

## THOMAS BUXTON JUNIOR SCHOOL AND ST ANNE'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL IN COLLABORATION WITH THE HALF MOON YOUNG PEOPLE'S (HMYPT)

### HISTORY AND CONTEXT

*"The residency exceeded the original aims far beyond my expectations."* Deeanne Bell -Deputy Head, St. Anne's RC Primary School

In the Summer Term 2000 Thomas Buxton Junior School worked in association with the HMYPT in the delivery of an Arts based residency, the aim of which was to celebrate the differences and similarities between different cultures. There was some collaboration between Thomas Buxton Junior School & St. Anne's RC Primary School during the residency, culminating with some of the pupils from St. Anne's watching the final performance.

*"The head teachers from both schools were very supportive of the work we were doing and the whole ethos of the project"* Pauline Madden & Sandra Dyer –Drumhead, HMYPT

The head teachers from both schools have been very pro-active in challenging the cycles of prejudice, which pervade the two school communities and jointly applied for funding to further develop this process, in support of Recommendation 68:

*That Local Education Authorities and School Governors have the duty to create and implement strategies in their schools to prevent and address racism.*

The Tower Hamlets Equalities Initiative accepted the joint funding proposal and an Arts based anti-racism residency in association with the HMYPT was initiated; namely the Celebrate Diversity Programme.

This programme came in the form of a second residency, which took place during the Summer Term 2001 initiated with the aim of further developing the work that had already begun to take place with the staff and pupils of both schools, working towards greater understanding and respect of the different communities.

The overall aim of *this* residency was to explore issues of *difference and similarity* within the context of identity, language and culture through the creative mediums of drama, storytelling, music, visual art and video, culminating in an original and unique scripted performance piece performed at the HMYPT. The residency was established to further explore some of the misconceptions and conflict that had been occurring between the two different school communities, St. Anne's RC Primary School and Thomas Buxton Junior School. The residency hoped to leave a legacy of empathy, understanding & respect so that the two communities could begin relate to one another more positively and maintain open channels of communication.

Our working aim throughout the process of this residency was to establish a safe and creative learning environment, within which all the young people participating would feel able to express themselves. Our objectives as stated in the original bid are outlined below:

#### Objectives

- ❖ To begin to develop understanding and empathy between the two school communities;
- ❖ To develop an equal opportunities and anti-bullying policy;
- ❖ To embed strategies for continued equal opportunities development in the two school cultures;
- ❖ To empower staff with practical strategies for actively encouraging empathy between the two schools;
- ❖ To empower staff with practical strategies to deal with racist incidents.

The *Celebrate Diversity* Residency programme has been designed by the Education & Youth Team at the HMYPT, in association with senior staff at Thomas Buxton Junior School & St. Anne's RC Primary School, using local authority guidance & criteria on Anti-Racism in Education, as defined in Recommendation 68 of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 in response to the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report.

A research & development phase took place between January & April 2001, followed by the delivery of the residency during the summer term (May to July 2001).

The delivery of the residency took the form of 2 days of contact time per week over twelve weeks involving the Half Moon creative team working with all the Year 4 classes, from both schools supported by the class teachers. One full day INSET took place involving key teaching and support staff from the school, and explored techniques for using drama and storytelling to address issues of race. An additional INSET day is programmed to take place during the Autumn Term 2001.

### RESEARCH

A period of research took place involving the Half Moon Education & Youth Team working in consultation with the Head Teachers, link staff and pupils from both Thomas Buxton Junior School and St. Anne's RC Primary School during the period January to April 2001. The research included investigation of a range of publications and documentation, including school development plans and OFSTED reports, Commission for Race Equality's guidelines and publications, and the DfEE published document, *All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture & Education (2001)*. The research gave us a good understanding of both schools in terms of their commitment to anti-racist education and the context within which this could occur. An initial meeting with pupils from both schools due to participate in the residency established and informed the tutor team approach and content of the first few workshops.

