

**Round Dance Square: community. art. parties.**

A Roundtable Discussion with Cherish Violet Blood, Ange Loft, and Jada Reynolds Tabobondung  
Initiated and facilitated by Amandeep Kaur Panag

*This roundtable was held on February 12, 2017 at the Centre for Social Innovation on Spadina Ave in Toronto.*

**Amandeep Kaur Panag:** This roundtable is co-hosted by [Marvellous Grounds](#) and [Muskrat Magazine](#). We have invited you here to talk about your experiences as queer Indigenous artists, activists and community members in Toronto. The roundtable is part of issue two of the Marvellous Grounds blog, which highlights the various ways art and performance is used by queer and trans people of colour to tell our stories, build community and foster creative resistance to structural violence and colonialism, and also to imagine new possibilities. So first I'm going to ask you to please introduce yourself, your art and your work, and how it relates to some of these themes.

**Ange Loft:** Hi, my name is Ange Loft and I'm Mohawk from Kahnawake, Mohawk Territory. I am the Associate Artistic Director of [Jumblies Theatre](#), a community arts organization that's in downtown Toronto, in CityPlace. Jumblies Theatre is building new work with a lot of interesting people and community members and trying to pull together stories all over the place. We go around to a lot of places across Ontario and work with community arts groups that are out there, so I do a bit of work with other Native groups but I don't work for any Native art organizations, really. I do a lot of my own projects these days. I'm into history these days, like really into history! And I didn't realize that was what I wanted to do now. I felt like an amateur historian then. I'd rather just research than make art these days. So I'm really into arts research these days. I'm trying to figure out how to use different types of art. Working super across disciplines on how to tell our own stories, how to make stories become something other than just words. I'm obsessed right now with ideas around taking away the English language and adding in symbols and then having to re-interpret those symbols. Work like that is what is on my brain. And then lately, which is exciting, I'm getting these opportunities to do this structural stuff. Working with organizations with their strategic plans. This large-scale project planning thing. I'm now understanding that I'm really good at it. This is exciting. I can get people to think about their own projects and see what is missing. And also work with giant organizations. I got to work with the Banff Centre just two weeks ago and helped them figure out how they can get more people into their art. So my job is really about trying to make sure everyone gets different kinds of art in their life. And I think

that's the most resistance heavy thing that I do, to make sure lots of people get to make things and tell a bazillion stories, and that it's not always the same few people telling stories. I'm really into making sure, trying to hassle people and get them to do all kinds of work all the time. I feel like that's my calling. I don't want to make my own work. I just want other people to do things.

**Jada Reynolds Tabobondung:** I'm Jada Reynolds Tabobondung. I currently work at *Muskrat Magazine* as online content coordinator. I was also in a hardcore punk band called Fathers. And I produce and promote a monthly POC (people of colour) queer dance party at the Beaver in Parkdale. I am Jamaican, Ojibway, Thai and Dutch. I host these monthly queer dance parties as a way to reclaim a predominantly white space because I found that one of my favourite queer bars, the Beaver, was more of a white space and a lot of my POC friends didn't want to go there because there were a lot of white people in attendance at the events and I took it upon myself to create an event and to reclaim the space.

**Cherish Violet Blood:** I am Cherish Violet Blood. I am a theatre practitioner. I am a storyteller. I do a lot of theatre workshops with youth, not specifically with queer youth. I have been doing them for the past seven years or so.

**AKP:** Did any of you want to speak specifically to the importance of community arts in creating social change, because something that you all have in common is your work in community arts?

I went to one of the earlier workshop performances of the [After The Fire](#) production you created and directed, Ange, at Jumblies Theatre. I do remember Cherish you were also a part of that. In that performance you used audio of interviews you had collected from people across the country about people's responses and thoughts on the Idle No More movement to create an interactive performance and installation.

**CVB:** Specifically on working with community, I think most of it happened with little to no money, like all the time. Usually it's friends getting together with an idea and making it happen. I think accessibility to space is a big problem most of the time. And if you have a friend that happens to have that space, to get things done, it's great. You had space, Ange, because you were working at Jumblies and we were able to use the interviews that you had taken from other people in that same project.

