

Field of Interest: Arts and Culture

Case Study: *Stickboy*



Photo by Tim Mathieson. Animation and artwork by Giant Ant.

Organization: Vancouver Opera

As the second-largest opera company in Canada, Vancouver Opera's mission is to be the destination performing arts organization that entertains, stimulates and enriches British Columbians, driven by programming that redefines and revolutionizes its accessibility and community value.

Problem or issue: Bullying among youth

Bullying among youth is an enduring social issue that affects communities in BC and beyond. Despite numerous intervention programs by schools, governments and community groups over many decades, bullying continues to cause emotional and physical pain for many young people.

Project: *Stickboy*

Vancouver Opera proposed a novel way of highlighting and addressing bullying among youth through a project that departed in many ways from traditional opera programming.

Vancouver Foundation supported Vancouver Opera to commission a 90 minute work of music theatre chronicling one boy's experiences as both a victim and perpetrator of childhood bullying. *Stickboy*, the opera, was directly adapted from the original and autobiographical novel in verse by acclaimed Canadian spoken word artist and anti-bullying advocate Shane Koyczan.

Workshops were delivered by members of the Yulanda M. Faris Young Artists Program at Vancouver Opera. This workshop process informed the adaptation to a fully staged and orchestrated premiere at *Stickboy's* Vancouver Playhouse in fall 2014.

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Vancouver Foundation also supported Vancouver Opera to develop and deliver a substantial educational program that further explores the themes discussed in *Stickboy*. With the guidance of an expert advisory committee, *Stickboy* will leave the stage and tour secondary schools across BC. This will deliver core anti-bullying messages directly to the target audience of young people - nearly 50,000 across the province.

Why this is a social innovation

Vancouver Foundation supported this project because it:

- Deconstructs the typical dichotomy of bully and victim
- Gives young people a unique opportunity to workshop the production and take on principal roles
- Provides an educational program with a completely new and engaging way to involve young people directly in conversations about bullying
- Demonstrates potential for sustainable growth, and is expanding to encompass school tours and other community engagement activities without further support from Vancouver Foundation

Questions for your project

- What problem or issue are you addressing?
- How are you addressing the problem or opportunity in a way that is different to how it's been addressed previously?
- How will your project affect the rest of the social system that the problem or opportunity is located in?
- Will your approach involve groups that may have been previously excluded from participating or benefiting?
- How will your project adapt in the future to become sustainable?