

The Shoe Project Antigonish 2018-19: report for AGM 2020

This project had a full final report submitted at our last AGM, but because the project finished in 2019, it is included here as well.

The Shoe Project involved eight local immigrant women in a ten-week writing workshop, followed by five weeks of rehearsals, culminating in a show on Feb. 8th and 9th 2019, at the Bauer Theatre, part of the 2018-19 Theatre Antigonish season. Anne Simpson and Laura Teasdale facilitated the writing sessions and rehearsals. Dancer Lilion Quarmyne told the story of her immigration from Ghana to Canada through dance. The Shoe Project, a national organization, provided contracts, guidelines and a manual showing various ways to frame and edit the stories. On a local level, the project worked because of an excellent partnership between AHA!, ACALA, and Theatre Antigonish. ACALA assisted with the recruitment of women and Theatre Antigonish staff assisted with planning, promotion, and execution of the show.

Participating women felt empowered after the staging of the *Shoe Project Antigonish*; they felt that their stories were celebrated. This gave them enormous confidence. The community response to this project was overwhelmingly positive, with full houses both nights and a welcoming of these stories. There were difficulties along the way, but certainly the Shoe Project was a success. It was the group of eight women whose delight was most obvious: not only had they become very close, they discovered that they loved being part of the project and sharing their stories with others. One of the participants, said, “The project has given me an opportunity to pause, look back and re-think my whole journey to Canada. It serves as a point of reflection, enabling me to appreciate more of my effort, my growth, and my appreciation for the beauty of living in this country. I treasure the time I spent with other immigrants in this project as it has widened my understanding and perspective.”

Anne has had several requests to restage the Shoe Project, from the community, from past participants and from the theatre community. Storytelling is a powerful way to involve those on the margins of the mainstream, as has been reinforced through this project.

Anne Simpson,
edited by LB for 2020 AGM