“culture can be, and is, used as a means of resistance, a place to formulate other solutions. In order to strive for change, you have to first imagine it and culture is the repository of imagination.”

-Stephen Duncombe, Cultural Resistance Reader 03

August 2010

Prepared by:
Jennie Vengris, Social Planner

Prepared for:
The Urban Arts Initiative Steering Committee

© The Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton
162 King William Street, Suite 103, Hamilton, ON L8R 3N9
Phone: 905.522.1148 Fax: 905.522.9124 E-mail: sprc@sprc.hamilton.on.ca
Website: sprc.hamilton.on.ca

A United Way Agency

All rights reserved including the right to reproduce in whole or in part any form.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 Executive Summary .......................................................................................................................... 1  
   1.1 What is this report? .......................................................................................................................... 1  
   1.2 What are the core findings? ............................................................................................................. 1  
   1.3 What does all of this mean? ........................................................................................................... 1  
   1.4 What are the next steps? ................................................................................................................. 1  
2.0 INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................................... 2  
3.0 CORE ASSUMPTIONS AND DEFINITIONS ......................................................................................... 3  
   3.1 Definitions ........................................................................................................................................ 3  
4.0 METHODOLOGY ............................................................................................................................... 5  
   4.1 Literature and Model Review ....................................................................................................... 5  
   4.2 Engaging Youth ................................................................................................................................. 5  
   4.3 Community Partner Conversations ............................................................................................... 5  
5.0 CONTEXT: LITERATURE AND MODEL REVIEW ............................................................................... 7  
   5.1 Arts and creative opportunities are important for at-risk youth ..................................................... 7  
   5.2 Homelessness and Poverty Are Realities for Youth in Hamilton ................................................... 7  
   5.3 At-Risk Youth Face Barriers ........................................................................................................... 7  
   5.4 Developing a Link Between At-Risk Youth, the Social Determinants of Health and the Arts .......... 8  
   5.5 At-Risk Youth Thrive With Links To Arts-Based, Creative Expression Opportunities .................... 8  
   5.6 Excellent Models of Youth Arts Engagement are Innovative ....................................................... 9  
6.0 INVENTORY OF AT-RISK YOUTH ARTS PROGRAMMING IN HAMILTON ..................................... 11  
7.0 A MADE-IN-HAMILTON MODEL FOR BUILDING ARTS OPPORTUNITIES FOR AT-RISK YOUTH ........................................................................................................................................... 12  
    7.1 Model ............................................................................................................................................. 12  
    7.2 Space ........................................................................................................................................... 14  
    7.3 Community Fit ................................................................................................................................. 16  
    7.4 Sustainability ................................................................................................................................. 16  
8.0 CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS ............................................................................................... 17  
    8.1 Developing a Three-Year Pilot Project Plan .................................................................................. 17  
Appendix A: Youth Group Conversation Guide ........................................................................................ 1  
Appendix B: Photographs of Youth Murals .............................................................................................. 2  
Appendix C: Youth Individual Conversation Guide .................................................................................. 5  
Appendix D: Community Partner Conversation Guide ............................................................................ 6
1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 What is this report?

This report is a summary of all information collected for the Urban Arts Initiative consultation. The Urban Arts Initiative has been meeting for almost two years to better plan for arts opportunities with and for at-risk youth in the Hamilton community. The report describes the current literature on at-risk youth and the arts, identifies good models of practices, maps out the local opportunities and describes the advice and input solicited from community partners and young people. The report concludes with a recommendation for next steps for the steering committee.

1.2 What are the core findings?

1. There is a population of youth in Hamilton who are street-involved, homeless and at-risk. These are youth who face many challenges but bring incredible strength, creativity and resilience to their lives and to our community.
2. Engaging in arts and creative opportunities contribute to better health and social outcomes for at-risk, street-involved and homeless youth.
3. While Hamilton has arts opportunities for young people, the community lacks a centralized, comprehensive program for at-risk youth to be engaging in creative expression in both structured and non-structured ways.
4. Stakeholders (including youth) from the Hamilton community have identified the need for arts opportunities and provided advice on the strengths to build on and potential resources for moving forward.
5. A comprehensive arts program for at-risk youth must be centred on the experience and influence of young people, must strive for social inclusion and innovation.

1.3 What does all of this mean?

The findings of this report suggest that Hamilton needs and is ready to move forward on developing comprehensive arts programming for young people who traditionally lack such opportunities. Hamilton has many strengths to build on (including existing programs and a spirit of collaboration) and this report provides the foundation for solid planning around the model, the space needed, potential community partners and developing sustainability.

1.4 What are the next steps?

The Steering Committee will advance the findings from this report in two ways: first, into a pilot plan for a three-year at-risk youth arts development project, and second, into a communication and engagement strategy with community partners and young people.
2.0 INTRODUCTION

In early 2009 a group of dedicated stakeholders representing youth services, mental health services and arts organizations came together with a vision for youth arts in Hamilton. Their vision was to enhance opportunities for a positive and safe space in Hamilton where homeless and street-involved youth can create art, build community, and further develop the tools that they need to live healthy and rewarding lives. Through initial conversations, it was clear that there was community support for such an initiative; however, work was needed to define how to provide the best opportunities, building on existing community strengths and efforts.

