



# Ripple Effect: How Women-in-Games Initiatives Make a Difference

## Panelists:

Stephanie Fisher, York University

Sagan Yee, Hand Eye Society

Rebecca Cohen-Palacios, Pixelles

Zoe Quinn, Crash Override Network

Gemma Thomson, Diversi/LadyCADE/TjejHack



# Refiguring Innovation in Games

refig.ca





# The Difference Engine Initiative

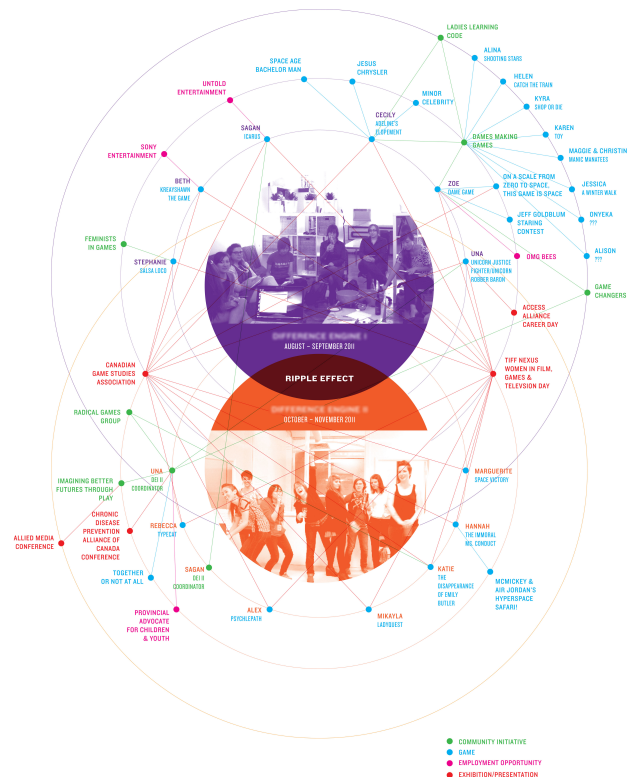
2011



WIG initiatives that provide free support and training for adult-women who want to make games not only gets more women into the industry, but also contributes to creating a diverse and inclusive digital games culture in the long run.

“Initiatives like the DEIs don’t do an adequate job of addressing or actually treating the systemic biases that have made the game industry’s culture less diverse and less healthy....The DEI was designed as a creative space where people could challenge themselves, develop their abilities and learn alongside one another in a warm, encouraging environment...But instead, it was viewed as a support group underscored and necessitated by the reaction to an unequal social world, and where learning was secondary to the formation of bonds and relationships.”

# Less than 6 months after DEI



All too often, the positive outcomes of WIG initiatives like DEI are forgotten, or are overshadowed by an unquenchable thirst to tell and repeat “bad news stories” about women in games.

As participants, organizers, and supporters of diversity initiatives, we stand before you today as the best evidence that WIG programs can have a ripple effect and make a real difference.

# Who are we? What do we run?







# Coming Full Circle

**Sagan Yee**

Executive director  
Hand Eye Society, Toronto



## What is the Hand Eye Society?

- A non-profit arts organization dedicated to supporting videogames made as a form of creative expression, rather than a commercial product
- Based in Toronto, Canada
- Founded in 2009
- Some notable projects: **WordPlay** (annual festival of interactive fiction), **Comics vs Games**, **Fancy Videogame Party** (2014 w. Wild Rumpus), **Artsy Games Incubators** (2006-present)

DEI I (2011)

GAME CURIOUS  
(2013-2015)

HES  
EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR  
(present)

DEI II (2011)

AGI: ANIMATION  
(2014)

ICARUS (2011)

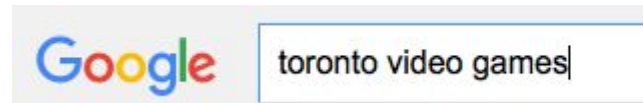
PSXXYBORG  
(2014)

MISC PROJECTS  
(present)

LONG TIME COMING  
(2013)

PUNK PRISM  
POWER (2015)

# Difference Engine I (Aug-Sept 2011)



By introducing new gamemakers from under-represented groups into our community, the Difference Engine Initiative aims to diversify what kind of videogames are made.

