

Board of Directors of Buddies in Bad Times Theatre

Inclusion Statement

Introduction

We are the Board of Directors of Buddies in Bad Times Theatre. We developed this “Inclusion Statement” to guide our activities as the Board.

We chose to craft this statement as a themes-based narrative instead of as a specific policy plan. This statement is a compass, but not a detailed roadmap. We will continue our work on inclusion and develop proposals for Board policies in line with this statement’s values.

Where we came from

There have always been storytellers, and there always will be. We acknowledge the two-spirit, lesbian and gay, bi, trans, and queer storytellers and ancestors who came before Buddies. Their archive of persecution, sex radicalism, censorship, mourning, collectivity, and creative resistance are an essential part of our project of queer liberation¹.

By listening to stories across generations that speak to the social injustices and colonial realities of past, present, and future, the Board acknowledges the intersectional² queer history of gay, feminist, non-binary, and trans anti-colonial liberation movements.

Buddies stands on the traditional territory named Tkaranto. It is the traditional lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Haudenosaunee, the Anishnaabe, and the Huron-Wendat. We acknowledge them and all other Nations - acknowledged and unacknowledged, recorded and unrecorded - as the past, present, and future stewards of this land. We thank and honour the two-spirit, queer, and trans elders whose shoulders we stand on.

Where we are

A renowned professional theatre company, Buddies is also a hub for community-building that provides capacity and resources to lift up diverse and intersecting queer communities. Buddies is a place where multiple generations come together to tell stories, learn from one another, and deepen bonds. Buddies is embodied through the art that flows through it. It lives in the stories and memories of the people that make art within its walls.

We recognize the position of power and privilege that the Board occupies. We are committed to transparency and being held accountable to our privilege. We are open to being called in³ and being called out⁴. We seek to listen with gratitude and grace.

We acknowledge that in order to create change, we have to better understand how the systems of power, as they exist now, cannot remain intact. We look to our communities and their art to think through how these systems are shaped by privilege and are affected by patriarchy⁵, settler colonialism⁶, white supremacy⁷, cis/hetero norms, and homonationalism⁸. But we also look to this art as a source of resilience, strength, inspiration, and joy.

We strive for interactions that foster respect and dignity among all people. But we understand that we are in a space that has not always been accessible, non-judgmental, and inclusive of sexual orientation; gender identity; economic position and class; racial and cultural identity; religion, faith, and spirituality; age; national origin and migrant status; and physical and/or mental ability.

We need to fully understand and acknowledge truths and experiences before we can get to reconciliation and inclusion.

We will continue our work on meaningful inclusion. We recognize that this requires an active, ongoing, and ever-evolving process of transformation to reach the goal of radical queer liberation. This work remains incomplete so long as there are voices still unheard.

Where we want to be

We are transgenerational, liberated, brilliant, fabulous and beautiful queers from cultures and communities across the globe. This cultural institution may be situated in a building but its spirit goes beyond these walls to nurture the hearts and minds of our communities. We are reflective of, informed by, and responsive to our communities and work to continue to build reconciliation between Indigenous communities, settlers, and the land. We know the transformative power of embracing risk and provocation and the spaces we inhabit are for anyone who wants to join us in this liberation of all. Our queer liberation is constitutive of our struggle. We desire and imagine queer futures that are possible, implausible, speculative and have never existed before. Join us!

Glossary

¹ **Liberation:** “The action of setting one free from oppression. This could be through seeking economic and social rights, political rights or equality.” (Purple Rain Collective)

² **Intersectionality** was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, a Black feminist legal scholar who was concerned with the lack of appropriate support for women of colour under the US judicial system. A cornerstone of feminism, intersectionality addresses interlocking systems of power and the ways in which social and political forms of discrimination overlap. For example, a lesbian of colour may experience overlapping oppressions of racism, sexism, and homophobia.

³ **Calling in:** “I picture “calling in” as a practice of pulling folks back in who have strayed from us. It means extending to ourselves the reality that we will and do fuck up, we stray and there will always be a chance for us to return. Calling in as a practice of loving each other enough to allow each other to make mistakes; a practice of loving ourselves enough to know that what we’re trying to do here is a radical unlearning of everything we have been configured to believe is normal.” (Ngọc Loan Trần, *Calling IN: A Less Disposable Way of Holding Each Other Accountable*)

⁴ **Calling out** “is bringing public attention to an individual’s oppressive behaviour – and it can be an effective approach to community accountability.” (Maisha Z. Johnson, *3 Things to Consider When Choosing Between Calling Someone Out or Calling Them In*, *Everyday Feminism*).

⁵ **Patriarchy:** “A social system in which men hold primary power and predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority and social privilege. With regards to the domain of the family, in patriarchal systems the fathers or father-figures also hold authority over women and children.” (Purple Rain Collective)

⁶ **Settler colonialism** “is a distinct type of colonialism that functions through the replacement of indigenous populations with an invasive settler society that, over time, develops a distinctive identity and sovereignty.” (Global Social Theory)

⁷ **White supremacy** is “is a historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations and peoples of color by white peoples and nations of the European continent; for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power and privilege.” (Racial Equity Tools)

⁸ **Homonationalism** is a conceptual frame “for understanding the complexities of how “acceptance” and “tolerance” for gay and lesbian subjects have become a barometer by which the right to and capacity for national sovereignty is evaluated”. Among other things, homonationalism “undergirds U.S. imperial structures through an embrace of a sexually progressive multiculturalism justifying foreign intervention”. (Jasbir Puar, *Rethinking Homonationalism*) In Canada, homonationalism might, for example, use legalized same-sex marriage to excuse oppressive immigration policies.