existing work and needed to prioritize their energy and capacity for that. This was particularly true for Indigenous practitioners. The three case studies ended up being facilitated by non-Indigenous practitioners of colour.
- For the Advisory Group, we contacted three Greater Toronto Area Indigenous people of various professional backgrounds, and seven non-Indigenous people. The hourly rate we were able to offer, however, was too low for many people, and so we ended up with no Indigenous representation on the Advisory Group.
- Given the history of settler institutions and Indigenous people, a future project would need to earmark considerable additional time and funding to build respect, trust, and genuine relationships with Indigenous practitioners and networks. As it stands, arts organizations have a lot to gain from this engagement; Indigenous people have considerably less to gain from sharing their knowledge.

1. The Framework: Transformative Justice

a) What is Transformative Justice?

Transformative Justice (TJ) is a framework for responding to harm that has emerged out of the practice, wisdom and experience of communities of colour in the United States.

The basic concept behind TJ is to respond to harm in a way that does not create further harm. Philosophically, it is an abolitionist framework—this means it does not rely on prisons or punishment as a solution to harm. Rather, TJ seeks to create opportunities for people who have been harmed to heal, for those who do harm to learn, change and grow, and for repair and transformation of the relationship to occur if/when possible and desired.

TJ is also a systems approach, in that it looks beyond individuals who do harm or are harmed, and seeks to understand and transform the underlying conditions that enable abuse and harm. It is about understanding root causes and seeking comprehensive change. Critically, TJ is also a voluntary process—participation is consensual, can be paused, and is sometimes a matter of ongoing negotiation.



Our structures for problem-solving and for addressing harm so often focus on the moment the harm is done, and who did it, and who experienced the harm, versus seeing the greater structure of things that allow harm or encourage harm to be done. Taking an approach that says, actually, we're all interconnected—that is really powerful for me.

**KAREN BK CHAN, TJ Facilitator
& Advisory Group**



Because the framework is so flexible, TJ processes are very diverse, and no two are the same. Sometimes people who have been harmed want accountability and engagement from the person who harmed them, or from community members who were aware of the harm as it was happening and did not intervene. Other times, engagement with the person who did the harm is not safe, wanted, or possible—in these cases, processes can centre on community dialogue, repair and healing of relationships, and other activities that support the empowerment of the person harmed and the transformation of the conditions that enabled the harm. In contrast to western legal processes, TJ processes are often non-linear: they can stop and start according to the needs of the participants, and they can also change course, as new options and needs emerge.

References

- [Creative Interventions Toolkit](#)
- [Barnard Center for Research on Women, TJ Archive](#)

b) Why did Transform Dance choose this Framework?

We chose the language and framework of TJ for several reasons. Arts communities (especially small or niche ones) are a hybrid of workplace and social networks. As such, people are often very hesitant to formally report harmful or abusive behaviour, for fear that it will impact both their livelihoods and their social relationships (which are often deeply intertwined).

As we embarked on the Transform Dance project, we also heard from a lot of community members that they wanted the person who harmed them to commit to stopping the harassment and changing their behaviour—and that formal reporting, with punitive consequences, did not feel like the right vehicle to achieve this. TJ, on the other hand, makes space for this kind of goal and outcome.

Finally, we chose TJ because we hoped a framework that explicitly seeks to avoid replicating the racism of the western legal system would enable many more dancers to access healing. Traditional reporting systems are built on the same foundation as the legal system, which means that the reporting process is often most violent towards the most highly targeted groups (equity-seeking groups, including those who identify as Indigenous, Black, People of Colour, Trans, Nonbinary, Queer, Disabled, and intersections of those identities). As such, we end up with very low reporting rates, and rates that artificially skew white, cisgender and able-bodied. We hoped that a TJ approach would open up

I don't think anything is gained when we jettison those who create harm out of our communities. We don't learn more about how we need to be treated, how we need to communicate about the harm that's done to us, how to better be in conflict. And they learn nothing, because now they've just been sent away, and maybe they do or maybe they don't know why.

**KRISTINA LEMIEUX, Lead Producer
(Generator) & Advisory Group**

increased space and safety for a more complex picture to emerge and be responded to.

TJ processes are one-size-fits-one—they are designed according to the particular realities of a given situation, the needs of the people directly affected and the willingness of other parties to engage. We felt this framework was the most flexible and effective way to address the complexities and nuances of harassment in a small community.

For more in-depth information about Transformative Justice, please refer to the 'Transformative Justice' Appendix to this report.

2. The Problems: What Were We Trying to Address?

What makes sexual and gender-based harassment in dance such a complex and persistent problem?

<p>DANCE IS A SMALL, PRECARIOUSLY-EMPLOYED SECTOR</p> 	<p>People often work on a casual or contract basis and there is rarely any safety net; this makes formal reporting very risky.</p>
<p>RELATIONSHIPS = ACCESS TO WORK, SO RETALIATION CARRIES ECONOMIC RISK</p> 	<p>Dancers are extremely hesitant to 'rock the boat' or file a formal complaint, especially if the incidents involve someone with power.</p>
<p>TOUCH IS USED IN THE WORK, AND SOME TRAINING METHODOLOGIES ARE ABUSIVE</p> 	<p>The lineage of ballet in particular is strongly hierarchical and often emphasizes that discomfort, pain and distress are normal, okay and 'part of being a dancer'.</p>
<p>WORKPLACE SAFETY LEGISLATION REPRODUCES THE PROBLEMS OF THE LEGAL SYSTEM</p> 	<p>Employers are mandated to investigate; this takes agency away from the targeted person and drives the process towards compliance, risk-management and organizational reputation; investigation techniques often re-traumatize and reproduce rape culture myths.</p>



a) Sector & Workplace Conditions

The dance sector is small, and precarious employment is the norm. Relationships are highly important in the sector, and there are concerns about retaliation. In a dance workplace, touch is used, and in particular there is a learning lineage from ballet that is very problematic. Taken together, these conditions create an environment where abuse and harassment can and do happen very widely.

These issues are discussed more deeply in our podcast (see 'More Insights: the Transform Dance Podcast' section of this report).

b) Issues with Workplace Safety Legislation

Currently, workplace harassment legislation is both a mechanism by which some harassment complaints get resolved, and a significant barrier to resolving problems in a trauma-informed, empowering way that is accessible to the most targeted groups.

