



# ARTS IN THE PARKS TOOLKIT





When summer arrives, arts take to the parks! Launched in 2016 by Toronto Arts Foundation (TAF), **Arts in the Parks** is a free, annual, summer-long celebration of arts in the outdoors. Working alongside Toronto Arts Council's (TAC) **grants programs**, this unique initiative provides opportunities for all residents, particularly those in under-served communities, to access professional arts programming in neighbourhood parks.

Entering our fourth summer, we are pleased to share our Arts in the Parks journey with others who are interested in animating parks with arts. Whether you are contemplating a summer long program or a weekend event, we think you will find useful ideas, links to in-depth information and handy tips in our Arts in the Parks Toolkit.

Arts in the Parks would not be possible without a network of supporters and partners from community organizers who advocate for their local parks, to city builders concerned about public space, and visionaries who see the arts as a way of bringing communities together. Toronto Arts Foundation would like to thank everyone who has cheered us on, especially the City's Parks, Forestry and Recreation Department and Mayor John Tory whose enthusiasm about Arts in the Parks has been a catalyst since day one.

Drawing on our Arts in the Parks experience, we have created this toolkit to help community organizations and municipalities look at the big ideas and the small details that go into planning and producing arts events in parks. Thanks go to Ontario Trillium Foundation for its important partnership and the support provided throughout the development of this resource.

We offer this toolkit as a way to share our findings with you. We hope it will add to conversations about the changing role of parks as social and cultural spaces and serve as a helpful resource for community visionaries to tap into the transformative power of the arts in public spaces. It's not a playbook, but a guide to help navigate some of the logistical, financial and artistic considerations involved in producing arts events in parks and other public spaces. Make this your own - the concept of Arts in the Parks is absolutely sharable.

Claire Hopkinson  
Director & CEO  
Toronto Arts Foundation and Toronto Arts Council

# ARTS IN THE PARKS TOOLKIT

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# KEY POINTS SUMMARY



Arts in the Parks (AIP) is an annual summer-long, inclusive arts initiative that takes place in an average of 32 parks per year across Toronto. Arts in the Parks is a strategic initiative of Toronto Arts Foundation in partnership with Toronto Arts Council, City of Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation Department, and Park People, a national advocacy organization. The involvement of these four key partners has brought important expertise to the table and helped strengthen the initiative.

AIP supports events that are free and family-friendly, including theatre, music concerts, film nights and creative workshops for community members. It promotes community-building and encourages local residents to enjoy parks in a new manner. Artists benefit too! With performance and exhibition space in Toronto becoming increasingly expensive and scarce, this initiative provides a partial solution. Arts in the Parks also positions artists as the producers of their events, which encourages artistic excellence and builds production skills. Artists are offered guidance on selecting the park most suited to their programming, how to navigate the often-confusing permitting process, and how to get people out to their event.

Drawing on our Arts in the Parks experience, Toronto Arts Foundation has created this toolkit to help community organizations and municipalities look at the big ideas and the small details that go into planning and producing arts events in parks.

## **ARTS ACCESS IN PARKS**

Concern about the scarcity and lack of affordability of arts space is almost universal across cities, towns, and rural communities in Canada. For many people, arts and culture venues are too far away from where they live, or too expensive. Others haven't felt welcome or represented. These dynamics create barriers to arts access. By investing in arts programming in public spaces, we can make more synergistic use of our public assets. Opening parks to arts programming allows municipalities to leverage new investment and increase arts access and means every neighbourhood can experience the arts.

While the Arts in the Parks program invests funding and resources directly into artists and arts organizations all across the city of Toronto, we intentionally invest in those artists, organizations and communities who, despite a prolonged lack of resources due to historical and geographical barriers, have been developing cultural and social infrastructure in the inner suburbs. We recognize the value of Toronto's inner suburbs (Etobicoke, North York, Scarborough) as centres of arts and cultural activity.

Parks are democratic spaces – they are free to all, reflect the demographic diversity of our city and are places for social and cultural interaction. Parks play a variety of functions: for those who live in small apartments, parks are open spaces good for reading and relaxing; for those who love nature but don't have a garden, parks are an oasis of flowers, bushes and trees. Arts and culture programs presented in parks – children's art classes, concerts, exhibitions and art installations – are opportunities for the public not only to have greater arts access but new experiences of art.

Featuring a variety of arts disciplines and event formats, AIP provides audiences a choice of how to interact with the arts: as an audience member, by getting involved in the art making or, in one case, helping generate the power needed to amplify a concert by riding stationary bicycles connected to a generator.

Arts access is at the core of Toronto Arts Council and Toronto Arts Foundation's shared vision: **Creative City Block-by-Block**. TAC and TAF are redefining what creative cities can be by putting equitable access to the arts at the forefront of our mission, through programs that promote community-building and encourage local residents and artists to see their parks in new, creative and inviting ways.

## PLANNING

Creating a plan is a key part of a successful event. Start well in advance and be prepared to make changes along the way as you find out more information about the location and the artists involved. When developing a production plan, some basic considerations go along with producing an event, particularly one taking place outdoors. The length of your timeline and amount of resources needed will differ greatly depending on the scale of your event; for example, a summer long festival compared to a weekend celebration. Key parts of a plan include:

- 1 Creating a Timeline
- 2 Picking a Location
- 3 Working with Artists
- 4 Human Resources
- 5 Outreach and Promotion
- 6 Permits, Insurance and Regulations
- 7 Dealing with Weather and Emergencies

There are many ways to make a plan. Use examples of other plans to get ideas but make sure your plan works for you and your community.

## PARKS MEET ART

Parks selected for events have an integral role in the success of the event. Each park has different features and its own character, which provide unique opportunities for cultural placemaking. The tangible and intangible elements of each site affect what happens in the space, who enters the space and how the space is used. It's possible you will have to compete with other events and other stakeholders, such as local recreational sports teams.

The following elements play an important role in determining which parks are suitable for which arts activities:

- ▶ Natural Terrain
- ▶ Built Structures
- ▶ Washrooms and Drinking Water
- ▶ Parking
- ▶ Park Size and Signage and Wayfinding
- ▶ Accessibility

Numerous factors – including built form, amenities, community and stakeholder engagement, park staff buy-in – determine if an event will be successful. Arts events should be highly site-specific and community-engaged. Stakeholders should be brought on board for planning and partnership-building from the beginning of the process. Consider what artists and staff might need to be successful and what attendees might need to enjoy the event. Anticipating people’s needs and taking care of everyone involved is a great operating principle.

## **PARTNERSHIPS**

Developing a diversity of partnerships is key to the success of presenting arts programming in parks. Partners can bring resources to the table such as permitting, funding, sponsorship, in-kind material donations, community engagement, marketing and promotion, and much more. Be open to collaboration with local organizations, BIAs, politicians, businesses, and community members. Successful partnerships are reciprocal, built one step at a time, and require clear communication and shared visions and objectives.

Key stakeholders in a public arts initiative are: artists and arts organizations, funders, municipal or regional governments, community agencies and services, and community members.

Building partnerships takes time, sensitivity and respect. Partnering with government can bring both financial and in-kind resource investment to your project. Partnering with community agencies allows for community buy-in and audience development. Working with artists requires respect for their skills and time and openness to change and experimentation. Support from politicians, municipal staff, and park staff in the planning process and during the event can be invaluable to your project.

An effective way of identifying potential organizations, agencies and individuals to collaborate with is to build a list by mapping the spaces, people, organizations, businesses, and communities that may benefit from and contribute to your initiative.

### **MAPPING POTENTIAL PARTNERS/SPACES/PEOPLE**

- ▶ Who manages the resources and services necessary to initiate the program?
- ▶ Who has the expertise and knowledge you are missing?
- ▶ Who has connections to communities you would like to engage (e.g. artists, local residents, etc.)?
- ▶ Who would be an asset to the initiative?
- ▶ Who would benefit from the initiative?
- ▶ Who is offering to contribute resources?

### **IDENTIFY SHARED GOALS**

- ▶ What are your organization’s strategic goals and objectives and how does the initiative fulfill them?
- ▶ The goals and objectives of what other organizations might be met, and how?
- ▶ How will the initiative impact the future of your organization and that of the partners?
- ▶ What is the impact of the project on your organization and your partners’ interests?
- ▶ Do your partners want to be involved in designing evaluation tools?
- ▶ Will you share the evaluation results with your partners?

## FUNDRAISING

Raising money is a vital part of any arts initiative. What's important is to find the fundraising methods that work best for you. Remember that arts in parks often has funder and donor appeal where the events are free and this is seen as a community benefit. Keep in mind, however, that restrictions on signage in parks may require creative or alternative solutions to acknowledge sponsors.

There are numerous ways to fundraise and find sources of revenue, including:

- ▶ Individual Donations and Crowdfunding
- ▶ Corporate Sponsorship
- ▶ Foundation Grants
- ▶ Government Grants
- ▶ In-Kind Support
- ▶ Fundraising Events

Fundraising is about relationship building, mutual benefit and shared vision. For inspiration, look at what others have done in your region for fundraising and budgeting and see how their successful strategies can be integrated into your own. Build a fundraising strategy that best suits the size and scale of your initiative and that you feel confident you can achieve. Make it artful and inviting. Also make sure you can deliver and document any requested or agreed-upon visibility for funders and sponsors.

## OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

The best community outreach and engagement strategies are an extension of the creative practice, not just a marketing campaign. Community outreach should be initiated from the beginning rather than when you feel ready to launch, and your community engagement should act as an invitation not only to join you on the day of the event but to collaborate in the project's development. Think of the invitation as the beginning of relationship-building, each step of which is part of a collaborative artistic creation process. Your invitation to the community should be artistically devised, warm, welcoming, inclusive, accessible and fun.

Ways to effect community engagement:

- 1 Determine the organizations, agencies, services and community groups operating in the area.
- 2 Research the neighbourhood history and demographics.
- 3 Ensure you develop protocols that respect, and share the spotlight with, local community organizers and artists.
- 4 Develop artful and fun ways to invite local community members to attend or participate.
- 5 Pay attention to the way the local community communicates important events: it may be through social media channels, through a community newsletter or through a less common community messaging system.

Think about what you could do to encourage people to attend and ways you can reach out so people feel welcome. You can better understand barriers to attendance by consulting widely with different community members.

## COMMUNICATIONS

Getting the word out about your event is important but not always easy. Think of how to promote both passively and actively.

**Passive promotion** means putting your information out for others to come across as they are reading the newspaper, scrolling online or moving about in the community. Information posted on your website, an ad in a newspaper or posters in the community can be effective in creating visibility about your event but you have less control over who is getting the information. Posters should catch the eye and prominently feature the date, time and location. We've found that information on bulletin boards at community centres and agencies or a pile of flyers at the local library are good ways to reach people at a local level.

**Active promotion** means targeting your promotion to the people you want to attract to the event. If you have lots of person power, you can organize door-to-door campaigns or attend community events like Farmers' Markets or community BBQs to inform people about the event in-person. Consider having a presence in the park prior to the event so you can raise public interest and people can ask questions about what will be happening.

## EVALUATION

Ongoing evaluation can be an effective tool for long term sustainability. It serves your mission and goals and your ability to attract resources in the future. The best time to think about evaluating your project is at the planning stage. When you envision the event and are thinking of your desired outcomes, ask yourself, "How will we know if we've met our goals?".

The effort to evaluate a project or activity is well worth the information you will get out, and an evaluation plan can be simple and tailored to the resources of your organization. Evaluation will help you to:

- ▶ Better understand how different people experience the activity
- ▶ Think of ways to improve your next event
- ▶ Focus on what's working and what's not
- ▶ Share your findings with stakeholders including funders

Steps in an evaluation plan include:

- 1 Identify project objectives, indicators and stakeholders
- 2 Assess evaluation resources
- 3 Decide on evaluation methods and tools
- 4 Gather data and analyze information
- 5 Create report, distribute and next steps (or recommendations)

Evaluation is a cyclical process. Each step builds on the one that came before it. We start by articulating our objectives, identifying stakeholders, and seeking input into the evaluation plan. Along the way we figure out the right questions, how best to gather information, and slowly the program impact emerges. When we have the full picture we can create a report. The contents of the report can be used for arts advocacy, fundraising, and promotion. It is also a useful planning tool to help improve the next event or project. In this way the circle is complete and the end becomes the next beginning.

## CONCLUSION

Arts in the Parks is a work in progress, and each year the feedback we receive from evaluations helps us make improvements and embrace new ideas. In 2018, TAF launched a Local Artist Spotlight Program, providing opportunities for local emerging artists, primarily youth, to perform before a main Arts in the Park event. The Local Artist Spotlight Program provides paid performance experience, generates collaborative opportunities, and deepens the connection between the presenting artists and the community.

Each year when the summer arrives, arts will take to the parks and community members will come out to see what is happening. The arts have much to offer communities: they bring people together and offer opportunities to engage in ideas and to experience spaces transformed by beauty. The Arts in the Parks program encourages people to explore their own creativity, enjoy park spaces in a new way, and enliven their neighbourhoods and their lives.

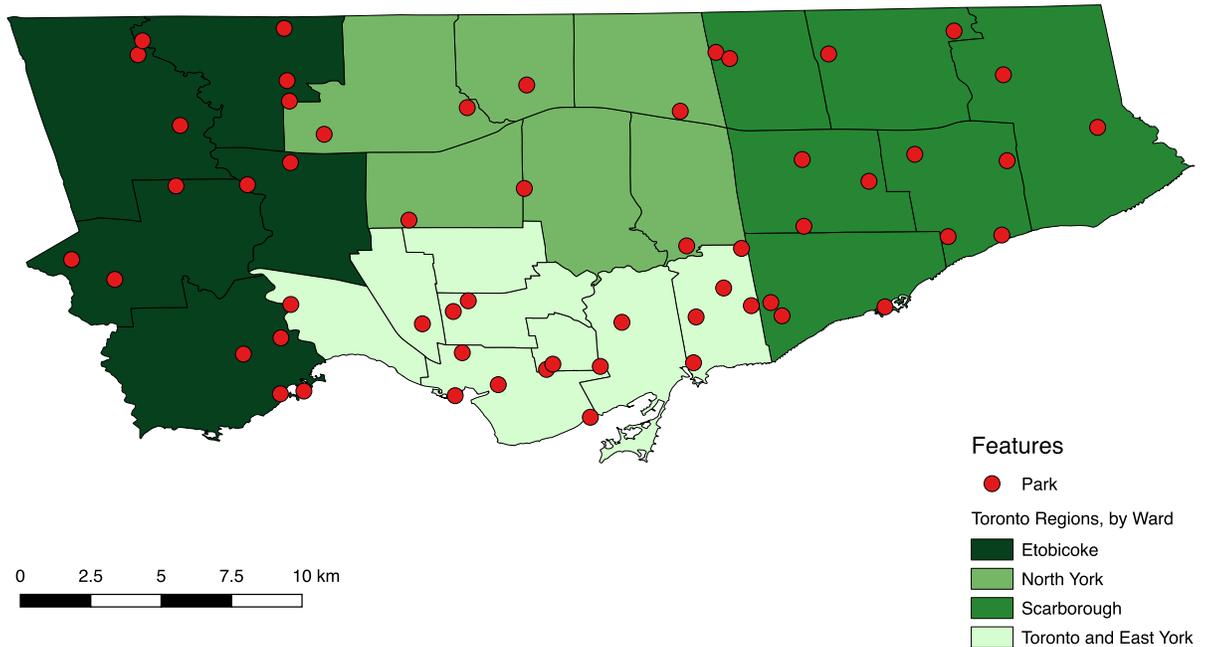


# ARTS IN THE PARKS STORY

## BACKGROUND

Arts in the Parks is an annual summer-long, inclusive arts initiative that takes place in an average of 32 parks per year across Toronto.

### EVENTS LOCATIONS 2016-2018



Arts in the Parks (AIP) supports events that are free and family-friendly including theatre, music concerts, film nights and workshops for children, families and neighbours. It promotes community-building and encourages local residents to enjoy parks in a new manner. Artists benefit too! With performance and exhibition space in Toronto becoming increasingly expensive and scarce, this initiative provides a partial solution. Arts in the Parks also positions artists as the producers of their events, which encourages artistic excellence and builds production skills. Artists are offered guidance on selecting the park most suited to their programming, how to navigate the often-confusing permitting process, and how to get people out to their event.

Artists have been performing in Toronto parks for decades, but the idea of Arts in the Parks -- tying all these events and activities together and creating greater access for artists and for communities -- is fairly new. The Animating Toronto Parks grants program was launched in 2015 followed by the Arts in the Parks program in 2016. Over the last three years, Arts in the Parks has animated **55 individual parks with 597 artist-produced events**, reaching **330,984 people** in neighbourhoods across the city of Toronto. Audiences are growing and communities are enthusiastic about Arts in the Parks coming to their neighbourhood.

## ARTS IN THE PARKS 2016-2018

	2016	2017	2018	Total
Audience	20,534	152,000	158,450	330,984
Event occurrences	121	194	282	597
Events (unique)	32	34	45	111
Number of artists/arts groups/companies	30	29	33	59
Parks animated	25	34	36	55
Wards with featured events (44 model)	24	28	28	34
Staff hours on-site	1,352	916	932	3,200
Volunteers	246	246	336	828
Youth volunteers		23	68	91
Volunteer hours	790	1132	1010	2932
Surveys collected	805	1,023	1,321	3,149

## ARTS IN THE PARKS PARTNERS

AITP is a strategic initiative of Toronto Arts Foundation in partnership with Toronto Arts Council, City of Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation Department, and Park People, a national advocacy organization. The involvement of these four key partners has brought important expertise to the table and helped strengthen the initiative.

