



**THE COUNTDOWN  
PUBLIC ART PROJECT**

**EVALUATION REPORT  
2020 - 2023**

# Table of Contents

02

## **Introduction**

02 Executive Summary

06

## **Context**

06 Background

08 Notes About Language

10

## **Current Project Design**

10 Program Adaptation Overview

12 Evaluation Design

16 Accessibility

17 Project Snapshots

18 Artworks & Programming

33

## **Key Impacts & Findings**

34 Connection

36 Dynamic Exchange

38 Inclusive Art-Making

40 Common Hopes

42 Mentorship

43 Social & Political Activism

44 Dialogue & Story Sharing on  
Difficult Experiences

45 Multi-Sensory Knowing

46 Witnessing

47

## **Recommendations**

47 Amplify Countdown

47 Peer Learning

48 Community Arts

48 Partnerships

48 Research

49

## **Distribution of This Report**

50

## **Credits & Acknowledgements**

51

## **Appendices**

51 Selected Evaluation Tools

56 Selected Snapshots



# INTRODUCTION

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Countdown Public Art Project works with communities to create monuments in public spaces to honour those affected by gender-based violence and to imagine, or count down to, a world without gender-based violence.

The project is an Ontario-wide multi-phase arts initiative, produced and devised by ReDefine Arts, in partnership with local community, cultural, and civic organizations. It was launched in 2016 following an invitation from the Women's Sexual Assault Centre of Renfrew County, and since then, over 4,000 people have gathered in large and small groups across Ontario to build 13 pebble mosaics in Pembroke, Eganville, Killaloe, Pikwàkanagàn First Nation, Peterborough-Nogojwanong, North Bay, Carleton Place, Brantford, Almonte, Bancroft, Smiths Falls, and Combermere.

The Grow Phase of The Countdown Public Art Project (fall 2020 to fall 2023) consisted of a 36-month project to engage communities in Lanark County and North Hastings in collaborative art-making to create permanent public artworks that increase the public's engagement with and understanding of gender-based violence, and offer remembrance and hope for those affected by gender-based violence.



*Photo by Maureen MacMillan, RCI Public Art Response, 2022*

***“Setting something powerful in stone solidifies its purpose.”***

*-- Community Contributor, North Hastings (Bancroft, 2023)*

The project brought 1095 days of project development, arts programming, partnership meet-ups, mentorships, resource sharing, focus groups, community forums, presentations, installations, and unveilings including: 68 free multidisciplinary arts workshops and events to 3000 people in 8 communities: Bancroft, Birds Creek, Maynooth, Combermere, Almonte, Smiths Falls, Barry's Bay and Killaloe.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

6 large permanent public artworks were installed and publicly unveiled at community-designed commemorative events in: Bancroft (Millennium Park), Almonte (Almonte Old Town Hall), Combermere (Lookout Park), Barry's Bay (Water Tower Park), Smiths Falls (Smiths Falls Town Hall Square) and Killaloe (Killaloe Pathways Park).

The project grew to include the creation of 120 small pebble mosaic stepping stones made by community members and gifted to Countdown partner organizations - North Hastings Community Integration Association, North Hastings Community Trust, North Hastings Children's Services and Algonquin Inòdewiziwin Child and Family Centre.

Seeking to make community art processes even more accessible during the pandemic and beyond, the project: hosted paid community art mentorships; created a purpose-built Countdown Digital Story website featuring 14 virtual exhibition galleries, 14 new short videos, and 3 Digital Story events; and created and distributed 175 Countdown Activity Books and art supplies and 200 Countdown Public Art Project Colouring Books that include mosaic designs and resources about gender-based violence.

**Countdown also sparked 2 offshoot initiatives in the Ottawa Valley where The Countdown Public Art Project began:**

The first offshoot, The Renfrew County Inquest Public Art Response (2022), brought together multiple organizations during a 2022 Chief Coroner of Ontario's Inquest in the region, to make meaning of and respond, through public art, to the 2015 murders of Anastasia Kuzyk, Nathalie Warmerdam, and Carol Culleton. The Public Art Response featured a mentorship and training program for 11 local residents in community arts engagement and pebble mosaic production, a public unveiling event featuring an 8-foot pebble mosaic commission, and the creation of 150 small community-generated pebble mosaics.

The second off-shoot, The Pathways of Resistance Arts Festival (2023), featured a week of multi-disciplinary art activities and workshops, culminating in a full-day of programs (including Countdown workshops), performances and unveiling of the Pathway of Resistance public artwork. The Pathways of Resistance Arts Festival was inspired by [The Countdown Public Art Project](#), the 2022 [Renfrew County Inquest Public Art Response](#) and the more than 310 mosaic stepping stones made in the community as a response to gender-based violence. Some were kept by participants, and many were donated to the Pathway of Resistance.

**The purpose of this evaluation report is to: present project data; share an overall view of The Countdown Public Art Project experience; understand the impact of Countdown in its Grow Phase (2020-2023); and identify recommendations to strengthen the project. Evaluation for this project led to identifying 9 key impacts:**



# KEY IMPACTS

## 01 Connection



Countdown contributes to an increased sense of community belonging and social cohesion.

## 02 Dynamic Exchange



Countdown leaves a legacy of inclusive art-making, consensus decision making and cross-sectoral arts representation.

## 03 Inclusive Art-Making



Countdown builds a greater appreciation for the arts and community arts.

## 04 Common Hopes



Countdown cultivates an ecosystem of partnerships building shared experiences.

## 05 Mentorship



Countdown offers professional growth and job prospects for artists, arts administrators, and community members through mentorships, networking, and internships.

## 06 Social & Political Activism



Countdown community art activities possess the power to address important issues, resist injustice, and give a voice to marginalized people facing systemic oppression.

## 07 Dialogue & Story Sharing On Difficult Experiences



Countdown fosters conversations on challenging social issues and enhances community experiences and offers a safe space to discuss difficult topics.

## 08 Multi-Sensory Knowing



Countdown artistic activities within community settings provide individuals with access to different types of knowledge.

## 09 Witnessing



Countdown promotes healing by connecting individuals to their cultural and personal histories.



This report ends with five recommendations for the next steps for The Countdown Public Art Project.

## RECOMMENDATIONS



1

### Amplify Countdown

Continue to amplify The Countdown Public Art Project by animating existing public artwork monuments through ongoing events and community arts engagement.



2

### Peer Learning

Provide a range of peer learning, artist mentorships and training opportunities.



3

### Community Arts

Continue to foster inclusion in community arts initiatives.



4

### Partnerships

Expand upon partnerships and collaborative platforms.



5

### Research

Conduct research and training in trauma-informed evaluation for community arts practitioners.





# CONTEXT

*"We are part of a collective, we are part of something that is larger."*

*-- Community Partner (Bancroft, 2021)*

## BACKGROUND

The relationship between the Women's Sexual Assault Centre of Renfrew County (WSAC) and ReDefine Arts (then Red Dress Productions) was forged in 2006 during the Acting Out Against Violence (AOAV) project, a partnership between ReDefine Arts, the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre and the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centre. AOAV was a multi-phase Ontario-wide community arts initiative that toured to 12 Ontario towns and cities and featured performances, community art workshops and forums. AOAV, and the relationships rooted in cross-sector gender-justice advocacy and activism that stemmed from it, was the precursor of The Countdown Public Art Project.

When WSAC reached out to ReDefine Arts in 2016 with an invitation to create a permanent public artwork to honour those impacted by gender-based violence, the initial goal was to create the conditions for individuals and communities to gain and share insight into the systemic roots of gender-based violence through community-engaged arts. This led to hands-on community arts workshops with community members, community and civic partners, and a team of artists in Pembroke, Eganville, Pikwàkanagàn First Nation, and Killaloe. Ottawa Valley Community Arts (OV-CAOS) anchored partnership building and outreach. Four linked monuments were built with 250 community members and unveiled at four consecutive events attended by 400 people on October 15, 2016 in Pembroke, Eganville, Pikwàkanagàn First Nation, and Killaloe, on unceded Algonquin Territory, in the Ottawa Valley.

The legacy phase of The Countdown Public Art Project in 2018-2019, in North Bay, Brantford, Peterborough-Nogojiwanong, and Carleton Place, Ontario, engaged another 1200 community members in the creation and commemoration of 4 public artwork monuments.



*Photo by Katie Yealland, Millennium Park Unveiling (Shawashkong Ikwe Singers) 2021*

*"Building those relationships with the other community organizations — I think that's one of the biggest takeaways from the Countdown project... that's what brings us all together. One of the things William Commanda said is 'we are all connected' and this, these connections, every connection you make, can only make you stronger as you go forward."*

*-- Noreen Tinney, Omamawinini Anishinabe Ikwe, Kijicho Manito Madaouskarini Algonquin First Nation and Shawashkong Ikwe Singers (Bancroft, 2021)*

## BACKGROUND

From 2016 - 2019, a total of 347 people were surveyed. The team gathered in 2019 to review the evaluation data to date and to reflect on and discuss project themes, strengths, challenges, and recommendations.

### Four themes emerged:

- Art as a tool to support mental health;
- Artistic expression as a catalyst for community-building;
- The importance of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives;
- The strength of communities and cross-sector partnerships;

### Two main challenges were identified:

- Site preparation delays overburdened the installation team and added additional communications work and expense;
- Continuing to meet the demand of community members and audiences, who wanted more/ongoing workshops.

### Two key project elements were identified that supported the project's success:

- Diverse facilitation team including artists, Indigenous knowledge holders, and gender justice advocates;
- Communities assume the role of stewards of the public art monuments without prompting.

### Ideas to maintain or add to future projects included:

- Connecting and sharing resources within and across regions;
- Expanding online;
- Expanding to include more artists, time, administrative support and access resources and supports;
- Maintaining access to free creative experiences for community members;
- Amplifying project impact data.

*“My deep hope is that survivors can visit the mosaic site and really connect with the spirit and intention of the many people coming together to create this piece and who are working towards ending gender-based violence.”*

*-- Erin Lee, Executive Director, Lanark County Interval House and Community Support (Smiths Falls, 2022)*



Photo by Shmoofypooof Creative, Almonte Unveiling 2021



# CONTEXT

## NOTES ABOUT LANGUAGE

### Gender-Based Violence

When the project began in 2016, it was described as “the countdown to end sexual violence.” During the project’s Legacy Phase (2018-2019), we alternated between using the language “sexual violence” and “gender-based violence.” During the project’s Grow Phase from 2020-2023, which is the focus of this report, we solely used the term “gender-based violence.”