Legislation about workplace harassment draws from one-size-fits-all western legal constructs and replicates the problems we see in how criminal law addresses gender-based and interpersonal harm. **Like the criminal system, workplace safety legislation further marginalizes underserved and targeted people, reproduces racism, and perpetuates rape culture.** These trends are evident when we look at rates of how often gender-based violence is reported, how often it is prosecuted, and which demographics are more likely to get prosecuted.

In drawing on the same legal constructs as the criminal system, workplace safety legislation produces many of the same outcomes. For example, under current Ontario employment law, an investigation is mandated as soon as an organization becomes aware of a problem. This can remove agency from the targeted person and push them into an intrusive 'fact-finding' approach, which can in turn cause more harm. This is not a response based on the needs of the person who was harmed or the context of the harm. **As a tool, investigations are a very blunt instrument: just like criminal investigations, workplace investigations seek to prove or disprove incidents and qualify them against a threshold of harm—but harassment is a notoriously difficult experience to define, explain and demonstrate or 'prove'.** Investigative techniques thus often fall short of 'proving', rely too much on the investigator's personal assessment of harm (which is culturally constructed from the same flawed concepts, and often comes out of

“People talked a lot about [how] in dance training, you teach your body to deal with discomfort and that's just part of conditioning. And for me, thinking about my work with people who've survived violence, I just thought, wow: it's pretty tough to teach someone at a young age to deal with discomfort, and also try to teach them boundaries.

MEG SAXBY, Project Coordinator



the same legal training that creates problems in the criminal system) and, in the process, can cause damage to all parties.

For some people and in some situations, workplace harassment investigations feel like an accessible and appropriate option—but for significant numbers of targeted people, the formal reporting system as mandated by the Ontario Health and Safety Act does not provide a realistic or helpful path. Further, most employers, in an effort to comply with the legislation, respond to substantiated harassment reports with punitive consequences. Sometimes targeted people want punishment, but often they do not, and punitive approaches reduce space for learning, change, and repair/transformation. This effectively ‘kicks the can down the road’ in terms of actually changing behaviour and addressing the problem comprehensively.

Finally, when we look at the problem only through the lens of employer/employee relationship and workplace safety legislation, we end up with a compliance-driven approach that ends up focusing resources on organizational reputation-saving and risk management. This is the toxic cocktail that we see playing out so often in the media.

These issues are discussed more deeply in our podcast (see ‘More Insights: the Transform Dance Podcast’ section of this report).

3. The Process: What Steps Did We Take?

We underwent a five-step process to prepare us for the cases, and to help us identify what those cases would be.





a) Hiring a Coordinator

Assumptions we made

- We assumed this person would need to be familiar with counselling, intake, and case management, because they would be in a role directly supporting participants in the process.
- We assumed this person would need to be a member of a regulated college or health profession, to ensure comfort with front-line response to trauma and a practice around confidentiality.
- We assumed this person should come from outside of the dance and arts sector, to provide an arms-length perspective.

What we learned about our assumptions

- Hiring a social worker is not necessarily a helpful solution. Lots of social workers have good skill sets, and in this particular case it did work out. However, social work is a profession that has perpetrated considerable harm and social surveillance, particularly related to Indigenous and racialized communities. This is most evident in the field of child welfare, but occurs across the social services. It should not be taken for granted that a social worker (or any other regulated health professional) has a nuanced and sufficiently complex understanding of their role so as to not do harm in their engagement with vulnerable people.
- As a social worker in private practice, our Project Coordinator engaged in her own clinical supervision—this was useful to ensure she was getting support, limiting vicarious harm, and following high ethical standards. This was helpful for her, and in turn helpful for the project participants.
- Having someone from outside of dance was both positive and negative—she had to do more legwork to become known and make connections, but she also brought a different perspective, and her lack of existing relationships within dance made her more accessible to some folks.

Lessons for next time

- Hiring an outsider to dance (or any industry) means there will be a longer getting-to-know-the-landscape and relationship-building curve; this affects planning time.
- Given the demographics of targeted groups and how racism plays out within the arts, it would be beneficial to have a Project Coordinator who is racialized. Racialized participants did approach the project and engage in the processes Transform Dance oversaw; they indicated that they felt safe to approach largely because the Advisory Group included Black members. Having a non-white front-line intake worker would likely increase this trend.



- A counselling, intake and case management skill set and front-line experience were valuable. However, it is important to note that these skills often come from inclusion in mainstream social services institutions, and so prioritizing them runs the risk of excluding TJ practitioners who come out of community-based traditions and privileging people with experience in western institutional structures. Any future projects should focus on a holistic understanding of the skills required, and not default into a classical social services model.
- Membership in a regulated college is not a simple thing in the context of this work. On the one hand, it ensures regular participation in clinical supervision and accountability to the public via the framework of the regulatory college. At the same time, most colleges have very conservative ethical frameworks and enforce them using punitive measures that replicate the very systems for which TJ is seeking to provide an alternative. These frameworks are not rooted in the realities that many communities face, and include standards of practice that can remove agency from targeted people (for example, duties to report, wellness checks, compliance with authorities regarding case notes). Regulated professionals who move against these codes of ethics—even if they do so in pursuit of equity or justice—expose themselves to professional risks. The presence of regulated professionals can make a system inaccessible to targeted communities (in particular, racialized, undocumented, and Indigenous communities). As such, any future projects need to weigh the pros and cons of using regulated professions.

b) Developing an Advisory Group

Skills we determined we needed in the group

- Representation of dance community and dance sector service organizations.
- Experience in arts sector workplaces.
- Experienced Transformative Justice facilitators.
- Legal knowledge, with an understanding of reporting and investigation processes.
- Trauma-informed lens and knowledge of local mental health resources.

What we learned about our assumptions

- A significant number of the Transformative Justice and Restorative Justice facilitators that we wanted to be on our Advisory Group were too busy to participate.
- Several others expressed interest, but were not able to work for \$30 CAD/hour.
- There was a lot of interest from lawyers; we had to turn people down to ensure that our Advisory Group would not end up being only legal experts.