### TORONTO ARTS FOUNDATION (TAF)

TAF raises funds from the private sector to support Toronto's arts and cultural sector. The Foundation is a charitable organization that sparks creative connections, spotlights artistic excellence, and supports vibrant cultural growth throughout our diverse city through private sector investment.

### TORONTO ARTS COUNCIL (TAC)

TAC is the City of Toronto's arm's-length arts funding body. For many years a handful of TAC-funded organizations have been offering excellent arts programs in downtown parks. In 2016, as part of the Arts in the Parks initiative, TAC developed Animating Toronto Parks, a new funding program that enables artists to produce their own projects in parks outside the central part of Toronto. Grants of up to \$25,000 are available to artists, collectives and non-profit organizations to produce arts programming in selected Toronto parks in Etobicoke, North York and Scarborough. Recipients are chosen through a peer jury process.

### PARK PEOPLE

Park People is a non-profit organization that supports the improvement of city parks country-wide by developing programs and connecting people and groups who share an interest in parks. TAF partnered with Park People from the beginning to better understand the parks that were being animated and to establish connections with community organizers familiar with local parks.

Park People has valuable resources which you can find [here](#).

### CITY OF TORONTO

The City of Toronto is a critical partner, and leadership from Mayor John Tory has been instrumental to the success of this city-building initiative. The City's Parks, Forest & Recreation Department (PFR) is responsible for the care of city parks and is a primary collaborator in the park approval process that matches artists and parks and issues park permits to arts groups. Permits cover aspects such as noise concerns, when to be out of the park, and use of fire pits.



## ARTS IN PARKS NUMBERS – ARTISTS AND ARTS GROUPS

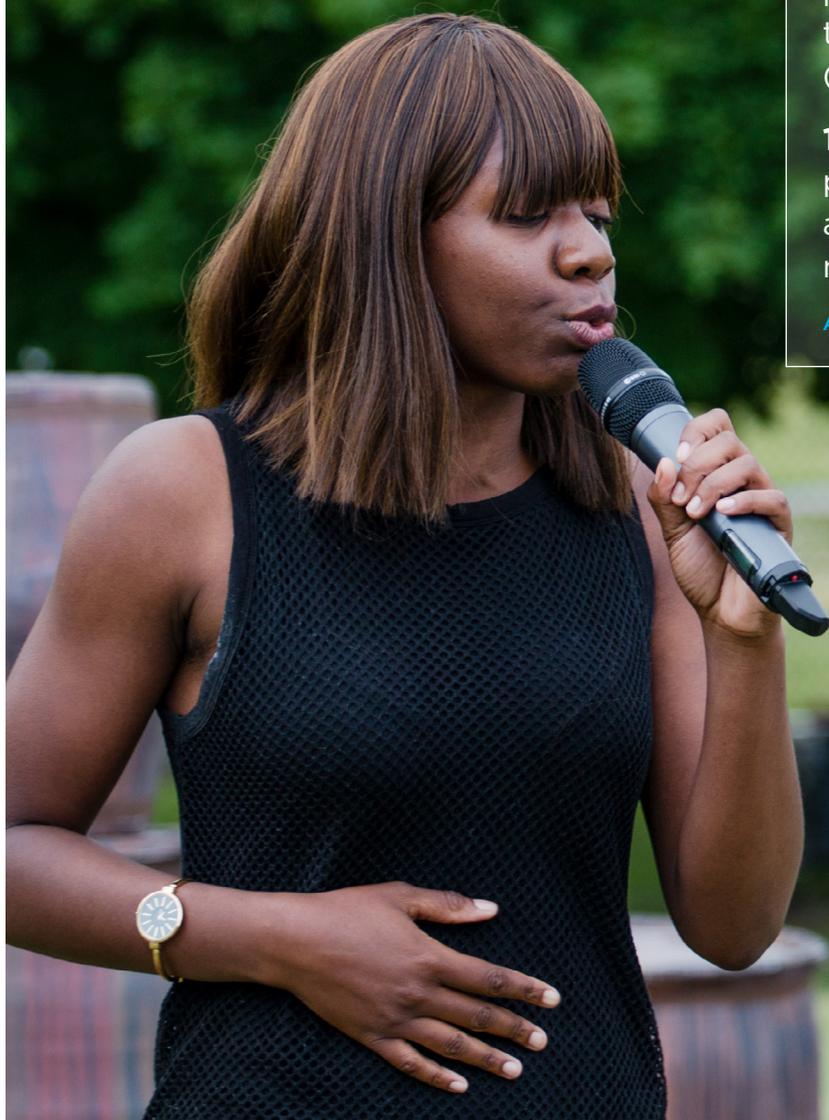
In 2018, 36 parks were animated by 282 events produced by 33 artists and arts groups; those who responded to our survey told us:

**100%** of artists and arts groups agree they benefit from being part of Arts in the Parks

**88%** of artists and arts groups participate because they want to engage with specific sites (parks) and environments

**100%** of artists and arts groups participate because they want arts to be free and accessible in neighbourhoods

[Arts in the Parks Evaluation Report 2018](#)



## STILL DEVELOPING

Arts in the Parks is a work in progress. Year over year the program and its projects are evaluated and adjustments are made to improve areas, such as marketing and outreach. In 2018, TAF launched a Local Artist Spotlight Program, providing opportunities for local emerging artists, primarily youth, to perform before a main Arts in the Park event. The Local Artist Spotlight Program provides paid performance experience, generates collaborative opportunities, and deepens the connection between the presenting artists and the community.

## SUPPORTING ARTS

Concern about the scarcity and lack of affordability of arts space is almost universal across cities, towns, and rural communities across Canada. For many people, arts and culture venues are too far away from where they live or too expensive. Others haven't felt welcome or represented. These dynamics create barriers to arts access. But equally universal is the abundance of artists and arts audiences in each and every community! By investing in arts programming in public spaces across the city, we can make more synergistic use of our public assets. Opening parks to arts programming allows municipalities to leverage new investment and increase arts access, and means every neighbourhood can experience the arts.

### Arts in the Parks Report



Since the first year, the Foundation's Research and Impact team has put together an evaluation report that examines the experience of Arts in the Parks' four key groups: attendees, artists, volunteers and community organizers. Click the following link to read our most recent report: [Arts in Parks 2018 Evaluation Report](#)

Find out more

While the Arts in the Parks program invests funding and resources directly into artists and arts organizations all across the city of Toronto, we intentionally invest in those artists, organizations and communities who, despite a prolonged lack of resources due to historical and geographical barriers, have been developing cultural and social infrastructure in the inner suburbs. We recognize the value of Toronto's inner suburbs (Etobicoke, North York, Scarborough) as centres of arts and cultural activity.

Arts access is at the core of Toronto Arts Council and Toronto Arts Foundation's shared vision: **Creative City Block-by-Block**. TAC and TAF are redefining what creative cities can be by putting equitable access to the arts at the forefront of our mission, through programs that encourage local residents and artists to see their parks in new ways - as spaces of social and cultural interaction.

All AITP artists and organizations, funded by TAC, receive support to develop and plan arts programming and navigate permitting and partnerships. Through our new Animating Toronto Parks, both emerging and established artists develop their artistic practice and build valuable producing skills that serve to build sectoral capacity in public arts presentation. Through TAC and TAF's partnership with the City of Toronto, we advocate for the benefits of local arts presentation in parks and public spaces, which helps the city to create more efficient and welcoming processes for park booking and permitting, removing barriers to access for artists and communities.

Increasing access to the arts at the neighbourhood level improves livability, health, wellness, safety and civic engagement. Created with the intention of increasing public use of Toronto parks, Arts in the Parks adds value to the social development of neighbourhoods. It creates opportunities to experience high quality arts programming in every city ward, not just downtown.



# WHY ARTS OUTDOORS IS IMPORTANT

## ENVISIONING ARTS IN PARKS

Known as the “City within a Park”, Toronto is recognized internationally for its more than 8,000 hectares of parkland and over 1600 parks which are a diverse network of ravines, sports fields, recreation trails and neighbourhood parks of all shapes and sizes.

Parks are democratic spaces – they are free to all, reflect the demographic diversity of our city and are places for social and cultural interaction. Parks play a variety of functions: for those who live in small apartments, parks are open spaces good for reading and relaxing; for those who love nature but don’t have a garden, parks are an oasis of flowers, bushes and trees. Arts and culture programs presented in parks – children’s art classes, concerts, exhibitions and art installations – are opportunities for the public to have greater arts access.

94% of Torontonians who responded to the Arts Stats survey in 2016 saw a personal benefit to having art in public spaces.<sup>1</sup> The city’s 2013-2017 Parks Plan found that 93% of Torontonians strongly agree that parks and trails are vital city infrastructure.<sup>2</sup> Putting these two great strengths together has enabled TAC and TAF to imagine how parks could become arts venues.



*“A lovely way to spend a beautiful summer evening. It introduced me to music I would likely not hear otherwise.”*

– Attendee in Panorama Park, 2018

*“Toronto parks are welcoming spaces to escape the fast pace of city life and connect with nature. Our parks bring communities together for fun, recreation or quiet reflection and Arts in the Parks helps connect communities with artists on our common grounds.”*

– Parks, Forestry and Recreation, City of Toronto

As noted in Arts Stats 2016, Torontonians value arts activities that are free, less formal, and close to home. Art in public spaces helps people feel more connected to their city and since there are parks all over the city, it’s never very far to travel for an arts experience in a park.

There are many ways that arts activities add to the quality of life of individuals and communities, including:

- ▶ Bringing neighbours together
- ▶ Celebrating community history
- ▶ Encouraging creativity in young people
- ▶ Addressing social isolation of seniors

<sup>1</sup> Toronto Arts Foundation Arts Stats Survey, 2016

[https://torontoartsfoundation.org/tac/media/taf/Research/Toronto%20Arts%20Stats%202015/2016\\_Toronto-Arts-Stats-Booklet\\_public\\_FINAL.pdf](https://torontoartsfoundation.org/tac/media/taf/Research/Toronto%20Arts%20Stats%202015/2016_Toronto-Arts-Stats-Booklet_public_FINAL.pdf)

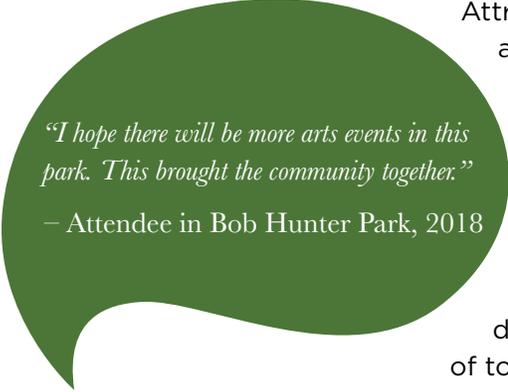
<sup>2</sup> City of Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation, Parks Plan 2013-2017

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2013/pe/bgrd/backgroundfile-57282.pdf>

## GETTING PEOPLE OUTSIDE

According to [Coleman Canada's 2017 Outdoor Report](#), nearly two-thirds of Canadians (64%) enjoy the open-air less than two hours per week, despite nearly all respondents acknowledging that being outdoors has many health benefits including enhancing overall well-being (98%) and reducing stress (95%). In addition to missing out on these benefits, those who don't spend time in parks miss out on numerous community activities offered outside.

Artists who have participated in the program have embraced the challenges of finding new ways to draw audiences in. Some approach the work as a form of conversation, seeing attendees not as passive spectators but active creators. For example, some projects invite attendees to learn drumming techniques or help assemble a mural or participate in a processional theatre production.



*"I hope there will be more arts events in this park. This brought the community together."*

– Attendee in Bob Hunter Park, 2018

Attracting residents to the park can be greatly improved by the support and on-the-ground knowledge of community organizers. These groups help spread the word in the community which helps bring out the audience. In return, the program helps local organizers to begin to see new possibilities for their local parks and envision more arts activities in their area.

An example of a group that has helped promote Arts in the Parks is [Flemingdon Community Support Services](#), located in a highly diverse neighbourhood in Toronto's North York populated by a number of tower communities. As part of the interwoven web of neighbourhood connections that address the needs of the many newcomer communities that call Flemingdon Park home, FCSS has interesting thoughts to offer on community engagement. FCSS Chair, Nawal Ateeq, proposes re-thinking the idea of outreach because it presumes an "insider" group that's trying to reach people who are "outsiders". Instead, it's important "to consider everyone in your community (and beyond) to be 'insiders' — they just may not know it yet."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Park People, Effective outreach means turning outreach 'inside out', 2018  
<https://parkpeople.ca/resources/en/resource/2299/effective-outreach-means-turning-outreach-inside-out>



## ARTS IN THE PARKS NUMBERS – COMMUNITY ORGANIZERS

In 2018, 19 community organizers contributed their time and resources to support Arts in the Parks and help the Foundation better engage with local communities; those who responded to our survey told us:

**75%** of community organizers feel inspired to do more in their parks after being part of an Arts in the Parks event

**67%** of community organizers agree Arts in the Parks changed their perspective on possibilities for their parks

**67%** of community organizers agree Arts in the Parks provides them with skills and knowledge to continue animating their parks with arts

[Arts in the Parks Evaluation Report 2018](#)



# SHADOWLAND THEATRE PRESENTING FEATHERED FRIENDS

Featured Story

# SHADOWLAND THEATRE PRESENTING FEATHERED FRIENDS

## LOCATION

Alexmuir Park in Scarborough

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

**Shadowland** is a professional theatre company founded nearly 40 years ago. Based in downtown Toronto, they animate a multitude of spaces using puppetry, masks, stilt-walking, fire, live-music and other spectacles.

## ABOUT THE PARK

Alexmuir Park is a medium sized tree-lined neighbourhood park with a large open area, playground and sports field. Located in a suburban residential area, it is surrounded by houses and is adjacent to a school. There are small clusters of trees throughout the park.

## HOW THE PARK WAS ANIMATED

Shadowland animated Alexmuir Park with a week-long community-engaged theatre arts residency featuring daily workshops geared towards youth and culminating in a community parade. The project theme, Feathered Friends, was developed in collaboration with community members and celebrated the park's bird life and natural elements. Shadowland collaborated with Alan Colley (Toronto Aboriginal Eco Tours) to incorporate Indigenous nature teachings with outdoor theatre techniques (spectacle arts, puppetry, music and sculpture) to express the importance of birdlife in our world. Shadowland's collaboration with Rosewood Community Association was central to this project.

*"It brought the neighborhood together. Excellent event! We really enjoyed it; our son participated in the event throughout the week and loved it! Thank you!"*

Their week long residency included:

- ▶ Indigenous teachings and nature walks based on the Medicine Wheel, nature and local wildlife
- ▶ Exploring bird species and habitat in the park
- ▶ Creation of a bird-themed stilt and pageant costumes, puppets, masks, and sculptures
- ▶ Stilt-walking classes
- ▶ Music and choreography lessons
- ▶ Shadow puppetry and other forms of puppets
- ▶ Lessons on storytelling and story creation
- ▶ Campfires and storytelling

*"Had fun. Met a lot of people who were so friendly. Learned interesting things and interacted with a piece of my culture."*

All activities culminated in a community theatre pageant that toured around the park. It featured costumes and multiple staged vignettes that told a story created by the youth participants. The celebration also featured local traditional Chinese musicians and dance groups.

This project was funded by the City of Toronto through Toronto Arts Council's Animating Toronto Parks grants program.

## **IMPACT**

Since their first Arts in the Parks event in 2016, Shadowland has forged important relationships with the Alexmuir Park community and their presence is now something the neighbourhood looks forward to every year. The approach of returning to the same park year after year gives the impression that that Shadowland's event belongs to the community, though Shadowland is not from this community. It also has encouraged residents to return every summer and each year attracts new attendees.

Community involvement and ownership is also reinforced through Shadowland's practices of hiring local community members. These members act as ambassadors for the event – conducting active outreach in both English and Mandarin and working as workshop assistants – and as aides to the community organizer in sending out emails, distributing flyers, putting up posters, conducting door-to-door canvassing and attending special events. Shadowland's approach is highly visual, making it more accessible by reducing any language barriers.



# FOCUSING ON OBJECTIVES

## Dance Artists Working in Parks



*Dusk Dances* has been bringing dance to parks in Toronto and across Canada since 1993. As dusk descends, a theatrical host leads the audience – which invariably includes children, dog walkers and local residents – to eclectic dance pieces that unfold in different areas of the park.

Choreographers from various backgrounds are invited to create a ten-minute piece inspired by the park's natural environment. Audiences are invited on a pay-what-you-can basis to an innovative site-specific festival, which is not only an artistic event but a social and cultural one as well.

With the creation of the Dusk Dances Licensing Initiative, local organizations can learn how to produce Dusk Dances events in their community. Most recently licensee events in Ontario have taken place in Hamilton and Barrie.