We found there was a need to provide plain language resources that defined gender-based violence and engaged communities in discussion about the systemic underpinnings of gender-based violence, as part of our community-engaged art process. While the term “gender-based violence” is challenging to define and understand because of its scope and complexity, our use of the term is meant to build shared understandings, equity and inclusion by addressing cultural biases and misconceptions that make less visible those at the greatest risk of gender-based violence.

This is the language used in our publications and in community-engaged workshops, presentations, and commemorative public unveiling events.



Photo by Katie Yealland, Smiths Falls 2023

Gender-based violence is violence committed against someone because of their gender identity, gender expression, or perceived gender.

Patriarchy is the root cause of gender-based violence.

Women and girls are at greater risk of gender-based violence, particularly women with disabilities, Indigenous women, rural women, and women of colour. Men and boys are also impacted by gender-based violence.

Some people are more at risk of experiencing gender-based violence because of other forms of discrimination, including racism, colonialism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, and poverty.

Gender-based violence has a disproportionate impact on LGBTQ2S (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and two-spirit) and non-binary peoples.

Gender-based violence can take many forms including cyber, physical, sexual, societal, psychological, and economic. Discrimination and harassment can also be forms of gender-based violence.

# NOTES ABOUT LANGUAGE

## Community-Engaged Art

The term “community-engaged art” is used throughout this report. Community-engaged art, as a term and practice, can be unclear and difficult to define, even amongst practitioners, because of broad understandings of what falls within it.

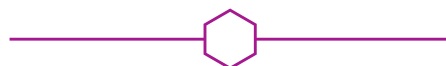
Community-engaged art is practiced by professional artists working alongside people who do not self-identify as artists to co-create professional artistic products or outcomes. It’s a uniquely relational form of art making. The value of community-engaged arts lies as much in the process of creating the art as in the final artistic product. The entire artistic process, from visioning to creation and presentation, is informed both by the artist(s) and the community participants.

*“Art as a community-based, collectively driven activity is probably as old as art-making itself, and indeed, as the very catalyzing of ‘community’ as such. In recent years, a variety of terms have been used, each with its own nuanced goals and practices. These include: socially engaged art, community arts, community cultural development, social arts, and participatory arts. In addition, the practices of arts education, creative arts therapies, popular education and creative leadership processes are closely related. While a series of networks of those who practice community-based art have now been established and a body of literature addressing shared concerns is currently being amassed, the boundaries of this community of practice and research, is necessarily porous.” (Spiegel, 2018)*

Countdown is a community-engaged art project - an aesthetic and discursive intervention - rooted in co-creation between professional artists and community participants working together to address gender-based violence.

*“We, the people we support, don't get invited to the table very often for opportunities like this. And this is something that they can be very proud of and visit and feel like they participated in and gave ideas to. So it's very special. Often we make art on our own, we paint a canvas -- so any opportunity to experience collaborative art making and working together in a group, which translates to just learning how we work together better, is awesome.”*

*-- Marlena Zuber, Community Participation & Planning, North Hastings Community Integration Association (Combermere, 2022)*



*“My personal learning experience was how art can be a collaborative endeavor, and it should be. The message is so profound when it comes from a collaboration.”*

*-- Alexander Walder, Councillor, Municipality of Hastings Highlands (Combermere, 2022)*



# CURRENT PROJECT DESIGN

## PROGRAM ADAPTATION OVERVIEW

In July 2020, ReDefine Arts received a three-year Grow Grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF), under the Inspired People action area to support more people to connect with culture, heritage, and the arts in the Quinte, Rideau, Kingston region of Ontario, which is catchment area 5 within the OTF's funding strategy.

The grant result guiding this project is for people to be engaged in community-engaged arts creation. Through arts workshops, collaborative design, public artwork creation, digital story creation and presentation, arts mentorships, and commemorative unveiling events, the project worked to support project participants to build on and deepen their connection to the arts through engagement in community arts.

The project plan included building six public artwork monuments in six different communities across the Quinte/Rideau/Kingston regions. The approach to achieving these plans changed in response to the pandemic which restricted gathering in groups and limited access to community spaces. This called for project adaptation and new ways of connecting including engaging communities online, outdoors, and through activity kits:

### 2020/2021

Development and dissemination of an Activity Book; hiring two Community Art Ambassadors to support dissemination and collection of Activity Books and other aspects of the project; presentations and community arts workshops online; outdoors in-person physically distanced pebble mosaic building workshops; outdoors in-person unveiling events and online Digital Story event.

### 2021/2022

Presentations and community arts workshops online; outdoors in-person pebble mosaic building workshops; development and distribution of Countdown Coloring Books; outdoors in-person unveiling events and online Digital Story event.

### 2022/2023

Presentations and community arts workshops online and outdoors in-person pebble mosaic building workshops; distribution of Countdown Colouring Books (2nd edition); hiring two Community Art Interns; outdoors in-person unveiling events and in-person Digital Story event.

Many of the adaptations, such as facilitating workshops outdoors, were maintained throughout our project because they increased access to more community members. PPE and hand sanitizer was provided throughout.

# PROGRAM ADAPTATION OVERVIEW

The Countdown Public Art Project successfully brought 1095 days of project development, arts programming, partnership meet-ups, mentorships, resource sharing, focus groups, community forums, presentations, installations, and art unveilings to North Hastings, Lanark County and the Ottawa Valley. The project created 6 permanent public artwork monuments (including 2 offshoots) with 13 community partners, 5 arts and culture partners, and 7 civic partners.

*“Very important work is happening here. Essential community growth and change. Change happens at the speed of relationship.”*

*-- Community Contributor, Madawaska Valley (Barry's Bay, 2022)*

## Community Partners

1. Algonquin Inòdewiziwin Child and Family Centre
2. Almonte & District Horticultural Society
3. Community Resource Centre, Killaloe (Co-producer, 2023)
4. EVA-Renfrew County (Lead Partner, 2022)
5. Hastings Highlands Public Library
6. Lanark County Interval House & Community Support (Lead Partner, 2020-2023)
7. Maggie's Resource Centre of North Hastings (Lead Partner, 2020-2023)
8. North Hastings Children's Services and the Youth Advisory Board
9. North Hastings Community Integration Association
10. North Hastings Community Trust
11. Survivor Advocacy & Support Initiative [now known as Watershed] (Co-producer, 2023)
12. The Sexual Assault & Domestic Violence Advisory Committee - Lanark County
13. Women's Sexual Assault Centre of Renfrew County (Lead Partner, 2022)

## Arts & Culture Partners

1. Algonquin Arts Council
2. Arts4All
3. Jumblies Theatre
4. Community Corridor of Inclusion and Resilience Project
5. Ottawa Valley Community Arts (Co-producer, 2022 & 2023)

## Civic Partners

1. Kijicho Manito Madaouskarini Algonquin First Nation
2. Municipality of Hastings Highlands
3. Town of Bancroft
4. Town of Mississippi Mills
5. Town of Smiths Falls
6. Township of Killaloe, Hagarty, and Richards (Co-producer, 2023)
7. Township of Madawaska Valley



Photo by Anna Camilleri, Millennium Park 2021

# EVALUATION DESIGN

This evaluation report spans the Grow Phase of the Countdown work from November 2020 to October 2023 in Lanark County, North Hastings, and Renfrew County, Ontario.

Using a mixed participatory methods approach, we gathered video, audio, photos, anecdotes, and other qualitative information. We tailored tools to different groups in order to gather information most effectively, including: feedback loops; an online survey and hand-written postcards survey; needs assessment meetings with partners and partner interviews; team debriefs; focus groups with community members and partners (project contributors); focus groups with artists; participatory and arts-based evaluation activities; ongoing informal discussion, feedback, and adaptation of process; and project statistics captured throughout including the number of workshops participants and attendees at events.

We gathered feedback from a cross-section of stakeholders including workshop participants, public unveiling event audience, community, Indigenous and civic partners, artists, community art ambassadors and community arts interns.

## **SURVEY: Expectations and Hopes (2020-2021)**

The information gathered provides insights into who registered, their expectations for the project, and what they hoped for as a result of being part of The Countdown Public Art Project. Respondents provided a wide variety of information that touched on personal changes and addressed their own needs. They also expressed their desire to help support others and described what kind of support is needed at the provincial level.

Evaluation Questions:

- Why did you register to be part of this project?
- What do you hope for?
- What do you hope your community will do?
- What do you hope the province will do?

Registrant Statistics:

- 50% of registrants were between the ages of 42 and 64
- 91% of registrants identified as female
- 33% of registrants identified as Indigenous
- 25% of registrants identified as disabled/living with a disability

*"I hope my community will respond positively to the monument, feel solace and peace by the monument, and carry the energy of the monument and all of the intentions behind it in their hearts daily."*

*-- Community Contributor, North Hastings (Bancroft, 2021)*



## EVALUATION DESIGN

While we continued to ask project participants about hopes (for self, community and the province), we did not continue to collect demographic data (about people's gender, race, age, etc.) in order to foster low barrier access to Countdown workshops and events.

Working primarily in rural communities with local partners who best know the populations they serve, anonymity was indicated as an important element for local participants impacted by gender-based violence. In these areas where resources are more scarce and support is harder to safely come by, due in large part to geographical distance, transportation barriers, and "broken telephone," the stakes are higher for survivors trying to access various forms of support, whether that be from local agencies or from community initiatives like The Countdown Public Art Project.

Even with clear guidelines, outlining voluntary and anonymous survey participation, it's important to acknowledge that some survivors of gender-based violence experience harm within systems designed to provide support. This is also true for disability-identified, racialized, and LGBTQ2S people. With external data pointing to disproportionately high levels of gender-based violence affecting these populations, Countdown opted to prioritize participant comfort and enact a community responsive project model that is primarily activated through non-formal, non-quantitative methods of evaluation.