In the work that I did with the Dancer Transition Resource Centre, we would have dancers who would come to us about wanting to leave dance performance. And when you really talked to them and pulled it out of them, often it was because they had had a bad experience, either with a choreographer or an artistic director. And it just seemed to be such a waste of talent.

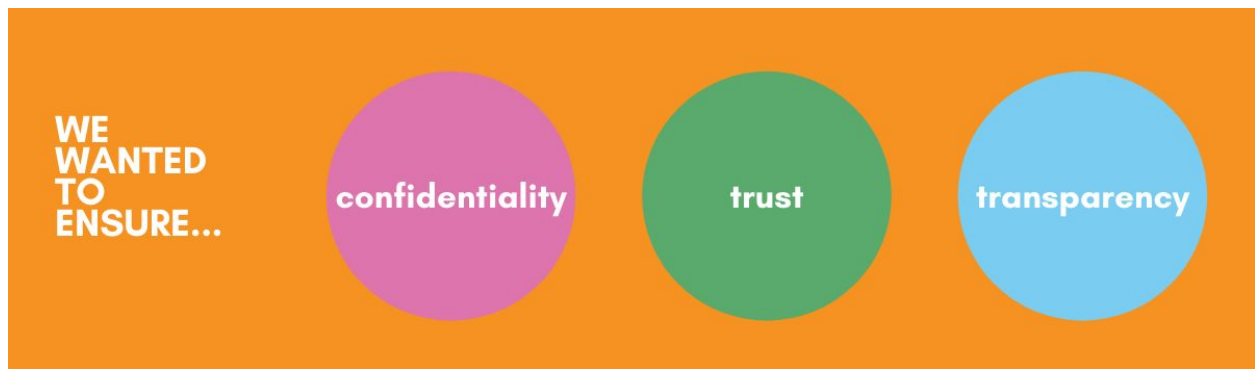
AMANDA HANCOX, Advisory Group

- The Advisory Group learned from each other as we went—those with Transformative Justice experience did not have arts sector experience, and those with arts sector experience did not have Transformative Justice experience.

Lessons for next time

- It would be helpful to have the budget to pay for specialized skill sets on the Advisory Group.
- A higher hourly rate for the Advisory Group members would also enable more participation from historically marginalized and economically precarious groups.
- Probably because of the hourly wage we could offer, we ended up with an Advisory Group who had more intra-institutional expertise and less expertise from community-based processes; there were both pros and cons to this.

c) Confidentiality Systems and Operational Structure



This entailed:

- Developing guiding principles for the Advisory Group. We wanted to be as transparent as possible, and we also wanted to set a high standard for the project. As such, one of the Advisory Group's first tasks was to develop some guiding principles. They can be found in the 'Project Description' Appendix to this report, under 'Our values and principles.'
- Detailing clear protocols on confidentiality. Because we were working with confidential information, we assumed it would be very important for Advisory Group members and potential participants to each clarify confidentiality expectations beforehand. We agreed that only the Project Coordinator and the associated Transformative Justice facilitator would know the participants' identities. Advisory Group members signed a Non-Disclosure Agreement. We felt this was very important, especially because some Advisory Group members were well known within the arts sector, and we did not want this to be a barrier to people coming forward. We made these protocols visible on the project website, and explained them verbally while doing community outreach. We also advertised that participants



could request, without requiring an explanation, that any given Advisory Group member ‘sit out’ any discussion related to their case.

- Developing a Working Agreement for participants, so as to clearly outline and document their rights within the process. This emerged out of one of our processes, when the Transformative Justice facilitator suggested it would be useful to clearly document the rights, responsibilities and expectations of participation. This can be found in the ‘Working Agreement’ Appendix to this report.

Lessons for next time

- Confidentiality was very important to everyone; every effort should be made to document clearly and openly how confidentiality will be practiced and upheld.
- One area for potential confidentiality breaches that we did not anticipate was the administration of the wellbeing fund. (For further detail, refer to the ‘Participant Wellbeing Fund’ section of this report.) If participants were seeing an independent therapist or body worker, we could have that practitioner invoice Generator directly for the cost of the sessions, and the participant’s name did not appear on the invoice. However, if the participant wanted to use the wellbeing fund for a different sort of purpose (for example, to replace lost wages), they had to invoice for it as individuals. This also meant that the support they received was taxable and a T4A was issued. Ultimately, all of our participants were okay with invoicing directly as needed—we informed them of the identity of Generator’s bookkeeper—but it would be smart, for future projects, to have some pre-established mechanism for working around this. More research could be done looking at the practices of organizations like AFC and DTRC around this sort of protocol and GAAP standards.

d) Outreach and Trust-building

We assumed most people would want to learn about the project anonymously, so we built content that people could access online, hosted on the Generator website. On the project website, we included the following information:

- A full project description
- Names, bios and photos of the Advisory Group and Project Coordinator
- Information (videos, podcasts, and written content) about Transformative Justice
- The guiding principles of the project, along with our confidentiality protocols
- A confidential way to directly reach the Project Coordinator

We hired a focus group to give us feedback on the website content. We reached out to about 20 people connected to the GTA dance community. We asked them to share the project and offered a \$50 CAD honorarium, plus dinner. We ended up with a focus group of six people from within the dance community who gave us feedback on the content, the design and the overall feeling of the website. The focus group ended up being a vehicle by



which we reached process participants—focus group members shared information about the project with their networks.

We relied on the connective tissue of the arts sector, and the dance world in particular, to get word out about the project. This meant:

- Going to meet with dance service organizations’ staff to discuss the project (we did a lot of outreach through Canadian Dance Assembly and Canadian Alliance of Dance Artists).
- Presenting workshops at dance conferences and festivals (we developed and delivered a highly participatory workshop on conflict resolution as an easy gateway/entry point for dialogue. *This is discussed further on our podcast—see ‘More Insights: the Transform Dance Podcast’ section of this report).*
- Asking dance companies to share the project information on their online platforms.

Assumptions we made

- We assumed we would have far too many cases and would have to turn people away.
- We assumed people would know about and be interested in Transformative Justice.
- We assumed the dance service provider community would be on board.

