

Building Community Through Cultural Expression

Final Report

Collingwood/Renfrew Arts Pow Wow

Building Community through Cultural Expression

Our approach has had rippling effects throughout the neighbourhood. From small beginnings in each of our areas (aboriginal, neighbourhood, community, communications) have come great things. Over the course of the project we have seen increased participation in community life from all types of residents. Community groups continue to approach us to work in partnerships. 10,692 volunteer hours and 6040 participants have been involved in the project since 1998.

We completed the “**Community Spirit**” mural and the “**Faces of the Neighbourhood**” mural celebration, parade and Slocan Park picnic in July 2000. This proved to be a thrilling event with performances by local artists and attended by at least 450 people. Pow Wow members and a new resident, who is a visual and performance artist, coordinated the daylong spectacle. This project spawned “**Mosaic Madness**” in June 2001. At our second annual community event the community participated in making pebble mosaics for a walkway and planting a garden for Slocan Park. A First Nations elder blessed the “**The Guardian Spirit Totem**” site and a First Nations dancing group welcomed the people arriving to the park in two separate parades. Local artists, musicians, health practitioners, and businesses all played an important role in the celebrations. More than 700 people attended.

On June 22, 2002 we held the 3rd Annual “**Slocan Park Fest: Nature and Art**”. Festivities started with the blessing of the Renfrew totem pole by elder Emily Stogen in front of the community centre. We then paraded through the Renfrew Ravine, stopping to admire, sing, and bless the new installations “**The Labyrinth**” and “**The Gateway Garden**”. At the “**Gateway Garden**” we paused to remember local resident Grant McKay, Ravine steward and friend of many. Grant’s family donated the semiprecious stones from his extensive collection to the Ravine committee to embed into the stunning centre piece mosaic in the garden. We then crossed the street to celebrate native plantings in the “**Triangle**” beside the Skytrain station in Slocan Park and break the ground for construction at Slocan Park with golden shovels. Refreshments, entertainment with local artists, Tai Chi master, and musicians continued throughout the afternoon. Children enjoyed the pool, artists presented their wares, and people relaxed in the sun enjoying each others company.

Our group was chosen to participate in a Weather Network clip that highlighted the Millennium Bureau of Canada activities across the country. A film crew from Discovery Channel, which was working on a segment on livable communities, filmed the “**Faces of the Neighbourhood**” celebration. Potentially our project could have been seen by millions of viewers across North America. Videotapes, hand-bound books, brochures, and a website document the Pow Wow activities.

The **Skills Inventory** has been developed and is being accessed and maintained by the Neighbourhood House. The **Artist Presentations** have grown in popularity with healthy regular attendance and no shortage of local artists to book for monthly presentations. The artist gatherings have provided a forum for local artists and have been instrumental in finding artists to help and lead other Pow Wow projects. The “**Festiva**” gathering of artists in December 2001 was a powerful experience for all involved and provided the community with an opportunity to see, purchase items from, and recognize some of our local talent. Local musicians provided

musical interlude and puppeteers created a lively show to entertain both children and adults alike. This event spawned another similar event in the spring 2002 called the “**Arts Groove**”.

The Collingwood Music Club has started a community “**Orchestra**”, provided opportunities to learn and share musical culture, and supported and organized local fundraisers by providing musical entertainment. By partnering with the local Legion # 48, musicians have access to a regular practice venue where they don’t need to worry about noise and have a place to store their equipment. Regular **Monday Night Jams** at the Legion have grown to a total of 80 people, 10 to 15 of which attend regularly.

The **Collingwood News** has recently partnered with Renfrew Community Association and The Joyce Street Community Policing Office to become the much thicker **Renfrew/Collingwood News**. The newspaper has become a well used vehicle by the Arts Pow Wow and other community groups to promote activities and events. Its original distribution of 5000 papers (3000 door to door) has grown to a total of 10,000 copies distributed bi-monthly throughout the neighbourhood. Very soon 7,000 papers will be delivered door to door in the community. Many local business are discovering the advantages of advertising in the paper (regular advertisers have doubled in numbers) and the local Safeway now distributes 2000 copies. The paper now employs two people on a part time basis.

