“What is at stake when artists and arts organizations confront the tasks of arranging, describing, preserving, and providing access to the past?”

Recollective:
Vancouver Independent Archives Week

This document records and celebrates Recollective, a collaborative programming initiative that focuses on artists using archives, artist-run centre curators, and artists working in the archives in local, national, and international contexts.

Between 2015-2021, Recollective public programming included exhibitions, community radio, artist talks, panel discussions, performances, screenings, historic, oral histories, workshops, gatherings, and a digitization project. Recollective also commissioned artists, community organizers, and scholars to respond to individual programs, which materialized as posters, books, and audio cassette tape, exhibition texts, films, poetry, and visual essays.

Through this program, we share the many threads of intergenerational teachings, grassroots strategies, volunteer partnerships, typical models, DIY community, political research, open source solutions, and counter-archival that facilitate the work of community organizing and for community. Recollective event descriptions, documentation, and responses are available at archivesweek.ca.
"I do believe that we can decolonize through creating new structures through abolition—abolition of slavery, abolition of prisons, abolition of mainstream art institutions. I think that there's a lot of things that we can do, where we can start to imagine and grow something from the beginning. That is how we will finally decolonize."
—Oryx Marcus Ware. Touch Change. 2018.

"I feel like laughter—my laughter, other people's laughter—is like the war cry of resistance."

"Indigenous women, two-spirit, and queer folks have strength in understanding the temporal; when our realities and representations are so hard earned and so delicate, we learn to continue to weave ourselves back together again and again after we have been undone. To someone witnessing this continued metamorphosis, it could be sad, but it is the opposite: we continue to build, and rebuild, and with each re-build we become stronger, learn more, and build more resilience."
—Donatella Tock. Past is Prologue: 20 Years of COGWOODJUM. 2018.

"...we want to build relationships more than we want to get history. We think that they're linked...."

"Everybody has a family history; a social story, that could be part of public memory, and is worthy of attention, if they are comfortable sharing those stories."
—Dr. Glenn Dear. How to Build a Responsive Community. Archive. 2012.

"...and I thought, Okay, I'm in. If my grandmother feels like this, there's a reason why. I'm in."

"...listening is a process that understands sounds as never fixed. Listening to the past cannot be singular, hermetic, and specific, but must emulate the act of listening itself as an expanded, aleatory and situated activity."

"How do we navigate the thorny terrain between archives as potentially productive, future-oriented spaces of encounter for trans records, researchers, and communities and their normalizing and straightening impulses?"

"...as an artist, you ask yourself if one is really interested in presenting and creating new forms of imagining the world, then one has to participate in the larger social movements that aspire to establish a new order in the world."