ACT ARTISTS AND CHILDREN TOGETHER



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2019-2021 REPORT

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INNOVATION & RESILIENCY

2019 was a year of building on success for the ACT initiative. Our goals to increase the number of participants, build on the already successful programs and deepen the understanding of the initiative and its outcomes were on track. Our first tasks were hiring staff and artists, ensuring the studio was ready and planning programs to ensure more people were able to participate in the arts. Little did we know what was ahead. January 2020 brought a pandemic to our world which changed the work and the way we carried it out. As an organization, with our staff teams and community, we looked at all programs offered and found ways to continue in the new situation. The word 'pivot' had been used; an understatement to just use one word to describe what needed to happen to meet the new and ever evolving restrictions. What the ACT team did to keep the program going was a testament to the resiliency and ingenuity of MCRC, Artists, leadership, and staff in the programs. Under the restrictions, the ACT initiative has managed to stay true to the vision with innovative outcomes, which proved effective and efficient. Building on what staff knew were successful strategies, we moved programs online, supported virtually and continued the initiative's programs as best we could and in-person where and when it was possible. Presently, this means ACT continues to be successful as the restrictions are starting to be loosened/removed.

This edition outlines the successes, challenges, learnings, and reflections from 2019-2021. Over the last 3 years it has been an honour to work side by side with so many people on this journey. Despite the challenges, the ACT Initiative has successfully reached 20,510 children, educators, families, and community members!

We look forward to what the future brings and hope you will join us.

- Kim Duong ACT Coordinator







COMMUNITY ART STUDIO





OTF Recognition Event February 12, 2019 MPP Parm Gill. ED Rebecca Barrows-Vrankruli. & OTF rep Mark Emmanuel



STUDIO OPENING 2019





626 studio participants



4

community members reached in year one

"What a beautifully creative and serene space! It allows an escape from a busy day, and encourages a moment of mindfulness! Thanks!"

"Beautifully inspiring space! Looking forward to future workshops."

"The space is very inviting & welcoming! The care you took in providing aesthetically pleasing arrangements was lovely! Looking forward to visiting & using the space!"

- MCRC staff









ACT logo rebranding

АСТ

ACT's Community Art Studio Inspired & Sustained Creative, Innovative Thinking & Learning

ACT offered arts-based learning to children, adults, and members of the community. This gave the community members opportunities to work side-by-side with Artists using a variety of quality art materials and create representational art pieces of their growth, nurture their knowledge, deepen their relationships with materials and each other, to better understand and observe children and selves.



Meaningful Studio Work



2019 The Studio welcomed:



different groups for community practice & reflective meetings

'Lunch & Learns' with a large variety of materials & team building experiences for all MCRC staff

145guests in Adult Drop-ins; Artists
& Families Together Open studio



"I love that ACT workshops offer us a time to stop and reflect, a break from work so we can go back to our work with a clear head. When I was in the classroom I loved that ACT supported with resources, time to document and provoke deeper thinking and learning."

- Heather Bonser, HR



7

arts-based collaborative Family Fun Programs

20 community

professional learning workshops for educators









Open Studio

"What does it mean to have quiet, focused and pleasurable things to do together in a studio with dedicated time? How does this prolong or strengthen [their/our] existing relationships?" - ACT Facilitator's reflective question





ACT continues to be deeply rooted in observing and cultivating relationships with one another and using materials as a catalyst for learning and for allowing children the right to express their creativity and to lead.

When possible (due to the constraints of COVID -19), Educators had time to reflect, collaborate and work alongside an Artist in the program, create and study documentation, engage in research, and create a portfolio of their own work. This allowed for genuine and effective support of the child and the child's experiences as well as their own.





When possible, in mandated cohorts and using a hybrid of virtual and in-person, ACT was able to invite school-aged summer camp children and educators into the studio and virtual for meaningful project work, explorations of their art kits and the bounty of nature offered from a garden.