THE CHALLENGES WE FACED

(And how we addressed them.)

EXPLAINING TRANSFORMATIVE JUSTICE & RESTORATIVE JUSTICE FRAMEWORKS TO THE DANCE COMMUNITY



Experiential workshops in dance organizations and settings.

Videos and case studies on the website.

FINDING (AND PAYING FOR) THE RIGHT SKILLS

TJ facilitators are busy! Lots of people wanted to be involved but didn’t have the availability.



The Project Coordinator worked for below-market rates.

DEMONSTRATING TRUSTWORTHINESS

We went at the pace of trust. We emphasized face to face meetings.



We did lots of workshops as outreach.



- We assumed that we would be offering individual processes (i.e. that cases of harm against an individual would be resolved on an individual level).
- We assumed that using neutral language in the recruitment material would be read as inclusive.

What we learned about our assumptions

- There is indeed a high volume and a high need vis-à-vis harassment in the arts, but we only tapped into it once we established ourselves as trustworthy—this took time.
- Survivors often network with one another; all of our cases came through these referral networks.
- Some dance service providers expressed significant discomfort in doing outreach or advertising for the project (they were not familiar with Transformative Justice; they worried about ‘opening a can of worms’; they expressed general anxiety about the topic).
- We found that workshops which used Transformative Justice skills, approaches and themes were a valuable way of starting the conversation in a low-risk way and accessing potentially interested groups of people.
- In all three cases, there was a significant collective element to the process. **In Cases #1 and #2, the participants wanted to involve community members in their healing, and conceived of the healing as extending beyond themselves.** This contrasts starkly with the conventional workplace harassment response model, which strongly seeks to limit the process to just the individuals directly involved in an incident.
- The neutral language we used felt exclusionary to some because it was perceived as representing the mainstream white dance world.

Lessons for next time

- Future projects should anticipate that a significant amount of time and energy will go into outreach and trust-building.
- An intentional communications and outreach strategy is necessary to get the word out; it should include participatory and interactive components, such as workshops.
- The communications strategy should include ongoing outreach to communities who are already doing TJ work. TJ facilitators tend to be very busy and the work is often done under the radar—as such, outreach needs to be intentional and ongoing.
- A future project would need to consider asking what accountability means towards a group of people and not just an individual. **We worked with a variety of cases and heard a diversity of disclosures, and all included elements of systemic and social harm. A future project would need to be equipped conceptually to respond to systemic harms, and not default into individualist models.**



I shouldn't have been, but I was very surprised and really struck by the levels of fear and anxiety in the sector about opening this conversation up.

MEG SAXBY, Project Coordinator

- Intentional and explicit outreach should be done towards groups who are usually excluded from mainstream dominant patriarchal and ableist white culture. This includes ensuring these groups are identified explicitly on any calls for participants, and designing any outreach activities and events with these groups in mind.
- As a whole, the dance community was not familiar with Transformative Justice or Restorative Justice; there is more awareness and skill development to be done in this area.
- Additional work needs to be done to enhance the skills and comfort of dance service and arts service organization front-line workers around these themes. Their discomfort acted as a barrier to their clients accessing what may have been a needed and helpful process.
- For the future, it would be good to earmark both time and money for relationship building and trust development with dance and arts service organizations as the project is being developed. Trust is so vital to this work; stronger relationships between ASOs, and increased understanding of what TJ offers, should be considered key deliverables and therefore worth devoting resources towards. More understanding about the nature of the project would reduce the discomfort discussed in the point above, as well as build easier service navigation pathways and a more cohesive system of support for participants.

e) Cataloguing Resources Proactively

There is an ongoing crisis of lack of resources for mental health and gender-based violence in general, and this absolutely impacts people facing workplace harassment. Because we did not know what we would encounter—the project model was deliberately open-ended and the need is significant—we felt it was responsible to develop rosters of resources that we might need to refer to.

We developed lists of...



Assumptions we made

- We assumed people might reach out to us mistaking us for a crisis service.
- We assumed we would have a deluge of interest and would likely have to refer people externally.



- Generally, at the Advisory Group, there was a high level of anxiety as the project kicked off, including concerns about risk, liability, and the safety and wellbeing of individuals who might come forward.

What we learned about our assumptions

- None of these things happened! People were much more careful and cautious when engaging with the project than we imagined they might be. Between August 2019 and April 2020, Transform Dance was contacted by seven individuals, two of whom decided to engage in a process. One of the processes involved holding community workshops about TJ, and this gave us access to a much larger network of interested people—however, by this time, we had already committed to the three cases for which we had funding.
- No one in an active situation reached out. Everyone we heard from had left the situations of harm and was seeking healing or repair.
- When we did have people decide to participate, they were very happy to receive the list of potential facilitators and healers—it was helpful for them to have folks to research and imagine working with.

Lessons for next time

- Future projects should anticipate considerable anxiety from within their sector about potentially triggering an influx of disclosures and complex crises. At the beginning of the project, there was a lot of anxiety on the part of the Advisory Group (and also within the service provider organisations we worked with as outreach partners) that we would receive an avalanche of cases—this did not ultimately occur.

4. The Cases: What Processes Emerged?

For a more in-depth discussion of the processes that emerged, refer to 'More Insights: the Transform Dance Podcast' section of this report. In the podcast, you can hear directly from the facilitators and one participant.

a) Case #1

Case #1 concerned a historical harm. The harm had caused the participant to leave her emerging performance career in dance. Had she wanted to report the harm at the time it occurred, it would not have been possible, because there was no infrastructure available to do so (no policy, procedure, or available pathway existed at that time). She was interested in pursuing TJ because she wanted to restore her feeling of safety and belonging within the GTA dance community, to engage with the person(s) who had been present at the time, and to heal and transform what she had experienced. Dialogue one-on-one with her TJ facilitator was central to her process of unpacking her experience of harm. Another key part



of her process was collective dialogue; as a Black woman, she chose to convene conversations with other Black women dance artists about how experiences of harm play out in their lives and dance communities. She also chose to host an African dance workshop for Black women only, and to do a dance performance as a vehicle to communicate her experience. The performance idea evolved into a project involving three other dance artists and a choreographer, with a timeline that extends beyond the Transform Dance project.

