

ArtsAccess Participates in Elder Youth Gathering's 'Reclaiming Our Native Languages'

March 7, 2008 - *Kitchener, Ontario, Canada* – ArtsAccess will join community members at this year's Elder Youth Gathering on March 15th in Guelph. ArtsAccess is a community arts outreach initiative of the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery (KW|AG) which focuses on building relationships with cultural organizations, schools, libraries and community centres.

The Elder Youth Gathering is an annual public event that helps to educate the larger community about Aboriginal cultures. The gathering creates connections between Aboriginal peoples and the communities in which they reside, and fosters connections among Aboriginal youth and their elders. The theme for this year's Elder Youth Gathering is "Reclaiming Our Native Languages". The event will focus on understanding the importance of language as it relates to culture, relationships, rites of passage, and identity.

ArtsAccess Community Artist Facilitator, Mosa Neshamá McNeilly, will provide four large canvas drawings, each representing an herbal medicine: sage, sweet grass, tobacco and cedar. A gallery of words in various local Aboriginal languages with English translations will accompany the work. Participants can select words that are most meaningful to them, and using the words, images and symbols, will work collaboratively on the canvases using paint and collage. They can add to the gallery of words to share their personal linguistic heritage and create a personal symbolic button made out of the natural medicinal ingredients and deer hide.

"I feel honoured to be invited to facilitate a workshop at the Elder Youth Gathering," explains McNeilly. "The collaborative art projects provide tangible symbols of community-building that is intrinsic to this event and to the work of Anishnabeg Outreach."

"Our experience with ArtsAccess has been fabulous. The projects always create a sense of unity and inclusivity that is reflective of our mission here at Anishnabeg Outreach," says Wendy Stewart, Community Development Officer, Anishnabeg Outreach. "The communal banners, quilts and paintings we've created act as visible signs of our unity and are our heirlooms at future events. Members of the community really feel a sense of pride when they see their individual contribution on a banner displayed at a public venue. It is their imprint in the community, and part of their heritage that is now being passed down for future generations."



The Medicine Wheel Banner project, Dublin Street United Church, Guelph, January 27, 2007. Banner was displayed at the Elder Youth Gathering in February 2007.



Participants engage in Medicine Wheel Banner project, January 27, 2007.



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ART GALLERY

Event Details

Elder Youth Gathering

Saturday, March 15, 2008, 8 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Shelldale Community Centre

20 Shelldale Crescent, Guelph

Registration deadline: March 9th

To register or for more information, contact Wendy Stewart, Anishnabeg Outreach, at 519-763-5292 or at stewart.wendy@gmail.com

Youth from 12-16 must have parental or care-giver consent.

Donations are gratefully accepted in lieu of an admittance fee to the event. Elder Youth Gathering is made possible through funding from the Musagetes Fund at the Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers.

About Anishnabeg Outreach

Anishnabeg Outreach is a non-profit, charitable organization assisting Aboriginal individuals in their search for employment, training and education opportunities. Their mission is to build bridges for Aboriginal peoples in urban communities. Anishnabeg Outreach provides Aboriginal people with access to culturally appropriate services, direction and assistance to overcome their barriers, encourages individual exploration of avenues that will lead to self-sufficiency and success, and promotes a holistic approach to life-long career decision making. For more information, visit <http://www.anishnabegoutreach.org>.

About ArtsAccess

Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery's (KW|AG) participation in ArtsAccess, a three year provincial partnership between KW|AG, the Art Gallery of Ontario, Thunder Bay Art Gallery, and Woodland Cultural Centre, provides an alternative approach to programming that draws from community arts practice, with values congruent to the Gallery's goal of transforming the "institutional box" into a catalyst for community development. Over 6300 people have already participated in initiatives through ArtsAccess, the majority of whom represent new audiences for KW|AG. Current community partners include: Anishnabeg Outreach, The Children's Museum, Downtown Community Centre, Forest Heights Collegiate Institute, Kitchener Public Library, Kitchener Youth Action Council, the Multi-cultural Centre, Open Sesame, St. John's Catholic School, St. Mary's Secondary School, University of Waterloo, and the Working Centre.

About the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery

Through thoughtful and engaging programs, the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery (KW|AG) connects people and ideas through art. The Gallery's exhibits and programs are built on the mission that art is the catalyst for shared experience, dialogue and imagination. The Gallery emphasizes contemporary art, often premiering works by Canadian and international artists. Exhibitions frequently draw upon selections from the 4,000 -work permanent collection to provide a forum for dialogue. KW|AG plays a vital educational role in the community, offering a full spectrum of artistic experience for adults, children and families alike. Established in 1956 and operating within Centre In The Square, KW|AG is the oldest and largest public gallery in Waterloo region: roots in the community, eyes on the world. For more information, contact mail@kwag.on.ca or visit www.kwag.on.ca.

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Connecting people and ideas through art.