

Malvern Community Challenge

A Collective Impact Climate Art Pilot



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Executive Director Canadian Climate Challenge

Many proposed reporting guidelines asked many of the right questions, however needed adaptation to allow us to convey our stories in a community engagement and arts based approach...

Message from Project Lead

Centering Canadian Communities in Climate Solutions

I am the founder and executive director of the non profit Canadian Climate Challenge.

I am Afro Canadian, born in Toronto, ON to Jamaican, British parents, who immigrated to Canada with their Jamaican parents, through both the UK and US.

The first major decision I remember making in my life, that has stayed with me both sub/consciously my whole life, was how to respond to my parent's divorce, at age seven.

The decision that said, i can't control whether my parents get divorced, what i can control is how i respond, and by extension assist in how my family responds. I remember very consciously refusing to be victimized by divorce, I loved both of my parents, and no matter their differences, i believed that our future looked a lot healthier and happier, by building the strongest connections we could as we adapted to divorce. I did not want to live trapped in the history that caused the divorce, or be subject to the colloquial victim narrative of a divorced family.

Many years later as an adult, one of the proudest things I carry with me today, is despite several marriages and remarriages, full/step/half siblings, of varied racial mixtures, we have overwhelming focused on strengthening our connections to one another.

Our focus, has always been once you become part of the family, you are always part of this family. As such we have managed to create a space, a feeling of family, a feeling of community,

What this experience has taught me, is that for all my life, i have unknowingly been developing skill sets and perspectives on how to build a community,

We don't always agree, we range in an ever changing mix of wealth, education, location, political and religious perspectives. However what both my familial and lived experiences have taught me is that no matter our aforementioned differences - that our most common bond, is the desire to create and belong to a community. And that often our varied attributes serve to strengthen our communal connections as opposed to being the barriers we often preemptively assume they will be.

I continue to find this desire for communal connection to be a fundamental part of who we are as human beings. An undoubtedly imperfect search, as history has demonstrated the lengths we will go to in order to feel part of a community, or protect one we feel connected to.

Canada is no stranger to these foundational and ongoing challenges. The vast majority of our systems and structures, including communities, have been designed based on a very capitalist, colonial, imperialist model.

However amongst the many lessons derived from the first year of this Collective Impact project, the most important is that effective, sustainable climate solutions are inextricably linked to deep, participatory, inclusive and equitable community development.

In our experience the generational desire to extricate ourselves from the more divisive elements of our past, and current communities is profound in the younger generations. And we believe if nurtured properly, this palpable desire to create modern, intersectional communities reflective of current identities has the power to create the transformational change we need.

Andre Forsythe
ED, Canadian Climate Challenge.



**“Your privilege & safety
blinded you to our true
realities”**

- *Renaissance, Lead Artist*



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“Engaging and enabling the community to lead on climate issues is central to achieving a net zero GHG Toronto.”

-TransformTO Net Zero Strategy, November 2021



Stage 1: Design

This community climate art pilot is led by the non-profit Canadian Climate Challenge (CCC) and is part of a wider collective impact project with partners Toronto Climate Action Network (TCAN), City of Toronto (TransformTO), and the Centre for Social Innovation (CSI). The wider collective impact project's purpose is to identify areas across the city where climate engagement and education has either been underserved, or comparably ineffective. Upon doing so the project's intention is to deploy a climate justice lens, particularly in equity deserving communities historically underserved in climate emergency mobilization.

While the broader project assessed engagement across the city, the community climate art pilot focused particularly on one neighbourhood in Scarborough (Ward 23), Malvern. The intention of this focus was to identify whether an arts based collective impact approach rooted in climate justice, was a more effective approach to engage communities of colour, largely alienated from an overly caucasian environmental narrative.

TransformTO's net zero strategy recognizes the importance of strengthening and empowering communities to lead on climate issues as central in achieving a net zero GHG Toronto. However many of Toronto's communities,

particularly communities of colour and communities outside of the downtown core, received significantly less engagement on climate solutions, perpetuating systemic barriers and a narrative rooted in this discrimination.

The city recognized that in these communities, it might be more effective to empower existing community organizations to build on their existing work, in a collective impact approach, collaborating with organizations from outside of the community to add any additional expertise, in a climate justice approach.

Many of these communities had existing social justice and systemic

challenges that had long been inadequately addressed, thereby limiting capacity for residents to consider any additional challenges, beyond their persistent daily barriers. Many of these communities had very little trust and engagement with Government and the political process.

With lived experience in Malvern and experience with public climate art projects in Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area, CCC led the pilot to determine whether community climate art engagement and empowerment rooted in climate justice could be a meaningful contribution to the collective impact process and the adoption of climate solutions in Malvern.

An aerial, black and white photograph of a city, showing a dense urban area with numerous buildings and streets. A prominent red banner is overlaid across the top center of the image, containing the text 'Initial Project Goals' in white, bold, sans-serif font.

Initial Project Goals

- 1. Identifying existing social justice issues**
- 2. Connect climate justice issues to existing Climate Action Solutions**
- 3. Explore how Climate Art can strengthen community engagement**
- 4. Explore how Climate art can develop a collective community climate solutions narrative/identity**
- 5. Explore how climate art can strengthen an inclusive community relationship with climate policies**
- 6. Beautification & Representation of local neighbourhood through climate art**
- 7. Increased pride and connection to their neighbourhood and other residents**
- 8. Disseminate learnings to other community engagement and climate justice initiatives.**
- 9. Increase engagement with younger generations.**

An aerial, black and white photograph of a city, likely Toronto, showing a dense urban core with numerous buildings and surrounding residential areas. A prominent red banner is overlaid across the top center of the image, containing the title text.

