The Countdown Public Art Project
Report & Highlights: October 2025–September 2026

A project of ReDefine Arts, supported by the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

Making Change Together

What can happen when people come together to make art, sing, share knowledge, move through the landscape and imagine—and work toward—a world beyond gender-based violence?

Countdown is a community-driven, multidisciplinary public art project produced by ReDefine Arts. It brings people together through creative activities and collective action to end gender-based violence and build safer, more supportive communities. Since 2016, Countdown has grown across Ontario, with 13 large-scale pebble mosaic public artworks and approximately 300 small stepping-stone mosaics in public spaces.

The current three-year phase builds on this ten-year history. It expands opportunities to take part through creative workshops, performances, community gatherings, movement and shared learning across unceded Algonquin territory, including communities in the Madawaska and Bonnechere River watersheds and surrounding areas.

Our first year focused on building connections, making art together, connecting with the land and laying the groundwork for the next two years.

A Year in Numbers

- **22** activities
- **658** recorded attendances
- **11** Countdown Creates workshops
- **2** Countdown Live concerts
- **3** Countdown Moves events
- **6** participatory research sessions
- **85** small pebble mosaics created
- **21** performing artists engaged
- **17** singers from Constellations Community Choir
- **6** new local artist-facilitators engaged
- **17** Countdown Moves volunteers
- **13** partners
- **12** Countdown Stewardship Team Meetings

Where People Came From

Location information was collected through registration forms for Countdown Creates and Moves activities, as well as postcard surveys. Responses show that people took part from communities across the region and from farther afield, with a significant concentration in the Township of Killaloe, Hagarty & Richards.

Reported town, municipality and First Nation locations included:

- **38%** Killaloe / Killaloe, Hagarty & Richards Township
- **7%** Barry's Bay
- **5.5%** Combermere
- **5%** Bonnechere Valley
- **5%** Renfrew
- **5%** Eganville

Killaloe and responses identifying the Township of Killaloe, Hagarty & Richards (KHR) are combined in the 38% figure. Other reported locations, each representing 4% or less, included Bonnechere Algonquin, Hastings Highlands Algonquin, Golden Lake, Pembroke, Deacon, North Algona Wilberforce, Ottawa, London, Madawaska Valley, Toronto, Brudenell, Lyndoch, Raglan, Cobden–Whitewater, Greater Madawaska, L'Isle-aux-Allumettes (Québec), Peterborough, Bancroft, Bracebridge, Carlow (Ireland), Chichester (Québec), Douglas, Horton Township, Laurentian Valley, Maynooth, Petawawa, Quadeville, Rochefort, Rockingham / BLR Township and Vancouver.

These figures and locations reflect home locations as reported by participants.

Making, Singing and Creating Together

During the year, 11 Countdown Creates workshops brought people together through pebble mosaics, printmaking, tie-dye and singing.

Two pebble mosaic workshops resulted in 85 small mosaics. Makers were invited to keep their work or donate it to Countdown. Twenty-six were donated for new Countdown installations (to be installed in 2028), and 59 went home with the people who made them.

Five printmaking and tie-dye workshops produced hundreds of small monoprints and tie-dyed textiles. Four workshops were open to the general public. A fifth was offered specifically for the survivor community, in partnership with the Renfrew County Sexual Assault Centre. The artworks were then brought into the landscape as temporary public art installations for Countdown Moves and the September Countdown Live concert.

Four community singing workshops brought singers together to prepare for a group performance at the September 20 concert in Eganville, where the community choir also performed in collaboration with the Lyra Ensemble.

These activities offered different ways to take part: making, leading, learning, sharing skills and experience, moving, singing and bringing individual creative expression into a shared public experience.

One participant reflected:

> "There is something special about different people doing the same thing together, but in their own way."

Another described the value of creative activities and sharing knowledge:

> "I find that play and the sharing of knowledge can build confidence and empowerment that transfers to other parts of life."

Moving through the Watershed

Countdown Moves invited people to connect with Countdown's purpose and the Bonnechere River watershed through walking, rolling and paddling.

Three activities took place:

- A planned round-trip paddle from Killaloe to Golden Lake was reimagined as a picnic and visit to the Countdown pebble mosaic pathway at Killaloe Pathways Park because of dangerous storm conditions.
- A 15 km Walk & Roll from Killaloe to Pikwàkanagàn First Nation.
- A 16 km Walk & Roll from Pikwàkanagàn First Nation to Eganville.

Both Walk & Roll routes included opening circles with guided stretches, shuttle buses, four joining points along the routes and closing circles. The joining points and shuttle buses offered different ways to take part without requiring everyone to travel the full distance.