This participant wrote letters to the three people who had done harm, inviting them to participate in one-on-one conversations with her, together with her assigned TJ facilitator. At the time of this report, one of the people who did harm has participated in a conversation with the participant, one has expressed that she is willing, and one has not responded to the letter. With the additional funds allotted to this participant's project, she will pursue conversations with the remaining two people who did harm, in the same format, one-on-one, with the support of her TJ facilitator.

b) Case #2

Case #2 concerned a recent experience of harm. The participant had been fired from her recent job at a dance company, after having experienced harassment and bullying by a senior leader within the company. After a period of healing and reflection, she wanted to engage with the person who had harmed her, but she did not want to make a formal report to the dance company. She did not feel a formal report would help her or the other person to grow or heal. She also knew that the person held a powerful position within the dance company and had behaved in this way towards other dancers, so she didn't trust the company's ability to respond well, or their interest to do so. TJ felt like the right option for her because the approach felt flexible and supportive. Additionally, she found that the wellbeing fund was extremely helpful—it allowed her to work therapeutically with her experience before and during her TJ process.

This participant wanted the person who had done harm to participate in a circle, and she also wanted the people who had been present at the time to participate in a circle. At the time of this report, the person who did harm had agreed to participate, as had the people who had been present at the time. As a result, the participant and facilitator extended their work together to accommodate this. Additional facilitator hours were required to accommodate the timeline, but going slowly was very important and beneficial for the process and ultimately enabled all sides to engage.

I feel like this is my process and I'm designing it. It makes me feel important and it makes me feel respected and like my experience was real. [...] The pace made me feel safe. It made me feel like my needs were being taken into consideration. There was no pressure—when things were feeling overwhelming, we could step back and I could take time.

PARTICIPANT, Case #2

c) Case Study #3

Case Study #3 took the form of a multi-part workshop series, designed to build the capacities of emerging and established male-identified leaders within the dance community.



A key tenet of Transformative Justice is to intervene in the underlying conditions that create and maintain violence: what can we do to make abuse and violence less possible, and relationships of justice and equity more achievable?

Desire in the community

As Transform Dance progressed, we noticed a pattern. We heard from people who had experienced harm and were not particularly interested in initiating a process themselves, but who felt interested in ‘something proactive and preventative’ being done to collectively address the problems of harassment and harm in the dance community. We also heard a lot of similar stories of patterns of behaviour by dance leaders—Artistic Directors, Executive Directors, Choreographers, and so on—that, intentionally or not, set up workplaces that felt psychologically and physically unsafe.

Patterns of behaviour

There was a gendered pattern to these stories. Leaders from all across the gender spectrum struggled to set up and maintain safe(r) spaces, and the dancers within these spaces told us about the different ways unsafety played out. The difficulty in holding safe(r) space across the sector was very prominent, but there were specific ways in which male-identified leadership struggled, and other ways in which female-identified leadership struggled.



Workshop series

We decided to use the funding for the third case study to develop an interactive workshop series that would serve male-identified dance leaders and build their capacity for establishing and holding psychological safety as leaders in dance workplaces. We envisioned professional development that would not just focus on policy, protocol and compliance, but would equip emerging and established dance leaders with new ways of approaching, understanding, communicating about and building/sustaining psychological safety in the workplace. We wanted to give people applied, tangible frameworks, and tools to help them build and sustain healthier dance workplaces.

Finding participants

We hired two adult educators—Douglas Stewart and BK Chan, both members of the Transform Dance Advisory Group—to develop the curriculum, and emailed about 40 male-identified dance leaders in the GTA. In the initial outreach materials, we explained that the workshop series would be rooted in TJ principles, and would broadly address practical tools for psychological safety in dance workplaces. We wanted to make sure the curriculum would be responsive to the participants' interests, so our initial outreach described these objectives at a high level, with the goal being for each participant to have an initial intake conversation with the Coordinator. We then gathered together all of the intake information for Douglas and BK to work with, so they could develop the most useful content and approach. We also offered all participants a \$500 CAD honorarium for participating. (This money came out of the wellbeing fund, which was \$6,000 CAD for each case—see 'The Money: What Did It Cost?' section of this report for more details.) Some of the participants were salaried, so they declined the honorarium; for others, we increased the honorarium to \$700 in response to the impacts of the Covid-19 outbreak on arts livelihoods.

Adjusting the scope

After we sent a follow-up email, about 20% of the 40 people we reached out to responded. Most responses were positive, but a lot of folks indicated they were already booked or travelling. (Interestingly, even following the Covid-19 outbreak that occurred soon after, we did not hear back from those who had indicated interest but lacked availability.) We had about five people initially indicate interest; after a couple of weeks, this dwindled to only two confirmed participants. Several people indicated interest but stopped responding to emails or did not attend scheduled meetings. We asked our confirmed participants to reach out to their networks (for a fee), which drummed up more interest. We also expanded our pool to include anyone doing physical performance. Our two confirmed folks grew to nine. Based on the input of these participants, Douglas and BK drafted an initial high-level curriculum. We circulated that back to the participants for their input

The conversation is: I might do harm and I might have done harm. And how might I face that within myself, how might I face that among my peers, and what do I do now?

**KAREN BK CHAN, TJ Facilitator
& Advisory Group**



to see if we were heading in the right direction. (The outreach email sent to participants and intake questions can be found in the 'Appendices' section of this report.)

We ran the first pilot of the workshops in early June 2020. Below is a summary of what we learned from the pilot.

Assumptions we made

- We assumed these workshops would be held in person, which we hoped would add to the psychological safety and collective comfort required to delve into complex topics.
- We assumed the most useful thing would be to follow a specific agenda focused on particular content.
- We assumed leadership was a relatively static and obvious thing, and that all leaders have (and perceive themselves to have) similar amounts of power.
- We assumed a four-part series would be adequate time to help participants go deep into the material.
- We assumed an intensive schedule (four workshops over one-and-a-half weeks) would make it more accessible for participants to join amidst busy schedules. We also thought this might be helpful in accelerating people's learning.