Virtual and Pop-Up Studios

In order to continue to nurture and deepen those relationships, ACT pivoted to offer these opportunities through virtual platforms, creating at-home learning, "pop-up studios" and studio work within homes and on screens.

By purchasing guality art materials, ACT was able to make hundreds of personalised kits for distribution to Licensed Child Care programs, camps, collaborative initiatives like She Can! EarlyON and local community visits to retirement living centres under careful distribution and sharing where and when needed.









studio participants able **466** studio particip to visit, safely



school aged children reached in Summer Camp programs

project work

Collaborative & In-Person

Educators conveyed their needs and the needs of the children for an increase in accessibility to art materials and experiences.

ACT created in-person pop-up studios to keep Educators engaged and meet the demands for increased art experiences.



Printmaking on Watercolour Wednesdays at Viola Desmond pop-up studio



Licensed Home Child Care Loose Parts Workshop in the studio



Youth reached through the ACT Art Club



ACT Community Art Experiences





Mural Making Team Building Workshop in the studio

ACT Art Club. Preparing for 'My Expression, My Art' art exhibit

Children are competent & full of ideas that are worth knowing about; they have a right to be heard, & their fluency in a range of art media helps others to see & hear their ideas.



Collaborative & Virtual

Pandemic Art Gallery

The Artists at the heart of interactions and bridging communication using art and art media with children, families and Educators, saw the need and opportunity for community healing through the eyes of children and to make the voices of children heard during a time when they may be feeling isolated. MCRC and ACT were aware of the challenges and uncertainties that this pandemic has brought on and launched a Pandemic Art Gallery webpage in June of 2020.

Exploring Mother Nature

Over the years, ACT visited EarlyON's drop-in and outdoor programs yielding very successful outcomes of infusing and showcasing the ways in which art and nature were one and the same, and could be found in every day life. We strived to maintain the consistency of these outdoor programs by designing them to become an interactive virtual art and nature experience. Families were encouraged to explore their neighbourhoods and communities within their household or "bubbled" unit and share with the group in an 'Exploring Mother Nature' virtual program. This program eventually became Making Room for Art as we discovered the children's connections and joy in the natural loose parts art elements and tools in their specially curated kits.





Photograph courtesy of Ilze Koch. Virtual "Exploring Mother Nature"

She Can! Collaboration

In collaboration with MCRC's empowerment program She Can!, ACT created a Palette to Pandemic virtual platform for watercolour painting and invited She Can! participants to share their pandemic art work in it's many forms to be uploaded digitally. When inperson learning was permitted, the studio was open for ACT to host the Palette to Pandemic painting group. This collaboration culminated in the creation of She Can Create!





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Partnership with She Can! to develop She Can Create!

virtual program participants in 2021

"Art and creativity are strong ways in which humans can express themselves, in order to make sense of and reflect on the elements of life and being human during a pandemic."









The Artist's virtual 'Land acknowledgment' was honoured by Skye-Lee

The Presence & Work of ACT Artists Impacted Our Organizational Culture

Artists in the Centres

Dedicated full-time Artists and ACT staff are crucially important to the continuation and implementation of the initiative. They are able to communicate and maintain the vision, which keeps the work moving upwards in new directions and discoveries, provoking the thinking of Artists and Educators through reflection, communities of practices (i.e. book studies), resources and valuable experiences.

Artists displayed and nurtured curiosity, openmindedness, collaborative, and reflective dispositions. These help in building hands-on competencies with materials, building meaningful connections with children and families, and allowing children to lead.

2019

- 59
- MCRC classrooms visited by Artists
- MCRC Educators worked with an Artists in their classrom
- **47** MCRC school-aged educators reached through Community of Practice activities





ACT Artists' Professional Learning Series: Watercolour Painting





Mental Health Awareness & Mood Lifting Monday sessions ACT co-facilitated with MCRC's Human Resources on how playing in art can be a catalyst & tool for positive mental health, calm, meditation, well-being & togetherness.