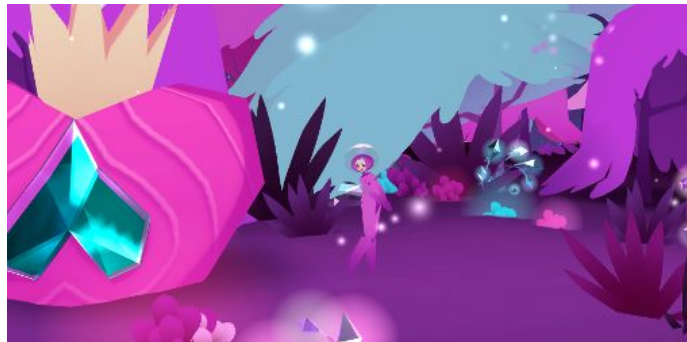
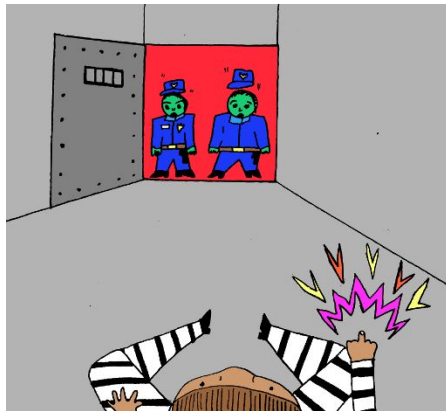
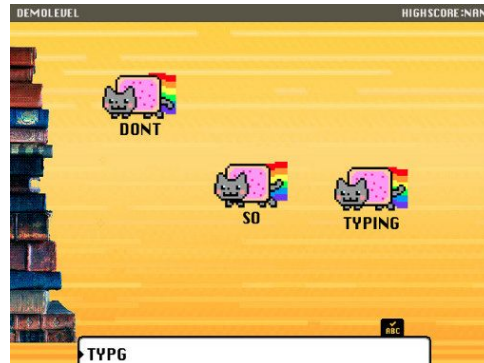


My first game, "Icarus"



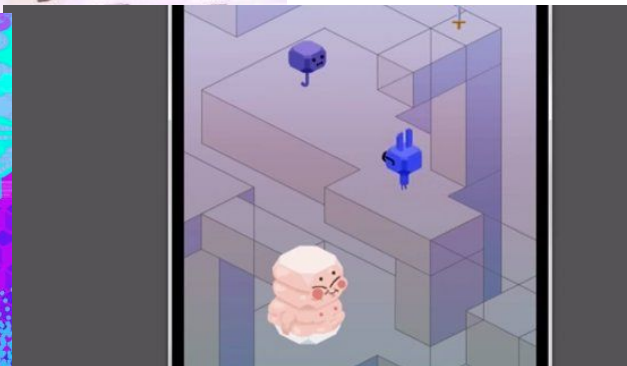
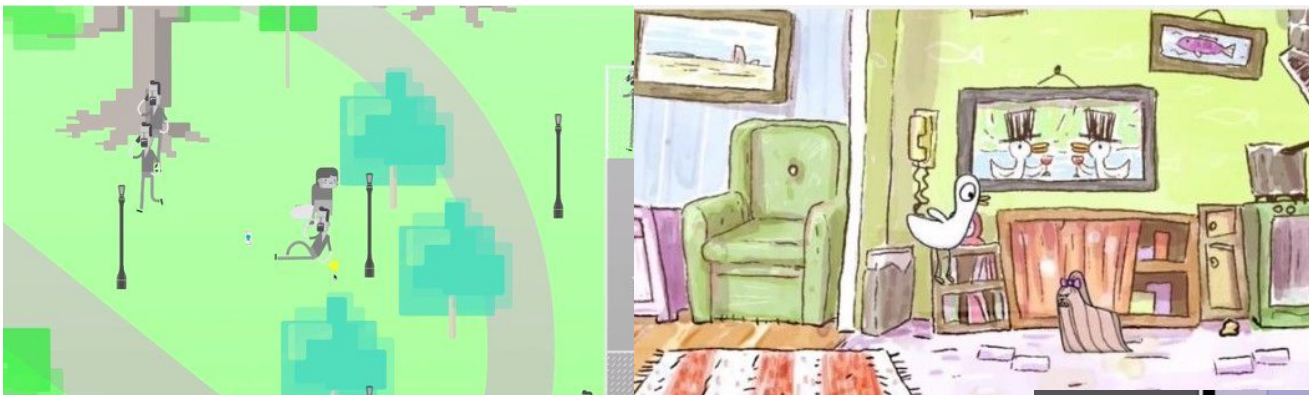