**AKP:** At that performance of *After the Fire*, I really felt like it was a queer space.

**CVB:** I think it's because there was just a bunch of gays that were doing all the acting. Maybe that's what it was. But actually it was awesome because I think with *After the Fire*, Ange really opened up the conversation. A lot of people that don't usually get the opportunity to be heard, were heard, in one way or another. Their opinions, whatever they thought about Idle No More or the movement or what had led up to it or what was the conclusion were all included somehow in most of those monologues.

**AL:** It was also kinda fun that the second time we did it we had them write these postcards to different federal departments at the end, as the final thing that the audience does. And it took a while, but we mailed them out and then months later we got a response from the Ministry of the Status of Women. They got them. Just one department wrote back but they got them. So that's good.

**AKP:** Jada, I'm curious to hear about yourself being a musician and a part of the Toronto punk scene and now throwing parties for queer people of colour. What is important about that?

**JRT:** What I found when I was in a band - because the Toronto punk scene is very white - is that you can count the people of colour in that scene on your hands and you may not need your second hand. I found whenever there were touring bands that came up that included POCs and queer bands and that focused on politics, my band would be brought in. I have to be honest with you, we were horrible, we were not a good band at all! Like I forgot the words to all the songs. It was a mess! But we were brought in to play with, like, Downtown Boys. I've played with Gloss! A lot of big queer bands and big POC bands, but I didn't think we deserved it. I felt like I was just brought in because we were one of the few bands that had POC.

**AL:** I feel like we have the opposite issue. We are trying to think of who to go on tour with. We are a bigger band that's mostly all mixed Asian people and then there is myself and another Mohawk guy, Walter Scott. He is not even in the band any more. So we can't really play Native gigs because there is only just me. We can play other people of colour gigs. We have our record label. The majority of the time when we play gigs, it's a lot of tall white guys with beards. And then there are young random kids of colour that are kinda just really psyched. And it's ok they're there. They do show up. But who do we book ahead of us as opening act? I need to know more bands. I need someone to tell us who the cool kid bands are. It would be great if we had more weirdo kids of colour bands that were playing weird psych metal. That's what we need. That's what I want personally. I want ten more bands that look like who I wanted to see as a teenager. That's why I am doing this kind of music half the time, to make something

that's like what I would have liked to see when I was fifteen. So that's the only thing I do on stage. It would be good to have more. We are trying to figure out who to go on tour with over the next little bit and we have no idea!

It's not only about representation. I want the band that's opening for us to be frickin good! And I want them to have the same work ethic and more weird style, which is what we need. We need more experimental, bizarre bands being made with these people that I know are writing this stuff. I work on all these mentorship projects and I get to meet all these theatre makers and writers and people and I know you are writing this really weird stuff, but it's not going further than that little monologue that you're going to put on stage for this one thing. So this limit to what you're going to do with your stuff is frustrating because people feel like they're not welcomed into these venues where they can expand on what they're already generating. There's amazing poetry and weird songs being created everyday by all these weirdos writing for their small programs that are happening Toronto. But then nothing happens with them. I hear about things here and there and working with young people and I'm like "Dammit! Make a frickin band! Figure out how to make this into something that people will want to listen to."

**JRT:** Quality is key!

**AL:** The first year I got to Toronto, Amandeep, you were around for this. There was that party at the Gladstone [Hotel] that happened for a little while called [Fresh to Def](#). And it was LeRoy Newbold's, Elisha Lim's and Kalmplex's party and they took over the Gladstone once every Thursday night for a good three year run. And it was pretty solid, like there were a lot of people. I had just got to Toronto, I was young and I was going out all the time. I think it's kinda shitty that you have to party. It's the place where having a good time happens. But it's frustrating to me because I can't drink too much anymore, that part of my life is just... oh I can't deal with it anymore, like, "Oh I'm tired." I want to find alternative ways to hang out with gangs of people and have fun. I'm getting too old to be part of these dancey parties. I tried and I went out and everyone was younger. And I'm too old for this shit anymore.

There's seas of white people in all the other places, and you get back to Toronto and you're like "Thank fucking Christ!" And you get on a bus and you're not the only one on the bus! *[Laughter]* I got to find other ways to congregate with cool brown kids.

**CVB:** There was a long time when Ange and I would get invited to all these gay parties, we would be the Native contingent. *[Laughter]* We were the two Native girls that'd show up at these gay parties!