Who was Malvern?

Like most communities Malvern has many ways in which it is rich and unique in both it's blessings and it's challenges.

While the lived experience of the project lead, and some of the team members provided valuable insight, research was a very important first step, assisted by student support from UofT course ENV421, UofT Scarborough's Urban Just Transition Project, TCAN Collective Impact Mapping Work, Present & Past Resident Engagement, City of Toronto Data, Councillor Jamaal Myer's office and more.

The community is one of the most diverse areas of Toronto. Based on the most recent 2016 census, over 60% of residents identify as immigrants with over 90% of residents identifying as visible minorities.

The average income in North Scarborough was 30% less than in the rest of Toronto in 2016.

The average income in North Scarborough was 30% less than in the rest of Toronto in 2016. Voter participation in the last election was below 40%

Historically underserved and underfunded community

Low levels of climate solution education and support

Racial inequity

High levels of existing and forthcoming immigration

Strong sense of community

Resilient

Misrepresented Narrative

Historical Disconnect

An aerial photograph of a city, likely Malvern, showing a mix of urban buildings and green spaces. A prominent red banner is overlaid across the top center of the image, containing the title text in white.

Community Backcasting

Aligning strategy with community needs

As a historically underserved and marginalized community, the inconsistency of well intentioned short lived community programming, providing hope at the start, only to fizzle out, leading to distrust and trauma in the community as a result, is an experience Malvern residents are all too familiar with. As such it was immediately apparent that a multi year project collaborating with existing organizations was critical to building trust.

Furthermore, like many suburb communities of colour, Malvern has a long standing history of persistent social justice challenges, perpetuated by systemic barriers. These challenges have been reflected in the daily lived experiences of many of the residents. Overwhelmed by food insecurity, housing vulnerability, over policing, and the associated violence consistent with precarious neighbourhoods, there has been little capacity for folks to engage with past, comparatively sparse climate community engagement efforts.

The typical hyperfocus on fear, technological and nature based framing of the climate crisis, has only served to alienate communities of colour more. The travesty of which, being that these communities of colour, often contributing the least to the climate crisis, are also most vulnerable to it's impacts.

What became clear was a climate justice lens was necessary to identify the intersectionality of social and climate justice. However, repeating the mistake of leading with climate would be just as insensitive and ineffective, regardless of a justice lens or not.

Being sensitive to the characteristics and needs of the community clearly indicated a backcasting approach would have a far likelier chance of success. This engagement strategy begins with encouraging the telling of stories that hold meaning to residents, and to enable participants to use narrative to address local complexities. Beginning with an emphasis on local values and priorities, as is consistent with a backcasting strategy would allow for a much better understanding of where the community is at, and provide insight as to what value could be offered.

Community, Backcasting & Climate Justice

1. Values Based Community Engagement - Reclaim Narrative

- Artwork developed and integrated in the community to stimulate resident feedback re: pride in Who? Why? Where?
- Installations and artwork dispersed throughout the community in high traffic areas, to stimulate accessibility, representation, and empowerment.

2. Values Based Community Visioning - Future Narrative

- Building on community connection developed in phase 1, artwork will serve 2 primary purposes: (i) Workshop/Community Consultation artwork and (ii) Community Vision Mural work.

3. Community Strategy Narrative - Community Hubs

- Upon development of community vision, a collective impact approach including community/climate/social organizations etc. identified as key partners to realize community vision. Suggested artwork for this phase to convey this story: documentary, short story, animation.

4. Continued Community Narrative

- As community progresses along its strategic plan, art plays the role of annually reflecting progress to maintain interest
- Murals, Projections, Installations etc. in the community/at organizations responsible for success

Ensuring equitable implementation is an important goal of Net Zero Strategy. Measuring and reporting on indicators is an effective way to stimulate and track progress.

- TransformTO Net Zero Strategy



From Pilot to Practice

Who was CCC?



Events & Campaign Calendar

Toronto Canada

< NOVEMBER JANUARY >

EVENTS FOR NOVEMBER

30th

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
	27	28	29	30	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	1	2	3	4	5	6

- 9:00 am – 5:30 pm
AT THE CROSSROADS: ANNUAL CONVENING ON THE STATE OF CANADA'S CITIES
Shaw Centre
- 10:00 am – 11:30 am
DAY OF ACTION – SUBMITTING MOCK COVER LETTERS!
- 1:00 pm – 2:30 pm
FAITHFUL RESPONSES TO ECO-ANXIETY
online



The School for Climate ethos is that to encourage the fight for a better city, an inspirational vision of what we're fighting for is necessary. Projects: UofT, CUPW, Greenpeace.



CCC has been Toronto's most popular and comprehensive climate events calendar for the past 4 years. Event content creation and live streaming services drastically increased climate event/education accessibility.



Adapting an arts based approach to Community Climate Justice

**Address
Environmental
Racism**

**Malvern's stigma
propagated by bias media
coverage, and low levels
of representation.**

**Inconsistent
community
programming**

**Work
collaboratively
with residents**

**Collective Impact
approach via local
partnerships**

**Engage with
vulnerable
neighborhoods**

**Climate
Justice**

**People will
be impacted
differently by
climate
issues based
on identity,
race, socie
economic
status,
sexuality,
geographic,
age,**

**Intersectional
Approach**

**Community control
of Malvern
Narrative**

**Empower the
disenfranchised**

“*Ensuring equitable implementation is an important goal of Net Zero Strategy. Measuring and reporting on indicators is an effective way to stimulate and track progress.*”

- TransformTO Net Zero Strategy, 2021

Stage 2: Community Narrative

THE MALVERN
WE KNOW AND
THE MALVERN
THEY TALK
ABOUT ARE TWO
DIFFERENT THING,



Nowhere without Narrative: Move over science, it's time for the Arts

Without narrative we go nowhere.

