

NIGHT WALKS WITH TEEN- AGERS



Mammalian Diving Reflex has worked with hundreds of young people over the course of dozens of projects and has made three observations: **1) young people like to walk at night, 2) adults like to walk at night, and 3) young people and adults like to walk at night together.**

Nightwalks with Teenagers brings together a group of young people from Inverness and a group of young people from Toronto who, together, will plan three night walks, and then invite the public to join them on these walks: **Ocean Walk, Forest Walk, and Town Walk.**

Nightwalks with Teenagers are an opportunity to get to spend some time with two interesting groups of young people, from Inverness and from Toronto, and to get to know a little bit about them. **It’s part social event, part recreational activity, and part party.**

Mammalian Diving Reflex likes to make simple but unlikely things happen to see what happens when they happen. **What might happen when a group of young people from Toronto works with a group of young people from Inverness to create a series of nightwalks, and then invite the public to join them? This is what we think will happen: we will get to know each other in an easy, casual way; we will see the ocean, forest, and town with shared eyes; we will have a good time; and we will feel better about the people with whom we share the world. But that’s just a guess.**

Nightwalks with Teenagers: strolling with teenagers the way it was meant to be—at night, in Cape Breton.



Mammalian Diving Reflex presents:

NIGHTWALKS WITH TEENAGERS

Starring The Invernessers and The Torontonians, *Nightwalks with Teenagers* are three late-night walks through different landscapes in the company of a bunch of young people from Inverness and Toronto. What better way to spend an evening than strolling in the company of teenagers?

MEET AND GREET

August 16: Meet the Invernessers and Torontonians. 4 PM at the The Hoff Pub & Grill (20 Mill Road, Inverness).

THE NIGHT WALKS

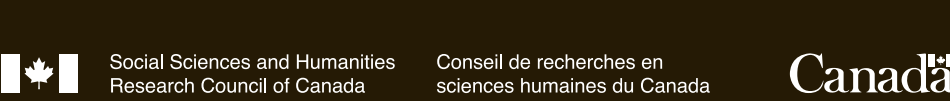
August 18: Ocean Walk, Dunvegan

August 19: Forest Walk, Piper’s Glen

August 20: Town Walk, Inverness

To join us for any of the scheduled walks, meet at the Ceilidh Trail Park (on Central Avenue, Inverness, next to the Sean Co-op) at 8PM. Exact routes and directions to the start of the walk will be shared. Wear comfortable shoes, and bring rainwear (if appropriate), a snack, insect repellent, and a headlamp or flashlight. We will return by mid-night. Children are welcome but must be accompanied by an adult.

Project organized by Amish Morrell with the support of Inverness municipal councillor Jim Mustard as part of Diane Borsato and Stephanie Springgay’s Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada-funded study “The Institute of Walking: Research and Creation in Relational and Interventionist Art Practices.”



METCALF FOUNDATION

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Walking Together At Night

On August 14th, 2003, shortly after 4 pm, a major power failure paralyzed the province of Ontario and eight U.S. states. In Toronto, for almost 24 hours, subways and streetcars shut down, and lights, elevators, cash registers, refrigerators, televisions, and air conditioners stopped working. Hundreds of thousands of people walked across the city to get home, or took to the streets to escape their dark houses and apartments. Strangers took it upon themselves to direct traffic, and shop-keepers handed out free ice cream to passersby. As night fell, the city was thrown into darkness, revealing a sky full of stars and planets rarely seen from downtown Toronto for more than a century, and strangers struck up conversations with one another. As Darren O’Donnell describes it, during the blackout normal rules of the city ceased to apply, and countless new and unexpected exchanges and encounters occurred. He suggests that the absence of power enabled people to think about their civic roles and responsibilities in different ways, and to form new relationships with people they knew and strangers alike. ¹

