

Final Report:

Sustaining a Living, Inclusive and Creative City

A University/Community Partnership
In support of Canada's Participation in
Expo 2010, "Better City, Better Life"

Submitted to
Canadian Heritage
October 29th 2010



Submitted by:

The Institute of Urban Studies
In partnership with

Art City
And

The Saskatoon Community Youth Arts Programming Inc

Attention: Chantal Rougeau

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February 10, 2010

TO Chantal Rougeau
RE: Final Report, Sustaining a Living, Inclusive and Creative City

Mrs. Rougeau,

The Institute of Urban Studies and its partners Art City and The Saskatoon Community Youth Arts Programming Inc. are very pleased to submit our final report on our collaboration, Sustaining a Living, Inclusive and Creative City, in celebration of Canada's role at Expo 2010 in Shanghai. Our collaboration proved to be very rewarding for all three organizations, and afforded us the opportunity to engage in and promote community learning in our respective neighbourhoods. The projects carried out in both Winnipeg and Saskatoon helped us all learn to see our cities from a child and youth perspective, as well as gave us some new tools for undertaking our work. The project also provided us with some enduring legacies, including some wonderful artwork and a joint website, which has proven to be popular and useful in promoting other programming.

We would like to sincerely thank the Department of Canadian Heritage for their generous support for our project.

Respectfully,

Jino Distasio



THE UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG

Project Title: Sustaining a Living, Inclusive and Creative City

Summary description of project

This project linked the Institute of Urban Studies with the broader community in Winnipeg and Saskatoon for the purpose of participating in the World Expo 2010 in Shanghai, the theme of which is "Better City, Better Life." Using a community learning framework, the University of Winnipeg's Institute of Urban Studies, Art City and the Saskatoon Community Youth Arts Programming Inc. (SCYAP) collaborated to visualize and document a prairie perspective on the themes of Expo 2010.

Using multiple mediums and forms of interaction, the project team engaged with children and youth in both cities to create different forms of artistic expression on the theme of city life on the Canadian prairies. These efforts were documented on an evolving website titled "Living Prairie City" (http://ius.typepad.com/living_prairie_city/), and culminated with the production of public art slated for eventual installation.

Project Objectives

The intent of the project was to engage in a dialogue between young people, arts-based organizations and urban studies academics, one premised on the major international event, Expo 2010 in Shanghai. With Institute of Urban Studies staff providing a framework for action (in the form of reference and guidance on the themes of Expo 2010 as well as facilitated discussions and online resources), two leading community-based arts organizations in both Winnipeg and Saskatoon organized and delivered relevant programming and workshops to their participants. IUS' Manitoba partner was Art City, which is located blocks away from IUS, while Saskatchewan's Saskatoon Community Youth Arts Programming (SCYAP) worked with youth in Saskatoon. All members of the team contributed to the Living Prairie City Blog that communicated both information and art over the course of the summer and fall of 2010.

The objectives of the project were:

- to engage with young people in two prairie cities about the themes of Expo 2010;
- to have young people generate artwork relevant to the themes of Expo 2010, specifically relating to their own perceptions, attitudes and beliefs about their respective cities;
- to document these activities and works of art on the Living Prairie City blog; and
- to have a legacy artwork that would be suitable for installation at the University of Winnipeg's Richardson College for the Environment, presently under construction.

Description of activities used to achieve objectives

IUS:

The Institute managed the budget and coordinated the efforts of the partners by hosting meetings and engaging in regular email/telephone contact. It also took the lead on mounting and maintaining the Living Prairie City Blog. As well, IUS research associate Art Ladd – who has existing connections with Art City as the Chair of the Board – acted as the principal liaison between IUS and the community partners. He worked with the Art City staff and in August travelled to Saskatoon to hold a workshop with the SCYAP staff on community development principles. Ladd worked with both SCYAP and Art City staff to identify how each of the organizations are incorporating environmental sustainability into their respective organizations, from both an administrative and programming perspectives. Focusing on how the organizations can consume less resources and produce less waste, strategies for water, energy and waste were discussed. Additionally, the partners explored with the organizations how they incorporate environmental sustainability education into their programming. They found that each organization informally (i.e. not through formal policy) drew from extensive material re-use, and would actively consider toxicity, biodegradability and source when making acquisition decisions (purchases and acceptance of donations). All of this information was shared between the organizations, facilitating relationship building and learning from each of their strengths and successes.

