

# **Art-Based Placemaking at Renfrew Ravine: Implications for Sustainable Places**

**by  
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# Approval

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## Ethics Statement

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this work, has obtained, for the research described in this work, either:

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or

- b. advance approval of the animal care protocol from the University Animal Care Committee of Simon Fraser University

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## **Abstract**

This research explores the role of placemaking at Still Creek, Vancouver, Canada. Placemaking is an integrative approach to public space management that aims to foster both sense of place and sense of community through a citizen-driven process. At Still Creek, a non-profit organization is engaging their neighbourhood using an interdisciplinary approach of arts and stewardship in collaboration with several community partners. Findings suggest placemaking is occurring at Still Creek through three key activities (e.g. festival, art in place, and environmental stewardship and restoration). Still Creek has become a place of interest, care and advocacy among those involved suggesting sense of place is present along with several community building elements as well. Implications for sustainable places are also explored.

**Keywords:** placemaking; sustainable placemaking; arts; environmental stewardship; Still Creek, Still Moon Arts Society.

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## **Preface**

*“Renfrew Ravine is considered an urban greenway by the City of Vancouver, and while this designation is important for the conservation and enhancement of the ravine and the creek that run through it, the words themselves fail to fully grasp the entirety of what the ravine represents.*

*“Greenway” much like “highway” suggests movement; it suggests a corridor but not a destination. In a myriad of ways this description is correct. Human travel alongside the ravine for recreation, exercise, and on their commutes to work and school. Migratory birds stop within the ravine’s borders to rest and seek shelter and the bubbling brook of Still Creek passes between the banks, on its journey to the Brunette River and eventually to the Pacific Ocean.*

*However, in many other ways the inhabitants are “Not just Passing Through”. The ravine is home to a diverse array of life that has managed to find home there. In more sinister ways, the humans who throw garbage onto the banks or pour chemicals into the storm sewers are ‘not just passing through’ but each leave an indelible stamp on the ravine’s landscape, threatening the life that is at times struggling to take hold or maintain its hold.*

*As Still Creek moves along its course, the water it carries brings dynamism to the ravine; leaving behind a legacy of plant and animal life. Unfortunately, the creek’s other legacies are the toxic chemicals and oils that are washed into it with every rainfall, improperly disposed of household cleaners, and the soap created with the washing of every car.*

*We hope that these materials will introduce the idea that the Renfrew Ravine is not just a greenway but also a destination. It’s a place you can go to, not just pass through. With education and understanding we can begin to realize the importance of these urban oases, the consequences of our actions and viable solutions.”*

**- Not Just Passing Through, Still Moon Arts Society**

# 1 Introduction

This research explores the role of arts-based placemaking in sustainable places. In Vancouver, Canada, Still Moon Arts Society is engaging people to get involved and to care about Renfrew Ravine, a local greenspace in their neighbourhood. Their art and environmental stewardship work is fostering placemaking principles – community building and sense of place - to improve the state of Still Creek. This research will also explore the implications of this case study for sustainability and sustainable places.

The complex issues facing society today require local, place-based solutions that incorporate the needs and desires of the local people. Governments of all levels are acknowledging the interconnectedness and complexity of current issues (e.g. impacts of climate change, growing inequality, and affordable housing among them) require *collective* solutions beyond the traditional top-down prescriptions (Head, 2007, pg. 443). Greater levels of citizen participation is critical for identifying local responses to local problems as people understand the needs and solutions to many of the issues in their community (Head, 2007, pg. 443). “Required instead are place-sensitive nodes of policy intervention, strategies constructed with knowledge of the particular circumstances in communities, and delivered through collaborations crossing functional boundaries and departmental silos,” (Bradford, 2005) By looking at the local, at the places we inhabit, our communities may thrive by involving different individuals, organizations, and disciplines.

Great places are essential for successful, competitive, and resilient communities. Vibrant cities and towns have many destinations and many places within those destinations that appeal to different users (Project for Public Spaces, 2015; Cilliers and Timmermans, 2014, pg. 415). The achievement of ‘great places’ involves many factors including: (1) accessibility and connection, (2) use and activities, (3) comfort and image, and (4) sociability, by attracting people and bringing people back to the place (Project for Public Spaces, 2015). Integrating different functions and users is therefore essential to achieve the elements of a ‘strong place’ (Timmermans et al, 2013 as seen in Cilliers et al, 2015). Placemaking aims to enhance the value and quality of place by inviting citizens to collaborate to enhance those qualities (Project for Public Spaces, 2015).

Placemaking is an integrative approach that is citizen-driven, place-specific and interdisciplinary. Placemaking has people and place at the core of the practice as the active creation and construction of places by people. The objective of placemaking is to transform public space to meaningful places through a user-driven, collaborative creation of sense of place (Silberberg et al, 2013). “Placemaking is thus the process by which people transform the locations they inhabit to the places they live,” (Cilliers et al 2015, pg. 591). When places are vibrant and thriving, people feel a sense of belonging and sense of community that can build a civic identity and culture around those places (Cilliers et al, 2015). By connecting people to each other and the places in their community, it can generate provide distinct social, economic and even ecological benefits.

Literature asserts that the power of placemaking is in the process. High civic engagement and participation are embedded in this approach, prompting some to refer to placemaking as the ‘mutual stewardship of sense of community and sense of place’ (Silberberg et al, 2013). Strong community engagement is foundational to successful, meaningful places. “People must not only feel like they belong, but also that they can play an active part in the creation, management, and continued success of that place” (Project for Public Spaces, 2015). Through this process of engagement, placemaking builds and enhances value, capacity and collaboration in communities that is essential for resilience (Project for Public Spaces, 2015).

Placemaking as a practice is evolving towards a ‘sustainable’ idea of place. Sustainability has three core pillars - social, economic, and environmental aspects – that should be considered in equal balance (Roseland, 2011). Placemaking has social goals of community building at the core of the process and research has also examined the role that place can play on catalyzing local economic development (see for example Dang, 2015c; Markusen & Gadwa, 2010). The final pillar, the environment, is receiving renewed attention in placemaking. Broadly speaking, placemaking has become more ecologically responsive (Robertson, 2015; Project for Public Places, 2011; Cilliers et al, 2015). Research finds placemaking projects are now, “[encouraging] positive social and ecological outcomes including greater ecoliteracy and pro-environmental practices in homes,” a sort of ‘greening’ of placemaking’ projects (Robertson, 2015). This new development in placemaking theory prides itself on being holistic, ecologically-responsive, and one that works with natural ecosystems with affinities to green planning

approaches (Project for Public Spaces, 2011; Cilliers et al, 2015). When working effectively, a sustainable place generates economic value, that they connect peoples, but also improves, enhances or restores ecological systems. Together, this represents a trend towards sustainable places.

## **1.1 Research Gaps**

There is a growing tradition of placemaking initiatives in Canadian cities and towns. Citizens are catalyzing public space in many ways to make their neighbourhood livelier, more livable, and social and connecting people to communities through the process. Despite this, there are relatively few Canadian examples to draw from in the literature and limited number that explore connections between placemaking and sustainability (Robertson, 2015; Project for Public Places, 2011; Cilliers et al, 2015). This research answers the call for more research on placemaking and sharing lessons to the larger network of practitioners, organizations, and citizen interested in the practice (Silberberg et al, 2013). In Vancouver, Still Moon Arts Society, a non-profit organization, is using an interdisciplinary approach to connect people to Still Creek. In the context of achieving sustainable placemaking, Still Moon Arts Society's unique approach to community engagement at Still Creek is worthy of investigation.

## **1.2 Research Objectives**

This project seeks to explore and understand placemaking at Still Creek in the Renfrew-Collingwood neighbourhood of Vancouver, British Columbia. Specifically, I will examine the intersection of art-place-ecology at Still Creek through the activities organized by Still Moon Arts Society, a longstanding actor engaged at the creek. Through the intersection of art-ecology-place, I will explore the impacts of arts activities (e.g. art along the stream, ecological art, festivals and performances) as well as environmental stewardship and restoration activities organized by Still Moon Arts. Recognizing the increasing emphasis on sustainability, this case study will also provide insight on potential contributions to the recent trend towards a sustainable placemaking practice (Project for Public spaces, 2016; Robertson, 2015).

This project seeks to answer the following research questions:

- 1) Is placemaking occurring at Still Creek in the Renfrew-Collingwood neighbourhood?
- 2) How has Still Moon Arts contributed to engagement at this site?
- 3) Are there lessons about this experience that can be shared especially for sustainable places?

This paper attempts to develop responses to these questions through interviews with those involved at Still Creek, and as a passive participant/observer in the activities at the ravine. Additionally, documentation from local planning agencies, actors, and media will be reviewed to confirm interview findings. The methodology for the research is outlined in detailed in Chapter 2.

This document is broken down into six chapters. **Chapter 1** reviews literature on place and placemaking, and the potential benefits identified by arts-based placemaking in particular. **Chapter 2** outlines the methodology of the research project including case study selection, data collection and analysis, and limitations to the research. **Chapter 3** establishes the context for the case study and introduces Still Moon Arts Society, the focus of this project, while **Chapter 4** discusses the results of the research. Lastly, **Chapter 5** discusses the results in relation to the literature and provides concluding insights.

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1.1 The Origins of the Modern Placemaking Movement

'Place' is an old fascination. A range of social science and environmental fields have studied the contribution of 'place' and 'sense of place' in the context of community development and planning. This has contributed to many perspectives, definitions, and meanings of 'place'. Broadly speaking, place is a space filled with meaning and significance (Cilliers and Timmermans, 2014, pg. 413). Early theorists focused on place as the local environment; the physical/territorial place, its characteristics and distinctiveness (Dempsey, Burton & Smith, 2014, pg. 6). However, as concepts of place developed, it was recognized that the meaning of a place also involved how people felt and were attached to a place, described as a 'sense of place'. Sense of place acknowledges meaning to places attributed by individuals and group, as well as spiritual and cultural identities (Dempsey, Burton & Smith, 2014, pg. 6).

Place is now commonly understood as the physical setting and social constructs such as feelings and attachments to that place. Place also embodies the meanings and values constructed by an individual's experience in place which that socially constructed, known as sense of place (Manzo, 2003). For example, a place can be perceived by a group of people or residents (e.g. a neighbourhood), as a spiritual place that evolves from feelings, attachments, identities associated with it (e.g. a person's home, a sacred burial ground), and from the social, political, and cultural factors of the individual perceiving it, known as the politics of place (Dempsey, Burton & Smith, 2014, pg. 6). For example, gender, age, sex, race can shape a person's experience in New York City contrasted to the broader experience of, say, Indigenous people in North American cities (Manzo, 2003, pg. 56). Sense of place is not static notion. Relationships to place are also informed by the setting, by the experience in that place over time, and memories associated with it, which can and often change (Williams, 2008, pg. 14).

Sense of place is an important concept in community planning and development. It is valuable to understand the use, meaning, and comfort people attach to public spaces in communities to help those spaces meet individual and group needs, create positive experiences in place, and social connections to others. These examples are just

some of the far-reaching social, economic, and environment implications that sense of place and attachments to place can offer (Project for Public Spaces, 2009). And placemaking hopes to foster that sense of place while also bringing people together to collaborate.

