

August 24, 2010

The Bridging Project transforms a Scarborough traffic bridge by connecting communities on both sides through art and performance

On September 11 and 12, the Bridging Project will complete its summer-long community "art intervention" on and under a Scarborough traffic bridge, with two full days of arts and performance during the Subtext Multi-Arts Festival.

That weekend will also see the launch of the bridge-spanning art work created by Mural Routes, as well as unveiling the results of an array of arts and performance activities that have engaged hundreds of youth, artists and residents in the Kingston-Galloway/Orton Park (KGO) community.

The Bridging Project evolved from the concerns of members of the KGO community that a six-lane traffic bridge on Lawrence Avenue, east of Orton Park, was physically cutting the community in two. Residents avoided crossing the bridge to access events, activities and services located on the other side. The Bridging Project brings added vitality to this community by artistically and symbolically uniting residents on both sides of the bridge through collaborative art and community activities.

By engaging multiple generations of the area's diverse residents with multi-disciplinary art projects, and by using unique outdoor spaces for people to safely and creatively explore the links between natural and urban environments, the Bridging Project reclaims this imposing bridge for residents while creating stronger links among members of the community. Some highlights of the project include:

Subtext Multi-Arts Festival - Produced by the Scarborough Arts Council, this festival will engage members of the community and artists through the celebration of contemporary urban art forms. Occurring under the bridge, this unique space becomes a community amphitheatre over two days (September 11 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.; September 12 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.). The festival will feature graffiti art, live music, dance performances, storytelling, interactive wildflower plantings, art demonstrations, a film screening and local vendors.

Mural Routes - Artist Rob Matejka mentored a team of youth and community members to create a painted art work spanning the North side of the bridge (871 feet or 266 metres). Images of the flora and fauna of the parkland around the bridge are interspersed with the footprints and impressions of people in the community and wildlife indigenous to the area. These elements represent the routes travelled by people and animals, and the roots and flora of the natural environment in the area. This mural will be dedicated in a ceremony on September 11 at 10:30 a.m.

Evergreen - This national charity worked with local volunteers in June to help plant 800 native wildflowers and grasses along Highland Creek on the north side of the Lawrence Avenue bridge. During the Subtext Multi-Arts Festival (September 11 from 10 a.m. to noon), Evergreen will host a public planting of 800 native wildflowers. These plants will help protect the area from erosion, attract pollinators such as butterflies and provide habitat for a variety of species while beautifying the local area.

Batik banners - Eleven Grade 11 and 12 students from the Kingston-Galloway/Orton Park area school Sir Robert L. Borden BTI

engaged in a workshop with artist David Kibuuka, facilitated by Toronto Cultural Services, to create modern batik artworks that will be featured on banners affixed to light poles over the bridge. These vibrant works of art feature natural images like butterflies, dragonflies and flora.

The Amazing Place - In co-operation with the KGO Neighbourhood Action Partnership, the Amazing Place hosted a Community Speak on April 29 to engage members of the community in a discussion about the bridge and the green space below it. Engagement and documentation of resident,Âs experiences, ideas and desires continued in the summer and will continue during the Subtext Multi-Arts Festival weekend.

Jumblies Theatre - On June 24 this multi-arts company, currently artists-in-residence at Cedar Ridge Creative Centre, conceived and coordinated a celebratory parade and pageant across the bridge. Jumblies Theatre will also be part of the Subtext Multi-Arts Festival, with arts activities and information about this local arts project.

East Scarborough Storefront - This innovative community hub hosted workshops that initiated the mural design process and has been a home base for the mural artists working tirelessly to paint the bridge. This space is also hosting dance workshops that will take place during the Subtext Multi-Arts Festival.

City of Toronto - Staff in the City's Cultural Services area are co-ordinating the Bridging Project's activities with all of its partners, with support from other City divisions.

The Bridging Project is co-presented by City of Toronto Cultural Services, Mural Routes, Scarborough Arts Council, The Amazing Place, Evergreen and Jumblies Theatre.

More information about the Bridging Project is available at <http://thebridgingproject.blogspot.com/>.

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