



Combine toCreate

LEARNING REPORT

Capturing Stories of Value
of Creative Residencies with
Communities in Moray

Programme producers

FINDHORN BAY ARTS

In Collaboration with

**SCHOOL OF
INNOVATION
AND TECHNOLOGY
THE GLASGOW
SCHOOL OF ARTS**

Funded by



ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL

FOREWORD

This Learning Report sets out to understand how the Combine to Create programme worked, and the impacts it has had on those involved, in order to share 'Stories of Value'. We see vital importance in demonstrating the value of embedding artists through collaborative working, slow working, and new methods, models and processes for engaging with communities through creativity, as it can support communities to shape and co-create their own cultural and creative lives. To do this we wanted to show the multiple layers of relationships, partners, collaborators and networks that connect and work together with communities to help shape the power of art and creativity.

This programme was part of a network of 26 Culture Collective projects across Scotland funded by Creative Scotland through Covid-19 pandemic additional funding secured through the Scottish Government, which had an ethos to share learning and support each other in how we supported communities within and beyond the Covid-19 pandemic. For the funded programmes, the Culture Collective provided a network and opportunities to share resources, learning and experiences. For the sector as a whole, the Culture Collective shines a light on the crucial importance of participatory arts projects for artists, for communities and for the future.

Combine to Create has collaborated with The Glasgow School of Art's School of Innovation and Technology in producing this report, as they shared our goal of demonstrating the power of the arts and its broader impacts by adopting qualitative evaluation and learning, beyond the traditional hard data, and dig deeper into the more nuanced values, essence and process. Combine to Create was initiated during the Covid-19 Pandemic and like everyone else, as an organisation and as a programme, we had no map, no instructions, no predetermined plan. The programme was designed to be responsive, flexible and to support long term working with artists and communities, rooted in our core values and key programme themes, to support embedding artists within communities. With The Glasgow School of Art, we co-created a framework for qualitative evaluation to help identify the emerging value created through the programme and tell the stories, with an independent lens.

The aim of this Learning Report is to document and to share the story of how our approach can inform future learning for ourselves, the artists and creative practitioners we work with, community partners and also wider stakeholders, funders and policy makers in valuing arts for community resilience. We want to share what worked well, what could be done differently, what could be adopted and what could help to make the work, including the learnings and the process, more visible and better understood.

Kresanna Aigner

CEO / Creative Director Findhorn Bay Arts

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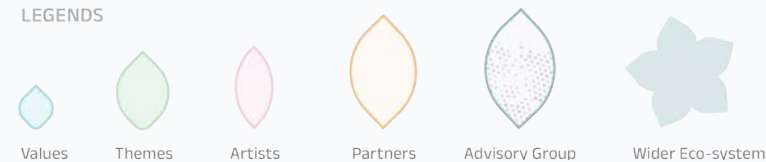
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COMBINE TO CREATE PROGRAMME ECOSYSTEM

LEGENDS



INTRODUCTION

Findhorn Bay Arts (FBA) work towards the vision that Moray is a place of exceptional creative opportunities. We have the mission of connecting, engaging and celebrating people and places through exceptional and diverse creative opportunities in Moray and beyond. We are both an international reaching biennial performing arts festival, that takes place across Forres, the Findhorn bay area and beyond, as well as a year-round and region wide producer of community-facing and creative sector-connecting development projects.

When the Covid-19 Pandemic came about in 2020 we, like the rest of the world, were thrown into uncertainty and fear. The communities we work with were not able to connect and were struggling in so many ways, with this uncertainty impacting on mental health and wellbeing, and so much more, artists and creative practitioners had lost much of their work overnight. FBA faced extremely uncertain times in those early days too, not being able to go ahead with programme plans and not knowing what our financial position would be or if we could keep our doors open.

A few months into the pandemic, the Scottish Government awarded Creative Scotland additional emergency funding to support the cultural sector and the Culture Collective was launched. Applications were invited from cultural organisations to support them and their communities during the pandemic. It was a highly competitive call but FBA were successful in achieving funding to support this two and a half year programme, Combine to Create (C2C).

The aspirations for C2C built on the work FBA had been doing and our long-standing relationships with community organisations and collective working with artists and cultural partners. This was developed through our learning, conversations, and through identified needs. At its heart was supporting community-engaged creative activity, participatory approaches, socially engaged practice and projects where artists and creative practitioners (hereon in referred to as artists) work collaboratively with communities.

In its first year, the programme supported: six long term artist residencies, four small halls artists residencies, one film documentary residency, and the partnership working with tsimORAY, which supported a secondment of our programme coordinator, Elidh Brown. The funding also provided stability, during a very unstable time for FBA to be able to deliver this work and more. In this first phase, we co-created a set of values, which were the anchors for all that we do: Curiosity, Collaboration, Generosity, Equity, Inclusivity, and Sustainability. Five overarching themes were also offered to the artists taking up residencies to be considered as starting points in their conversations with people and communities in Moray:

Connection and Reconnection

Nature and the Natural World

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Regeneration and Revitalisation

Sustainability and Environmental Awareness

We undertook research, training and took time to build relationships with each other and a range of community partners. With people and place partnerships formed, artists were supported to deliver a range of creative activities with communities both online and off, in and out the various lock down phases, to co-create the creativity that people sought to enable them to express themselves, develop skills and to connect.

In the second year of the programme, as we moved through and out of the pandemic and facing a whole new set of challenges of economic crises, war and the climate emergency, we were able to provide ongoing support for five of the long-term artist residencies and continuation of the documentary residency. These continued to build on relationships, on the learning and continued this work with artists, communities and our partners, embedding artists within communities through long-term working and programmes of activity. This second phase has been exploring ongoing and new needs, asking where we go next, and through collaboration and collective working, has encouraged ambition and provided space for innovative thinking, as well as to make the outputs and impacts of this work visible and understood too.

Culture Collective is a network of participatory arts projects, shaped by local communities alongside artists and creative organisations. Funded by Scottish Government through Creative Scotland, the first cohort of 26 Culture Collective projects began in March 2021. From Shetland to Inverclyde, Aberdeen to Hawick, each unique project is designed and driven by the community in which it is rooted, playing an important part in shaping the future cultural life of Scotland. Some projects are working to creatively engage with older community members; some provide opportunities for young women and non-binary people to find their voices; and others address disconnection, loneliness and mental health in a post-lockdown world. Culture Collective is a programme of change, and many of the projects are now embedded within the work of artists and organisations, providing ongoing opportunities for communities and artists to work together.

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“Culture and creativity continue to offer new and innovative ways to address the ongoing challenges felt by people and communities, and the impact of Culture Collective has been incredible. Supporting artists to work collectively with communities, and prioritising equality, flexibility and fair work, Culture Collective has made significant changes to how community-engaged creative work is developed, delivered, and understood. The programme, and the varied work of all involved, underlines the value of culture to people’s lives, and shows that work by, in and with communities is vital, excellent, and groundbreaking. The report on the Combine to Create Culture Collective project clearly demonstrates the wide-ranging and positive impacts of culture, developing pathways to creative careers and supporting sustainable communities in Moray.”

Karen Dick - Creative Scotland - Head of Place, Partnerships & Communities

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CAPTURING STORIES OF VALUE

This report marks our coming to the end of the Culture Collective funding. We have taken the time to evaluate and understand the impact of this work, and the value of the long term and reciprocal ways of working, to find ways for this essential work to continue. This has been done in collaboration with The Glasgow School of Art's School of Innovation and Technology (SIT), one of C2C's Advisory Group members, who supported Combine to Create through co-developing evaluative themes and approaches to support documentation and reporting on the programme.

Based on this partnership, we took the opportunity to fund a Design Research Associate, Shashank Gedala, led through time in-kind by Dr Michael Pierre Johnson, Creative Economy Leadership Fellow at SIT, to review all the data, reports, videos and wider evidence captured throughout the C2C programme of residencies. With limited resources and such a rich and complex array of data, this had its challenges, in particular limiting the capacity to approach select partners or participants for focused data capture. As such, the aim for this process focused on collating the 'stories of value' that emerged from the project with a relational lens. This means that we looked closely at how relationships between people, place and practice were enhanced to support and deliver the core values and key themes the residencies set out to meet.

What is presented in this report is an overview of five 'value themes' supported by sub-themes as 'stories of value', with definitions, case examples of evidence and key learnings to support how to evidence such forms of relational value in future. These themes were identified as value (co-)creation that cut across the different artists residencies and partnerships. The intention is that by sharing these value themes in this way, other practitioners, cultural organisations, community partners, funders and policy makers can use the emergent framework to support ongoing learning, dialogues and best practice in arts for community, environment and place.

This could not be an exhaustive account of all impacts achieved by the artists and community collaborations in C2C. However, this sits alongside the programme's wider reporting, blogs, films and other extensive dissemination activities to contribute to the vital task of better valuing and understanding ways of working with arts and artists.



