

# How Do I Start a Community Art Project?

## What is Community Art?

Community Art is any art form which focuses on involving community members, who contribute a variety of talents, to design and create a public art piece. These projects are done together with a professional artist who passes on skills to the participants through the art-making process. The content of the artwork usually reflects local issues that have been identified by people within the community. Community art can use any art form including theatre, music, visual arts, literary arts, dance and more. The importance of the project is placed on the process of art making because of its ability to build relationships and involve all members of a neighbourhood helping to establish collective identity. The artwork, once complete, is exhibited or performed for the community.

## What are the benefits Community Art?

- 🎨 Personal growth and achievement
- 🎨 Confidence, self esteem, empowerment, lifelong learning
- 🎨 Development of stronger, more sustainable communities
- 🎨 Widening participation
- 🎨 Identifying social needs at a local level
- 🎨 Promoting creativity and problem solving
- 🎨 Intergenerational harmony
- 🎨 Active citizenship and local involvement in governance
- 🎨 Improvements in mental and physical health
- 🎨 Less crime and offending behaviour
- 🎨 Improved community relations
- 🎨 Feelings of acceptance and belonging in the community

## Do I need to be an artist to participate?

No. All skill levels from professional to first-time arts participants are welcome. In fact, the more diversity the better! This allows for people to build on their skills and feel a sense of togetherness with others in the community. At least one professional artist will be needed to help teach the group the artistic skills they will need to create the artwork the community will envision.

## How do I get involved?

The first step to starting a community art project is getting inspired and using that enthusiasm to find partners for your project. You will need a facilitator, at least one artist (who may double as the facilitator), community participants, and funders (who may also be interested in participating).

## Some initial questions to ask yourself and the participants:

What community issues would you like to address through your artwork? How will your artwork help address or solve these issues? How will you ensure that all participants feel included in the project design, artwork design and art creation? How will the skills or relationships developed over the project be sustained past the life of the project? Will you target specific community members to participate (ex. youth, children, seniors, cultures, etc.) Where will you perform or display your work?

Some great resources are available online to help you design your project. See Resources below.

## Who do I contact for more info?

Contact HRM's Community Arts Facilitator, Kate MacLennan at 490-4408 [maclenk@halifax.ca](mailto:maclenk@halifax.ca)



## Resources

### Videos

#### Documenting Engagement – A Community Artists Media Institute

To order contact Liz Schulze at [liz.schulze@cinematheque.bc.ca](mailto:liz.schulze@cinematheque.bc.ca) or call 604.688.8202 and ask for Liz.  
A Sense of Africville - Joseph Howe School Community Art Project

#### Magic in Mud – Explorations in Natural Building

For copies of either of these DVDs contact Kim Thompson at 453-2429 or [shipharbour@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:shipharbour@ns.sympatico.ca)

### Guide Books

#### Community Art Guide Sheets

[http://www.artsresourcenetwork.net/community\\_arts/developing\\_a\\_project/tools.asp](http://www.artsresourcenetwork.net/community_arts/developing_a_project/tools.asp)

#### Community ArtS Workbook... Another Vital Link – more detailed resource

<http://www.arts.on.ca/Page48.aspx> - click on Community Arts Workbook...another Vital Link

#### YouthARTSHandbook - Workbook for Art and Youth at Risk

<http://www.americansforthearts.org/youtharts/download.asp>

#### Youth Engagement Tool Kit – a concise 'How To' guide on working with youth. Not

specific to the arts. Download at [www.halifax.ca/recreation/YouthEngagementToolKit.html](http://www.halifax.ca/recreation/YouthEngagementToolKit.html)

### Local Organizations

#### 4C's Foundation (Creative Connections between Children and their Communities)

[www.4csfoundation.com](http://www.4csfoundation.com)

- granting organization - deadlines for applications October 15, January 15 and May 15

#### Visual Arts Nova Scotia (VANS)

<http://vans.ednet.ns.ca>

-runs a two day Community Arts Workshop (covers all art forms – not just visual)

### Websites

These sites have further links of their own.

[www.artsresourcenetwork.net/community\\_arts](http://www.artsresourcenetwork.net/community_arts)

[www.communityarts.net](http://www.communityarts.net)

[www.commonweal-arts.com](http://www.commonweal-arts.com)

[www.creativecity.ca/resources/project-profiles](http://www.creativecity.ca/resources/project-profiles)



Information provided in the Good Neighbours Great Neighbourhoods Tool Kit is accurate as of the date of printing. For the most current information on these and many other HRM programs, please visit [www.myhrm.ca](http://www.myhrm.ca) or [www.halifax.ca](http://www.halifax.ca)

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