



Dr Shelley Tracey

Abstract

Shelley Tracey, the presenter of this workshop, was Artist in the Community for 2015 in Northern Ireland, with an intercultural creative writing project sponsored by the local Arts Council. The project, *A Write to a Sense of Belonging*, took its name from “A Sense of Belonging”, the 2014 Racial Equality Strategy consultation in Northern Ireland. The impetus for the project was the increase of racist language and hate crime in Northern Ireland, following the expansion of the minority ethnic population. The purpose of the creative writing workshops was to give opportunities for creative expressions of views about belonging to Northern Ireland society, and for enhancing intercultural sensitivities and understanding. The project explored a number of assumptions about belonging, culture, creativity and the arts. These include the idea that belonging is complex, layered, constitutes multiple identities, and involves a sense of place and home. Creativity opens up possibilities for exploring ideas, for seeing things from multiple perspectives, and for expanding our frames of reference. Finally, the project explored the notion that the arts can offer opportunities for shared connections, and enhance empathy with people from other cultures. The workshop will include an excerpt from a film about *A Write to a Sense of Belonging*, made by a local television company, and begin with an icebreaker activity used at the start of each of the *Write to a Sense of Belonging* workshops. Participants in the workshop will also have opportunities to explore the anthology of writing in which *A Write to a Sense of Belonging* culminated, as well as the guidelines which emerged for facilitating intercultural creative writing workshops. Examples of the creative writing, which emerged from each phase of the Creative Belonging model, will be explored in the workshop, with reflections on themes and metaphors for belonging, as well as barriers to a sense of belonging. In the final part of the workshop, we will explore the concept of intercultural empathy, sharing ideas about how it might be cultivated by participation in the processes of creative writing and other arts forms.

Bio

Shelley Tracey is a researcher, poet and community arts facilitator. Her doctoral research gave teachers opportunities to explore and develop their personal and professional creativity. In 2015, she was Artist in the Community for the Arts Council Northern Ireland, with an intercultural creative writing project, *A Write to a Sense of Belonging*. She also received a Minority Ethnic Artist award (2013/14) from the Arts Council for a poetry project

exploring experiences of migration to Northern Ireland. From 2002-2012, Shelley designed and facilitated tutor qualifications programmes at Queen's University Belfast for adult literacy practitioners from 2002-2012. An important part of the programme was the inclusion of learners in reading and writing poetry to enhance their confidence and voice as writers. Shelley's research interests and publications include mentoring, practitioner research, creativity and the development of a new poetic form, textpoetry.