COMBINE TO CREATE STORIES OF VALUE FRAMEWORK



MAKING MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS TO NATURE

Human relationships to nature and the natural environment featured prominently across many of the C2C residencies. Through the use of natural materials, outdoor immersion, development of nature-based spaces and thematic reflections, artists worked with communities to support meaningful change in such relationships, which is benefitting societal and natural wellbeing.

ARTISTS FOSTERING CARE WITH NATURE

In working with nature, the notion of care and wellbeing for self, community and the natural environment emerged as a prominent value. Artist activities from James Chitty, Kate Mackay, Jen Cantwell, Rachael McIntyre and Andrea Chappell featured practical skills using nature as central materials, such as through green woodworking and coppicing, willow weaving, bushcraft, foraging for clay, nature walks, and more. Participants widely expressed the value of creative activity in and with nature “de-stressing”, enabling relaxation and physical activity, in contrast with wider life scenarios. For Kate Mackay working with Neurodivergent children and young people, she reported that “by having an open and responsive practice, a natural environment and removing stereotypes; disruptive, challenging and emotional responses disappeared completely.” In fact, multiple artists and partners observed the effect of a different and nurturing space and experience being outside, often evoking a more open and collective activity.

Nature 4 Health, through their Branching Out programme, worked with James and other artists in C2C and reported that the collaboration “enhanced what [they] offer in terms of mental health and wellbeing experiences in nature’ [and] helped weave meaningful experiences for all who joined the programme.”

Jo Hodges and Robbie Coleman’s development of a Secret Garden transformed The Hub in Buckie’s bare courtyard and garden to a colourful, active, creative and social outdoor hub, meeting area and place to participate in creative, nature inspired activities. One volunteer outlined its inherent wellbeing benefits:

“For me it was fantastic. Inspirational, scientific, entertaining, educational, informative, intriguing. Where do I stop? I truly believe The Secret Garden has helped with my recovery after my traumatic operation. I also believe it has helped and continues to help some of the regular visitors to the hub. The workshops were very beneficial in different ways. Getting people to believe in themselves was a massive plus. – Volunteer at The Hub, Buckie

ENHANCED WELLNESS

James Chitty’s residency delved into the climate emergency, emphasising enhanced wellbeing through collaboration and nature experiences.



“The project has given me an increased appreciation of the social web that we are all part of and that we all depend on. It has shown me something of the relationship between creative expression and wellbeing in that they feed each other. I have learned in myself that creative activity at the same time requires and also has the power to generate a sense of ease.”
– James Chitty

NATURE FOR NEURODIVERGENCE

Inclusive spaces are crucial for neurodivergent families. This created an environment where families could engage together, breaking the barrier between the child’s learning and the parent’s involvement.



ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS IN FINDHORN GARDENS

Kate’s outdoor sessions at Findhorn Gardens became fertile grounds for creativity. Participants delved into artistic expressions amidst blooming flowers and lush greenery, translating the garden’s vibrant energy into their artwork.



“As there were no rigid walls, parents could accompany their children in the class, be in the vicinity or leave the children completely - Kate Mackay



KEY LEARNINGS

The difference creative experiences with nature make for health and wellbeing emphasises the need to grow collaboration in how to measure and report accurately. Evidencing health benefits could target specific conditions, with expert collaboration, for clear insight on impacts. However, wellbeing is more associated with lived experience and best evidenced in the stories and reflections of participants and partners. C2C offers valid and compelling evidence for future creative collaborations focused on enhancing nature for health and wellbeing.

ENHANCED STEWARDSHIP OF NATURE

Through nature-based practices and activities explored and delivered by the artists, partners, participants and indeed the artists themselves were opened up to taking on roles that cared for or looked after existing or newly developed natural areas.

With Jo Hodges and Robbie Colman's residency at The Hub in Buckie, this entailed the development of a Secret Garden, where natural space has become an active part of The Hub. A strong sense of community was developed around nature values, with a number of volunteers looking after and further developing the garden as a legacy of the project.

Other residencies enhanced the use of the outdoor spaces and environment accessible to partners and community spaces. Andrea Chappell's workshops focused on printing activities responding to tranquil, local natural environments they were set in, such as a woodland, a wildflower meadow and a willow barn. Andrea reports that "connecting local people to local places that many participants had not heard of, or been to, brought awareness to a much wider audience locally and those from outside the area."

Nature stewardship was not only explored through local activities but through dialogues connecting participants and peers to global environmental challenges, such as James Chitty attending the COP 26 fringe in Glasgow, supported by the 'go and see' fund, exchanging ways in which socially engaged art practice could play a role in facing the climate emergency. In partnership with FNLRT, James supported the 'Riverwoods' screening through an exhibit of 'forest fish' and facilitated table discussions discussing 'what does a thriving Findhorn watershed mean to you?' with participants:

"Bringing my creative work invited reflection and stimulated discussion. [...] This resonates with something I became increasingly aware of through the residency, this is to do with 'being' rather than 'doing' and a consciousness of how we do things as much as what we do." – James Chitty



PRACTICES FOR NATURE CONVIVIALITY

Small group workshops with other creative practitioners at local venues and nature sites created works on fabric using simple, accessible methods, such as printmaking onto fabric using local natural resources.



GARDEN REJUVENATION

The Hub's Garden Rejuvenation project, in collaboration with artists, transformed a derelict space into 'The Secret Garden', fostering creativity, well-being, and community engagement. Through nature based creative activities and open conversation, it activated the garden as a vibrant hub, encouraging personal growth and reevaluating the value of volunteers' contributions.



“Activities like these community workshops are such an important part of lifelong learning. They bring communities together, improve people's health and well-being, and raise awareness of environmental issues. The positive impact of art and creativity was clear to see.”

– Participant at The Hub



KEY LEARNINGS

An explicit form of value and impact was traceable in how roles would be created, changed or enhanced towards care for or with nature. This could be with natural spaces or assets, or through the models of practice artists or partners embraced. Further work would connect with explicit collaborations and programmes seeking to tangibly transform landscapes and nature-based solutions in regenerative ways and evidence how creative practices enable community and place environmental transformation.

PARTICIPANTS' ENHANCED NATURE APPRECIATION

Nature appreciation occurred in many subtle, yet significant ways for participants, partners and artists. These would focus on offering new ways of seeing, experiencing, thinking and speaking about nature in themselves and their local environments. Neil Callaghan's residency at Findhorn Village Centre used short performative and participatory lectures about natural human processes and relationships to food, taste and digestion. Attendees would talk about "nematode worms, the gut microbiome and how we taste and eat with all our senses." James Chitty developed a focus on 'salmon' to facilitate participatory exploration of the River Findhorn and its bioculture, with one participant reflectively valuing storytelling on "the origins of the salmon as a factor for developing our souls." Andrea Turner delivered Walk, Write and Draw workshops for adults at Edinkille Community Hall that explored parts of the Dava Way in creative ways. She has been mapping and documenting wider walks in the area to promote how 'all roads lead to Edinkille Hall' as the centre of the parish boundary. Participants relished "creative inspiration connecting art and nature in an inclusive, spiritual and soulful way."

Inspiration was a prevalent form of nature appreciation across the residencies in material, spatial or symbolic ways. Ruby Worth incorporated nature-based processes and connection by taking school children outside for embodied learning or imitating natural processes and animals e.g. flocking like birds. Amy Benzie supplied inspiration to participants with the malleable and tactile nature of clay, alongside stimulating participant reflections on the natural landscape. One young woman created a collage of bright green and yellow gorse bushes against a brilliant blue sky and said to Amy, "those colours always remind me of Rafford [...] I could almost imagine the coconut smell of the gorse flowers." This sparked other memories, with participants swapping gorse wine recipes, natural dyeing recipes and the best places to find the gorse in Rafford.



RUBY WORTH

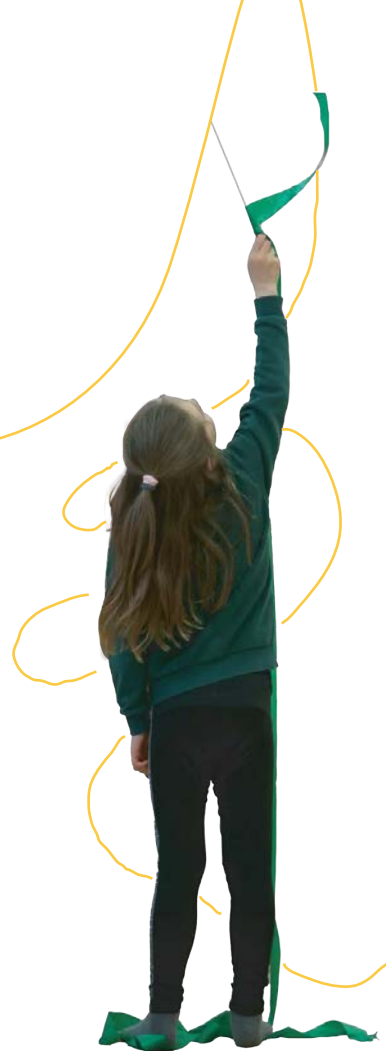
NATURE CONNECTED LEARNING

Participants explored processes of nature through embodying them, enriching their understanding through experiential learning, fostering a profound connection to each other and the natural world and enhancing their overall learning experience.