In *Nightwalks with Teenagers*, a new project presented by Darren O’Donnell and Mammalian Diving Reflex, “The Torontonians”, a group of fifteen-year-olds from Parkdale, a neighbourhood in Toronto, and “The Invernessers”, a group of teenagers of the same age from Inverness, Cape Breton, are organizing a series of walks at night, which are open to everyone, in areas in and around the town of Inverness. The Torontonians have never been to a place like Inverness, but they know how to breakdance, have performed at theatre festivals, and like to hang out with other people their own age. The Invernessers are into their hometown, enjoy listening to heavy metal, and know exactly what to do when there’s a power outage. Together, these two groups will lead three walks on the nights of August 18th, 19th and 20th: one along the ocean, one in the forest, and one in the town of Inverness. They’ve already been talking to each other over Facebook and e-mail, to get to know each other and to figure out what the experience will be like.

Many of us are fearful of being out at night, especially walking around in the woods. The prehistoric origins of this anxiety lay in specific dangers, such as predators or enemies. Over time, these real risks were replaced by generalized fears and superstitions. For example, in the 17th century, many writers described the night as being the descent of evil



Profiles of Participants



Saniya Ansari

Saniya is an actor, producer, director, and arts educator. Currently completing her B.Ed at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education, she works with The Torontonians—Mammalian’s Parkdale-based art collective, where adults and youth recognize each other’s strengths, abilities and energies—providing opportunities for interaction, information, and participation with Toronto’s artists and cultural organizations. In 2000, she co-founded the theatre company Modest Productions to direct *Damme, This Is The Oriental Scene for You!*, adapted by Rehan Ansari from G.V. Desani’s novel *All About H. Hatterr*, for Theatre Passe Muraille. Most recently, in August 2010, Saniya directed a workshop presentation of *Unburdened* by Rehan Ansari at CEPA Gallery’s Art of War festival in Buffalo, NY. *Unburdened* was also read at the Asia Society in New York City in June 2011.

Saif Azmi

Saif is a director and editor. He loves music, and scuba diving is his sport of choice. He likes his morning coffee at The Common and is currently finishing work on a trailer for a music-based graphic novel. He is excited that a short film made by The Torontonians was selected as an entry for Monitor 7, a short film festival organized by SAVAC (South Asian Visual Arts Centre). Saif would like to collaborate more with musicians, visual artists, and fellow film enthusiasts. He also thinks “multiculturalism” is an awesome cuss word.

Brayden LaRadical
Brayden likes ’80s hardcore punk, black metal, and his favourite, celtic punk. His hobbies are hanging out with friends and listening to music. He dreams of learning to play the bagpipes and of visiting Ireland and Scotland.



spirits or noxious vapours, which made people susceptible to sickness, death, or spiritual corruption. To protect themselves against the night air, people closed their windows and sealed up their bedchambers, ironically preventing the circulation of fresh air and creating ideal conditions for the spread of illness.² And at night, it is often hard to distinguish between different forms, such as a tree and a person, or between something imagined and something real. As a consequence, the night has always been a repository for the supernatural and the unexplainable, a place where the imagination runs wild.

Despite such firmly rooted anxieties, the night has also enabled us to reflect on our place in the universe. For philosophers and scientists, the night made it possible to chart both space and time. In the Ancient World, shepherds as well as navigators would have been adept at reading the stars. However, with the rise of modern cities and the widespread use of electric lighting, there came a changed relationship with the night, and with it a shifting sense of our place in the world. Streetlamps and electric lights enabled an extension of daytime activities, but they also cut off our relationship with the celestial realm. On a cloudless night in the country, when the moon is little more than a narrow sliver and the constellations form a bright, milky band across the night sky, it is possible to grasp an understanding of time and space that is far more vast than one’s mortal experience. Not having these celestial bearings would have been a profound change for many rural people who migrated into cities in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Throughout history, the night has also facilitated the transformation of social hierarchies, and has offered a place of temporary freedom for many people, including servants, slaves, and others confined to drudgery during the day, as well as an opportunity for members of privileged classes to step outside of their social roles.³ In the contemporary city, the night is an escape, to bars, nightclubs, and other places only open at night that offer community, meaning, and temporary respite from work and social conventions. Outside of work and ordinary public conduct, the night provides a sphere where markers of social position and class can be transformed. This shift in social power, where conversations can occur between groups that might not otherwise speak to each other, is crucial to the meaning of *Nightwalks with Teenagers*.