*"I hope that my generation of women will not pass down the silence, guilt and shame."*

*-- Community Contributor, North Hastings (Bancroft, 2021)*



*Photo by Cheryl Kauffeldt, Pathway of Resistance 2023*





*"I hope to let go of what I can let go of. I hope, as a survivor and as a community member, to open conversations with women, girls, trans and non-binary youth and adults, and with boys and men about what we can do as a community to end gender-based violence."*

*- Community Contributor, Madawaska Valley  
(Barry's Bay, 2022)*

*"I hope to see an end to all forms of violence. I hope to leave a better land for our grandchildren. I hope for more understanding, more conversation. I hope for a new government, I hope for systemic change, justice and healing. I hope for a sense of belonging."*

*- Community Contributor, Lanark County  
(Smiths Falls, 2022)*



*"I hope, and it's a big hope, that both personally and for my community, and for the province and the world really, that we are, in fact, counting down to a world without gender-based violence, domestic violence, and any kind of violence."*

*- Community Contributor, Hastings Highlands  
(Combermere, 2022)*



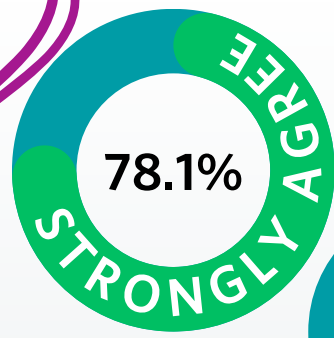
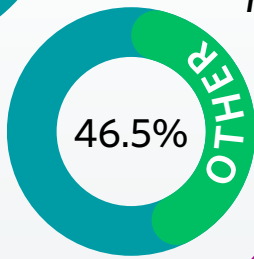
# POSTCARDS: DATA FINDINGS

## Countdown and Renfrew County Inquest Public Art Response

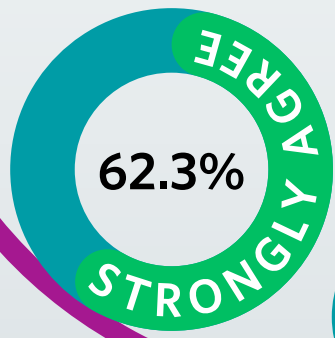
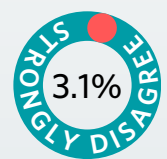
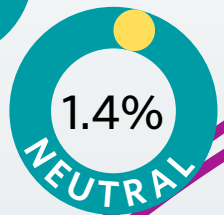
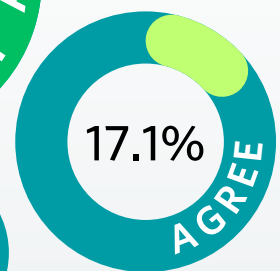
Total survey responses:



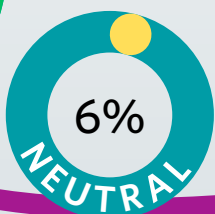
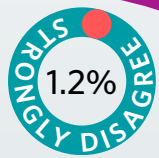
How did you find out about the Countdown/RCI Project?



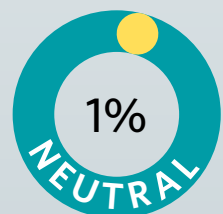
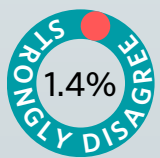
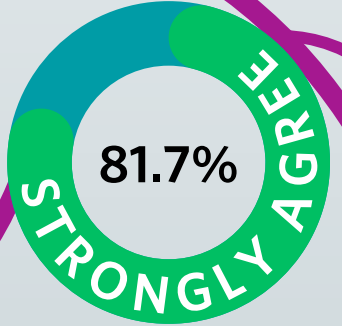
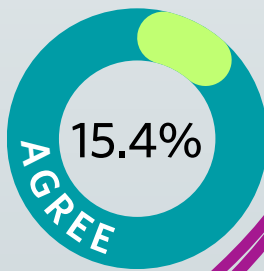
A project like this creates a strong sense of community.



Gender-based violence is a problem in our community.



Monuments in public places are a good way to honour and remember those affected by gender-based violence.





# CURRENT PROJECT DESIGN

## ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility resources enabled greater community engagement in workshops, events and evaluation activities, particularly amongst contributors who are disability-identified, chronically ill, or low income.

Access planning was integrated into all partnership and project planning meetings. Access needs were creatively and cooperatively met in a variety of ways:

- Transportation (coach rentals, community buses, door-to-door rides, gas cards, ride-share efforts) was provided by ReDefine Arts, Community Resource Centre/Watershed and North Hastings Community Integration Association
- Childcare was provided by Community Resource Centre/Watershed
- Support workers were provided by all community partners; notably, North Hastings Community Integration Association provided wrap-around supports for participants with developmental disabilities, including one-to-one support workers
- Cultural: Elders and Knowledge Keepers Noreen Tinney and Ada Tinney (Omamawinini Anishinabe Ikwe, Kijicho Manito Madaouskarini Algonquin First Nation) and Roberta Della-Picca (Bonnechere Algonquin) shared Indigenous ceremony, teachings and medicines
- Digital: Zoom tutorials and support with online events was provided by ReDefine Arts
- COVID: PPE and outdoor event equipment that supported physical distancing was provided by ReDefine Arts and Ottawa Valley Community Arts



Photo by Katie Yealland, Millennium Park Unveiling 2021

*“People with disabilities experience a higher rate of gender-based violence, especially women with disabilities. One of our missions is bringing awareness to issues that surround people with disabilities. So [partnering with Countdown] makes a lot of sense – to be a part of a project that addresses gender-based violence in such an amazing way. I think another reason is just community engagement and civic engagement because this is ... a permanent art piece in our community that we can visit, that we can say we've been a part of. The people we support don't get invited to be part of discussions and creating and any civic engagement, really. Not very often, at least. It's such a great opportunity.”*

-- Marlena Zuber, Community Participation & Planning, North Hastings Community Integration Association (Combermere, 2022)

# PROJECT SNAPSHOTS



**6**  
LARGE PEBBLE  
MOSAIC  
MONUMENTS



**310**  
SMALL STEPPING  
STONE MOSAICS



**14**  
NEW SHORT  
VIDEOS



**56**  
WORKSHOPS



**95**  
PARTNERSHIP  
MEETINGS



**469**  
PARTICIPANT  
SURVEYS  
COMPLETED



**3**  
DIGITAL STORY  
EVENTS



**50**  
FIRESIDE CHATS



**58**  
MEDIA COVERAGE  
EVENTS



**215**  
PEOPLE HIRED



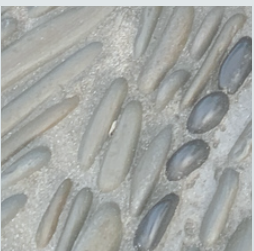
**3**  
STEPPING STONE  
INSTALLATION  
SITES



**12**  
FORUMS



**175**  
ACTIVITY KITS  
DISTRIBUTED



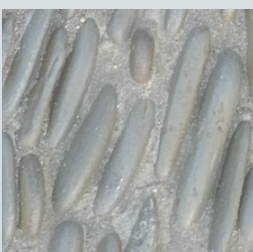
**16**  
COMMUNITY ARTS  
MENTORSHIPS



**14**  
VIRTUAL  
EXHIBITION  
GALLERIES



**3**  
FOCUS GROUPS



**200**  
COUNTDOWN  
COLOURING  
BOOKS  
DISTRIBUTED





# CURRENT PROJECT DESIGN

## ARTWORKS & PROGRAMMING

### WORKSHOPS

These workshops enabled participants to build connections and find their inspiration through the exploration of materials, artistic approaches, and collaboration in the creation of pebble mosaic public artwork monuments and the Countdown Digital Story.

#### Online Workshops

##### Hands Across the Shield

Hundreds of people have gathered in large and small groups across Ontario to build pebble mosaic monuments to end gender-based violence. In this series of workshops, postcards made by past participants welcoming new participants joining the countdown to end gender-based violence were shared. Participants were introduced to materials and mixed media technique to make postcards to welcome present and future Countdown contributors.

##### Grounding Stone

Stones are all around us, supporting us. As part of The Countdown Public Art Project stones also symbolize the strength of communities working for change. In this series of workshops, participants shared stories about stones located where they live, stones they carry, and, through collaborative story rounds, participants imagined the pebble mosaic and who and what it will support.

##### When I Say Take Care I Mean

Words can heal or harm. In this series of workshops, participants explored expressions of care and consent by writing lists and “word strings” in response to suggested prompts. Participants were guided through a creative process of selecting, mixing, and combining words to create short poems.

##### Connecting Words

Words can reflect our experience, connect us to one another, and harness community intention. In this workshop, participants used writing prompts rooted in interdependence to create short poems and vignettes.

##### Visioning Jam

As a community responsive project, collaborative visioning with participants is an integral part of Countdown. In Visioning Jams, project participants were invited to contribute hopes and ideas to help shape the itinerary and design of the unveiling events for completed pebble mosaic monuments.



# ARTWORKS & PROGRAMMING

*“Art making together with an awareness or intention to acknowledge hard issues helps pain move. In making the mosaics, we put pieces together to make a whole. A metaphor somewhat, but also an actual building with pieces that can represent our healing and rebuilding, in a supportive community context.”*

*-- Community Contributor, Madawaska Valley (Barry's Bay, 2022)*



*Photo by Maureen MacMillan, RCI Public Art Response 2022*

**FEATURED VIDEO: [Vimeo.com/ReDefineArtsTO/SettingSeeds](https://vimeo.com/ReDefineArtsTO/SettingSeeds)**

## **In Person Workshops**

### **Graphic Symbols**

Graphic symbols are everywhere from turtle crossing road signs to wheelchair symbols in accessible spaces. In this series of workshops, participants explored pebble mosaic design ideas through drawing, tracing and layering.

### **Make An Impression**

In this series of monoprinting workshops, participants explored pebble mosaic design ideas by combining drawing, painting, and paper collage.

### **Collaborative Design**

In this series of workshops, lead artist Anna Camilleri presented multiple original design drafts inspired by the intentions and creative ideas generated by community members through the Countdown workshop series. We collaborated by experimenting (cutting, pasting, and combining these designs). Through consensus, we decided upon key elements for the final pebble mosaic designs.

### **Pebble Mosaic Building**

Participants gathered under tents in park settings to build pebble mosaics in the pre-cast method. Large pebble mosaic public artworks were built collaboratively around tables and participants also created small pebble mosaic stepping stones.