A 17-person volunteer team supported Countdown Moves as hosts, greeters, route marshals, set-up and take-down crew, and first aid support. Seven volunteers (41%) were women aged 60 or older.

The September 19 Walk & Roll concluded with a reception hosted by Renfrew County Sexual Assault Centre. EVA – Ending Violence Alliance, Renfrew County, sponsored lunches for all three Countdown Moves events and co-hosted the shuttle bus on September 5 and 19.

Together, these activities invited people to experience the landscape and connect with one another, and with the land that holds the Countdown monuments and the stories, histories and communities of the watershed.

Gathering in Public

Two public gatherings brought the wider project into view.

The June 13 launch at Killaloe Pathways Park began with a pebble mosaic workshop, followed by an acoustic concert featuring Constellations Community Choir, Lyra Ensemble, Andy Trull and the McLean Sisters.

On September 20, Gerald Tracey Park in Eganville hosted a concert marking ten years since the first Countdown pebble mosaic monument was unveiled in 2016. Performers included RAW Taiko, Salt Cellars, Sigrid and Lady Flora, Lyra Ensemble and Constellations Community Choir. The gathering also included a contribution from speaker, survivor and gender-justice activist Anna MacDonald.

The event brought together community workers, advocates, artists, singers, musicians, and community members to celebrate the work and the relationships that continue to sustain Countdown as a gender-justice movement building project.

For one participant, the opportunity to sing together was:

> “A chance to sing and remember in solidarity of the work that still needs doing.”

What Participants Told Us

Postcard surveys offered participants an opportunity to reflect on their experiences. Among the 91 people who completed a survey:

- **84 respondents (92.3%)** reported that their experience positively affected their sense of connection.
- **77 respondents (84.6%)** reported that their experience positively affected their sense of belonging.

These responses offer a glimpse of what creative participation can make possible.

One person wrote:

> “Today brought me back to a spirit of play and childhood that makes me feel safe.”

Another described the connection between art and shared purpose:

“Getting to connect with people and give our intention for peace to the art.”

These are individual reflections. Together, they point to the value of creating welcoming opportunities for people to make, share and take part alongside one another.

Learning from Community Knowledge

Year One also included six sessions with older women to share knowledge, explore ideas and help shape future project resources, particularly an activity kit for individual and group use. This work was developed in partnership with the CRC Seniors Active Living Centre, Barry's Bay & Area Home Support.

The project recognizes older women as people with valuable knowledge and experience to share. What they have contributed is helping shape resources and future opportunities for learning and collective action.

During the year, the project produced a summary of the research findings, a brochure, a video and two drafts of an activity kit.

The first year also created opportunities for artists, facilitators and partners to learn together. Five new local artist-facilitators joined the project, and 15 staff, artists, facilitators and partner representatives took part in trauma-informed facilitation training designed and led by ReDefine Arts. A companion workbook was developed to support this approach, which is invitational, consent-centred and guided by shared community agreements.

A Collaborative Effort

Countdown is made possible through relationships among arts organizations, community organizations, local governments, artists, cultural workers and community members.

Year One partners included the Community Resource Centre (Lead Community Partner) – Watershed and Killaloe Seniors Active Living Centre programs, Ottawa Valley Community Arts (Communications Lead), Renfrew County Sexual Assault Centre, EVA – Ending Violence Alliance Renfrew County, Barry's Bay & Area Home Support, Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn Health Centre, Townships of Killaloe, Hagarty & Richards and Bonnechere Valley, Eganville & District Seniors, Echo Centre, Killaloe Public Library, Killaloe Craft & Community Fair, and local artists, musicians and ensembles.

Partners contributed to project development, outreach, communications, research, event hosting, programming and artistic collaboration. They also shared spaces, knowledge and connections with their communities.

Looking Ahead

The first year established a foundation for the remaining two years of the project.

Our next priorities include continuing Countdown Creates workshops, Countdown Moves and Countdown Live concerts; refining and distributing 250 activity kits; and continuing to strengthen and grow the partnerships that make this work possible.

We will also continue to document and learn from the experiences of participants, artists, facilitators, volunteers, community workers and partners.

Countdown is built through many contributions, large and small. A mosaic made by hand, a song shared in public, a walk through the watershed, a story offered and received—each creates another opportunity to take part in collective action to end gender-based violence and build safer, more supportive communities.

Thank you to everyone who made, moved, sang, shared, supported and gathered with us during this first year.

Countdown is a ReDefine Arts initiative, supported by the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

Learn more: redefinearts.ca/projects/countdown.