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We explored movement material that would give them a felt sense of how interconnected and woven in we are, as human beings to our natural environments and the processes of nature - Ruby Worth

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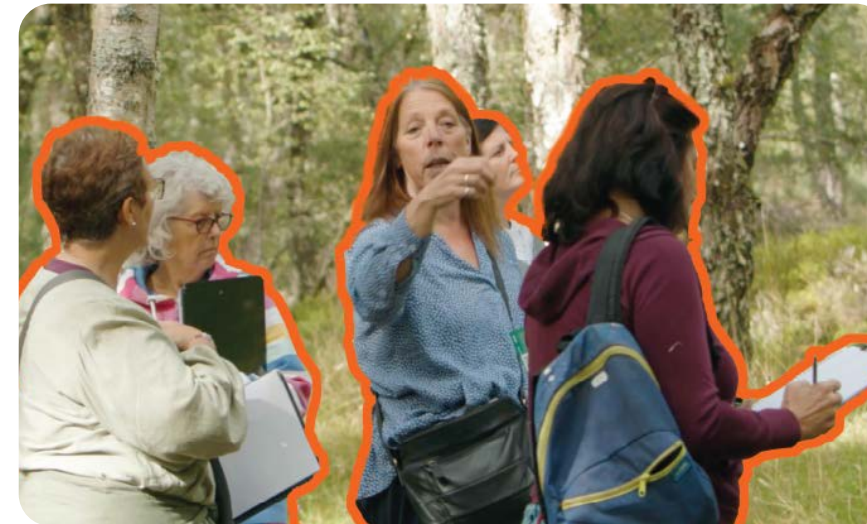


ANDREA TURNER



USE OF NATURE

Andrea Turner's connection to nature unfolded organically during her residency, where butterflies, bees, and birds seamlessly blended into the collective experience



KEY LEARNINGS

Articulating relational stories of personal reflection on the meaning people find when creatively exploring with or in nature is argued to be an authentic source of value generated in C2C. It was also clear that the artists' close connection to each other through C2C, sharing their experiences and learning with each other, enabled new ideas and ways of working with nature in their work. The difference this makes to people's behaviours and attitudes was not necessarily a direct goal in many cases, but the work delivered a platform for how creative practices and experiences can seamlessly interweave an enhanced relationship with nature.



BUILDING CONFIDENCE AND CAPABILITIES IN COMMUNITIES

Access to arts for communities has been shown to enable people to develop a positive relationship with themselves and their situations. Opportunities for creative expression, and the experience and skills these can afford, delivered through C2C have seen participants, artists and many partners build self-confidence and self-development through new forms of social connection.

EMPOWERING SELF-IDENTITY

Personal growth and development are essential factors and benefits to accessing the arts, as it can help fulfil unmet needs across personal challenges when applied with the care and consideration demonstrated by the artists. Through facilitating and supporting women to lead their own sessions and workshops, Jen Cantwell's residency work fed into and supported the work of Moray Women's Aid (MWA) by encouraging communal making as a way of building confidence and relationships. One bird box making workshop had built the confidence for one participant to take on lots of practical tasks around the house, while another completed previously unfinished DIY tasks, turning around previous feelings of guilt and incapability. Two further women (one of whom was blind) found confidence to host their own workshops and experience how to hold authority in a new way. Such experiences in Phase 1 of Jen's residency revealed personal growth for a participant who assisted with making a window installation for MWA:

"She talked about her experience at MWA and with me and went on to talk about her process of healing and processing the trauma that she'd gone through. None of that was planned and it grew from the trust we had in each other that we'd built." – Jen Cantwell

This connection of self-confidence and empowerment extended to participants in other residencies. Andrea Chappell reports of a participant in her sessions stating, "I care for my child with a life limiting illness, [and] doing this has reminded me that there is joy and beauty in the world." Rachael McIntyre's work with LGBTQI+ youth members provided major boosts of confidence through visibility and self-expression (as reported in other sections). Kate Mackay reports on an open, flexible and responsive approach to engagement that kept the parameters of inclusion very broad, where no diagnostic labels were required.



BOOST TO PARTICIPANTS' CONFIDENCE

Participants in Jen Cantwell's sessions experienced a surge in confidence, inspiring independent projects and overcoming challenges.

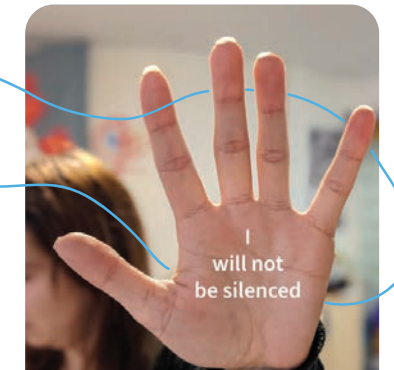


SPARK OF CREATIVITY

Positive activities initiated during the sessions led to a chain reaction of creativity and independent endeavors.

BEYOND THE BIRDBOX

A notable achievement was a participant confidently managing practical aspects of her new home after the birdbox making workshop.



"This brought together a group who were perhaps the most isolated and least served in the Neurodivergent community. [...] We responded to the needs and impulses of the group, the environment and elements. As there were no rigid walls, parents could accompany their children in the class, be in the vicinity or leave the children completely. For some children, it was the first time they had been happy to be left in a group. [...] These children had been said to be disruptive, unable to engage, distressed and emotional in other settings. In our workshops children were engaged, settled, happy and confident.

– Kate Mackay

NEURODIVERGENT YOUTH

Kate MacKay's project provided a safe haven for neurodivergent youth, fostering self-expression, improved self-esteem, and new skills.



KEY LEARNINGS

This emerges as possibly one of the strongest themes of value emerging from C2C, as many participants found their experiences with creative activities offered ways of processing often challenging or complex personal situations, as well as building new senses of belonging and possibility. The care and consideration developed by artists comes with challenges and pressures that require professional support, training and expert collaboration to establish arts as part of formal care contexts.

FOSTERING CREATIVE SKILLS (WITH YOUNG PEOPLE)

All the residencies reached and engaged children and young people through the long-term working models providing space for multiple experiences and activities, or one-off community events accessed by young people who might not access arts otherwise, sometimes brought by parents or guardians, and often through workshops in local schools. Many would learn new skills to help in making and crafting artefacts to keep, such as Andrea Chappell's textile installation at Dyke and District Village Hall, Amy Benzie's fired and curated sculptures and vessels made with all generations at Rafford Village Hall, or Andrea Turner's creative sessions with children at Logie Primary School.

Ruby Worth's residency directly collaborated with Applegrove Primary School, with embodied learning delivered through dance and physical activities. The benefits for the children (aged 7-8 years old) were reported as being "really useful for the children's creativity skills and working as a team" by the Assistant Head Teacher at the primary school. In the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, there was an identified need for the children to physically express themselves with each other again. Teachers shared how children returned to classrooms with greater focus, confidence and concentration after sessions. One child's grandmother shared her delighted observations:

Rachael Macintyre's focus on working with LGBTQ+ young people tried a variety of creative activities to encourage meeting new people in creative ways in an open and accepting environment. She noticed real growth in confidence for members, "which came from being encouraged to be creative and producing things through their own creativity." By being able to provide a safe and welcoming environment of like-minded folk, and with the right tools, she saw the young people as highly creative and independent. One youth worker reported how one young person they had introduced to the sessions was now speaking more confidently in groups and carrying themselves with more assurance.



RUBY WORTH

EMBODIED LEARNING

Ruby Worth's Embodied Learning Programme (ELP) transformed traditional learning, instilling confidence and focus among participants. Children developed trust, leadership skills, and a love for learning, fostering a positive and inclusive atmosphere.



“As time went on, he became more confident, especially in the body, to express himself. [...] What I also saw was how it deepened his interactions with others and his confidence to express himself with other people. [...] It has given him a greater control of how to express himself and his emotions, a greater emotional resilience. A life skill that will be of use to him in the future. - Ruby Worth”



ANDREA TURNER

IMPACTFUL ENGAGEMENT WITH PRIMARY CHILDREN

Andrea Turner's connection to nature unfolded organically during her residency, where butterflies, bees, and birds seamlessly blended into the collective experience



“I saw how much focus and effort they were putting into learning their contact skills and new ways of moving and connecting physically with each other.. - Ruby Worth”



KEY LEARNINGS

Access to arts being provided to young people should be a certainty, but sadly it is not in many cases, and C2C demonstrates the life-enhancing role having such access can provide. Similar to the previous theme of empowered self-identity, offering opportunities for personal growth and development with young people is argued here to have improved their outlook and their futures. Evidence in such cases requires long term accounts that are beyond the resources and responsibilities of such projects and organisation. But the collaborations with schools and youth workers can be used in future to account for the difference these activities can and do make.