Dana Lui

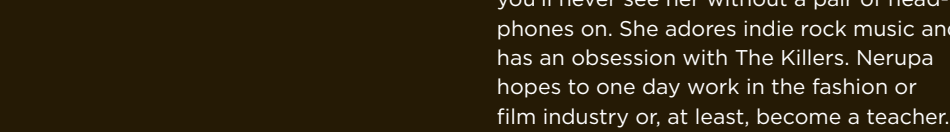
Dana plans to be a famous actress, is learning hip-hop, and used to play the violin (the queen of all instruments) but it stressed her out. She loves to read, especially manga, and has read over 200 different series. Her favourite musician is TVXQ, from Korea, and her number one love is Hero Jaejoong — never change!!

Amish Morrell

Amish is Editor of *C Magazine*, a quarterly journal on contemporary art. He has a PhD in Education and Cultural Studies and is a faculty member in the Department of Visual Studies at the University of Toronto at Mississauga. His writing has appeared in various publications including *Art Papers*, *Canadian Art*, and *Prefix Photo*. Amish was born in Inverness and grew up in Margaree Valley, Cape Breton, and as a teenager, he created his own summer job leading people on hiking trips in different parts of Inverness County.

Jim Mustard

As a young man, Jim found a place to call home in Cape Breton. He has spent all of his adult life in Piper’s Glen. With his partner, Margaret Thompson, he has created a place to grow the relationships that count: with horses, goats, gardens, their three children, and many other children who have found themselves in need of foster care. Jim was the initial champion of the Roots of Empathy program in Nova Scotia (www.rootsofempathy.org), and has been the program coordinator for Eastern Nova Scotia since 2003. As a municipal councillor and Executive Director of the Inverness Early Years Co-op, Jim is working with his community to develop an integrated plan that recognizes that “love grows brains.”



Darren O’Donnell

Darren is a novelist, essayist, playwright, director, designer, performer, Artistic Director of Mammalian Diving Reflex, Research Director of The Tendency Group (an emerging think-tank and social policy laboratory), and co-founder of The Torontonians. His books include: *Social Acupuncture*, which argues for an aesthetics of civic engagement, and *Your Secrets Sleep with Me*, a novel about difference, love, and the miraculous. His best-known work is *Haircuts by Children*, which was first created in collaboration with the children of Parkdale Public School in 2006. In addition to his artistic practice, he is currently an MSc candidate in Urban Planning at the University of Toronto.

Sanjay Ratnan

Sanjay is a comedian. He acts, sings, raps, and always tries to have fun. His favourite singer is Lady Gaga, and he is into pop music. He likes cultural food, loves animals, and has a really positive side. He takes modelling classes to have fun, and likes to go to concerts to see bands, to travel, and to see what’s out there. He always gets through tough stuff and works hard to be what he wants to be: the top singer/actor and styling boy out there! He is the 2010 winner of Mammalian’s Timothy Comeau Award.

Nerupa Somasale

Nerupa is currently a student at Parkdale Collegiate Institute. She’s loud, spirited, and never hesitates when it comes to sharing ideas. With a constant thirst for knowledge and adventure she jumps at any opportunity. Nerupa enjoys anything and everything about the arts. In her spare time you’ll find her drawing, writing, and cooking, and you’ll never see her without a pair of headphones on. She adores indie rock music and has an obsession with The Killers. Nerupa hopes to one day work in the fashion or film industry or, at least, become a teacher.

Walking at night demands a calculated reorientation of your senses. Without familiar visual cues, such as depth or colour, it’s necessary to rely on touch, hearing, and smell, to feel your way through shadows, to listen with your skin, and to see with your imagination. When the visible details of your surroundings are hidden by night, other senses are heightened. You become keenly aware of gravel under your feet, cold air coming from a hollow in the ground, mist lying low in a meadow, or ferns glowing in the moonlight. For those who have learned how to quell their fears and navigate the darkness, the night becomes its own vast continent, where they can wander, reflect, and talk to their companions, inventing new stories, rituals, and communities. Through walking and conversing together, the landscape takes on meaning and comes alive in new ways.