With the wrong narrative, we end up where we find ourselves today. If that's not where we want to be tomorrow, it's time we start creating a new Canadian story. And who tells stories better than artists? Every person you ask can reference a song, live performance, or film that helped them connect with who they are.

A piece of art, photo or poem that conveys their emotions better than they ever could. Entire communities, religions and cultures are bound closer together and represented through artistic expression. If we are to supplant the corrosive climate crisis narrative we've been enacting, we'll need enriching, inclusive climate justice stories to take its place.

The kind of stories that deep down inside we are all longing for.

However replacing cultural stories central to identity is an undertaking not to be understated - yet it is exactly this moment that we find ourselves at, and

in the right community to do so.

Diverse communities like Malvern have embodied cultural stories that in many ways have caused more harm than benefit. The lived experiences of these communities has uniquely informed their ability to constructively critique and identify the weaknesses of our existing narratives.

Historically disempowered from owning and steering their own narratives, the opportunity to develop more inclusive, healthy and diverse narratives, is an opportunity that many of the marginalized have long dreamed of. Communities who have disproportionately benefited from the extractive, exploitive current cultural narrative, used to wielding considerably unbalanced levels of power have a considerably different attachment and therefore reluctance/fear to embrace transformative change - despite the considerable improvements they will also be afforded from new narratives.

Much like with Indigenous communities, there are many existing and long standing cultural narratives, we can and have to learn from.

“Here artistic processes reframe climate discourse away from scientific imperatives, turning to art to go beyond illustrating science and policy imperatives to explore meanings, identities, and purposes in a post-fossil world.”

An aerial, black and white photograph of a city, likely Scarborough, showing a dense urban area with many buildings and a surrounding landscape with some greenery and roads. A bright yellow rectangular box is superimposed over the center of the image, containing the word "Vision" in bold black text.

Vision

“I want to be part of a movement of community innovation in Scarborough that inspires residents and reclaims the power to establish our identity”

- *Renaissance, Lead Artist*



Who is Malvern?

Reclaiming their Stories Past & Present

Methodology

Like many marginalized communities, Malvern's stigma propagated by media coverage, heavily focuses on violence, completely overlooking the strong, resilient connections that made it the vibrant destination enjoyed by and home to many.

As such the first art pieces were created to empower residents to share their own stories. The response was palpable as folks eagerly took to social media posting photos of the artwork and sharing deeply personal recollections both positive and negative.

These conversations were not only directly with us, but increasingly were amongst one another, as discovering shared experiences, unknown connections, a multitude

of lived experiences ranging from difficult and vulnerable, to empathetic, joyful, and very fulfilling stories of real pride.

The public artworks were very intentionally installed over night, and at a diverse range of highly to modestly visible locations. This place based strategy was specifically deployed to foster physical connections to locations in the community, in a manner impossible to achieve digitally.

With both little to no engagement from our team, the conversations were intergenerational and educational as participants learned things about their community they hadn't previously been aware of, but quite naturally grew from memories from the past, to include present day stories, and future hopes for the

neighbourhood.

Simultaneously empowering folks to take back control of their community narrative, physically contributing to the character of the community with the public art pieces, and publicly and vulnerably exhume both personal and collective recollections, whether fond or frightening, demonstrated the value that and varied roles art has the capacity to play. This is exactly the role we need community climate art to play. Facilitating folks to connect with their past and existing values and narratives, seamlessly demonstrated the opportunity to begin discussing, how those values and stories have the potential to change going forward.

Furthermore as part of a climate justice strategy, publicly providing

the opportunity for folks to demonstrate pride in their community, and dispel feelings of shame, is precisely the impact needed for folks to recognize the unique values, strengths, characteristics, perspectives and contributions they and their community are uniquely positioned to lead, as we create a more equitable balance of power in our city.

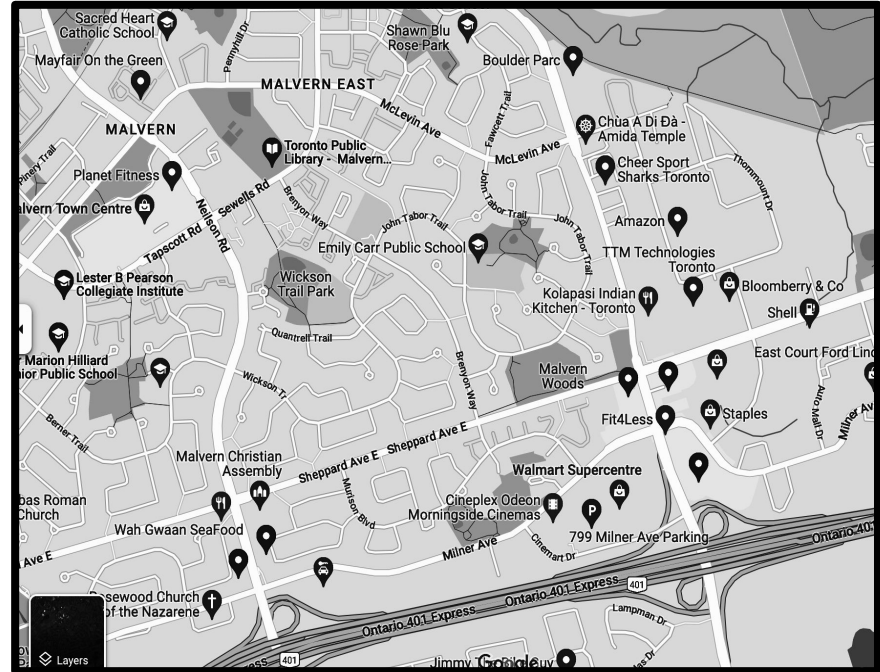
“When can we have that in our community?”