[Find out more](#)

## FIRST STEP

Your first step in presenting arts outdoors is to craft a statement of your vision and objectives. This will guide you, ground your decision making, and let you know how you are doing every step of the project. You can devise this statement by better understanding the answers to some basic questions about capacity and resources. Here are some questions to ask at the beginning of the project:

- ▶ Who are you trying to reach?
- ▶ What do you hope is the outcome of the program?
- ▶ How does the outdoors add to the event?
- ▶ What types of parks are in your community?
- ▶ Do you want this to be an annual event? Is this a special event perhaps coinciding with an important anniversary?
- ▶ Where might funding or donations come from to cover cost of the event(s)?
- ▶ What resources (organizations and people) would get behind this idea?
- ▶ Who will be the lead organization(s)?

Keep your objectives front and centre from beginning to end as they will drive all the choices you make. When it's all

over, your objectives will be your guideline to determine if the event has been a success and to what extent.

Other options that can be decided based on your vision and objectives include:

- ▶ Admission: free, pay-what-you-can or a ticket price
- ▶ Artists: local or from outside the region/area, or both
- ▶ Audience/Content: family-friendly, child focused, youth focused or adult focused
- ▶ Art Format: presentation, audience participation, or opportunities for attendees to learn arts skills
- ▶ Audience Format: seated or standing
- ▶ Stages: one stage, multiple stages, or no stages

## CHOOSING ARTISTS TO MEET YOUR OBJECTIVES

Knowing your objectives will help you decide on the artists you want to work with. Do you want to attract a large audience? Do you want to support local artists? Do you want to promote a particular art form? Do you want to encourage new and emerging talent? Or a combination of approaches?

*“This program helps to convey the message of how the fresh air and healthy environment and arts events in the parks can support them for their good physical and mental health and enjoy a good living”*

– Scarborough Community Organizer, 2018

In 2018, Arts in the Parks added a new objective to highlight local artists living in or near selected parks. The position of Community Engagement Coordinator was introduced to work with artists and community organizers to identify local artists who could be opening acts at events. This also helped meet the objectives of spreading the word about Arts in the Parks and increasing interest in the initiative.

*“Seeing the kids running free. There’s something for the whole neighbourhood and anyone else who wants to partake. Not a kids only, nor a teen only, nor an adult only event.”*

– Volunteer, 2018

## INVOLVING THE COMMUNITY

You might have in mind arts events that feature the work of professional artists, whether that be performances, film showings or visual arts exhibitions. But if part of your vision is to engage community members, consider community-engaged arts projects that invite the community to participate in the creative process in the days and weeks leading up to the event, often followed by being part of the presentation alongside professional artists. Community-engaged arts practice is defined by the **Ontario Arts Council** as “collaborative creative processes that involve professional artists and social institutions, grassroots groups or individuals.”<sup>4</sup> Such projects have been very popular in Arts in the Parks locations.

### Celebrating Local Culture



City of Toronto’s *Cultural Hot Spots* program highlights arts, culture and community by celebrating, connecting and investing in Toronto’s diverse neighbourhoods. Each year the focus is on different regions of the city. The program is designed to:

- ▶ Celebrate local culture, heritage, creativity, business and community with special events, festivals and art happenings, all of which build on community pride.
- ▶ Connect the Hotspot community, develop new partnerships and promote the area to all of Toronto through gatherings, events, outreach and media campaigns.
- ▶ Grow creative capacity in the area with workshops, courses, youth employment and mentorship, and legacy projects like the Cultural Loops Guide.

Find out more

Community-engaged arts practices and approaches include:

- ▶ Understanding that community members have important skills and lived experience to bring to the collaboration.
- ▶ An environment of reciprocity and exchange from which the artists and community participants mutually benefit.
- ▶ Recognition of the contribution of community participants to the artistic creation process.
- ▶ Adequate time to attend to relationships, flexibility, and adequate staffing/labour (all of which are crucial to success).

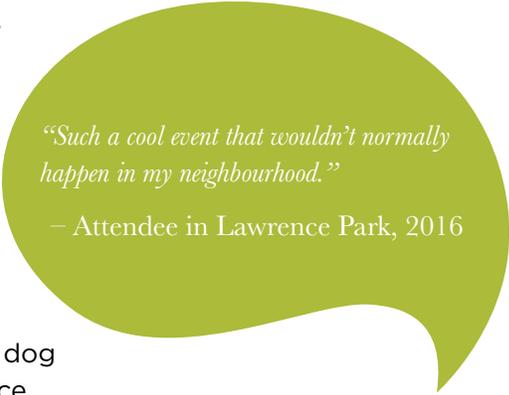
## KNOWING YOUR AUDIENCE

When you picture your event who do you see in attendance? Is your objective to make the arts more accessible and affordable? Is your objective to attract people to an arts event who don’t usually attend the arts? How will you better understand their reasons for attending? Arts in the Parks has put together a comprehensive evaluation plan to help us understand who is attending, and this helps us adjust our planning.

<sup>4</sup>Ontario Arts Councils definition of community arts:

<http://www.arts.on.ca/oac/media/oac/Publications/Framing-Community-A-Community-Engaged-Art-Workbook.pdf> p.5

We promote Arts in the Parks as a family-friendly event. Our surveying tells us important information about our attendees. People of all ages attend though they are most commonly between the ages of 35-54 (36%). Many of them attend with family and friends. Most attendees come as a result of making a specific plan, but others are “just passing by” and decide to check out what’s happening. The sight of stilt walkers and the sounds of drumming combined with a parade of people in bright costumes are enough to lure bicyclists, dog walkers and those out for a stroll over to the performance.



*“Such a cool event that wouldn’t normally happen in my neighbourhood.”*

– Attendee in Lawrence Park, 2016

The majority of attendees live in or near the neighbourhood where the activity is taking place, which is meeting the AITP objective of making the arts accessible at a local level. Other attendees come from across the city, some from cities close to Toronto, and a few are tourists from across Canada plus a handful of international guests.

Our surveys also tell us what our audiences value and care about.



## ARTS IN THE PARKS NUMBERS – ATTENDEES

Attendee surveys of 1190 audience members at approximately 50 events reveal that:

**82%** of attendees agree that experiencing Arts in the Parks increases their interest in attending or participating in more arts activities

**68%** of attendees agree the arts activity they participated in changed the way they see the park

**79%** of attendees agree they will return to the park for other activities

**43%** of audience members attend because it's free

**44%** of audience members attend because it's an opportunity to spend time with family and friends

**74%** of attendees live in the same region of the city where the activity took place

[Arts in the Parks Evaluation Report 2018](#)



# PLANNING

Whether you are producing your own arts events or developing a program to support arts programming in parks, you will require an ample pre-production period. Many elements need to come together: partnerships, resources (financial and human), required permits and permissions, artist commissions, marketing campaigns and community engagement.

## PLANNING COMMITTEE

A good place to start, and bring multiple stakeholders together, is to create a planning committee. The committee might be made up of representatives from government, partner institutions or organizations, artists, event organizers/planners, community agencies and other non-profits. Invite community members as well because input from residents helps to create an event that resonates at a local level.

*“It often felt that we were on the forefront of a new way of conceptualizing art and public space.”*

– Artist, 2016

Together the planning committee can develop a production plan, incorporating sections on location, infrastructure, accessibility, weather contingencies, planning, staffing and volunteers, etc. Your plan should be thorough enough to act as your go-to guide in producing the event.



**TIP:** Don't forget to schedule a wrap-up meeting so those involved can debrief what happened, what worked, and what didn't. If you intend to run another event, this feedback will help you start the planning for the next year and give you a good idea of how much lead time is needed.

## PRODUCTION PLAN

When developing a production plan, some basic considerations go along with producing an event, particularly one taking place outdoors. The length of your timeline and amount of resources needed will differ greatly depending on the scale of your event – a summer long festival compared to a weekend celebration. A good production plan needs to answer some of the following questions:

### 1 WHEN - TIMELINE

- ▶ What needs to get done? By when does each item need to be done?
- ▶ When should we get started?
- ▶ How far in advance does the location need to be booked?
- ▶ When does the promotion and outreach start?

### 2 WHERE - PARK AND COMMUNITY

- ▶ What is the right location?
- ▶ What kind of permits will be needed?
- ▶ Will the audience use public transit and how close is the park to the nearest route?
- ▶ Is there enough parking space for people who will drive?
- ▶ Is the space large enough for the program you're planning or cozy enough for your storytelling circle?
- ▶ What kind of infrastructure will be needed?
- ▶ What kind of accessibility accommodation will be needed?

### 3 WHO - ARTISTS AND STAFFING

- ▶ What artists will you program? How will you contact them?
- ▶ How do you deal with artists' contracts?
- ▶ What human resources (staff and volunteer) will be needed?
- ▶ How will staff/volunteers be recruited?
- ▶ Who will manage and coordinate volunteers?
- ▶ What kind of Event Crew will be needed?

### 4 HOW - PRODUCING, COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH

- ▶ How will the event be advertised? Who do you want to reach?
- ▶ What message do you want to convey about the event?
- ▶ What channels will be used to get the word out about what you're doing?
- ▶ What insurance will be needed?
- ▶ What permits and regulations apply to the event?
- ▶ What about weather contingency plan? When should an event be cancelled?

## INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS

Each park space is unique and each project will have different infrastructure needs. How you plan to use the space will determine how you need to get things set up. Make a list of everything you think your event will need even if it already exists in the park (that way you are less likely to overlook something).

Needs may include:

- ▶ Accessibility options
- ▶ Signage for the event
- ▶ Wayfinding signage
- ▶ Box office for paid events
- ▶ Stage or presentation space, or space for artists to work
- ▶ Seating
- ▶ Shade (trees, umbrellas, tents)
- ▶ Toilets (portable or on-site)
- ▶ Lighting and sound equipment
- ▶ Parking
- ▶ Storage for artists
- ▶ Drinking water and/or refreshments
- ▶ Considerations regarding proximity to residential areas (noise, parking congestion, etc.)

#### Helpful Hints To Plan an Event



Take inspiration from an Ontario community's experience with running festivals and events. [Richmond Hill's Festival and Event Guide](#) helps organizers through the various stages involved in planning a new festival or event.

Find out more

## SELECTING ARTISTS

Selecting artists depends on the kind of event you are producing. Are you showcasing musicians or presenting a wide range of arts disciplines? Are you looking for artists whose work will hold the attention of children? Do you want a culturally specific event or will you focus on the community's diversity? Do you want to showcase local artists or invite artists from outside the community?

Have you considered hiring Deaf Artists or Artists with Disabilities? What do you need to do to make their participation possible? Is the stage accessible? Will you provide Relaxed Performances?<sup>5</sup> Making adjustments and providing accessibility results in widening your access to and options for exciting, diverse arts expressions from artists who often have less opportunities. Involving Deaf Artists and Artist with Disabilities also provides positive role models for event attendees who may also face barriers. If you are unsure what kinds of needs an artist will have, don't be shy to ask.

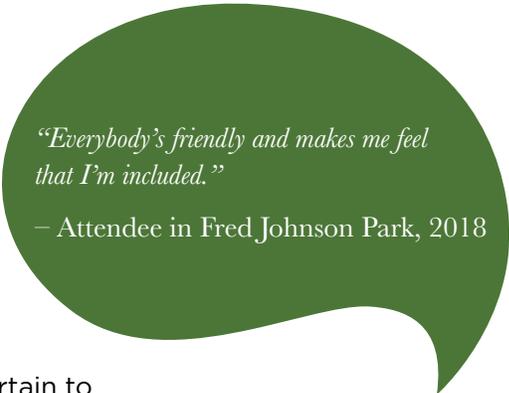
## PERMITS, INSURANCE AND REGULATIONS

Regardless of your location in Ontario, presenting art in a park is likely to require one or more permits from your municipality.

In an effort to streamline the process and make permitting easier for artists and city staff alike, in 2016 Toronto's department of Parks, Forestry & Recreation created a simplified permit level for arts programming. One-time, grassroots, free admission arts events may now access free permits with a very quick approval time. See [Arts and Music in City Parks](#) for more information about permits for Toronto's city parks.

However, if you're planning an event or events which span more than one day, or will include alcohol, food, amplified sound or installation of infrastructure or equipment, you will likely need to complete a number of documents and apply for several additional permits, including:

- ▶ Waste management plan
- ▶ Noise exemption permit (if there will be amplified sound)
- ▶ Public health permit (if serving food)
- ▶ Alcohol & gaming permit (if serving alcohol)
- ▶ Building permit (if constructing or installing a tent stage, platform or other infrastructure)
- ▶ Emergency action plan (if large audiences are expected)



*“Everybody’s friendly and makes me feel that I’m included.”*

– Attendee in Fred Johnson Park, 2018

Additionally, municipalities will have regulations that pertain to permitted park use. Some examples of additional regulations in Toronto include:

- ▶ No provision of bottled water on park property
- ▶ Restrictions on the size of signage and sponsorship recognition
- ▶ Fireworks restrictions

In Toronto, everyone presenting arts programming in City parks requires insurance. Insurance can be a particularly difficult requirement so it's important that it be considered and resolved early. To help with the cost and difficulty this requirement can cause, particularly for individual artists, the following solutions have been put in place:

- ▶ Artists working under an Arts and Music in City Parks permit may purchase the necessary insurance from the city (cost ranges from \$25 to \$100)
- ▶ Toronto Arts Council takes out group coverage for all artists and organizations receiving funding under the Animating Toronto Parks program. The group coverage is a highly valued benefit of being part of Arts in the Parks.

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<sup>5</sup>British Council's Access Awareness and Relaxed Performance Training:  
<https://www.britishcouncil.ca/access-awareness-relaxed-performance-training>

## WEATHER

A contingency plan for inclement weather is a must when working in parks. This plan should include a rain date (if you choose to book one) as well as actions that may need to be taken in the event of bad weather (covering electrical equipment or displays, anchoring signage, furniture or other structures, etc.). Some artists prefer to book alternate dates in order to cancel in the event of inclement weather and others will proceed rain-or-shine. This may depend on the type of art or performance being presented and/or the degree of risk to attendees. Choose a weather contingency plan that best suits the nature of your event and that works within the resources you have available. Weather is something that can't be controlled but there are steps you can take to mitigate issues it causes.

*"I was interested in getting involved with a new organization. I liked that this one was outdoors and had to do with community arts. I also liked the flexibility/commitment level."*

– Volunteer, 2018

Natural and built structures can provide protection from harsh weather and trees provide some shelter from both sun and rain.

But if trees are the only available shelter, consider renting a tent or tents. Renting a tent can be costly depending on the size and length of the event and, depending on local regulations, tent installation may require a building permit or other special permissions.

Consider booking a rain date in case you have to cancel and include this information in your event promotion.

Clearly communicate your weather contingency plan and its components to all artists, staff and volunteers, and delegate specific roles. Practice these roles so everyone knows what to do.

## HUMAN RESOURCES

You need to consider what human resources are needed for your event, and whether they will be paid staff or volunteers. You will also need an Event Crew, or a number of sub-crews, to ensure event logistics run smoothly on the day of.

### PAID STAFF

Each year, TAF has applied to [Canada Summer Jobs](#) to hire summer staff to support a variety of tasks such as outreach, writing event reports and attending the events and overseeing volunteers. Temporary staffing can make it possible for a small organization to tackle a big project and the positions are a great opportunity for students interested in the arts to gain experience in cultural placemaking.

Larger scale events will benefit from a Production Coordinator or Producer. For example, an outdoor arts event presented by a municipality should have staff hours assigned to the project.

### VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are as integral to the success of AITP events as they are to most arts events. They support staff by handling tasks and logistics that would be impossible for any one staff to do on their own. Consider recruiting young people since high school students have a curriculum requirement to complete 40 hours of volunteer service. In 2017, TAC/TAF incorporated youth volunteers (ages 14-17) into our programming and established roles exclusive to this group.

Volunteers contribute their time and skills for many reasons but one of the most common is being able to participate in the event and experience the art.

Volunteer roles can include:

- ▶ Informing the public about the initiative and specific events
- ▶ Helping with event set up and take down
- ▶ Staffing a box office or refreshment booth
- ▶ Conducting surveys

*“I lived in Toronto for most of my life and volunteering with Arts in the Parks allowed me to explore parks I had never been too, such as Trillium Park.”*

– Volunteer, 2018

## EVENT CREW

An event crew, or sub-crews, can be made up of organizational staff, sponsor staff, supporters and community volunteers. An event crew will:

- ▶ Assist with all aspects of event, workshop or installation set-up
- ▶ Set up box office and sell tickets (if the event’s not free)
- ▶ Staff a refreshment table
- ▶ Help vendors find and set up their spots (if event includes vendors)
- ▶ Staff an event information table
- ▶ Help manage and guide audience members and assist with information requests
- ▶ Distribute and collect surveys
- ▶ Assist with all aspects of event take-down, including site clean-up and garbage removal

A stage and sound crew is likely to be made up of paid technicians. They will:

- ▶ Set up audio/visual equipment
- ▶ Run sound checks
- ▶ Run sound during the show
- ▶ Pack up and remove equipment



**TIP:** If you have more than one act at your event, you will need:

- ▶ A stage manager to get artists settled backstage and let them know when they are on
- ▶ An emcee to introduce acts and make announcements

## AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

Consider how your audience/attendees will engage with the art. Producing arts in outdoor settings doesn’t have to mean a presentation on a stage with audiences sitting in chairs or on the grass. Depending on your objectives or the type of art, audience members might be encouraged to move around the space or get involved in the art-making. Installations

and outdoor exhibitions don’t have the same beginnings and endings as performance events, although you might include an artist talk so artists can share information about their work and attendees can ask questions.