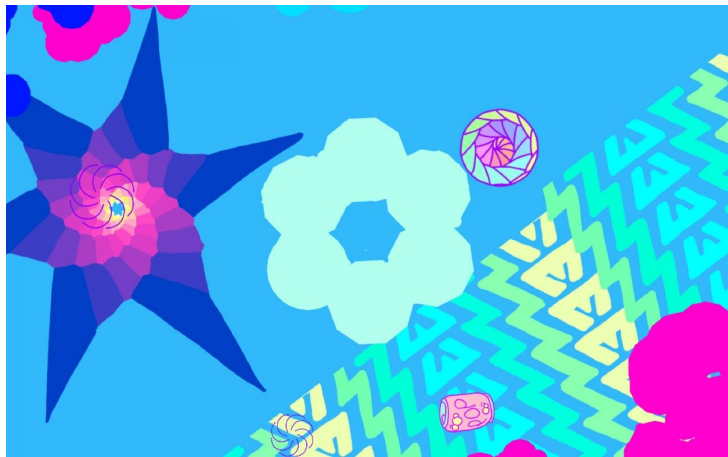
# Difference Engine II (Oct-Nov 2011)



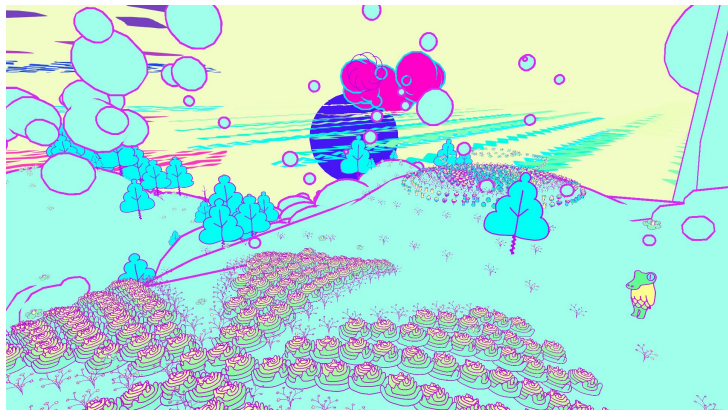


# Artsy Games Incubator: Animation





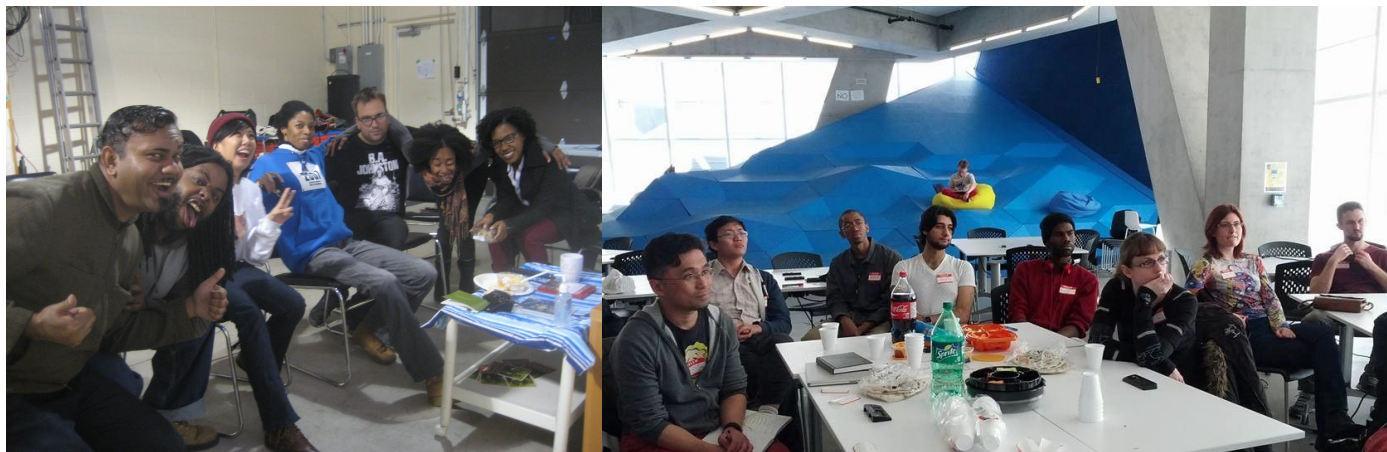
# Paloma Dawkins (Gardenarium)