The **Slocan Park Landscape Plan** was submitted to the Parks Board, after a lengthy community consultation process, in the fall of 2001. Since then, construction plans were drawn and negotiations between community groups and the Vancouver Park Board, City engineering, sidewalks and lighting departments, Greenways and TransLink were held. On several occasions we ran into skepticism and negativity from bureaucrats, which later through gentle perseverance, turned into positive support. The Vancouver Park Board allocated \$100,000 in Park Board funds and TransLink committed \$10,0000 to complete the first phase of the park project, “**The Duchess Walkway**”. The City and Greenways also committed funding for wiring, asphalt and a sidewalk. Construction began June 2002 with plant removal, surveying and foundations for the lights being installed. Due to a busy construction industry in Vancouver our contractors bids came in much higher than expected. A contractor was chosen by the Park Board and we spent a heartbreaking summer renegotiating and altering the designs to be able to construct as much as possible with the \$75,000 left in the capital fund. A number of key design elements were lost in the budget crunch. Walkway construction began in September 2002. Weather permitting, the “**Mosaic Islands**” will be finished by October 10, 2002, with the “**Guardian Spirit**” pole placed the following week. There will be a small celebration on November 1, 2002 to turn on the lights and celebrate the installation of the Mosaics. Our **Covered Area** was dropped from the Capital Plan, then reinstated for \$60,000 after some heavy lobbying on the part of the community. The **playground** is also included at \$30,000 in the next Capital Plan. We will submit an application to the City’s Community Public Art program for funding to finish the light covers on the walkway, and other funders for additional playground funds.

“**Duchess Walkway**” workshops in design, pebble mosaic, clay tile making, and stencil patterns have been held in the park and throughout the community. The community has made over 200 mosaics. The local Tai Chi group has become very actively involved, their energy spilling over into Renfrew Ravine clean-up projects. A number of artists have taken on leadership roles and are gaining skills in public and community art making. Youth have become enthusiastic participants in both the Park and Ravine projects. A “**Gateway Garden**” and “**Labyrinth**” for the Renfrew Ravine was created across from the station with the help of the City of Vancouver

Community Art Grant, Matching funds and the Evergreen Foundation. Activities between the Park and Ravine are melding and linking especially through mosaic, event, and revegetation plans. Monthly meetings were held together to plan and create gardens in both places. Stewards for the gardens have emerged from the community, although not many people seem to like to weed. The “**Triangle Nursery Garden**” in the Slocan Park will be used as a nursery to raise plants for further plantings in the park, Ravine, and other areas.

After carving the “**Multicultural Gateway**”, the aboriginal carvers were inspired, through their participation on the **Canoe Club**, by the possibility of carving a 31-foot canoe in a traditional manner, a sacred art known only to a few on the West coast. However, an appropriate log couldn't be found in time so they carved the “**Guardian of the Park**” totem to be placed in Slocan Park. They successfully fundraised a further \$12,000 for that carving. Many people in the neighbourhood visited the site regularly, taking personal interest in the carving's safety and state of progress. The **Canoe Club** purchased two canoes that have been taken on the water by a youth group. Awareness of aboriginal culture in Collingwood has increase exponentially.

The Pow Wow partnered with Evergreen Health Centre to plan, conceive and carry out an exiting community project that spanned three neighbourhoods. The “**Body pArts**” project approached the community to focus on health issues and created three wall hangings (one from each neighbourhood) that expressed the community's health vision. The Health Centre was able to monitor and discover the community's health issues and concerns through the process of creating the poignant artworks. Cecilia was the artist in residence at Nootka School last year (2001). Some Pow Wow members intending to apply for an artist residency at Renfrew Community centre this fall.

Our group, Renfrew Collingwood Arts Pow Wow, worked with two evaluators with different approaches: self-evaluating through the **Medicine Wheel** and participatory evaluation through a community development approach. We combined these approaches and designed an evaluation process meaningful to all participants involved. Issues we addressed were: dealing with growth, effective communication between groups, building confidence in each other, how to effectively tell our story and how to see that we're making a difference. The Pow Wow interviewed the community about its impact and both evaluations have been compiled into a report.