ACT Artists' Professional Learning Series: Watercolour Painting. Artists, Educators & ACT Leads were invited to participate in this 4-week session

Side-By-Side Mentoring

In working with Pedagogical Leadership & Compass Early Learning & Care Consultant, Lorrie Baird, we implemented a side-by-side mentoring model with Artist and Educator, which is key to ACT's long term success and long-term outcomes. These reflective meetings and shared experiences in programs built strong relationships whereby both parties were learning from and supporting each other in the understanding of the child's learning and thinking.

Building & Sustaining Relationships

ACT Team

ACT devised successful collaborations by enlisting a part-time post secondary Art student, ACT leads, and an Educator on secondment as a third Artist from Parkview Children's Centre (PCC).

Having the additional members as part of the team enabled us to achieve our goals:

- More programming within Licensed Child Care in School-Age & EarlyON
- more art community experiences in retirement living centres like Seasons Retirement Communities (Milton)
- generate awareness of art as a language using virtual platforms & in-studio; facilitated Lunch & Learns & mentoring of the ACT Leads, Artists & Educators through book studies & material explorations
- work closely with MCRC's Human Resources for new hiring orientations, provided content for company wide newslettters around art & documentation
- connect with MCRC's Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Specialist to design spaces for people to use, & feel welcomed in prayer & meditation as part of DEI committee initiatives

"It has allowed me to infuse more art and different kinds of art that I may not have thought of into my programs. The reflective meetings have allowed me to view things from a new perspective, to think more deeply, to gain insight from others and has allowed me to observe more deeply. My work with ACT has also made documentation easier to do and to share with others."

- Educator

Hours of Reflective Meetings

130 in 2019	70+
150 in 2020	- •
180 in 2021	Educators in Reflective Meetings from 2019-2021

Artist & Educator Reflective Meetings

Through creative thinking and ingenuity, ACT was able to effectively design and re-design to adapt to our ever-changing environments.

Reflective meetings consisted of:

- study of pedagogical documentation written by Artists and Educators alike from their time and curiosities in programs
- studying Reggio Emilia literary works, articles, podcasts, and provocations for study by utilizing established protocols
- experimenting and experiencing art materials based on the Educators' interests and interests of the children

The reflective model allowed for a consistent framework of learning and organization from centre to centre. It helped Educators shift their thinking and helped them see children from a different lens of pedagogy. They were able to build their own portfolio of learning and professional practice and most importantly, these meetings helped everyone in new ways to inspire and understand children.

"Reflecting with other educators about how the program has affected the way we engage and interact with children and art but has also changed my personal opinion on art and I enjoy it more."

- Sara, Parkview Educator



Reggio Emilia: Creating Culture

Journaling Explored

A large part of these 3 years, was to continually evaluate and study the impact of the work for Educators and children. As a team, we frequently evaluated our actions and outcomes so we could do things better or different. In doing so, ACT discovered through many enlightening and deep conversations around Reggio Emilia and culture that we essentially were weaving a fabric of culture in the programs we offered, the reflected meetings we facilitated, and the artistic energy put out to the community. Born of that work came the ideas of collaborative work and projects amongst children and amongst Educators in the form of a bullet journal or sketchbooks. Within the School Age groups of MCRC, She Can Create!, ACT Art Club, EarlyON and the organization as a whole, (art) journals have been integral tools of exploring, communication, potential release of thoughts and feelings to be worked out, catalysts for learning about self and others, and important, valuable work that was honoured and shared.

"Collaborated on pedagogical discussions involving children, the environment and art explorations. Participated in Watercolour classes ACT provided. Investigating Reggio Approach and how to bring it into MCRC organization/culture so it is meaningful and impactful. Relied heavily on artists and coordinator for input on documentation and reflective conversations. Participated in several book studies with team. Attended virtual learning events that ACT was involved in."