The Hamilton Community Foundation provided the resources to learn from youth service providers, arts organizations/artists and young people about the best plan for building comprehensive arts opportunities to youth who traditionally miss out.

This report will be organized into five sections: 1) Core Assumptions, 2) Consultation Design, 3) Literature and Model Review, 4) A Made-in-Hamilton Model for Building Arts Opportunities for At-Risk Youth and 5) Next Steps.
3.0 CORE ASSUMPTIONS AND DEFINITIONS

The Steering Committee approached the work of conceptualizing opportunities for youth and the arts from a set of core assumptions. These assumptions were defined and articulated through the course of the project. The core assumptions are:

1. Youth are great leaders – they need meaningful opportunities and support to demonstrate this
2. Youth teach us about what they need to practice the art they want to create
3. We value youth and their central role in co-creating youth spaces
4. Art has the potential to be transformative personally for youth and for community building
5. Youth need distinct spaces to practice art
6. Engaging in art and creative expression has the potential to improve the health of youth in our community
7. Culture is critical – youth culture, street culture, black culture, Aboriginal culture, new cultures, emerging cultures, subcultures all inform good youth arts opportunities
8. Any project of this kind needs to be built on collaboration – collaboration that builds on the strengths in a community and pushes for innovation.

The core assumptions commit the planning team to a course of action based on youth engagement, inclusion and arts-focus. These are the core assumptions through which decisions and planning will be made.

3.1 Definitions

The following definitions describe how the Steering Committee understands who they are working with and what the work is.

At-Risk Youth

For the purpose of this project at-risk youth are defined as young people who lack traditional access to arts opportunities. The barriers and situations that may preclude youth from artistic and creative opportunities include poverty, homelessness, mental health issues and past/current involvement with the criminal justice system.

Youth Engagement

Meaningful youth engagement is the opening of opportunities for the meaningful inclusion of young peoples’ perspectives in planning and decision making. Youth are engaged in different ways– through leadership, development, civic engagement and organizing1.

Social Determinants of Health

Social determinants of health are the non-biological factors that impact a person’s health outcomes. These factors are largely economic and social in nature2. The Public Health Agency of Canada has identified 12 key Determinants of Health including: 1) Income and Social Status, 2) Social Support Networks, 3) Education and Literacy, 4) Employment, 5) Social Environments, 6) Physical Environments, 7) Personal Health Practices and Coping Skills, 8) Healthy Child Development, 9) Biology and Genetic Endowment, 10) Health Services, 11) Gender, and 12) Culture3.

A SDH framework is a useful way to understand the factors that protect people from harm and promote well-being.

1 Youth Engagement 101, Mike Des Jardins and Jennie Vengris, 2007
2 Social Determinants of Health Fact Sheet, National Collaborating Centres for Public Health, 2008

Urban Arts Initiative Feasibility Study
Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton – August 2010
Community Art Practice

We look to community arts practice\(^4\) to inform our definition of art. When the Urban Arts Initiative uses the terms *art* or *creative expression* we are talking about:

~ Art which is situated in a community in a participatory way;
~ Creative expression practices that are transformative for participants and communities. These practices can be transformative for participants by building self-esteem, transferrable life and employment skills and healing from trauma. These practices can be transformative for communities because they increase bonding between members of the community and enhance community pride;
~ art making that is diverse – painting, drawing, sculpture, dance, movement, theatre, clothing design, music, production, video, story telling, graffiti arts, illustration, body art, electronic and online expression, woodworking (this list is not exhaustive).

\(^4\) Community Arts Action Plan, City of Toronto, 2008
4.0 METHODOLOGY

The Urban Arts Initiative consultation was completed using a number of methods.

4.1 Literature and Model Review

Literature on at-risk youth and the arts was consulted to help understand and develop the foundation of this initiative. The literature used was Canadian, conducted in the last 10 years and focused on young people facing risk factors (poverty, homelessness, social exclusion) and the arts. We also reviewed models of engagement in the arts with young people. These models are North American and focused on at-risk youth engaged in creative processes.

4.2 Engaging Youth

Young people were engaged in conversations and contributed to murals about building arts opportunities. The verbal and written/drawn contributions were sought two ways – individually and in groups.

*Murals/Group Conversations*

A large piece of mural paper was provided for youth in four settings: Notre Dame House School, Living Rock Ministries, The Good Shepherd Youth Services Mental Health Conference and Recreate Outreach Art Studios. For all but the Recreate mural, the mural paper was provided for a limited time (less than one hour) and youth were engaged in a conversation as they drew or wrote. A total of 23 youth participate in the mural contributions/facilitated conversations. The Youth Group Conversation Guide can be found in Appendix A.

A blank mural sheet remained available for Recreate Outreach Art Studio participants for approximately three weeks. A sign was provided that asked “What would you like to see in an art space for youth?” We are unsure how many youth contributed to it, since it was not facilitated.

Photographs of the murals are available in Appendix B.

*Individual Conversations*

Conversations were held with four youth who were particularly engaged in the arts to understand more deeply their experiences and suggestions for future planning. Youth were interviewed in settings of their choice. The Youth Individual Conversation Guide can be found in Appendix C.

