

## **Buddies in Bad Times Theatre**

### Third-Party Review

Terms of Reference – Approved July 20, 2021

### **Purpose**

To conduct a third-party review of Buddies interviewing a handful of specific artists/former employees/community members who came forward after an organizational call-in in the summer of 2020. The purpose of the third-party review is to provide an opportunity for interviewees to share their experiences of harm with Zainab Amadahy, concluding in a written report that will include findings from the interviews and recommendations for reconciliation, healing, and transformation at Buddies. It should be noted that this third-party review will provide useful tools for future reconciliation but shouldn't be considered a comprehensive review of past harms as the scope of the project includes only twenty interviewees.

The Advisory Committee will endeavor to work together through a cultural code of conduct that represents and prizes:

- Active listening
- Respect
- Empathy
- Dialogue
- Allyship
- Giving grace
- Understanding/educating ourselves about institutional oppression

The Advisory Committee will vote in a Secretary to arrange monthly meetings, organize documents/drafts and confirm approvals for the Third Party Reviewer.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

#### Advisory Committee

1. Approve the draft of an invitation to the twenty artists, former employees, and community members to participate in the third-party review process.
2. Approve interview questions.
3. Offer guidance to the consultant as needed throughout the process.
4. Review a first draft of the final third-party review report.
5. Provides recommendation and assistance on a dissemination plan of the findings of the Third Party Review to stakeholders and the public.

#### Consultant

Lead the third-party review process; seek guidance from the Advisory Committee where relevant; conduct interviews with the artists who have come forward with experiences of harm; draft and finalize a report on the third-party review process.

## Board

Represent Buddies as an organization; arrange and facilitate payments to the interviewees in order to ensure anonymity, follow through on commitments to update the community on the third-party review process; ensure accountability of the process at Buddies, including dissemination of the final report to staff and publicly.

## Staff

Represent current staff perspectives during Advisory Committee discussions; communicate with staff on the progress of the third-party review; work with Buddies management on implementation of recommendations from the final report.

## Community Partners

Identify the artists who have come forward with experiences of harm working with Buddies; provide advice to the consultant on interview questions and process; support the review of the draft third-party review report.

## Participants

All twenty artists who have come forward to share their experiences of harm with Buddies will be offered an honorarium of \$250.00 for participation in the process. Participants will also be invited to relevant healing sessions once the third-party review process is completed.

## **Operational Guidelines + Decision Making**

The Advisory Committee shall meet bi-monthly throughout the third-party review process until and after the public dissemination of the Report.

A Quorum requires 50% of the Advisory Committee

All questions shall be decided by consensus.

## **Deliverables**

- Review the invitation to participate in the third-party review (drafted by the consultant)
- Review and add to interview questions for community members who have come forward with experiences of harm from working with Buddies.
- Review and approval of final report on the third-party review process, including: stories of harm and recommendations for transformative change at Buddies.
- Provide a plan stating recommendations on a dissemination plan of the findings of the Third Party Review to stakeholders and the public.

## **Timeline**

### May - July 2021

Establish an Advisory Committee that operates on consensus, comprising representatives from Buddies staff, Buddies Board, and community members.

Send an invitation to artists who have come forward with experiences of harm working with Buddies. Buddies announces the commencement of the Third Party Review to the general

public- this announcement will include a blog post or communication piece from community members.

### July - August 2021

Interview artists who have experienced harm; encourage them to share relevant experiences; solicit ideas on how future harm can be prevented and minimized; and solicit suggestions around health supports that Buddies can provide to our communities.

Write a report about the harms Buddies has caused with artists and community members, based on interviews. Respondents will be kept anonymous unless asked to be named publicly.

### September 2021

Buddies will publicly share the final report, including findings of harm and recommendations on how to improve its culture, processes and relationships with communities.

## **Background**

Over the course of 2020, institutions across the arts sector, including Buddies, have been invited to reflect upon our complicity in systemic racism. We have been asked by community members to be accountable for all the ways in which we have benefited from and exacerbated anti-Black racism and other forms of oppression deeply entrenched in our history and at all levels of our institution.

While these are conversations that have been initiated with Buddies in the past, they were most recently brought forward in May 2020 by Shaista Latif, in an open letter on her social media. In it, she referenced her experiences of racism and classism at the theatre. This statement was shared widely by community members calling on Buddies to acknowledge it outrightly, and to engage in a community-led process to address classism, anti-Black racism, racism, sexism, ableism and other inequities at the organization. The message was also echoed in an open letter by Bricks and Glitter, and by Rhoma Akosua Spencer, who organized a panel discussion to address anti-Black racism at Buddies. In solidarity with these calls, a number of artists have withdrawn from or declined participation in our programming, including our blog, 2020 Pride Programming, Rhubarb Festival, and Residency Programming. Since Summer 2020, Shaista Latif (former Buddies artist in residence and youth facilitator), with support from Claire Burns (former Buddies employee and community member) and Sedina Fiati (community member and former Buddies artist and contractor), have been facilitating a variety of methods to gather experiences of harm and hold the institution accountable. This work also includes advocating for committees and archival projects to render visible histories that have been erased.

We recognize those who have highlighted instances of racism at Buddies and who seek accountability, privately and publicly, and in allyship with other community members. We specifically acknowledge that Indigenous, Black, and racialized communities have been called on to re-tell their experiences of oppression, to educate and advise us, and to push for redress, despite disparities in capacity and while risking re-traumatization, dismissal, and retribution.

Members of the Board of Directors at Buddies have been in conversation with Community members, Claire, Sedina, and Shaista since August 2020 with the hopes of co-creating a process to address harms imposed by the institution and experienced by community members. Sedina, Shaista and Claire offered the board a 3-phased proposal in March 2021 that included:

Phase 1) Payment for past work with the organization (May 2020-March 2021)

Phase 2) A third party review process specifically for the 20 or so community members that came to Shaista after her call in and expressed stories and experiences of institutional harm.

Phase 3) A public call and artistic response aimed at reconciliation, witnessing and recording.

Phase 1 has been completed and Phase 2 is now underway with this review.

At a staff level, parallel work has included an anti-racism reading group that has met regularly since Summer 2020, which has informed a departmental review process; improved staff-board communications; quarterly training sessions, and facilitated company-wide discussions.

Moving forward, Buddies is committed to holding space for painful histories, and to actively push against white supremacy and patriarchy in all corners of this theatre. We acknowledge that the transformation process ahead is a long one, and will take time and energy. As we enter into this process and strive for meaningful organizational change, we commit to always framing our actions with accountability, equity, and collaboration with, and in service to, our communities. We hope our communities will join us in the shaping of a future of justice and solidarity at Buddies.

### **Anticipated Outcomes**

- Transparent accounting of harms experienced as a result of working with Buddies.
- Deeper engagement with Buddies' communities on how to improve the organization.
- Greater input from community members on the ongoing transformation of the theatre company and its operations.

Please note that these anticipated outcomes should not negate further work that the institution should undertake to engage with additional community members. The third-party review is a step towards a transformational goal.

### **Advisory Committee Members**

Claire Burns (Community Member, Former Staff)

Jacqueline Costa (Staff Member)

Sedina Fiati (Community Member, Former BIBT Artist/Contractor)

Shaista Latif (Community Member, Former BIBT Artist/ Staff)

Aidan Morishita-Miki (Staff Member)

Adam Morrison (Board Member)