Several theorists have contributed to placemaking through their reflections on the use and value of public space in their cities. For example, well-known urbanist, Jane Jacobs, advocated against top-down processes she saw transforming New York City during urban renewal (see for example *The Life and Death of American Cities*). She believed that residents should be involved in the decision-making that impacts their neighbourhood and city, which has influenced the participatory, user-driven nature of placemaking (Silberberg et al, 2013, 2012). Whyte also contributed by documenting how people experienced public urban spaces (Silberberg et al, 2013). These thinkers emphasized the participation and experience of local residents as vital aspects of community life (Silberberg et al, 2013, 2012; Project for Public Spaces, 2015). By putting citizens and users at the centre of their thinking, Jacobs' and Whyte's lessons on public space are still relevant today. This citizen-centred approach has influenced the notion of citizenship in community planning.

Civic participation in decision-making is now considered a best practice, if not an expectation. Citizens are demanding a greater role in decision-making at all levels of government (Head, 2007, pg. 443). Top-down approaches that dominated early decades of community planning appear to lack accountability and have been tempered in favour of greater participation of ordinary citizens to solve problems (Head, 2007, pg. 443). "This emphasis on process and participation is now widely accept as a minimal requirement of effective and ethical practice in municipal planning and placemaking," (Finn, 2014, pg. 387). This trend towards participatory placemaking is complemented, if not paralleled, by the increase in participatory planning. Beyond this desire to participate in the processes that affect them, Harvey believes this participation is a fundamental right to take part:

"The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most

precious yet most neglected of our human rights.” (Harvey as seen in Silberberg et al, 2013)

People, and the places they inhabit, stand to benefit when the community is engaged. Research emphasizes the benefits of a collaborative approach to improve the challenging physical and social conditions for urban dwellers worldwide, and improving those involved in the process of collaboration (Friedmann, 2010, pg. 162). The emphasis on collaboration in placemaking is captured by urbanists like Montgomery, who believes, “the city is ultimately a shared project...a place where we can fashion a common good that we simply cannot build alone,” (Montgomery, 2013). Placemaking practice advocates for collaborative, citizen-driven projects to improve public spaces and the people in the process. Many activities and initiatives can fall under the umbrella of placemaking (e.g public square redesign, greenspace restoration, community mural) to achieve multiple objectives across disciplines (e.g. social isolation, connection to nature, public dialogue). As a result, placemaking is posited as an integrative way to address complex problems and build community resiliency (Project for Public Spaces, 2015).

There is some debate regarding who can be a ‘placemaker’ in the literature. Some research has suggested that planners take part in placemaking as city-builders and managers of public space (Cilliers et al, 2015). However, where planners and designers are ‘constructing’ places by building plazas, parks and using the term ‘placemaking’ without fully engaging the residents and users of those spaces, the social value of placemaking may not be realized (Project for Public Spaces, 2015). Top-down projects branded as placemaking warrant caution so that the integrity and high social value of civic engagement of placemaking is not lost (Project for Public Spaces, 2015). Perhaps planners can initiate placemaking processes in their role as managers of public space but people make a place meaningful, vibrant and interesting.

### **2.1.2 Arts-based Placemaking**

Arts-based placemaking is a distinct iteration of this growing practice. Arts-based placemaking uses art<sup>1</sup> and creative projects to bring people together in a particular place such as mural painting projects and song, dance, theatre in public space (Lewis, 2013, pg. 8). It can transform people’s perceptions of place by enlivening and re-imagining

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<sup>1</sup> In this research, arts refer to all forms of arts and cultural activities whether drawing, painting, sculpture to performance art such as song, dance, theatre and creative projects and installations.

how places are used and experienced (Lewis, 2013, pg. 8). For example, an artistic activation of an alleyway can enable people to feel more welcoming and accessible (Lewis, 2013, pg. 10). This style of placemaking recognizes the arts as an integrated approach to community development. It has also been celebrated for the ability to work across disciplines like environmental education, health, urban revitalization, and beyond (Project for Public Spaces, 2015). Arts-based placemaking is increasingly recognized for engaging people; however, it is underutilized as a method of building community and civic participation (Lewis, 2013, pg. 9). There are distinct social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits of the placemaking practice. The potential impacts of placemaking and the arts-based approach will be explored below.

## **2.2 Impacts of Placemaking**

Placemaking has the capacity to impact social, health and well-being, economic, and even environmental aspects of community. In the following section, I synthesize research on the impacts of placemaking, arts-based placemaking as well as the broader literature regarding sense of place and connections to place.

### **2.2.1 Placemaking: Building community through meaningful engagement**

Civic participation and engagement is fundamental to placemaking practice. The value of arts-based placemaking is that art is said to be a strong community engagement tool (Brown et al, 2011; Lowe, 2000; Flinn & McPherson, 2007; Lewis, 2013). Some see civic participation in art along a spectrum: from the audience watching a final product (spectating), the audience contributing towards an artistic experience (co-creating), to projects where the community is directly involved in the artistic experience (audience-as-artist) (Brown et al, 2011, pg. 15-17). Arts-based placemaking endeavors to create a highly engaged process and may vary along this engagement spectrum when the objective is to create art together<sup>2</sup>.

While levels of engagement in these creative endeavors can vary, it is generally understood that the more engaged the community, the greater degree of positive impacts. Civic engagement can be encouraged through bringing ordinary citizens into

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<sup>2</sup> This is also referred to in the literature of community-based art or participatory art.

the design, creation, and execution of creative projects in place through a participatory and volunteer-driven process (Lewis, 2013, pg. 7). When people are engaged in the process, there is greater likelihood they will feel pride and accomplishment in the product and a sense of belonging through working with others that can build a sense of community (Lowe, 2000; Dang, 2005, Flinn & McPherson, 2007; Reinsborough, 2008; Newman et al, 2004). Further, these collaborative creative projects can build community capacity through learning and skill development (Flinn & McPherson, 2007; Lowe, 2000; Newman et al, 2004). This involvement can be affecting; participating in community activities can also instill a civic culture among participants. People who participated in arts projects were more likely to also participate in civic activities outside the arts (Lewis, 2013, pg. 9). As a result, art can be a powerful tool for getting people involved in their community.

Arts-based placemaking can also foster community identity through shared work and creating traditions. When people participate in collaborative arts projects, social bonds are ignited and a sense of collective identity can develop when residents gather for the shared goal of art-making (Lowe, 2000; Dang et al, 2005a, pg. 2). There is also a symbolic function of art where community celebrations can create common memories between participants that may even become rituals and traditions (Dang et al, 2005c, pg. 3; Carruthers, 2006). Traditions and rituals can enrich people's lives and provide something to look forward to. These aspects link to both concepts of individual identity and group identity.

Arts-based placemaking can also play a role in improving social cohesion by inviting and connecting different groups of people. Art that encourages all people to participate in the process can facilitate creative expression and build skills along the way. By encouraging involvement of people from differing abilities, age, languages, and backgrounds, creative projects may be more accessible by working on activities despite different language or ability (Lewis, 2013, pg. 12; Newman et al, 2004). Art has also been celebrated for creating safe spaces to participate for marginalized groups and giving people a place to have a voice (Dang, 2005; Flinn & McPherson, 2007). The critical aspect is often having working artist guide the community members towards a creative goal; like a large mosaic in a park comprised of tiles made by individuals. These factors can contribute to feelings of belonging and allow an entry point into community for those who would not participate as readily in formal planning processes, for example

(Dang, 2005). However, community-based art must recognize that people who do not identify as artists may not feel comfortable contributing or feel they possess the necessary artistic skills (Reinsborough, 2008). Practitioners can create a welcoming invitation to participate and building creative skills in the process to overcome this barrier.

Arts-based placemaking can help bridge difference in community and foster understanding between different groups of people. When different sections of society are connected, there may be an opportunity for people to learn about one another that may build understanding of differing perspectives and ideas. Exposure to new ideas, bridging difference, and initiating dialogue are important aspects community art encourages (Lowe, 2000; Hicks & King, 2007; Dang et al, 2005b). Art-based projects can help to expose people to new ideas, perspectives and build understanding among people participating (Reinsborough, 2008, pg. 44; Lowe, 2000). “By being exposed to different interpretations and varied meanings, neighborhood (sic) residents became more aware of possibilities outside of their frame reference. They were able to imagine and consider perspectives other than their own,” (Lowe, 2000, pg. 375). These aspects are important ingredients to social cohesion of a community.

Through civic engagement and participation, arts-based placemaking can also contribute to social connections that are vital for community agency and mobilization. Community arts processes are often collaborations that not only connect individuals, but also like-minded organizations and networks (Lewis, 2013; Dang et al, 2005b). Indeed, social bonds among individuals and organizations, often described as ‘social capital’, are an important factor in community mobilization. Strong communities use social capital effectively to meet individual needs and frame collective community desires. Through these networks, people obtain assistance, ask for favours, lend, work, socialize, and mobilize to action. Research shows that the collaboration fostered through placemaking projects have contributed to the formation of social capital (Hou & Rios, 2003; Semenza, 2006). This is also the case with arts projects (Flinn & McPherson, 2007; Lewis, 2013). These findings suggest arts-based placemaking can increase social capital by connecting people and organizations.

Arts-based placemaking can also spark community change. When people feel they belong and contribute by working alongside their neighbours, the belief that they

can make change in their community, known as collective efficacy, may can fostered (Lewis, 2013, pg. 9). Studies suggest that arts-based placemaking supports collective efficacy by creating new opportunities to come together, to share experiences, and to discuss issues of mutual importance in a community (Lowe, 2000; Flinn & McPherson, 2007; Dang et al, 2005b). This could translate into collective action should the group mobilize around a common interest (Flinn & McPherson, 2007, pg. 13).

Greater engagement in local issues does not imply universal agreement among those involved. Differing perspectives and disagreement is a natural part of the community building process and often results when different sense of place are present (Perkins, 2002; Williams, 2007, pg. 11). But communities with stronger social ties have a better chance at self-actualizing towards a common goal even when there is dispute or deliberation, as there is greater potential that a resolution can be negotiated between stakeholders who are familiar with each other, for example (Williams, 2007). People who have worked together may be more open to new and different ideas, as noted above, and listening with an open mind may be an important community resource during conflict that can be facilitated by arts-based placemaking.

### **2.2.2 Placemaking: Health and Wellness**

Placemaking also has potential to improve health and wellness outcomes by encouraging self-expression and bringing people together. Creative expression contributes to identity and concepts of the self that can improve a sense of well-being for a person. As a practice that fosters creative expression, art can influence self-awareness, self-esteem, and self-expression that are essential to well-being and mental health (Lowe, 2000; Flinn & McPherson, 2007). Further, community art contributes to wellbeing by reducing social isolation and depression through socializing, making friends, increasing happiness for those who are involved (Lewis, 2013, pg. 9; Newman et al, 2004). Recognizing these positive health benefits, the public health sector increasingly undertake community art projects in public health programming (Lewis, 2013, pg. 9; Newman et al, 2004). In this way, arts-based placemaking has been celebrated as an integrated planning tool due to its contributions to various social outcomes including health and wellness, community participation and engagement (Project to Public Spaces, 2015).