> - Denise MacDougal **THRC Pedagogical Lead**





2020/2021

- 12 book studies ACT facilitated and/or participated in
- weeks of virtual & in-person book 113 club meetings
- MCRC & Parkview Educators 125 reached & mentored in book studies, workshops & reflective meetings





"My view of art in the early years' environments has changed tremendously. My mind has completely opened to all the possibilities art has to offer young children. Incorporating art into all areas of the classroom is a huge piece I have taken from this book study."

- Parkview Supervisor











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Books that sustained and helped develop our learning in documenting practice,

ACT Built Awareness & Understanding of Art as a Language

Cultivating connections in the broader community was equally important. ACT endeavoured to be integral in developing and executing valuable art experiences and quality time facilitated by Artists, Facilitator and Coordinator for many programs and opportunities where we could promote the awareness and understanding of art as a language. the value in creating and studying documentation and deep reflective study.

2019

visits to EarlyON drop-in & community programs

1732 people reached in EarlyON drop-in & other programs

people participated in ACT's first 172 conference in partnership with The Halton Resource Connection

Collaborative & In-Person



Hosted International Educators from Hong Kong with a wire exploration



2 day conference in partnership with THRC entitled Inquiry Based Early Learning Environments: Creating, Supporting, & Collaborating with author Susan Stacev



Visits to retirement living communities for paint exploration & recounting of history through storytelling & art



Collaborative art activities at MCRC's Family Fun Fair Fundraiser & set-up a clay take-away at the Milton Farmer's Market

2021



studio participants able 204 to visit during the global pandemic

> She Can Create! participants able to visit during the global pandemic

"When exploring and engaging with the art materials that allowed me to express my ideas and expressions with confidence. I want the children to experience this activity too. " - Aimee Garcia **Parkview Educator**



Provided art exploration night to show appreciation of volunteers for National Volunteer Week



Artist & Facilitator visited Parkview Children's Centre for art explorations with Educators & children with facilitated Reflective Meetings & Professional Learning sessions in studio



She Can Create! Team Building

"The collaboration and investigation we have had to meaningfully bring and embed the Reggio philosophy into our organization has been very exciting and uplifting. I believe what has been explored so far, would be incredibly beneficial for the culture of our organization as it is very grounded in a strong sense of belonging for each individual in the organiztion."

-THRC Staff

ACT Built Awareness & Understanding of Art as a Language



The Halton Resource Connection (THRC) has been an invaluable partner to the ACT Initiative over the last three years. THRC staff have been incredibly collaborative and creative, working with the ACT Team to support educators in the Halton Early Learning community. Their contribution in support, consultation and referrals have been most welcomed and beneficial to the ACT initiative and our goals of spreading the awareness of art as a language.



Under the circumstances of the last 2.5 years, we have been fortunate to share and promote awareness of our children's and educators' learnings on social media in short but impactful documentation pieces with photos, flyers for workshops, interactive questions and trivia, raffles and draws as well as broadcasting our conversations in the form of podcasts in collaborative projects with THRC. In the podcasts, we discuss exploration of materials like clay and how it can be introduced and used meaningfully with children and Educators. We chat about concepts of identity, relationships, the meaning of mark making as well as the unique identities of others. The conversations are engaging and inspirational and thought provoking.

"The unique perspectives from the team were extremely valuable and impactful. Opportunities to explore different art mediums deepened my appreciation for the 100 languages and it's benefits (for one's well-being, expression, and engagement). The team itself always strived to ensure that I felt comfortable and at ease when participating in any activity. Their innate sense of curiosity and proper role modeling of interactions support foundational elements for learning, which benefits the teachers and of course impacts the children for the better."