I think there needs to be more collectives like Bold As Love, the one that we have. We are a music collective, but then again we only got funding for one year. And I think that has to do with them trying to check off a quota, like “Oh we did fund gay people that time and now we don’t have to do that any more.” Finding money to keep those spaces is really difficult.

**AL:** The 2Spirit Skillshare exists. Like yesterday [February 11th, 2017] they did a ribbon shirt making workshop. There’s a bunch of stuff still happening. It’s just I work a lot and I want to socialize but you know...

**AKP:** Yes, I wanted to ask about the 2Spirit Skillshare. Cherish, you did workshops with them in the past. Did any of you want to share anything about them?

**AL:** They’re just a group of people that are hanging out in a, like, low buy in kinda way. You can just drop in and then you can go see them again at the next activity. It’s a really tight group. A really tight group of friends that are running a really cool program. Young people. But I haven’t done anything with them in a while.

**CVB:** I think they need someone who is familiar with arts administration to get their funding properly. I think that is a really big thing. Just in the careers that we are in, it’s really hard to do things for free, especially in Toronto. Although that would be awesome, to create these spaces and be doing these things. But we need to pay, like for our lives. So it’s hard to volunteer time. And I think that’s still a really big thing, like people aren’t willing to pay for your skill set even though that is your job. It’s a small community and when they were first starting out, when I was doing workshops, there weren’t really queer people in my workshop. It was just Native people.

**AKP:** So just drawing on some of the things you all have been speaking to. We know about the intersectional experience. The experiences of racism overlapping with homophobia and transphobia. There have been a lot of specifically queer people of colour parties, events, organizing, spaces that have been happening, for quite a while. But there has also obviously been criticism that you can’t homogenize people of colour. And what does “people of colour” mean? The experiences of Indigenous queer people may be very different than experiences of Black queer people or other queer people of colour. Do you find that there has been inclusion of Indigenous people in these QPOC spaces and organizing, or even

when there is storytelling or collaborative work? Do you find that Indigenous people are being represented?

**JRT:** I can speak from where I'm at because I'm at the prime age for partying and going out. I do go out and party in these queer spaces and I do feel and find that, not intentionally, but my Indigenous identity is put on the backburner. So when I do go out to these queer POC dance parties I'm seen as exclusively a Black person but there are not very many things that focus on queer Indigenous people. If there are any [queer Indigenous] DJs out there, I'd love to book them for one of my events. But right now I find myself working with predominantly other Black queer youth.

**AL:** I mean it's hard because I've never navigated the world in a strictly queer space. I grew up in Kahnawake with only two or three friends that were kinda queer and only kinda figured that out later in our lives. Then I moved to Montreal, lived together in a tight little community, and I hung out with a bunch of weird punks there. I never had that group gang queer community. I heard they existed in St. Henri and I went to two or three of their parties but I was not really one of them, but they wanted me. You know when they found out I was Native then they wanted me, but then I left. But when I moved to Toronto and suddenly got this new community and what does this really mean? I don't hang around all of them anymore. I have a few people that have risen to the top that I hang out with. I don't have this whole queer community that I roll around with anymore so I have this kind of funny relationship with what that means in the first place.

These communities have always been party organized, going to events and seeing who's out. But not everyone can afford that, so you kinda have to pay to play in a sense to be part of some kind of community. Unless you're organizing around playing soccer or other activities.

**AKP:** In activism and organizing there is shared experience but there are also a lot of differences. And what comes up often is that people are not understanding the meaning and implications of themselves as settlers or settlers of colour and recognizing that colonialism affects our life and that we are living on colonized land continuously.

**AL:** I feel like that aspect of things is barely alive in my brain. That whole layer of how people look at the world. Are you a good person and are you doing cool things and are you having fun and probably a little conscious? Then you're probably good in my books. Like I barely draw distinctions these days.

It's related to the work I have to do. You know, it's frustrating. I can't harp on these divisions without it affecting my shit. Like work on your own interests and traditions and you'll probably have fun. I don't know.