It became very clear that both organizations were well-educated regarding issues of environmental sustainability in an urban setting. Through consultations with SCYAP and Art City IUS was able to identify areas for professional development. It was felt, given their urban context, that community development theory would be the most valuable area to explore. In a seminar format, Ladd led discussions on the theory and practices surrounding community capacity, social capital and their related concepts. Much of this was already practiced by each organization, but not in the language of government and funders. These seminars, conducted on site in Saskatoon and Winnipeg, provided SCYAP and Art City staff a broader conceptual framework for understanding the community development work that they are already doing. In addition to lively presentations and discussions on community development, discussions also centred on commercial greenwashing, and how to distinguish real 'green' products, activities, etc from straight marketing. As seminars are highly interactive and stray into many different directions, the seminars ended up discussing issues related to urban planning, green communities, grass roots social development, sustainability, and the use of arts in revitalizing communities.

SCYAP:

In August/September SCYAP held youth forums to discuss with youth the positive aspects of the core neighbourhoods of Saskatoon. These discussions sometimes led to one-on-one discussion with the youth who were eager to discuss their feelings not only about the positive aspects of their neighbourhood, but also their feelings towards the stigmas and stereotypes that they encounter on a regular basis. A number of the youth featured on the forum were later selected as participants in the Urban Canvas project (see below).

In follow-up to the forums, a small group went on a walking tour of several of the areas selected as highlights during the forums and one-on-one discussions. This photo project was a lot of fun and really highlighted that many of the sites selected for the list were artistic and/or cultural by nature. Several of the pictures and spot selections were posted to the blog in September.

In November several of SCYAP's youth participants will be taking part in a forum led by the City of Saskatoon called Saskatoon Speaks (see <http://www.saskatoonspeaks.com/>). The objective of the project is for citizens to provide input regarding what they want for the City and how they would like to see the city grow over the next 50 years. A large amount of the information collected during the summer forums conducted by SCYAP will be very useful during this session as it will provide a starting point for the youth who have already identified the types of services/businesses that they value.

SCYAP also allocated a portion of the funds toward a public art display titled We Needdi Graffiti; An Urban Collaborative show which was on exhibit at the SCAYP gallery from September 11 – October 11. The evening opening was very well attended with over 100 people viewing the exhibit on opening night. SCYAP hopes to hold a similar show next summer and have had several of the artists express interest in being part of the 2nd annual show next year.



Art City:

Art City developed three weeks of art programming specific to city life and the project themes. These workshops were:

Seed Sown Civilizations: scrap wood cities overgrown with real plants! (June 7-11; 58 participant visits). Children explored built form with material re-use, combined with living plants. The sustainability focus provided hands-on experience with material re-use as well as an introduction to urban agriculture for children. Participants learned about growing plants from seeds and the versatility of reusing 'waste' lumber. It illustrated different ways that greening of spaces do not need to be expensive, but start can start with so-called waste products and seeds.

What Does Art City Mean to You? Mixed Media Art (July 12-16; 106 participant visits). Using a wide range of reused and recycled materials in mixed media, participants looked at Art City and the role it plays for them in their neighbourhood. Examining a sense of place within the greater community, participants expressed their feelings of the social and physical environment and how Art City contributes to it. Additionally, this workshop engaged children in developing and expressing their personal and collective identity through their broader experiences at Art City.

Mixed Media Metropolis Mural (9-13; 56 participant visits). This project involved mapping out a large city using scrap materials such as plywood, old reclaimed cork board, and other mixed media, to create buildings, people, trees, bicycles, trains, sidewalks and other urban elements. The completed work will be displayed in a temporary location in the community until it can be installed in a more permanent location, presumably the Richardson College for the Environment.



