Dear Symposium Participants,

We are so pleased you are joining us for the 7th year of The Symposium, brought to you by the Agenda for Children OST (AFCOST), in partnership this year with Cambridge’s STEAM Initiative. The Symposium is by you and for you. And it is evolving into what some of us are fondly beginning to refer to as “The People’s OST University.”

The Symposium gives all of us the incredible opportunity to come together, to engage in peer-to-peer learning, based upon our real-life experiences and our work. Each presenter is stepping out with courage to share what they’ve learned and are inviting you into a collaborative learning space with them. Let’s make certain we express our appreciation to each one of them, as they are very appreciative that you’re attending their workshops.

This year the AFCOST team sensed that there was a topic surfacing in a more pronounced manner in our work than in the recent past. And in many ways what is present within the Cambridge OST community and work mirrors what’s present in our nation and the world at this time. We have brought that topic front and center this year through the Symposium’s theme, Seeing Possibilities: Racial Justice, Equity and Access. This is the main focus of the work we believe AFCOST is here to do and to support you in doing to achieve quality program outcomes.

This handout contains wisdom and thought-provoking information to support your learning journey through Symposium 2019. The Ways of Being reflect how we at AFCOST work with each other so we’re bringing those agreements into the Symposium to help us all shape a collective culture and container in which we can be together, honoring each other both in our similarities and dissimilarities. Why should we honor each other? We ultimately are all united in our commitment to Cambridge’s youth and families, especially those who are under-represented and lack equitable access to the quality OST experiences we can offer.

In closing, we want to acknowledge our STEAM Initiative colleague, Barb MacEachern, as Symposium was her vision 7 years ago. Barb, we’re deeply grateful to you for dreaming and then making that dream come true!

We look forward to learning together this week. See you around!

Our best,
Susan Richards & Khari Milner
Co-Directors, AFCOST
WAYS OF BEING

Practice Empathy
Accept that others’ beliefs may have been shaped by a different life experience than your life experience, and they might not align with your beliefs. No matter who they are or what position they may hold. Their beliefs don’t have to trigger you unless you allow it.

Bring courageous curiosity to dialogues:
Turn up the volume on your curiosity. Practice deep listening, which requires temporarily suspending judgment and making space to receive new information. Ask questions to deepen understanding.

Make Space, Take Space:
Pay attention to who is speaking. Privilege often shows up by who feels affirmed to speak in each space. Make room for those who need space, and take up space when you need to join the conversation.

Assume best intentions and attend to impact:
We’ve been taught not to assume and yet, it’s important to keep a perspective that everyone is participating in the Symposium to deepen their own learning and understanding. To attend to impact, means to name the harm that may come from our ignorance and to be accountable to one another.

We practice antiracism in our relationships with one another.

Take the Lessons, Leave the Details:
This work is personal, and we invite people to bring their experiences and stories into the Symposium. For confidentiality, share your learning, but leave out names and identifying details.

Take Care of Self and Community:
Take what you need to learn, which includes breaks and nourishment. We also ask that we care for one another. If you see someone in the community that needs support, take notice and offer care. We are responsible for the wellness of one another.

Be Present:
Bring your full attention to each session. We ask that phone calls, text messages and/or emails be done outside of the workshop space. Honor the work of your colleagues through your attention and presence.

HEALING AND ORGANIZING SPACE

The Lounge
We are all longing for safety, belonging, dignity, and purpose. We invite participants to join us in the Washburn Lounge to connect to one another and center healing in our racial justice, equity and access work.

Art as Healing
Daily offerings of art experiences help us explore how creativity is central to healing and building community.

“I think it is healing behavior, to look at something so broken and see the possibility and wholeness in it.”
-adrienne maree brown

Music and Movement
We’ll have a rocking playlist all week to inspire you, along with a special guest performance!
Step outside of your comfort zone (or in it!) and learn how intentional movement can build strength and connection to your body and spirit.