**CVB:** I think of course everyone has differences. I mean that's just a given in communities. But I tend to formulate relationships based on similarities because it just seems to work. In certain places and instances you're hired to go to "be the Native." I try my hardest not to do those things anymore, unless they're showing a genuine interest in my political stance, or in water rights, or in missing and murdered Indigenous women, something that I'm interested in, something that I actually feel like has a true message. Otherwise I tend to stay away from those things because it feels tokeney, and I don't like it. And it happens with all communities, settler communities, Black communities. They're like "Get the Native person up there to go sing a song," or something like that. If you're not interested in who I am or my people in general then I don't want to be there. But if they're actual genuine relationships, that's what I'm into.

**AKP:** In terms of performance specifically, how might that have come up for you? Cherish, you have taken part in what some would categorize as Native theatre through initiatives with the [Centre for Indigenous Theatre](#), such as their production of Tomson Highway's *Rez Sisters*. What happens when people want to have representation but sometimes it's misrepresentation because they are still expecting you to play a specific role? Maybe it's like tokenizing. Have you come across that a lot?

**CVB:** I think I'm fortunate enough to pick projects that I'm trying to be part of. Usually when I want to work it's because I want to work with the people, not necessarily because there's a million dollars. That would never be the case. A lot of the work I am doing is collaborative, so if I find that it's too hard to work with the person then it just isn't happening. Like if there is a genuine interest in my story then I will tell it to you. But if it's not a genuine interest and you're just including it to check off a list and prove that you've covered it, but are not really listening to the content, then I refuse really to be there. That's probably why a lot of my work is in Native theatre communities. Plus I come from a really strong traditional storytelling background and that's where I feel comfortable. Western theatre constructs really mess me up sometimes. I'm not into the *Romeo and Juliet* kinda stuff.

**AL:** I'm not even into regular scripts these days. I don't even care about acting in someone else's show. Well I'm not really primarily an actor at all, but I was a stage manager for a while and did a lot of musical

theatre when I was young. Then I thought stage management was where the money was. I started working on some western plays for a long time. And my god, I was bored! It felt like nothing I wanted to do. I didn't want to be there and I decided after having some pretty bad stage management gigs, that I got to figure out how to make my own work. That's when I figured out how to get to [the Centre for Indigenous Theatre] and train with [Muriel Miguel](#), whom Cherish trained with too. I started following and actively pursuing different people that would really teach me how to do something and make something from the beginning.

**CVB:** And how to build stories without having the whole trigger warning before your shows. It is amazing because these days I find people are too sensitive and "trigger warning" everything! I can't handle that because personally I go to theatre to have a reaction. I want to know what you feel from a story, what's real from the story. You know what I mean? But people get so sensitive and they want us to tell our stories but they want us to tell the Pocahontas version. So I don't work with those people.

**AL:** Like if someone wrote a part for me, like what people do for Cherish - people just write her parts *[Laughter]* - then, maybe I would do it!

**AKP:** Let's move to the current political climate in Canada and Justin Trudeau's broken promises to Indigenous peoples, on pipelines and Canada's failed implementation of the United Nations Declaration's provision to ask for First Nations' consent before any resource extraction. This year, we're also in the middle of the 150 years of colonization celebration. What thoughts do you have on being an artist and community change maker at this time?

**AL:** I managed to get some of the Canada 150 funding for one of the projects I'm working on. And it's really funny because, like, it's not Canada's birthday! Canada's birthday was a long time ago! It was when they said "That's Kanata. That's the village" - you know on the [CBC Canadian Heritage Minutes](#) - and the settlers said "Oh, it's Canada!" *[Laughter]*

And the second Canada's birthday I would say for real is around Royal Proclamation time, when the King of England tried to bring this proclamation to all these different nations and people didn't understand it because it was written on a piece of paper [in formal English which wasn't spoken by Indigenous Nations at the time]. And then they had to translate it for the [Treaty of Fort Niagara](#). That got



