“The Park Board holds a vision of a city where the arts are an integral part of everyday life; where community cultural development processes strengthen civil society, where parks and community centres reflect the cultural vitality of the community and where people are able to learn and express creativity in ways that build healthy communities.”

*Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation Arts Policy*

The ACE Team supports community-engaged arts and creative greening initiatives in facilities, parks and community gardens, and at every community centre in the city.

**Arts, Culture and Environment Team 2013**
Coordinator: jil p. weaving
Community Arts Programmers:
Cyndy Chwelos  Marie Lopes  Margaret Naylor
Danita Noyes  Brenda Racanelli  Becky Till
Lorrie Wager  Lisa Walker
Associated staff and interns:
Hilary Davis  Nicola Dunne  Yuna Flewin
Tara Nazemi  Kya Prince  Megan Stuart-Stubbs
“The Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation confirms its mandate in the arts and recognizes the arts as an essential element in a vital, creative and balanced city and seeks to actively facilitate participation in and access to the arts for all.”

Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation Arts Policy

Early in 2013 the Vancouver Park Board launched the Arts, Culture and Environment (ACE) team, a new model of support for community-engaged arts and creative greening initiatives. This new model was based on a year of consultation and planning to explore how best to update and enhance Park Board’s role in supporting public access to, and participation in, arts and culture in the city. During this process the leadership that community arts projects play in developing innovative greening strategies was recognized, and support for greening initiatives was formally incorporated into the new team’s role.

This booklet is an overview of our first year and offers a snapshot of the team’s achievements in supporting community participation in artistic, cultural and environmental initiatives in our city’s neighbourhoods. It provides a window onto the work we do in supporting healthy individuals, caring communities, a thriving arts and culture sector and enhanced natural environments.

jil p. weaving
Coordinator, Arts, Culture and Environment

“When someone says, “I can’t draw”, I refuse to believe them. There are so many ways to draw... We draw as children and chances are you still draw– when you doodle, make maps, sign your name...”

artist Elizabeth MacKenzie
Artist led community engagement is an important aspect of community cultural development in Vancouver, providing opportunities for people to literally build community by making art together.

Community-engaged arts see artists collaborate with community members—who may not see themselves as artists—working together as creators, producers, performers, and activated audiences. Through a creative process consisting of workshops, discussion groups and exhibitions, they make and present artwork exploring issues and concerns that matter to them. The work promotes diversity, innovation and collaboration.

Because community arts projects are often interdisciplinary and ephemeral they don’t necessarily fit easily into traditional gallery or theatre settings, and access to community, recreation and park spaces is essential. In 2013, work by artists and communities supported by the Vancouver Park Board was created in parks, schools, community centres, gardens, on city streets AND in art galleries and theatres.

**Draw Down**

This annual day of drawing saw 5,000 drawers of all ages participating in workshops across the city. The project challenges the idea that drawing is only for professional artists, revealing drawing as a way everyone dreams, plans, thinks, and socializes. In 2013, the event presented 35 drawing workshops in 23 community centres, in parks, art galleries, schools, and neighbourhood houses.

**Aboriginal Carver in Residence at Britannia Community Centre**

2013/2014 is the Year of Reconciliation in Vancouver. Carver Darren Joseph of the Squamish Nation notes "The Year of Reconciliation is about healing as a community and traditionally carving is to help the people." As he worked on the Honouring the People housepost he shared traditional teachings with community members and neighbourhood youth, sharing different protocols related to welcoming visitors to territories and the important role of the housepost in family storytelling.

**The Bird Project at Queen Elizabeth Park**

Artists Geneviève Raiche-Savoie and Jesse Garbe work to raise awareness and explore issues regarding the city life of local and migratory birds. Vancouver hosts many local bird species and is situated on one of the world's most important migratory pathways. The Bird Project creatively explores ways our growing city can remain accommodating to avian co-inhabitants, engaging with the public to build our understanding about these "non-human" neighbours in our city.
Engaging People

The ACE Team worked with colleagues in recreation and neighbourhood volunteers to support projects and initiatives across the city. The wide range of creative activities linked community members to the professional world of visual arts, dance, music and performance and to the city’s active environmental community.

Diverse Partners

Our diverse partners include community centre associations and grassroots arts and environmental organizations, businesses both large and small as well as significant cultural festivals, museums and theatre companies.