*“Children who were very apprehensive about working with another school seemed to benefit most and their initial fears were quashed [as] were their negative perceptions of each other.”*

Sharon Shrubsall-Lead Drama Tutor, HMYPT

## **THE TUTOR TEAM**

*The Half Moon team built strong and positive relationships with children from both schools. [The team] were talented, enthusiastic, energetic, positive and highly motivating.*

Deeanne Bell Deputy Head, St. Anne’s RC Primary School

The residency was facilitated by a team of arts education specialists from the Half Moon freelance pool working in a unique collaboration, involving; a writer, two musicians, two drama specialists, a production designer and a video artist. The tutors brought a wide range of expertise, and participated in a series of planning meetings, in advance of the residency facilitated by the Half Moon Education & Youth Team, in order to ensure a quality of progression through each day of the programme. The series of drumming, writing, movement and drama workshops took place twice weekly during the Summer Term. The young people had the unique opportunity to participate in a diverse range of expressive art forms, including drama, music and visual art, which can be otherwise limited within current curriculum structures.

## **Roles & Responsibilities**

The role of the Video Artist was two-fold: to incorporate video recording and projection in the children’s performance; and to make a video documentary of the process for the purpose of recording the residency. The video recording worked as a highly successful tool in enabling those who found speaking confidently and with volume an opportunity to be heard. The projections had the dual role of providing an artistic and visual backdrop and more importantly incorporating the bi-lingual performance element through poetry spoken in both Bangladeshi heritage and English by pupils from both schools.

*“The projections seemed appropriate and enhanced the performance rather than distracting from it”*

Adrian Hart – Video Artist, Coyote Video Productions, HMYPT

The role of the drama specialists was to develop and nurture a safe space within which attitudes could be challenged and explored through metaphoric story. They also had the responsibility of ensuring that a devising process was taking place and ideas were being shaped within dramatic techniques towards a final performance piece.

*“[The] relationship with the children was excellent and also how you got the two schools to integrate”*

Anne Azzopardi Link Teacher, Thomas Buxton Junior School

The role of the musicians was to develop a cohesive group dynamic. Through the exploration of rhythm, movement and song the group worked together as one in the pursuit of harmony. The music tutors worked in direct tandem with the drama tutors and each process informed the other throughout the residency.

*I enjoyed the music and the dance. Working with St. Anne’s School was fun and enjoyable. The Macaw looked fantastic. I learnt that don’t be racist to anyone and always be nice and kind to everyone and you shouldn’t tease anyone.*

Year Four Pupil, Thomas Buxton Junior Primary School

The production designer facilitated the production of artwork for the final production and exhibition. Some considerable time was incorporated into the residency to allow space for reflective evaluation to occur through this medium. Many expressive and beautiful pictures were produced; these served to inform the writing and metaphoric story processes.

The role of the writer was to extract and create a metaphoric story, which accurately represented the story of these young people. The writer also worked in direct liaison with the producer in the design and facilitation of the Celebrate Diversity programme.

*“I thought the project was a great success overall and that it truly achieved the aims of the residency in literally celebrating the diversity between two very different schools*

Emma Jones – Production designer, HMYPT

The team provided a unique approach, which fused these forms together as a means of developing an anti-racist Arts programme. A safe and positive working environment was established very quickly through the positive collaboration between the Teachers, and the Half Moon team.

*“I thought the support from the schools during our residency was excellent. Given that the project worked across two schools and various faiths, there was little sense of territory and I felt the space was ours when we were there”.*

Emma Jones – Production designer, HMYPT

## **WORKING APPROACHES**

The initial sessions were spent establishing a safe and creative learning environment within which all the young people participating would feel able to express themselves. Our overall aim here was to fulfil our original objective: to begin to develop understanding and empathy between the two school communities.

*“At the start of this project we asked the children if they had one wish what it would be and many of them said that they wanted a garden. We then set about creating a garden through drama, writing and music and the result was a magical place that the children could call their own. The garden provided them with a space that was away from both schools where they could get to know each other feeling both safe and free”.*

[Emily Nightingale ~ Writer HMYPT]

This theme and story emerged during the initial work-shopping and was used as stimulus for anti-racist drama exploration and discussion with the children.