Nightwalks with Teenagers brings together people from communities who might not otherwise ever meet each another, to share experiences entirely unique to a place and time. The Torontonians are from a neighbourhood with one of the highest concentrations of new immigrants anywhere in Canada. Their families are from nations that include Sri Lanka, Tibet, and China. For many of the teenagers from Inverness, their families immigrated to Canada centuries ago. *Nightwalks with Teenagers* invites us to consider what we might learn from one another, and how we might find our bearings together in the dark.



Endnotes:

^[1] Darren O’Donnell (2004), Social Acupuncture (Toronto: Coach House Books), pp. 95–95.

^[2] Roger Ekirch (2005), At Day’s Close: Night in Times Past (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company), pp. 12–13.

^[3] Ekirch, p. 233.


Stephanie Springgay

Stephanie is Assistant Professor in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto. Her research focuses on embodiment and the senses in contemporary art and educational spaces, bringing together curriculum theory, aesthetics, and feminist pedagogy. She is the principal investigator on a SSHRC-funded study on the relationship between contemporary art, discourses of creativity, and pedagogy. Her publications include: *Mothering a Bodied Curriculum: Emplacement, Desire, Affect* (University of Toronto Press), with Debra Freedman; *Curriculum and the Cultural Body* (Peter Lang), and, also with Debra Freedman, *Body Knowledge and Curriculum: Pedagogies of Touch in Youth and Visual Culture* (Peter Lang). She is the co-director of the Centre for Media and Culture in Education at OISE.

Chosang Tenzin

Born in Nepal, Chosang first moved to Hamilton and then to Toronto. Chosang likes to bike, play guitar, play piano, play basketball, meet cool people, make money, and learn hands-on stuff. Chosang also likes hats, watching TV, movies and shopping for clothes, shoes, and sunglasses. He likes staying up really, really late.

Chozin Tenzin

Chozin Tenzin enjoys music, partying, bike riding, and has a distaste for people with big mouths.

Kathy Vuu

Kathy is a breakdancer from Parkdale, Toronto. She spent her Grade 9 year at Rosedale Heights School of the Arts. She loves to try out new things because she feels it will be helpful in the future. She has a great passion for what she believes in. She loves to make abnormal noises and wishes to sing, even though she is tone-deaf. She has been in many dance performances and plays, so she has experience on stage. She was part of a student-written play called *Fruit and Time Travel* in the Best Plays Ever Festival. It became a huge success throughout the whole school and even got recognized by the organizer of the Rhubarb Festival. Kathy wants to be a teacher or a choreographer.

Mammalian Diving Reflex

Founded in 1993, Mammalian Diving Reflex is a research-art atelier dedicated to investigating the social sphere, always on the lookout for contradictions to whip into aesthetically scintillating experiences, while producing one-off events, theatre-based performances, videos, installations, theoretical texts, and community happenings. Company members range in age from 13 to over 80 years old. Past work includes: *Nuit Market, Eat the Street, Haircuts by Children, The Children’s Choice Awards, Slow Dance With Teacher, A Suicide-Site Guide to the City, Monster Makers, The Best Sex I’ve Ever Had and Old Women Shooting Guns*. Mammalian Diving Reflex’s work has been presented around the world in Birmingham, Bologna, Brisbane, Brussels, Calgary, Chicago, Cork, Derry, Edmonton, Enschede, Greensboro, Kitchener-Waterloo, Kuopio, Lahore, London, Los Angeles, Melbourne, Milan, Mumbai, Montreal, Newcastle, New York, Norwich, Nyon, Prague, Oldenburg, Oslo, Ottawa, Perth, Portland, Regina, Sydney, Tasmania, Terni, Trondheim, Vancouver, and Victoria.