



**Press Release: ACE Initiative Intergenerational Arts! In the Eastern Townships  
May 1 2017**

Students from Knowlton, Sutton and Waterloo have been participating in a most unusual project. Thanks to the English Language Arts Network (ELAN) for choosing us as partners, the generous grant from The Department of Canadian Heritage, and lots of assistance from the Townshippers' Association, they have made new friends.

For six weeks, a group of students from Knowlton Academy, Sutton Elementary and Waterloo Elementary schools have been travelling to their local seniors' residence to partner up with a senior citizen. Each week, the kids and their teachers walk over to Manoir Lac Brome, or Le Foyer Sutton, or Courville Residence in Waterloo. Together, they have been studying Fine Arts in a series of workshops that highlight a different art each week.

In the first session at each senior's residence, there was some nervousness as each kid met their buddy and began the sometimes awkward process of getting to know each other. Coordinator Laura Teasdale introduced them and played some tunes to get things underway.

The next time they came together, dance teacher extraordinaire Tamara Burcombe was there to choreograph a beautiful dance that made them partners and friends. From there on in, there was an easiness between them.

In the weeks that followed, the teams sat side by side and learned painting from Marie Andre Leblond, who is as talented as she is passionate about community. Then they had the privilege of taking a pottery workshop with the magical Qita Reindler, a soft spoken and gentle potter who none the less kept the seniors and students enraptured. The power of music was awakened in them by Lucy Hoblyn, whose expertise had even the shyest children and elders singing together in perfect harmony.

The Activity Coordinators at the seniors' residences were Connie Sharman at Knowlton, Sylvie Poirier at Sutton and Sonia Ares at Waterloo. They were the unsung heroes of the program. They coordinated the schedules of all the seniors, getting them ready and in

place when the children arrived. It was they who decided who the partners would be and they did so beautifully.

The teachers of each of the classes chosen to participate, Charlotte Coles in Knowlton, JoAnn Kay in Sutton and Tim Croteau in Waterloo could not have been more generous; throwing their schedules into upheaval and walking the kids to the residences. They sacrificed class time and their own spare time and helped the kids write notes to their partners. They even participated in the workshops, learning songs and dances with the gang! Teachers give a lot to make their students lives richer and these teachers really proved that.

As a nice accompaniment to the project, two students from each school were sent along to act as cinematographers. Films will be created from the events and participants will receive a copy of the final cut, edited by our own Ruggie Thomson. Those students were Ben MacAuley, Jackson Stone, Madison Goyette, Noah Veillette, Ryan Lacroix and Mia Pare.

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Of course, the principals of the schools had to be in support as scheduling a massive project like this takes a lot of scheduling and planning. Renalee Gore, Catherine Canzani and Dave Scott were all on board. Now we are starting to get a sense of the scope in sheer numbers of people who had to work together to pull the project off. There were over 100 people directly participating, plus volunteers!

Special thanks to the many volunteers who made it all possible; Tania De La Mare and Lynn Chapman. Lisa Dutil. Sheryl Taylor, Lee Singfield, Scott Edmunston, Margot Bergeron, Béatrice Côté, Cécile Hopkins, Linda Hoyt, Stephen Paglia and some we may have forgotten.

This week, the partners will present the fruits of their labour at Art Exhibitions at each of the seniors' residences for family and friends of all involved. The partners will get to have ice cream out of the pottery bowls they made!

Laura Teasdale, who coordinated the project with much help from the experts at Townshippers and ELAN says, "It was a beautiful and heart warming experience. I will never forget the precious moments, watching the students and seniors making friends, and I know they won't either. It's a once in a lifetime experience...unless we can encourage more of these projects. You just have to see it to believe how powerful it can be when children and seniors work together!"

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