brought around to with that 24 Nations Belt.<sup>1</sup> That's that belt with everyone holding hands, with a ship on one side and land on the other. It represents the idea that you can pull<sup>2</sup> and you'll get goods and resources and that this is part of the agreement, that there would be an exchange with the British that was supposed to be ongoing. What they say is Canada's birthday is kinda the time when they stopped talking to and consulting Indigenous people so there was this time when they, Canada, kind of wiped its hands of all the English responsibilities from the past. Especially after the war of 1812, they no longer needed Indigenous peoples in this area to defend them against the Americans. So there was a real strong clear point where Canada just said "Well, we don't have to deal with this anymore," and they just closed the book when they overall instated the Indian Act. Any attempts of individual nations' sovereignty were squashed at that moment. And when you think about the way Canada was created, people around this area of Toronto have had 400 years or more of relationships with these European nations. As opposed to the other side of Canada, which has a totally different history - 150 years of contact in some places. So when thinking about Canada and its responsibilities to Native people, to try to even assume any sort of blanket statement is impossible just because of the diversity of everybody's experience. It just sucks that they are framing out this Royal Proclamation and this Treaty of Fort Niagara because that's the stuff that was supposed to lay the groundwork for how the rest of the treaties were supposed to happen. So all the rest of those numbered treaties were supposed to have gone through in a cool way, and it didn't happen that way. So a lot of people are fucked over on that side of the country especially on ceded territories.

What does that mean for Toronto and artists in Toronto? It's so complicated! But it takes more than saying two or three statements before the beginning of a production. It takes more than just acknowledging three nations. This whole [Talking Treaties Project](#) is about trying to figure out how to wiggle in experiences from a really honest way about what we actually know about this place, and then how we make that known widely enough so that it's popular, where it's not just secret information. Like what I just said took me three years to say. That little tiny snippet of what I just said took me so long to be able to voice confidently because I needed to research it for three years, and we are dealing with politicians who are in and out in three years. How are they possibly able to speak or address something

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<sup>1</sup> An invitation and strands of wampum were run to over 24 nations to invite them to take part in the delivery of the Treaty of Niagara. The Treaty of Niagara Belt is more or less the symbol based version of the Royal Proclamation, and the belt was made by the British and given to the 24 Nations.

<sup>2</sup> The Treaty of Niagara was accompanied by the 24 Nations belt, which has land on one side and a ship on the other, connected by 24 Native nations. The idea is that if any one of these nations were in need, they can pull on the chain of Nations, and word would be given to bring more goods from England to the 24 Nations. These goods included ammunition, pots and kettles, medical supplies and cloth.

or have any effect on something when we think about time and responsibility. And government is so willy-nilly and changes hands so often.

So it's really goofy, it's like the artists and the people on the ground have to be really well aware of this stuff because they're the only ones with a national memory, an institutional memory. The artists are the only ones that have to really learn these things because they're the ones who are going to have to remind people. Because the politicians are not fucking doing it. So that's why I'm obsessed with history and research right now. It's not all about being an artist for me. I've always been a bit of a teacher. And now it's like, "Oh, now I really do have to talk more and get my facts in order and be able to clearly state things, so that I can provide some sort of alternative to this preposterously simplified narrative that they're giving us about Canada 150." And then there is this issue of what's going to happen after this is over. Like are all the Native and people of colour artists going to go back to sleep because you don't give them any more money, because you did it all in the one shot for Canada 150?!

**CVB:** I was looking at a post the other day about Canada 150. And I think there are a handful of "Indigenous projects" that were passed through to get money from that. I know a lot of them aren't even on Indigenous issues. The whole thing's just like, "There's a Native person in our play so give us the money." It has nothing to do with our stories or our reality. Canada 150 is another way that the government is going to pull a blanket over our real issues and show the so called good parts of Canada which are not Indigenous. I think it's just another way to make Canada more exclusive to Native artists. Like our voice isn't important any more - or has it ever been important?

**JRT:** In my community, that Canada 150 is just going over everyone's head. It's not really something that's discussed and no one really knows that it's the 150. Nobody talks about it, because it's not brought to the youth. I feel like a lot of people that are talking about it are older, or like thirty plus.

**AKP:** What do you think about the fact that the Canadian government is talking about reconciliation now and about honouring the treaties?

**AL:** The words "honour the treaties" are complicated in the first place, because a lot of the treaties are bullshit to begin with. Trying to honour them is doing a discredit to some of the nations that were swindled into signing them. You can't reconcile anything, you can't. It's such a preposterous idea, to say that the government can come in and say "I'm gonna give you these things and then it's going to be back to normal." One of the biggest things [that would help] is forcing people to work together.