- MCRC Staff

The ACT Art kits transformed and supported the ideas of the "pop-studio" where families from programs like Making Room for Art and She Can Create! were able to do a curbside pick-up or delivery of their specially curated kits. In an effort to engage Educators within our organization and community of Educators in Halton, e-connects in collaboration with THRC were designed for once a month exploration of each kit for a total of 8 months. Each e-connect was facilitated by one or more Artists or ACT Leads on a specific ACT art kit. These Professional Learning events coincided with the companywide newsletters and internal calendar events as they were free of charge for MCRC staff. Art kits were created inexpensively for purchase to promote the use of good quality materials and for art to be recognized as a means of communication and provocation.

Collaborative & Virtual

A positive outcome of the restrictions and challenges posed by the pandemic was that it forced us to really see what we needed all along. **Relationships**. In building awareness and understanding of 'art as a language', using it to connect and collaborate in relation to one another, to children, to our Indigenous partners and to our natural world, **"We learned, there are other ways of knowing,"** wisely said by our Indigenous Relations Consultant Karen Marshall in discussing the outcomes of the past three years.

"The ACT initiative has helped my team to see art in a different light, especially loose parts. We are thinking more outside the box when it comes to art materials."

Educator/ACT Lead



ACT has curated some tips & techniques over many years of working with children & art media for the design & creation of these kits & can be purchased at THRC



ACT Art kits for Making Room for Art & She Can Create!







ACT 8 art kits

"ACT has inspired me to bring in more challenging art materials for young children to interact with. It's helped me to gain confidence when introducing complex art materials to children. One of the most important lessons that I've learned through ACT is to avoid jumping right in and demonstrating how to use materials and to instead allow the children to explore and make their own discoveries."

> - Jennifer Lee Site Designate/ACT Lead

ACT utilized technology to form meaningful connections and to share knowledge during the pandemic.

Social media platforms helped ACT spread awareness of art as a language. They were also used to facilitate art experiences throughout the community.





Making Room for Art screenshots from computer.

ACT Honours the Meaningful Engagement of Indigenous Cultures in Truth & Reconciliation

ACT's Community Art Studio in MCRC sits on the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, Huron and Wendat, and more recently Treaty Lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. We are committed to intentionally continue along our journey of Reconciliation.

We strive to learn about and learn from our community's Indigenous voices as we grow, honour and value the teachings bestowed us. For the last three years, ACT and MCRC have been fortunate to work with Karen Marshall, a local Indigenous Relations Consultant who works in natural disaster response, in helping not only in our journey towards Truth and Reconciliation but through advice, talking circles, reflective meetings, practices, and sacred ceremonies to develop our programs using teachings and a land-based lens in which to look at our programs in art, and ways in which children and Educators connect and engage in the gifts offered to us from the land.



ACT Indigenous Artist, Kassamarie Galan, created a dreamcatcher installation for MCRC's 410 Bronte St. foyer. At ACT's studio grand opening, we invited guests to select & write on the feathers their hopes & dreams to be shared on The Dream Catcher.



Educators were asked to add words in a collaborative art project that spoke to what Truth & Reconciliation means to them for children's rights



Every September 30th, ACT observes Orange Shirt Day in Honour of Every Child Matters & Truth & Reconciliation. ACT is a part of planning each year's "Commemorative Every Child Matters Ceremony."

ACT engaged in the study of literary arts and awareness of this art form through communities of practice and virtual book study groups within our organization. It was important for us to recognize that learning encompassed story-telling as a means of communicating in developing deep empathy for those brave enough to share their struggles, discoveries and journeys.

"We will never have true civilization until we have learned to recognize the rights of others." — Thomas King, The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America



"It has been a privilege and a pleasure to walk with MCRC and the ACT team on the path to reconciliation over the past three years. As a First Nations woman, I've been delighted and proud of the deep commitment shown to learning about our history, our worldview, our cultures and how they all relate to the varied traditional and modern art forms. Incorporating this learning into programming, service delivery and staff development reflects the deep commitment to sharing an appreciation of our arts with the community they serve. This is truly ReconciliACTion!"