Drama structures were used to identify shared commonalities between the different backgrounds and communities experienced by the children. Storytelling and story building explored cultural history, prejudice and stereotyping, bullying, changing habits and attitudes. Visual artwork and design provided opportunity for personal reflection on the themes raised by the story in development and a vehicle for imaginative interpretation of the story in a theatrical, celebratory context. The children developed a high level of skill and achievement through intensive music tuition with two music specialists, focussing on the use of music in the dramatic context of the story. Musical harmony provided the metaphor for the harmony within the Macaw’s Garden story where the community had to work together to achieve its aim. Metaphoric stories provided opportunities to tackle race issues within a safe and contained environment. This was evident throughout each level of the residency and used in workshops with pupils and during the INSET with teachers.

## **INSET**

*“The INSET demonstrated methods and techniques used by the Half Moon, giving and demonstrating techniques, which could be, used in classroom, circle time and lunchtime situations. It gave ideas to facilitate the exploration of issues in school in a ‘safe’ manner”.*

Deeanne Bell -Deputy Head, St. Anne’s RC Primary School

The aim of the INSET was to explore methods of using stories (myths & legends) to address issues of *difference and similarity* within the context of Anti-Racism Education. The INSET provided teachers with a way of reflecting upon the shared objectives of the residency and maximising the positive outcomes. The INSET strand of the residency focussed on identifying ways of celebrating diversity in a dynamic way, incorporating techniques and strategies for use in literacy hour, PHSE and Citizenship. A number of games and exercises exploring trust, confidence and group integration were introduced and explained, to equip Teachers with strategies for use with their own classrooms.

*“[The INSET was] excellent. Everyone who went on the INSET told me they enjoyed it and were looking forward to the next one”.*

Ann Azzopardi – Link Teacher, Thomas Buxton Junior School

## **PERFORMANCE**

*“For me, seeing the children going from being nervous about standing together in a circle, to happily crowding together to create a giant monster, a fountain, a wishing well, has been one of the biggest joys of the project”.*

Debs Newbold - Drama Lead Tutor HMYPT

The performance used mediums of drama, movement, video projection and live music. As the two groups became one group, a new community was formed: a group of performers working towards a common aim. The performers produced an inspirational piece of work, which was enjoyed and positively reflected upon by all who attended. A bi-lingual exhibition of the children’s work was displayed in St. Anne’s School and in the Half Moon YPT’s foyer.

The Macaw’s Garden was a celebration of a challenging and positive process, which incorporated the contributions and experiences, through a metaphorical journey, of a group of young people who live and play in East London.

*“This was a brilliantly organised and well-executed residency with a beautiful end product” Debs Newbold – Lead Drama Tutor, HMYPT*

### **The Macaw’s Garden**

In a town without any gardens.....three children wish for a place to play. A magical Macaw hears them and promises to create a paradise garden if they vow to nurture and share it with their whole community. All the townspeople are entranced by the garden’s dazzling colours and it unites people who have not spoken to each other for years..... that is until.....word of the garden’s beauty travels to lands far and wide, making it even more famous than the Eiffel Tower or the East London Mosque! Before long this *new* community are faced with making choices if the Macaw’s garden is to remain theirs.....

## OUTCOMES

The original outcomes for the Celebrate Diversity residency are listed below:

- ❖ A multi-lingual performance by the pupils from both schools at the Half Moon YPT;
- ❖ Multi-lingual exhibition of the whole process including photographs, pupils writing, video etc, at the Half Moon YPT;
- ❖ Inset for the whole staff from both schools on equal opportunities culminating in policy statement.

