

Audience Research – Adults

Chaired by Jack Cunningham; Reporter, Jackie Armstrong

Jack introduced the topic with a summary of learning styles based on age group or generation (see Handout)

Questions and answers are drawn from two sessions, each with 9 participants.

Question: How do you appeal to a particular learning style?

Jack & Group – See that there's something for everyone to do. Offer choices of entry points drawing upon Kolb's learning styles. Visitors may gravitate to one thing but it's important for them to follow through the whole experiential learning cycle to really learn something.

Question: Do people want to read?

Jack & Group – If you make it a social thing – “sneaky learning.” At Pier 21 an older docent engaged a visitor in the story so much so that s/he went back to read more about it. Motivation is a key part of learning. “Museum fatigue” can be overcome by getting people engaged and making personal connections. People remember people.

Question: Why did so many more people visit Black Creek Village in the early years?

Jack & Group – Could be the loss of personal connection to the local past. In early years visitors would bring their grandchildren to show them what their lives had been like. Now that personal link is lost. Black Creek needs to provide and nurture that intergenerational link. Help show how the past can be relevant to the present.

Question: How can we use the information you've shared to develop programming?

Jack & Group – Audiences are never who you think they are. Going broadly allows you to capture more people, different people. You can't define people as simply parents, children, seniors, etc. Need to “target” who you'd like to come but be able to go beyond that in practice.

Look at Art Encounters vs. tea vs. other activities at the McMichael Gallery. Identity of a person plays a role but learning also takes place through connecting with other people.

Question: How can information on adults and generations inform our professional practices as museum and gallery educators?

Jack & Group – Look at exploring tools for *social engagement* rather than just learning. Explore what it means to be part of a professional organization rather than learning on your own.

Jack Cunningham is a writer, performer, arts business coach and adult educator. Jack has over 25 years experience in education and training as well as an arts career as a playwright, producer and performer. He has designed adult training programs for Centennial College and Humber College where he also taught Organizational Management and became a training consultant to business and industry with the College's Business Services division. He has taught at George Brown College in the Adult Instruction Certificate program and designed professional development workshops for the Toronto District School Board. Most recently he has designed and delivered workshops for The Cultural Careers Council of Ontario: The Business of Art – Career Planning for Artists and also Facilitating Adult Learners. Jack has a BA in English Literature from Concordia University, a Diploma in Counselling, Advanced Accreditation from the Canadian Society for Training and Development, and certificates in: Adult Instruction, Instructional Design, Myers-Briggs, Personality Dimensions/True Colors, and Life Skills Coaching.