[www.handeyesociety.com/game-curious](http://www.handeyesociety.com/game-curious)





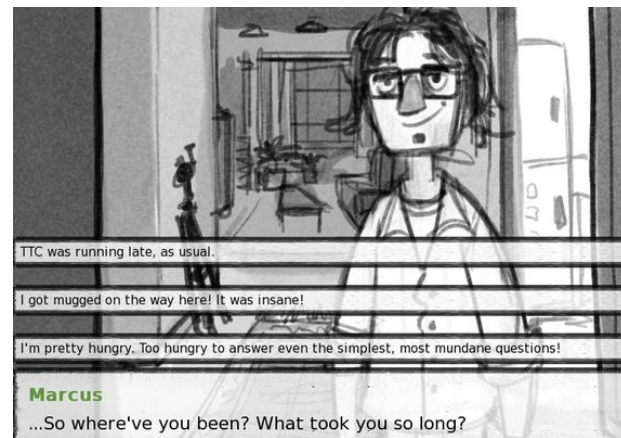
- Game Curious attracted a very diverse pool of participants and volunteers, many of whom continue to be involved with Hand Eye activities years after the first program
- Increase of women, people of colour and non-binary genders in paid positions and leadership roles
- Inclusion of Safer Spaces policy and conversations around anti-oppression frameworks for staff and volunteers

Developing a community toolkit with  
practical programming and strategies for  
starting similar initiatives!

[www.handeyesociety.com/game-curious](http://www.handeyesociety.com/game-curious)







# Support, Succession and Mentorship

- I was not only supported and encouraged to take on greater leadership positions, but given freedom to make programming decisions with little interference or pressure
- Became involved with other organizations (some game-related, some not, i.e. Allied Media Conference) that focused on social justice issues, from which I learned many valuable frameworks of equity and community-building
- My experiences as both a participant and coordinator of a WIG program has greatly influenced how I make organizational/programming decisions as director of a non-WIG organization
- Although DEI no longer exists, I continue to be supported by and draw inspiration from other WIG programs to this day
- I'm still learning!



# Ripple Effect: How Women-in-Game Initiatives Make a Difference

*Rebecca Cohen-Palacios*  
*Pixelles co-founder & director*





THANKS @TAG\_NEWS + @JEKAGAMES!

# Rebecca Cohen-Palacios

(PA-LA-SEE-OS)

 rebheartsyoud

*Pixelles co-founder & director  
UI Developer, Ubisoft (Montréal)*



# PIXELLES

Empowering women to create games through self-discovery, encouragement, community, & accessible learning.



*pixellesmtl // info@pixelles.ca // pixelles.ca*





# 5 YEARS EARLIER



PANORAMICAL and 19 others follow



**superbrothers™** @the1console · 19 Jul 2011

THE **DIFFERENCE ENGINE INITIATIVE** aims to diversify what kind of videogames are made, the goal of this edition is to involve women...



3



1



**superbrothers™** @the1console · 19 Jul 2011

THE **DIFFERENCE ENGINE INITIATIVE** is free. There is an optional info session on Tuesday July 26th. To participate, apply by Sunday July 31st.



1



1



**superbrothers™** @the1console · 19 Jul 2011

THE **DIFFERENCE ENGINE INITIATIVE** "Ada Lovelace"... two DIY videogame incubators for women run by The Hand Eye Society:

[handeyesociety.com/project/the-di...](http://handeyesociety.com/project/the-di...)