-Instagram Response, Scarborough Resident

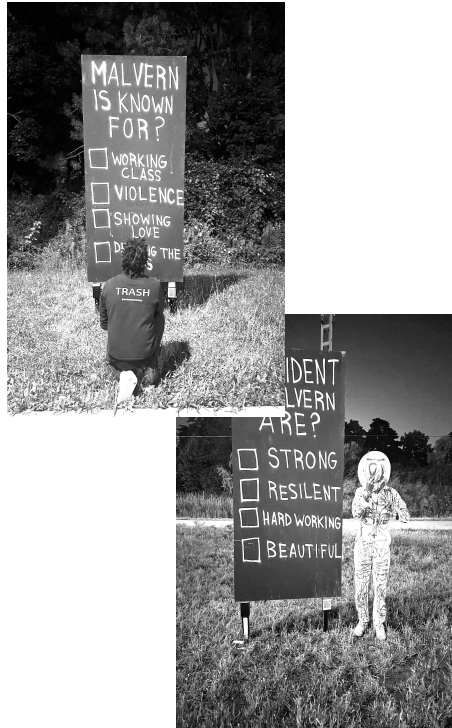
Malvern Artwork Map

9 Community Art Locations

- High traffic driving
- High traffic walking
- Community Meeting Spaces (libraries, community centres)
- Intergenerational locations
- Middle schools, High schools
- Faith Groups
- Neighbourhood Events
- Public Transportation
- Near Community Signage
- Established Community Organizations



Community Narrative Artwork



The high visibility of community art has worked wonders for generating connections with local organizations, as we began the path of building and strengthening those relationships

Whether at events we hosted, or community events we participated in, the excitement for the greater range, and number of participants our arts based approach facilitates, was unanimous.

The city's decision to empower organizations like ours to lead this process, allowed for participants to share at a level of openness, vulnerability and honesty, that is often difficult to achieve in Government-led engagement. Our emergent artwork strategy also immediately generated media attention, further demonstrating the potential that an arts based approach brings to a climate justice community engagement strategy.

Our team was also very happy to learn how much our work resonated with the youth in the community. It wasn't long after the pieces went up, that they started to pop up on tiktok generating considerable engagement. But even more validating was the amount of youth who stopped to engage with the artists, team members, or amongst themselves. With younger generations being not only a priority target audience, but a key cohort we endeavour to empower and connect to.



Community Event Stories: Kiddies' Carnival Malvern



Celebrating the way the Malvern community has come together to build capacity, and strengthen connection to each other, despite historical barriers, was a method our arts based approach highlighted and contributed to pre existing community efforts. This celebration of the opportunity and responsibility we have to include the worldviews of the historically marginalized, undervalued and misunderstood, presents a strategy no longer focused on fear, but centered on pride, as we demonstrate the strength of telling more truthful stories of our past, so that we can collectively co-create the stories of our future.

This experience validated how the collective impact approach respects the role of the powerful and powerless alike, in a creative attempt to reinvent our narrative together, based on humility, inclusivity and equity.

As organizations, residents, groups and businesses participate, both local or otherwise, there is a freedom to engage deeply in subject matter Government representatives are often restricted from achieving. As such residents, of varying backgrounds, do not need to fear attending, or sharing of potentially contentious perspectives, details, thus creating a safe space.

That fear and vulnerability is experienced uniquely in communities of colour, and dispelling the paralyzing effects of fear is crucial for us to move forward.



Stories from vulnerable residents

Triple Neighbourhood Piano Pop Up *110 Empringham/Misthollow/Mr. Jerk Plaza*

We hit three key neighbourhoods chosen specifically because of their high visibility, high marginalization and high traffic respectively.

In each location our community engagement included the piano, our two lead musicians, our documentation team and our engagement team members.

Each activation resonated overwhelmingly with youth and young adult participants, and generated genuine feedback about how the Malvern story was not representative and a deep appreciation for our approach and coming to their communities to include their perspectives.



Story Telling at Malvern Family Resource Centre




Iterative Design & Representation:

One of the most important aspects of our methodology, is the iterative, and representative nature of the pieces created so far, maintaining the genuine focus on the community working in concert with the art, instead of being overshadowed by it.


In the community piano created, lead artist Renaissance, and the team members, integrated some of the stories shared in response to the first round of art, into the design of the piano. The validation and excitement folks felt, confirmed that the iterative design approach, designed to be responsive to community engagement, so as to prioritize representing the views, perspectives, stories of the community is an approach we must continue to explore.


When our musicians took to the piano, to bring song and celebration to the stories, and to residents was equally as fulfilling for the musicians as it was the residents.

Social Media Stories

 **das_germaican** 5w
Used to work in the area doing street outreach and community outreach. People need to stop underestimating the power of resilience and some need to start embracing it. The world should be yours!
3 likes Reply

 **thethirstyredhead** 5w
We need a Orton Park version. I love my street
0 likes Reply

 **nefasjewelry** 5w
This the beauty and positive that should be promoted online blessings to everyone here
2 likes Reply

 **lourdestelesforo** 5w
Resilient community that supports those in need. Sometime it only takes one person to make a change. The Change is happening now! ❤️

 **itallstartswithabuzz** 5w
Malvern is the place where I was born and raised. Malvern is still where my parents call home. Malvern has been through a lot of tough times and changes but it should be known as a loving community that has defied the odds. Malvern rocks!!
32 likes Reply

Traditionally associated with contributing to isolation, can social media contribute to building a strong climate just community?