Acknowledgement is more steps than just saying “Ok you’re here.” It is facing that fact that you want to look away and then forcing yourself to deal with it. Like trying to have deeper relationships, forcing people to do something together from beginning to end so they have to. I think a lot of community projects are doing that but most of these 150 projects seem pretty surface level. I hate these simple ideas like you talk and then it’s done. But talking is the first thing. It’s like giving someone a present, the very first thing you can do before you can start being in a relationship together.

**AKP:** My last question is on futurity and kinship. I was going to reference Karyn Recollet’s work<sup>3</sup>, a scholar in Women & Gender Studies at the University of Toronto, who studies Indigenous performance and has also worked with the Centre for Indigenous Theatre. I read a piece of hers which talks about these art projects such as the flash mob round dances during Idle No More, and [Christi Belcourt’s \*Walking with our Sisters\*](#) commemorative art installation as being examples of “spatial tagging.” So she is talking about taking up actual geographical space to make performative art that intervenes in normative structures of settler colonialism as a way of educating but also as a protest, action and art. You were speaking to that a little bit, Ange. I was just also thinking about the renaming streets project, [Ogimaa Mikana](#), and also their mural about the Dish with One Spoon Treaty near Queen [Street West] and Dufferin [Street in Toronto]. I know this treaty is something a lot of people have started to use to get into mainstream knowledge of settler responsibility. Do you have any thoughts on that? How do we build relationships across communities, and look to future ways of being and for possibilities for decolonization?

**AL:** Well, the Dish with One Spoon Treaty is super funny because it’s a nation to nation treaty that is Indigenous based. It doesn’t have the inclusion of any settler nations, like any European nations, in that treaty explicitly. But if you look at it, it’s really just about making sure the dish is clean, making sure there’s enough for everybody, making sure that it can go all the way around, making sure there’s a little bit left there in the bottom. This is kind of the idea that governs the Iroquois and Anishinaabe relationship. It’s an Iroquois concept, making sure that it can go around. It’s funny to think how you could extend that to Toronto relationships, to other people, because it’s not like we are the only ones to have this idea. I think a lot of other places have the idea that you need to make sure it’s safe and there’s enough for everybody. I like that that’s a universal concept that seems to have been lost in western nations. It’s fun as an idea for Toronto but it’s also a very complicated narrative in itself.

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<sup>3</sup> Recollet, Karyn. "Glyphing decolonial love through urban flash mobbing and *Walking with our Sisters*." *Curriculum Inquiry* 45.1 (2015): 129-145.

I think it's interesting though, the renaming of Toronto, because Toronto itself you look at it and every river is renamed after a river in the UK, every street is named King and Queen and Simcoe. They are these streets that are strategically about governors and lieutenants that have been from Europe and England here. But if you're talking about natural ways of naming things, like Lakeshore is more a native type of name because it's by the lake and Ishpadina is up the hill which is cool because it means up the hill and Wahdobegong, Etobicoke. It means where the black alders grow. That kind of weird natural reorganization of how we think of the place. We've been doing all these mappings for the Talking Treaties Project and thinking of where the rivers used to be and where the settlements used to be and it's also logically connected to waterways. Anyhow, it's fun to think of Toronto in this cool way, instead of having to think about all these ridiculous little borders and territories and roads that are tied through it. So I feel like renaming things from a very personal way is actually really fun. If between us we have stories like say, "that's where I fell down that hill", renaming things like that is more entertaining to me. It's like how else do we think about this. *[Laughter]* It's easy to learn someone else's language if we put our mind to it, but how do we also think beyond that. Like personally naming things, naming things as community naming things through experiences. Like we say "That's Yonge and Dundas Square." We could just call it Round Dance Square! These kind of funny ways between each other trying to rename a place. Like how do we get outside of the literal, already implemented streets and road signs. How do we go beyond that and actually get back to what was on the ground before and is there now.

**CVT:** It would be really nice if we got paid for every project we do. Also, when listening to academics describe art sometimes it's confusing to me. Not because of the language, actually ya the language they use but also an artist is trying to put something out there, like a message or an idea and then an academic often tries to simplify it with big huge words that make it more confusing than what was initially put out there. Do you know what I mean? Like I do know Karyn Recollet and she is a really good friend of mine but a lot of the academic things I read about, for instance on Christi Belcourt's piece, like why couldn't it just be like about reconciliation? When you walk into the room and you see all those moccasins that women made in remembrance of those women, why can't the whole idea be about reconciliation? Why does it have to be about reclaiming space? Why can't it be just that they took it and now let's take that time to give that moment to those women and to the idea, instead of trying to break it down into something else.