Activity levels by neighbourhood:

BR. Britannia  FC. False Creek  KT. Kitsilano  SC. Strathcona
CP. Champlain Heights  HC. Hillcrest  MO. Marpole/Oakridge  SS. Sunset/Moberly
CH. Coal Harbour  HS. Hastings  MP. Mount Pleasant  TB. Thunderbird
CS. Creekside  KS. Kensington  RC. Ray-Cam  TL. Trout Lake
DP. Douglas Park  KR. Kerrisdale  RN. Renfrew  WE. West End
DN. Dunbar  KL. Killarney  RH. Roundhouse  WPG. West Point Grey

Engaging People: Community

195 Projects

- 22 Dance
- 48 Interdisciplinary Projects
- 7 Film
- 11 Environmental Art
- 10 Local Food
- 19 Theatre
- 17 Music
- 41 Visual Arts
- 20 Other

Fiscally Resourceful

ACE projects are developed and presented with investments from multiple sources. The graphic below reflects actual project dollars. The funds are further leveraged with invaluable in-kind and volunteer support.

$512,991 Total

- Green Park Board Investment- $117,607
- Orange Association Contributions- $39,634
- Red Other Funders- $355,750
  (including: Vancouver Coastal Health, Vancouver Foundation, Canada Council for the Arts, BC Arts Council, etc.)

Total Hours of Community Participation

- 185,204 Hours
- 86,778 Hours
- 63,374 Hours
- 35,052 Hours

- Appreciating
- Creating
- Leading
A Healthy City for All

Engaging in arts and cultural activities is essential to developing healthy individuals and healthy communities. Research consistently shows the positive impact on physical health, emotional and physiological well-being, as well as increases in community connectivity for those who participate in the arts. Working in collaboration, the recreation and professional arts communities are especially well positioned to develop and deliver creative arts opportunities to our neighbourhoods.

"The Arts and Health Project brings out our happiness and sadness. It helps us recollect our memories, life experience and individual stories, with laughter and tears. We forget our age, health, limits and pain when we go to Strathcona every Tuesday."

Choi Sau Ching, participant, Strathcona Arts and Health Project

Canada’s Changing Demographic demands new ways to creatively engage the growing community of older adults. The Park Board Arts and Health Project: Healthy Aging through the Arts, is at the leading edge of understanding new ways to honour, engage and serve an aging population. Toppling stereotypes about aging, participants work with professional artists and seniors workers, creating challenging art that celebrates and shares their rich life experience. Through performances, exhibitions and celebrations, they contribute to community while improving their own health and sense of well-being. Our success in achieving positive health outcomes is well documented in a research project undertaken by UBC School of Nursing.

Remarkable Women

Each year individual stories of women who contribute to their communities are featured on a series of posters. The posters are showcased in community centres, schools, and libraries. A celebration on International Women’s Day completes the project. In 2013, women who made significant contributions to food sustainability were recognized, highlighting women’s work in our local food movement.

“I love to teach people from all backgrounds and walks of life about Indian food that is healthy as well as delicious. I believe that the key components of good health are nutritious food, exercise, friends, community and family.” Mohinder Sidhu

Celebrate! Stanley Park

When Stanley Park celebrated its 125th birthday with a free two day festival, the ACE Team’s expertise and effort infused the weekend with cultural programs that ranged from hands-on workshops to spectacular performances and artists’ projects. Highlights included: English Ivy weaving workshops, First Nations canoe races off Deadmen’s Island, multicultural dance, and the premiere of a new Canadian opera on the life of renowned First Nations poet Pauline Johnson.
Building and sharing best practices is an important part of the ACE Team’s work. Methods we utilize include peer-sharing, information distribution and pedagogical initiatives.

State of the Practice: Cultivate

2013 marked the first year of an annual State of the Practice Project with exhibition and workshops exploring issues, trends, challenges and triumphs in community-engaged arts practice. The exhibition CULTIVATE showcased the work of artists who draw on urban ecology as subject-matter and material to explore environmental concerns. A key outcome of State of the Practice Project is increased dialogue in the arts community and among our colleagues at the Park Board.

The Reflect Effect Pilot

The ACE team partnered with CityStudio Alumni to pilot a youth-driven 10 week program connecting youth and creative media experts to explore nature-based activities and tour ‘the Greenest City’ to see how sustainability policy is put into practice. The youth will share their learning in creative media projects showcased at the city-wide Youth Week Exhibition and online in the upcoming year.