The power of social media is formidable, both in its potential for positive and negative impacts alike. However particularly in a community where attending community gatherings, town halls, meetings and other organized gatherings generates accessibility issues, issues of access, and intergenerational barriers, can an arts based approach actually increase community participation, particularly to the disenfranchised and vulnerable.

Social media has also been a powerful tool for youth organizers who often don't have access to physical meeting space, affording them the ability to connect with peers and build power, particularly as mass media fails to live up to its responsibility.

Also the increasingly creative nature of many social media platforms, affords the users the ability to engage and customize the artwork. These platforms also have provided inroads to youth artists, photographers, and other creatives, increasingly becoming part of our team.

These platforms have also demonstrated the capacity to build tremendous solidarity across cultures and subject matters not afforded to us by our Canadian corporate media. They are increasingly the home of progressive media, and afford our participants the option of anonymity and a safe/soft space to engage in topics without less risk of harm.



From Pilot to Practice

WERE LIKE HOW DID YOU MAKE IT OUT ALIVE, SMH THEY HAVE NO CLUE. JUST
SPOTTED THE ONE ON MORNINGSIDE AND SHEPPARD TODAY EVERYTHING YOU
SAID HEART. DROPPING OFF MY GIRL HERE IN THE EARLY 2000s MEANT HELICOP
TER LIGHTS AND A RANDOM PAT DOWN FROM UNDERCOVERS. WISH I COULD LIKE
THIS POST TIME
OUGH FROM 200
MY CHILDHOOD
ERN IT'S A GR

MALVERN

POLO

THEY NEED TO
ANNOYING. BORN

SHIT IS
CCVERN.B.

From CCC to C©C: Who is Canadian Community Challenge?

Canadian Community Challenge (C©C)

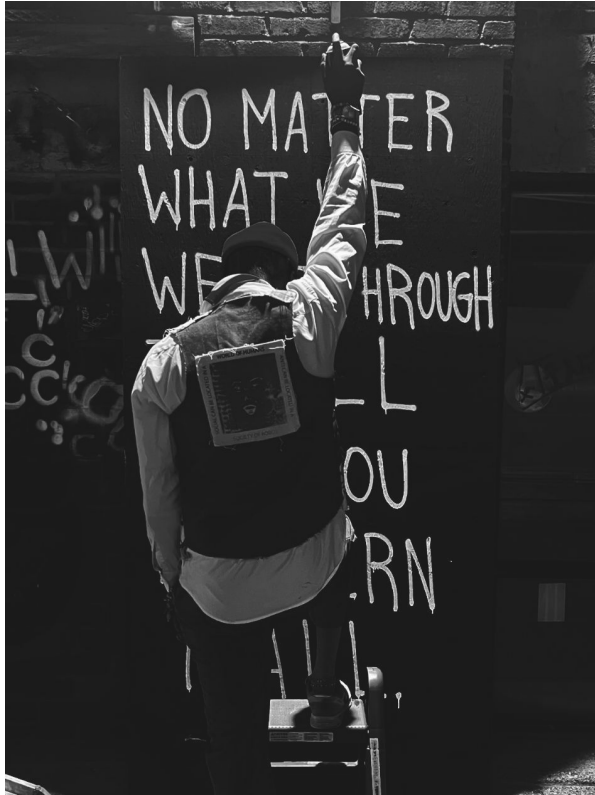
The work we've done in Malvern in the first year, and both the community engagement learnings, and the artistic practice developments, have had a substantial impact.

Realizing the empowerment and agency residents have already achieved through a focus on community, the intersectional understanding of how climate, social justice, and many other solutions by community members of all ages, has informed our strategy, creating a new brand identity.

From Canadian Climate Challenge to Canadian Community Challenge we've evolved into a nonprofit organization combining its history of CCC climate organizing and School for Climate public artwork, to advance an arts based approach to climate justice community engagement.

Whether it's communities of colour, geographic communities, religious, communities of class, trauma, shared interest, expertise, power, practice, communities of identity, or the many other communities we form - the community level has revealed itself to be a potentially empowering level for agency, collective impact, local understanding, and the potential for overcoming isolation, in our quest for mobilization and climate solutions integration into new collective identities, and narratives of empowerment and collective impact.

Fun Fact: The team specifically chose a pigeon for the logo based on the bird's terrible public reputation, unique skill sets, and the lack of appreciation for it'



An aerial photograph of a city, likely Malvern, showing a mix of urban buildings and green spaces. A bright yellow banner is superimposed across the top of the image, containing the title text.

Creating a Community Artist Collective

If it can work for Malvern, it can work for us!

As we've learned the empowering and effective benefits of building community in Malvern, we have begun to build a community of practice with Canadian Community Challenge.

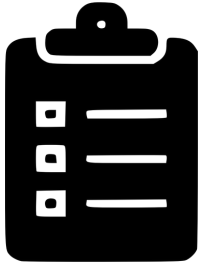
Working at the intersection of community-climate art is not experience common to most artists. As such it is a steep learning curve, inaccessible to many artists. In fact in the past it often inhibits the artistic spirit as many creatives default to drawing a picture of a green neighbourhood. Delving into a subject matter that is unfamiliar to most, can be quite isolating.

On the contrary, year 1 of our pilot has afforded artists the opportunity to work together, to brainstorm together, to collaborate on pieces, and the relation to a climate justice narrative provides a relatability and understanding, particularly working with artists of colour.