The momentum created by the project in the neighbourhood has touched the lives of many people. In the spring, we worked with a facilitator on identifying priorities and direction for the project. We decided to narrow the scope of our endeavors and focus on some key projects that will maintain the essence of the original and build on the successes we have experienced in our work. During these workshops a desire to focus on individual areas in a smaller way emerged as a general reaction to the overextension of most of the Pow Wow members. Balance between community development issues, the fundamental needs of expression and survival for the artists, and “burn out” were part of the discussion. A place for nurturing the creative energy of the neighbourhood is high on the list of next steps. A desire to develop the community events nurtured by the project is strong. We plan to continue to strengthen cultural exchanges and opportunities in the neighbourhood. The Neighbourhood House has absorbed some of the Pow Wow work into its general programs and administration.

As a direct result of our experiences and networking through this project, many of us have found new opportunities in this neighbourhood, as well as in other areas. New projects are presenting themselves and the neighbourhood's profile for successful community art projects has gained

much recognition and support from the City, Parks, and other groups. Some of the projects have been upheld as models for City involvement in community arts.

The project has built a new resource of artists in the neighbourhood with the ability to use their skills to work as community developers as well as artists. This allows for new creative and alternative ways to strengthen our community. Collingwood Neighbourhood House has also recently introduced a new pilot program in partnership with Langara College called **The Collingwood Leadership Institute**. The Institute is a response to the needs of natural leaders in the community (such as those on the Pow Wow) to gain skills to help their work become more effective. The Institute is providing opportunities for the artists, other natural community leaders, and the community at large to develop their leadership skills and understanding of community development processes within the context of their work in the neighbourhood.

Our community has become culturally alive through sharing culture, workshops, artist presentations and gatherings, festivals, music events, and creative opportunities. We were able, through this project, to share and touch the cultural lives of so many different people in our neighbourhood. We have a greater understanding and view of our neighbourhood's richness through these activities. Our talents are more visible and assessable through the skills inventory, website, and newspaper. As residents we feel we've made a difference, our neighbourhood is now a place we helped create.

Overall Project Accomplishments

Community Development

- Increased participation in community life from all types of residents
- Increased skill and networks of local artists in community development and leadership, arts and culture.
- Increased socializing and communication through the arts
- Created an art and cultural presence in Slocan Park, Ravine, CNH, Health Centre, Legion and local businesses
- Increased safety and health through increased neighbourhood connections and communication

Art Creation

- Community Spirit Mural
- Guardian Spirit Totem Pole
- Multicultural Gateway Carving
- Eagle Spirit Carving
- Canoe Club, storytelling, greetings, songs and painting
- Faces of the Neighbourhood Celebration
- Mosaic Madness Celebration
- Nature and Art Celebration
- Slocan Park Landscape and Art Plans
- Fieldhouse Mural
- Children's Stories and puppet shows written (Duchess)
- Workshops – African Drumming, Mosaics, Artists and Musicians Gatherings, Writing Circle, multimedia, performances, handmade books, collages, painting, printing, puppeteering, woodwork, environmental art, parade banners, stiltwalking, stiltbuilding, costumes, artist working sessions.
- Grenfell School Mural
- Green Up/Clean Up logo
- Body pArts Wall Hanging
- Festiva event
- Arts Groove event Renfrew Ravine Labyrinth and Gateway Garden
- Pebble Mosaics, clay tile stencils, banners and native plant nursery garden for Duchess Walkway
- Duchess walkway Lights, mosaics, and Guardian Spirit Totem raising finish date October. 2002

Documentation

- Discovery Channel
- Weather Network
- Skills Inventory Manual
- Portrait V2K (www.portraitv2k.com)
- Video of multicultural carvings and festivals
- Community Newspaper
- Arts Pow Wow website
- BCTV news
- Arts Pow Wow booklet
- Handmade books on mural creation and Pow Wow activities
- Renfrew Ravine pamphlet
- Building Community Through Cultural Expression: An Evaluation Of The Renfrew Collingwood Arts Pow Wow

Resource Raising

- Partnerships with schools, Parks, Translink, Evergreen, Tai Chi Group, Legion, Girl Guides, Renfrew Community Centre, Green Up/Clean Up, Vancouver Regional Health Board, local businesses, First Lutheran Church and City of Vancouver
- Raised \$241,673 from Government (Federal = \$104,469, Provincial = \$35,120, Municipal = \$102,084)
- Raised \$38,900 from business and corporations
- Raised \$118,395 from Community Foundations

- Facilitated in kind and volunteer contributions within the Collingwood community at an estimated value of \$142,821
- Fundraised and purchased two Canoes and one Tipi

