Young People Explore Local Heritage

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Portadown 2000 and Millennium Court Arts Centre (MCAC) were awarded the grant for an oral history project that will explore and record the lives of local people before and during the troubles.

The project, ‘Communities of Interest’ will bring together young and older members of the community, from both sides of the religious divide, to learn about the history and heritage of the area. Visual Thinking Strategy (VTS) is a teaching method that allows different opinions to be shared and explored on the basis that there are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers, only multiple truths. The project will use this method to examine the contested heritage of Portadown and Craigavon during the Troubles, and provide opportunities for the participants to learn about the lives and experiences of those from different religious backgrounds.

Fifty young people aged between 17 and 21 will work with local groups, such as Age Concern Portadown, to develop and manage the project. The young people will be paired with an older person who will tell their stories of life in the area. The young people will interpret these stories using VTS and select a method of visually presenting their interpretation using artwork, photography, text or video. A final exhibition will be held at MCAC to showcase the young people’s work.

Funding for the project was awarded under the Young Roots programme, which aims to involve 13-25 year olds in learning about, conserving and taking an active part in their own and other people’s heritage. The programme supports projects that stem directly from young people’s interests and ideas and encourages them to lead and take part in activities to develop their skills and confidence.

Speaking on behalf of Portadown 2000 and Millennium Court Arts Centre, MCAC Director Megan Johnston, said: “This project utilises an important new methodology to continue our innovative artistic work with local communities on issues found within contested spaces and places. We believe that creativity and creative skills are essential for envisioning a new and shared future while respecting broad notions of what heritage is as well as for whom it speaks for and to”.

HLF Development Manager, Úna Duffy, said: “We are delighted to be involved in this exciting project that will record and conserve the memories and life experiences of local people, and increase opportunities for others to learn about this heritage. At HLF we are always interested in hearing from groups and organisations that are considering undertaking a heritage based project. There is a lot of help and support available to develop your idea and to guide you through the application process, and we would encourage other groups from the area to get in touch.”

MCAC is central to Portadown's town-centre regeneration strategy led by Portadown 2000 and is Craigavon's only dedicated arts facility. Through programming of visual, verbal arts and accompanying education and outreach initiatives the people of Craigavon and beyond access high-quality arts experiences. MCAC, who are principally funded by Craigavon Borough Council and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, has been described as one of Northern Ireland’s premiere art spaces.

Further information

HLF Northern Ireland Development Team on 028 9031 0120.