

December Report
RECAA/ACM project
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-THE RECAA PROJECT -



RECAA is a community-based organization of seniors working to combat elder abuse. Known originally as *Ressources Ethnoculturelles Contre l'Abuse Envers les Aîné(e)s* the English-language acronym for RECAA is *Respecting Elders: Communities Against elder Abuse*.

Working with a participatory action research approach towards media making and knowledge sharing, the projects we are undertaking with RECAA explore how elders interact with digital technologies and mobile media. Our work with RECAA helps us, as the A-C-M research team, to reflect on a conceptual approach that takes into account the mediation (or “mediatization”) of communication through technology through an intimate, hands-on engagement with members of the organization on a weekly basis. The collaboration with RECAA project allows us to recognize the subtle nuances of ageist attitudes toward older adults, rethink how these attitudes influence elder abuse, and acquire a deeper understanding about ageing and the use of ICTS by seniors within an inter-generational context.

The RECAA group is involved with different ethno-cultural communities throughout the city of Montreal and are an excellent point of contact for us. RECAA are partnered with the Digital Literacy Project (DLP) from the Atwater Library and Computer Center (ALCC), another of the Ageing-Communication-Media network partners. Both groups (RECAA and the DLP) have a community-based mandate and we share equipment, resources, and “know-how” on a regular basis.

Last year we worked with RECAA on two projects: a short video called “Respecting our Elders” and on an event, World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD). The video, which was filmed and edited by members of RECAA was their first foray into using digital tools to create media for various events and for the World Wide Web. The video premiered at WEAAD, which was celebrated on June 14 2012. The event was an enormous success with over 80 attendees. It involved numerous “acts” including The Raging Grannies, a Hindi dance in honour of mothers by a RECAA member and one of RECAA’s skits, Aunt Enid.

This year we are continuing to work on media production with RECAA, and as June, 2013 draws closer we will again assist in the production of WEAAD. While RECAA 's bi-weekly meetings have been held at James Lyng High School for the past two years, this year RECCA has worked with James Lyng High School students. Under the direction of theatre director, playwright and actor Lib Spry, RECAA, students from James Lyng, and the MML are developing an intergenerational project where youth and elders work together to produce a theatre piece. The production of the theatre piece involves learning new technological production techniques for video and sound, an aspect of the project that has most directly concerned me. This year's project was made possible by the strong collaboration and partnership that was created last year through the organization of the World Elder Awareness Day (involving RECAA, the Atwater Library and Computer Center, the ACM/Mobile Media Lab, and COPSI).

One of the important goals for RECAA this year, which we are assisting, is to build a website that will allow RECAA to disseminate their work and be visible on the web (the domain name will be: <http://recaa.ca>). We are also working on a Facebook page to explore the use of social media to spread RECAA's message of respect towards elders. RECAA's final overall project presentation (on which we are collaborating) will be held on June 13th, 2013, during the Fringe Theater Festival of Montreal. It is a direct outcome of this year's collaborative work on "ageism."

The main research themes RECAA are pursuing:

- Building an intergenerational approach towards the issue of ageism.

The goal of this project is to work with James Lyng's students to create theater works around the issue of ageism (for now, we are working with 3 students from the school).

- Creating a new forum theater piece conveying a more 'optimistic' perspective on growing old that is different from the optimism of advertisers who simply celebrate "our golden years" without addressing the challenges.

This involves: The creation of "We are old, we are wonderful" a piece that will be presented on June 2013, for the WEAAD (World Elder Abuse Awareness Day). This project is being conducted with the help of a federally-funded Artist in Residence program, which has allowed Lib Spry to work in collaboration with RECAA to create outreach workshops, script new forum theatre pieces and bring "We are old, we are wonderful" to completion.

RECAA's goals for this year (2012/2013) (Future Outcomes):

- 1- Build an intergenerational approach to the issue of ageism in collaboration with James Lyng students.
- 2- Create the theater piece "We are old, we are wonderful" (Work directed by Lib Spry) that will be presented in June, for the WEAAD.
- 3- Recruit new members (outreach workshops)
- 4- Create new Forum theater pieces (one new and review the old ones)
- 5- Create a new video of RECAA
- 6- Develop a functioning RECAA Website

- MY TASKS -

1. Fostering technical independence:

My main task has been to facilitate technical workshops that allow RECAA to be independent in the use of new ICTS. I spent the first month of the past year making a list of the materials and equipment needed by RECAA. We bought a Imac computer, a camera (Canon), a tripod, an SD card, the Adobe Production Suite, Microsoft Word for Mac, a pair of headphones and an external hard drive. We bought basically everything that allows them to be technologically independent to meet their above-stated goals.



First interview done. Two elders are filming.

2. Learning together:

Learning is given a purpose through content: we are now working on a video 'capsule' that speaks about ageism and the way we are ageing. RECAA members will have done everything on their own. This work will be disseminated on the web and premiere during the international event, WEAAD 2013, June 13th.