Community Dance Residencies: Groups of non-professional movers come together to explore body, mind and emotion through dance. Choreography and dance emerges as participants work with professional dance artists who ‘lead from beside’ to transform shared experiences and improvisations into art. 2013 projects include a seniors dance initiative at Moberly and a mixed-ability dance program at the Roundhouse. Our new community dance partner Made in BC: Dance on Tour, will study different ways of taking dance projects like those developed in the Park Board across the province.
Neighbourhood Matching Fund

The Neighbourhood Matching Fund is a program which supports community arts and greening initiatives that make creative improvements to public spaces. An advisory committee of community volunteers works with staff to guide the program and make the hard decisions on project funding.

Killarney Earthmakers Mural

Through the Earthmakers Mural Project, community members came to understand the natural history of the Killarney site as an ancient bog. They created designs for the mural depicting the life found in bogs. The mural is unique in that it has been designed to allow people to make rubbings from it and share the ecological knowledge.

"After visiting the Camosun bog, the teen volunteers found they could actively have a role in a restoration project and see tangible results. In a world where environmental issues are overwhelming, these students found a place where they could engage in making a positive change."

Lori Harkins, recreation programmer

Green Logo Program

In collaboration with the City’s Sustainability Office, ACE led a program to identify community centre programs which contribute to the greenest city goals. Information about these programs was distributed through community centre brochures and mail-lists of people interested in ecological action.

Local Food Systems

The 5th annual Sustenance Festival—a celebration of the local and global intersections of art, culture, food and sustainability took place in 18 venues across Vancouver including community centres, parks, restaurants, schools and neighbourhood houses.
The Field House Residency project brings the everyday life of art into community, inviting neighbours, colleagues, and curious visitors to share in intimate creative process with artists through daily, shared arts experience. This project transforms former park caretakers cottages into studio spaces for community-engaged artists. Over 100 artists (solo and in collectives) are currently working in 12 field houses across Vancouver. For artists, this is an opportunity to create work in a stable workspace. In return, they develop participatory art projects with and for community. This program is intended to grow community-engaged arts knowledge, connecting senior and emerging artists who work in this field of creative practice.

“The arts are critical to a community’s quality of life... The studio space will provide a supportive, creative environment where artists can develop their work, engage residents and increase participation in the arts.” Park Board Commissioner Sarah Blyth

MacLean Park Field House: The Urban Weavers
Led by eco-based community artist Sharon Kallis and Haida cedar weaver Todd DeVries, this project involves a growing community of weavers who unite art and ecology, and re-purpose green waste and invasive plants from parks, as their weaving materials.

Elm Park Field House: Germaine Koh
Germaine Koh’s “problem solving as play” project Leage, invites community to invent new games and sports and play them together.

Artist Residencies include:
Elm Park Field House: Germaine Koh
Falaise Park Field House: Mark Haney and Diane Park
Hadden Park Field House: tenfifteenmaple Collective
Memorial South Park: Cloudscape Comics Collective
Burrard Marina: Contemporary Art Gallery artists
MacLean Park Field House: Sharon Kallis and Todd DeVries
Moberly Park: Something Collective AND Melanie Schambach
Slocan Park: Art House in the Field Collective
Strathcona Park: Field House Ensemble
Queen Elizabeth Park: Geneviève Raiche-Savoie and Jesse Garbe
Aberthau/West Point Grey: Loco Moto Art Collective
Visit artist blogs at vancouver.ca, search <studio residencies>
2013 has been an exciting foundational year for the Park Board’s Arts, Culture and Environment Team. It involved a significant amount of change: realignment of responsibilities, staff movement and the development of new coordination, documentation and evaluation strategies. As we move forward we will fine-tune the basis of regional and city-wide support for community engagement in arts, culture and environmental initiatives that has now been established.

Areas of focus for 2014 include collaborations with the Park Board’s Environmental Education and Stewardship Task Force, supporting the Park Board’s involvement in the Year of Reconciliation, initiating new sites for the Arts, Health and Seniors Project, and continuing to partner with organizations across the city to invite and support public participation in leading edge, community-engaged art, culture and ‘green’ projects.

“If I had my life to live over again, I would have made a rule to read some poetry and listen to some music at least once a week; for perhaps the parts of my brain now atrophied would thus have been kept active through use.

The loss of these tastes is a loss of happiness, and may possibly be injurious to the intellect, and more probably the moral character, by enfeebling the emotional part of our nature.”

Charles Darwin

The Roundhouse Youth Theatre Action Group

This project brings youth from a diversity of cultural groups together with professional theatre artists in collaborative creation and public performance. Students write, perform, direct and produce their own work, exploring issues and challenges that matter to them. Theatre becomes a tool for social change, inspiring awareness and discussion of youth concerns, issues and ideas. Their 2013 production Sticks & Stones was a humorous and thought-provoking look at youth action and agency in redefining and ending bullying.