### **2.2.3 Placemaking: Economic development**

Placemaking can also play a role in revitalizing local economies. Place distinctiveness and character is an important aspect of local and regional economic development and a factor for economic vitality (Markey et. al., 2015; Bradford, 2005; The Project for Public Spaces, 2011b). The Project for Public Spaces (2011b) argues that 'place capital' – the shared wealth of the public realm – can organize and mobilizing other kinds of capital (e.g. human, social, infrastructure and natural capital) in the pursuit of sustainable economic development. In this model, place capital uses key public spaces to generate wealth and attract investment (2011b). Re-invigorating and investing in place can improve and build local economic development. One of the ways this can be done is through a focus on arts and cultural activities to spur growth and investment.

Research indicates that arts and cultural activities can play a role in a place-centered economy. Research indicates that the economic impact of arts and culture activities in cities is often overlooked and under-recognized (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010, pg. 5). Local festivals were found to increase local spending, for example, and creative districts and artist enclaves spurring economic development (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010; Stern & Seifert, 2007). There is also a connection between place, economy growth and creative activities. Arts and cultural activities can cultivate new places through the use of under-used and abandoned buildings which can attract other creative industries for future employment (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010, pg.7). It is important to note that economic benefits spurred by arts and culture activities may not be shared equally. Creative districts may unintentionally catalyze gentrification by increasing property value in poorer and underserved neighbourhoods. This can effectively drive out artists and lower income populations from the area.

### **2.2.4 Placemaking: Connecting to and Improving the Natural Environment**

Placemaking may also play a role in improving the behaviours towards the natural environment. By fostering emotional ties to place, people are encouraged to care for the environment<sup>3</sup> (Ardoin, 2006; Brehm, 2013) and possess more environmentally-

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<sup>3</sup> To clarify, Brehm et. al. (2013), place meaning to be more significant in place attachment and they also found environmental concern that was not associated with place attachment.

friendly behaviours and attitudes (Vaske & Kobrin, 2001; Ardoin, 2006; Vorkinn & Reise, 2001). For example, greater place attachment among youth work program employees has been associated with a trend towards environmentally responsible behaviours (Vaske & Kobrin, 2001). This is supported by other research that finds reconnecting humans with their landscape can yield positive impacts for the environment by fostering a sense of place (Ardoin, 2006, pg. 120). For example, Shandas (2008) observes that when people reconnect with the natural environment through restoration activities, their sense of place is also restored (pg. 416).

By developing a sense of place and fostering community learning, arts-based placemaking can contribute to environmental objectives. Art has long played a role in peaking interest and educating about the natural world from the painters like the Group of Seven who shared remote landscapes with the broader public, for example. As previously mentioned, arts-based placemaking has been heralded for working across disciplines including environmental education (Project for Public Spaces, 2015; Carruthers, 2006; Reinsborough, 2009; Hicks & King, 2007). Some artistic practices have the express purposes of raising awareness about local environmental issues like pollution, restoration, climate change and these projects tend to be tied to a sense of place (Carruthers, 2006; Hicks & King, 2007). Other forms of art, like celebrations and rituals can play an important role in environmental education and potential solutions by instilling hope and positivity on the issue of focus and contribute to community healing (Carruthers, 2006; Dang et al, 2005d; Hicks & King, 2007).

“The value of the arts for helping us remember that there is not only fear and sorrow and loss in a time of crisis – there is also a huge need for hope and beauty and celebration. We need to take heart in order to stay engaged...this heartfelt and willing engagement could best be achieved through the arts.” (Carruthers, 2006)

In this way, art may be able to reframe environmental issues by finding a way to celebrate and instill hope. In celebrating nature and the environment, the value and attachments towards the environment can change, and potentially, people’s behaviours towards it.

Art can also connect people to the environment through storytelling. Stories are an important aspect of arts and cultural activities in various mediums including photography, painting, and performance art like theatre and music. Creative projects can

connect people to the past histories, narrative, stories and ecology of a place as well as the people that were connected to it (Cilliers et al, 2014; Sandercock, 2012; Dang et al, 2005c). The lifespan of art, and the stories attached to it, often extends beyond residents during a specific period to future generations of a place (Dang et al, 2005c, pg. 3). In this way, storytelling connects people to past and present sense of place, and can bring stories to life including those about ecology, connections to the land, and Indigenous perspectives. For example, in the creation of a storytelling parade at Black Creek, lesser known narratives about the creek were discovered that extended beyond the common narratives told of nature and ecology. These included indigenous perspectives, youth ownership and multiple meanings of place that were expressed at the parade through art forms such as poems and music (Reinsborough, 2009).

Now that the literature has been reviewed, I will outline the methodology of the research process.

## 3 Methodology

### 3.1.1 Overview of Research Methodology

This section will review how the methodology was designed to answer the primary research questions including description of the primary and secondary research, data collection and analysis, as well as limitations to the research.

This research project uses a case study approach to investigate the research questions. A case study is deemed appropriate given the living, dynamic nature of the activities at Still Creek and due to the fact that no control of behavioural actions is required for the study (Yin, 2009, pg. 18). When the boundaries of the context and item of study are difficult to distinguish, the context is used to defining the case study (Yin, 2009, pg. 18). The case study will be explanatory in nature to illustrate the unique and distinctive quality about what is occurring at Still Creek, relying on community context and past research to frame the case. While I recognize the value of comparative cases, a single case was chosen given the limited time for completion of my degree requirements.

This particular case was selected for a number of reasons. Still Moon Arts arts-based model evolved from and builds on existing place-based art initiatives in the Renfrew-Collingwood Neighbourhood like the Art Pow Wow initiative. Investigating Still Moon's particular role to placemaking at Still Creek will extend existing research in the neighbourhood. Second, the mandate of Still Moon Arts is a unique combination of art-place-ecology with over a decade of stewardship and art activities in the neighbourhood. This longstanding work is worthy of investigation. Further, the partnership between Still Moon and Simon Fraser University Centre for Sustainable Development provides opportunity for research that is relevant to both students and the organization as well. Prior to initiating this project, I assisted with research related to the application of ecosystem-based management for a course for my graduate work. The research was a natural extension of that project due to my familiarity with their work, the existing partnership, and the proximity and access to the site for the researcher.

## **3.2 Data Collection**

To construct the case study, I collected qualitative data using a mixed methodology. Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews with key respondents, secondary research and participant observation at Still Moon Arts events.

### **3.2.1 Interview with Key Respondents**

Interviews are the primary source of data to understand the context and details of SMAS activities around Still Creek. Twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted. A table of participants has been included in the Appendix without attribution as well as a list of interview questions. The project used a purposive sampling method as the population is a known sample (Yin, 2009). In our case, the data-rich respondents were people involved with the Still Moon Arts Society Board of Directors, the Moon Festival volunteers, collaborating artists, City of Vancouver planners as well as participants in arts activities and collaborating organizations.

With this type of sample, a researcher can draw on their knowledge of the field to identify participants who can answer the research questions, or seek out participants with particular or contrasting experiences and use 'the snowball method', referrals from participants, to other identify an appropriate sample (Marshall, 1996). Still Moon provided several iterations of potential respondents for inclusion in the study. As I conducted secondary analysis and heard about or saw more potential respondents, I added them to the list. Other participants have publically contact information like those from planning agencies. The challenge of purposeful sampling is knowing when the data collection is complete (Marshall, 1996). Due to project time restraints and the inability for some potential respondents to participate, the data collection ended after the twelve interviews. Annex 1 shows the interviews and their affiliation.

### **3.2.2 Interview Protocol**

The interviews were conducted in person in British Columbia, or by telephone, depending on the locations and preferences of the participants. Potential participants were contacted by email, telephone, or in person and asked to participate in the study, explaining how they were identified. Following the guidelines and protocol established in

the Office of Research Ethics, I ensured the project invitation included the necessary statements about the study participant rights' and confidentiality. This protocol assures the rights of the participants are protected in the research process. All interviews were recorded using an electronic recorder and notes were taken during the interview. Once an interview was transcribed, I sent the document back to the participant for edits or additional clarifications. This process gives the participant control over the interview as well as the opportunity to elaborate on specific areas or answer questions. Once this process was complete, the transcript was stored for data analysis.

### **3.2.3 Participant & Site Observations**

Informal site observations and participant observations were included in the research process. These informal visits allowed me to get a better understanding of the participatory nature of Still Moon activities and to situate myself in the location where they are working. It was necessary to visit Renfrew Ravine on several occasions to observe the use site and familiarize myself with the neighbourhood. This gave a practical sense of how the space is used at different times of day and in various seasons. I also spent time at Renfrew Ravine Park, Renfrew Park and at Still Creek near the Grandview highway.

In 2014, I attended, observed and participated in various Still Moon events. I attended the Still Creek walking tour and volunteered at a lantern-making workshop in preparation for the Moon Festival. I also volunteered at the Still Moon Arts table at the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Renfrew Ravine Moon Festival. I reflected on the experience personally and noted comments from participants there. To formalize the process, I made journal entries after these experiences to capture my observations. This following table shows the way I embedded myself in the research process:

**Table 1 Participant Observations at Still Creek**

<b>When</b>	<b>What</b>	<b>Involvement</b>
2014-2015	Informal Visits	Visiting Renfrew ravine to observe how people use and move along the site in different seasons and time of day. Visited Still Creek to see the salmon run behind Canadian Tire near Lougheed Highway.
2014-2015	Meetings with SMAS staff	Discussion of priorities and needs, project update.
Dec – April 2015	Collected and organized data for the Ecosystem Based Managed project led by SMAS with the help of Da Silva Foundation.	Working on the EBM project created by Still Moon
September 2014	Volunteered at the 12 <sup>th</sup> Annual Renfrew Ravine Moon Festival.	Participant observations and discussion at main Still Moon event. and assisted visitors with an art activity. I observed the entire festival for the full day from the Harvest Fair, the parade, and lantern walk of the ravine.
September 2014	Volunteered at pre-Moon Festival lantern-making workshop with Yoko Tomita	Participant observations and discussion at pre-festival event.
May 2014	Attended walking tour “Discovering Still Creek with Carmen Rosen, Still Moon and Mark Sloat, City of Burnaby.	Participant in Still Moon collaborative activity.
September 2013	Watershed Connection event on Still Creek led by Evergreen	Participant observations of collaborating organization and awareness of environmental issues affecting Still Creek.

### 3.2.4 Ethics Approval

This project was subject to the terms of the Office of the Research Ethics (ORE) at Simon Fraser University. The project received ORE approval on March 25, 2015 with a renewal for the ongoing research granted on March 29, 2016.