6



3





**Reb C-Palacios # GDC**

@rebheartsyou



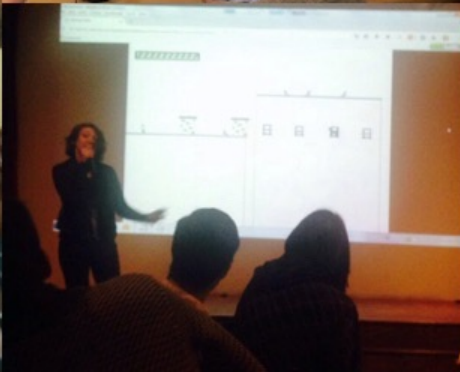
Following

Guess which girl gamer was just accepted into the Difference Engine Initiative — a game creation incubator? Oh yeahhh! (hint: me)

11:15 AM - 3 Aug 2011







**Reb C-Palacios # GDC**

@rebheartsyou

Day 4 at Ubisoft... It's strange to think that all of this started 2 years ago with the Difference Engine Initiative.

RETWEET

1

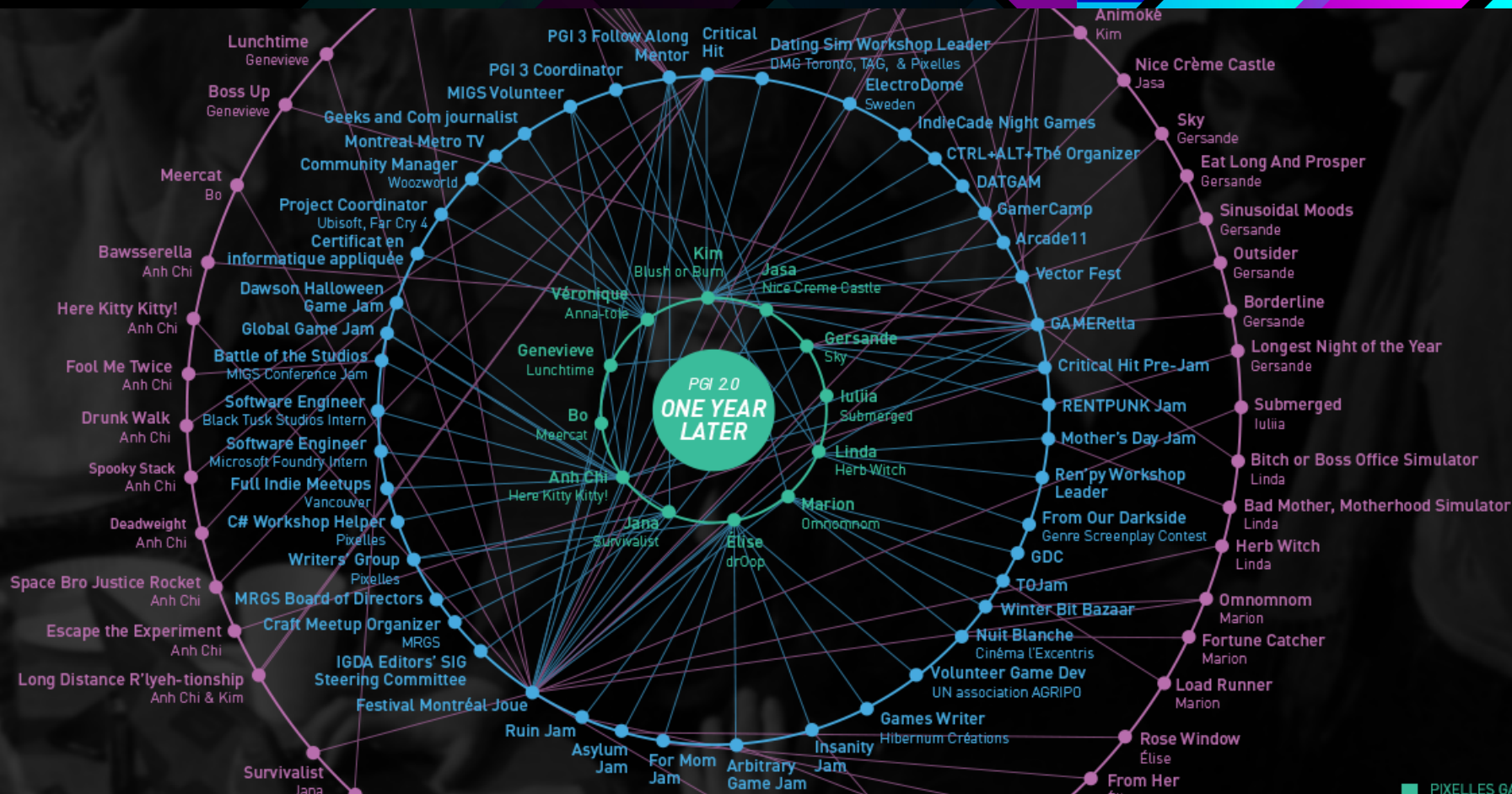
LIKES

6



12:05 PM - 14 Aug 2013







**ACB** @acbui · Mar 4

2014 was life-changing, honestly thanks to the @PixellesMtl incubator. It pushed me to where I am today in games and in my life