Examples of outdoor artist exhibits:

- ▶ **Field Work** just off Highway 7 near Perth, Ontario
- ▶ **Winter Stations** on Woodbine Beach in Toronto

Examples of outdoor artist exhibits:

- ▶ **Red Dress Productions** work in urban and rural outdoor settings and frequently invite community members into the creative process
- ▶ The STEPS Initiative project, **Woven**, was part of Arts in the Parks in 2018

### Volunteer Management Software



To keep track of volunteers, easily communicate with them and manage volunteer schedules, all of which helps make volunteering a pleasant experience for both you and your volunteers, consider using a volunteer management platform such as *Better Impact* or *Volgistics*.



## ARTS IN THE PARKS NUMBERS – VOLUNTEERS

In 2018 more than 300 volunteers contributed 1010 hours of work; those that responded to a volunteer survey told us:

**58%** volunteer in the same area of the city that they live in

**78%** would volunteer again for Arts in the Parks

**85%** of volunteers feel welcomed and appreciated by Arts in the Parks summer staff

**81%** of volunteers feel their volunteering mattered

**86%** of volunteers feel their volunteering was valuable to them

[Arts in the Parks Evaluation Report 2018](#)



# KAEJA D'DANCE PRESENTING PORCH VIEW DANCES

Featured Story

# KAEJA D'DANCE PRESENTING PORCH VIEW DANCES

## LOCATION

Vermont Square Park in Downtown Toronto

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

**Kaeja d'Dance** is a contemporary dance company that, in addition to more traditional dance presentation, places dance in the public realm by creating community performances in which professional dancers work with local residents to create unique choreography and dance pieces that reflect the community.

## ABOUT THE PARK

Vermont Square Park is a small park located in the downtown neighbourhood of Seaton Village. This park is right beside a community centre and indoor ice rink and is a short walk from a subway station. It is well used by families for its pleasant playground and there is also a small stage.

## HOW THE PARK WAS ANIMATED

Kaeja d'Dance animated Vermont Square Park and the neighbourhood of Seaton Village with Porch View Dances over five consecutive days. Kaeja d'Dance worked with residents to create performances that told stories from the community. Mixing professional dancers with novices and those who perhaps have never danced before, Porch View Dances places local residents in the position of creator and performer. Parading from house to house, audience members watch unique vignettes featuring their friends and neighbours on their front porches and lawns. The event finished with a "Flock Landing" where all audience members could partake in a collective dance routine in the park.



*"Such a lovely and warm community event. Rare for the times."*

– Audience member, 2018

This project was funded by the City of Toronto through Toronto Arts Council's Dance Operating grants program.

## IMPACT

This project takes dance out of a formal setting and puts into public space – removing barriers to make it accessible to anyone interested. As Kaeja d'Dance has been producing Porch View Dances in Seaton Village since 2012, it has become a part of the neighbourhood and something residents look forward to every year. From beginning to end, residents are at the heart of Porch View Dances, which really encourages them to invest their time and interest in the annual project. It is an event for the community by the community, celebrating the neighbourhood and strengthening community connection.

# PARKS MEET ART



## PARK SELECTION

Parks selected for events have an integral role in the success of the event. Each park has different features and its own character, and the tangible and intangible elements of each site affect what happens in the space, who enters the space and how the space is used. This section will help you understand the various influential factors that exist in parks and provide you with topics to consider while developing your programming.

The park selection process can be complex and nuanced – requiring the involvement of multiple stakeholders. TAF and TAC have specifically sought out parks in areas of Toronto that have had very limited access to arts programming. Some of these parks are located in neighbourhoods that have been designated by the city’s Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy 2020 as Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIA). Most of the selected parks are located in the Greater Toronto Area’s “inner suburbs”. Some parks have been selected because they are in a neighbourhood with a strong social infrastructure or a high-capacity “Friends” group. In the planning stages, AITP met individually with City Councillors to get their input into the selection of parks in their area of the city.

When searching for a suitable park it’s possible you will have to compete with other events and other stakeholders, such as local recreational sports teams. Depending on who is in charge of maintenance, supervision and management of the park (i.e. a park supervisor), you may need to plan for some careful relationship management. Spending extra time in meetings or communications and clearly outlining your event requirements and expectations to the park management staff are very important.

One of the first steps should be to book an onsite meeting in the park with key stakeholders and park staff. Be sure to send a clear and concise event information package in advance that explains what the event will look and feel like, how the audience will flow through, what your seating plan is and any emergency plans. Identify the designated event area and why that area is best for your event. Be prepared to compromise. Park staff may be nervous to approve activities that are unfamiliar, but they are likely just trying to conserve the park, protect it from potential damage and guard against liability.

You will also need to be sensitive to surrounding contexts. For example, you may meet with resistance if you are planning a very loud event in a quiet, residential neighbourhood. Be prepared to respond to any neighbourhood complaints by making changes to address concerns. A single complaint to the mayor or a city councillor’s office can thwart months of planning, so be prepared to allay any fears from community members in a real and substantial way. Good relationship management is a core part of Arts in the Parks events.

Locations are selected based on a variety features, including:

- ▶ Design features (such as a shade structures, community centres, amphitheatres, etc.)
- ▶ Natural features (trees, hills, water, etc.)
- ▶ Amenities and facilities (washrooms, water fountains, fieldhouses, parking, etc.)



## ARTS IN THE PARKS NUMBERS – ATTENDEES

Attendee surveys of 1190 audience members at approximately 50 events reveal that:

**34%** of attendees walk to Arts in the Parks events

**42%** of attendees live in the same neighbourhood as where they attended the activity

**12%** of audience members attend an Arts in the Parks event because they were just “passing through the park”

[Arts in the Parks Evaluation Report 2018](#)



## PARK FEATURES, INFRASTRUCTURE AND DESIGN

Park features, design and infrastructure vary widely and influence how the park is used. Parks with playgrounds and water features attract families with children. Parks with a lush tree canopy provide shade spaces for summer picnics and casual gatherings. Parks with sports fields attract spectators and players. While some parks have community centres, rinks, fieldhouses and washroom facilities, others may just be an open field.

It is a good idea to know the features of each park and how the park is used. There are parks that feature forests, lakeshore, ravines and/or watersheds and may have protected, environmentally sensitive areas not suitable for arts programming but which may be enjoyed through guided nature walks by conservation organizations and volunteer groups. Some of the features that attract artists to a park can also be the elements that make it difficult to use the space or attract attendees.

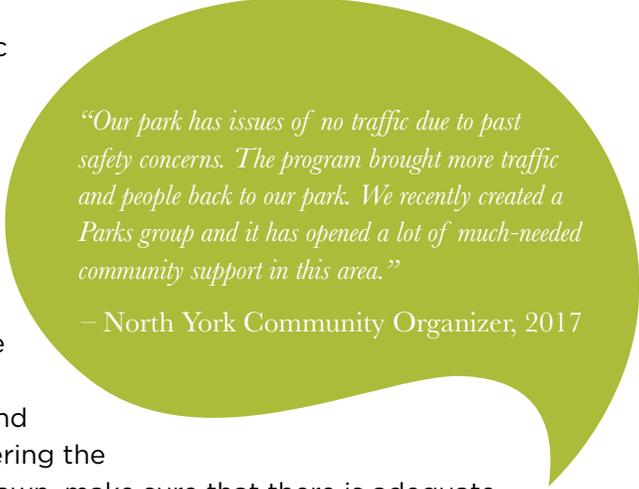
The following elements play an important role in determining which parks are suitable for which arts activities:

### NATURAL TERRAIN

Artists are often interested in the geography of a site and, in some cases, it's the reason they wish to perform in a specific space. Geography influences attendees as well: hills, uneven ground, or an absence of walkways can present navigation difficulties for attendees and can discourage people with mobility issues from attending, reducing the scope and inclusion of an event. To ensure your event can be attended by all, select locations that are physically accessible and place the event in an area that has the least barriers.

### BUILT STRUCTURES

Field houses, playgrounds, sports fields, picnic tables, benches, walkways, recreation trails, shade structures and lighting are all features that influence whether people use a park and how they use it. A park void of any of these features may have very few users. Some parks have what most would consider ideal infrastructure for an arts event, such as a stage or an outdoor amphitheatre, but these elements don't guarantee success. Entering a dark park often makes people feel uneasy and vulnerable, and therefore some will avoid entering the space at night. If your event will go past sundown, make sure that there is adequate lighting in place.



*“Our park has issues of no traffic due to past safety concerns. The program brought more traffic and people back to our park. We recently created a Parks group and it has opened a lot of much-needed community support in this area.”*

– North York Community Organizer, 2017

### WASHROOMS AND DRINKING WATER

Feedback from artists, staff and volunteers suggests that a consistent problem is lack of access to washrooms and water fountains. No access to washrooms or drinking water affects everyone – artists, attendees, volunteers, and staff – but can be especially taxing on artists who are fulfilling a residency or are at the location all day rehearsing for a show. If these amenities don't exist at the location, consider providing a temporary equivalent (i.e. portable washrooms).

## PARKING

Not all parks have access to on-site parking. This isn't much of an issue for smaller community-focused events but can become a problem for larger scale events such as festivals. Transportation and access to parking are important to consider if you plan on attracting a large audience outside the local area and/or if the artists will need to transport equipment. If you are planning an event in a residential community park where street parking is the only option, consider drafting a parking plan utilizing attendants (volunteers or staff) to direct attendees where to park. Another option is to rent a private lot or direct patrons to a nearby mall or other large public car park and provide a shuttle to and from the park. Ensuring parking is relaxed and orderly will go a long way in gaining the trust of the community and not having your event declined the following year.

## PARK SIZE AND WAYFINDING SIGNAGE

The size of a park also affects how people interact with the art while it's there. A smaller park makes it easier for park goers to engage with what is there, whereas larger parks can make it hard for people to find the event, or easier for them to ignore it. If you are going to be in a large park, clear and identifiable wayfinding signage is important so attendees can find the event site easily.

## ACCESSIBILITY

Is the site you've chosen accessible to everyone, including artists, audiences, participants and volunteers who are Deaf, who have disabilities, who have small children or who are senior citizens? Have you designed the audience or participant area for all bodies/abilities? Do you have staff members or volunteers who can usher audience members to accessible seating, and ensure seating is left open and available for those who may need it? Does the space have good lighting so that people can see where they are going? Does the area have multiple exits? Will people feel safe? Are the pathways wide enough for a wheelchair? Are there accessible washrooms? Will you hire an ASL interpreter, provide live captioning, transcription, or visual interpretation? Make it clear in your promotional material what accessibility accommodations will be provided.

### Outdoor Event Accessibility Guide



If you would like to ensure your event is accessible, use the [Guide to Accessible Festivals & Outdoor Events](#), created by the Ontario Government.

Download

Accessibility is complex and multilayered. TAC and TAF subscribe to the social model of disability, which views disability as a consequence of environmental elements and social and attitudinal barriers that prevent people with disabilities from fully participating in society. The medical model of disability focuses on an individual person's perceived physical or mental limitations.

Consider how you can be an advocate for accessibility by conducting an "access audit" of your event and your event space and creating a plan and timeline for a more accessible event. Consult with Deaf and disability organizations and consider inviting representatives as event advisors or as members of your planning committee, event team or board.

## TYPES OF PARKS

Through our observations and feedback over the past three years it's become clear that no two parks are the same and each park has its own personality. At the same time, we found that parks can be categorized into one of two groups: "Destination Parks" and "Community Parks". Certain characteristics determine what type each park is, and it's possible for a park to be both Community and Destination.

Consider how a park is used to determine which it is, which may in turn influence how you approach your event in that space.

### DESTINATION PARKS

Destination Parks can attract visitors from a long distance, most of whom don't use the park on a regular basis and are probably visiting for a specific reason, such as a birthday celebration. Destination Parks are typically larger in size, have proper facilities to accommodate visitors, and are often brought to life by fun activities such as kite flying or barbecuing. It can be harder for artists to have deeper engagement with people at a Destination Park as they have often come to be together and are not as likely to seek out arts activities.



*"This was an amazing experience. This opportunity enabled me and my team to create and to exhibit the installation in an ideal green public space."*

– Artist, 2018

### COMMUNITY PARKS

A Community Park is used predominantly by the surrounding community and has a "community footprint", meaning the park is an extension of the everyday life for those who live around it. It is a place to walk the dog, a shortcut to somewhere else, part of a running route, and where kids go to play. It is a familiar place where people are likely to know or recognize each other, and interactions with the space are casual but more consistent.

### PARKS AS UNWELCOMING SPACES

It should be noted that parks are not always a positive space in communities. Due to the neglect of a park or damaging incidents, the space may be seen as a place to avoid. Some parks have been sites of trauma and violence or criminal activities. Some spaces are heavily policed and closed after dark. As well, some residents have preconceived notions as to how a park should be used and who belongs there, and may not like having arts events in the park; i.e. they might view parks as nature sanctuaries, not a place for concerts or puppet shows.



*"The area is a diverse community and having an event that is multicultural and enjoyable lessens the isolation of newcomers and seniors. The park has also ample space and venue to host these kinds of performances."*

– North York Community Organizer, 2017

Community engagement and outreach and having a presence in the space prior to the event can help mitigate potential issues and build a culture of park use by the community. Good community engagement also creates opportunities for residents to contribute ideas and input on what kind of arts events and activities they want to see and may even inspire the community to produce their own programming. Our evaluations suggest that changing the culture of how a park is used by a community is a long-term project. Collaboration and partnership are key to creating welcoming and inclusive park culture.



**TUNE YOUR RIDE  
COLLECTIVE  
PRESENTING  
TORONTO  
BICYCLE MUSIC  
FESTIVAL AND  
SUNSET SERIES**

Featured Story

# TUNE YOUR RIDE COLLECTIVE PRESENTING TORONTO BICYCLE MUSIC FESTIVAL AND SUNSET SERIES

## LOCATION

City wide: Bell Manor Park (Etobicoke), Flemington Park (North York), Humber Bay Park West (Etobicoke), Memorial Park (Etobicoke), Parma Park (North York)

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

**Tune Your Ride Collective** creates fun, interactive bicycle-powered arts events that showcase local musical talent. For the past 10 years they have presented the Toronto Bicycle Music Festival, a free, family-friendly, mobile music festival that takes place in and between Toronto's wonderful parks and streets.

## ABOUT THE PARKS

Bell Manor Park is a small neighbourhood park located in south Etobicoke. It is in a residential area surrounded by mid-rise apartments and contains a playground with a small splash pad and a community garden. The space is well used by families in the area, with kids running, biking and playing in the park.

Flemington Park is a large park in North York that runs along a hydro corridor and features several multipurpose sports fields, two ball diamonds, ball hockey and basketball courts, a community garden, a children's playground and a splash pad. The event took place in an area of the park where there is a basketball court and a community garden. A small community centre is located beside the park.

Humber Bay Park West is a narrow park jutting out into the water of Lake Ontario along the lakeshore in Etobicoke. It's a lovely multi-purpose park that features a bike trail and an off-leash area for dogs. A number of parking lots and paved pathways make this an accessible park.

Memorial Park is a small residential park close to the east bank of the Humber River in Etobicoke. The park connects to the Humber River recreational trail and features a bandshell under a tree canopy.

Parma Park is a medium sized park located in North York and is in close proximity to several apartment buildings and townhouses. The space features a ball diamond, basketball court, a gazebo, a splash pad and a children's playground. The park is adjacent to the Parma Park community and the O'Connor Community Centre, and is located in a Neighbourhood Improvement Area.



*"Cool idea, relaxed concept!"*

## HOW THE PARKS WERE ANIMATED

Tune Your Ride Collective presented a series of free, family-friendly, mobile, pedal-powered music concerts and a one-day festival showcasing a diverse range of artists. The "Sunset Series", four bike-powered community concerts, took place biweekly throughout July and August, leading up to the main event, the Toronto Bicycle Music Festival, in September. At each event participants had the opportunity to meet for a communal bike ride to the park hosting the concert and, once there, attendees could sit and enjoy the show or jump on a stationary bike to help power it. The Festival began with a performance underneath an expressway at the **Bentway**, followed by a group bike ride leading to Humber Bay Park West for an afternoon of music. All of the events showcased a range of Toronto-based talent and were amplified by a unique bicycle-powered sound system ridden by audience members. Food vendors at the concerts added to the fun and festive atmosphere.

This project was funded by the City of Toronto through Toronto Arts Council's Animating Toronto Parks grants program.

**IMPACT**

The format of the programming – communal bike rides from park to park – enabled Tune Your Ride to reach a wider geographic area of the city, encouraging people from across the city to join in or attend. The project also gets people out and exploring parts of the city they may not visit otherwise and mixes the arts with active living. Tune Your Ride physically engages audience members by enlisting them to help power the event by peddling one of the stationary bikes.

In order to get the word out about the event, Tune Your Ride starts the outreach early, connects to a wide range of community organizers and maintains relationships with Cycle Toronto and Friends of the PanAm Path.