ARTISTIC CONFIDENCE THRIVES

Confidence was not just enhanced for participants accessing arts, but particularly developed for the artists in residence themselves. In many cases, they developed nuanced and societally meaningful roles of advocacy and impact in their chosen contexts of focus.

Katy Mackay reported understanding herself as a neurodivergent artist and how being part of the collective and Findhorn Bay Arts supported her in this, stating “barriers to connection have been removed for me as I’ve been invited to networks, forums and funding that I wouldn’t have known how to apply for.” Rachael Macintyre reported the development of her creative practice as a socially engaged artist and recognised the value of developing over two phases in the programme, moving from a collaboration with schools and youth workers, to running sessions independently, whilst remaining connected with them, alongside the young people that helped grow her practice.

Ruby Worth used the second phase of C2C to share a powerful film of the Applegrove Primary School C2C Residency. Through interactions with other professionals and stakeholders while sharing the film, Ruby has been advocating for how Embodied Learning presents a strong foundation upon which to build young people’s health, wellbeing, empathy and resilience, alongside developing their creativity and self or group expressions. She has since been working to develop how embodied practices can be further developed to meet areas of the curriculum for excellence and pursuing further funding to support this.

James Chitty reported gaining a deeper awareness of some of the challenges community members face, and some of the areas where more support is needed. Through training in safeguarding and first aid, as well working alongside those experienced in community and mental health work, he feels “better equipped to work in these areas with an awareness of the safety of both participants and facilitators.”



RUBY WORTH

PLAYFUL FOUNDATIONS

Ruby has been a vocal advocate for the integration of embodied learning in primary schools, participating in enlightening forums and conferences.

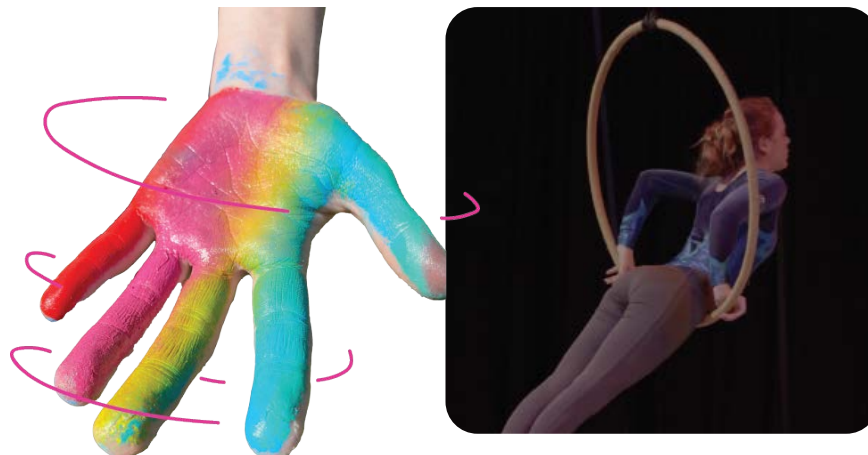
“ I loved witnessing the children growing in confidence and building their own individual physical literacy over the course of the project. - Assistant creative practitioner ”



RACHAEL MACINTYRE

SENSE OF BELONGING WITHIN GROUP

Rachael Macintyre’s sessions facilitated deep connections with young artists, fostering ongoing participatory engagement. These connections nurtured artistic relationships and community integration, strengthening the bonds within the artistic community.



JAMES CHITTY

SUPPORTIVE ROLE WITHIN COLLECTIVE AND CLIMATE DEMOCRACY

His increased social awareness highlighted the interconnectedness of individuals and communities, enriching his artistic journey.



“ I feel so much more confident now in considering myself a socially engaged artist and this project has been, and will continue to be, a huge influence on my work in the future - Rachael Macintyre ”



KEY LEARNINGS

The development of artists and how they position themselves within wider contexts, networks or ecosystems of value are here argued to be a vital success and goal for artist residencies and programmes like C2C that support them. The time they spend engaging with such networks, building relationships, sharing knowledge and facilitating wider influence and impact are here recommended to be recognised as part of their ‘model of practice’. It is through such models that narratives of value can facilitate leadership and more influential roles for creativity in wider society.



CO-CURATED APPROACHES FOR DIVERSE NEEDS

A key aim across the C2C programme was to reach and serve underserved communities and individuals. Many of the artists residencies positioned their partnerships to achieve this aim and it was here that the support structure and sharing approach across the cohort that some of the strongest and most important forms of development and new ways of working occurred.

ENHANCED UNDERSTANDING OF NURTURING ENVIRONMENTS

Many of the practitioners would share learnings for better understanding of how the creative activities could reach participants in sincere and meaningful ways due to the longer-term structure they could spend with community members and partners. Kate Mackay shares her observation on the experience of one neurodivergent child, indicating how a nurturing environment was created for him (and others):

“There was a moment when we were creating crayon rubbings outside, it was a very textural and sensory way of mark making. [The child] began punching holes in the paper with his crayon and his mum stopped him saying “no don’t tear the paper.” [But one child encouraged the other] “its ok, you can make holes if you like” and to [the parent] she said, “He can do that here, this is a group for children who think differently.” – Kate Mackay

In many cases, the artists would learn approaches beyond the provision of the creative activities and how finding wider ways to support social connection often resulted in pivotal changes. Rachael McIntyre’s residency with LGBTQ+ young people involved chats and conversations in a relaxed atmosphere, from which interviews, performances and films could evolve naturally from the work they were doing together. As such, it was meeting regularly to build up the trust and the community that was seen as particularly important.

For Jen Cantwell, the partners Moray Women’s Aid provided practical support developing and delivering sessions and gave access to reading material, staff planning, information and inhouse resources. Jen highlighted the value of developing shared goals and values demonstrated by her positive activities approach (fun, laughing, playful) and prioritising the comfort and needs of participants. Jen’s way of being with the participant group was reported as being as important as the creative activities she delivered. Her focus on ‘slow making’ helped participants to celebrate themselves, their families and their relationships with each other.

BRIDGING NEURODIVERSITY THROUGH ART

Kate Mackay developed an interactive art tool called the Polychrome card deck, which has been distributed to practitioners, artists, and individuals across Scotland.

“Participants were afforded the rare opportunity to participate in a group activity and setting that was completely tailored to suit their needs. They were able to relax and enjoy the activities and social connections without the stresses, obstructions and judgements they usually have to cope with. - Kate Mackay”



KATE MACKAY



IMPACT OF PRACTICES ON MENTAL HEALTH AND INCLUSION

Highlighting the urgency for open, responsive approaches by revealing the detrimental impact of common practices and stereotypes on mental health and inclusion.



RACHAEL MACINTYRE

YOUTH WORK COLLABORATION FOR INCLUSIVITY

The project encompassed diverse categories, such as design, performance, and research, offering young people various creative avenues to explore their interests.



“The success lay not just in creativity but in the friendships, confidence, and acceptance nurtured. It underscored the vital role of safe spaces for the youth. - Rachael McIntyre”



KEY LEARNINGS

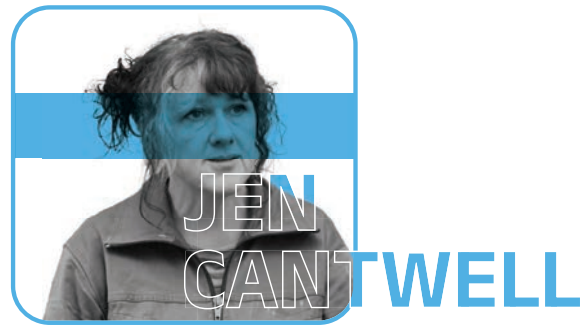
Evidencing an understanding for ‘nurturing and safe environments’ for people accessing arts requires demonstrating a complex combination of skills, experience and insights, alongside the experiences of the people artists work with. This level of evidence can emulate forms of training and education assessment, with subsequent qualifications, enhanced by the accounts of partners and participants that provide the best validation of such practitioner understanding. This raises the question to what extent understanding can be recognised in artists and made tangible systematically, through common, respected standards.

DIVERSE PRACTICES FOR DIVERSE NEED

Within the intimate details of how artists worked with their partners and participating community members were multiple accounts of changing and experimenting with different creative activities or careful co-curation of what would suit in particular cases. The time afforded by the residencies and peer support between artists helped them to feel able to craft their approaches. Jen Cantwell developed ways of working that weren't reliant on one thing, but planned up to three small activities to ensure there were options that "could be both picked up or put down, that were able to roll over as many weeks as wanted or could be left and restarted easily." This developed from a sensibility to balance the needs of people in the room, which could be difficult when different people's needs conflicted with the needs of others.

This sensibility to diverse needs was a key feature and tangible output for Kate Mackay's residency, as she developed the Polychrome card deck – cards of different colour articulating different emotions – to facilitate dialogue exploring, expressing and meeting the inconsistencies of neurodivergence. As Kate explains, where one tool, method or environment could never suit all neurodivergent people, the cards could be used to understand any person in group or individual settings.