## **3.3 Data Analysis**

### **3.3.1 Framework Selection**

The case study will be analyzed against the framework placemaking and the particular contributions of arts-based placemaking in particular. The framework established in the literature review – the intersection art, place and ecology - will be used to analyze data gathered from the interviews and document analysis in the case study. This framework will assist in explaining what relationships may be present in the Still Moon case from placemaking theory and experience (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

### **3.3.2 Analysis of Qualitative Data**

Qualitative analysis was done on multiple sources. I was guided by principles of the inductive approach. Raw data was coded openly to allow themes to emerge and to develop a theory based on the categories identified (Bazeley, 2013). The data analysis followed the following steps. First, I coded the transcripts openly to identify the key themes. Repetitions, patterns, as well as outlying responses were noted as I went through the interviews (Bazeley, 2013, pg.167). The core themes emerged from a prolonged analysis of the material but also related to my experience, observations, and cumulative knowledge of the context at Renfrew Ravine. Once top level themes were identified, responses were sorted under these categories to find sub-categories, and further outliers and anomalies. From these themes, I developed a theory of the case study. The theory was tested against the literature to arts-based placemaking and connections to place to better understand the intersections between seemingly disparate disciplines of art, engagement, and ecology. Document review occurred concurrent to the analysis of interviews to validate and triangulate key themes and concepts identified (Yin, 2009).

## **3.4 Limitations**

Research bias is a challenge in qualitative research. In every qualitative investigation, there is a risk that the researcher brings a bias to the phenomena they are investigating. However, there are research methods such as triangulation help to ensure validity of research results and mitigate research bias. I endeavored to conduct the

project from an objective standpoint and question my own assumptions throughout the research process. I also validated findings of key informants through another source of information, document, to ensure that the findings. While these methods help ensure validity and reliability of data from open coding process, thematic coding is still a subjective exercise. The researcher uses their best judgement to categorize phenomena to develop a theory. There is limitation to the qualitative methods as a result of research bias.

A limited number of interviews inform this project. Obtaining participation in the project posed a challenge. Several potential respondents were too busy, had to reschedule (n=5) or did not respond (n=2). There was a number of research participants involved with Still Moon (n=4) but also collaborating neighbourhood actors (n=6) and external partners (n=2). Considering the context involves a small volunteer-based community organization, the pool of key informants is also small. Steps were taken to invite as many external stakeholders as possible though the majority of invitees who did not respond to the research invitation were from potentially insightful groups like those who led a park master planning process in the community. The lack of response is a limitation of the research.

Secondly, the research design had shortcomings. Initially, I was concerned that the project design did not have an instrument to collect feedback from the participants in Still Moon MAS activities, the neighbourhood residents and users of Renfrew Ravine. I recognize that a survey for participants on Still Moon would be useful to get their perspectives and would have benefitted the project greatly. Time and resources did not allow for a second instrument to be created, employed, and analyzed. Attempts were made to obtain informal participant views through participant observations was an alternative approach to data collection from this group.

Lastly, the scope of the project was a challenge at times. This project straddles several disciplines; planning and community development, community arts, and environmental education among them. I had a tendency to stretch the scope of the research to an unmanageable size due to my interest in seemingly everything. Maintaining an adequate scope was a challenge of the project.

## 4 **Still Moon Arts Society at Still Creek**

### 4.1.1 **About the Organization**

The Still Moon Arts Society, also known as Still Moon, is a community arts and stewardship organization. Founded in 2004 by community members along with artistic director, Carmen Rosen, it has a mission to, “inspire vibrant and connected communities by creating art and nurturing a passion for nature,” (Still Moon Arts Society, 2016a). The group envisions a “Still Creek neighbourhood where people live as part of a health ecosystem and participate in a community where arts thrive,” (Still Moon Arts Society, 2016c). Through programming, it seeks to achieve four primary goals in the Renfrew-Collingwood neighbourhood:

- Develop, engage and promote the creation of art from a diversity of disciplines
- Promote and engage in activities that educate, raise environmental awareness, and enhance and restore sustainable natural environments
- Promote community engagement and participation in environmental and artistic projects
- Promote and engage in activities that link arts, community, and environment.  
(Still Moon Arts Society, 2016a)

As a small non-profit, community partnerships and collaborations are fundamental parts of their work in community. Many of their project involve a network of other organizations including local schools, local community organizations like Renfrew Park Community Association, Chinese Seniors Society, Collingwood Neighbourhood House to name a few. Partnerships are highlighted in table 2. The relationships with Still Moon vary in strength, time, and formality with some managed through funding agreements (e.g. City of Vancouver, Neighbourhood Grants Program) and other relationships through informal support and updates (e.g. Evergreen Uncover your Creeks Program).

**Table 2 Still Moon Partners and Funders**

<b>Government</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>Schools</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Artists &amp; Performers</b>
Heritage Canada Government of Canada: <i>Canada Summer Jobs</i> Department of Fisheries and Oceans Province of BC: Direct Access Program (via Renfrew Park Community Association)	Collingwood Neighbourhood House Renfrew Park Community Association EKA Collective Renfrew Policing Centre Montagnard Vietnamese Society Tai Chi Group Renfrew Seniors Society Chinese Seniors Society Renfrew Collingwood Aboriginal Youth Canoe Club (CREW) Renfrew-Collingwood Food Security Institute Streams of Dreams	Nootka Elementary School Renfrew Elementary  Windemere Secondary School Leadership Program Vancouver Technical Secondary School Vancouver Christian School  Emily Carr Art Institute Simon Fraser University British Columbia Institute of Technology University of British Columbia	Da Silva Foundation Evergreen BC Arts Council Windemere Bike Society Red Sara Shift Delivery TD Friends of the Environment TEDX East Van Bruce McDonald, Historian and Author Brian Campbell, Beekeeper	Jennifer Bain January Wolodarsky Jennifer Norquist Yoko Tomita Suzo Hickey Isabelle Kirouac Sharon Kallis Crystal Kacheech Jolene Andrew ...and many other creative collaborators.

\*Many of the government partners have been funders of SMAS work.

Note: This table was constructed on the best available information to show the types of partnerships used by SMAS. Some partnering organizations may have inadvertently left out.

#### 4.1.2 Key Projects

Still Moon embarks on a variety of projects to achieve their goals of community engagement, environmental education and stewardship and creative expression. Their signature community event, the Renfrew Ravine Still Moon Festival, takes place around the full moon in September every year for 15 years running (Still Moon Arts Society, 2016a). The Moon Festival includes a harvest fair and performances, a parade as well as a lantern festival in the local parks. They also host annual events like the Crow Bike Ride, a bike ride that follows the crow from Vancouver to their nesting spot in Burnaby, a Still Creek walking tour in collaboration with the City of Burnaby and historian Bruce McDonald as well as a variety of art performances, trainings and workshops. Other long-standing and ongoing events are the stewardship gatherings at Renfrew Ravine which

may include activities such as removal of invasive species, planting pollinator gardens, testing water and monitoring water quality, and removing garbage from the ravine.

Still Moon also engages in other collaborative projects to achieve their goals. In addition to annual events already mentioned, they have executed a number of other projects focused on Still Creek. This includes the street mural project, a story collection project, and a restoration project, each using a different techniques and strategies to engage the community and connect them to the Still Creek in their neighbourhood.

### 4.1.3 The Renfrew Ravine Still Moon Festival

The Renfrew Ravine Still Moon Festival, initially known as the Slocan Park Festival, has evolved into an annual community celebration held around the harvest time in late September. It is the largest and most well-attended event hosted by Still Moon Arts Society, and one of the largest festivals in the community. The Still Moon Festival is first and foremost a celebration, bringing together a diverse set of arts and cultural performances, including dancers, musicians, stilt walkers, lantern-makers, and also gardeners to celebrate the harvest season. The time of year was chosen for the relationship to harvest inspired by the Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival that celebrates the harvest during the full moon with lanterns, performances, and food.



**Figure 1** Participants at the Renfrew Ravine Still Moon Festival

The Moon Festival has three main components. First, people come together at the Harvest Fair hosted at Slocan Park. At the main stage, performances from local arts and cultural groups entertain the crowds while food is sold out of the fieldhouse. Moon cakes are a common food sold as a sweet associated with the Mid-Autumn Festival. In the past

there have been drumming groups, dance acts, musicians, and other performers like stilt walkers in the crowds who mill through the crowd, encircled by the booths of organizations who comes with displays, activities for kids like face painting. The harvest fair also hosts a competition on the best vegetables from local gardeners, which are also on display. Over the course of the afternoon, children, families, and neighbours fill the park.



**Figure 2 Following the Still Moon Lantern to the Lantern Display**

The second element of the Moon Festival is the parade to Renfrew Park for the lantern display. At dusk, the crowd gathers on the field by the large Moon lantern. A band strikes up and the Moon lantern begins to bob and sway the parade out of the park, across the road to Renfrew Ravine Park where the ravine trail begins. Everyone is encouraged to bring lanterns and there are many lantern-making workshops prior to the festival, which are glowing in the evenings dusk. As the parade winds its way up the ravine trail, the parade passes the labyrinth, often featuring a performance. Several backyards the parade passes are decorated and lit up for the occasion. The procession moves along the ravine path and eventually onto nearby streets to cross into Renfrew Park.

The last component of the festival is the lantern display and grand finale performances in Renfrew Park. The sun has set when the parade arrives at Renfrew Park, you can see the glow of hundreds of lights within the trees of the park and along its pathways. The crowd floats down together to wooded pathways along the open but channelized bed of Still Creek. There may be life-sized coyote lanterns, salmon lanterns hung across the water, or four foot jelly fish lanterns hung in the trees. As the crowd enjoys the display twinkling among the trees and along the stream, there is more music and performances. A fireworks display signals the end of the festival for the year as night sets in. The

festival takes several months of work to by executing by a large network of volunteers and community groups. It is a collaborative community event that has seen growing success with attendance estimated as high at 5-6,000 in recent years.



**Figure 3 The lantern display at Renfrew Community Park**

#### **4.1.4 Governance**

As a non-profit organization, Still Moon is led by a Board of Directors made up of volunteers from the neighbourhood. The Board of Directors sets the strategic directions and activities for the organization, consists of five core members and five at large members, and is supported by seven committees (e.g. Sponsorship and Fundraising, Governance and Policy, Programming and Stewardship, Youth Committee) (Still Moon Arts Society, 2016c). All committees are chaired by Board Members in addition to other community volunteers. Youth from the neighbourhood are integral part of the governance with two youth occupying executive positions on the Board and a distinct youth engagement component to their work (Still Moon Arts Society, 2016c). Created by demand from youth engaged at Renfrew Ravine, the Youth Committee coordinates workshops and other activities as well as distinct responsibilities related to the Still Moon Festival (Interviewee 1, 2015).



**Figure 4 Artistic Director Carmen Rosen with performers at the Still Moon Festival**

Still Moon has one full time staff member, Artistic Director Carmen Rosen. As an artist, performer, singer, among her personal art practice, Carmen participated and led many community-based arts initiatives, past and present. In her role at Still Moon, she provides creative vision, builds artistic and environmental stewardship capacity, links with partners, and acquires funding for their programming, among many other talents<sup>4</sup>. Still Moon also hires summer students based on funding availability like the Outreach and Engagement Coordinator and other project-based positions. They recently found a long term home at VIVO Media Arts Centre, a local co-working space, from its former location at the Slocan Fieldhouse as part of the Art House in the Field Collective<sup>5</sup>. In 2014, Still Moon celebrated its 10 year anniversary at their Annual General Meeting (Still Moon Arts, 2016f).