# PARTNERSHIPS

Developing partnerships is key to the success of presenting arts programming in parks. Partners can bring resources to the table such as permitting, funding, sponsorship, in-kind material donations, community engagement, marketing and promotion, and much more. Be open to collaboration with local organizations, BIAs, politicians, businesses, and community members. Successful partnerships are reciprocal, built one step at a time and require clear communication and shared vision and objectives.

## ESTABLISHING AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Building and maintaining multiple partnerships can be daunting but it is a necessary part of creating public arts programming. Beyond developing connections in the community and raising awareness of an initiative, strong community relationships allow for community input to help develop events and activities that are suited to community needs and wants. This in turn fosters greater long-term sustainability for the initiative. Collaborating with community can have other spin-offs, such as creating local jobs, greater involvement of residents in local initiatives, and overall community capacity building. Strong relationships also strengthen your ability to act quickly if there are changes in a community.

Having a strong vision will help you determine who your partners might be by identifying who is in alignment. A strong vision will also help decide when to say “No” to a partnership that might threaten the artistic or ethical integrity of the project.

### How To Create An “Elevator Pitch”



An elevator pitch is a quick, succinct and persuasive speech to spark others’ interest in your idea, project, organization or business. Click the following link to help you prepare yours: [How to Nail Your Non-profit’s Elevator Pitch](#)

Find out more

Whether you’re looking for political champions or sponsors, start by finding potential partners and stakeholders to bring into the project at a deeper level. Figure out who might be able to support your arts project. Create a list of public and private organizations in your region, city or neighbourhood. When you are ready to meet with potential partners, be prepared with support materials (hard copy and digital) to back up your verbal pitch, and prepare an “elevator pitch”: a concise explanation of your project and why it would be of interest to a potential partner. Allow adequate time to talk, brainstorm and plan with your

potential partners. Be flexible. It may take time to get to your grand vision for the project but creating a shared vision builds deeper community relationships. Being open to collaboration can build ownership of your project among partners which adds motivation, responsibility and accountability.

## MAPPING SUPPORT

An effective way of identifying potential organizations, agencies and individuals to collaborate with is to build a list by mapping the spaces, people, organizations, businesses, and communities that may benefit from and contribute to your initiative. Shared goals and objectives will form the basis for partnerships.

## MAPPING POTENTIAL PARTNERS/SPACES/PEOPLE

- ▶ Who manages the resources and services necessary to initiate the program?
- ▶ Who has the expertise and knowledge you are missing?
- ▶ Who has connections to communities you would like to engage (e.g. artists, local residents, etc.)?
- ▶ Who would be an asset to the initiative?
- ▶ Who would benefit from the initiative?
- ▶ Who is offering to contribute resources?

## IDENTIFY SHARED GOALS

- ▶ What are your organization's strategic goals and objectives and how does the initiative fulfill them?
- ▶ The goals and objectives of what other organizations might be met, and how?
- ▶ How will the initiative impact the future of your organization and that of the partners?
- ▶ What is the impact of the project on your organization and your partners' interests?
- ▶ Do your partners want to be involved in designing evaluation tools?
- ▶ Will you share the evaluation results with your partners?

## RELATIONSHIPS AT ALL LEVELS

Key stakeholders in a public arts initiative are: artists and arts organizations, funders, municipal or regional government, community agencies and services, and community members. As the organizer of your initiative you will be the primary liaison and facilitator between all stakeholders. Your role requires a great deal of sensitivity, communication and flexibility.



**TIP:** Creating clear and transparent roles and responsibilities is an important way of showing respect for your partners and the wealth of experience and knowledge they bring to the partnership. A “memorandum of partnership” is a useful way to ensure each partner knows what their role is and understands the scope of the project.

## MUNICIPAL PARTNERSHIPS

Having members of your municipal government support the project from its inception will aid in its success. Champions at the highest level might provide direct resources (such as funding) but can also help you leverage other resources. TAC and TAF were exceedingly fortunate in finding a real champion in the mayor of Toronto.

*“One of the things we absolutely need is to bring people together in this city, and one of the ways we are going to do that is through programs like this. I can't tell you how much I'm looking forward to seeing this program bring that joy, that creativity, that diversity, and that talent to our parks over the course of the summer.”*

– Mayor John Tory, 2016 Arts in the Parks press conference

Parks may be subject to a number of regulatory frameworks and navigating municipal divisions can be challenging. For instance, some Toronto parks have recreation trails that are managed by Transportation division, shorelines that are managed by Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, facilities that are managed by Parks, Forest and Recreation, or infrastructure underground or on the property managed by any number of entities (Hydro One, phone companies, Toronto Water, etc.). Depending on the proposed artistic programming, you may find yourself navigating a complex web of regulations which can have associated costs and further requirements. Allow for additional time to navigate these complex issues and a contingency budget line to cover unexpected costs.

Support from councillors, municipal staff, and park staff in the planning process and during the event can be invaluable to your project, as can be having a municipal staff member assigned to your initiative to assist in navigating your local government's regulatory systems (as we do for Arts in the Parks). Inviting politicians and dignitaries to champion your event can encourage residents to engage with it and can help discourage some residents from instinctively bringing up issues such as parking, litter and noise levels. But be aware that some municipal staff have the ability to intercept and stop a project if they take issue with it. The best defense is a having clear objectives and establishing a clear line of communication with local councillors and municipal officials. Depending on the municipality this might be easy while others will have to be persistent in developing a relationship.

*“Programs like this fill a great gap in the way parks are animated. Residents have been complaining how there isn’t a lot of variety of events in their community and how they always have to travel downtown for similar experiences. Events like these are great for bringing people together, getting them acquainted with other members of their community and building confidence, trust and people’s awareness of what a park (public space) can be and do for them. And how they can reach out to different levels of government and organizations to accomplish their vision.”*

– North York Community Organizer, 2017



Join or search Park People's [national network](#) to connect with other park groups and access resources that can strengthen your work.

Find out more

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Partnering with other organizations, agencies and services can help you make contacts in local communities and recruit collaborators, participants, and volunteers. Some partners may be from outside the community you are programming in but it's important to ensure you also have partners from within the community.

Find an organization that shares your interests and vision and helps you better understand your own organization's capabilities and areas of weakness. For example, TAF partnered with Park People, a national organization that works to improve quality of life in cities across Canada by supporting and mobilizing people to activate the power of parks. Through Park People, connections were made with local communities.

Local or neighbourhood community groups and organizers can connect you (or your organization) with local community members, which generates the opportunity for community needs and wants to be communicated and better served. Community organizers and groups are an invaluable bridge between you and the neighbourhoods you are animating with arts activities.

## ARTISTIC PARTNERSHIPS

For municipalities, towns or regions, engaging artists can seem like an intimidating task, but don't wait until your initiative is already launched to put a call out for artists. Design your initiative so that artists are involved in the production, design and delivery from the beginning. Be open to their guidance. Respect their experience. Advocate for their needs. Take risks. Trust artists.



**TIP:** Be responsive to emergent dynamics within the web of partnerships and remember that partnerships are worth more than the sum of their parts. You may discover, for example, that your initiative will achieve unforeseen goals of the partner organizations. Be open to unexpected outcomes. Embrace complexity.

## MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS

Staying relevant beyond the summer months can be difficult. Building year-round connections to the community helps to build an audience or participant base for your programming. Don't just show up to launch a program and expect everyone to be excited. Building trust and support for your initiative will take time.

One option is to think about planning activities throughout the year. Be aware that many low-income, marginalized communities have community development and youth initiatives imposed upon them on a regular basis, so there may be a legitimate exhaustion and distrust of a yet another new program being offered that they did not ask for. Consult and collaborate at every level of program development and make a long-term commitment to developing public arts programming. Hire locally where possible.





# LITTLE DADA PRESENTING THE LONG EXPOSURE FESTIVAL

Featured Story

# LITTLE DADA PRESENTING THE LONG EXPOSURE FESTIVAL

## LOCATION

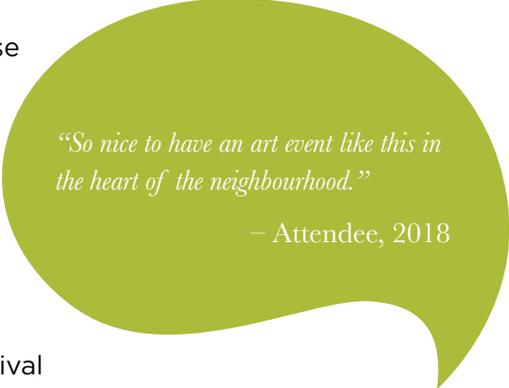
Flemingdon Park in North York

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

**Little Dada** is a group of creative technologists who use digital technologies in combination with art to explore the role of technology in culture and promote positive social change.

## ABOUT THE PARK

Flemingdon Park is a large park in North York that runs along a hydro corridor, and features several multipurpose sports fields, two ball diamonds, ball hockey and basketball courts, a community garden, a children's playground and a splash pad. The event took place in an area of the park where there is a basketball court and a community garden. A small community centre is located beside the park.



*“So nice to have an art event like this in the heart of the neighbourhood.”*

– Attendee, 2018

## HOW THE PARK WAS ANIMATED

The Long Exposure Festival was a daylong outdoor festival that took place in August focusing on performance, visual art and photography. Circus performers wearing lighted clothing roamed through Flemingdon Park, which had been lit with installations and interactive games. People could get their picture taken in a long exposure photo booth, watch performances, make crafts and play with various light up toys and games.

This project was funded by the City of Toronto through Toronto Arts Council's Animating Toronto Parks grants program.

## IMPACT

The event mixed the arts with technology in an open, barrier-free, outdoor space. The mix of installations, activities and performances provided residents the opportunity to decide what art to interact with, when, and at what level of participation (observing, participating or a combination of the two) which made the event more inviting as no one was obliged to engage in a certain way. The event also featured a photo booth where attendees could do their own “light painting” and then receive a printed photo of their work as a memory to take home and an extension of their experience.

Why attendees enjoyed it:

- ▶ It was family-friendly
- ▶ It was interactive and explorative
- ▶ They could watch and/or participate with the art

To promote the event, Little Dada reached out to local community groups and nearby schools, and leveraged pre-existing relationships, utilizing traditional methods like posters and flyers as well social media campaigns.



# FUNDRAISING

Fundraising is a vital part of any arts initiative. The information in this section is not meant as a how-to guide, since approaches will likely differ depending on your objectives and scale of the event. Instead, this section is to help you navigate which fundraising methods will work best for you, and how to encourage others to support your goal of animating outdoor spaces with the arts. Arts in parks often has funder and donor appeal when events are free as this is seen as a community benefit. Keep in mind, however, that restrictions on signage in parks can require creative or alternative solutions to acknowledge sponsors.

## CREATING A BUDGET

An important first step in defining your fundraising goals is to create a realistic budget for the project. Artist fees, staffing, equipment rental, materials, permitting, food, washrooms and marketing are some common expenses. Artists fees will vary according to the discipline and to the artist's experience (emerging or established). Sources of revenue you can aim for include grants, donations, and the value of in-kind contributions.



**TIP:** If you don't know how much to pay an artist check with these artist associations: Theatre: [Canadian Actors' Equity Association \(CAEA\)](#) Dance: [Canadian Alliance of Dance Artists \(CADA\)](#) Visual/Media Arts: [Canadian Artists Representation/Le Front des Artistes Canadiens \(CARFAC\)](#) Music: [Canadian Federation of Musicians \(CFM\)](#)

## TYPES OF FUNDRAISING

There are numerous ways to fundraise and find sources of revenue for your project, but whatever method or mix of methods you choose, it will require work and planning. Determine what your organization is capable of and what's most feasible. Methods primarily include:

### INDIVIDUAL DONATIONS AND CROWDFUNDING

One way to raise funds is to run an individual donations campaign. Depending on the scope of your intended project, individual giving can fund your whole project or supplement it. There are numerous ways to approach individuals for donations, such as handing out donation cards at events, placing a donations page on your website or starting an online crowdfunding campaign. Fundraising is all about reaching out, whichever way you go about it.

Regardless of what route you take, start with your own personal network and build out from there. If your organization has a board of directors, you may want to establish a fundraising committee who will be responsible for soliciting donations from the community. Crowdfunding platforms, like [Indiegogo](#), have become popular over the last several years, and may be a good option as they can make it easier to ask more people for donations. With crowdfunding platforms, you can share your campaign online and anyone can donate any amount. Numerous crowdfunding services are available, each offering something different, so make sure to look around and find the one that best suits your goals.

[CanadaHelps](#) is a great resource for organizations with registered charitable status. Their website hosts a searchable catalogue of all registered charities in Canada that allows people to find charities that match their interests. CanadaHelps processes the donations, disburses the funds to the charity and provides tax receipts, making it a secure online fundraising platform for charities.

Once you have donors, keep them involved so that they can see firsthand that their investment is going towards a good cause and is being well spent. Invite them to your event(s) and/or send updates via a digital newsletter.

Something to consider while fundraising is Customer Relations Management (CRM) software to help with various business processes such as managing donor data, donor contacts and communications. [Sumac](#) and [Raiser's Edge](#) are great options for non-profits, though there are many available so you should choose the one that best meets your needs and budget. Visit [TechSoup Canada](#) to access systems at a reduced cost for registered charities and non-profits.

### **CORPORATE SPONSORSHIPS**

Corporate sponsors have a funding mandate or donation guidelines that state exactly what causes they support and what they're looking for in an applicant. Be sure to review the mandate and guidelines to ensure your project is eligible and your objectives match those of the corporation's community investment strategy. When writing your application:

- ▶ Use their corporate language and vocabulary
- ▶ Be clear how the project meets the community investment objectives of the corporation and benefits your community and local residents
- ▶ Include and describe your unique selling proposition
- ▶ Illustrate how the company will benefit from sponsoring you
- ▶ Give them a reason to give (for example, through a story of the community or an individual in it)
- ▶ Itemize ways you can provide exposure (on a website or FB page, through social media channels, signage at the event, etc.)

Many large corporations have a stated interest in community development. Presenting your initiative as one that contributes to city building, increases arts access and has multigenerational engagement will help to catch their attention. However, since the concept of placing arts in public places has a local focus, be sure to also direct fundraising efforts to local organizations such as banks, insurance companies, local developers and businesses. Widen your view of the typical arts supporter and think about who might want to invest in your community.

It's important to understand that most corporate community investment programs are an extension of a marketing strategy. The corporate "sponsor" is, in many ways, leveraging your event and your marketing presence to enhance their brand in the community. Be sure you only offer a level of visibility you can commit to and be prepared to report back with samples of marketing collateral, photos or video that include or depict acknowledgement of donors and sponsors. Also make sure that relevant signage by-laws in your region, city or town don't conflict with what you plan to do. Some municipalities have careful restrictions on third-party signage in public spaces like parks to ensure that advertisers do not encroach on city-owned spaces. Where temporary third-party signage is allowed there may be limitations on size and placement, and a well-researched sponsorship package will account for these limitations.

### **FOUNDATION GRANTS**

Foundations are often set up by the founder of a successful business or members of their family to give back to the community, and will frequently have specific mandates they want to achieve. As with all donors and investors, make sure to familiarize yourself with the mandate of the foundation and its funding objectives. Foundations are often less interested in the public visibility of their gift than corporate sponsors. It's still a good idea to mention how visibility can be achieved but don't be concerned if this is not an objective of the foundation.

Funding decisions are usually made by a board of directors at quarterly meetings but be sure to check if there are deadlines for applying. Many foundations and corporations accept applications on an ongoing basis but many also have deadlines. Also be sure to time your application far enough in advance so you will have notification sufficiently ahead of your project implementation. See below for tips on writing a grant application.

*“A lot of our community members are grateful to have a FREE event produced at a professional level. Receiving public funding really allowed us to focus more on production and execution, instead of worrying about admission pricing and larger promotion.”*

– Artist, 2017

## GOVERNMENT GRANTS

Public grants are an excellent source of revenue for public arts programming. Most provinces and some cities have an arts funding body and funding also exists at the federal level through funders such as the Canada Council for the Arts and Canadian Heritage. Some municipal parks departments, such as in Vancouver, have arts funding and artist residency programs.

Keep in mind that, until you succeed in obtaining multi-year or operational funding, public grants are not a guaranteed on an ongoing basis. Make sure you have a diversified funding base and plan well in advance so that you are one funding cycle ahead of your immediate programming needs.

### Video for TAF Fundraising Event



In 2018, TAF created an Arts in the Parks video to capture the importance of volunteerism and making arts accessible at a neighbourhood level. The video was shown at the Evening for the Arts to garner more interest about the initiative and get people excited about its impact.

Watch video

## IN-KIND SUPPORT

Media agencies often provide in-kind support or sponsorships to non-profits or arts groups which facilitate marketing activities at a portion of what they would normally cost. Like corporate sponsorship, there is usually some expectation of an exchange, such as a guaranteed advertising purchase, depending on the scope of the event or the visibility of the organization or institution undertaking the event.

In-kind support is an excellent way of gathering resources for a public arts programming initiative. Having a municipality, city or region as a partner may help offset staffing and permitting costs, as well as marketing and community engagement costs. Small or large businesses and some corporate sponsors may agree to offer resources (such as equipment, portable toilets, food, materials, staff volunteer time, etc.) in exchange for brand visibility. Securing this support can be a matter of legwork (going door to door) or making phone calls. Make sure you have clear and presentable information about your project and the support you hope to gain and be ready to provide it either digitally or in hard copy.