Another crucial factor in the adjustments artists made for participants was in the value of collaboration to support key judgements and sensibilities. It was observed as crucial in Rachael McIntyre's case to work with youth workers to support and manage a variety of situations her young participants could be experiencing. For James Chitty, collaborating with different artists and Nature 4 Health positioned his practice in stronger alignment with wellbeing needs. The whole residency model welcomed a new way of working without any pre-set instructions the residencies and partnerships offered. For Ruby, this highlighted the gift of freedom, "because we were free to stay longer with our questions, our research, our partners, our communities and our creative peer groups."



TAILORING SUPPORT: DIVERSE NEEDS AT MORAY WOMEN'S AID

Jen customised practices, building connections in a welcoming atmosphere. Shifting from art to creativity, a supportive community blossomed, empowering survivors. Through personalised approaches, Jen inspired change, addressing unique needs and fostering growth.

“ I took a lot of notes and built some good learning into my research so that I felt I was building a creative resource of ideas that I could draw on when I had brain space. - Jen Cantwell ”



“ The length of the residency has allowed for a real collective journey... I was quickly to learn that this vast scope required some focus and defined parameters in order to keep it manageable. I chose to focus on the salmon. - James Chitty ”



INCLUSIVE NARRATIVES

James actively seeks out and incorporates diverse perspectives, ensuring that his work represents a broad spectrum of voices. James demonstrates a deep understanding of cultural nuances, respecting and incorporating diverse viewpoints with sensitivity.



KEY LEARNINGS

Reporting on isolated cases of bespoke needs being addressed can require ethical discipline and approval, while an explicit method or methodology (such as the Polychrome Cards) can embody meaningful knowledge accessible by others. Developing cases of best practice that can be shared and acknowledged between peers and across disciplines is where core value can be articulated. Framing such cases by their contexts, audience needs, methods and goals offers a clear route for knowledge exchange and development.

TRUST BUILDING IN CREATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Many of the artists and partners reported the importance of the relationships they had developed together. For some of the artists, they found sophisticated ways to manage and build trust with partners by ensuring constructive and generative possibilities that could offer ways forward at each stage.

Applegrove Primary Assistant Head Teacher acknowledged Ruby Worth as being “very proactive in seeking to get our advice as class teachers [...] so that strategies can be put in place with children that need a wee bit more engagement.” This was appreciated as collaboratively ensuring progression for all the children involved. Ruby herself acknowledged and valued the freedom to experiment and see “how our creative tool belts could be put to use within our communities of people and place.” This is echoed by Jen Cantwell’s supportive relationship with Moray Women’s Aid that provided major benefits to the residency, addressing small challenges with workarounds in utilising different spaces and being flexible to working needs.

In some cases, trust building developed within community groups. In Kate Mackay’s residency, the work and processes were genuinely emergent, engaging new participants and responding to emerging needs. It was difficult to find a partnership for such a shifting journey, with Kate reporting that “the main consistent project partner has been the parents of group participants.”

Heather Fulton’s residency with young mothers found such connection by providing the time and environment for informal chats and easing each other into the wider process, such as through sharing soup. She was delivering the first part of her residency as a pregnant woman and developed learning and trust from the parents she was engaging by hearing their stories:

“What surprised me about the work was the challenges the parents were facing that I hadn’t considered – issues like their partners being away for long stretches of time in offshore jobs or with the RAF.”



RUBY WORTH

THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Effective communication and collaboration play pivotal roles, standing as constant demands throughout the process. This served as the foundation upon which age-appropriate playfulness was built.



HEATHER FULTON

NURTURING SAFE SPACES

In Heather Fulton’s residency, the local Youth Café serves as a safe space. It provides a relaxed and secure environment where parents and babies can engage in interactive sessions without fear of judgement.

DIVERSE METHODS, LASTING IMPACT

Heather employs a diverse range of methods including messy play, music, projection, dance, and drums. This eclectic mix caters to different developmental schemas and interests, offering a varied and fun experience for participants.

FOSTERING INCLUSIVITY

Smaller groups enabled personalised attention and better integration into the school community.



“Being together in smaller groups allowed for 1:1 time or 2:1 time. This supported the young people’s individual needs to be attended to. - Ruby Worth”



KEY LEARNINGS

Trust is often cited as an essential factor in community engagement and development work, but the level of trust and influence of trust can be challenging to differentiate from one relationship to another. Nonetheless, it is an essential value and quality that can be traced through evidence of alignment, communication, collaboration and new behaviours worth documenting. An emerging question is how trust should be perceived and presented as a value outside the relationship, and how telling stories of collaboration can resonate as much as any other accounts.



ENHANCED COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

An implicit outcome from the artists' activities was in the different and imaginative ways they brought people across Moray's communities together. This would result in momentary, yet meaningful and lasting connections being formed, as well as new relationships established between communities and the local places and spaces that could serve them in ways enhanced by artistic practice.

ENHANCED CONNECTION FOR PARTICIPANTS

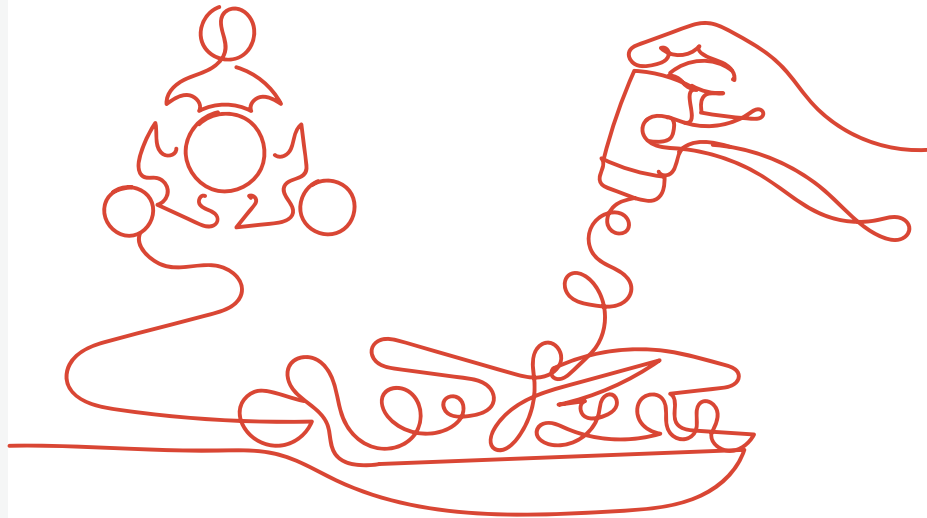
Every artist's residency provided opportunities for community members to meet each other through novel experiences and activities. The breadth and imagination of approaches used enabled meaningful exchanges and connections to form through cultural, environmental and human factors. Neil Callaghan held a number of sessions at the Findhorn Village Centre, where he supported local residents to create a community cookbook of recipes that originated in memorable encounters for participants. The Centre manager expressed that Neil "really managed to engage with members of the community, who were excited to share their recipes with him." Participants appreciated connecting to others they didn't know in the area, alongside how the lightness, fun and meaningful connection had added value to the neighbourhood.

Bringing people together in creative ways helped form new stabilising friendships, such as for participants in Jen Cantwell's work with Moray Women's Aid, and through new connections to place, such as through James Chitty's beach art activities or Jo and Robbie's nature-based activities in the Secret Garden. Andrea Chappell's second phase of work delivered small group workshops in partnership with other creative practitioners, at local venues and nature sites. She reports how participants developed interest in continuing at home and sharing their new skills with others, while two of the wild print sessions created new groups with creative interests who now meet up to take other workshops together.

Creating enjoyable social dynamics was core to Rachael Macintyre's work with LGBTQ+ youth. For her final session she simply brought along circus toys, with almost all of the usual participating young people coming along, plus others who had come to occasional sessions. The chat flowed between them and included conversations about a range of topics, from transphobia amongst their peers to people they fancy. One participant shared with Rachael, "I don't normally open up to people I've just met, but I feel so safe."



NEIL
CALLAGHAN



FOOD AS COMMUNITY CONNECTOR

Participants shared personal food preferences and beloved family recipes. Conversations delved into treasured culinary memories, emphasising the importance of preserving these dishes. The project highlighted the significance of food in connecting generations within the community.



JEN
CANTWELL

FRIENDSHIPS FOR VULNERABLE WOMEN

Participants built friendships during mindfulness and drop-in sessions, reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness.



JAMES
CHITTY

NATURE AS COMMUNITY CONNECTOR

The project facilitated connections and stronger relationships among participants. Participants felt more connected to others, their surroundings, and their creative expressions.