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<sup>4</sup> Carmen Rosen most recent art piece is a sculpture of two massive salmon bodies entitled, 'Still Here', situated near the daylight sections of Still Creek at Grandview Highway.

<sup>5</sup> The Art House in Field Collective is a network of artistic groups who practice, organize, and co-create arts and cultural performances in the Renfrew Collingwood neighbourhood to build community. The network consists of Still Moon Arts Society, Renfrew-Collingwood Multicultural Artist Network, and the Collingwood Neighbourhood House Development team. The Vancouver Park Board rented the Slocan Field House to the collective for two years starting in 2013 (Still Moon Arts Society, 2016).

## 4.2 Renfrew-Collingwood Neighbourhood

### 4.2.1 Demographics

Still Moon's work largely focuses to the Still Creek watershed as it flows through Renfrew-Collingwood neighbourhood of Vancouver, BC. Renfrew-Collingwood is most eastern neighbourhood in the City of Vancouver home to about 50,000 residents (as of 2011), and the second most populated neighbourhood covering over 820 hectares (City of Vancouver, 2011). Renfrew-Collingwood prides itself as one of the diverse neighbourhoods in the city, with a large and growing population of Chinese-speaking residents (growing from 39% to 50% from 1996-2011) as well as English speakers (30%), and other notable language groups present like Korean (2.7%), Punjabi (1.8%), Tagalog (1.6%) and Taiwanese (1.5%), (City of Vancouver, 2011). The neighbourhood has a unique demographic in Vancouver as the area with the highest youth population and the fastest growing seniors population compared to other areas (City of Vancouver, 2011). This neighbourhood is primarily single-family housing zoning with key commercial areas around Kingsway, and commercial/ industrial areas at Grandview highway (Lee & Ass. et al, 2004).

### 4.2.2 Community Actors: Arts Pow Wow

Past community projects in Renfrew-Collingwood led to the emergence of Still Moon as an actor in this neighbourhood. A community development initiative, the Arts Pow Wow (1998-2002), was started by the Collingwood Neighbourhood House<sup>6</sup> which aimed to promote community development through art, communications, and place-based improvements (Koeller, 2005). One aspect of the Arts Pow Wow aimed to revitalize Slocan Park through art and other beautification efforts (Moffat, 2005). Key artistic outputs of the project were community-made murals at the fieldhouse, stone mosaics, the Guardian totem pole, and the creation a sidewalk through the park called 'the Duchess Walkway' all made with volunteers and local residents (Moffat, 2005). After negotiation between the community and municipal agencies, the walkway eventually included the installation of lights for increased safety, funded in part through the Greenways grant program and the Vancouver Parks Board (Collingwood Renfrew

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<sup>6</sup> The Collingwood Neighbourhood House is a

Neighbourhood House, n.a.). Moffat found this project to be not only a community building exercise, but also an example of placemaking (2005). Her assessment noted a balance of improving the park and encouraging participation, working collaboratively and creating art together (Moffat, 2005). Beautification and resident efforts at Slocan Park began to spread to nearby Renfrew Ravine Park.

#### **4.2.3 Shifting Focus to Renfrew Ravine**

With the successful efforts at coming together at Slocan Park, community groups shifted their focus to nearby Renfrew Ravine. There were many individuals and groups that dedicated their volunteer time to clean ups like the Tai Chi group and youth volunteers from the local high school (Collingwood Renfrew Neighbourhood House, n.a.). This space had a reputation for many illicit activities like drug and alcohol use, safety concerns, as well as excessive garbage and dumping people in the ravine (Moffat, 2005; Interviewee 2, 2016; Interviewee 1, 2015). In light of concerns raised in the safety audit, the city implemented improvements at Renfrew Ravine like the upgraded trail at the eastern bank and look outs that still exists today, as well as seating and lighting to improve safety and increase use of the park (Still Moon Arts, 2010).

Renfrew Ravine became a site of restoration but also one of art and celebration. Artists from the Arts Pow Wow held three Slocan Festivals, a gathering that started in Slocan Park and paraded through Renfrew Ravine (Collingwood Renfrew Neighbourhood House, n.a.). One of the collaborating artists pouring her passion into Slocan Park and Renfrew Ravine was Carmen Rosen. As the Arts Pow Wow project wrapped up, there was an opportunity to continue the work with renewed focus on the stream and its value given existing passion and efforts (Interviewee 1, 2015; Interviewee 2, 2016). Thus, the Still Moon Society was created with the goal to change the attitudes about the ravine so that it was no longer an unsafe place to keep children away from rather a place with meaning that was celebrated (Interviewee 1, 2015). The work at Renfrew Ravine that the community has pursued for nearly fifteen years will be the focus of our case study.

#### 4.2.4 Still Creek in Renfrew-Collingwood

Still Moon has primarily focused their place-based work on parks that host Still Creek in the Renfrew Collingwood neighbourhood. Of the thirteen parks in the neighbourhood, three parks have been the geographical focus of SMAS work: Renfrew Ravine Sanctuary Park, Renfrew Community Park, and Slocan Park (City of Vancouver, 2017). What is significant about these parks is that Renfrew Community Park and Renfrew Ravine Park host the remaining open sections of Still Creek in Vancouver, one of two open creeks left in the city<sup>7</sup>, which flows from Vancouver to Burnaby and eventually the Fraser River (Parsons, 2015).

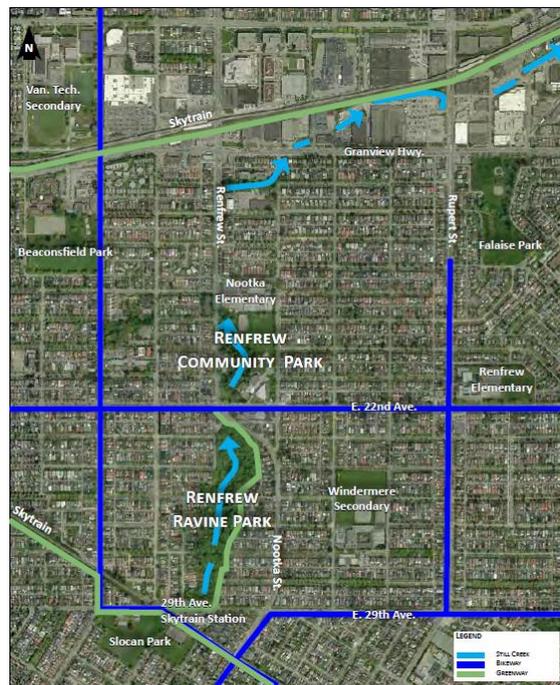
Still Creek faces several ecological challenges especially in the highly developed section of the watershed in Vancouver (City of Vancouver, 2016). Still Creek is an urban stream with challenges that are typical of urban waterways. These issues include high peak flows due to concrete and asphalt in the watershed that increase potential for flooding, poor water quality due to contaminants from run-off, and high water temperature making it less hospitable for aquatic species (Lee & Ass. et al, 2004). Since the watershed is highly urbanized, there is low vegetation and riparian areas and therefore also low habitat for plants and animals in the watershed (Lee & Ass. et al). Historically, this was a salmon-bearing stream with fish travelling up from the Fraser River to spawn but salmon have been absent from the stream since 1940 (Lee & Ass. et al, 2004). The source of Still Creek is south of Renfrew-Collingwood near Metrotown, Vancouver where it is piped through residential development to Renfrew Ravine and Renfrew Park in an open, but occasionally culverted, stream bed. Past Renfrew Park, the stream continues in a daylight area by Lougheed Highway and continues in an open stream bed to Burnaby Lake with some culverting along the way. From there, it joins the Brunette River and eventually flows into the Fraser River (Parsons, 2015).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Still Creek watershed straddles two municipalities with one third of Still creek's watershed in Vancouver and two thirds in Burnaby (Lee et al, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> The past century of development and intensification in the area dramatically altered the natural course of Still Creek in the upper and lower watersheds. In Vancouver, the area was logged at the turn of the century to make way for agriculture and housing (Still Moon Arts Society, 2016f). Early engineers and planners examined Still Creek with an eye for storm water drainage and wastewater management (Still Moon Arts Society, 2016f). Until the 1950s, many portions of the creek underwent channelization, culverting and dredging due to encroaching development in what would become Collingwood-Renfrew neighbourhood and adjoining Burnaby (Chan, 2012). Once a separated storm water and sewage system was installed in the upper catchment area (1960), the use of Still Creek would be as a storm water conveyor for an estimate 2,400 acres of East Vancouver (Chan, 2010). At this time, the municipal attitude shifted towards concern for Still Creek and community actors began to emerge in nearby neighbourhoods (Chan, 2012). The polluted nature of the creek was recognized by municipal and community actors in 1985 so the City of Vancouver investigated and banned enclosures on

Renfrew Ravine is an important area of riparian habitat in the upper watershed. Here, the streambed is mostly natural with culverts at both ends to bring the creek under neighbourhood streets. It is the largest vegetated area and riparian zone in the Vancouver portion of the creek, with wooded banks on either side of the ravine that act as important habitat for 58 species of birds and small mammals like squirrels, raccoons, skunks, and even coyotes (Still Moon Arts, 2010). Early logging in the area left the ravine with an alder-cottonwood forest with large poplars, alders and some evergreen trees though large cedar stumps show the remains of old-growth forest in the area (Still Moon Arts, 2010).



**Figure 5 Still Creek in the Renfrew-Collingwood neighbourhood**

By contrast, Renfrew Community Park is a community hub with large recreational facilities, library and community space. The park also contains a wooded area where the creek emerges in the southeastern corner of the park. Here, the creek runs in a channelized cement bed. Slokan Park is a smaller neighbourhood park with a playground, field and fieldhouse with a structure for outdoor events. It does not have an open stream feature of the other parks but is was the home for Still Moon Arts for

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specific areas of the creek (Parsons, 2015) and a number of community stewardship groups began to emerge (Parsons, 2015)

several years through the Arts in Field House Program ran by the Vancouver Parks Board.

### 4.3 Community Planning in Renfrew-Collingwood

There are several community planning initiatives related to the Renfrew-Collingwood neighbourhood and Still Creek that are worth noting. The *Renfrew Collingwood Visioning Exercise* (2004) engaged the neighbourhood on their priorities and needs across many aspects of social life including housing, public spaces, and amenities (City of Vancouver, 2004). There were several areas of interest for this research, namely: the emphasis on improving public spaces, art, and community participation in the neighbourhood including restoring and enhancing Renfrew Ravine (City of Vancouver, 2004). This is an evergreen document meant to help inform plans in the community for the following ten years and it demonstrates a need for improved public spaces and the desire to improve and restore Still Creek (City of Vancouver, 2004).