As the group works horizontally and collectively, we take a lot of time to discuss issues, doubts, and approaches. RECAA started by working on a short skit, “She can’t hear me!, that they could present to classes to recruit students for their intergenerational project. Interestingly, the script involves inter-generational communication “mis-understandings” because of mobile media technologies.

We filmed the skit, and watched it together multiple times (see Annex 1). The video became a great way for RECAA to see themselves with distance and to work on their skit from another perspective.

3. Technology training, the RECAA way

- For the first part of the project, my task was to work with RECAA members so they could get used to working with the camera, the tripod and the computer they had bought this year with their New Horizons money. I’ve showed them how to film, how to use the camera properly, how to plug it into the computer. I tried to show them the easiest way to become at ease with the material. I then encouraged RECAA members to use the material when I wasn't there, so they could come back with questions and be by themselves with the material. We have gotten great things from this approach.

Anne took the camera and shot during a meeting where neither me, Lib or Nadia were present. She got really great footage from a discussion around the table



while all of the RECAA members were there:

In these shots, it’s Emily’s birthday. She is turning 70. She asks RECAA members to give her some tips about what it is to be old. They speak

about good and bad things of ageing, their perceptions of the youth, of their world, etc.

- I collaborated with Lib Spry and her assistant Nadia Cicurel to get the work on ageism, the technical skills workshop and the theatre workshops relevant and consistent with RECAA's approach. We sometimes, could not prepare our workshop because we would finally end up doing something else at meetings. This method might appear counter-productive, but we realized that we need to be comfortable taking the time needed, and we came up with some interesting outcomes by the end of November, adapted for the group as a result of this process.



Photos taken during a workshop with James Lyng's students.

4. Public presentation: "The Bus"

- On December 4th, we presented a public work-in-progress made in collaboration with 3 students from the James Lyng High School to the school: "The Bus". It is a five minute piece. The action takes place in a bus and involves different perspectives around ageist attitudes and is set up in an intergenerational context (see script in the annex 2). This short theater piece bring together the knowledge gained from different workshops and discussions we have had on ageism with both young students and older adults. During those workshops participants were asked to improvise dialogues around the issue of ageism.

Surprisingly, both young students and older adults suggested setting up an interaction on public transportation, a space where everyone had witnessed ageist attitudes. We took all key moments from those workshops and put it into “the Bus” piece:

Three young students enter in a bus and they sit aside. An elderly lady enters very slowly. Nobody stands up to give her a seat. Time stops and we hear everybody’s inner voices (that represent the scope of ageist attitude: another older women judges the elderly lady; a young person can’t believe that the young student doesn’t get up; the young girl wants to give the elderly lady a seat, but she wants to sit beside a boy and the boy doesn’t know that the elderly lady needs to sit). The girl decides to finally give the elderly lady a seat, but it’s too late. We arrive at the terminal stop and everybody has to get down.

We shot this scene with the students as a video projection for the background: The projection represented a window of the bus. At the suggestion of a student, RECAA dedicated this work-in-progress to Sue Mayor, the James Lyng High School counselor who retired at the end of December.

Notably, the RECAA group has become a refuge for one of the students in the project. This student has some problems with bullying at school. He has become passionate about using the camera and working with RECAA offers him a “haven” where he feels safe. After the work-in-progress presentation, he told me: “*I’m so happy of the way you’ve done this... Sue was happy. She looked at me and she smiled and that makes me happy!*”

- SCHEDULE -

From September 2012 to December 2012:

We met Tuesdays and Thursdays with the following schedule:

Tuesdays:

1:00 to 3:00 pm – Technical workshops

3:15 to 4:45 pm - Workshops with students around the issue of ageism

Thursdays: 11:00 am to 3: 00

11:00 am to 12: 30 – Business meetings/ games

1:00 to 3:00 pm – Theatre work

January/February/March 2013

Tuesdays:

12:30 to 1:30 – Ageism project with the students and the theatre group of the school

2:00 to 4: 00 pm – Editing the Video (footage from Emily’s birthday)

Thursdays:

11:00 – Business meetings

1:00 pm- Skill training workshops (“We are old, we are wonderful”)

RECAA will welcome Clea, who does puppetry (3 workshops)

RECAA will welcome Chimwemwe, who is working on a song

(1 workshop left)

As winter is hard for RECAA members, we started slowly in January, with less people. We have taken advantage of this weather situation to work on the video editing and to work on the website.

Lib continues to work on the script of “We are old, we are wonderful” by visiting RECAA members at home (with the camera) and asking them to speak about the wonders o ageing. Nadia will work on theatre workshops (Thursdays). By March, we should be ready to start to rehearse with everybody and to fix some objectives for June’s presentation.

- ANNEX 1 -

NEW HORIZONS YOUTH RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

MC INTRODUCES RECAA BRIEFLY

"CAN'T HEAR ME"

REMEMBER THAT NEITHER ONE CAN HEAR THE OTHER AND THEY SHOULD NEVER LOOK AT EACH OTHER.

Youth is grooving with earphones and smart phone.

Grandparent takes out the hearing aid and tries to fix it - shakes it, blows on it, adjusts the sound.