4.3 Community Partner Conversations

Stakeholders representing a range of interests and sectors were interviewed individually and in small groups. Sixteen people were consulted. The conversations were organized around four domains that the Steering Committee identified as critical for moving forward in planning. The Community Partner Conversation Guides can be found in Appendix D. The community partners agreed to have their agencies included in the report to demonstrate the range of perspectives. The conversations included:

*Model*

Recreate Outreach Arts Studio  
Community Centre for Media Arts  
Hamilton Regional Indian Centre

*Space*

Imperial Cotton Centre for the Arts  
Hamilton Youth Arts Network
Community Fit

The Workers Arts and Heritage Centre
The Print Studio
Settlement and Integration Services Organization – The Globe
Local Community Artist
You Me Gallery

Sustainability

Hamilton Community Foundation
Ontario Trillium Foundation
Mohawk College

All Four Domains

City of Hamilton – Department of Culture
City of Hamilton – Arts Advisory Commission

James Street North Art Crawl Speakers Corner

During the James Street North Art Crawl\(^5\) in June, a Speakers Corner was set up with support from the Community Centre for Media Arts. Passersby were encouraged to participate at random. The interviewer strived to get a diversity of perspectives. Each participant was asked a total of three questions. The footage was edited into a three minute segment which is available on YouTube (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5xnQNZPYx_g).

Town Hall Check-In Event

In late June, after the data had been collected, the Urban Arts Initiative Steering Committee invited community partners to hear the preliminary key findings and to provide feedback at this stage. The agenda included youth music performances, a presentation of the key findings and a feedback session. The event drew thirty participants, most of whom had not participated in the research. The participants identified themselves on a sign-in sheet as belonging to one of three groups. It is important to note that many of the youth identified themselves as individual artists.

\[\begin{array}{l}
\sim \text{ From a Youth or Arts-Based Organization: 18} \\
\sim \text{ Individual Artists: 6} \\
\sim \text{ Youth: 6}
\end{array}\]

Notes were taken during the event and feedback forms were filled out by nine of the participants.

These methods elicited a range of perspectives on building youth arts opportunities in Hamilton. An analysis from the literature/model review and the consultation culminates in the section A Made-in-Hamilton Model for Building Arts Opportunities for At-Risk Youth.

\(^5\) The James Street North Art Crawl is a community event that happens monthly where gallery and arts spaces are open to the public for openings, demonstrations, performances and workshops.
5.0 CONTEXT: LITERATURE AND MODEL REVIEW

5.1 Arts and creative opportunities are important for at-risk youth

“I find my art to be a safe place to escape, to express my emotions in a way others can see. I draw, sculpt, paint, build, carve and write. I do art to show others that anyone can be an artist or use art to learn or survive. I have been on and off the streets the last 17 years of my life. Art has been a way of surviving through a lot of hard times. Teaching, creating, talking about, selling and giving away art has helped me survive as long as I have” (Interview Participant).

“If I didn’t do art, I’d be a different person, I’d be somewhere else. I can’t picture myself without art…When someone draws, not just seeing landscapes, but seeing another view to the world, understanding people better…If I had money I could get food so that I could spend time on drawing instead of trying to find money for food. I don’t have a space to draw, no money to buy materials”

(Interview Participant)

When asked, youth were clear about the connection between personal transformation and the arts. One participant told a story about using freestyle hip hop in a jail setting to broker peace between rival gangs. Current research strongly supports that arts-based opportunities contribute to positive outcomes for homeless, street-involved and at-risk youth.

5.2 Homelessness and Poverty Are Realities for Youth in Hamilton

Hamilton is a community that celebrates many strengths but also experiences complex challenges. It is the youth population that is often over-represented in the statistics representing those challenges. Young people (aged 15-24 years) are a fast growing segment of the local population, growing twice as fast as the general population from 2001 – 2006. Youth face higher rates of unemployment and poverty than the general population. That experience is often marked by early school leaving and living in female led lone parent families. Immigrant, newcomer and youth of colour are all more likely to have higher rates of poverty and unemployment than the general youth population.

Young people are also experiencing street-involvement and homelessness. It is difficult to provide an accurate count of the incidents of homelessness among youth. According to a 2005 report (the most recent, most accurate number we have documented), there were at least 608 young people experiencing street-involvement and homelessness in 2004. Service providers have remarked that this number is likely under representative of the actual problem.

5.3 At-Risk Youth Face Barriers

This project focuses on young people who are “at-risk” and, often, lack traditional opportunities for engaging the arts (opportunities through school and family resources). These are youth who face poverty, homelessness, criminal involvement and exploitation. They are youth who face a multitude of barriers. Many of the youth are street-involved and homeless. Young people who sleep rough, stay in flop houses, stay in shelters, couch surf, live in precarious, unstable and unaffordable housing are considered to be street-involved. They are also young people who find their identity, families and supports on the streets.

Youth become homeless for a myriad of reasons, most often because of serious family conflict and abuse. While poverty is not often a contributing factor to a young persons homelessness, poverty marks

---

6 Statistics Canada, 2006 Census Data
7 Ibid.
8 Addressing the Needs of Street-Involved and Homeless Youth in Hamilton, Jennie Vengris, 2005
9 Addressing the Needs of Street-Involved and Homeless Youth in Hamilton, Jennie Vengris, 2005
the homeless experience. The street experience is chaotic and difficult and street-involved youth have higher than average rates of mental health issues and substance use. However, young people on the street demonstrate survival, hope and resilience.