Strengths Built by the Project

- Forged strong relations with coordinators, artists, volunteers, community members and local service providers
- Developed administrative supports particularly planning, budgeting, advertising, computer technology, provision of supplies, access to space and equipment, financial management and access to childcare
- Contributed to personal growth of leaders spiritually, emotionally, physically and intellectually (i.e. community awareness, sense of belonging, overcoming insecurity, connecting and communicating with neighbours, learned and developed professionally, changed ideas)
- Developed plans for Slocan Park art and landscape development through broad based community consultation
- Developed working partnerships with TransLink, Parks, Royal Canadian Legion, schools, Collingwood Neighbourhood House, Renfrew Community Centre, Evergreen Health Centre and numerous community groups.
- Created spaces, places, opportunities, products and processes
- Developed some resource banks (skills, websites, booklet of products, cultural volunteers)
- Engaged people who are consistently involved that can be a basis for steering committee development
- Planned fundraising and some commitment of funds (i.e. artist/musician gathering fundraising, Norquay applications to City Cultural Affairs, neighbourhood matching Art Council, Translink, totaling \$73,200, aboriginal partnerships confirmed with schools and Vancouver Film Studio)
- Identified the following as possible supporters: Concert Properties and other developers, VanCity and other credit unions, Telus, BC Hydro, Board of Trade, Vancouver Film Studios. Also entrepreneurial options such as arts market, market to sales venues, sell services to schools, child development centres.
- Created community support and enthusiasm to continue initiatives
- Mentored other community groups who came to us around community processes.

Evaluation Summary

- Involvement of artists grew steadily over the project. Artist and other volunteers contribution increased steadily in all areas over the course of the project.
- Volunteer hours by artists increased steadily over the project
- Strong relationships were built between coordinators, artists, volunteers, and community members
- Important creative relationships and sharing was built between artists in the neighbourhood
- Volunteers were highly valued, but there was concern for artists volunteering time and the how that affects their ability to make a living
- Community building partnerships were made both in and out of the neighbourhood
- CNH provided much administration, while allowing latitude to coordinators, resulting in people performing above and beyond their duties
- The project allowed artists to grow spiritually and professionally: skills learned, improved and shared,
- Building community, providing creative opportunity, and bringing people together created a strong sense of satisfaction for artists
- A stronger sense of community was created
- Artists embraced the community development approach, awareness and ideas about community art grew
- Aboriginal culture in the neighbourhood was brought forward and awareness and appreciation increased for everyone
- Artists personal confidence and relationship to the community grew
- Participants appreciated the multiculturalism and diversity, family oriented participation opportunities, getting together with neighbours, and celebrating together, making friends and having fun.
- Community members felt events reflected the multiculturalism, were well organized and highly enjoyable.
- People appreciated being brought together in positive ways rather than over problems and the opportunity to promote and understand other cultures
- Activities fostered positive community pride, spirit and heart People supported each others projects better, provided creative community motivation, creative learning opportunities, more beautiful environment, stronger sense of community, and a positive awareness of the neighbourhood by other communities
- Suggestions for improvement for the artists regarding the drain on personal life and being stretched too thin focused on communication, socialization, and creating together more.
- Reduce or eliminate requirements for struggling artists to volunteer time in future proposals.
- Improve capacity to resolve conflicts through conflict resolution workshops, better communication and planning, more socializing and medicine wheel ceremony
- Recognize and strengthen relationships with volunteers by being careful to express gratitude and acknowledge contributions while working, connecting people together, and providing socializing events
- Some administrative changes could be made such as: better communication with other programs, more grants to artists, permanent art meeting space, better organization and leadership skills, more secure funding for coordinators, more meetings...
- Event participants wanted only one improvement- more children's music
- Focus groups suggested a better advertising network, especially in other languages especially Chinese, signs in different languages explaining artworks, more children's art classes and services for birthday parties, and parades to be on time.
- The five main goals set out in the the original proposal were all met or excelled by the activities of the group over the course of the project. Recommendations include: a strategic plan for community arts and cultural development be created , arts meeting and storage space pursued, promotions increased with more info in other languages, revenue generating arts projects be pursued, artist recognition be established, Pow Wow Story written, workshops held with other groups to create events, communication and leadership training be provided, more secure funding be sought for artist grants, coordination, equipment.