

Voices of Women: Mothers & Children

Change Through the Arts: The Making of “Elsewhere”

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Outline

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Why Use Arts? - Method

- ▶ Arts is a medium that allows the participants to offer what they wish in a safe space that encourages truth telling.
- ▶ Opportunity is given to have multiple voices heard and the many words become woven together so that no one story is identifiable, this assists to preserve the anonymity of participants.
- ▶ The individuals who participate can feel empowered over their circumstances as they identify solutions, better ways of working and offer up a variety of potential outcomes.
- ▶ Arts is a forum that accepts everyone where they are to contribute as they are able.

What's in a Play? - The Process

The Process

- ▶ Women of lived experience were offered opportunity to meet either in individual interview, or group forum. In addition to providing contributions through written submission.
- ▶ Calls for participation in Interviews were set up through the Windsor Youth Centre (WYC), The Welcome Centre Shelter Drop-In Program (Windsor) and My Sister's Place (London).
- ▶ Additionally Front Line shelter workers (Windsor) were asked to provide input as to barriers that homeless women are up against and some of the struggles they face in supporting the women they serve. These were used to provide some of the story line and cohesive structure to the script.

What Was Asked? – The Interview Questions

- ▶ Tell me about homelessness...
- ▶ What needs to happen for real change to occur?
- ▶ What has been your experience with homelessness?
- ▶ How has the Centre assisted you?
- ▶ What are some shortcomings?
- ▶ If you were in a position to make changes what would you offer or “do differently”?

Content: The Script

- ▶ A total of 22 interviews were completed,
- ▶ Individual interviews provided the greatest amount of full story material, however they were the pieces that needed to be deconstructed and woven together so as not to be identifiable as a particular individual's story.
- ▶ The most active participation came from the women attending Drop-In who with the support of one another, were more open about telling their stories and offering up how their experiences were similar or different from one another.
- ▶ Some of the critical pieces offered did not come in the form of stories, but rather statements of what must be said, what women were feeling, or experiencing that they indicated needed to be contained within the play. Thanks to the women from My Sister's Place primarily for providing this critical piece

Inclusion: Hearing All Voices

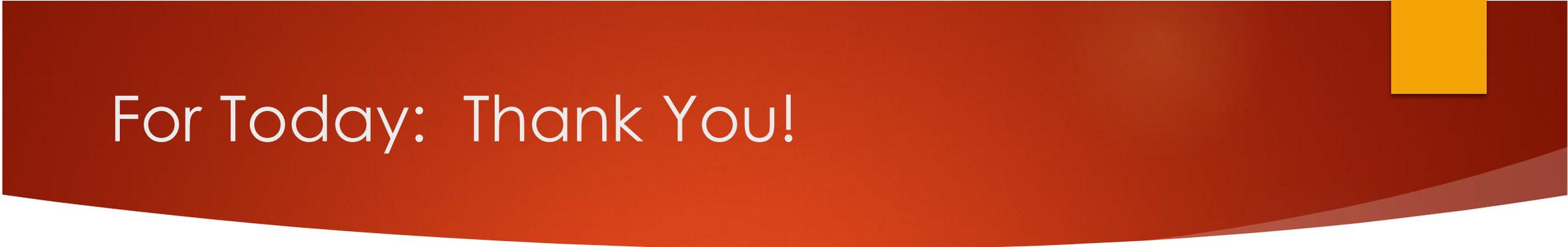
- ▶ From the interviews there was so much raw material that could not all be incorporated into one script: In fact the play put up is a shortened version of the original script.
- ▶ There were a number of themes that came up again and again as women spoke about homelessness, in addition to what needs to happen for change to occur. One consistent message was that the women wanted to offer up solutions. There was a sense that for change to occur the issue of homelessness needed to be looked at differently. To include these voices they were incorporated into two poems the one “Shifting Perspectives” and the other “Homelessness: Going Forward, Looking Backward” which provide the basic set, opening & ending.

Keeping It Real – Lived Experience

- ▶ Once the women's stories from the interviews were woven together the initial script was returned to women of Lived experience to review, edit, and act out until it spoke to them as true to life, as they have experienced
- ▶ Women from My Sister's Place (London) are here today holding the voices of these women, speaking their truths, and offering themselves as instruments of change.
- ▶ We have one guest appearance (Susan Scott) in our play "Elsewhere" on November 3, 2016. She is a truth teller and author of "All Our Sisters" a book that provided voice to homeless women.

Up Next: Change

- ▶ The reason this project was undertaken was to give voice to the lived experience of women, specifically mothers and children who have found themselves homeless. The hope is that it inspires change.
- ▶ **Change can come in many ways, here are just a few:**
- ▶ How we talk about the issues of homelessness
- ▶ The questions we ask
- ▶ The solutions we offer
- ▶ The ways in which we work
- ▶ The creation of conversation
- ▶ Necessary Systemic Changes and
- ▶ Providing the space to speak our truth



For Today: Thank You!

Thank You for
Participating Today &
Helping to Change
Tomorrow!