5.4 Developing a Link Between At-Risk Youth, the Social Determinants of Health and the Arts

The Social Determinants of Health (SDH) approach provides a good framework for understanding the multitude of factors that contribute to a person’s wellbeing (please see the Definitions section for an explanation of the Social Determinants of Health concept). This framework acknowledges that a person’s health and wellness is determined by a network of social and economic factors. From an SDH perspective, street-involved and at-risk youth experience many conditions that negatively impact their health and well-being including poverty, hunger, lack of shelter and lack of community connection10.

The arts as a contributor to well-being and as a protective factors against negative health outcome is emerging in the current body of literature around the Social Determinants of Health. Currently, the Disabilities sector and the Urban Health sectors are linking arts and creative expression opportunities with increased health and mental health outcomes11.

The Public Health Agency of Canada identifies twelve Determinants of Health. There are six that potentially connect with the provision of arts opportunities to youth: Culture, Coping Skills, Social Environments, Employment, Education and Literacy and Social Support Networks. These six could be impacted by the opportunities and space for young people to be engaged in creative expression.

5.5 At-Risk Youth Thrive With Links To Arts-Based, Creative Expression Opportunities

The literature strongly supports that youth who engage in arts-based programming have enhanced life outcomes. The National Art and Youth Demonstration Project determined that there were multiple benefits to young people engaging in arts programming including, “staying in school, improving academic performance, improving self-esteem, instilling hope for the future…and inhibiting their involvement in negative social situations such as substance use, crime and violence”12.

The challenges street-involved youth face can be many and contribute to emotional instability and mental health issues. Art and creative expression can be protective factors contributing to the emotional resilience of homeless youth for three main reasons. First, youth can use the practice of art making to transform negative experiences and emotions. Second, creative expression can be a welcome distraction and stress-relieving activity in times of chaos13. Third, art allows youth to redirect potentially destructive or harmful emotions. Additionally, art can help street-involved youth to find their identity. For some youth the ability to cope and manage revolves around their identity14. Art is individual and personalized in a youth’s sense of self as well as in the creations themselves, creating art contributes to the feeling of individuality and a valued identity in youth.

The benefits of creative expression extend beyond emotional well-being into other attributes of resilience. Art and self-esteem are positively connected. Street-involved youth often have lowered self-esteem because of all of the things they have experienced. “Working in the arts increases self-esteem, strengthens resilience and invigorates a desire to learn more”15. Creative thinking can contribute to enhanced problem solving. Artistic and creative expression can provide the self-esteem needed to

---

10 Housing as a Determinant of Health, Public Health Agency of Canada, 2002.
11 National Arts in Health Network, The Centre for Urban Health Initiatives, Disability in the Arts, Disadvantage in the Arts National Network
12 National Art and Youth Demonstration Project, National Crime Prevention Centre, 2007
15 Sketch Toronto website – www.sketch.ca
confidently make decisions. Additionally, creative expression is known to “reduce impulsivity”\textsuperscript{16}. Art is a way of communicating. When other street-involved youth and people outside of street culture view the art created by street-involved youth it allows further insight and a different way of thinking about their stories. Art can tell so much more than words (Kidd, 2009).

Finally, engaging at-risk youth in the arts is not personally transformative for youth but also for the community where it is happening. The practice of creating art impacts youth who impact and challenge their communities. Street-involved youth often face discrimination based on age and poverty. Art allows people to see that the stigmas and stereotypes attached to street-involved youth are not all true (Kidd, 2009). Art “breaks down barriers” (Sketch). Street culture is an important and powerful force in the lives of youth. Art helps street-involved youth to acknowledge and connect to the positive aspects of street culture, demonstrates to the community that positive aspects of street culture exist and opens up relationships with people outside of street culture (Kidd, 2009).

5.6 Excellent Models of Youth Arts Engagement are Innovative

A number of Canadian and American models of arts-based programming for at-risk youth were explored to understand the elements that made them successful. A few, highlighted below, demonstrate real innovation in their engagement of young people and model of practice. Sketch – an arts organization for homeless youth in Toronto – provided mentorship and guidance through this process. Their model and advice for moving forward is discussed at the end of this section.

Between the models investigated for this report there were some common, innovative elements of practice, including:

\begin{itemize}
\item Open, accessible spaces
\item Access to arts materials and mentors
\item Providing referrals and access to supports as needed
\item Explicit engagement of youth who face oppression
\item Recognition and respect for the culture youth bring – street culture, youth culture and a multitude of identities.
\end{itemize}

\textit{Regent Park Focus Youth Media Centre – Toronto, ON}

Regent Park Focus Youth Media Arts Centre works with youth in a range of ways including film, video, photography and music. The Media Arts Centre also runs a radio station that youth plan, produce and host – lending their voice about their community to a wide audience. What makes the Regent Park Focus Youth Media Centre innovative? The mediums they use and their explicit engagement of ethno-racially diverse youth.

Visit the Regent Park Focus Youth Media Centre website at: catchdaflava.com

\textit{Saskatoon Community Youth Arts Programming (SCYAP) – Saskatoon, SK}

SCYAP is a creative expression space for at-risk and homeless youth in Saskatoon. The model is very much designed and fueled by the perspectives of the youth participants. Offering both drop-in space and more structured programming, SCYAP focuses on skill building, employment readiness and entrepreneurship. SCYAP participants are engaged in paid public mural projects around the city. What makes SCYAP innovative? Their explicit and authentic youth engagement.