# ARTWORKS & PROGRAMMING

## EVENTS

### Commemorative Public Art Unveiling Events

#### Millennium Park Pebble Mosaic Unveiling, Bancroft, Ontario September 24, 2021

ReDefine Arts collaborated with Maggie's Resource Centre of North Hastings, the Town of Bancroft, local organizations and community members to create and unveil a unique, six-foot diameter, pebble mosaic monument located in Millennium Park, Bancroft. Artists included the Shawashkong Ikwe Singers.

*"It's such an inclusive thing and it brings so many different people in from different walks of life. Just seeing everyone who was there at the unveiling, I would have never been in the room with a lot of those people if that wasn't happening. That's something I really appreciate and something that we strive to do here as well is connect folks who wouldn't normally be connected together so that we can learn from each other, learn to care about each other and have that humanity."*

*Victoria Burke, Harm Reduction Outreach Coordinator, North Hastings Community Trust (Combermere, 2022)*



*Photo by Katie Yealland, Millennium Park 2021*

#### Almonte Pebble Mosaic Unveiling, Almonte, Ontario September 30, 2021

ReDefine Arts collaborated with Lanark County Interval House and Community Support, the Town of Mississippi Mills and community members to create and unveil a unique, six-foot diameter, pebble mosaic monument located in the gardens of Almonte Old Town Hall, Almonte. Artists included: Danielle Gregoire, Beth Shilling, and Nicole Forsythe.



## ARTWORKS & PROGRAMMING

*“Being at Emond Hall, hearing the beating of the drums echoed the beating of the heart of the community. It brought us closer together.”*

*-- Alexander Walder, Councillor, Municipality of Hastings Highlands (Combermere, 2022)*

### Lookout Park Pebble Mosaic Unveiling, Maynooth, Ontario

September 9, 2022

ReDefine Arts collaborated with Maggie’s Resource Centre of North Hastings, the Municipality of Hastings Highlands, local organizations and community members to create and unveil a unique, six-foot diameter, pebble mosaic monument located in Lookout Park, Combermere. Due to ongoing construction and landscaping in the area surrounding the mosaic, this unveiling took place remotely in Emond Hall, Maynooth. Artists included the Shawashkong Ikwe Singers.



Photo by Wayne Elliott, Lookout Park 2022

### Water Tower Park Pebble Mosaic Unveiling, Barry’s Bay, Ontario

September 22, 2022

As part of the Renfrew County Inquest Public Art Response, ReDefine Arts collaborated with multiple organizational partners, the Township of Madawaska Valley and community members to engage in a collaborative design process for the public unveiling of a unique, eight-foot diameter pebble mosaic located in Water Tower Park, Barry’s Bay. The event was followed by a reception at Opeongo Seniors Centre and Barry’s Bay inaugural Take Back the Night march. Performing artists included After The Revolution and RAW Taiko Drummers.



Photo by Maureen MacMillan, Take Back The Night - Barry’s Bay 2022



## ARTWORKS & PROGRAMMING

### Maggie's Pebble Mosaic Unveiling, Bancroft, Ontario July 20, 2023

ReDefine Arts collaborated with Maggie's Resource Centre of North Hastings to create and unveil a six by eight foot pebble mosaic artwork, created in collaboration with Maggie's clients, board members, and staff. Permanently installed at the entrance of Maggie's, this unique artwork is collectively composed of twenty individual one-foot diameter pebble mosaics. An intimate unveiling took place to mark the completion of this project, with ceremony and song by the Shawashkong Ikwe Singers.

### Smiths Falls Pebble Mosaic Unveiling, Smiths Falls, Ontario May 18, 2023

ReDefine Arts collaborated with Lanark County Interval House and Community Support, the Town of Smiths Falls and community members to create, build, and unveil a unique, six-foot diameter, pebble mosaic monument located in the Smiths Falls Town Hall Square, Smiths Falls. Artists included Elder Francine Desjardins, musicians Sara & Isaac and Oto-Wa Taiko Drummers.



Photo by AJ Photography, Smiths Falls Unveiling 2023

**[FEATURED VIDEO: Vimeo.com/ReDefineArtsTO/PowerOf3](https://vimeo.com/ReDefineArtsTO/PowerOf3)**



Photo by Cheryl Kauffeldt, Pathway of Resistance Unveiling 2023

### Pathway of Resistance Unveiling, Killaloe, Ontario

August 26, 2023

As part of the Pathways of Resistance Arts Festival, ReDefine Arts collaborated with Ottawa Valley Creative Arts, the Community Resource Centre (Killaloe)/Watershed, and Township of Killaloe Hagarty Richards to unveil a stepping stone pathway in Killaloe Pathways Park consisting of over 100 small community generated mosaics. The unveiling included a poetry reading by Andy Trull and ephemeral production design by Anna Camilleri and Kathy Blomquist.

# ARTWORKS & PROGRAMMING

## Digital Story Events

### Countdown Digital Story

October 27, 2021

This online event featured creative writing activities exploring cultivating a culture of care and consent and a live screening of new and recent Countdown videos connected to the Countdown Digital Story - an online archive and presentation of the stories recorded, artworks created, and relationships built since the project took off in 2016.

### Digital Stories: Building Cultures of Consent

November 24, 2022

This online event featured a live screening of new and recent Countdown and Renfrew County Inquest Public Art Response videos connected to the Countdown Digital Story.

### Stepping Stones Across The Shield: Digital Story Event

July 20, 2023

This event at the Bancroft Village Playhouse featured the Shawashkong Ikwe Singers and a live screening of new and recent Countdown videos connected to the Countdown Digital Story .



Photo by Harold Eastman, Digital Story Event, Bancroft Village Playhouse 2023

**[FEATURED SITE: CountdownStory.com](https://www.countdownstory.com)**

*“This process has the power to hold space for community and collaborative healing in a very open but safe and secure way. For me, I didn’t have a space or a voice to connect with others in these experiences and conversations if it hadn’t [have] been for a project and like-purposed people throughout this process.”*

*-- Community Contributor, Madawaska Valley (Barry’s Bay, 2022)*

# ARTWORKS & PROGRAMMING

## PUBLIC ARTWORKS

### Public Pebble Mosaic Monuments

Pebble mosaic monuments have been the cornerstone of The Countdown Public Art Project since 2016. These monuments, constructed with stones, sand, water, and countless helping hands, exist to honour and commemorate victims and survivors of gender-based violence. Built with community members and a team of guiding artists, these mosaics have been permanently installed across rural and small urban centres in Ontario and live on to serve as community gathering places, sites of activism and resistance, and places to quietly reflect, grieve, and envision safer futures.

#### Bancroft

Millennium Park  
166 Hastings Street North, Bancroft, Ontario  
6-foot diameter, 2021



#### Almonte

Almonte Old Town Hall  
14 Bridge Street, Almonte, Ontario  
6-foot diameter, 2021



#### Barry's Bay

Water Tower Park  
20 Mahon Street, Barry's Bay, Ontario  
8-foot diameter, 2022



#### Combermere

Lookout Park, Lake Kamanisheg  
Lookout Park Road, Combermere, Ontario  
6-foot diameter, 2022



#### Smiths Falls

Town Hall Square  
77 Beckwith Street North, Smiths Falls, Ontario  
6-foot diameter, 2022



#### Killaloe

Killaloe Pathways Park  
86 Queen Street, Killaloe, Ontario  
125-foot pebble mosaic path, 2023

*Mosaic Designs by Anna Camilleri*

[FEATURED VIDEO: Vimeo.com/ReDefineArtsTO/SteppingStones](https://vimeo.com/ReDefineArtsTO/SteppingStones)



# ARTWORKS & PROGRAMMING

## Community-Generated Stepping Stone Installations

### Maggie's Resource Centre of North Hastings

Undisclosed address, Bancroft, Ontario  
20 1-foot diameter pebble mosaics  
6-foot x 8-foot, 2023

### North Hastings Children's Services Youth Hub

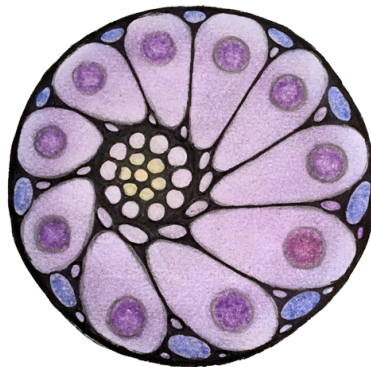
168 Hastings Street North, Bancroft, Ontario  
20 1-foot diameter pebble mosaics, 2023

### North Hastings Community Trust

19 Valleyview Drive, Bancroft, Ontario  
25 1-foot diameter pebble mosaics, 2023

### North Hastings Community Integration Association

2 Alice Street, Bancroft, Ontario  
25 1-foot diameter pebble mosaics, 2023







*"...because it's located at the park area, which is next to the youth hub I think it is a really good placement because the youth will look at it, maybe discuss it, ask questions, and perhaps we will have in our next generation, the number of happenings [decrease] in the future when they discuss it and learn about it."*

*-- Ada Tinney, Kijicho Manito Madaouskarini  
Algonquin First Nation, Omamawinini Anishinabe  
Ikwe (Bancroft, 2021)*

*"This is the place people can go and tell their stories. The rocks hold their stories and there's no judgement. I hope the mosaic locations are places where people can heal."*

*- Community Contributor, Lanark County  
(Smiths Falls, 2022)*



*"We can't talk about gender-based violence and say, 'oh, but the support is two and a half hours away, you need to take a bus and a train to get there'. It's really good that the service is right in our town and there's not an extra barrier to go get it. You can just walk from the mosaic to where you need that support, which is really great."*

*-- Victoria Burke, Harm Reduction Outreach  
Coordinator, North Hastings Community Trust  
(Combermere, 2022)*



# ARTWORKS & PROGRAMMING

## PUBLICATIONS

### **Countdown Activity Book, 2021**

The Countdown Activity Book is a 24-page print publication with 7 activities designed to engage communities in the Countdown project, particularly during the early days of the COVID pandemic.

175 Activity Books and art supplies were distributed to participants in North Hastings and Lanark County. With the support of Site Coordinators and Community Art Ambassadors, 100 participants contributed their completed Activity Books to add their creative ideas to a raft of arts-based research that formed the development of themes and motifs that informed pebble mosaic collaborative design. Presentations featuring artwork generated by participants through Activity Book engagement were shared in online workshops, and made available asynchronously.