Pivotal to our collaborative ability has also been securing a studio space, where artists, team members, and partners can spend both structured and unstructured time. Not only has this broadened our ability to add musicians, dancers and poets to our existing team of visual artists, but it experience working in this subject matter, and the opportunity to continue to do so, provides a rare and marketable skill set.

This asset has been pivotal in balancing the playing field allowing artists of colour and lesser means a more equal opportunity to participate

Evaluation



ARCGis

- Internal project development mapping, documentation, interviews, updates, deviations, learnings, etc.
- Led by UofT & UTSC student partnership

Participatory Evaluation Framework

- Evaluation framework to be developed with David Maggs and Leanna Butters as part of Irresistible Worlds Mode 3 Artwork Development
- Urban Just Transitions project led by Laura Tozer and Professor Matt Hoffman, evaluation support.
- UTSC PhD Student Data Evaluation, Collection and Assessment Support

Stage 3: Shaping the Future Narrative

“Malvern os home always. Even though I moved out of the community, I still frequent Malvern. Nothing but good memories and lessons that helped me get through hard times and persevere. Malvern will always have my ❤️”

- Malvern Resident, in response to Community Artwork

Who will Malvern Become?

Artistic Engagement as process not just Output

Integrating creativity into the community visioning workshops is intended to reduce barriers, increase playfulness, add humour, personal connection, and depoliticize topics, making difficult topics more comfortable to engage with.

Testing an intergenerational approach also fostered connection between our eldest participant (93 years young) and one of our youngest (8 years old).

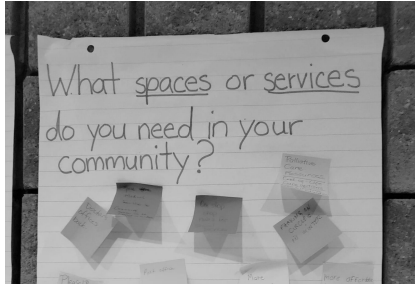
At a town hall held by city councillor Jamaal Myers, seen on the following page, on a typical weekday evening, regarding an issue genuinely very important to the whole community, there was a great turn out of around 100 people. However by integrating the topics for community engagement into our public art, participation grew to the 1000s.

In a community filled with many vulnerable members and families who may not have the ability to attend a town hall after work in person, the avenue explore how our community climate arts based approach can be refined to help address accessibility challenges.



City Councillor Town Hall

The Mall matters to Malvern..



The Future of Malvern Mall?

- City Councillor Representative of Ward 23, and newly appointed TTC Chair Jamaal Myers and his team held a community town hall to weigh in on this vital issue to the Malvern community.
- As seen in the photos we participated by demonstrating how our creative engagements in the community are intended to allow for people unable to attend the town to still have their opinions represented in this consultation far beyond the capacity of a town hall
- The responses from the individual participants and the attendees representing their organizations in respect to our work was overwhelmingly positive, and generated new community relationships, partnerships and opportunities to extend the reach of our work.



From Pilot to Practice

Who will CCC Become?



NO MATTER
WHAT WE
WENT THROUGH
I STILL
LOVE YOU
MALVERN
MALL.

Climate Justice approach for Marginalized Artists

Accessibility Needs

Working with a community of marginalized, youth and artists of colour we were provided valuable insight as to the barriers disadvantaging them against more privileged artists.

Suffering inconsistent access to studio space, higher vulnerability to financial instabilities, housing insecurity, food insecurity, vulnerability to police, decreased access to resources (cell phones, computers), higher child care needs, transportation vulnerability, decreased familiarity with climate, vulnerability to policing, and working largely in spaces where there are few who look like them.

As such we were challenged to help meet

some of their needs in order to work with them.

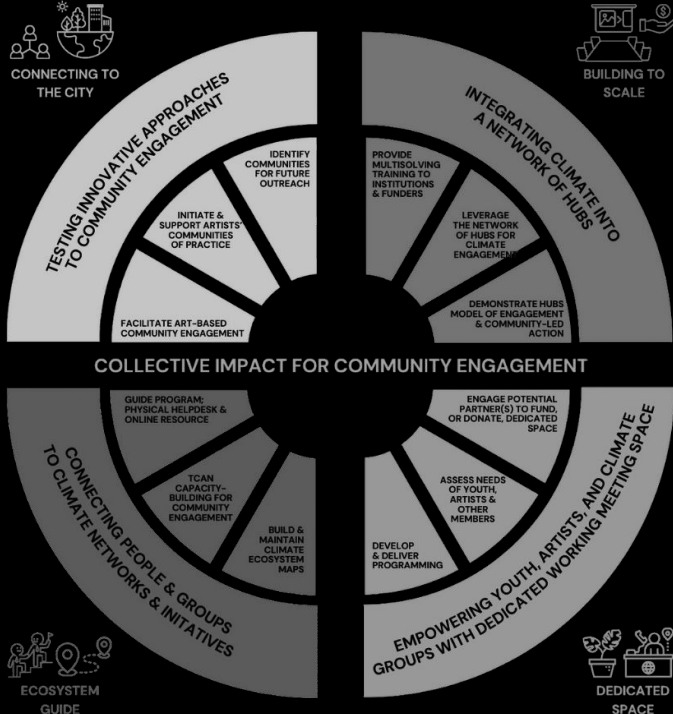
Unique Skill Sets

In doing so, we garnered even more valuable insights on the unique strengths possessed by these artists.

