

# Conflict Theatre @ UBC

Rehearsing Conflict



Rehearsing Courage

## What is It?

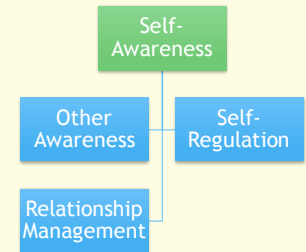
Conflict Theatre is a 2-year pilot program that offers conflict engagement training, customized to suit different needs:

- ◆ Skill development workshops
- ◆ Play performances
- ◆ Rainbow of Desire & Cops in the Head (i.e. theatre exercises to deeply deconstruct conflicts & self-reflect)
- ◆ Full-day intensives

Since April 2017, we delivered **21 events** to **550 attendees** across UBC.

## Why Conflict Theatre?

Participants can use the theatre setting to rehearse constructive approaches, take the perspective of others, strengthen emotional intelligence, and build the courage to engage in conflict with authenticity and resilience.



Evaluations have shown that Conflict Theatre supports important areas of social and emotional learning. Two key concepts stood out that support better interactions:

- ◆ **Self-awareness:** Awareness of your own emotions, triggers, patterns, context, and perspective.
- ◆ **Other awareness:** Awareness of other people's emotions, triggers, patterns, context, and perspective.

Instead of just hearing about a better way to handle conflict, this arts-based approach is a chance to actually practice constructive, empathetic conflict engagement.

## Participant feedback:

“What I got out of it is a sense of self-awareness and understanding of what’s really going on for me during conflict and being more aware of how I show up (in the past anyway) and hopefully being able to bring that awareness in the future when that comes up.”

“It was nice to explore ourselves in a safe environment and push boundaries to self-reflect.”

“It was good to see these different approaches to learn new ways to deal with conflicts while remaining true to who we are as individuals.”

“I learned a lot. I think that’s the one big benefit of this, through all of this practice, that it’s experience we gain, that’s not learning intellectually through books.”

“I had a shift in perspective. It was emotionally intense and visceral, and I know I would act differently in the future.”

“It was a great way to observe from 'afar' and identify assumptions we sometimes jump to at work. Great reminder about the importance of being 'present' and really listening to what others are saying.”

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## Conflict Theatre Offerings

### Facilitation

An experienced facilitator always leads the group through the exercises and a debrief of the significance. Our lead facilitator, Professor Tom Scholte (BFA, MFA), receives glowing feedback from participants and has taught acting at UBC since 2004. He has designed the workshop content based on his training and practice with David Diamond's *Theatre for Living*, as well as his extensive research on theatrical models of social complexity.

### Potential Outcomes

- ◆ Develop empathy for all sides of a conflict & build understanding for multiple perspectives
- ◆ Foster a curiosity-driven engagement with conflict, rather than one that is confrontational, fearful, or defensive
- ◆ Gain a better understanding of how conflict arises, what keeps it going, and what can help
- ◆ Create a sense of community and learn a shared language for handling conflict

### Skill development workshop

(12+ people, 2+ hours)

This is an opportunity to use a series of embodied exercises to build capacity for constructive conflict engagement.

Participants reflect on personal challenges, interpersonal dynamics, and systemic structures through activities and games that offer a new way to look at old patterns. It is a great introduction to some of the ideas and strategies of Conflict Theatre, which can be customized to fit team needs.

### Conflict play performances

(10+ people, 2+ hours)

This is an interactive theatre experience that lets audience members reflect on conflict, recognize shared struggles, and rehearse new strategies. The Conflict Theatre troupe performs a play that represents real stories of conflict from the UBC workplace; audience members are invited to intervene to resolve the story. There are multiple plays to choose from and attendees take part based on comfort levels. Try out new ways of engaging in conflict without the high-stakes of real life.

### Rainbow of Desire

(15+ people, 2+ hours)

This is an opportunity to understand how our personal fears and desires can create both internal & external conflict. To begin, participants act out a real story of conflict (solicited from the group), and then we deconstruct the internal struggles of the people in that conflict. By the end of the session, participants put their new knowledge into action by rehearsing alternative endings to the story of conflict, based on a deeper understanding.

### Cops in the Head

(15+ people, 2+ hour)

This is an opportunity to explore and then move beyond the internalized, unhelpful "voices" in someone's head that might influence them in conflict. Participants act out a real story of conflict (solicited from the group), and then explore the origins of those "voices" to reflect on how personal history influences us during conflict & sustains negative patterns. Then, we consider how to counter those negative influences and rehearse alternatives.