The *Still Creek Enhancement and Stewardship Plan* (2004) has been instrumental in bringing together actors from the city and other organizations to improve and restore Still Creek. The plan implemented enhancements along the Still Creek watershed, north of Renfrew Ravine and Renfrew Community Parks. This plan also identified the need for community engagement and public art to increase awareness about the state of Still Creek, issues affecting its health and the watershed (Lee & Ass. et al, 2004). The planner tasked with implementing this plan has a working relationship with actors like Evergreen and Still Moon to enhance outreach and engagement. The lead planner was interviewed as part of this research.

The most recent and ongoing planning initiative is the master planning process for Renfrew Ravine and Renfrew Community parks. In 2010, the Vancouver Parks Board initiated a master planning process for these two parks to, “increase recreation and educational opportunities for the public and preserve and enhance the ecology of the parks, the ravine and Still Creek” (City of Vancouver, 2017). After detailed site analysis and consultations with stakeholders in the community, the final plan outlines key changes to be made including recreational areas in both parks as well as access points at the ravine within the parks. The plan commits to keeping existing art work created by

Still Moon along Renfrew Ravine. Still Moon Society was one of several organization consulted through the plans and also contributed by reported on their 'Reflecting Still Creek' project committee meetings to the process (City of Vancouver, 2017). The city's website indicates that implementation will begin in 2017 but no work has been noted to date (City of Vancouver, 2017).

Now that the context for the case study has been established, the following chapter presents the results of the research at Renfrew Ravine.

## 5 Results

“The story is that [Renfrew Ravine] just came from being a garbage dump and a thing that came to be a jewel in the city and a natural environment that’s being protected. It does have some artwork around it but there could be more. It has definitely created a big sense of community. I think we’re all very proud of it, those of us who’ve been involved. We forget how far we’ve come. It’s been a lot of years but to know that people come back.” (Interviewee 2, 2016)

Placemaking aims to foster a sense of community and a sense of place through a process of collaborative engagement (Silberberg et. al, 2013). It has many potential benefits in terms of community building (e.g. building civic culture and identity, creating social capital), wellness (e.g. self-awareness and identity, reducing social isolation), economic development, and connections with place (e.g. creating meaning, encouraging pro-environmental behaviours) . Still Moon has played a leading role in raising awareness and connecting people to the Renfrew Ravine, the open portion of Still Creek. Still Creek has become a place of interest to the community. To explore the application of placemaking at Still Creek and the intersection between art-place-ecology, I used an inductive approach to data collection and analysis. From the interview with respondents, I used open coding to identify core themes. These themes are best illustrated through the primary events and activities at Still Creek coordinated by Still Moo Arts.

Results are broken down into four sections to illustrate findings:

- I. The Still Moon Festival
- II. Art at the Ravine
- III. Environmental Education, Stewardship and Restoration

The Results section concludes with a summary of the overall contributions to ‘placemaking’ at Renfrew Ravine and a brief summary of challenges to sustain the work.

## 5.1 The Still Moon Festival

### 5.1.1 Connection to the environment

One of the main values of the Moon Festival is how it connects people to nature at the ravine.. Respondents felt that the Moon Festival connected people to the ravine who may not normally have connecting to the ravine. By doing so, the festival increased awareness off the ravine and its importance in the neighbourhood (e.g. as habitat for fish). The physical connection to the stream is accentuated by the format of the festival. When participants walk along the ravine together, they symbolically represent and connect to the flow of Still Creek. Further, the Moon Festival draws crowd into a park by the stream at night which would not normally happen. In the dark, attendees walk along paths in the park; they can hear the water; they are among the trees and in nature, and experience the beauty of the lanterns glowing in the night. The following respondent discusses how the festival connects people to nature at the ravine:

“The Moon Festival draws people’s awareness to the beauty and magic of the ravine, the appreciation of trees, birds, water, and encourages them to look at environmental issues (i.e. water quality, fish returns). It is different than the other festivals in that it highlights the environment and specifically the ravine. The other festivals highlight youth leadership, the arts, history of the area, diversity but the Moon Festival has these other dimensions as well as all of the above.” (Interviewee 11, 2015)

The format for the festival has followed the same route and experience for fifteen years in the neighbourhood, creating a community tradition of celebrating their local environment through this greenspace.

Celebrating nature was identified as an appealing way approach to environmental education about Still Creek (Interviewee 1, 2015; Interviewee 8, 2015). A local planner shares her thoughts on why the festival, traditionally understood as an arts and cultural event, also connects people to the environment:

“In 2002, the Still Creek Enhancement Plan identified education as key to the success of the efforts to rehabilitate the creek. The education is vital and community artists tend to involve residents more so using art as a means of doing the education, I think is really important...I think [art] does play a role because it creates a bit more of an attraction and a celebration. It really is something to celebrate, the environment, or that the fish have been coming back the past three years. I think that really is something to celebrate. I think it does draw colour and people will see

and think there is something going on here so I think it definitely does make it more appealing.” (Interviewee 8, 2015)

The Moon Festival may be one of few times that the average resident connects to Renfrew Ravine. But by making a memorable and positive experience in this natural space, this experience may carry forward in future visits at the site. Some have even found the experience moving enough as to qualify the experience as sacred.

### 5.1.2 A Sacred and Memorable Environment



**Figure 6 Prayers for the water written by Moon Festival participants**

One of the ways discussed by respondents is how the ambiance of the lantern display suggests to participants that Renfrew Ravine is a place to be respected and treasured as a sacred space. People are invited to participate in reflective activities for the environment like writing a prayer for the water and the general ambiance of hundreds of lantern illuminating the forest and the stream with music and performances is powerful (Interviewee 6, 2016; Interviewee 8, 2015). This sacred aspect of the festival is an intentional act to add an element of reverence and celebration of nature in their backyards (Interviewee 1, 2015). Several respondents use the language of spirituality,

the sacred and reverence to describe their experience at the lantern display at Renfrew Community Park:

“The first time I took [my daughter] here a couple of years ago, after we did the whole park with the lanterns and the lights, the fish lanterns hanging over the creek and the floating candles. She said that is was the most spiritual thing she has ever experienced. She said it was way more spiritual than any church service you’ve ever taken me to. They had an area where you could write a prayer on a paper shaped like a big drop of water and you could hang your prayer in the tree. Hearing the music and the sense of reverence for the water and what it means to have water. I thought that was very telling for a thirteen year old to say that.” (Interviewee 8, 2015)

“People when they go to the Moon Festival, they experience music they would never hear otherwise, lanterns in a different way, they experience the ravine in a way that [is] almost like a spiritual experience for some, I think.” (Interviewee 12, 2016)

“It’s kind of magical. Everybody calls it magical. You see the lights in the trees and the lanterns...I guess it tugs on the emotions. You get into nature and you seem to open up, you relax and it makes them feel good. And we all want to feel good. And we all want to feel good so that’s why they keep coming back.” (Interviewee 1, 2015)

Further, beyond the feelings of sacred and magic, many respondents report that the positive experiences of the festival stay with them long after the festival is over. What was often memorable for respondents was how art in the form of lanterns, music, and performance created a special experience:

“It’s really fascinating how Still Moon Art Society uses art to illuminate the stream and shed light onto Renfrew Ravine because I think the neighbours know what it is but it’s not something that a lot of people in Vancouver know about. So when we do an awesome festival and we put out lanterns people really see the magic of that Renfrew Ravine is or that Renfrew Ravine has to offer. Walking through the stream at night is a very memorable experience.” (Interviewee 3, 2016)

“One of the things that I remember really strongly is, especially with the very finale at the end when the watching the dancers, the music, you hear all these different languages around you in the dark, you really know that you’re connecting with a lot of people which is special, really.” (Interviewee 11, 2015)

This positive and transformative experience through the festival can inform a person’s perceive the place but may also inspire great involvement. One respondent describes how she was inspired to get involved after experiencing the festival:

“I really remember my first time in grade eight, being able to go down into the ravine and seeing the lanterns at night time, and just that experience. Having the ravine that you kind of knew was there but you didn’t really engage with it, you just go down there and completely covered in dark, then you have this art and local artist lanterns glowing. I remember that just being a really special moment. That really resonates with me. It made me not even think twice about going back to volunteer a second time.” (Interviewee 4, 2015)

The Moon Festival is a special, meaningful event that has the potential to transform people’s perception of Renfrew Ravine. Art can paint the environment as sacred, can create a special and memorable experience in place, and even inspire new connections and involvement with the ravine. This effect of the Moon Festival transcends connections with place; it can also be looked at as a community building process.

### **5.1.3 Building Community through Engagement**

Respondents felt that the Moon Festival has contributed positively to the community as an event and as a community process. The event successfully engages a wide network of organizations in the festival, as well as participants and volunteers (Interviewee 1, 2015; Interviewee 2, 2016, Interviewee 11, 2015; Interviewee 10, 2015). Respondents found many things the festival brought to the neighbourhood. It encouraged socializing and connecting with neighbours, bridging difference and celebrating diversity, inspires youth leadership and learning, and building a sense of belonging and a sense of community through active participation and volunteerism.

The Moon Festival encourages active participation in the festival. For example, neighbourhood residents are invited to attend lantern workshops to build their own lanterns to bring to the parade. Attendees are also involved in various components of the festival such as walking the parade route along the stream, and engaging in activities at the display such as writing a prayer for the water at the lantern display. Engaging residents to participate in the experience of the festival was identified as creating meaning and a sense of belonging (Interviewee 1, 2015; Interviewee 3, 2016). Active participation allows for greater meaning than simply spectating or consuming an artistic experience:

“I think community ritual and celebration is more meaningful if you bring a lantern you’ve made than if you bring a lantern that you’ve bought from a street hawker. There is a different level of investment and meaning in

something that you've spent time preparing rather than just consuming in the moment. It's an alternative to consumer culture because I don't actually think citizens and consumers are the same thing. We have been demoted to consumers rather than citizens. I think citizens participate.

[In the Moon Festival] I think that's a big part of it, making lantern workshops, getting people to do hands-on things when they show up. They can write their prayers for the water on a boat or a branch on a piece of paper that we tie on tree and they are doing something, they are actively involved. They are carrying a lantern, they are following the parade route, they are going through the journey from sunset through twilight to night time and all the metaphors that that entails into the land of mystery and unknown. All those things have a sort of psychic resonance that one may not admit to on a conscious mind but that act on us on another level." (Interviewee 1, 2015)

A strong component of the festival is this encouragement to be an active participant in the lead up and experience of the festival. While greater involvement as a volunteer can contribute to a meaningful experience, the act of participating as a collective can also help people feel like they are part of a larger whole. Interactions between strangers and neighbours through were important social opportunities the festival provided, noted by respondents. The festival was by providing a chance to come together, to socialize and get involved in their community which was associated with a positive social impact:

"Social outcomes are that people start talking to their neighbours that are next to them and people become more aware of what's going on. So like it became an annual event, people think about it and come all together. The festival is also very intercultural. That's the most beautiful part, the challenge, and at the same time, very unique and new." (Interviewee 5, 2016)

"I think that a lot of people are definitely feeling more engaged because it feels good to know your neighbours or even just to nod at them. And I think that it's one of the things that in the Vancouver Foundation report about social cohesiveness says: to even just have that casual interaction with neighbours and community members gives a really big sense of well-being if you can just have a little chat. (Interviewee 1, 2015)

These casual interactions with others can help people feel like they belong and can also contribute to individual well-being, as previously discussed. Respondents recognized that as a community with a high level of ethnic diversity and many languages spoken at home, there may be barriers to connecting with neighbours. The festival provided an opportunity for neighbours to connect. Efforts to create a safe and inclusive event for community members were also embedded in the event design.