### **The Countdown Colouring Books, Edition 1 (2021) and Edition 2 (2022)**

Originally designed as an outreach tool, the Countdown Colouring Book proved to be an effective and fun intergenerational educational tool, featuring pebble mosaic designs and information about and resources for gender-based violence. 200 Colouring books were distributed throughout the project.



*Photo by Maureen MacMillan, Countdown Colouring Book 2022*

### **Countdown Digital Story**

The Countdown Digital Story (website) designed and built by Wy Joung Kou is an online archive and presentation of the stories recorded, artworks created, and relationships built since the project's genesis in 2016. This Digital Story currently holds the contributions of Countdown participants from 2016 - 2023, featuring 14 virtual exhibition galleries and 17 short films, including *Carrying the Call*, a 20-minute documentary, as well as resources, a monuments map and project impact webpages. Also included in the Digital Story are participant contributions from the Renfrew County Inquest Public Art Response (2022).

Offered as part of both Countdown and Renfrew County Inquest Public Art Response community-engagement activities, Elder & Storykeeper Roberta Della-Picca hosted Fireside Chats. Fireside Chats are conversations, audio-recorded with participant consent, which include discussion about participants' experience with the project(s) and reflections on personal and community impact. Audio recordings from these fireside chats have been shaped into videos that bring alive the people and places working to build cultures of consent in their communities.



*" We need art. We need to address violence. We need healing"*

*-- Community Contributor, North Hastings (Bancroft, 2021)*





# ARTWORKS & PROGRAMMING

## VIDEOS

### Beginnings

2015, 2 min. 30 sec.

Many voices come together, accompanied by a photo montage, to provide a brief overview of the Countdown project.

### Patch of Scrub

2019, 2 min. 33 sec.

Brantford Countdown participants in 2019 discuss personal take-aways from the project and hopes for the future.

### I Carry

2019, 2 min. 40sec.

A video poem created in collaboration with many Countdown participants in 2019.

### Unveiling

2019, 3 min.

Erin Lee, Executive Director of Lanark County Interval House & Community Support, shares some words of reflection and gratitude at the 2019 Carleton Place mosaic unveiling.

### Lean In

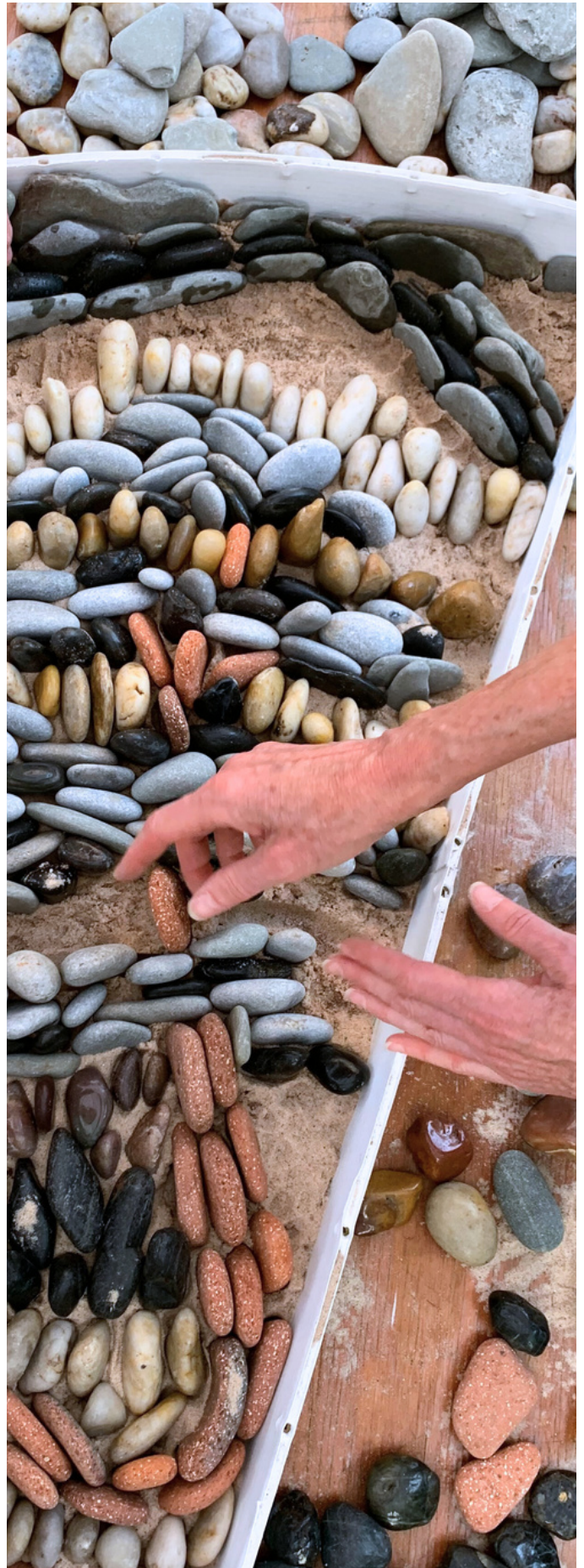
2019, 1 min. 49sec.

With a soundscape woven together with poetry, this video emerged out of creative writing workshops with project participants in Killaloe, Ontario.

### Hands Across the Shield

2020, 5 min. 5sec.

A medley of postcard creative writings, images, and Fireside Chats between Storykeeper Roberta Della-Picca and project participants. Hands Across the Shield is a core workshop activity where postcard messages are created specifically to share with new participants and communities.



*Photo by Katie Yealland, Bancroft Pebble Mosaic Build 2021*

## ARTWORKS & PROGRAMMING

### Land / Water

2021, 3 min. 14 sec.

Algonquin Elders Roberta Della-Picca & Noreen Tinney speak together about land, medicine, and accountability.

### Care is a 4-Letter Word

2021, 1 min. 11 sec.

Countdown Lead Artist & Designer Anna Camilleri offers a poetic reflection on carrying memory and being carried by community members' intentions and actions to end gender-based violence.

### Can We Get One Here?

2022, 4 min. 22 sec.

Donna Reid tells the story of how the Bancroft Countdown mosaic came to be, reflecting on community connections and intersections, and the impact of gender-based violence in the region.

### Hummingbird

2022, 2 min. 12 sec.

A visual poem about the creation of the Smiths Falls monument, set to Sara Milligan singing Hummingbird, by Maren Morris.

### Intersecting Paths

2022, 5 min. 36 sec.

A medley of Fireside Chats between Storykeeper Roberta Della-Picca and project contributors, reflecting on the Combermere mosaic location and design.

### There is Change

2022, 5 min. 10 sec.

Roberta Della-Picca shares some words of reflection on making change at a community level in an interview with Countdown Lead Artist Anna Camilleri.



*Photo by Maureen MacMillan, RCI Public Art Response 2022*



## ARTWORKS & PROGRAMMING

### Carrying the Call

2022, 22 min. 14 sec.

A documentary about the triple femicide in the Ottawa Valley in 2015, the beginnings of The Countdown Public Art Project, and Renfrew County Inquest Public Art Response that takes place during and alongside the 2022 Inquest into the femicides.

### Stepping Stones Across the Shield

2022, 3 min. 41 sec.

This video features “Stepping Stones Across The Shield”: a unique iteration of the project that focuses on deepening the work of Countdown with local partners and communities.

### Setting Seeds

2022, 8 min. 37 sec.

A medley of workshop footage and audio from The Countdown Public Art Project: Stepping Stones Across The Shield, which took place from June 12 to 19, 2023 in North Hastings, Ontario.

### The Power of Three

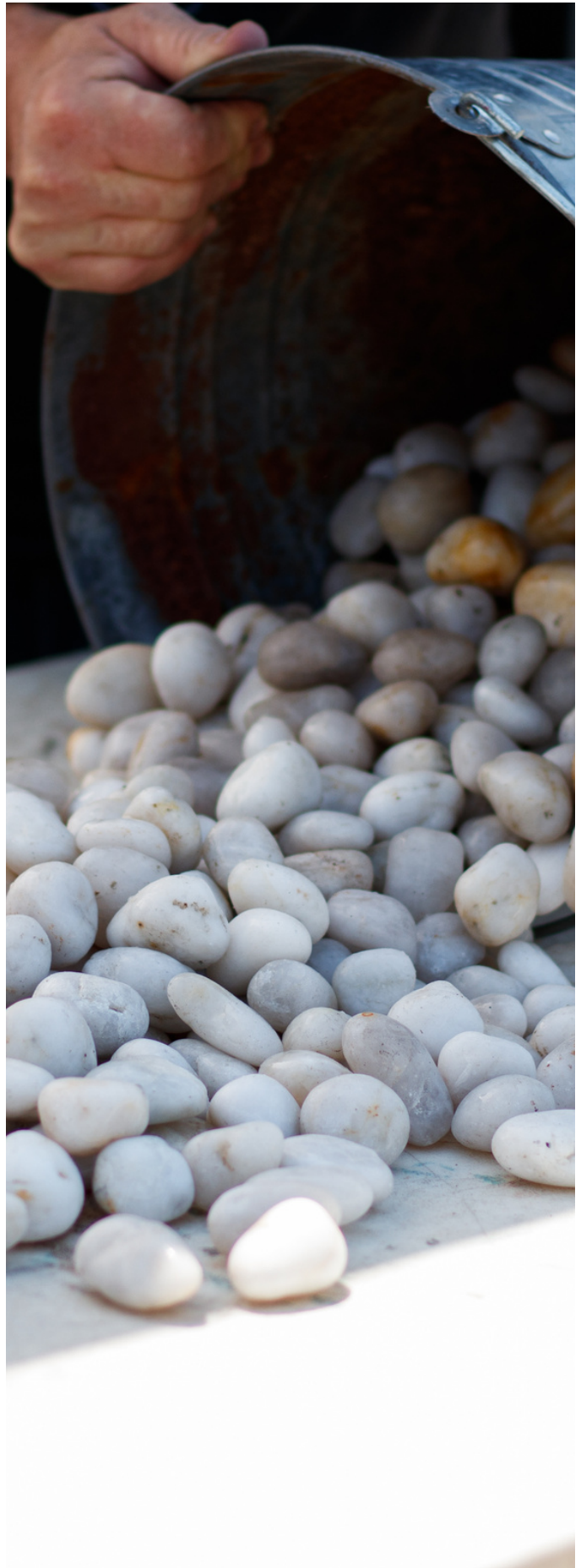
2023, 7 min. 31 sec.