3



7



**ACB** @acbui · Oct 18

My confidence in becoming a #WIT came from meeting inspiring #WIT like @rebheartsyoun and @tanyaxshort and being a part of @PixellesMtl



4



4



# ***THANK YOU***

♥ pixellesmtl // [info@pixelles.ca](mailto:info@pixelles.ca) // [pixelles.ca](http://pixelles.ca)

♥ rebheartsyu



# Ripple Effect: How Women-in-Games Initiatives Make a Difference

Zoe Quinn, Crash Override Network





# Ripple Effect: How Women-in-Games Initiatives Make a Difference

**Gemma Thomson**  
Chairperson, Diversi



- Europe's first all-female game jam
- ~30 participants
- Majority of first-time jammers
- 6 games, inspired by Ada Lovelace Day









# LadyCADE<sup>★</sup>

- 7 gatherings in 4 cities, in the UK and Sweden
- Partnered with two European festivals
- ~450 total attendees
- 15 games showcased



# Game Jams



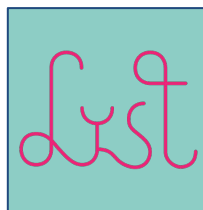
2012



2013



2014



2015

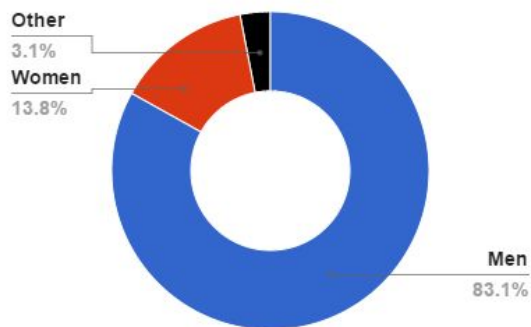
2016



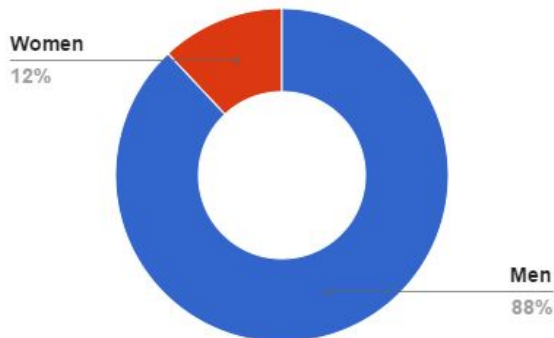
- 5 inclusive game jam events for adults & children so far
- Sweden's largest Global Game Jam site in 2015 & 2016
- ~20-40% female attendees

# Gender Balance at Game Jam Stockholm Events

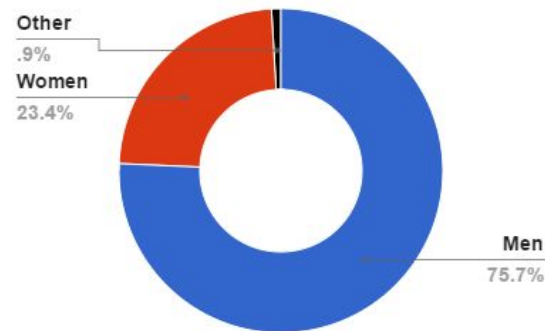
GGJ Stockholm 2015  
(65 participants)



King Game Jam Stockholm  
(50 participants)



GGJ Stockholm 2016  
(107 participants)