#### 5.1.4 Community Wellness: Safe and Inclusive Events

Respondents felt the festival had an inclusive atmosphere. The Moon Festival celebrates and engages many cultural groups present in the neighbourhood through music, arts and cultural performances, particularly through the performances at the Harvest Fair stage (Interviewee 2, 2016; Interviewee 1, 2015; Interviewee 5, 2016; Interviewee 8, 2015, Interviewee 4, 2015). “Still Moon has had similar values over the years; it’s all about engaging different facets of community,” (Interviewee 4, 2015). The year I attended, many groups performed including a Japanese drumming group, marimba players, as well as musicians singing in several languages. Inclusive and safe spaces can be symbolized through different forms of sharing. Every year, the Montagnard Refugee Society, a community of refugee groups from South East Asia, constructs a model of their villages in the lantern display (Interviewee 1, 2015; Interviewee 2, 2015). This model is an important symbol and source of pride for this group (Interviewee 1, 2015; Interviewee 2, 2015). Several respondents noted that the format of the festival helps people connect because of the universality of enjoying music, or harvesting food for example. This bridged connections between neighbours and fostered a sense of community, says one respondent:

“What I also love about it is because that it’s such a diverse community, the artwork and the nature transcends the language. Every culture likes to celebrate harvest time, it doesn’t matter what culture you’re from. You can have an Italian neighbour and a Chinese neighbour side by side and they can talk about their gardens, they can talk about the ravine, and they can talk about the Moon Festival and taking their kids down for a walk and listening to the music. Music, art, and food; that all transcends culture and that’s what helps to bring this community together. I think that’s why it’s been so successful. You don’t have to worry about language barriers. Everybody can talk about fireworks. You can stand there and enjoy fireworks with your neighbours even if you can speak their language or not. So it really has fostered a wonderful sense of community around here.” (Interviewee 2, 2016)

Engaging many ethnic and cultural groups in the neighbourhood was incorporated into the design of the festival from its inception. The Moon Festival was inspired by the Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival and the format and concept was first developed in consultation with a late resident of Renfrew-Collingwood, Daisy Wong, along with the Chinese Seniors Society (Interviewee 9, 2015; Interviewee 1, 2015; Interviewee 2, 2015). The mid-autumn festival celebrates the full moon and harvest,

often using lanterns (Interviewee 1, 2015; Interviewee 2, 2015). The Moon Festival uses this same timing around the full moon and harvest year to year and may also incorporate food that is common to the mid-autumn festival such as moon cakes (Interviewee 1, 2015; Interviewee 2, 2015). One respondent believes that representation across cultural groups at the Moon Festival is important as it is a reflection of the diversity in the community:

“It’s representative of the community and on a spiritual level, on a deeper level. Not just come out and have a big party but engage with people, engage with the community and engage with art and local artists that you normally wouldn’t done before. And then Still Moon has always has a similar values over the years, it’s all about engaging different facets of the community.” (Interviewee 4, 2016)

Beyond the festival format, the significance of the place in the community may also allow people to feel safe:

“Also the power of how a place can bring together community. At the festival, there is a really big diversity of people there; different cultures, different ages, neighbours who maybe didn’t talk to each other before. But because you’re in this place that is a milestone of the community, you feel safe and people are able to connect with each other more.” (Interviewee 4, 2015)

The place where the festival occurs and the way it brings people together are important ingredients for participation. The involvement of residents, volunteers, and organizations in the neighbourhood were critical ingredients to contributions to a sense of community.

### **5.1.5 Community Building: Collaboration**

The Moon Festival bring many individuals and community organizations to work together to create a beautiful and meaningful festival. Many community groups are key partners in the event like the Collingwood Neighbourhood House, Windemere High school Leadership Program, Renfrew Park Communication Association as well as a large network of artists in the community (Interviewee 1, 2015; Interviewee 12, 2016; Interviewee 11, 2015). “The lead up to the Moon Festival including the lantern making workshops, the training that goes on with the Windermere leadership students, the contracts with local artists, the local talent, for their involvement means that the “web” is large. Those people bring their friends and families,” (Interviewee 11, 2015). Still Moon coordinates the efforts of these organizations before the festival and leads the

recruitment of community volunteers and engagement of local artists and talent. It is said that while they may not have much financial capital, Still Moon has social capital in the community as a result of these relationship (Interviewee 1, 2015). Reflecting on the festival, one respondent notes organizations supported and collaborated in community to achieve greater success:

“The objectives were to reach new people in the community, to have festivals that were relevant to the community, to celebrate different cultures and help increase understanding, to provide a vehicle where the talents and cultures could be expressed, shared and appreciated. We tried to coordinate festivals to avoid duplication and spread them around the community; when one agency took the lead, others looked where they could support. Strong inter-agency collaboration makes it possible to achieve more than if agencies and community groups work in isolation,” (Interviewee 11, 2015).

These organizations coming together are an example of community in action. While collaboration is important, another element that the Moon Festival mobilizes in the neighbourhood is a high degree of volunteerism.

The festival provides a meaningful opportunity to volunteer and get involved in the neighbourhood. Annually, over 200 volunteers are recruited to plan, organize and execute the Moon Festival with tasks ranging from promotion, community lantern workshops, organizing food and performers, and so on. Former youth volunteer and active President of the Still Moon Board, describes the benefits he had from getting involved with the festival:

“Thinking back, I’m really thankful that I’ve been given capacity building opportunities through Still Moon because when I started I didn’t really feel like I belonged to the community, I didn’t really know my neighbours, I didn’t really have a lot of friends that were different than me or friends that lived in my neighbourhood. So through volunteering I gained so many opportunities: social, skill building, capacity building, employment, just through volunteering and getting to know people.” (Interviewee 3, 2016)

Through volunteering at the festival, volunteers become part of a larger group working towards the end goal. One respondent said the festival is such as tradition, taking part is expected in the neighbourhood (Interviewee 8, 2015). This high degree of involvement by volunteers helps them feel like they belong and are a part of community, says one respondent:

“Through volunteering, I think that fosters a sense of belonging because people feel proud that they are contributing to a very successful festival. People are enjoying themselves. They see the successes that they are

contributing to and I think that goes back to how Still Moon Arts Society and Renfrew Ravine fosters a sense of belonging” (Interviewee 3, 2016).

Inviting people to be involved in the planning and organization of the festival can make this event more meaningful to the community. Pride, accomplishment comes from taking part in a successful festival (Interviewee 3, 2016). Many of those volunteers are youth from the local high school.

### **5.1.6 Community Building: Youth Mentorship & Leadership**

Youth engagement has become an important aspect of Still Moon’s activities around the ravine. Students from Windemere Secondary School often make up the majority of volunteers for the Moon Festival and they encourage their friends and families to come out (Interviewee 1, 2015). To engage with this important group and harness their energy, Still Moon hires students dedicated to youth engagement, where funding is available. The collaboration between these high school students and Still Moon is one of capacity building, peer-to-peer learning and leadership in the art and stewardship activities:

“Over time, the younger students will grow into leadership roles and have more responsibilities when they continue to volunteer. They will also have the opportunity to mentor students who are beginning high school and are volunteering in the organization for the first time. This is a cycle of volunteerism, where younger volunteers age and mentor new volunteers and so on.” (Interviewee 3, 2016)

Over time, many youth have shown leadership and built capacity through volunteerism at the Moon Festival, complemented by their involvement in stewardship activities as well (Interviewee 3, 2015). Youth involvement has grown so strong over the years that they created Youth Committee which now leads the organization and direction of the Harvest Fair, among other events throughout the year (Interviewee 1, 2015). Working with youth in the neighbourhood for over a decade, one respondent found that when youth are mentored, they can take on leadership roles (Interviewee 1, 2015; Interviewee 3, 2016). The contributions made by youth continue to be a strong aspect work at the ravine (Interviewee 1, 2015; Interviewee 12, 2016).

### **5.1.7 Generating Local Economic Value**

The Moon Festival may generate local economic value.. Still Moon has leveraged funding for projects in the community such as the Moon Festival, and workshops and training programs. There was also mention of local contracts generated through the Moon festival and youth employment through a few summer positions such as the Youth Engagement coordinator (Interviewee 11, 2015). While the dollar value of these contributions at Still Creek may be small, they are contributions to the local economy nonetheless.

## **5.2 Art at Renfrew Ravine**

Art installations at Renfrew Ravine have also connected people to this place through collaboration. Installing art at this natural space invites and welcomes people to that space and marking the place as special. Art can also connect people to the nature by peaking interest in and calling attention to the ecology of a natural place. This can be done by using materials associated with place or by highlight flora, fauna or services nature provides in the art pieces. The projects installed along the ravine ranging from a mosaic walkway and bench, poems on signs, ying yang bench, and other markers. The collaborative nature of the art installations successfully engaged residents in the creative process.



**Figure 7** Art pieces at the south entrance of Renfrew Ravine Park

### 5.2.1 Art in Place: An invitation

Broadly, respondents thought art installation in place can spark interest in the environment. Each of the permanent pieces at and near Renfrew Ravine has an environmental aspect could peak interest in or dialogue about the ecology of Renfrew Ravine (Interviewee 1, 2015; Interviewee 9, 2015; Interviewee 2, 2016; Interviewee 8, 2015). The art pieces at the stream attract interest and attention of those passing by because of their beauty but also the natural content (e.g. art that uses natural elements of fish, plants, and trees). For example, the street murals just south of Slocan Park reminds the community that the stream is still present beneath the street and is flowing up towards the parks. The relationship between art at the ravine and connecting to nature is discussed:

“People look at the mosaic and they see the fish or the salmon in the mosaic and it was our hope that it would prod somebody to think, ‘Gee there is a stream down there. I wonder if there was actually salmon down there at one time. And then we put up the little plaques and the informational bits around to prompt people to make the connection. Because art is like anything, it appeals to some and not to others. I think it also peaks the curiosity of people.” (Interviewee 2, 2016)

Further, adding art to a space can also denote that place as special and welcoming for humans. This may serve as an important invitation to the space, especially when a place has a reputation for being inaccessible, uninviting or scary experiences like at Renfrew Ravine in the past.

“Art is means of expressing an opinion or a feeling or a thought and inviting questions about that opinion, feeling or thought. I think maybe the key word in there is inviting. So if you're placing an art piece on the periphery or within a greenspace then you are inviting people to that space...I think that art can certainly be a bridge between people and nature. Some people don't need that bridge but a lot of people do.” (Interviewee 9, 2015)

In this way, the art installations can change whether people feel welcome to the space and perhaps change their attitude towards it.