What we learned about our assumptions

- Because of Covid-19, everything had to move online. This had impacts in terms of people's economic contexts, their emotional, mental and physical wellbeing, and the ability of the group to engage.
- Many participants indicated that they actually got the most and deepest learning from emergent conversations addressing current events. The uprisings related to police violence provided a lot of important food for thought and conversation, and online disclosures around harassment in the dance community similarly gave a lot of concrete examples to discuss.
- Because dance is a small and relatively precarious sector, 'leadership' is not always self-evident and is not always/only institutionally defined; it is not always clear who is a leader, and participants did not always identify with having power.
- These conversations work best when they are meandering and there is no need to hurry; a four-part series was not enough time.
- The intensive model was too hurried. Facilitators and participants needed more time between sessions to reflect on what came up in the previous sessions. Facilitators needed

A lot of people, they end up in a leadership role in a dance or arts organization without any formal training, often with very little money, usually no mentorship—or some mentorship but not super formal. And sometimes whether they want to or not, they're just replicating what they've seen and experienced.

MEG SAXBY, Project Coordinator



time to adapt the future sessions to be more responsive to evolving needs.

Lessons for next time

- There was a lot of desire to go deeper into the topics and interest in a more persistent space to do it; a slower, longer series or Community of Practice would allow for this. (For example, two sessions per month, lasting six months or a year.) This should not be an intensive format—longer and slower appears to be much more helpful.
- There are key intersections of identity that strongly influence people’s experiences with power. Race, sexuality, class and ability are all very powerful shaping forces. Future iterations should plan intentionally to follow the contours of these intersectionalities, to enhance both psychological safety and learning.
- There is a need to build skills and comfort in the area of having conversations about power with one another as leaders, particularly in the area of ‘calling in’ or challenging one another. This is not an easy practice, given the precarity of the arts sector—the fear of economic repercussions often leads to silence where there could be a fertile and beneficial exchange. Future iterations should seek to understand and build the conditions that enable this kind of exchange between peer leaders.

Voices from participants

The participants in the series gave feedback to the facilitators, and also had the opportunity to comment on the summarizing text above. In addition to the comments above, the following thoughts and reflections were received:

- “It would have been great to have more time to more deeply unpack the issues, and working in person would have been ideal.”
- “There was a lot of learning, on a very personal level, especially by practicing having hard, real and vulnerable conversations.”
- “It was great to have this group assembled, especially as there were new voices around the table, but there were male dance leaders absent who would have really benefited from the learning—how do we get ‘those men’ into the conversation?”
- “This project really helped me find confidence in my skills as a leader. It also helped me find a wonderful community of peers that I can look to for support, guidance, and inspiration in the future. I came into the program as someone who has been increasingly questioning my leadership style and what it means to be a leader. Through these hyper-focused Transformative Justice workshops, it allowed me to do a lot of inward reflection and critical thinking about my personal strengths and weaknesses. I have new found perspectives on what it means to



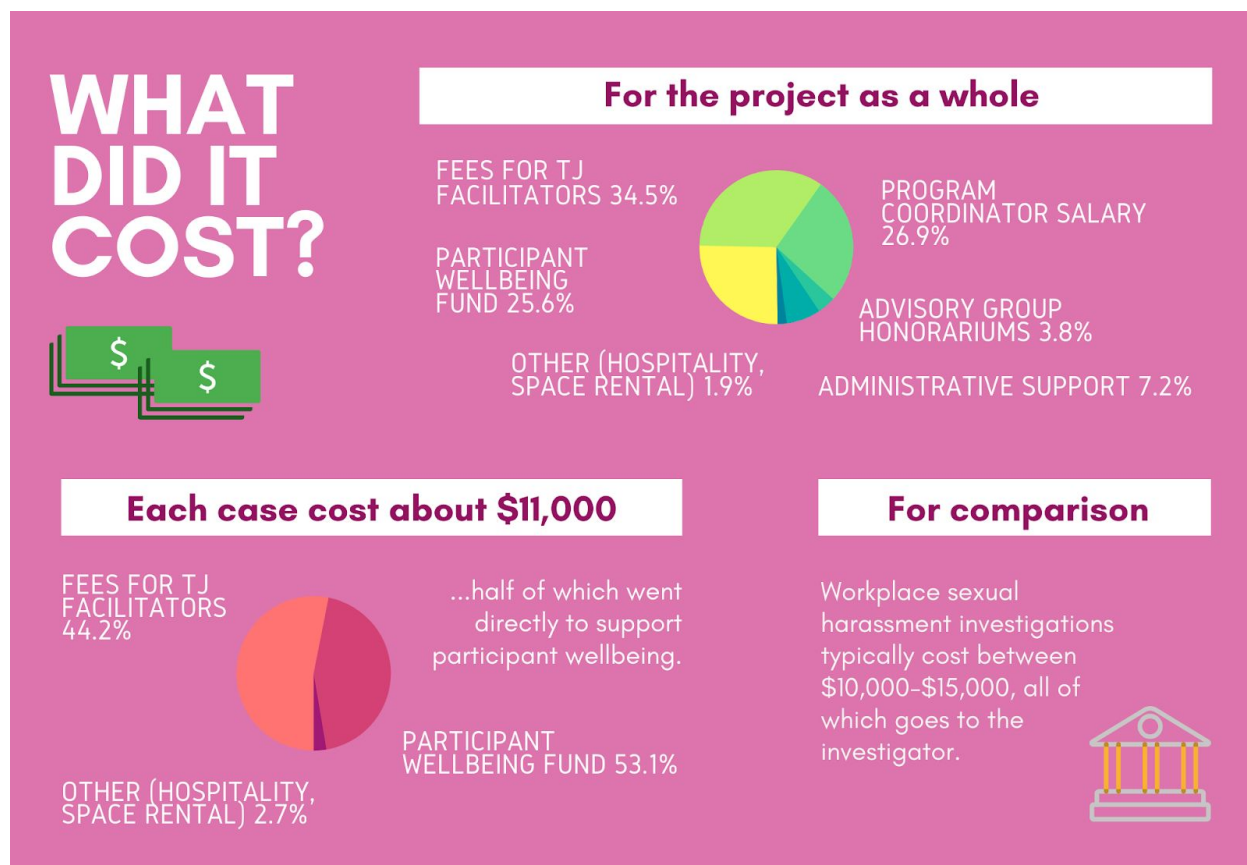
When I think about the people who do show up and the people who don't, I know that the people who do show up, and especially the younger folks who are showing up at the conflict resolution workshops, are the ones who are the future leaders.