Key speakers and partners that played a pivotal role in the creation of the Smiths Falls pebble mosaic monument speak at the unveiling on May 18, 2023 at Town Hall Square in Smiths Falls, Ontario

### Pathways

2023, 3 min. 20 sec.

This video features the unveiling of the Pathway of Resistance, a stepping stone pathway permanently installed in Killaloe Pathways Park. The new installation, consisting of over 100 small mosaics, forms a tangible path forward to resist gender-based violence. Poet Andy Trull shared an original poem to mark the unveiling of this monument.



*Photo by Schmoofypoof Creative, Smiths Falls 2022*

# ARTWORKS & PROGRAMMING

## MENTORSHIP & COMMUNITY ARTS TRAINING

### Community Art Ambassadors & Interns

Emerging from a desire to grow local leadership in multi-partner community arts initiatives such as The Countdown Public Art Project, 2 Community Art Ambassador positions were created in 2021-2022, and 2 Community Art Intern positions were created in 2023.

### Mentorship Program

As part of the Renfrew County Inquest Public Art Response in 2022, 11 local artist-interns were hired, trained, and embedded in all aspects of the project including workshop facilitation and production. This mentorship program was facilitated by Tristan R. Whiston (ReDefine Arts) and Andy Trull (Ottawa Valley Community Arts).



*Photo by Maureen MacMillan, RCI Public Art Response Mentorship 2022*

## COMMUNITY FORUMS & PRESENTATIONS

Designed as an outreach and partnership building tool, visual presentations were delivered to civic councils to secure partnerships primarily expressed through hosting and preparing public sites for pebble mosaic monuments.

## PARTNERSHIP MEETUPS

The Countdown Public Art Project was produced by ReDefine Arts within a consensus-based model that prioritized local knowledge, leadership and shared decision making. 95 partnership meetups were held over the course of the program to: co-design; plan; coordinate; conduct site surveys; discuss various elements of the project including outreach, access strategies, hiring committees and protocols, evaluation, and team debriefs.

**[FEATURE: Countdown Project Model Infographic](#)**



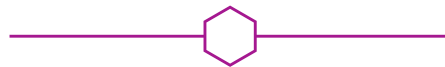
# KEY IMPACTS & FINDINGS

*“Certainly the vastness of the vista that you get from Lookout Park is just an amazing space. You just can see for miles and miles and miles and it's wonderful. I hope that shows people there is something out there, there is something beyond that next step, you can see those miles ahead and, okay, they're in the distance, but one step at a time, and you can get there.”*

*-- Noreen Tinney, Omamawinini Anishinabe Ikwe, Kijicho Manito Madaouskarini Algonquin First Nation and Shawashkong Ikwe Singers (Combermere, 2022)*



*Photo by Wayne Elliott, Lookout Park 2022*



*“The memory I have is a wish that I had for all as I stood under blue sky in the high energy location of Lookout Park – that I could feel as free and unburdened as I did while standing in the company of community.”*

*-- Community Contributor, Hastings Highlands (Combermere, 2022)*

Following the evaluation analysis gathered between 2020 and 2023, nine distinct themes emerged about the impacts that The Countdown Public Art Project has brought to bear on individuals and communities within the Ottawa River watershed in North Hastings, Lanark County and Renfrew County. The data suggests that community-engaged arts bring deep and wide benefits to communities, participants and artists.



### 01 Connection

Countdown contributes to an increased sense of community belonging and social cohesion.

Community contributors, audience members and artists shared that the project impacted them in a positive way, supported mental health and provided them ways to connect with others. People also expressed that the project helped them through the pandemic lockdown and increased their feelings of connection to their community/communities and local histories and advocacy.

The project's contribution to increased community belonging and social cohesion is evident through the positive impact it has had on various stakeholders involved. Starting with the community contributors, individuals who participated in the project felt a stronger sense of belonging within their community. By engaging with the project, they actively participated in shaping community narratives, leading to a greater sense of ownership and investment in its well-being.



*Photo by Shmoofypoof Creative, Smiths Falls Pebble Mosaic Build 2022*

Similarly, the project's positive effects extended to audience members who attended the events or experienced the project's outcomes. These individuals were able to connect with people who shared similar interests, fostering a sense of unity. The project provided a platform for individuals to come together and form new connections, reducing social barriers and strengthening community bonds.

Artists involved in the project also experienced a positive impact on their mental health. By showcasing their work and creative facilitation skills, they found an outlet for self-expression.





### 02 Dynamic Exchange

Countdown leaves a legacy of inclusive art-making, consensus decision making and cross-sectoral arts representation.

The project supported local community and civic organizations to gain visibility and community as well as relationship-building, resource sharing and participation amongst partners across regional and sectoral catchments. It provided opportunities for emerging and established artists and encouraged the greater community to participate in a creative process resulting in the creation and commemoration of permanent public artworks.

The project created a lasting impact on the community by fostering inclusive art-making practices, consensus decision making, and cross-sector arts representation. By involving a diverse range of artists and stakeholders from different backgrounds, regions and sectors, the project reduced barriers and promoted collaboration and understanding.

*“I always thought that art was a singular communication between the artist and the observer. But what I learned from the presentation is, no, it's not a singular thing, it's a combined community effort of many partners in the community. So that educated me to a new level of possibilities.”*

*-- Alexander Walder, Councillor, Municipality of Hastings Highlands (Combermere, 2022)*



Photo by Cheryl Kauffeldt, Pathway of Resistance Pebble Mosaic Making Workshop 2023



## ...DYNAMIC EXCHANGE

*“Sometimes when we participate in things, we just sort of show up and do what we need to do, but these questions are really making me think about myself, my community, and what the project is about and all the people involved. It pushes and inspires me.”*

*-- Marlena Zuber, Community Participation & Planning, North Hastings Community Integration Association (Combermere, 2022)*

Through its support of local community and civic organizations, the project helped create visibility and recognition for these groups. This increased visibility not only promoted their work but also allowed them to engage with a broader audience and build stronger ties within the community. By facilitating cross pollination, relationship-building, and resource sharing among partners across regional and sectoral catchments, the project encouraged collaboration and the exchange of ideas, skills, and knowledges. This benefited individual organizations and also strengthened the overall arts ecosystem in the region.

Furthermore, the project recognized and provided opportunities for both emerging and established artists. By offering platforms and resources for artists to showcase their expertise as cultural workers and community-engaged arts practitioners, it empowered them to contribute to the community's creative process. By involving the greater community in this creative process, the project fostered a sense of ownership and pride among community members. Through participation and engagement, community members contributed to the creation and commemoration of permanent public artworks that showcased their shared experiences, values, and aspirations.

Countdown promoted inclusive art-making practices by: empowering community and civic organizations; providing visibility and communications resources; facilitating collaboration and relationship-building across different sectors and regions; supporting emerging and established artists; and encouraging community participation in the creative process resulting in the creation of permanent public artworks. The project created a stronger, more vibrant, and interconnected arts community that will continue to benefit the community long after its completion.



*Photo by Maureen MacMillan, Barry's Bay Unveiling (After The Revolution) 2022*

### 03 Inclusive Art-Making

Countdown builds a greater appreciation for the arts and community arts.

The project worked with communities to co-create, produce and present new artistic work, generating a dynamic exchange of creative ideas, validating the lived experience of community members, engendering a sense of belonging and sharing a collective vision for a world without gender-based violence with the wider community. People also expressed that experiencing their contributions to the project reinforced artistic expression as a catalyst for community-building.

*“My hope for the community is just that [the project] continues to do what it's doing and provides a legacy of opportunity for people coming after us. For people who've been taken from us, that they know that there is honour, that we're honouring those who are taken, that we're honouring the fight for those coming after us, and that we're in it to try and raise awareness and to try and support people to heal from it.”*

*-- Erin Lee, Executive Director, Lanark County Interval House and Community Support (Almonte, 2021)*



*Photo by Maureen MacMillan, RCI Public Art Response 2022*

Countdown fostered a deeper understanding and recognition of the arts, as well as the significance of community arts. By involving communities directly in the co-creation, production, and presentation of new artistic work, Countdown encouraged a lively and ongoing exchange of creative ideas. Through this collaborative process, the project validated the lived experiences of community members, acknowledging their unique perspectives and stories.

In doing so, the project advanced a sense of belonging among participants. By actively involving community members in the creative process, contributors helped shape the project's ...



## ...INCLUSIVE ART-MAKING

*“Every little experience I had with the project was so rewarding. It’s really beautiful and hopeful and healing and inspiring. I think we absolutely, at this time in history, we need art.”*

*-- Jane Kali, Executive Director, North Hastings Community Trust (Bancroft, 2021)*

...overall vision. This sense of ownership and investment instills a stronger connection to the community, reinforcing the idea that artistic expression can be a powerful catalyst for community-building.

Countdown addressed gender-based violence by articulating and sharing a collective vision for a world free from gender-based violence. By using art as a medium, the project engaged the wider community in these discussions, raising awareness and fostering empathy towards survivors and those affected by gender-based violence. Through the arts, the project amplified the voices of engaged community members, creating a platform for them to be recognized and validated for their contributions.

By providing the opportunity for individuals to witness the impact of their contributions, the project strengthened the belief in the transformative power of artistic expression. The act of experiencing their creative output integrated into the project reinforced the participants' sense of value and purpose and how their unique contributions have the potential to shape and positively impact their community.

Countdown cultivated a greater appreciation for the arts and the potential of community arts to address social issues. It validated community members' experiences, promoted a sense of belonging, and generated a collective vision for a world without gender-based violence, all while fostering community-building through artistic expression.



*Photo by Katie Yealand, North Hastings 2023*

### 04 Common Hopes

Countdown cultivates an ecosystem of partnerships building shared experiences.

People also indicated that having opportunities to express themselves creatively in a community context enabled them to better understand their community members, shared histories and build common hopes for the future.

Countdown created an ecosystem of partnerships and fostered shared experiences among individuals. By bringing together different individuals, groups, and organizations, Countdown promoted collaboration, engagement, and a sense of collective identity within its communities.