All of these have been achieved and many other unexpected outcomes have also been a part of this process. Below are some additional achievements expressed by Teachers and tutors during interim and final evaluations throughout the Summer Term:

*"The long term effects of this residency is that it began building positive relationship[s] at a pupil and staff level. The identification of the need to be a community in a multicultural society.*

Deeanne Bell -Deputy Head, St. Anne's RC Primary School

*"One change in the dynamic of my class as a result of the residency is that the children are able to listen to one another especially during circle time".*

Ann Azzopardi – Link Teacher, Thomas Buxton Junior School

The Residency involved 63 Year 4 pupils, 11 members of the HFYPT staff and 16 Teachers and School Support Staff. The audience included 200 children and 100 parents from both schools. Over 400 people were involved throughout the anti-racist Celebrate Diversity programme.

## FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

1. The residency programme has enabled effective links to be established and developed between the two schools and this has become integrated into the two whole school communities. There are already plans in place to maintain and develop these links, such as an after school maths club.
2. As part of the INSET programme, the HMYPT was able to examine some of the gaps in the school policies. The Head Teachers of both schools identified and are in the process of implementing an anti-bullying policy and an equal opportunities policy. The pupil's responses during the targeted anti-racist drama workshops have been documented and could be used as a basis for developing both policies. Another INSET is due to take place during the Autumn Term 2001, which will aid this process.
3. The INSET, which took place, examined storytelling and gave teachers the tools and confidence to practically tackle and deal with racist incidents within a classroom environment. The INSET also provided a series of stimuli for use as a part of an ongoing policy of incorporating diversity and awareness into the curriculum base of both schools. A resources box has been provided to aid any follow up work.
4. The whole school needed to be more aware of the residency, which was helped by the INSET programme. The HMYPT could have attended a whole staff briefing with an outline of the programme.

*"In hindsight maybe I could have done an assembly on what the children were doing and discussed anti-racism".*

Ann Azzopardi Thomas Buxton Junior School

5. If this residency programme was to continue in its current form, the Half Moon should invoice each term.
6. The programme should take on the format of an academic year, three-term structure with all of the research and initial groundwork happening within the Autumn term. The preparation and initial workshops occurring during the Spring term and the Summer term taking the form of rehearsal, evaluation and performance.
7. Staff, pupils and students need to continue to develop positive working relationships with each other, and this means recognising and appropriately challenging racist behaviour; developing equality of opportunity in working practices by complying with policies and having a shared understanding about differences and similarities within the school community.

A selection of quotes collected from Year 4 pupils from Thomas Buxton Junior School & St. Anne's RC Primary School during a final evaluation session:

*"I think this residency took place to make two communities which was Thames Buxton and St. Anne's School into one with a good relationship"*  
A Year 4 pupil from Thomas Buxton Junior School

*"I think this residency took place to stop racism between different communities and make one big community by making a relationship".*  
Year Four pupil St. Anne's RC Primary School

*"I have learnt how to make friends and how to not be racist and how to work together and learnt not to be greedy, look after the environment and learn things from each others school".*  
Year Four Pupil Thomas Buxton Junior Primary School

*"I have learnt that if you are racist to someone you would be being racist about your friends as well because they might come from the same community".*  
Year Four pupil St. Anne's RC Primary School

*[I particularly enjoyed] playing with the St. Anne's*  
Year Four Pupil Thomas Buxton Junior Primary School

*"I have learnt not to ignore the relationship we have made with a mixed group of people. Don't take the mickey out of someone's colour because you have a friend that colour".*  
Year Four pupil St. Anne's RC Primary School

*"I have learnt about friendship and how we can work together."*  
Year Four Pupil Thomas Buxton Junior Primary School

## **CONCLUSION**

*I have learnt that when you're given something good ...look after it.*  
Year Four pupil St. Anne's RC Primary School

Within the school community different people see and experience racism and education in different ways. They may also have a different overall perspective as well as a different perception of the definitions of the problems to be solved. The school community needs to have a shared understanding of the nature and role of racism and specifically institutional racism, so that together, they can identify and recognise what should be done in practice.

*The simple messages of the story, which have evolved naturally throughout the process, clearly mark the beginning of a transitional period for the children of both Thomas Buxton and St. Anne's. I hope they continue to nurture and develop the friendships they have made and hold in their memories forever the magical and beautiful oasis they created in their Macaw's Garden.*

*Vishni Velada Billson ~ Producer HMYPT*