Visit the SCYAP website at: scyapinc.org

\textsuperscript{16} Prescott, M. et al.
Art Start – New York, NY

Art Start is a grassroots, artist-founded program for at-risk youth (youth who are homeless, in conflict with the law and/or facing conflict at home). The model is designed to recognize youth as critical contributors to society and engages young people in apprenticeships, artist-in-residence opportunities and outreach to homeless and criminally involved youth. What makes Art Start innovative? The fact that it is artist-founded and artist-led.

Visit the Art Start website at: art-start.org

Sketch – Toronto, ON

Sketch is a comprehensive arts organization in downtown Toronto that engages street-involved and homeless youth. Established in 1997, Sketch provides space, guidance and resources to youth to engage in a range of art practices and activities. Sketch currently has space and materials for textile work, painting and drawing, print-making, sound recording and editing, graphic design work, wood work, dance, theatre and movement.

Sketch started out doing outreach to young people in Toronto, fostering arts projects and responding to the needs and suggestions of young people. The artists leading the effort were not initially prepared to respond to the complex issues that were emerging for some youth as they engaged in art. Five years into Sketch’s development, a youth worker who built bridges to organizations providing services to homeless youth was hired. Now, Sketch offers free studio time with access to materials and mentors, more structured workshops, opportunities for youth to provide leadership and mentorship, connections to arts education and employment opportunities, referrals to outside agencies and a kitchen with prepared meals. Sketch’s core values centre around youth engagement, leadership, entrepreneurship, the importance of the narrative and community building. What makes Sketch innovative? Their values around youth-centredness and street-culture as valid and strengths-based, their focus on playfulness and the flexibility of the program to meet the changing needs and dynamics of youth.

Staff from Sketch provided the following advice for moving forward on arts-based programming with youth in Hamilton:

~ Differentiate the organization from service organizations – youth have been ‘serviced’ for so long that they need ‘playfulness’ in their lives.
~ Pay attention to neighbour relations.
~ Foster strong relationships with funders and supporters.
~ Build core costs into every funding opportunity.
~ Be clear about what the organization does and does not do.

Visit the Sketch website at: sketch.ca
6.0 INVENTORY OF AT-RISK YOUTH ARTS PROGRAMMING IN HAMILTON

Hamilton is not devoid of arts opportunities for youth. However, these opportunities are not comprehensive, not coordinated and not always focused on the unique needs and culture of at-risk youth. In developing an inventory of local programs, we discovered six projects or initiatives that are focused on working with street-involved or at-risk youth in creative ways.

In the spirit of collaboration that is well-known in Hamilton, it is important that we build on current capacities and opportunities, that we are not inventing something brand new. The following is a list of programs for young people (16 – 30 years old) that focus on creative expression and the arts and is focused on at-risk, street-involved and/or homeless youth. The information is from Inform Hamilton and the organizations’ websites.

Recreate Outreach Art Studio (Recreate)

Recreate is a drop-in outreach arts studio for street-involved and homeless youth. They are open two times per week for three hour sessions. Recreate currently operates currently out of Good Shepherd - Notre Dame House.

The Community Centre for Media Arts (CCMA)

The CCMA runs programs that support youth in creative expression through new and social media (Monkey Biz and media studio space and mentorship). They have open studio time available to be scheduled throughout the week and operates in the James Street North Area.

The Hamilton Conservatory for the Arts – Culture for Kids in the Arts

Culture for Kids provides opportunities for mentorship, exposure to creative opportunities and scholarships for skill development to youth and are open every week day. They operate in the Downtown Core (James Street South).

The Print Studio

The Print Studio works with the community to engage youth in printmaking in and out of school and in their local neighbourhood. They operate some programs ongoing, while others are one-time or time-limited projects. The Print Studio operates on James Street North.

The Living Rock Ministries

The Living Rock is a multi-service site for street-involved and homeless youth to receive support around a variety of needs. They run the Arts of August – an annual summer youth arts initiative that invite youth to submit art (in a variety of mediums) to help celebrate diversity in the Hamilton community. The Living Rock is in the Downtown Core.

The Hamilton Youth Arts Network (HYAN)

The HYAN is an engaged group of youth and adults who work together to expand opportunities in the arts and develop youth-led arts projects. The group is supported by the Workers Arts and Heritage Centre and the YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington. HYAN has a strong Facebook presence and runs events as they emerge from youth.
7.0 A MADE-IN-HAMILTON MODEL FOR BUILDING ARTS OPPORTUNITIES FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

This consultation with youth and with community partners forms the foundation for moving forward on a program for at-risk youth to engage with the arts and creative expression. The key findings are organized into four domains: model, space, fit with the community and program sustainability.

7.1 Model

Core Message: Hamilton needs a dedicated and comprehensive creative space where at-risk youth learn, create, show, teach and sell art.

Conversations about the model for at-risk youth arts delivery centred around four key themes: a centralized, youth arts storefront organization, fostering collaboration, engaged staff, volunteers and youth and strong core values.

Youth and community partner participants made clear that Hamilton needs an expanded youth arts organization, not another social service organization for young people. The model should provide open, drop-in studio time with access to materials and mentors and more structured workshops and apprenticeship opportunities. The model should be open to multi-disciplinary projects – linking mediums, projects and connecting youth to their community.