Audiences reached

Art City: 220

SCYAP: 55 youth, 20 artists, 100 visitors at reception, plus regular gallery visitors (approx. 200 per month).

Living Prairie City Blog: 1,820 views as of October 29, 2010.

Partnerships

The project afforded the Institute of Urban Studies the opportunity to work more closely with community-based arts organizations. As well, Art City also worked closely with Resource Assistance for Youth (RaY), which works with homeless youth in Winnipeg. This project has increased the capacity to partner with RaY to develop art programming for street involved youth in the future, in three ways: 1) Art City has now developed a relationship with SCYAP, so it can now have them as a resource partner. 2) The Mixed Media Metropolis is presently installed in the joint RaY/Art City programming space, and has helped to develop this place as a creative and safe space. 3) RaY is interested in working with its participants to develop an art blog, so lessons learned through this project can help their future project succeed.

As a part of its outreach efforts, SCYAP has a member sitting on the Stories of Homelessness committee and helped to find individuals who are currently homeless or have been homeless to interview as part of this project. It is also a partner of Project ID, which assists those (often from Reserves) who have no identification. On December 10, SCYAP will be hosting a homelessness awareness day that will include displaying the mobile exhibit resulting from this project for the Saskatoon community to see and read. SCYAP's involvement with this project will continue through the winter.

Lessons Learned

IUS, SCYAP and Art City enjoyed working on all of the opportunities that resulted from this partnership. All of the activities that took place as a result of this funding contributed greatly to the success of relevant programming as well as helped the partners to reach a larger audience in regard to regular programming.

The web presence was a learning experience for all three partners. The opportunity to develop capacity and understanding about blogging was well-received. It did turn out to require determined effort and time to compose and post work online, and project funding allowed the art organizations to dedicate a staff to do this. The staff did self-guided entries about agency projects as they related to the artistic themes, and worked one-on-one with participants to create work to be posted.

Many of the youth who frequent the SCYAP Art Centre receive a large amount of their information/news from the internet rather than newspapers or even TV. The funding secured through this grant allowed SCYAP to continue reaching out to these youth but in a new and creative way. Being involved in the blog allowed SCYAP to not only spread the word about the Living Prairie City blog, but also about other relevant blogs as well. Blogs offer a grassroots message that is unfiltered by media and covers a wide range of topic areas. As a result of our involvement on this project, many of our youth will likely continue to read blogs as an additional source of information on arts and culture activities.

The Living Prairie City blog also provided SCYAP with an additional outlet to highlight the success of local young artists in a form that reached a different and perhaps wider audience due to the collaborative nature of the project. Another positive and unexpected result was an increase in interest for the SCYAP Urban Canvas Project. After posting a blog post regarding the closing ceremonies for the Urban Canvas IX project, a record number of youth attend the Urban Canvas Orientation Session. SCYAP had 90 applicants and interviewed nearly 40 youth, which is over double the response from 2009.

Sustainability

The Mixed Media Metropolis mural is being considered as an installation for the soon-to-be-completed Richardson College for the Environment, to which IUS will likely move in 2011.

The stakeholder partners are also interested in maintaining the Living Prairie City blog. In the future they will be more able to develop blog-specific art projects as they now have a better idea about the time and tools it takes to complete this kind of work. The experience demonstrated to the community-based groups how blogs can be used as a tool to spread a message to a wider audience, while recognizing that allocating sufficient time and resources to the site is crucial to its utility and success.

Finally, the community development theory seminars will strengthen the ability of both Art City and SCYAP to better communicate the social outcomes of their work to both governments and funding bodies.

Conclusion

The funding provided through the Department of Canadian Heritage supported a rewarding and engaging partnership between organizations in two prairie cities that generated a unique approach to understanding the theme of “better city, better life.” It provided the artistic resources necessary for young people to express their thoughts and views on life in their communities, and facilitated a genuine dialogue between the project partners and their communities that is still ongoing.