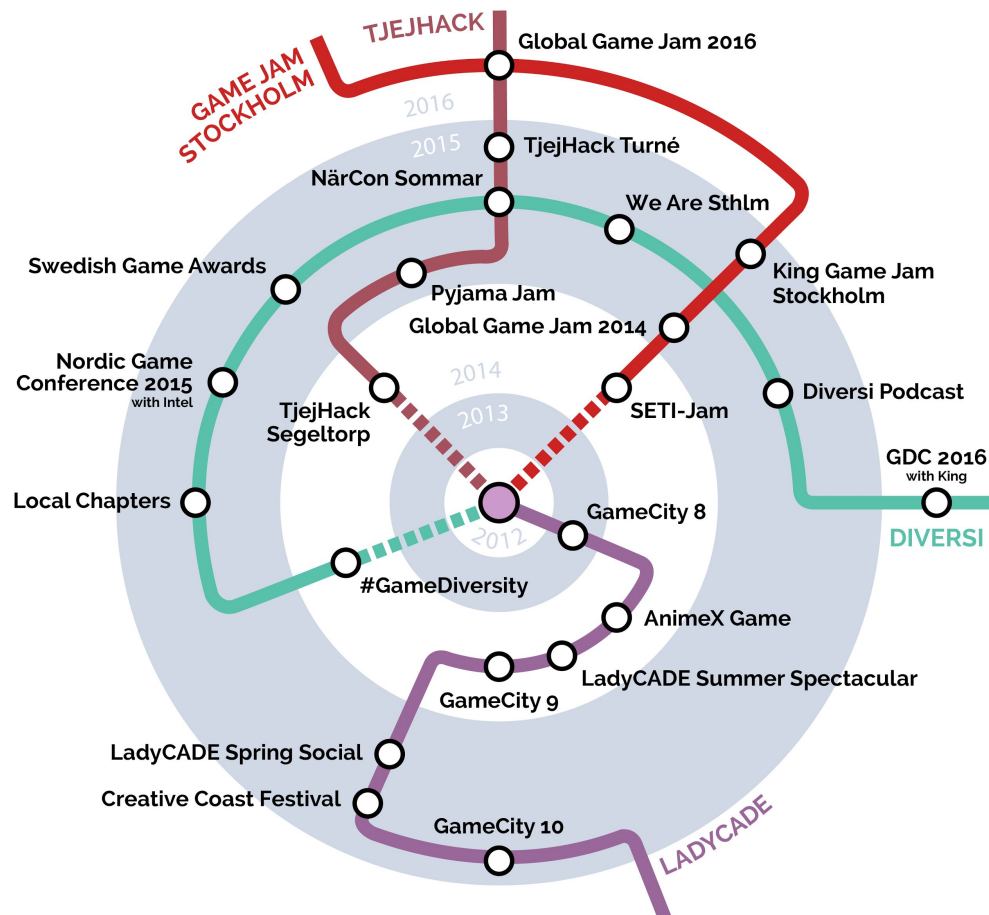




## TjejHack

- 25 members in Stockholm
- ~90 new girls and women from a nationwide tour
- Two women rejoining education in game programming and art
- Collaboration with - and easement into - game jam events





**Stephanie Fisher – York University, REFIG**

Academic & Community Partnerships, Participatory/Action Research, Feminist pedagogy.

[Stephanie\\_Fisher@edu.yorku.ca](mailto:Stephanie_Fisher@edu.yorku.ca), [refig.ca](http://refig.ca)

**Sagan Yee – Hand Eye Society, Dames Making Games Toronto**

Community organization and event programming, 6-week incubator model, game-making workshops, diversity in non-WIG organizations, succession and mentorship, outreach to non-gaming communities

[sagan@handeyesociety.com](mailto:sagan@handeyesociety.com) /@saganyee/[handeyesociety.com](http://handeyesociety.com)

**Rebecca Cohen-Palacios – Pixelles**

Starting a non-profit from the ground up, mentorship programs, working with other community organizations and AAA studios, low budget and effective programs, multilingual community organization.

[@info@pixelles.ca](mailto:info@pixelles.ca) /@rebheartsyou/[pixelles.ca](http://pixelles.ca)

**Zoe Quinn – Crash Override****Gemma Thomson - Diversi/Game Jam Stockholm/LadyCADE/TjejHack**

Indie showcasing/curation, game jams, event organisation, diversity resources, diversity communities, promoting game creation as a hobby, inclusivity in indie spaces. [gemma@raygun-gothic.net](mailto:gemma@raygun-gothic.net) -  
[raygun-gothic.net](http://raygun-gothic.net) @RaygunGoth/[raygun-gothic.net](http://raygun-gothic.net) (UK & Sweden)