Participants also called for the planning to authentically include collaboration and cooperation. Hamilton does not need another venture that competes with existing organizations for resources. The reality is that when engaging at-risk youth in the arts, no comprehensive opportunities exist. The next steps of the work are, then, to build on what exists, challenge traditional ways of thinking about youth arts engagement and creating new opportunities where there are gaps.

An initiative of this nature needs the right people planning, engaging and supporting the work. Resoundingly, participants called for authentic youth leadership; youth need to have input and control in planning, youth should be able to contribute to decision making and youth who excel should be able to run courses to make money for themselves and the centre. The space needs the right staff, mentors, role models. When talking about the “right” people, participants described giving staff power and space to be responsive and plan alongside youth, staff who are non-judgmental and who “get youth” and engaging paid artists for their work.

There are values that need to be explicit in the planning and the work. Those values include balancing flexibility and structure, approach all youth from a strengths-based perspective, explicit inclusion of refugee, immigrant, Black, Aboriginal and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer youth, and finally, integrating self-esteem building, self-exploration and healing from trauma into the creative expression activities.

While youth input is intertwined in all of the key findings, the young people provided important feedback in terms of the activities they want to engage in. The following table describes the youth input in terms of activities, mediums, supplies and supports beyond art that they described during the consultation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Mediums</th>
<th>Supplies</th>
<th>Supports Beyond Art</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art workshops</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Charcoal and pastels</td>
<td>Pet friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Busker spot out front</td>
<td>Hip hop</td>
<td>Gimp, string, beads</td>
<td>Stress Counsellors – “some12talk2”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art classes which teach different artistic skills and techniques (like school)</td>
<td>Singing</td>
<td>Computers (with Photoshop and video editing)</td>
<td>Snacks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art instructors</td>
<td>Creative Writing</td>
<td>Clay</td>
<td>Food and drinks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Videos on art and music</td>
<td>Poetry, music, stories</td>
<td>Guitar</td>
<td>Fridge, full of food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different activities that teach creativity and art skills (group and individual)</td>
<td>Painting</td>
<td>Turn tables</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freestyling, battles</td>
<td>Water colour</td>
<td>Piano</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching how to draw</td>
<td>Oil painting</td>
<td>Drums</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Body painting</td>
<td>Writing supplies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Face painting</td>
<td>Books</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Drawing</td>
<td>Paint</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comic book drawing</td>
<td>canvases, plastercine, a whole bunch of random stuff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fashion design</td>
<td>Recording equipment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pottery</td>
<td>Video equipment with a green screen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sculpting</td>
<td>Screen printing press</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carving</td>
<td>Ink</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paper mache</td>
<td>Liners</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pottery</td>
<td>Paper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Photography</td>
<td>Cloth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Video</td>
<td>Wood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Graffiti art</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Silk screen/print making</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stage production</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Acting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knitting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.2 Space

Core Message: An engaging arts space for at-risk youth should be a centralized storefront with clear street-access and an open, inspiring interior.

The participants who commented on the ideal space considerations for engaging youth through the arts discussed considerations around renting versus owning space, the location and the studio features.

All of the participants agreed that both renting and owning space had both benefits and drawbacks. Owning space allows for increased freedom of use and the potential for future revenue. Renting space allows for flexibility, opportunities to learn about changing needs over the first 3-5 years and not having to deal with the many potential issues that owning a building brings. Overall, most participants advised that renting space would be the best idea for an initiative such as this.

The location for the space generated a lot of discussion. Most participants felt that arts opportunities should be located in the downtown core for increased accessibility and visibility. Many felt that the James Street North corridor with its increasingly strong arts presence in the community would be a natural fit. According to one participant, “we want at-risk youth rubbing shoulders with the creative industry”. However, some participants acknowledged that the relationship between vendors on James Street North and young people has been strained in the past. This location would help to challenge the negativity and increase awareness, sensitivity and inclusion. Other locations that were discussed include Ottawa Street North as an emerging arts centre, Barton Street and the East end. Youth who were interested in locations outside of the downtown core wanted the space to be “away from the drama” but accessible by public transit. Additionally, there is much need and potential in the east end which is traditionally does not have many resources and opportunities.

The location question also raised conversations about having one central space or many satellites. The consensus was that one, centralized storefront location with satellites and outreach is ideal. The centralized storefront would be important for creating a youth-centred place and a community identity. Satellites would be important to support art-making forms that require specialized and expensive equipment (print making, theatre).

According to the consultation the space should have:

~ Open-concept, very large room (or two)
~ Spaces to engage with a variety of mediums
~ Spaces to hang out, think, communicate and be inspired
~ Lots of creative consideration for storage – at least half of the space may be needed to store materials and projects
~ Lots of flexibility, opportunities for transformation – movable furniture, dividers
~ Natural light
~ One wall just for tagging
~ Bulletin boards full of opportunities (potential shows, websites to check out, contests)
~ Should be housed in a non-traditional space, for example, a warehouse space.