“

I see these conversations as threads, connecting different parts of the local community, building on what exist and creating new connections, strengthening a network and building the resilience we need to absorb the shocks and stresses of adapting to change. - James Chitty

”



KEY LEARNINGS

Traditional feedback evaluation collected by participants accessing creative activities is a common form of evidence, which often can't go deep enough into understanding the difference it made for them in their communities. The long-term nature of C2C provided greater opportunities to follow-up and understand the new connections and behaviours that traced directly or in some way to their participation. While this insight can't be expected from every participant, where there are longer-term residencies or roles involved, such insight is golden to understanding value.

ENHANCED COMMUNITY SPACES

While most residencies enhanced the reach to new audiences for the partners or halls they collaborated with, key examples had managed to transform the places and spaces they worked within and new appreciation of ways to connect with each other and their surroundings. Robbie Coleman and Jo Hodges' 'The Secret Garden' collaboration with The Hub in Buckie was reported on how well it worked "as a tool for creative public engagement with nature, as a creative activator of a new space and as a socially engaged process." They transformed the bare courtyard and garden to a colourful, active, creative and social outdoor hub, meeting area and place to participate in creative, nature-inspired activities.

"A key aspect of the residency was focussing on using our natural environment for inspiration, and natural materials for the practical activities. The resultant bee hotels, willow bird feeders and cyanotype prints were all much admired. The relaxed pace of the activities, and outdoor location, gave participants time to recharge their batteries and relax from the stresses of everyday life." – Buckie Hub Volunteer

The project enhanced and activated the garden space, people tried out new things, learnt new skills, met new people, had new conversations, some of which reflected on the work the Hub was doing and how people thought about it. The site was "becoming a mirror for their project - allowing the volunteers to consider their own contributions and re-assess their value to themselves, the Hub and the wider community."

Further 'transformative impacts' occurred through Andrea Turner's residency with Edinkillie Hall reaching a new community and strengthening their programme of activities. Amy Benzie's practice with fired clay linked to local stories of place that would be displayed in Rafford Village Hall. Conversely, the stories of partners' feeling better positioned to confidently work with artists going forward is expanded upon below, but is worth emphasising here as a core element of how local spaces have been enhanced.



TRANSFORMATION OF GARDEN SPACE

In a groundbreaking collaboration with a community partner, The Secret Garden project proved to be a powerful tool for creative public engagement with nature. The bare courtyard and garden were transformed into a vibrant, social outdoor hub, where people explored new activities, acquired new skills, and forged meaningful connections

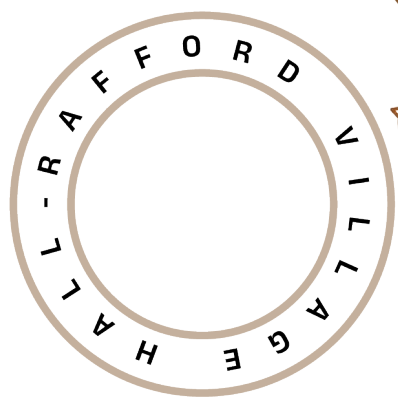


"I loved every part of the Secret Garden. For me it was fantastic. Inspirational, scientific, entertaining, educational, informative, intriguing. Where do I stop? Getting people to believe in themselves was a massive plus- Kevin McKay, Volunteer"



CERAMICS TELLING COMMUNITY STORIES

Through the art of ceramics, Amy transforms shared stories and local connections into tangible creations, bridging the gap between creativity and community.



TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT FOR THE HALL IN THE COMMUNITY

Through shared stories, art, music, and camaraderie, my Small Halls residency at Edinkillie Hall transformed the once-quiet space into a vibrant hub of community connection and creativity, leaving a lasting positive impact on the hall and its community.



"It's been lovely having Andrea Turner as our Small Halls Artist in Residence. Our remit to Andrea was to get people back to the hall after Covid and she definitely did that!"

KEY LEARNINGS

The participatory transformation of spaces in the community is rarely purely physical and so best presented through case studies detailing the different ways such spaces were used before and after such interventions. This must go beyond simple observations such as numbers of visitors or range of activities, but also include co-evaluation on the shift in roles, skills, relationships, and assets, from a diverse range of voices accessing such spaces

ENHANCED COMMUNITIES OF IDENTITY

One of the most important legacies and outcomes from the C2C residencies came through providing the opportunity for unheard voices, experiences or identities to connect as identifiable communities of shared interest and experience. Where groups facing similar challenges found a path to belonging, building their confidence and sense of self in a rural context.

Rachael Macintyre learned how much the new community she was supporting was needed, as there was nothing else like this in the area for young LGBTQ+ teens: "together we've made a cabaret, attended Pride, and created a community where before there wasn't one [...] all about kindness and respect and really valuing each other's work." Through the residency, Rachael attended the International Children's Festival in Edinburgh and became aware of other LGBTQ+ creative groups in Scotland, which helped her "feel more deeply connected to being a queer artist and making work with and for LGBTQ+ young people."

Kate Mackay acknowledged how other parents in the Mind's Eye Art group she helped form have been forced to give up careers to support their children in a world that does not meet their needs around neurodivergence. Kate was encouraged through the C2C programme to put her lived experience at the heart of her creative practice, and feels privileged that her career has flourished during a challenging time. Working and sharing her work for neurodivergent children and young people with other parents has connected and built shared understanding and ambitions. Some of the parents have been empowered to explore and advocate alternative forms of education and connection for their children that "feel discombobulated and don't fit within the education system." They're inputting to staff training developed for schools; pushing for the council to allow their daughter to take her service dog into school; or training to set up their own outdoor learning initiative. This emphasised for Kate the case "to push for more supportive and accepting environments and attitudes, rather than work on the children to suppress their nature."



POSITIVE ENVIRONMENTS AND ADVOCACY

Bringing young neurodivergent people together through creativity helped build valuable connections between their parents and how they can further develop further forms support.

“It can feel quite isolating having children on the autistic spectrum but attending a group where the other parents understand the struggles and are supportive helps. [...] To see the children trying something new and different that they wouldn't usually engage in. A safe space for the children and me just to be. The class is full of positivity and expression. - Parent from Mind's Eye Art Group”



ONGOING ENGAGEMENT WITH INCLUSIVE YOUTH

Rachael initiated independent sessions to provide a stable and judgement-free space for young people to explore creativity and to connect with like-minded peers. This attracted young people from various backgrounds, promoted social connections, and served as a platform for LGBTQ+ visibility and acceptance.



“They all talked about how important it was to have a space they could go to that was safe for them and where they could meet other young people from different schools, in different areas of Moray. - Rachael Macintyre”

Two non-neurodivergent Ukrainian refugee families joined the project for its sensory benefits, bringing a distinctive and enriching dynamic to the engagement.



“I learned how isolating it is to be a parent or carer of a neurodivergent person, how little support and information is available in Moray. I learned that the community of neurodivergence in Moray is fragmented. - Kate Mackay”



KEY LEARNINGS

Stories of emerging communities of identity are rich and complex. Therefore, they are best told as case studies that can represent and validate their multi-faceted and ongoing nature. A range of traditional and engaging approaches could be used, such as video, blogs, that double-up as assets for the communities to support their emerging purpose, positioning and tangibility. The value(s) of supporting such communities become the emerging question and therefore evaluation and evidence should serve as much to progress as simply document.

A person is performing a hula hoop routine in a dark room. The performer is wearing a dark top and striped pants. A large, diverse audience is seated on the floor, watching the performance. The room is dimly lit, with a bright light source creating a large, glowing area on the floor. The overall atmosphere is intimate and focused.

ARTICULATING THE VALUE OF CREATIVE PRACTICE

This final theme of value seeks to emphasise the many ways in which the positive impacts and influences of creative practice can be created, felt and understood. Here this is observed and presented through embodied experiences, artefacts in place and through the confidence and ideas it inspires for partners and participants.

EXPERIENCING CREATIVE VALUE

Creative ways of working can offer new ways to experience the world. When members of the community, who might not often engage with creative practices, get space to explore the world in accessible ways, this can connect and bring forth lasting memories and ideas. For Jo and Robbie's residency with the Secret Garden with The Hub in Buckie, one participant shares in depth how inspired they were by their experience of their process (right).

Rachael Macintyre organised a celebration, in the form of a queer circus cabaret, The Cabaret of Misfits, as part of the fourth Findhorn Bay Arts Festival to see the impact of the residency at that point. Artwork the young people had created decorated the space, some of them volunteered running games people could play during intervals, and two of the young people performed at the cabaret. Rachael emphasised how it had been quite transformative for some young people's confidence, while "more than one parent came up to thank us, in tears, at how much it meant for their young person to have something like this take place."

A film was commissioned with Jason Sinclair to capture the impact of Ruby Worth's Phase 1 residency with primary school children in Moray. The film in itself is a powerful advocacy tool for the work. It captures the benefits and impact of the residency. It articulates the premises the embodied learning is founded upon and the aims of the residency that unfolded through the collaboration with the young people and the school. It further captures and highlights the personal and collective experiences of the young participants and the affirming observations and testimonies of the teachers and the young people. Responses to the film were overwhelmingly positive, as people were moved watching the young people in all their embodied wisdom and hearing their testimonies. Some shared their pain around not having had this space for connecting with themselves when they were a child in primary school, while one parent spoke of how their daughter was struggling at school because she didn't have this space to be herself.