An example of in-kind support are the free public drinking water programs offered by some municipalities for large public events (e.g. [HTO to Go](#), Toronto).

If you think creatively and are ready to offer something in return, you may discover many potential ways to gather the materials, resources and labour you need to execute your event.

## FUNDRAISING EVENTS

Events can be a good way to raise money but be careful of how much time and money is needed to hold a fundraiser. They take an enormous amount of people time – paid staff and volunteers – and can often require a lot of in-kind contribution as well as financial resources. Make sure the amount of effort and investment is worth the amount of money raised.

Since the first year of Arts in the Parks, the Toronto Arts Foundation has hosted an annual fundraising event, championed by Mayor John Tory, to raise funds for the initiative. The Mayor's Evening for the Arts is a gala-style dinner event featuring performances by Arts in the Parks artists, presentations from participants, residents and volunteers as well as video highlights of the various events and activities. Since 2015 the event has raised over \$3,000,000 to help support Arts in the Parks.

Not only does TAF's Mayor's Evening for the Arts raise money for Arts in the Parks and galvanize political support by the Mayor, city councillors and key city staff, it also helps to raise public awareness through major media coverage, further aiding Toronto Arts Council and Toronto Arts Foundation in advocacy for the arts in Toronto.



#### TIPS FOR WRITING GRANTS:

- 1 Read the grant program guidelines carefully.** Write down any remaining questions then re-read the guidelines to see if your questions are addressed. Ask yourself the following questions: Are you still interested in the program now that you have read the guidelines? Are you eligible? Is your project eligible? Is it a strong fit for the program's deadlines and objectives?
- 2 Contact the grant program manager.** Make sure any questions you have are well-researched. Pitch your idea and get feedback. The program manager may have some helpful questions, observations, and resources to share with you.
- 3 Give yourself adequate time.** Steps involved in pulling together a strong application take time: reading program guidelines thoroughly and considering how your project does or does not fit; gathering materials like artist bios and video links; building a work plan; building partnerships; creating a budget; soliciting feedback on your proposal; editing your writing; compiling all necessary attachments, such as partnership agreements or in-kind support letters.
- 4 Draft, edit and save your writing in a separate document.** This is especially useful when the application is on-line and/or has strict word or character limits. When the writing is final, cut and paste it into the fields. When done, you will still have the final draft of your grant writing saved and ready to adapt for other grants and sponsorship packages.
- 5 Use clear and direct language.** Begin with a one-sentence summary of your project that includes the following: who you are, what you are doing, how you are doing it. Don't use "artspeak" or academic references. Just be very clear about what it is you would like to do and how you will do it.
- 6 Develop a well-researched and realistic budget.** Be sure artist fees are being paid at industry standards (see references above). Be sure to budget for all equipment, materials, permits, staffing and amenities (including water, shade, food and washrooms).
- 7 Get feedback.** Show a draft of your grant application to a trusted friend or colleague for input and feedback.
- 8 Follow instructions and triple check your application before submitting.** Make sure you have addressed the questions asked and don't exceed the word limits. Be concise but detailed.

## FUNDRAISING SUPPORTS

In making funding requests – whether to corporate sponsors, foundation or government bodies or local businesses that might contribute in-kind materials – it's important to include accurate and compelling information and also to secure champions who will support your cause.

### CHAMPIONS

Securing local politicians or other community leaders to act as champions for your arts initiative can provide leverage when reaching out for support. Local buy-in helps generate enthusiasm and ensures potential supporters that the project is legitimate and built on an understanding of local needs and challenges.

*“Arts in the Parks is an incredible program that makes it possible for Torontonians to enjoy exceptional arts programming against the backdrop of our city’s beloved green spaces. Knowing the importance of access to the arts, I’m proud of the work Toronto Arts Foundation is doing to deliver the arts to communities across our great city.”*

– Toronto Mayor John Tory, 2018 Arts in the Parks Launch

### CONVINCING STATISTICS

To get up to speed on the impact and benefits of arts for communities, which is useful information to have when pitching your project, visit the resources below. These resources provide compelling statistical information that illustrates interest and need for arts in communities.

#### Funding Sources



Here is a list of Toronto, Ontario and national sources of funding so you can see examples of grant programs:

##### Toronto:

Toronto Arts Council (TAC): [Animating Toronto Parks](#)

City of Toronto: [Arts & Culture grants](#)

##### Ontario:

Ontario Arts Council (OAC): [Multi and Inter-Arts Projects](#)

OAC: [Northern Arts Projects grant](#)

[Metcalf Foundation](#)

[Ontario Trillium Foundation](#)

##### National:

Canadian Heritage: [Canada Cultural Spaces Fund](#)

Canadian Heritage: [Building Communities](#)

[Through Arts and Heritage - Legacy Fund](#)

[Canada Council for the Arts](#)

- ▶ [Hill Strategies](#)
- ▶ [The Arts Advocate Report](#)
- ▶ [Community Foundations of Canada](#)
- ▶ [Canada Council for the Arts](#)
- ▶ [Toronto Arts Foundation: Art Stats](#)



# OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

The best community outreach and engagement strategies are an extension of the creative practice, not just a marketing campaign. Community outreach should be initiated from the beginning rather than when you feel ready to launch, and your community engagement should act as an invitation not only to join you on the day of the event but to collaborate in the project's development. Think of the invitation as the beginning of relationship-building, each step of which is part of a collaborative artistic creation process. Your invitation to the community should be artistically devised, warm, welcoming, inclusive, accessible and fun.

## WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY

Partners in the community are vital to community engagement and can be the glue that holds your outreach plan together. They often have a deep reach into the community, they already hold community trust, they may have a physical place where members of the community gather, and they will have established communication channels through which they can assist with ongoing promotion. Get to know the residents, businesses, organizations and park friends' groups in the community surrounding the park. They will be your best allies.

*“Very enjoyable to see the diversity of my community, people enjoying music and the summer night despite a difficult year. Great to come together and celebrate our neighbourhood. Open, accessible; all ages and types of people.”*

– Attendee in St. James Park, 2018

To build engagement with community partners and residents:

- ▶ Be present, welcoming and available in the park
- ▶ Reach out to local service organizations such as social service agencies, schools, seniors' centres, etc., who can help bring people to the event
- ▶ Be responsive and flexible when community members give you feedback; be prepared to change your planned activities (if not this year then in the future).

### Indigenous Cultural Protocols



As filmmaker Nyla Innuksuk says, “It’s important to have some guidelines in place because there’s a very fine line between cultural appreciation and cultural appropriation.”

Watch video

If you are a non-Indigenous organization interested in collaborating with Indigenous artists or communities, be sure to seek out resources -- articles, books, websites, individuals, organizations, etc. -- that will provide more information and understanding.

To date the most successful Arts in the Parks events have been those that take the time to establish deep and long-lasting community connections and tailor their event to the community they are in. In some cases, artists or presenting organizations are located in the community; in others, they may have few connections and little prior knowledge. Understanding the cultural geography of a park is as important as developing the arts event itself, and is key to programming and community outreach. A good rule of thumb for community engagement is to be aware and be considerate.

A great example of tailoring programming to the community is the work of [MABELLEarts](#) in Broadacres Park in Etobicoke, where for the past three years they’ve worked with local residents of all ages and backgrounds to co-create a variety of arts-based projects. The work is created for community members by community members.

MABELLEarts stays in touch with community members year-round and conducts thorough outreach each year. They maintain a neighbourhood database of those interested in their work and, prior to any events, volunteers make personal phone calls to residents. As the area is home to many newcomers and refugees, these phone calls are offered in English, Arabic, Tigrinya and Bangladeshi. MABELLEarts further provides translation in Arabic at events and workshops as well as in ASL.



With their success in Broadacres, and numerous other parks, MABELLEarts has created their own toolkit, *Placing Parks in the Cultural Landscape*, for artists and community organizers wanting to create collaborative arts projects in public parks.

[View the toolkit](#)

## OUTREACH STRATEGIES

A wide range of artistic programming happens in parks and public spaces, from dance festivals to visual art installations. When looking to engage the community you will need to create an approach that feels right for you, that taps the strengths of the artistic discipline you're programming and draws attention to your event.

There is no one template but there are unlimited possibilities to be creative and inventive. Here are some ways to draw attention to your event:

- ▶ Gather politicians, dignitaries, sponsors, community and media and host a program launch with performances and/or host a picnic in the park and launch the program with community members
- ▶ Have a parade or performances in/through local neighbourhood spaces (sidewalks, streets, malls, community centres, libraries) leading up to the event
- ▶ Perform at a local event or festival, host a workshop or demonstration at a local community centre or library, or hand out flyers
- ▶ Knock on doors to inform people about your event
- ▶ Have a consistent, visible presence in the park
- ▶ Commission an artist to create signs or murals to advertise your activities

Word-of-mouth is by far the most effective communication tool for small-scale or neighbourhood-based events. While social media is important, Arts in the Parks found it less effective in suburban areas of Toronto. Large-scale marketing and branding initiatives (e.g. ad buys in mainstream newspapers) will certainly support your brand presence but are much less effective in reaching local community members.

*"I absolutely loved the artist spotlight program because it highlighted talent from the community. Because of this initiative we got to meet amazingly talented performers living right next door and we were able to give them a breakthrough opportunity and make them so happy. For some this was the first time they performed in front of people and also outdoors, and they loved it."*

– North York Community Organizer 2018



## ARTS IN THE PARKS NUMBERS - ARTISTS AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZERS

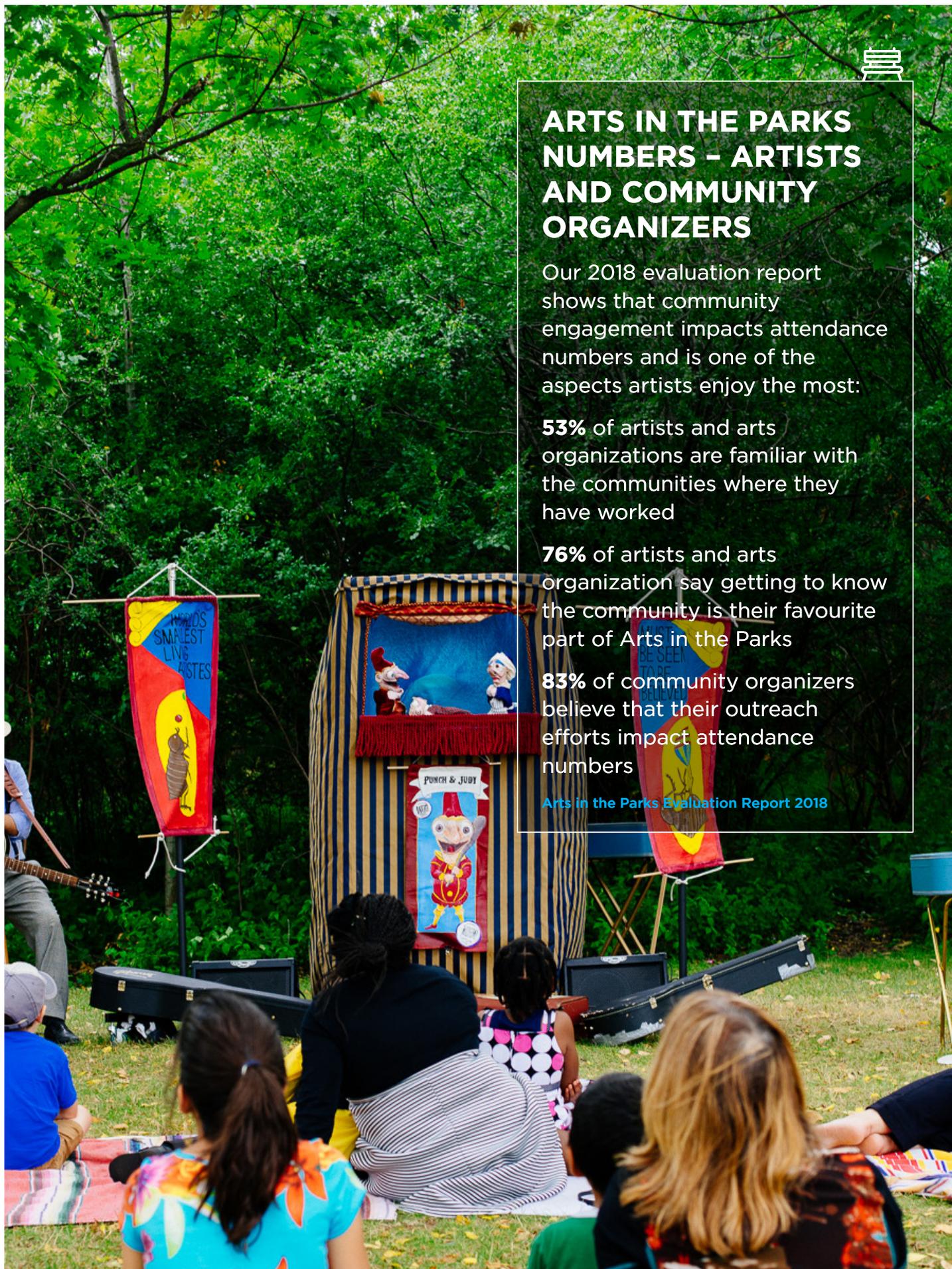
Our 2018 evaluation report shows that community engagement impacts attendance numbers and is one of the aspects artists enjoy the most:

**53%** of artists and arts organizations are familiar with the communities where they have worked

**76%** of artists and arts organization say getting to know the community is their favourite part of Arts in the Parks

**83%** of community organizers believe that their outreach efforts impact attendance numbers

[Arts in the Parks Evaluation Report 2018](#)





**TIP:** Go where the people are. Where are popular events and places where people gather? Arts in the Parks has found Farmers Markets to be excellent spots for handing out information. If your event is child friendly, let schools know. They might even arrange to bring a group of students to the event. If an event is during the daytime, make sure seniors' centres have the information.

## WELCOMING AUDIENCES

Think about what you could do to encourage people to attend and ways you can reach out to understand audience needs so that people feel welcome. How can you accommodate people's accessibility needs? You can better understand barriers to attendance by consulting widely with different community members.

Arts in the Parks evaluation shows us that 87% of attendees feel welcome at events. Consider these ideas:

- ▶ Arrange to bus groups to the park to reduce transportation barriers
- ▶ Ensure accessible entrances, exits, seating, shade areas
- ▶ Provide ASL translation, audio description, transcription, visual interpretation
- ▶ Provide language translation (in 2018, Arts in the Parks translated surveys into Tamil, Farsi and Simplified Chinese)

*"It was great to reconnect with the same community members we were introduced to last year. It is a great feeling to be directly engaged with local community members and residents!"*

– Artist, 2018

A stone arch bridge spans a river. The bridge is made of grey stone blocks and has a large central arch. In the background, there are green trees and a blue sky with white clouds. Several people are visible on the bridge and in the water. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

**BALANCE  
BRINGERS  
PRESENTING  
GAABIMOSEMIN  
NIBII  
COBECHENONK  
SHADOW SHOW**

Featured Story

# BALANCE BRINGERS PRESENTING GAABIMOSEMIN NIBII COBECHENONK SHADOW SHOW

## LOCATION

Étienne Brûlé Park and Rowntree Mills Park, both in Etobicoke

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Balance Bringers is an Indigenous Two-Spirit arts collective that tells Indigenous stories and history through the arts. The project was in collaboration with Naadmaagit Ki Group, Eventual Ashes, and Drawing with Knives Shadows.

## ABOUT THE PARKS

Étienne Brûlé Park, named after a French colonizer, is a large beautiful space in Etobicoke running adjacent to the Humber River. The park is a short walk from a subway station, has a parking lot at one end and contains a recreational trail for pedestrians and cyclists. Features in the park includes a fire pit. The park is a unique space in Toronto for its salmon fishing and wildlife sightings.

Rowntree Mills Park, located along the banks of the Humber River, is a beautiful natural oasis in north west Toronto. It was named Rowntree Mills Park in 1969 after Joseph Rowntree, a pioneer who settled in north Etobicoke village of Thistletown and established two mills on the banks of the Humber River. The park is connected to the Humber River recreational trail and features a fieldhouse, washrooms, picnic sites and access to parking.

## HOW THE PARKS WERE ANIMATED

In 2017, Balance Bringers presented Gaabimosemin Nibii Cobechenonk (translation: We will all walk with the water along the Humber River) in Rowntree Mills Park and Étienne Brûlé Park. An immersive arts experience, Cobechenonk included a magical canoe trip along the Humber River as well as music, shadow puppetry and storytelling grounded in the water teaching of two-spirit elders.

The Humber River has been and continues to be important for numerous Indigenous nations – Anishinaabe, Onkwehonwe (Haudenosaunee), Mississaugas and Wendat – and has played an important part in the history of Turtle Island. Participants were able to collectively experience the history of the land and learn its importance to Indigenous nations of Toronto. Traditional Indigenous food, made by the Anishinaabe Wellness Collective in Toronto, was served to attendees. Around a fire and with stories and food, Cobechenonk invited attendees to think about our collective futures and consider how Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations can be improved, as well as our relationship with the land we occupy and the water. This Indigenous-led arts presentation demonstrated how the arts can be used as a method of reconciliation and can create opportunities to, at least temporarily, reclaim urban space.