In that sense, we have to keep on working on the work we are all doing with our chosen community. Like focus on similarities instead of differences because it's the only way to get anything done. It's just a more positive way to get an idea across if we are trying to reach the same goal.

**JRT:** To me it doesn't matter whatever your identity is, because I'm mixed race and weave in and out of different communities. I feel like party-wise there's only three QPOC parties, Yes Yes Y'all , Brown Rice and whenever Nino Brown DJs. Those are the events that POCs want to go to and go to and I want more of that. There are a lot of queer spaces specifically that are getting shut down. The Henhouse got shut down a couple of years ago, some places on Bloor and the Beaver sold in a couple of years. We are losing spaces and we are running out of spaces to actually hold events that will welcome queer people of colour and so I want to find places where I'm able to have a comfortable space for queer people of colour to dance, drink, or hang out or party, whatever. It's never been my goal to make white people comfortable at my event. It says right in my event description. This is for people of colour and if you're a white person and you have a complaint and you feel uncomfortable? Good.

**AL:** You have to work the whole system, all the way around. You can't expect these spaces to just pop up for you or these gigs to pop up for you. No one is just going to make all these wonderful things happen. You have to forge and hold your ground. You have to do things regularly in certain places and make yourself unremovable. Like this place wouldn't be what it is if you didn't bring these people here. This thing of mandatory ongoing activity outside of what we consider safe spaces. That's what the purpose is - to make these spaces safer.

I don't mind if you're the only one there, because I grew up the only one there in Montreal, not only queer kids but even kids of colour at the time. Like there were none, dancing at these goofy punk bars in Montreal, like that was it. but if you're there all the time you notice that there are three or four other brown kids. Like it takes a long time but you eventually will find each other and then you realize "oh you're already here" and that there's a whole bunch of other things happening but, you know, follow your nose and support other things to continue to happen outside the city centre because we talk about Toronto like it's just this tiny core but there's tons of stuff happening way out at Islington and way out in Keele and I think there is probably a lot of awesome stuff happening in other places that could pick up if they just got a bit of encouragement that they could make this their place for real.

I think people need to develop more little tiny groups all over the place so that it's less centralized activity. I don't want there to be only three queer dance parties that I feel too old to go to. Also where are the 33 to 60 year old people having dinner and inviting me out to have cool dessert? Where is that? Because I just want to talk weird theoretical stuff and smoke a joint and hang out, right? I really don't care to go dance the night away anymore. I still want to know where those people are. I know they're around.

**CVB:** You sound like a senior citizen, Ange. I've seen you still dance the night away.

**AL:** Ya I can do it like once every three months now! New Year's and Halloween and then two more times! But I really dance on New Year's and Halloween! I make up for it! *[Laughter]*

**AKP:** is there anything else you would like to share with any queer Indigenous youth that might be reading?

**AL:** You don't have to give everyone everything all the time. Like this whole thing that you have to represent your whole community or anybody, you don't. Just do your own thing and you'll be significantly cooler if you have your extremely identifiable weirdo interests and you pursue those weird weird interests hard. Then someone's going to be like "What're you up to? Oh, you do that really well!" Making yourself super interesting based on your own real interest is key! Then people will realize you're really good at it. You don't have to be like anyone else. Go find something cool to make for yourself and keep doing it. Become an expert in your own weird interests.

**CVB:** Same thing - building on similarities. I think if there's something you're interested in, if you work hard enough and build it for yourself then people will join you. Then you can make your own little community. That'd be cool if there were ten little queer people of colour things going on in one evening. That would never happen, but if it did, that would be amazing!

**AL:** And if the banner wasn't just queer, but it was like "these queers are going to be knitting and these other queers are going to be making things out of stuff and these other queers are having this fun weird jazz sax party, and these other queers are having this old lady tattoo dinner party!"

**CVB:** Ha! Ange's dinner parties!

**AL:** No really, when I get old and have a real living room, I'm going to have dinner parties for real!

**JRT:** You should just come to my parties so we can keep having them and people can get paid.

*[Laughter]*