Again, while the above information integrates youth input, the following table isolates key space and design features that the youth articulated.
Table 2: Youth Defined Space and Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Space and Furniture</th>
<th>Areas of Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A place to express yourself</td>
<td>Dark room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colourful</td>
<td>Musical study area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plenty of spaces to work like desks or tables</td>
<td>Paintball/water balloon room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feng shui</td>
<td>Wood shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-lit</td>
<td>Writers lounge with rugs and seats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plants and windows</td>
<td>Recording booth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comfy floors</td>
<td>Stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desk with underlighting for tracing and such</td>
<td>Drawing section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoga balls for chairs</td>
<td>Screen printing section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disco Ball Lights</td>
<td>Music room with piano, drums, recording office, studio, couch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Checkerboard Floor</td>
<td>Theatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen</td>
<td>Computer/relaxation room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pictures</td>
<td>Green room – room to chill and smoke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sun room with couches to smoke</td>
<td>Chillin area to listen to your music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gym with treadmills and other equipment</td>
<td>Gamers area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lazy boy chairs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bug screen with projectors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washroom with full length mirrors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A wall we can tag</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A drinking room</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bean bag chairs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art supply cabinet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just spread everything out and showcase peoples’ work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smokers area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.3 Community Fit

*Core Message: The success of this initiative is contingent on strong partnerships with the arts and youth social service communities.*

The Hamilton community has incredible potential for building authentic arts opportunities for at-risk youth. A critical aspect of that potential is the strong, local tradition of community partnerships. However, our current funding climate means that many arts and social services are competing for limited resources and this competition can thwart new development. Another challenge is the community reticence because of past projects that did not move forward or that ended prematurely. Interestingly, youth described only potential and no challenges.

Most of the participants agreed that the success of such a project would be contingent on strong partnerships in the arts and social service communities – two sectors that have not, historically, had much connection. It is important to note that individual artists must be present in the planning and implementation – they represent an important and informed voice in Hamilton's arts community. This cannot be a strand alone initiative. Many participants expressed excitement about a comprehensive arts program for at-risk youth because it fills a void in the community.

7.4 Sustainability

*Core Message: Program sustainability can be challenging to achieve and relies on strong leadership, diverse funding and stakeholder commitment.*

The participants who talked about sustainability were asked to describe the beginning stages of successful programs and projects. The messages were threefold, in order to succeed in achieving sustainability a program needs: great leadership, diverse funding sources and buy-in from a variety of stakeholders. The leadership needs of a solid program start with a good board of directors with community connections and fundraising experience. The participants suggested that the program should be arts focused but with clear connections to education, employment, mentorship, entrepreneurship and micro-enterprise. Finally, the participants suggested that finding established organizations and initiatives that can incubate new ideas promotes stability and sustainability for programs such as these. Hamilton is a region that currently does not access some major sources of funding around youth arts. Three critical funding opportunities to explore include:

- **Municipal:** The Community Partnership Program – This program has historically been a small element of funding for arts initiatives. The program is currently under review with anticipated changes being announced in 2010.

- **Provincial:** The Ontario Arts Council (OAC) – Arts Education Grants are a critical source of operating funding for youth arts organizations. This is currently untapped in the Hamilton region.

- **Federal:** The Canada Council for the Arts – Integrated Arts Program for Organizations provides core funding for arts initiatives.

An analysis of the granting allocations for 2010 OAC, Arts Education Grants shows no recipients in the Hamilton area. An analysis of the granting allocations for the 2008 (most recent year available) CCA, Integrated Arts Program for Organizations shows no recipients in the Hamilton area. Both granting bodies are currently under-utilized in the Hamilton region.
8.0 CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

The Urban Arts Initiative consultation confirmed five core messages:

1. There is a population of youth who face risk factors that preclude them from good arts opportunities;
2. Engagement in arts opportunities for at-risk youth contributes to good health and social outcomes;
3. The Hamilton community has opportunities but lacks a comprehensive, stable program for at-risk youth to engage in the arts;
4. Youth and community partners helped us to understand what good opportunities would look like;
5. Young people must be central in the development of opportunities around the arts in Hamilton.

The literature and model review identified that innovative arts engagement with at-risk youth improves health and social outcomes. The consultation with young people and community partners helped us understand what a strong, local model for youth arts engagement would include.

The Urban Arts Initiative Steering Committee is now tasked with moving the findings of this consultation forward into action. The following next steps are recommended:

1. Develop a three-year pilot project plan for a comprehensive youth arts engagement model that includes (please see next page for more detail):
   - staffing requirements
   - hours of operation
   - space needs
   - an authentic youth engagement strategy
   - programming plans
   - a detailed budget.

2. Develop a communication mechanism for community partners and for funders.

3. Plan a developmental evaluation strategy for the three-year pilot project.

8.1 Developing a Three-Year Pilot Project Plan

a. Using the consultation key findings, define and articulate the program model. Elements of the program model should include:

   ~ The Community Centre for Media Arts and Recreate Outreach Arts Studio providing leadership
   ~ Strong partnerships in the arts community – especially artists and organizations providing youth programming, including:
      - The Hamilton Youth Arts Network
      - The Print Studio
      - The Living Rock Ministries
      - Culture for Kids in the Arts
   ~ Strong opportunities for youth to demonstrate leadership and be engaged in planning. Hire youth to mentor other youth. Engage youth to create, show and sell their art. Give space to youth to teach the art to the community.
   ~ A balance between open drop-in studio time with access to mentorship and materials (50%) and structured, skill-building workshops or projects (50%)
   ~ Staff, volunteers, artists, mentors who are interested in youth, non-judgmental, engaging, dynamic and passionate.
Explicit plans for engaging refugee/immigrant youth, Black youth and Aboriginal youth. Ensure this element is integrated from the beginning - in the planning phases with policies developed with this anti-oppression lens.