STORYTELLING, VIDEO & ADVOCACY FOR EMBODIED LEARNING

Ruby created an impactful film through her collaborations with Applegrove and has engaged in knowledge-sharing forums and conferences, advocating for embodied learning in primary schools.



Attendees of the Children and Young People's Forum felt inspired and emotional at how much Ruby's embodiment work benefits the children taking part. - Elidh Brown



INCLUSIVE JOY: YOUNG VOICES AND ARTISTRY IN QUEER CABARET

Young people were invited to take part in the preparation of a queer cabaret by painting signs and designing areas for the venue. They were also invited to be part of the day as volunteers running interactive games, performing on the stage, or in the audience spectating. It was an empowering community celebration providing representation and visibility in a joyous and accepting environment.



INSPIRATIONAL PROCESSES FOR UNDERSTANDING NATURE

Jo and Robbie's The Secret Garden project allowed participants to try out a range of creative, technical and scientific methods to see and experience nature in new ways.



As I have an interest in natural history I was delighted when Robbie offered to let me help him open the moth trap, after which Jo took me through the process of photographing the different moth species, using the computer and printer to make transparencies, and finally to use these to make Cyanotype prints. It was really exciting to follow the process from beginning to end. Jo and Robbie were excellent facilitators. They were enthusiastic, supportive and generous with their time and expertise. - Participant

It's not just about a performance, it's about creating a space where these young people can thrive, be celebrated, and be supported in their creativity." The cabaret became a testament to the potential of creative initiatives in fostering unity and understanding. - Rachael Macintyre



KEY LEARNINGS

Within the creative sector, experiencing creative work can be an essential part of how it is valued. Live events and films are essential tools for offering this connection. However, how you reach key audiences with such modes of storytelling can be a barrier, especially with prospective funders or stakeholders. Therefore, as part of developing shared objectives, co-commissioning and resourcing the documentation of projects through events and films offers exponential potential for developing such work in future.

EMBODIED KNOWLEDGE IN ARTEFACTS

The creation and co-creation of artefacts represents one of the most tangible aspects of the residencies, yet the experiences, relationships and processes these artefacts represent are less tangible.

Amy Benzie taught community members at Rafford Village hall simple techniques in creating a 'pinch pot' using a small ball of clay on arrival. No two pots created were the same, as this method afforded people a way to put their identity into their pieces. Stories of gorse flowers, washing lines, local journeys and personal heritage shared between generations would decorate their ceramic pieces.

Neil Callaghan offered participants at Findhorn Village Centre homemade soup, bread and cake to local residents in exchange for a recipe that originated in an encounter – some fleeting, others profound. The collected recipes were gathered into a published **COOK! BOOK!** shared with the community through a celebration event.

Andrea Chappell co-created both a textiles installation for Dyke Village hall and initiated her Moray Kilt Series of eight Highland (work)wear outfits designed for eight contemporary regional roles, each of which showcase the crafts, culture and industries of Moray. The residency produced two of eight kilts in the series, with community input creating the cloth.

Jen Cantwell made Moray Women's Aid's ethos visible by creating a series of digital lettering pieces based on words and phrases embedded in their core values and from an interview with one of the resident women. This gave them images to use in awareness raising campaigns and around the building as a reminder of their core thinking and approach.

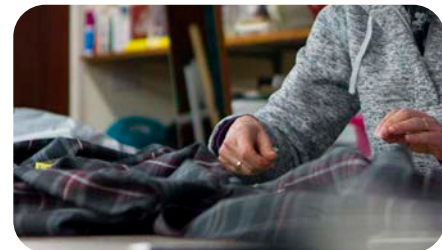
Kate MacKay worked through fragmented conversations visually and with words in developing her Polychrome Cards; an interactive, cyclical spectrum of human experience that visually maps pathways of connection, rather than barriers to acceptance. Polychrome is emerging as an evaluative tool in itself to explore the relationships between actions, emotions, environment, and ideas.



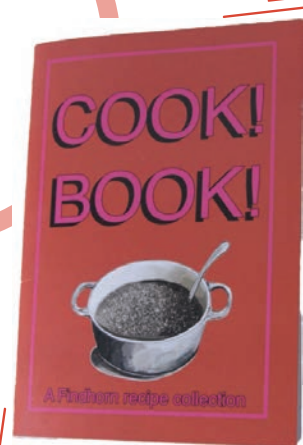
KATE MACKAY



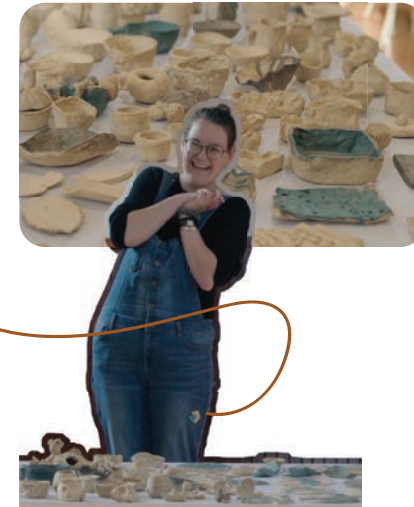
ANDREA CHAPPELL



NEIL CALLAGHAN



AMY BENZIE



JEN CANTWELL
DIGITAL LETTERING PIECES

KEY LEARNINGS

The breadth and depth of artefactual outputs are one of the untapped resources of value, understanding and impact in C2C. The documentation of their creation, the stories they impart and the roles they go on perform are all rich sources of evidence and insight for which all parties can develop ways to document and share. Such documentation would not only serve to support co-evaluation of the processes, experiences and value their production provided, but also allows an archive for future reflection, dialogues and activities to respond to. Partners are recommended to claim ownership of residencies through documenting the artefacts produced for future stakeholders, artists and community members to access.

COLLABORATIVE CONFIDENCE IN USING ARTS

At the heart of the structure applied through C2C was artist residencies with community-based partnerships. Therefore one of the clearest positive outcomes and impacts of the project can be told through the changes in how partners now value arts and artists to enhance what they offer their communities.

Jo and Robbie's residency developing a Secret Garden was acknowledged as collaborative from the start and deeply transformative for The Hub in Buckie:

“This was the first “artistic” collaboration I have been involved in and it opened my eyes to the value of using creativity as a means of involving people from all walks of life in shared activities. The “Secret Garden” project added impetus to our plans to develop our outdoor space as a social area and provide a focus for volunteers who are particularly practical. The programme attracted [...] first time visitors to The Hub and helped grow our connections to other groups in the town. Since the project ended, the practical volunteers have continued to develop and improve the outdoor area. [...] Findochty and Buckie Development Trust are keen to work with Jo and Robbie on a new project and we have applied for funding from Sustrans' Art Roots Fund to support this.”

- Chair, Findochty and Buckie Development Trust, Volunteer at The Hub

Andrea Turner's Small Halls residency with Edinkillie Hall developed transformative audience reach and a close working relationships with the committee and Finnerne Development Trust, who are believed to have expedited a trial bus system through the project:

“It is great to see the creative energy and positivity that Andrea [...] has brought to Edinkillie Hall after its period of enforced dormancy. I think that Andrea's residency has the potential to be a catalyst for the future development of Edinkillie Hall and what it has to offer the community.”

- Finnerne Development Officer

Following Jen Cantwell's residency, Moray Women's Aid have now embedded creativity into their own plans going forward. Staff in the therapeutic team feel confident using creative activities as part of their groupwork:

“[The residency] has changed the way we are developing the more therapeutic side of the work we do, such as putting on mindfulness groups, having social inclusion groups, and having another element to those. [...] Jen has shown us some ways to be more inclusive as well.”

We ran some groups where all the mums could come with their children in the summer holidays and do activities. [...] Domestic abuse ruins parents' relationships with their kids. [...] The drop-ins Jen attended took on a new dimension for us because she did things that we just didn't have the skills and knowledge, or the foresight, to do. We saw a huge improvement in the parent child relationships, so it was invaluable for them.”

- Business Development and Funding Manager for Moray Women's Aid



BUCKIE COMMUNITY HUB

By embracing diverse needs, they created a collaborative space, showcasing the power of art to build confidence and transform challenges into opportunities, driven by a shared goal of community connection and empowerment.



ARTS IN COMMUNITY BONDING

The residency not only enriched the community's artistic endeavors but also instilled a newfound confidence in collaborative artistic expression, empowering individuals to embrace the arts as a powerful tool for shared storytelling and communal celebration.



FURTHER FUNDING

Moray Women's Aid have applied for, and secured, the Moray Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund, keeping Jen working with them for a few hours until August next year and will look next at the National Lottery to further fund her work.