This project was funded by the City of Toronto through Toronto Arts Council's Animating Toronto Parks grants program.



# COMMUNICATIONS

This section of the tool kit is about how to manage a promotional campaign for your event and make the most of your own communication platforms. It discusses branding, how to write a press release and active and passive outreach strategies.

## TYPES OF PROMOTION

**Passive promotion** means putting your information out for others to come across as they are reading the newspaper, scrolling online or moving about in the community. Information posted on your website, an ad in a newspaper or posters in the community can be effective in creating visibility about your event but you have less control over who is getting the information. Posters should catch the eye and prominently feature the date, time and location. We've found that information on bulletin boards at community centres and agencies or a pile of flyers at the local library are good ways to reach people at a local level.

*"I'm so glad to have found out about this because I only discovered my love for theatre recently! I'm so excited to see the performance."*

– Attendee in Prairie Drive Park, 2018

**Active promotion** means targeting your promotion to the people you want to attract to the event. If you have lots of person power, you can organize door-to-door campaigns or attend community events, like farmers markets or community BBQs, to inform people about the event in-person. Another option is having a presence in the park prior to the event so you can engage public interest and answer questions about what will be happening.



## MAKING A PLAN AND BRANDING YOUR EVENT

Whether this is your first event in a series or a one-time activity, you will need to brand the event or the series so it stands out. Start by asking how you can capture the essence of the activity. What words and images will you use? Create a logo or brand image that is unique to your project. If you have the resources, you might decide to hire a professional designer or branding professional. But whether you choose to do it yourself or bring someone in, don't forget that you and your team are the experts. You know the program objectives, who you are trying to reach, and what will work in your community.

Here are some questions to ask early in marketing planning:

- ▶ **Does the title of your event capture the essence of the activity?** Arts in the Parks doesn't need a subheading; the name says it all: art in park settings. But if you choose a less literal title, such as Under the Sky, you might want to add a subheading that provides more detail, such as Under the Sky: Arts in the Great Outdoors.
- ▶ **Is your event being produced by many partners under one umbrella?** If so, you will need to decide if you want your event programming to have a distinct look. For example, Arts in the Parks is an initiative of Toronto Arts Foundation but we chose to create a new logo so Arts in the Parks would stand out from the other Foundation programs. We also created a separate website to make it easy for people to find detailed information and updates.



## ARTS IN PARKS NUMBERS – ATTENDEES AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZERS

Our 2018 evaluation report shows that attendees find out about Arts in the Parks through various mediums, and that community organizers use a variety of methods to conduct outreach:

**41%** of attendees say they found out about Arts in the Parks through family and friends

**33%** of attendees say they found out about Arts in the Parks through social media

**100%** of community organizers say they conducted outreach through word-of-mouth

**83%** of community organizers say they conducted outreach through social media

[Arts in the Parks Evaluation Report 2018](#)

- ▶ **Which communication platforms will be used?** Social media, e-newsletters, printed newsletters, and websites are all great tools to help get the word out about your event(s). Each channel has its pros and cons so it's a good idea to use a mix of them to increase your impact. A website, or a new page on your existing website, is a must-have as it's a go-to place for people to find information and can be easily updated to provide more details about your event and your organization. Newsletters, both digital and printed, and blog posts maintain pre-existing connections making them a great form of targeted marketing. Social media posts and platforms are important communications tools. While posts might seem short-lived, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are all great ways to inform people about events and remind them to attend. The most effective use is to post frequently and be consistent with your messaging. However, make sure you don't overburden yourself by trying to use every single form of communications if you don't have the capacity to do so.
- ▶ **What's the best way to reach people?** Social media is very important but at a local level word-of-mouth is key. At an Arts in the Parks focus group, community organizers agreed that in person or face-to-face encounters are an important way to get community members to attend events.



**TIP:** Create a unique hashtag to use in posts across all social media channels. Hashtags make it easier for people to find you on social media and help to connect with your audience, generate interest and build brand awareness. Social media was the second most common way attendees found out about AITP events in 2018. Make sure the hashtag you create is easy to read and remember, clearly relevant to your initiative and not too long. TAF uses #artsintheparksTO on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

### Arts in the Parks Press Release



At the beginning of each summer, right before Arts in the Parks starts, TAF puts out a press release. [Click here](#) to read 2018's.

[Find out more](#)

## WRITING A PRESS RELEASE

A press release is a crucial part of any communications strategy. It's a short and concise official statement about a newsworthy event happening within your organization. Press releases are used to get the word out and pique the interest of local journalists.



## TIPS FOR WRITING AN EFFECTIVE PRESS RELEASE:

- 1 Begin with a compelling headline.** The headline is the first thing journalists and the general public will see. Make sure it's eye-catching so everyone continues to read on!
- 2 Include all relevant information in the first paragraph.** Journalists are busy and rarely have time to read a whole release. Including all relevant information in the first paragraph ensures that your readers will know exactly what your press release is about.
- 3 Include quotes.** Quotes can add life to your press release and serve the function of filling in any missing information.
- 4 Add your contact information and include links.** Let your readers know who they can contact if they have additional question. Provide a link, when possible, to your website, blog or Facebook event so that readers can learn more.
- 5 Keep it short and easy to read.** One to one-and-a-half pages is the recommended length for a press release. Remember that a press release is a short dose of information that should compel your readers to learn more. Similarly, ensure that the language you use is simple, easy to read, and that the information you provide is accurate.

## HARNESSING COMMUNITY NETWORKS

Community partners have their own constituency or members, and artists participating in the project often have their own networks and followers. Harness the community's social networks by creating a communications package that provides information and content bites that fit easily into existing communication channels. You may want to provide some of your own organizational history, some images and video content and all relevant links to your event.

At the very least, make sure to share your press releases and event hashtag with artists and partners along with a request for them to share information with their networks. Artists' social media postings about upcoming performances, exhibitions or community engaged art-making projects can help attract people.

Your promotional campaign can really be helped by recruiting a spokesperson. This would be an influencer, someone who is well known and respected. It might a community leader who has helped make a change, an artist or arts group involved in the project, or a person who has championed the arts in your community.

## ROLLING OUT THE CAMPAIGN

No matter the size of your project, work backwards from the event date(s) and identify all the tasks involved in the outreach campaign. Those closest to the event will be day-to-day details with broader tasks at the start of the campaign. Once you have your message, your logo and images, you are ready to roll out your communications and outreach plan.



**TIP FOR BALANCING CITY-WIDE AND LOCAL PROMOTION:** TAF created an Arts in the Parks event guide, outlining all the summer activities, which helped establish AITP as a city-wide brand. We also created local event-specific postcards which were dropped in mailboxes, posted in community locations and handed out at community events and gatherings. This combination was effective in reaching the community and also helped in advocating at the city level for future support of the program.



# EVALUATION

Ongoing evaluation can be an effective tool for long term sustainability. It serves your mission and goals and your ability to attract resources in the future. The best time to think about evaluating your project is at the planning stage. When you envision the event and are thinking of your desired outcomes, ask yourself, “How will we know if we’ve met our goals?”.

The effort to evaluate a project or activity is well worth the information you will get out, and an evaluation plan can be simple and tailored to the resources of your organization. Evaluation will help you to:

- ▶ Better understand how different people experience the activity
- ▶ Think of ways to improve your next event
- ▶ Focus on what’s working and what’s not
- ▶ Share your findings with stakeholders including funders

## EVALUATION PLAN



## STEP ONE: IDENTIFY PROJECT OBJECTIVES, INDICATORS AND STAKEHOLDERS

### DEVELOP YOUR EVALUATION PLAN

It’s a good idea to develop your evaluation plan at the same time as your event plan. To develop an evaluation plan, you need to know what your objectives are, what indicators you will use to measure your objectives and who your stakeholders are. Objectives for your evaluation will be the same as those for the project.

To identify your stakeholders, ask: “Who can help us understand if we are meeting those objectives?”. Arts in the Parks evaluation focuses on a range of stakeholder perspectives that allow us to understand the event from different angles. We call this a 360-degree evaluation because it provides feedback from the point of view of different stakeholders. From 2016 to 2018, we collected 3149 surveys from attendees, volunteers, artists and arts organizations and community organizers.

Indicators are elements that help you identify and measure what you achieved – how many came to the event, from where, how long did they stay, did they enjoy the activity, etc. Indicators can be quantitative (statistics) or qualitative (narratives).

### Ontario Trillium Foundation Evaluation



#### Resources

Online courses and webinars from OTF are great resources to help people with evaluation, including:

[OTF's online Evaluation E-Learning course](#)

[Evaluating Your Pilot: Setting yourself up for success](#)

[Impact measurement: What Makes Arts for Change Work Excellent?](#)

For example, one of the objectives for Arts in the Parks is to make arts more accessible for residents living in the inner suburbs of Toronto where there are few dedicated arts facilities. We consequently survey audience members to determine how many attendees are from the neighbourhood or region of the city where the event took place. We also ask how they found out about the event, who they came with, what barriers they faced to getting there, if they felt welcome in the space, and if they enjoyed themselves.

With a few minor changes we have been using the same set of indicators (or asking the same set of questions) since

2016. In 2018, we did a round up of evaluation results from 2016 to 2018 to compare responses over a number of years, which helps us see how our initiative is growing and what areas need improvement.

## STEP TWO: ASSESS EVALUATION RESOURCES

### GATHERING INFORMATION

After you have laid out your objectives and indicators and identified your stakeholders, the next step is to figure out how you can gather information and how many resources you have to carry out the evaluation plan. Resources include: money, staff, and time. For example, you might want to conduct in-depth interviews but you don't have enough staff or volunteers to do the work and not enough time to transcribe the interviews and finish the report before event reports are due or next year's planning has to start. Create the kind of evaluation plan that fits with the time and resources at your disposal.

### WORK WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Look to allies and supporters to help with your planning and to maximize your resources. In return you can share the results of your evaluation with your partners. At Arts in the Parks, we want our final report to be as useful to our partners as it is for us.

There are also resources beyond your immediate circle of event supporters. The not-for-profit sector has taken a great deal of interest in evaluation to better understand community needs and the impact of community programs. The [Ontario Not-for-Profit Network](#) (ONN), which supports the non-profit sector's vital role in the health and well-being of Ontario communities, provides evaluation resources and training for the sector.

*"While doing surveys I was really able to gather a fuller understanding of why people attend these events and really just how under served specific areas in Toronto are in terms of arts, culture and a feeling of community."*

– Volunteer, 2016

## STEP THREE: DECIDE ON EVALUATION METHODS AND TOOLS

### BEST METHODS

Frequently people wonder what evaluation approaches are the best ways to measure success, but it is not an either/or question. While some approaches work better than others in different circumstances, you don't have to choose between number gathering (quantitative) and story gathering (qualitative). They are both equally compelling. Arts in the Parks evaluation embraces what's called mixed method evaluation: no stories without numbers and no numbers without stories.

**Quantitative methods** focus on what can be counted, such as the number of attendees, volunteers or venues. Demographic information such as age, household income or postal code can be broken into ranges and counted.

**Qualitative methods:** focus on the quality of an encounter and provide ways for respondents to express their experience through a subjective lens.

### EVALUATION TOOLS

Arts in the Parks uses a variety of evaluation tools depending on the stakeholder group:

- ▶ Artists and Arts Groups: surveys and focus groups
- ▶ Audience members: surveys, field interviews, creative responses
- ▶ Community Organizers: surveys, focus groups
- ▶ Volunteers: surveys
- ▶ Summer Staff: interviews and creative reflection

### CRAFTING QUESTIONS

Whether you are asking questions in a focus group or an interview or using an online survey, creating the right questions is an important step in an effective evaluation plan. Focus group members and interviewees need to know that you welcome both negative and positive feedback. Surveys shouldn't be too long.

#### Writing Effective Surveys



From the various question types available to design and distribution, there's more that goes into writing a survey than some may think. [Click here](#) for a guide on writing surveys.

Find out more

Helpful survey tips:

- ▶ Be clear and concise
- ▶ Tailor your questions and wording to suit the group you are surveying
- ▶ Avoid jargon, technical terms and acronyms
- ▶ Avoid leading questions (a type of question that sways respondents to answer in a specific manner)
- ▶ Ask one thing at a time – don't put too much into one question
- ▶ Provide opportunities for respondents to share other information and observations in addition to the questions posed

In creating a survey, offer options such as “I Don’t Know”, “Prefer Not to Answer” or “Other”. The “Other” option, followed by an open field or writing space, gives respondents an opportunity to contribute their own ideas. Also leave a space at the end of interviews or surveys for anything else the respondent would like to share. You can create a small or larger box depending on how much feedback you’d like to receive.

### COUNTING ATTENDEES

Getting an audience count is easy if you sell tickets. If the event is free you will need to do a head count. It’s best to have a few people doing the counting so numbers can be compared and averaged. Our approach is to collect information at the beginning of the activities when most of the audience is present. A head count gives an approximate number but still provides information about the scale of the event (small, medium, or large) and the number of people attending in different areas of the city.

### SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS

You can get information about the impact of your project by looking to social media. If you created a website for your event, how many views did you get? If you record the event and post it on YouTube, how many comments do you collect? You can look at Facebook shares and Twitter retweets in the same way.

### DESIGNING AND DISTRIBUTING SURVEYS

People go to events to enjoy the activities so it’s important not to take up too much of their time. AITP uses long and short form audience surveys. Short surveys provide key feedback; they take only a few minutes, which encourages more people to participate. Long surveys take a bit more time and dig a little deeper to help us better understand the experience of the attendees. See appendix for Arts in the Parks survey questions used in 2018.



**TIPS FOR COLLECTING AND WORKING WITH DATA:** Print short surveys on stock that is postcard size and weight, which makes them easy for audience members to fill out. If you design longer surveys, we recommend using tablets and a platform such as [QuickTapSurvey](#) or [Survey Monkey](#) which cuts down on data entry time. Data can be transformed into informative graphs and charts to illustrate responses and to show trends.

### PLANNING INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUPS

Interviewing people or gathering focus groups is an excellent way to understand the impact of your program. Recording (audio or visual) captures what was said but if you can’t record the discussion, create a note template with a section for each question. This will make it easier to pick out themes. Interviews can be structured so that they don’t deviate off into other topics, or you can approach interviews more casually, with a sense of what you want to ask but open to interviewees taking things in another direction.

#### Creative Evaluation



Creative evaluation is a great approach to supplement other research methods. If you’re interested in using creative evaluation look at this [Creative Evaluation Toolkit](#) to see which approach suits you best.

[View the toolkit](#)

Focus groups bring people together to share their experiences and often act as a catalyst for future networking. Focus groups with Arts in the Parks artists created an opportunity for them to share experiences working in the parks but also to network with each other. Though they worked in different disciplines and in different parks, the focus group provided feedback about challenges they faced and helped us make changes to the program.

## EXPLORING DIFFERENT ANGLES

Creative reflection can be used to gain a deeper level of engagement than surveys, interviews or focus groups. It's most appropriate to use with people who have invested more time in an experience than a few hours; for example, those who have spent a whole day, a week or several months with a community arts project.

Arts in the Parks used creative reflection to look at the experiences of summer staff who worked from May to August in 2018. Their on-the-ground experience in parks gave them the opportunity to feel and observe park settings. In an evaluative session dedicated to creative reflection, they were asked to consider their experience by thinking about what they expected when they started, what happened along the way, and how they were feeling at the end of the program. They then created a collage (using paper, marking pens, magazines, scissors and glue) and shared it with other staff members while talking about their experience.



## STEP FOUR: GATHERING DATA AND ANALYZING INFORMATION

### CODING AND FINDING THEMES

When you have finished transcribing or documenting the information you've gathered, you can move to coding, which is a way of identifying common threads or themes. If you have structured your questions according to themes, they will be easier to identify.

For example, if you want to know about barriers to arts access you can ask about cost, distance, lack of time, public transportation, whether the space or event was welcoming, and whether participants connected to the activity being offered. The information gathered from each survey, interview or focus group can then be slotted into these same categories, or "buckets". Create a bucket for other comments to catch feedback that doesn't fit into existing buckets. Sometimes the most interesting observations come from this other bucket.

If you have a lot of interviews you might need coding software to help you manage the information.

### USING QUOTES

Your report might be full of interesting charts, but nothing beats a quote from someone directly involved! As you go through the interviews, surveys and focus group notes, identify quotes that illustrate the impact of the project or that provide unique observations. Arts in the Parks does not ask audience members, volunteers or community organizers to identify themselves on surveys, so quotes remain anonymous. Attributed quotes should in general only be used if they come from someone in a professional position whose point of view is being shared on behalf of their organization.

## STEP FIVE: CREATE REPORT, DISTRIBUTE AND NEXT STEPS

The arts have much to offer communities. They bring people together and offer the opportunity to engage in ideas and to experience spaces transformed by beauty. They encourage people to explore their own creativity and enliven their neighbourhoods and their lives. Evaluation reports aim to capture the essence of this.