Through partnerships, Countdown provided platforms and opportunities for people to express themselves creatively. This creative expression allowed individuals to showcase their talents and also served as a medium for them to share their thoughts, experiences, and perspectives with others.



*North Hastings Activity Kit, Participant Artwork 2021*

By participating in creative activities within a community context, individuals gained opportunities to better understand their fellow community members. This exposure to different narratives and experiences helps bridge the gaps between individuals and fosters empathy and unity.

The act of expressing oneself creatively within a community also deepens the understanding of shared histories. This can involve exploring cultural traditions, historical events, or common experiences that have shaped the community. By delving into shared histories while also recognizing differences of social location (within shared histories or land), individuals gain a more comprehensive understanding of their collective contexts.



## ...COMMON HOPES

*“The stepping stones showed how far reaching the whole project is. At the (North Hastings Community) Trust we stood around them in a circle to meditate and draw strength from each other just yesterday.”*

*-- Community Contributor, North Hastings (Bancroft 2023)*

Through this co-creative process, a collective vision for a better future emerged. This shared vision encompassed the aspirations and goals of the community members and served as a unifying force that drives positive change.

Countdown cultivated an ecosystem of partnerships aiming to foster shared experiences within a community. Providing platforms for creative expression, it enabled individuals to better understand each other, explore shared histories, and build common hopes for the future. This holistic approach strengthened community bonds and also promoted collaboration, cooperation, and a sense of belonging among contributors.

*“I want more awareness, support, and change. I want to see that change. That can happen through policies, funding, and on individual levels; we can speak up, we can take action, we can write letters and talk to friends and families, we can participate in projects like this.”*

*-- Community Contributor, Hastings Highlands (Combermere, 2022)*



*Photo by Shmoofypooof Creative, Smiths Falls 2022*

### 05 Mentorship

Countdown offers professional growth and job prospects for artists, arts administrators, and community members through mentorships, networking, and internships.

*“Gathering and creating with others makes me feel stronger.”*

*-- Community Contributor, Hastings Highlands (Combermere, 2022)*

Mentorship opportunities are critical for artists to gain specialized training in planning, engagement, technical skills, and adaptability. Community-engaged arts projects, such as Countdown, generate local employment opportunities in rural communities, addressing financial uncertainties for individuals in Ontario's rural and Indigenous communities.

Countdown offered chances for professional growth and job prospects for artists, arts administrators, and community members. Through paid community arts mentorships and internships and networking with fellow artists and organizational representatives, individuals accessed employment opportunities, exchanged skills, and received guidance.

Opportunities for networking, peer-to-peer learning, and professional development prove crucial for artists in acquiring the specialized training needed for community-engaged arts. This skill set encompasses effective planning and engagement practices, technical proficiency in the arts, and adaptation to unanticipated needs and issues.

Community-engaged arts projects also enhance the social and economic capacities of rural communities by generating local employment opportunities (e.g., catering, photography, support workers etc.). By investing project funds within the community, support can be extended to individuals facing employment obstacles, subsequently addressing financial uncertainties in Ontario's rural communities.



*Photo by Anna Camilleri, Lookout Park Installation 2022*



### 06 Social & Political Activism

Community-engaged arts possess the power to address important issues, resist injustice, and give a voice to marginalized people facing systemic oppression

Countdown tackles concerns like colonialism, care for the environment and challenges associated with gender-based violence and personal safety.

Through collaboration and co-creation, Countdown brought attention to significant matters, challenged inequities, and enhanced the voices of marginalized groups and individuals who face systemic oppression and stigmatization, and concerns surrounding gender-based violence, personal safety, and colonialism.

*“In order to have societal change, the issue needs to be right up front. I hope that’s one of the major outcomes...there’s so many mosaics that you’ve created, and it’s not just a local. The issue is not local. The enjoyment of the monuments and the things that they stand for have a very local image but a huge overall impact.”*

*-- Alexander Walder, Councillor, Hastings Highlands (Combermere, 2022)*



Photo by Maureen MacMillan, Barry's Bay Unveiling (RAW Taiko) 2022

## KEY IMPACTS & FINDINGS

### 07 Dialogue & Story Sharing on Difficult Experiences

Countdown fosters conversations on challenging social issues, enhances community experiences, and offers a safe space to discuss difficult topics.

*"This project has opened a lot of doors for conversations with family, friends, and loved ones. I hope it continues to bring awareness, allow for these conversations, and educate people."*

-- Community Contributor, Hastings Highlands (Combermere, 2022)

Through artistic expressions, people gain a deeper understanding of one another, which leads to shared moments of truth. This connection has the potential to generate significant social change within communities.

Countdown catalyzed conversations between people, stimulating dialogue around difficult social issues including gender-based violence, bystander intervention, safety, colonialism and racism, houselessness and the opioid crisis. By engaging in community-engaged arts projects, a platform is created for significant discussions and the exploration of topics that might otherwise be considered too difficult to approach. In a safer/braver environment, a sense of fulfillment is derived from the transformative power of the creative process. Countdown fostered cross-cultural exchange and amplified the voices of community members who have historically faced oppression, stigma, underrepresentation, and access to creative opportunities.

By sharing stories and ideas through artistic expression, individuals are able to perceive each other in a more holistic manner (that challenges biases and prejudice), resulting in shared moments of truth and common purpose despite differences. This social connection fostered new understandings and serves as fertile ground for creating meaningful social change within communities.

I carry voice, and hope  
I carry those not heard  
I carry determination, and faith  
I carry wisdom and fear  
I carry my past, my passion & my ancestors gifts.  
I carry strength, and frustration  
I carry my responsibility.



Call 1 (888) 373-9861 from anywhere to be guided through this activity. If you wish, please accept our invitation to leave a voice recording of your "I carry" poem.

Lanark County Activity Kit Contribution (Erin Lee, LCIHCS) 2021

*"[This project] brings conversations to areas that wouldn't normally have these conversations, for example, to the dinner table with my family."*

-- Community Contributor, Hastings Highlands (Combermere, 2022)



### 08 Multi-Sensory Knowing

Participating in artistic activities within a community setting provides individuals with access to different types of knowledge.

Countdown activities, such as sensory experiences, hands-on work, and group consensus, offered unique approaches to address personal and communal matters.

Countdown enabled participants to access alternative forms of knowledge that don't require prior experience. Community-engaged artistic process offers various methods (sensory, experiential and consensus-based approaches) that are accessible for addressing community and personal issues. By engaging with the world through their senses, participants are able to access new insights related to the issues they are exploring. Through hands-on somatic experience and engaging in reflection, the community-based artistic process enables participants to view and understand issues (and themselves) from a different perspective.

*"The whole process and the project itself have been an eye-opener for me in terms of thinking about our community and those in our community and what they're dealing with. Hearing other people's perspectives and going through the creative process - using words...and then having them transferred into a design with pebbles...all of that was quite interesting and rewarding for sure."*

*-- Bonnie, Partner (2020-2021)*



Photo by Anna Camilleri, Almonte 2021

## 09 Witnessing

Countdown promotes healing by connecting individuals to their cultural and personal histories.

Creating a space where people can witness and empathize with the experiences of others fosters a sense of connection and validates their own experiences. Witnessing is especially meaningful for those who have endured alienation (due to gender-based violence, stigma, trauma, colonialism and racism).

Countdown facilitated healing by establishing links to cultural and individual histories and legacies, thus establishing an environment where individuals can bear witness to the experiences of others; this helped foster a sense of connection. The act of witnessing holds particular significance for those who have undergone alienation resulting from traumatic experiences.

*“Healing, may you come. Healing, may you come to me, my community and the ways we govern and are governed. Healing, may you come.”*

*-- Community Contributor, Madawaska Valley (Barry's Bay, 2022)*



Participant Contribution (Postcard), North Hastings 2023



# RECOMMENDATIONS

01



**CONTINUE TO AMPLIFY THE COUNTDOWN PUBLIC ART PROJECT BY ANIMATING EXISTING PUBLIC ARTWORK MONUMENTS THROUGH ONGOING EVENTS AND COMMUNITY ARTS ENGAGEMENT.**

The Countdown Public Art Project has been successful in bringing art to public spaces and engaging communities in a meaningful way. To continue building on this success and further enhance the impact of the project, it is crucial to animate the existing public art monuments through ongoing events and community arts engagement.

By animating the existing installations with events, presentations and workshops, the project will remain relevant, inspiring, and accessible to all members of the community. This sustained engagement will strengthen the project's impact and leave a lasting impression on the community, foster creativity, and promote the transformative power of art in public spaces.

02



**PROVIDE A RANGE OF PEER LEARNING, ARTIST MENTORSHIPS AND TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES.**

Interning artists expressed the need for more paid training opportunities, such as the paid learning positions with The Countdown Public Art Project. Creating artist mentorships in rural townships for artists living and working in rural Ontario, is an important initiative aimed at supporting artists working in community-engaged arts practices. Mentorship programs have the capacity to address the unique challenges faced by artists in rural communities, such as limited resources and mentorship opportunities. By providing tailored programs, rooted in rural communities, artists can receive guidance and enhance their skills and artistic vision. Artist mentorships will have positive social and economic impacts and contribute to community engagement, cultural vibrancy, and economic growth.

Peer learning can strengthen artistic practice, encourage innovation, and build a sense of solidarity among artists working in rural areas. Training and capacity-building opportunities for artists and community members involved in community arts projects can enhance skills, knowledge, and understanding of community engagement principles and practices. By providing space, expertise, and opportunities for collaboration, these programs can empower artists to create meaningful, socially relevant and sustainable work while enriching the cultural fabric of rural communities.

**03**

## **CONTINUE TO FOSTER INCLUSION IN COMMUNITY ARTS INITIATIVES.**

To foster inclusion in community arts initiatives, it is important to prioritize the support of projects that center and amplify the voices of historically marginalized communities. This includes Indigenous, racialized, LGBTQ2S, rural and disability communities.

By allocating resources in a deliberate and focused manner for art projects led by members of underrepresented communities, we can help address historical disparities in funding and provide opportunities for these communities to express their unique perspectives through art. Additionally, providing mentorship and access to networks that can help artists and cultural workers from these communities grow and thrive in the arts sector will contribute to long-term transformation and representation within the cultural and artistic landscape.