**KRISTINA LEMIEUX, Lead Producer
(Generator) & Advisory Group**

be a leader. Thanks to the TJ process, I feel my decision making and approach to community engagement is a lot more thought out, informed, and conscious.”

5. The Money: What Did It Cost?

We had a pilot grant from Toronto Arts Council for \$69,000. Over 14 months, we used the money to facilitate three case studies, applying a Transformative Justice (TJ) approach to sexual harassment in the dance community in the Greater Toronto Area.



Note: the above figures reflect direct delivery cost; they do not include the overhead of organizational leadership, marketing, space, etc. which were provided by Generator, the hosting organization.

a) Program Coordinator Salary

The Program Coordinator was paid as a part-time consultant, at \$40 CAD per hour. Because Transform Dance was a pilot project and not integrated into an ongoing service delivery organization, project funding constraints meant that the Coordinator worked for a



below-average hourly rate. (For social workers in private practice within the GTA, typical hourly rates range between \$100-\$200.)

The Coordinator averaged between 5-10 hours of work per week on this project. The majority of her time was spent doing outreach (both in-person, via workshops and presentations, and online, via the website) and connecting with and supporting participants as they went through their Transformative Justice processes. She also coordinated the Advisory Group, liaised with TJ facilitators and designed the project documentation and evaluation.

b) Transformative Justice Facilitator Fees

The process facilitators in this project were paid, on average, \$150 CAD per hour, as part-time consultants. They provided between 30-50 hours of support to participants. We intentionally set the TJ facilitator hourly rate at the level that independent mediators, social workers and other helping professionals typically charge. We did this because we wanted to acknowledge that TJ work is rarely, if ever, paid, and we were relying on a workforce that has often done years of pro bono work. Because TJ and RJ are frameworks that grew out of the knowledge and praxis of racialized and Indigenous communities, we also wanted to ensure that our payment process reflected an ethos of recognizing the value of those knowledge streams. One of the pitfalls, however, of paying these rates in a project with limited funding, was that all of the facilitators indicated they could have used more hours—in particular, to support participants after the formal processes concluded.

c) Advisory Group Honoraria

Advisory Group members worked for below-market hourly rates, at roughly \$30 CAD per hour. They provided 25-30 hours of support across the project, averaging three hours per month. This included monthly meetings and occasional brainstorming via email. The decision to pay the Advisory Group members less was a complex one to make—on the one hand, they were the most removed from the granular details and emotional labour of cases, and so their work was less strenuous in this regard; on the other hand, deciding to pay a below-market rate meant that the role was less accessible to people in more economically precarious positions. This resulted in an Advisory Group that was less racially and economically diverse than it could have been.

d) Participant Wellbeing Fund

The participant wellbeing fund was conceived of as a mechanism to add in wraparound and healing supports, and to thereby enable wider and more inclusive participation in this project. We initially thought people might use the fund to replace lost wages (from, for instance, leaving a project where harassment was active), or access therapeutic support,

but we intentionally left it as an open category to encourage participants to identify for themselves what would support their wellbeing. One aspect that we did not consider was that, given that we were working in the arts, at least one participant expressed an interest in developing a dance performance as part of healing themselves and their community. The wellbeing fund allocated to each case study was used in full, and was very much appreciated.

e) Administrative Support

This category included support in drafting the Program Coordinator job description, tech support in setting up the website, support in coordinating outreach workshops, communications and graphic design support, and honoraria for focus group participants. It was useful to house Transform Dance in an existing organization so that the skills and capacity for each of these areas was available.

6. Ideas for the Future: Where Could We Go Next?



a) A Sector-Wide Approach

Cases #1 and #2 are examples of where approaching this problem through the lens of employer/employee relationship falls short. The harm in Case #1 occurred before current legislation was enacted to mandate reporting pathways and policies. In Case #2, the participant had significant concerns about the dance company's ability to, or interest in, holding their employee accountable. Case #3 also would never have occurred under the purview of an employer-employee approach, because it brought together dance leaders from across the sector, from a variety of workplaces, in a proactive rather than responsive way.



Additional problems of the employer-focused approach that we heard about during Transform Dance included:

- Dancers move between companies and across the country all the time. Contracts are often very short-term, and confidentiality requirements often restrict employers from sharing the outcomes of investigations. This means that even when a given employer does their due diligence and investigates harm, the person who did harm can easily move to another workplace (or geographic location).
- Dancers work together in a wide variety of settings, many of which are extra-institutional (for example, contact improv jams or informal rehearsals) but are still vital to learning and livelihoods. When harm occurs in these settings there is often no distinct ‘employer’, but it can still absolutely have impacts on a dancer’s wellbeing and career.
- Dance companies are small, have very limited Human Resources capacity and are dependent on public funding and reputation. Taken together, these factors can easily lead to companies wanting to keep problems quiet and/or not having the resources to dedicate to a thorough, robust response.

As mentioned in Section 2 (The Problems: What Were We Trying to Address?), when we look at the problem through the lens of employer/employee relationship and legislation, we end up with a compliance-driven approach. A more effective, systems-based option would be to use a sector-wide approach—addressing dance as an industry, rather than individual dance companies or dance schools.

b) An Independent, Cross-Sectoral Body

An independent, cross-sectoral body could offer transformative and restorative processes—this would not replace employer requirements, but would be able to work alongside them and offer more flexible and responsive processes. Additionally, a cross-sector body could maintain and deploy specialized resources—it is not feasible for every small dance company to have specialized resources in this area, but a cross-sectoral body could hold that capacity.

An important thing to consider here is when and how TJ does and does not mesh with conventional institutional responses. Within the current legislative framework, there is sometimes space to respond to harassment issues with alternative dispute resolution (ADR) or mediation, rather than jump to investigation. (This is left to the discretion of the organization involved. Many organizations prefer to jump straight to investigations, because they are perceived as more



I think what is best for me is that it extends beyond me. It goes beyond the trauma and beyond the surface of the thing that happened. And I feel like a collective healing experience is kind of what we need. As individuals, and as an industry.