### EVALUATION REPORT

An evaluation report should include:

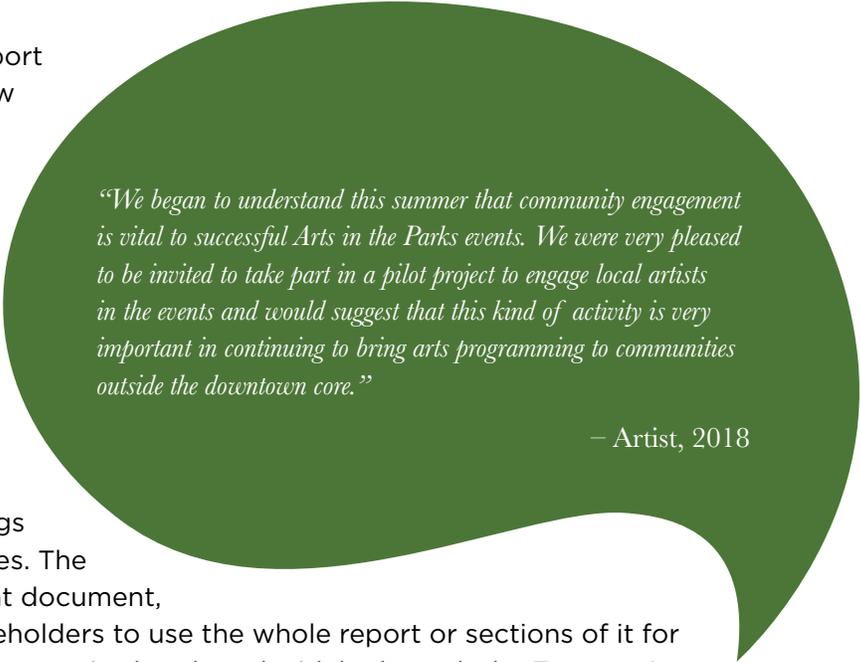
- ▶ Overall information about your program and your objectives
- ▶ Statistics and Comparisons: from activities, locations, audience members, artists, etc.
- ▶ Feedback from stakeholders: shared interests, expectations, surprises, challenges, outcomes
- ▶ Photographs: let the reader see the space, artists and audience
- ▶ Quotes from key stakeholders: that tap the energy and enthusiasm of those involved
- ▶ Next Steps: analysis of gap between current and potential program; create recommendations for change

The data in an evaluation report can be used in many ways, such as helping to find more resources. From attracting support of local businesses or Business Improvement Areas, to applying to granting programs or approaching foundations, the evaluation report is filled with stories and numbers that keep your supporters involved, help you attract new supporters, and demonstrate the impact of your program.

## DISTRIBUTION

Providing your evaluation report to stakeholders can show how much you appreciate them. Results can also be shared at a volunteer appreciation event or with potential partners to show them the vision of the project and the outcomes to date.

When the annual AITP evaluation report is complete, we send it to our partners and use it in meetings to discuss next year's activities. The report is built as a PowerPoint document, allowing organizers and stakeholders to use the whole report or sections of it for their own presentations. The report is also shared widely through the Toronto Arts Foundation website.



*“We began to understand this summer that community engagement is vital to successful Arts in the Parks events. We were very pleased to be invited to take part in a pilot project to engage local artists in the events and would suggest that this kind of activity is very important in continuing to bring arts programming to communities outside the downtown core.”*

– Artist, 2018

TAF and TAC are also working with City of Toronto Departments to evaluate how Arts in the Parks and City arts programs are working to increase access to those outside the downtown core.

## NEXT STEPS

Evaluation is a cyclical process. Each step builds on the one that came before it. We start by articulating our objectives, identifying stakeholders, and seeking input into the evaluation plan. Along the way we figure out the right questions, how best to gather information, and slowly the program impact emerges. When we have the full picture we can create a report. The contents of the report can be used for arts advocacy, fundraising, and promotion. It is also a useful planning tool to help improve the next event or project. In this way the circle is complete and the end becomes the next beginning.



# APPENDICES

# APPENDIX ONE

## GLOSSARY

### Capacity building

- ▶ A process in which individuals or groups gain, improve or retain skills, knowledge and resources that enable them to do a job at a greater capacity or volume (e.g.: increase audience, increase in scale, increase in impact).

### Community organizers and groups

- ▶ Persons or collectives of people that coordinate efforts and action by local residents to promote the interests of their community and improve it via projects/initiatives/events.

### Cultural geography

- ▶ This is a subfield of human geography, but we use the term to refer to the cultural values and customs specific to a geographical area. The ways people live that make an area unique.

### Cultural placemaking

- ▶ Approaching an area strategically to shape it and build a sense of identity through the arts and culture. As a practice it encourages residents to interact with each other and contribute to the area's well being on a communal scale and an individual scale.

### Neighbourhood Improvement Area (NIA)

- ▶ In Toronto this term is used to refer to a neighbourhood that has been designated as an area that requires additional investment and support to combat specific issues the area may be facing, such as a shortage of public services or above average poverty rate.

### Participatory event

- ▶ Events at which attendees have an opportunity to participate in the art creation and/or the presentation. e.g.: making banners as part of a community parade

### Spectator event

- ▶ Events at which attendees are audience members e.g.: viewing a film or watching a performance.

## APPENDIX TWO

### ARTIST SURVEY

This survey is sent digitally to participating artists and arts organizations to share their experience and provide feedback. This survey has been distributed following the end of summer when all the events are finished, as well as sent on a rolling basis to artists immediately following their event. To receive as many responses as possible we typically send out a reminder or two, about the survey.

#### Artist information

- 1 Name and Email
- 2 Arts organization or collective
- 3 Which park(s) did you work in this year?
- 4 As an artist/arts group are you familiar with the neighbourhood or communities where you worked?
  - a) Yes
  - b) No
  - c) Somewhat

#### Event Experience

- 5 Which of these describes the arts experience you offered? Select all that apply.
  - a) Performance presentation
  - b) Community-engaged arts performance - involving the audience in the work
  - c) Visual/Media Arts exhibition, installation or screening
  - d) Workshop/arts skill development for community members
  - e) Indigenous Arts
  - f) Interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary work
  - g) Family-focused
  - h) Youth-focused
  - i) Children- focused
  - j) Intergenerational-focused
  - k) Other: \_\_\_\_\_

- 6 Why were you interested in being part of Arts in the Parks? Rate 1-5 (1 being the least important and 5 being the most)
- a) want arts to be free and accessible in neighbourhoods
  - b) want to engage with specific sites/environments
  - c) want to work with specific communities in creation or skill building work
  - d) want to reach new audiences
  - e) arts in public spaces is the main focus of my(our) work
  - f) this work influences the rest of my arts practice
- 7 How many years have you been working in public/outdoor spaces?
- a) 0
  - b) 1-2
  - c) 3-5
  - d) 6-9
  - e) 10+
- 8 What was challenging about working in parks? Select all that apply.
- a) Getting to the location
  - b) Weather
  - c) Dealing with permits and city regulations
  - d) Noise
  - e) Audience participation
  - f) Location (park or site in the park) was a bad fit
- 9 What was the best part of working in parks/outdoor settings? Select all that apply.
- a) Scenery, fresh air and green space
  - b) Getting to know the community/neighbourhood
  - c) Bringing people together
  - d) Using the natural features of the park
  - e) Bringing arts to the public
  - f) Opportunity to promote civic engagement
  - g) Other
- 10 Did you think the park/location was a good fit? 1-5 (1 being a bad fit, 5 being a great fit)
- 11 Please briefly explain why the park(s) where you worked were or were not a good fit.

- 12 What assistance from Arts in the Parks was most important to you? Rank 1 to 5 with 1 being the most and 5 being the least.
- a) Assistance with City of Toronto permitting
  - b) Wayfinding signage in the park
  - c) Marketing and promotion
  - d) Local community outreach
  - e) Volunteers on site to direct audiences or participants
  - f) Raising our profile
- 13 We/I benefited from being part of Arts in the Parks? 1-5; 1 being strongly disagree, and 5 being strongly agree.

**Feedback**

- 14 What was the most interesting thing that happened? Did you encounter any surprises or unexpected outcomes?
- 15 How can Arts in the Parks be improved?
- 16 Any other comments?

## APPENDIX THREE

### AUDIENCE SURVEY

In 2018, we surveyed 31 of 36 parks where programming of one or more activities took place. Surveys were distributed and collected by volunteers using both digital tablets and postcards. Data entry was then completed by staff to convert the postcard surveys into a digital format that could be merged with data collected by tablet surveys.

### LONG FORM

#### Event information

- 1 Date
- 2 Area of City
- 3 Park
- 4 Event

#### Demographics

- 1 Age
  - a) 18-24
  - b) 25-34
  - c) 35-54
  - d) 55+
- 2 Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 Do you live...
  - a) In this neighbourhood
  - b) In this region of the city (i.e. Scarborough, North York, East Toronto, Etobicoke, York, Lakeshore, Central Toronto)
  - c) Elsewhere in the GTA (Greater Toronto Area)
  - d) Out of Town
- 4 What mode of transportation did you take here?
  - a) Walking
  - b) Public transportation
  - c) Taxi or Uber
  - d) Cycling
  - e) Driving

## Questionnaire

- 5 Did you go to Arts in the Parks events in previous years?
- a) Yes
  - b) No
  - c) Unsure
- 6 How many people did you come here with today?
- a) Adults \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) Children under 18 \_\_\_\_\_
  - c) I came by myself \_\_\_\_\_
- 7 Where did you hear about today's event?
- a) Community newspapers, or newsletters
  - b) Family, friend
  - c) Posters/handbills
  - d) Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.)
  - e) Local facility or organization (library, community centre, recreation centre)
  - f) Local businesses
  - g) From the artists
  - h) At another community event (farmer's market, neighbourhood festival, etc.)
  - i) Just saw it as I was passing by
  - j) Other
- 8 Why did you come to today's event?
- a) It's free
  - b) It's close to my home
  - c) It's less formal than attending arts elsewhere
  - d) I know the artists
  - e) I like being outside
  - f) To be with friends and/or family
  - g) To meet new people
  - h) Other: \_\_\_\_\_

- 9 Do you regularly attend arts events (dance, music, theatre, readings, galleries, festivals)?
- a) Often
  - b) Sometimes
  - c) Rarely
  - d) Never
- 10 Rate the following 1-5; 1 being strongly disagree, 5 being strongly agree.
- a) I want to see more arts events in parks
  - b) I felt welcome at this event
  - c) This experience changed the way I see this park
  - d) I will return to enjoy other activities in this park
  - e) This experience makes me want to attend or participate in more arts activities
- 11 Have you heard of Toronto Arts Foundation or Toronto Arts Council before?
- a) Yes
  - b) No
- 12 Additional comments:

## SHORT FORM

- 1 Age
  - a) 18-24
  - b) 25-34
  - c) 35-54
  - d) 55+
- 2 Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_
- 3 Did you go to Arts in the Parks events in previous years?
  - a) Yes
  - b) No
  - c) Unsure
- 4 Why did you come to today's event?
  - a) It's free
  - b) It's close to my home
  - c) It's less formal than attending arts elsewhere
  - d) I know the artists
  - e) I like being outside
  - f) To be with friends and/or family
  - g) To meet new people
  - h) Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- 5 Do you regularly attend arts events (dance, music, theatre, readings, galleries, festivals)?
  - a) Often
  - b) Sometimes
  - c) Rarely
  - d) Never
- 6 Rate the following 1-5; 1 being strongly disagree, 5 being strongly agree.
  - a) I want to see more arts events in parks
  - b) I felt welcome at this event
  - c) This experience changed the way I see this park
  - d) I will return to enjoy other activities in this park
  - e) This experience makes me want to attend or participate in more arts activities
- 7 What did you like best about your Arts in the Parks experience?

## APPENDIX FOUR

### COMMUNITY ORGANIZER SURVEY

This survey is sent digitally to participating community organizers to share their experience and provide feedback. This survey can be distributed following the end of summer when all the events are finished, as well as sent on a rolling basis to community organizers immediately following their event. To receive as many responses as possible we typically send out a reminder or two, about the survey.

#### Community Organizer Information

- 1 Email Address
- 2 Which park was the Arts in the Parks program in?
- 3 What was the Arts in the Parks event(s)?
- 4 Which of the following best describes your group? Select all that apply.
  - a) Community Park Groups
  - b) Community group
  - c) Residents group
  - d) Social Service Agency
  - e) Other

#### Event Experience

- 5 Please rate your overall experience with Arts in the Parks from 1-5 (1 being poor, 5 being excellent)
- 6 Was the program (type of art and/or type of activities) a good fit for your park?
  - a) Yes
  - b) No
  - c) Somewhat
- 7 Please explain in what ways the program was or was not a good fit for your park.
- 8 Have you previously hosted an Arts in the Parks event or activity?
  - a) Yes
  - b) No
- 9 Besides Arts in the Parks events, how many other events (park cleanups, community BBQ, fairs, etc.) in this park do you host per year?
  - a) 0
  - b) 1-2
  - c) 3-4
  - d) 5+

- 10 If you host other events throughout the year, what type of events are they? Written response.
- 11 Do you think your outreach had an impact on audience and event attendance?
- a) Yes
  - b) No
  - c) Somewhat
- 12 How did you let people know about the event?
- a) Social media
  - b) Posters/Flyers
  - c) Face-to-face/word of mouth
  - d) At our other programs
  - e) Community organizations
  - f) Door to door
  - g) Other
  - h) All of the above
- 13 From your observations, approximately what percentage of attendees do you think were from the local community?
- a) 1-25%
  - b) 26-50%
  - c) 51-75%
  - d) 76-100%
- 14 Rate the following from 1-5 (1 being poor, 5 being excellent)
- a) The site visit (if applicable)
  - b) Working with Park People (if applicable)
  - c) Working with the Arts in the Parks staff
  - d) Working with the artist
  - e) Community volunteer training session (if applicable)
  - f) The honorarium
  - g) Quality of the event
- 15 Would your group be interested in hosting Arts in the Parks next year?
- a) Yes
  - b) No
  - c) Maybe

- 16 Has animating your park with the arts inspired you to do more within your park?
- a) Yes
  - b) No
  - c) Somewhat
- 17 Do you think this experience has provided you with skills and knowledge to continue animating your park with the arts?
- a) Yes
  - b) No
  - c) Somewhat
- 18 Do you think local artists or arts groups were represented enough at the event/activity?
- a) Yes
  - b) No
  - c) Somewhat
- 19 Has your experience with Arts in the Parks changed your perspective on the possibilities of your park?
- a) Yes
  - b) No
  - c) Somewhat

### **Feedback**

- 20 Please let us know why this program is important to have in your community
- 21 Did you encounter any surprises or unexpected outcomes?
- 22 How can Arts in the Parks be improved?
- 23 Any other comments?

## APPENDIX FIVE

### VOLUNTEER SURVEY

This survey is sent digitally to volunteers at the end of the summer for them to share their experience and provide feedback. Another option when surveying volunteers is to have them fill out a much shorter survey at the end of their shift to provide immediate feedback. To receive as many responses as possible we typically send out a reminder or two, about the survey.

- 1 Are you:
  - a) a youth volunteer (14-17 years)
  - b) an adult volunteer (18 year+)
- 2 Do you live in the same part of the city where you volunteered?
  - a) Yes
  - b) No
- 3 If yes, how many of the parks where you worked are in your part of the city?
  - a) 1
  - b) 2-3
  - c) 4-5
  - d) 6+
- 4 How many parks did you volunteer in?
  - a) 1
  - b) 2-3
  - c) 4-5
  - d) 6+
- 5 How many volunteer hours did you work?
  - a) Under 3
  - b) 4-5
  - c) 6+
- 6 Do you volunteer for other groups or events (excluding Arts in the Parks) on a regular basis?
  - a) Yes
  - b) No

- 7 Why did you decide to volunteer for Arts in the Parks? Select all that apply.
- a) I like to support the arts
  - b) I like the idea of free arts in local parks
  - c) I want to make contact with arts organizations
  - d) I want to get work experience
  - e) I'm fulfilling required volunteer hours
  - f) Other
- 8 What was the most challenging thing about volunteering for Arts in the Parks? Select all that apply.
- a) Getting to the location
  - b) Weather (too hot, too cold, too rainy, too windy)
  - c) Number of hours I was expected to work
  - d) No one gave me clear instructions about what to do
  - e) Hard time making myself understood
  - f) Hard time understanding others
  - g) Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- 9 In general, do you think people who attended Arts in the Parks had a good time?
- a) Lots
  - b) Some
  - c) Not at all
- 10 I felt welcomed and appreciated by the Arts in the Parks team. Rate 1-5; 1 being strongly disagree, and 5 being strongly agree.
- 11 Volunteering was valuable for me. Rate 1-5; 1 being strongly disagree, and 5 being strongly agree.
- 12 I felt like my volunteering mattered. Rate 1-5; 1 being strongly disagree, and 5 being strongly agree.
- 13 I was provided with enough information and resources to inform attendees about the event and Arts in the Parks. Rate 1-5; 1 being strongly disagree, and 5 being strongly agree.
- 14 Would you volunteer again for Arts in the Parks or other Toronto Arts Foundation programs?
- a) Yes
  - b) No
  - c) Maybe

## Sharing Ideas

- 15 Please share a highlight of your experience with Arts in the Parks.
- 16 What can we do better? How could you have been better assisted to do your volunteer job?
- 17 What did you learn during your time volunteering with Arts in the Parks?

## PHOTO CREDITS

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- P. 12 Shadowland Theatre, by Sean Howard
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# HAVE FUN WITH ARTS IN YOUR PARKS!