KEY LEARNINGS

The cases of each partner's enhanced confidence in working with arts are testament to strong collaborative working and support mechanisms put in place by C2C. Evidencing the changes such partners have made because of artist residencies deserve their own case studies, but periods of co-evaluation, making sense of the changes that emerge, can help articulate and evidence influences on the different assets, processes and people, and the relationships between them. It should not be underestimated how much creative approaches can add value to the ways of working for different organisations, and so co-evaluation can feel like an exploratory process to define 'what difference has this made?' and to look at this question from multiple angles.



LEARNINGS TO TAKE FORWARD

This Learning Report has set out to share the diverse stories of value to have emerged from across the Combine to Create programme, which has delivered a rich, complex and lasting legacy for Moray's communities, establishing collective ways of working for Findhorn Bay Arts (FBA), the artists and the partners. This has in turn forged lasting partnerships, collaborations and developments that have deeply informed future work and ambitions.

We have presented the themes of value with definitions, based on observations from the work of artists and creative practitioners within the programme, examples and quotes from across the project, practical learnings from the programme and approaches to take forward in evidencing such forms of value. Summarising these key learnings, we'd like to take the opportunity to articulate how these relate to Findhorn Bay Arts' ways of working going forward to continue to build and grow the Combine to Create ecosystem of value creation.

At the C2C programme's outset it was imbued with a set of **values** - collaboration, generosity, equity, inclusivity, sustainability and curiosity - which the artists and wider programme were living and breathing moment to moment, in their activities, sharing events and wider dissemination. Within the stories above are a rich collection of examples of how these values can look and feel in practice and were often areas of exchange between the artists to learn and develop their ways of working to meet these values as closely as possible. This values-driven process has informed some of the artists' professional careers and positioning going forward, helping them to specialise in working with community members often under-represented in the arts.

Collaboration, one of C2C's stated values, has been fundamental to the successes and learning within the programme. Evidenced in the report are the intimate ways artists worked with local partners, community members, wider networks and with each other as a supportive cohort and with the team of Findhorn Bay Arts. Reported above are details of some of the explicit contexts of need that can only be addressed in collaboration. The programme brought together respective knowledge, assets and capabilities to bear on complex or shared challenges in growing young people's confidence, supporting health and wellbeing, connecting communities to their natural environments or making creativity accessible to new audiences. C2C demonstrates exemplars in place-based, collaborative working and compelling cases for doing together what we cannot do on our own.

Another dimension to highlight has been the transformational role of **long-term working** in enhancing the ability of the artists and C2C to implement the values so fully and build collaborative relationships in the depth touched upon through the above themes. The intricacies and nuances of how relationships and creative practices evolved and grew are only fractionally represented above. However the spaces, opportunities, rigour, impacts and developmental journeys achieved were

all made possible by the long-term nature of the programme. Iteratively experiencing, adjusting, improving and reflecting, in collaboration, maximised the learning and value created through the residencies. Funding models must adapt to recognise such benefits, where possible, especially when related to achieving wider social and environmental impacts.

The programme also excelled in supporting methods of **documentation** across the residencies and wider activities. Documenting processes, practices, activities, learnings, adaptations and impacts in ways appropriate for projects, artists and participants, are here viewed as an explicit part of delivering values-driven creative practices and programmes. This can produce a challenging amount of data, and present challenges in the methods and approaches adopted. The use of photography, videography, blogs, feedback collection and reporting have been extensive. However, it was the use of such documentation as part of sharing, making sense of emerging developments, and being responsive to support needs that we posit here as key to the sustainable delivery and development of similar creative programme models in future. The opportunities for sharing such documentation with partners and community members, as part of a process of **co-evaluation**, offers the potential to embed deeper knowledge, relationships and evidence of development and impact. Especially when considering Combine to Create as more than a collective, but as a creative and cultural ecosystem, developmental evaluation offers ways to embed new ways of working proven or demonstrated to make a difference. Reproducing the details of value presented in this report requires enabling and empowering non-hierarchical, grassroots approaches to collective working and leadership based on the subsidiarity principle.



POST-C2C DEVELOPMENTS

Project funding for this 2.5 year programme is coming to an end, so we are working with the artists and community partners to find ways forward through collaboration, new models of working and as co-producers to sustain, develop and embed creativity and culture with communities. Funding is becoming increasingly harder to source, and with no cultural budget from Moray Council it can be very hard to access ongoing seed funding for local creative activities to continue. This is alongside pressures on national funds, in particular Creative Scotland, whose funding is more and more competitive as the cultural sector develops and the demands for culture from communities, audiences and participants grows. This is against a backdrop of a lack of any dedicated arts funding from local authority.

In 2024, Findhorn Bay Art's new pilot **Associated Artists Programme (AAP)** will continue to work with: Kate MacKay, working with children and families who are neurodivergent; Ruby Worth, working with children whose mental health has been impacted through covid and live in areas of deprivation through primary schools; Rachael MacIntyre, working with LGBTQ+ young people; Heather Fulton, working with early years, babies and their carers / parents; and Jen Cantwell working with carers and vulnerable women. For two days a month the artists will continue to connect with each other and FBA, as co-producers, and tsiMORAY in monthly meetings, build ongoing relationships with community partners, contribute to networks that support their work and the resources to keep programmes of delivery with communities going, growing and sustainable.

Moray Women's Aid secured funding through Moray Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund for a project to recruit an arts worker, following Jen Cantwell's residency, with plans to further develop this model in future.

Kate MacKay and FBA have secured funding from Creative Scotland's Participatory Arts and Mental Health Fund to support Space for Wellbeing, as co-producers. This aims to bring together established and emergent artists living and working with neurodivergence and social-emotional difficulties to explore, create and design a safe and inclusive space for young people who are neurodivergent, and their parents or carers facing barriers to inclusion living in Moray.

FBA will also open up two **Small Halls residencies** in spring 2024 as part of the programme plans for the 2024 Findhorn Bay Festival, while there is a legacy of revitalised and reanimated community halls and spaces taking forward their own creative projects.

Excitingly, there are diverse **community-led developments** willing to take ownership of work with other cultural or community partner organisations to make creativity happen. The Mind's Eye Art Group (following Kate MacKay's residency) and Qreative Collective (following Rachael McIntyre's residency) are key examples. FBA will continue to support where they can add value (e.g. through

maintaining a relationship through the Festival as more regular venues). The communities themselves are key to shaping their own cultural life and the creative activities they make happen, whether they want to become constituted, or work as temporary platforms to future destinations for their members.

FBA is delighted to be working in partnership with the **Findhorn Watershed Initiative (FWI)**. The Findhorn Watershed Initiative is a multi-generational vision to restore a mosaic of nature rich habitats, grow a culture of nature connection and enable a thriving nature-based economy for the people and places of the Findhorn watershed. Led by local environmental conservation intermediary – the **Findhorn, Nairn and Lossie Rivers Trust** who have commissioned FBA to deliver a creative and cultural programme of community engagement in the lower catchment. This partnership has resulted through strands of the C2C programme and because of long-term relationship building with people and places that make up the lower catchment of the Findhorn Watershed.

Through C2C, **partnership between Findhorn Bay Arts and tsiMORAY** has gained strength and ambition to work together to 'connect people to create change' and improve positive outcomes for communities through 'making creativity happen'. They brought their existing experience and expertise together through staff secondment, which has come to an end, contributing to the realisation of shared aims of increasing voice and supporting communities to create change. The focus at this time is on taking the new ways of working developed through C2C forward through future projects and programmes that recruit and support artists and communities to work together, with the support of FBA and tsiMORAY, in future.

FBA and the artists we work with are deeply committed to continuing to build meaningful relationships with the artists and communities that we work with, to test and explore new ways of working, to support co-production and collaboration, to learn and to share our learning, and to work with artists and communities in order to deliver transformative, experimental regeneration projects that resonate locally and inspire nationally. We want to act as a conduit for dialogue between residents and artists in order to explore how creativity can amplify voices, find solutions and develop connections. We will do this through ongoing relationship building, supporting network development through events and produce a biennial Combine to Create Learning Symposium. C2C has enhanced and expanded on our mission, objectives and values that speak to FBA's values in all the stories of value outlined in this document.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Findhorn Bay Arts' team and board of Trustees would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to the Combine to Create advisory panel, artists, creative practitioners, and the community groups and cultural organisations who worked together with us through Combine to Create.

A huge thank you to the people of Moray, including participants and volunteers, who actively contributed to and participated in this programme, shaping their own present and future, that of their communities, and the emerging, vibrant and diverse creative and cultural ecosystem of Moray. It is a pleasure to work with you all. Lastly, thank you to Creative Scotland, and the Culture Collective network and team, for believing in, and funding this work through the Culture Collective Fund.

LINKS

For ongoing resources, to find out more or to read blogs about Combine to Create and the Culture Collective Programme, please use the following:

Findhorn Bay Arts

<https://findhornbayarts.com/projects/residencies-commissions/combine-to-create/>

Culture Collective

<https://www.culturecollective.scot/>