**04**

## **EXPAND UPON PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIVE PLATFORMS.**

Encouraging partnerships between arts organizations, community groups, and local government is crucial for the success of community-engaged arts in rural Ontario. Collaboration allows for pooling of resources, expertise, and support, resulting in innovative projects that meet the specific needs of rural communities. It ensures that arts initiatives are aligned with local desires and concerns through active community involvement, fostering a sense of stewardship. Partnerships also enable long-term planning, creating employment opportunities for artists, and amplifying the impact of arts programs through collective advocacy. Partnerships facilitate knowledge sharing and capacity building, leading to high-quality arts programs and a thriving arts sector.

**05**

## **CONDUCT RESEARCH AND TRAINING IN TRAUMA-INFORMED EVALUATION FOR COMMUNITY ARTS PRACTITIONERS.**

Conducting research in this field involves exploring the intersection between trauma, art, and evaluation strategies to provide evidence-based guidelines. This research should focus on developing a comprehensive understanding of trauma-related issues, incorporating trauma-informed approaches into evaluation frameworks, and identifying effective strategies to mitigate potential harm. It is necessary to study existing community arts projects, assess their methods, and identify best practices to inform the development of trauma-informed evaluation models specific to community-engaged arts.



# DISTRIBUTION OF THIS REPORT

Before publishing this report, participating artists and partners were given the opportunity to review it and ensure that it accurately represents their perspectives. Following this, the final version of the report was shared with artists, partners and participants, who have been encouraged to share it within their networks. This report exists in digital format, digital (plain text) format, and print format. Both the digital report and print report have distinct International Standard Book Numbers (ISBN) to facilitate public access and dissemination through public libraries.

Advice will then be sought from experts within our shared (arts, civics, gender-justice and disability justice, community development and Indigenous sovereignty) networks about how best to proceed with communicating and distributing the report to stakeholders. Potential strategies could include:

- Mailing the full report to all stakeholders;
- Planning evaluation report presentation(s) and facilitated dialogue with cross-sector stakeholders from across North Hastings, Lanark County and Renfrew County;
- Sending the report with a media release to media outlets across the region to raise awareness about the findings amongst the general public;
- Sharing the results of the report through public libraries and online resource centres through cross-sector partner organizations

ReDefine Arts aims to be creative in sharing this information with as many people as possible at a regional, provincial, and potentially national level.

It is important for us to communicate the significance of community-engaged art, the remarkable impacts it has on the communities it engages and serves, and the resilience, innovation, and passion shown by project contributors despite various obstacles.

Additionally, we want to emphasize the benefits that supporting and promoting this work would bring to stakeholders, communities, and represented groups. We not only wish for the continued existence of this art form, but also for its growth and sustainability in the future.

# CREDITS

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Thank you to the Toronto Arts Council and Ontario Arts Council for ongoing operational support.



# APPENDICES

## SELECT EVALUATION TOOLS

### Countdown + Renfrew County Inquest Public Art Response Postcard Surveys

How did you find out about the project?

- Word of Mouth
- Newspaper
- Facebook
- Other

A project like this creates a strong sense of community.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Gender-based violence is a problem in our community.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Monuments in public places are a good way to honour and remember those affected by gender-based violence.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

I participated in or attended this project / event because...

If there is anything else you would like to say about the impact this project has had on you, please do!

# APPENDICES

## SELECT EVALUATION TOOLS

### Pathways of Resistance Arts Festival Survey

In what ways did you participate with the Pathways of Resistance Arts Festival?

- One or more workshops
- A performance
- The unveiling
- Festival day
- Volunteer / team member

My sense of belonging to a movement for social change has increased after attending/participating in this festival.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

The arts can play a vital role in making social change.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

I feel inspired to take action.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Please share any actions you are inspired to take here.

Please share anything else here.



# APPENDICES

## SELECT EVALUATION TOOLS

### Partner Interviews

#### Interview Questions:

1. Tell me a bit about your organization and your role in it.
2. Why did your organization decide to become a project partner [or to partner again]?
3. In what ways is your organization supporting the project? Some examples:
  - co-hosting or supporting workshops
  - helping connect with local residents and organizations
  - promoting the project and its activities
  - providing some staff time to support the project
4. Thinking about the project, what worked well? Any suggestions for change? Were there any unexpected or unanticipated outcomes as a result of this project?
5. What might you and/or your organization do with the experience you gained and the things you learned?
6. What are your hopes for the impact and legacy of this project for your organization, your communities, the region, the province? [For returning partners: Have your hopes changed since the last time we partnered together?]
7. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience?

#### Survey Questions:

Options - Strongly Agree | Somewhat Agree | Somewhat Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Don't Know

1. The arts play a vital role in making social change.
2. Participating in creative activities helps people look at things in a new way.
3. This project brought people together.
4. This project provided opportunities for our organization to make new connections in the region.
5. In the future, our organization would like to support more community arts projects.

# APPENDICES

## SELECT EVALUATION TOOLS

### Focus Groups

#### Word Association:

- Journey
- Beginnings
- Endings
- Hold
- Take Away
- Let Go
- Shift

What did you discover/learn about yourself or your community?

What has changed and evolved through your engagement in this community project?

What is unique about collaborative art making as a response to gender-based violence?

What are the roots and shoots that have grown through this process?

If you were to change something about the project, what would you change?

What are your hopes for yourself, your community, and the province?

#### Fill in the blanks:

- When I joined the project...
- When I picked up my first stone...
- Along the way...
- At the end of the project...
- A memory I will carry with me is...
- Now as I stand back, seeing these stones together, ...

Anything else? Last thoughts, questions, and reflections.



# APPENDICES

## SELECT EVALUATION TOOLS

### Design Feedback Survey

Do any of the design concepts resonate? How?

What themes and motifs do you see reflected in the designs?

Is there anything you would change? What? How?

If you could carry or combine an element from X design into X, it would be... Describe it with words or try sketching it.

### Artist Field Notes

Briefly, what took place in this session or workshop?

Your highlights (words / images / incidents)?

Did anyone:

- show enjoyment of artmaking?
- make new connections?
- show a greater sense of confidence or belonging?
- have anything to say about the location, supplies, food?

Did you observe workshop activities fuse diverse traditions, abilities, generations, experience, or communities?

Quotable comments (participants):

Any difficulties, uneasiness or new insights?

Any actions for follow-up?

Did you learn anything as an artist/facilitator?

Anything else?

# APPENDICES

## SELECTED SNAPSHOTS

Evaluation Surveys: Keywords

hope safe stones  
legacy healing honour  
change connection  
community  
support growth care  
remember people  
awareness together

# APPENDICES

## SELECTED SNAPSHOTS

### Postcards: Select Quotes

"I believe our world now more than ever needs to heal."

"We need more community pathways like this one to build social change."

"Consent centered collaboration."

"Every stone, every step, every day matters."

"Gathering together is always helping us grow."

"I hope this project 'lives on' to teach other generations."

"Powerful community involvement, thanks for all this work. The Countdown has begun."

"[this project] is the road map to seeing changes in our community."

"I approach people with a stronger sense of being able to hold safe spaces."

"I feel as a member of the community I have a responsibility to push for change."

"I felt part of something larger, like I was part of a legacy."



# APPENDICES

## SELECTED SNAPSHOTS

### Select Participant Quotes

"Together we can make change and impact the lives of others, for the better."

"I feel fully encircled by the depth of my experiences."

"Not only do you have to acknowledge the victims of gender-based violence but you also have to, as a community, acknowledge that the problem exists."

"The stepping stones have a personal connection for people and can hold the depth of the project to each location the stones will be kept."

"The vulnerability and tenderness and joy of being present."

"Those in the community not yet involved have been moved and intrigued by the art and the messages. A chance to continue is worth working towards."

"I hope I will understand myself better so I could then try to understand and help others that need help."

"I hope I will feel a part of something, I will be contributing to something I care about. I hope to meet people and make connections."

"For myself, I hope for learning and growth. I hope for healing for my community and survivors. For the province, I hope for shifts and change, understanding, reforms, and revolution."

"We can create movement, we can create change."

"These stones are permanent reminders that people are struggling, and it's not something to be hidden away."

# APPENDICES

## SELECTED SNAPSHOTS

### Select Participant Quotes (ctd.)

"This project names something that needs to be named."

"Community art can address current issues in a positive and life affirming way."

"Many in our community are dedicated to the purpose of the mosaic. I know they will persist in working to end gender-based violence."

"Coming together for projects like this is about belonging. When we have belonging in our community, we have more safety and we have a healthier community in so many ways."

"I feel awareness in my community. My community has grown and I am grateful."

"Making art together gives people an opportunity to put into practice the kind of consent culture we are talking about building when we talk about anti-violence work."

"GBV [gender-based violence] needs to be at the center of the conversation. Not just VAW [violence against women]. So many are left out when we don't look at the bigger picture."

"I hope to continue to meet more like-minded individuals who really believe in coming together and gathering around this challenging issue because it makes me feel less alone."

"My hope for this project is that survivors who visit the mosaics have a sense of being supported and connected in their community."

# APPENDICES

## SELECTED SNAPSHOTS

### Select Partner & Stakeholder Quotes

"One thing I know, for the first time, we have a gender-based violence ending flag at our agency. So I feel like the project really was behind that. It was because of Countdown. I have never seen anything like that here ... and the leadership here put that up. So it's a sign that people do want to talk about this, I think."

"I think my goal has always been bringing everyone to the table. The more you can bring, the more the conversation spreads."

"I think it's just because the area, the community is so broad, is so large and it being up on the edge of Hastings Highlands or Hastings County, makes it really important because it feels like we've reached that edge and made ourselves known more in that bigger community of North Hastings."

"There was something else I was thinking of because it's located at the park area, which is next to the youth hub. I think it is a really good placement because the youth will look at it, maybe discuss it, ask questions, and perhaps we will have in our next generation, the number of happenings [decrease] in the future when they discuss it and learn about it."

"In the future, Algonquin Arts Council would like to support more community arts projects. It is tremendously well-organized. I really liked how it's coming together, and I was highly impressed by the event (community participating in building parts of the mosaic). I know the quality of work that is going to be [placed in the park], and I was highly impressed by the structure, and yet it was fun."

"It's a hard subject, so if you can do something that makes you feel good about it, that's a great thing. And so being part of that community of people that came together, it's just an amazing project to be involved with."



# ReDefine Arts



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