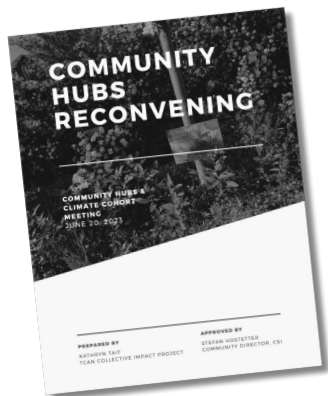
Resourceful, a deep connection to climate justice informed by lived experience, natural affinity to a counter culture narrative, a genuine affinity for structural and narrative change, background of different cultural narratives, welcome change instead of fearing it, experienced at sharing power, long standing systemic critical analysis, familiarity with social justice art, often a strong existing appreciation for community.

In centering equity and sharing power these artists are uniquely equipped to inspire.

Year 2 and Beyond: Collective Impact & Pathways to a Continued Community Narrative



Collective Impact & Community Hubs = Continued Engagement



Creating a Consistent Community Collective Impact Strategy

For many years, Toronto Environmental Alliance (TEA) has been examining best practices for community climate engagement. TEA has also been building relationships with community hubs staff, volunteers, and facilitators, exploring the potential roles hubs can play as physical and social infrastructure supporting climate engagement and resilience-building. The City of Toronto has committed to resourcing hubs as part of the TransformTO Net Zero Strategy.

What role can hubs play in a citywide community-climate action strategy?

We are exploring the possibility of formalizing a project with TEA and MFRC, to learn about hubs' potential and assess the resources that would be needed to adequately equip hubs as centres for place-based climate solutions and community resilience, both in the city of Toronto and potentially more broadly.

One of our goals is to explore integrating art-based community visioning practices into the hubs model.



Malvern's Community Strategy & Continued Narrative Art

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“In a recent presentation by climate artist Kendra Fanconi, she began by asking how many people in the audience had a transformative encounter with art. All but one or two put up their hands.”

- Art & Climate Change, David Maggs, 2021

Pathways to Community Visioning Realization

Upon development of community visioning, community/climate/social organizations etc. identified as key partners to realize community vision. Suggested artwork for this phase to convey this story: documentary, short story, animation.

Long term resident participation via Continued Community Narrative Art

As community progresses along it's strategic plan, art plays the role of annually reflecting progress to maintain resident participation and awareness. Murals, Projections, Installations, Theatre, Music, etc. in the community/at organizations responsible for success

Collective Impact, Community Murals: Connecting Community Hubs

Communities engaged and leading on place-based climate and resilience actions

Our vision is to be working with a constellation of 10 or more community hubs across the city, connected with intention through outreach to suburban areas, and equity-owed communities.

One hub, The Lighthouse centre, will co-locate youth, artists, and climate organizations, and serve as a resource hub, and pilot programs. We will be using art-based approaches for engagement & future-visioning.

Our ecosystem guide(s) will be connecting people to hubs, groups, and initiatives that match their interests. Sharing community-led climate & resilience success stories will inspire similar action in other communities, and further growth is enabled through cross-sectoral collaboration (collective impact).

And just as the Kingston-Galloway Road Community was inspired to have us bring and adapt community climate art engagement to their neighbourhood, we endeavour to cover communities city wide, with the new narratives they create for themselves.





From Pilot to Practice

From Community Hub to City wide approach



'Reauthoring the world' appeals to the world-making aspect of art described above.

We hope to help every community in Canada reauthor a climate just world, and the roles they play within it.

Leading with local and connecting with community can create the Canada we only dare to dream of.

Indigenous communities, communities of colour, communities of youth, and many other historically underrepresented groups continue to exemplify an intersectional understanding and solidarity our current extractive and exploitive narrative is devoid of. The urgency of displacing this narrative continues to demonstrate an excitement to revisit our cultural stories in pursuit of collective narratives to benefit us all, firmly rooted in a climate justice understanding and approach to moving forward.

The city provides the perfect platform to empower local communities to identify and create their stories, and to share learnings and best practice as we confront the concentrations of power, toxic fragility/guilt, uncertainty and fear that stand as barriers to our collective success.

The Lighthouse is an opportunity to foster collaboration between these communities, and for our arts based approach to develop inspirational visions of not only where we need to go, but how we get there together.

“Malvern = Community”

-Malvern Resident, July 21 2023

Summary So Far..

Barriers

1. Transportation

→Decades of under investment in the public transportation system in Malvern, presented significant barriers, increase of cost, and inefficiency leading to approximately 2hrs of transit required, each way.

2. Mayoral Election

→With an unexpected, dominant, and important mayoral election, the focus of the Malvern community, community partners, our network of partners, and media was heavily on election engagement. As such this delayed our initial rollout timeframe.

3. Toxic Fragility/Guilt/Power Dynamics

→Irresistible Worlds (IrW) was one of our earliest and most valuable partners from the outset of the pilot conceptualization. A research collective comprised of representatives from The Metcalf Foundation, The Only Animal, The National Arts Council, Mass Culture, Canadian Climate Challenge, and funded by the Canada Council of the Arts. The purpose of this collective was to combine their experience, in evaluation, community arts, climate art, performance art, and research, to develop a framework for what effective climate art can look like. IrW was also a funding partner for the Community Climate Art Pilot in Malvern. In the process of this work, unfortunately an all too familiar challenge arose, from the representative of The Only Animal. Confronted with a moment where ceding power and privilege was necessary to allow for diverse perspectives, and decision making, the team member disregarded advisement, culminating in the alienation of the projects diverse partners of colour, then partners not of colour and ultimately bringing the work to a grinding halt.

→This disruption to date has removed \$50k from the pilot budget, and the expertise, skills, mentorship and collaboration of IrW, and its partners.

→Furthermore this sudden and substantial change, caused tremendous stress on the Malvern pilot team, forcing resources to be stressed, delays in payments, pressure on team dynamics, potential reputational harm, a decreased ability to serve our community goals commensurate with the original project plan, and significant change in workload.