- Karen Marshall Indigenous Relations Consultant

In the three years of ACT's journey towards Truth and Reconciliation, we are continuously learning and listening. We strive to continue with open minds and hearts, to honour what is shared with us and we will continue to apply these teachings in our programs and persist in seeing through a land-based lens as stewards of the environment.

ACT is honoured and extremely proud to be a part of the **National Indigenous People's Day Planning Committee** formed by MCRC for June 21. We recognize and celebrate the unique heritage, cultures and contributions of our First Nations, Inuit and Métis people. In creating awareness in a virtual way of connecting with the community, we created Trivia games and daily featured local Indigenous Artists.

In 2019 and 2020, one of the featured Artists, Gina McIntee from Dunnville, Ontario donated for raffle, three beautiful painted paddles in honour of National Indigenous People's Day. ACT sourced dreamcatchers for an Indigenous facilitated workshop, and traditional teas for a virtual celebration for a companywide celebration.







MCRC's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Statement, additional resources & information Pedagogical documentation from a land-based lens



In **re-branding the ACT logo**, it was important for us to recognize & honour the sacred Indigenous medicine wheel colours as well as coinciding with primary colours in art. The medicine wheel not only represents a geographical directional compass & seasonal pedagogy, but it is also a metaphor for spiritual concepts of health & healing.

It was important for ACT on personal levels and as a team to engage in as many opportunities for learning as possible. In art workshops, we engaged in a Métis dot art session, a poppy beading session, visited Woodland Cultural Centre, a Museum of Excellence and Irografts (First Nations shop). We engaged in making medicine bundles to learn about the value and purposes, attended a workshop around Nature's medicinal plants and its uses; learned about food security and food sovereignty from local chefs. To understand and reflect on learning around Truth and Reconciliation, we attended a presentation by the Indigenous Education Advisory Council (IEAC) hosted by Halton Catholic District School Board's (HCDSB) "We All Have a Role to Play" with keynote speaker Dr. Niigaan Sinclair; we were invited by EarlyON to participate in the "Kairos Blanket Exercise", and worked closely with Angela Bellegarde from Our Kids Network.

Acknowledgements

"It has been incredibly exciting to watch the progression of this valuable MCRC program grow over the past ten years. A small classroom pilot in 2012 has now become a strong and viable resource for Educators, children, families and other members of our community. This would not have been possible without the dedication and commitment of many talented individuals and the confidence and support of our funders."

- Rebecca Barrows-Vrankulj Executive Director

ACT Team

Tina Bulicek, Director of Early Years, Child & Family Services Kim Duong, ACT Coordinator Shannon Speer, Artist Frances Maas, Artist (Parkview) Georgia Speer, Artist Amna Nabi, ACT Lead Shweta Garrett, ACT Lead Nasiha Klentos, ACT Lead Jennifer Lee, ACT Lead

> Victoria Armstrong Vicky Jenkinson KassaMarie Galan Mariana Arcila

THRC

Ruth Anne Wollaston, Director, Resources & Information Services Denise MacDougal, Pedagogical Leader THRC Team

She Can!

Kira McDermid, Supervisor She Can! Programs She Can! Team

MCRC

Special thanks to MCRC's LCC managers, supervisors, educators, & school-aged staff for your hard work & support!

Early Years

Petra Samson, Manager of EarlyON & Family Supports

EarlyON Team Family Fun Programs Team

MCRC Human Resources

& Finance Department

Communications & Information Systems

> Parkview Karen Campbell, Executive Director

Julie Vidler Director of Program Development

> Lynn Salisbury, School Director

Parkview Teams

Consultants

Karen Marshall, Indigenous Relations Consultant

Lorrie Baird, Pedagogical Leadership & Compass Early Learning & Care Consultant

Gillian Burns, Consultant, Facilitator & Trainer "There is nothing more truly artistic than to love people." — Vincent Van Gogh



- To learn more about ACT, please visit:

ACT

Artists

and Children Together

mcrc.on.ca/act-initiative







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