Link the arts with employment, training and education opportunities. Connect youth with creative industries as a potential employment path. Demonstrate what it is to be a working artist. Infuse the model with ideas around entrepreneurship, social and micro enterprise.

b. Develop a budget matrix for the program model. The following template will capture all core costs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Annual Operating Cost</th>
<th>Potential Funding Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Space</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For example: A 1500 square foot rental space in downtown Hamilton.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Salary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For example: 1 FTE Coordinator, 1 FTE Artist Mentor and 1 FTE Youth Engagement/Support Worker</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For example:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Honourariums</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For example: Honourariums provided to 50 youth/year for leadership and mentoring @ approximately $15.00 per hour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For example: Light meals/snacks provided daily for 5 days per week at $40.00 per day</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus Tickets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For example: 10,000 bus tickets per year @ $2.00 per ticket</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
c. Develop a communication plan and partnership plan. Define the list of organizations/people who need to know about the work. Define the list of organizations/people who need to participate in the work. Ensure that the following sectors are considered in the communication plan:

~ Arts Organizations
~ Individual Artists
~ Youth Serving Organizations
~ Funders and Sustainers

d. Establish a Board of Directors or Advisory Committee. The Committee should have representation from each of the following sectors:

~ Youth
~ Community Arts
~ Independent Artist
~ Street Youth Service Sector
~ Private Sector
~ Financial Sector

e. Rent a centralized space for the bulk of the arts programming. The space should:

~ Have input from youth on the choice of space and the way it is designed
~ Be open, non-traditional, bright
~ Be accessible on transit lines
~ Run by a supportive landlord (supportive to youth and to the arts)
~ Have lots of storage space.
Appendix A: Youth Group Conversation Guide

Youth Consultation

On some mural paper draw a bit square with a door on one side. This blank square represents the Urban Arts Initiative space. With crayons, markers, pencils, cut and paste materials—youth can form a circle around the square and develop a collage cooperatively about what needs to be inside this room for them to want to make art there. The facilitator can encourage contribution of ideas that are:

~ physical (what the space looks like)
~ material (what kind of art making materials/projects)
~ staff or mentoring
~ the ‘feel’ of the place
~ how youth participate – is it drop in, art courses, mentoring, long term projects
~ what happens with the art – showing it, selling it, just the process of making art
~ how will youth help make decisions and run it

The facilitator will be prompting these questions while the youth work. If by the end there are areas (above) that have not been discovered, the facilitator will ask. The facilitator will be taking notes or audio/video taping the session.
Appendix B: Photographs of Youth Murals
Appendix C: Youth Individual Conversation Guide

Youth Interview Questions

1) Tell me about your art. What do you do? Why do you do it?
2) Talk a bit about how art has impacted your life.
3) If you had all of the money and power, what kind of programs/opportunities would you set up for youth who want to make art?
4) If Hamilton was going to have a centre just for urban youth to create art, what advice would you give us?
   ~ physical (what the space looks like)
   ~ material (what kind of art making materials/projects)
   ~ staff or mentoring
   ~ the ‘feel’ of the place
   ~ how youth participate – is it drop in, art courses, mentoring, long term projects
   ~ what happens with the art – showing it, selling it, just the process of making art
   ~ how will youth help make decisions and run it
Appendix D: Community Partner Conversation Guide

Questions about a Youth Arts Programming Model

1) What do you think about the potential role of arts in the lives of at-risk youth? (Icebreaker)
2) What are the elements or characteristics of an ideal model? What do we need to steer away from?
3) What is happening in Hamilton, right now, that we need to know about, pay attention to and think about as we move forward?
4) Who do we else do we need to be talking to and why?
5) What are some ways that you, your organization or your community could participate in an arts initiative for at-risk youth?

Questions about Youth Friendly and Art Friendly Space Considerations

1) What do you think about the potential role of arts in the lives of at-risk youth? (Icebreaker)
2) What would an ideal space look like for this?
3) What is happening in Hamilton, right now, that we need to know about, pay attention to and think about as we move forward?
4) Are there potential partnerships we need to explore from the beginning? What are they?
5) What are some ways that you, your organization or your community could participate in an arts initiative for at-risk youth?

Questions about Community Fit

1) What do you think about the potential role of arts in the lives of at-risk youth? (Icebreaker)
2) How would a comprehensive youth arts initiative fit into the local arts and youth social service scene?
3) What is happening in Hamilton, right now, that we need to know about, pay attention to and think about as we move forward?
4) Are there potential partnerships we need to explore from the beginning? What are they?
5) What are some ways that you, your organization or your community could participate in an arts initiative for at-risk youth?

Questions about Creative Sustainability

1) What do you think about the potential role of arts in the lives of at-risk youth? (Icebreaker)
2) We are committed to building a sustainable program. What best advice would you give about our strategy for starting out? What are some examples of initiatives that were successful in the end? What did their beginning look like?
3) What are some creative ways to ensure sustainability of a project like this?
4) What is happening in Hamilton, right now, that we need to know about, pay attention to and think about as we move forward?
5) Who do we else do we need to be talking to and why?
6) What are some ways that you, your organization or your community could participate in an arts initiative for at-risk youth?