G: My hearing aid doesn't work.

Works on it some more.

G: Isabelle, Isabelle, I need your help.

Youth doesn't hear her as she is listening to her music.

Grandparent taps her on the shoulder three times.

Youth shrugs her off as she answers a text.

Y: In a sec.

Grandparent goes back to trying to make the hearing aid work.

Youth turns to grandparent.

Y: Yes? Do you want something?

Grandparent shakes head at the hearing aid.

Y: (Walking away.) Whatever.

G: (To audience.) Kids today!

Y: (To audience.) So annoying.

G: (To audience.) She can't hear me.

Y: (To audience.) She can't hear me.

MC EXPLAINS PROJECT GIVES INFO FOR MEETINGS AND WORKSHOPS.

- ANNEX 2 -

“The Bus”

SCENE ONE

IMAGE : On a bus in the afternoon rush hour. 2 old and one young person are already on the bus. Anyone else is focusing on themselves (correcting papers, listening to Ipod, texting etc.)

SCENE TWO

Daisy gets on, then Charlie, then Johnny. Daisy sits down. Johnny pushes past Charlie and grabs the last seat. Bus takes off. Video of streets.

JOHNNY: Is that Daisy? Hey there, Daisy, what's up? How you doing?

DAISY: I'm fine.

JOHNNY: Yeah?

DAISY: How are you?

JOHNNY: I'm good, I'm good. I'm just coming from like, football.

DAISY: That is so cool.

JOHNNY: You?

DAISY: Errr.... Jazz?

JOHNNY: Oh, what were you doing in Jazz class?

CHARLIE: Oh you know, we learned two songs in one hour. I got to play the drums!

JOHNNY: *(Condescendingly)* Oh, cool. *(To Daisy)* What do you play?

DAISY: The clarinet.

JOHNNY: That's cool. Hey, maybe you could teach me?

DAISY: Oh, not really. I'm not that good.

JOHNNY: Oh, that doesn't matter, I don't know how to play anyways...

CHARLIE: I can teach you. I play the drums, the clarinet and the guitar. And the piano.

JOHNNY: Yeah. Right. That's okay.

JOHNNY and DAISY look at each other and giggle.

JOHNNY: So what are you doing tonight?

DAISY: You know. Nothing?

JOHNNY: There's a party that I'm going to if you want to, like, come with me?

CHARLIE: I'm not doing anything either.

DAISY: *(Ignoring Charlie.)* That is so cool.

JOHNNY: Yeah.

DAISY: Um yeah, I'll have to check about that.

JOHNNY: Your parents, they're like strict?

CHARLIE: Mine are.

DAISY: No. I'm just shy

JOHNNY: It'd be fun.

Johnny begins to put his arm around Daisy. Charlie puts his earphones on. Bus stops.

SCENE THREE

AMA climbs on very, very, very slowly.

JOHNNY: Oh my God, she's taking for ever. It's ridiculous.

DAISY: Oh, yeah, she's so slow.

JOHNNY: She's like my grandma; it's so boring when I go there. She always tells the same stories, over and over. Every time I'm there she smells of peppermint.

DAISY: Oh.

JOHNNY: They look weird, they dress weird, they eat weird things.

DAISY: Yeah.

JOHNNY: Like my Grandmother she mashes it all in the blender, that looks so gross, and just plops on the plate, because she can't deal with her dentures. It's just ewww.

DAISY: Yeah?

JOHNNY: They're annoying. (To AMA) Come on, hurry up.

SCENE FOUR AWKWARD MOMENT.

AMA finally is on. Charlie ignores her with his earphones

AMA: Charlie! Charlie!

She gives up.

Inner voices

OPWITNESS1*: Rush hour is not the time for someone that old to take the bus. She should know better.

CHARLIE: What is my Ama doing here? I hope she doesn't see me. And I hope somebody gives her a seat... I just want to go to that party!

AMA: Oh that poor nephew is in his own world. I'm tired, oh I'm tired. I hope that somebody will give me a seat. They look young. The lady beside them looks tired. I hope they look at me at some point and see how tired I am. Should I ask for the seat? I don't know how much longer I will have to bury my pride.

JOHNNY: Damn, what I am doing with this girl? Yeah, football being on Friday, we've got to get that game

YPWITNESS**: Awkward! That is really rude. What's wrong with them? Do they not see her? Do they really not see her? No values. Someone should give her a seat. Can't he just give this old lady a seat? Get up, get up.

OPWITNESS2: Those kids I can't believe it. They just don't have any respect. They are spoiled! That's what they are! They want everything right now! We didn't have all this luxury when we were young.

DAISY: I want to offer her my seat, but I'm afraid of offending her. And what'll Johnny think of me? I want to be respectful. I don't know what to do.

SCENE FIVE

DAISY: Excuse me, would you like my seat?

Sound recorded: LAST STOP!

We see all the different reactions, Johnny wondering what she was doing, Charlie smiling, the YW and OW2 thinking «finally », OW1 raising her shoulders, Daisy disappointed, Ama...

End on the empty seat.

* Old person witness

** Young person witness