→Ultimately this development required the delay of some of the year 1 pilot activities into year 2.



Summary So Far..

Outcomes

1. Youth Engagement

→Partnering with both UofT St. George and UofT Scarborough, we were able to integrate youth participation, perspective and engagement very near the onset of our work.

2. Theory of Change

→Adapting to the needs of the Malvern Community required significant consideration and developed considerable learnings. Identifying a community engagement focus has completely changed our artistic practice, broadening the subject matter of our work, the role of art as not only an output, but part of the community engagement process, and generated a far more inclusive body of work connecting with the wide array of residents in the community.

→Developing a backcasting approach, has informed our abilities to adapt our process to a wide array of communities

→Applying a climate justice lens has empowered the ability for our artists to better understand the role they and their work can play and how that relates to climate solutions

3. Community Climate Art Studio/Workspace

→Pivotal to our collaborative ability has also been securing a studio space, where artists, team members, and partners can spend both structured and unstructured time. Not only has this broadened our ability to add musicians, dancers and poets to our existing team of visual artists, but it experience working in this subject matter, and the opportunity to continue to do so, provides a rare and marketable skill set.

→This asset has been pivotal in balancing the playing field allowing artists of colour and lesser means a more equal opportunity to participate

4. Community Climate Artists

→Creation of a cohort of artists, working together to continue to advance how their particular artistry can help author new ways of being, based on a renewed vision of our values and potential



Summary So Far..

Outcomes

8. **Establish Arts Based Approach as effective tool for community engagement and empowerment.**
 - Demonstrated the unique role that arts can play to assist a collective impact approach.
9. **First Collective Impact Workshop**
 - Demonstrated the potential for voices from many areas of the community to participate in ways not previously afforded to more marginalized residents, and potential new ways of collaboration.
10. **Build relationships with Municipal Councillor's office**
 - In a community with long standing trust issues with Government programs, and political participation, collaboration with local Government, demonstrated how community participation needs to be improved.
11. **Built relationships with community leaders and organizations, eager to partner and host upcoming art**
 - Provided validation that an arts based approach can contribute to the work long standing community leaders and organizations have been engaged in.
12. **Participatory Arts Based Practice**
 - Creatively engaging community in design and representation of our arts based approach, developed insights, understanding, and representation not previously experienced by this community - and very effective in building community capacity.

An aerial photograph of a city, likely Toronto, showing a dense urban core with many skyscrapers and a surrounding area with more residential and commercial buildings. A bright yellow banner is superimposed over the top center of the image, containing the text 'Conclusions/Lessons' in bold black font.

Conclusions/Lessons

Focusing on a community empowerment and narrative approach, whether geographic community, cultural, religious, identity, professional community, or any of the various other types, engages folks on a level that builds personal relationships, is a comfortable level of agency and belonging, and allows for building the collective power and support to affect change. Putting people at the center of community and climate solutions centers an equitable approach. Engaging with challenges on a local level, provides the opportunity for understanding our challenges on a more personal level, and to extrapolate local solutions to a wider level.

The effectiveness of a collective impact approach to community engagement is rooted in how diverse the participants, perspectives, skill sets and lived experiences represented. As such it inherently values the often marginalized perspectives, and allows for all folks in the community to see a pathway to engagement. A collective impact approach allows for the inclusion of all folks to contribute their unique expertise, bringing together practices and views together for the first time. This humble approach affords a learning opportunity that can be built on, learned from and adapted as necessary on both local and broader scales.

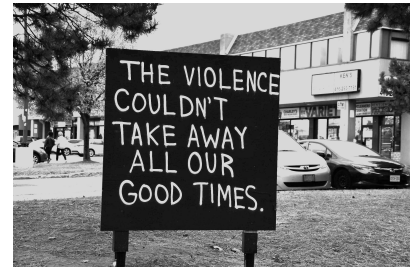
A combined backcasting and climate justice approach is a specifically effective strategy when working in vulnerable communities and communities of colour. With the focus of backcasting being on telling existing stories as a means of then connecting them with future visions, and a climate justice approach that recognizes that social injustice need to be addressed in climate solutions. A climate justice approach simultaneously creates the opportunity to build on the success and failures of predominantly environmental and technological focus on challenges and solutions, and creates the cornerstone for more comprehensive new narratives for existing and new Canadians alike.

Conclusions/Lessons

Marginalized communities are uniquely positioned to embrace a transformative change narrative when empowered by climate justice due to historic disenfranchisement from current narratives. With a deep history of counter culture experience, first hand and lived experience as to the inadequacies of our existing narratives, a variety of pre existing Indigenous, and cultural world views, these communities possess valuable relationships with a need to develop new local, regional, national and global narratives.

An arts based approach facilitates the community being represented in ways it previously may not have been. Simultaneously empowering folks to take back control of their community narrative, physically contributing to the character of the community with the public art pieces, and publicly and vulnerably exhume both personal and collective recollections, whether fond or frightening, demonstrated the value that and varied roles art has the capacity to play.

Taking an intergenerational justice approach to empowering youth is essential. Intergenerational justice and youth solidarity are fundamental priorities of our work. Working with youth artists, youth organizations, students, universities embedded youth perspectives in our approach. Aswell as helping ensure that the community art created resonated with this high priority audience and partner. Younger generations possessing a deeper understanding of the intersectionality of social justice, climate justice, and solidarity across the disenfranchised, are eager to establish their distinct generational narratives, which we believe to be a substantial key to substantively moving this work forward.



**If we don't create a New Narrative...
Who Will?**

Thank You



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