PARTICIPANT, Case #2



robust and less legally risky.) In this space, a cross-sectoral body could offer a TJ or Restorative Justice process. **However, it is important to note that the skills and approaches that TJ processes rest upon are often not present in many organizational cultures.** In many workplaces and organizations, asking people to speak openly about their feelings, needs, motivations and hurts is a hard sell, because the psychological safety simply is not there. A TJ response to this reality would be to invest the time and resources to build such psychological safety—a process that would need to happen slowly and consistently. This process is where a cross-sectoral body could likely offer very helpful support.

An independent body could also feed a high-level anonymized picture back to the sector—likely much more accurate than any data employers are able to collect, because collecting it would not require that people expose themselves to their employers as having experienced (or seen, or enacted) harm.

An independent body could develop and deliver more in-depth learning opportunities that are not shaped by the compliance-driven approach that most employers take.

Closing the Circle: Thoughts on Accountability for the Future

At the beginning of this report, we discussed some of the complexities of using the TJ framework, which has been birthed and nurtured in racialized communities and by the labour of people of colour, to address harm that occurs in workplaces and institutional settings.

To conclude, we would like to offer some suggestions for the future as to how similar projects could integrate meaningful actions to honour the lineage of TJ and the (almost always unpaid) work that has been put in to develop it as a practice.

- We had hoped Transform Dance would be shaped by oversight, input and implementation from Indigenous as well as racialized voices. This vision was partially realized. **In addition to prioritizing employment of community-educated TJ facilitators, future projects could consider donating a part of their resources to supporting grassroots Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour groups who are already doing the work. This is a way of supporting TJ as an evolving framework without expecting TJ facilitators to prioritize paid work over the community-based work in which they are already engaged.**
- Because TJ is a fundamentally collectivist and



I think it's really important for listeners or the funders to think: how do we support the people who are already doing this work? And often those are racialized women.

**HIRUT MELAKU, TJ Facilitator
& Advisory Group**



systems-focused way of working, future projects should consider convening regular, ongoing workshops and other spaces for community dialogue. These spaces would be most easily held and convened by grassroots groups who are already doing the work. In Case #1, the participant dedicated some of the hours and wellbeing fund towards holding a collective workshop to support Black women dancers. The participants in this workshop indicated that it was a very positive and helpful opportunity for them to discuss, in a safe space, some of the harms they have experienced. Future projects should consider intentionally convening spaces like this.

More Insights: the Transform Dance Podcast

Transform Dance was about learning, experimenting and trying new things. As Transformative Justice is a community-based framework that centres accessibility, we thought documenting our experiences as a conversation would be the best way to reflect the project, and to deliver our insights in an accessible way. We made a podcast where you can hear different people who were connected with the project talk about their experiences and their learnings. Quotes from these episodes are interspersed throughout this report.

Episode 1: Our Advisory Board

Episode 2: Conversation with a Participant

Episode 3: Facilitator Roundtable

You can find the episodes on [Spotify](#), [Stitcher](#), or [Apple Podcasts](#). The Transform Dance podcast was produced by Katie Jensen of VocalFry.

Thank You

Thanks to the Transform Dance process participants, who shaped this pilot with their courage and creativity. Thank you for trusting this project, for engaging so wholeheartedly, for sharing your imaginations and for your commitment to healing and transformation.

Thank you to the Transformative Justice community: facilitators, creators, healers and everyone else who contributes to these streams of praxis.

Thank you to the Transform Dance Advisory Group: Karen BK Chan, Hirut Melaku, Douglas Stewart, Amanda Hancox, Jeanne LeSage, James Foy, Kristina Lemieux (Generator staff), and Meg Saxby (Generator staff).

Thank you to the Generator staff not already named: Keshia Palm, Sedina Fiati, Annie Clarke, Audrey Quinn, as well as Transform Dance podcast producer Katie Jensen.



This project came out of a summer 2018 conversation discussing what service organizations could do for harassment in dance in the wake of #MeToo. In attendance at that meeting were Kristina Lemieux, Kate Cornell, Fabien Maltais-Bayda, Aviva Fleising, Jacoba Knaapen, and Amanda Hancox. The grants that supported this project were drafted with guidance from those folks as well as Rosslyn Jacob Edwards and Sedina Fiati.

Thank you as well to support organizations DTRC (Dancer Transition Resource Centre), CDA (Canadian Dance Assembly), and CADA (Canadian Alliance of Dance Artists).

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This report was prepared by Transform Dance Project Coordinator Meg Saxby in consultation with Generator staff. This report has been reviewed by members of the Transform Dance Advisory Group. Quotes have been edited for length. A draft version of this report was published in June 2020.



Appendices

[Transformative Justice](#)

Information about Transformative Justice that was hosted on the 'Transform Dance' section of Generator's website.

[Project Coordinator Job Posting](#)

Job posting that was hosted on Generator's website and circulated to networks as a PDF email attachment.

[Project Description](#)

Description of the Transform Dance project that was hosted on Generator's website and circulated as a PDF email attachment as part of the Project Coordinator's initial outreach.

[Advisory Group Bios and Statements](#)

Biographies and project statements for the members of the Transform Dance Advisory Group, which were hosted on Generator's website.

[Resource List](#)

List of resources related to gender-based harassment and violence, including mental health and healing services, that was hosted on Generator's website.

[Contact Form](#)

Contact form that was hosted on Generator's website to connect folks confidentially with Project Coordinator Meg Saxby.

[Working Agreement](#)

Agreement created by the facilitator for Case #1 (Hirut Melaku), the participant in Case #1 (identity protected), and the Project Coordinator.

[Case #3 Outreach Email](#)

Initial outreach email sent to about 40 male-identified leaders in the Toronto dance community in reference to the workshop series (Case #3).

[Case #3 Intake Questions](#)

Questions sent to workshop series (Case #3) participants in advance of their first conversation.

[Case #3 Curriculum Overview](#)

An overview of the curriculum of the workshop series, including topic areas, learning objectives, overall goals, and methods.