“I think those serve as points of interest for passerbys in the ravine but also points of familiarity and welcoming for people who are familiar with the space or live near it...It makes it feel like you're allowed to be there which is a big issue with some natural spaces, particularly Renfrew Ravine, because parts of it are scary. So knowing that its safe and welcoming space by having this human made art, I think is important.” (Interviewee 9, 2015)

In addition to the art being stalled at various sites along Renfrew Ravine, Still Moon art projects connect people to the ecology of Renfrew Ravine through ongoing environmental art workshops. Examples include weaving workshops with Sharon Kallis, who taught residents to weaves baskets from invasive plants that have been removed from the ravine (Still Moon Arts, 2016). The Poems for the Bees is a project that raised awareness about declining bee populations by engaging participants in poetry (Still Moon Arts, 2016). The use of natural close to home was an important aspect of not just these workshops but all the work at the ravine:

“I think Still Moon has brought awareness of the environment close to home, to our backyard, our community where we live. It is not on some beach or forest miles away. I also think we show how art can educate and inspire people to think” (Interviewee 2, 2015).

Respondents thought these artistic links to the environment can be an effective mechanism for sparking interest, environmental awareness and learning in a creative and fun way. One participant felt that celebrating nature was an inspiring, positive mechanism for environmental messages rather than focusing on the negative environmental impacts which can be disheartening and depressing (Interviewee 1, 2015). This has been the approach of the work here – ‘a nudge and suggestion’ towards positive behaviours for the ravine (Interviewee 1, 2015).

## 5.2.2 Community Engagement in Art Pieces



**Figure 8** Volunteers paint a mural of the stream at a local elementary school

An important part of the art installation is the community process used to create them. Each of these art pieces at Renfrew Ravine were created through collaboration with local artists, residents and often children. Much like the Moon Festival, Still Moon's

approach to art is a participatory process that invites anyone to take part (Interviewee 3, 2016). This approach helps people feel comfortable about their creative contribution as “making art together is a little bit safer than making art by yourself... You can see yourself contributing to a bigger whole,” (Interviewee 1, 2015). This respondent explains that making art with others has the value of encouraging creative expressions by being actively engaged in the creative process:

“Community-based art is trying to make it accessible to everyone and also facilitating for people to feel like they can be creative themselves. I like to have professional artists working with community members so they get a sense of how professional artists work but also so the community members are not just passive consumers of art. I want them to be participants in it.” (Interviewee 1, 2015)

Respondents found the participatory and collaborative process of the art installations along the ravine are a strong way to ensure that the product of the art process is meaningful to the group, as they took part in creating it:

“I think the process of the art is what really lends itself to the engaging side. [In the process to create a new bench] there were workshops at the community centre where different groups were invited [to design and create the bench] and they learned about why this location, why this material and which of the images should be on it. So I think that whole process of art is what really leads to the meaningful engagement.” (Interviewee 8, 2015)

This meaning comes from contributing to a larger project with others, working together, but also from taking part in the creative process.

### **5.2.3 Storytelling about Renfrew Ravine and Still Creek**

Still Moon Arts society is also collecting and sharing stories about Renfrew Ravine and Still Creek in creative projects. The Still Creek Stories project has gathered stories about Renfrew Ravine and the Still Creek watershed to be shared as a book (Still Moon Arts Society, 2016). Representatives from Still Moon have visited the homes of seniors to talk about the state of Still Creek in the past, their experiences, memories and stories at the ravine. Memories and stories about the ravine have also been collected at the Moon Festival. Not only will these be compiled and published in a book, they have also contributed to performance art pieces. Some of these stories were animated in a performance art workshop to be performed at the Moon Festival.

## **5.3 Environmental Education, Stewardship & Restoration**

Still Moon has encouraged connection to Still Creek through their education, stewardship and restoration work and collaborations. Volunteers connect to the physical space through stewardship and particulars about the ecology at the ravine in the environmental education that often complements stewardship work (Interviewee 1, 2015; Interviewee 9, 2015; Interviewee 11, 2015). As a result, there environmental awareness among volunteers has increased, especially with youth. The return of the salmon was a significant event that aided the efforts at Still Creek by raising the profile of the creek's value and refocusing stewardship to the restoration of this species. This renewed engagement has created a strong desire to implement ecosystem-based management of the Still Creek watershed from the local community.

### **5.3.1 Environmental awareness at Still Creek**

Still Moon has contributed to environmental awareness and education about the Still Creek watershed. Some of the environmental awareness Still Moon has pursued locally at the ravine are: interpretive signage, collecting and sharing historic information (Parsons, 2015), producing educational materials, and shared water quality data online (Still Moon Arts Society, 2016h). They have also shared their experience at educational events like lectures at Simon Fraser University and participation at TEDx events in East Vancouver, for example. Their efforts have contributed to greater awareness of the Still Creek watershed (Parsons, 2015). However, respondents felt there is more work to be done to raise awareness and to communicate the value of the Still Creek watershed (Interviewee 1, 2015; Interviewee 8, 2015, Interviewee 9, 2015).



**Figure 9 Environmental stewardship at Renfrew Ravine**

Increased awareness was particularly strong among youth volunteers. Renfrew Ravine was noted as a valuable site for learning for children and youth from nearby schools (Interviewee 12, 2016; Interviewee 2, 2016; Interviewee 1, 2015). Still Moon has played a coordinating role for volunteers and has also made important collaborations with Evergreen to bring this work forward (Parsons, 2015, pg. 71). Respondents felt that the youth volunteers who take part in educational activities<sup>9</sup>, stewardship<sup>10</sup> and restoration<sup>11</sup> had a deeper awareness and understanding about ecological systems at Renfrew Ravine and Still Creek (Interviewee 12, 2016; Interviewee 2, 2016; Interviewee 1, 2015). Youth from the Leadership Program at Windemere Secondary School have played a critical role in the projects undertaken by Still Moon. Respondents highlight the contribution activities have played to environmental awareness among youth:

“Carmen also has a big environmental focus and raising awareness on the beauty that is that stream. She’s worked quite hard on restoration efforts to restore our salmon population. So our kids [from Windemere Secondary School] have built lanterns on salmon, participated in the Crow Ride and done a lot of walk-thrus [at the ravine] and talked about invasive species.” (Interviewee 12, 2016)

“And Carmen is also done really excellent work with the high school students and in partnership with the leadership class at Windemere.

<sup>9</sup> Environmental education activities include learning about species of plants or animals and identifying those species (e.g. salmon), learning about natural cycles (e.g. the water cycle), specific ecological services nature provides (e.g. storm water management) and also ecological issues in the watershed (e.g. poor water quality).

<sup>10</sup> Stewardship activities at this site include removing garbage and debris, collecting scientific information like water quality, for example.

<sup>11</sup> Restoration activities include removal of invasive plant species, planting native plants, and planting ‘pollinator gardens’ for bees, for example.

They've done a lot of capacity building in those students and awareness building in those student so those kids who live in walking distance of ravine now understand that that's a space to sort of respect and is perhaps they understand what kind of services it provides to the community beyond storm water conveyance.” (Interviewee 9, 2015)

“Over the years, I think they have worked towards bringing awareness to the stream. I think one of the things that they've done is they organize monthly clean-ups so people would come volunteer their time to take out garbage as well as invasive species removal projects. With the same concept – neighbours would come together and make the stream a more beautiful place. I think this group or this group of particular neighbours have been fostering a sense of belonging and making the space, much more aware for neighbours.” (Interviewee 3, 2016)

The awareness of the stream and environmental issues affecting the stream was an environmental impact that respondents noted especially among youth volunteers and community volunteers who have participated in clean ups over the years. A drawback of this assessment is that this environmental awareness was not qualified with greater detail so the nuances of ‘environmental awareness’ remain fuzzy. Further research could research could seek to qualify the degree of awareness and areas of environmental education about the state of Still Creek among volunteers and the neighbourhood in proximity to the stream.

### **5.3.2 Communicating the economic value of restoration**

Document review found that the environmental restoration at Still Creek is being framed as an effective cost-savings strategy in the long term. One of the three objectives of the collaborative restoration plan seeks to improve the natural ecosystem as a ‘cost effective strategy for flooding and the long-term management of storm water’ (Still Moon Arts, 2016f). This perspective recognized other stakeholders values present at Still Creek (e.g. local governments) and frames the restoration efforts as assisting towards their priority for storm water management. This was not discussed widely by respondents, only one respondent discussed ecological restoration of Still Creek as cost-savings measure in storm water management (Interviewee 1, 2015).

## 5.4 Contributions to Place at Renfrew Ravine

Through their creative and multidisciplinary engagement with this place, there are important community connections and place connections being made through the Moon Festival, through community art pieces, and through stewardship and environmental education. These processes reinforce one another and create different experiences, knowledge, and connections to the place for people involved and participating that suggest a sense of place is present. Further, the work at Renfrew Ravine is contributing to a sense of community among those involved, and potentially, the broader community.

### 5.4.1 Change in Attitudes and Behaviours towards Renfrew Ravine

Changes in attitudes and behaviours towards Still Creek suggest increased awareness of Still Creek in the neighbourhood. Several respondents felt that the growing awareness of Still Creek as a site that is cared for in the community has contributed to better treatment of the ravine. Improved treatment noted by respondents includes the reduction of dumping garbage, grass clippings, and other materials along the banks of the ravine. Note that respondents also found a general decrease in other illicit activities in the ravine associated with increased use and attention towards the ravine (Interviewee 10, 2016; Interviewee 2, 2016). However, it is unclear if these activities have simply migrated elsewhere.

“Because the Moon Festival has increased awareness of the ravine, appreciation of its beauty and increased liveability of the neighbourhood, its importance to the environment (cleaner air, resource for birds) I noticed a shift in attitudes and behaviours. One thing is that’s there less garbage being pulled out during clean-ups.” (Interviewee 12, 2015)

“I think the strongest example of how people have changed their perspectives about the stream is that ravine clean-ups are becoming less required. Instead of cleaning up garbage over the years, the clean-ups have changed into stewardship events. Now, they focus on rehabilitation of nature instead of having to pull out old pieces of furniture and garbage.” (Interviewee 1, 2015)

“There was definitely a waste problem. There has been a decrease in waste because before people were pouring garbage into the ravine. In the past, the clean-ups were about taking old sofas and mattresses out of the ravine but since the Festival has happened that has decrease. Now we do restoration projects like planting trees, removing invasive species and

being able focus more on the ravine itself instead of the garbage in the ravine.” (Interviewee 4, 2015)

This change of behaviours was felt by respondents as evidence in the change of perception from the ravine from a garbage dump into a place to be cared for. This is also supported by respondent providing noting the ownership over the ravine. However, further research is required to understand and quantify the factors (e.g. awareness, art) affecting behaviors at Still Creek.

#### **5.4.2 Sense of Ownership at Still Creek**

As interest and work at the ravine has increased over the years, ownership of this space has also grown. Ownership implies strong connections to this place as people care for and maintain places that have meaning to them. Anecdotes about ownership include care-taking and stewardship outside of organized events such as cutting grass at the labyrinth or weeding gardens (Interviewee 1, 2015). Two respondents referred to the work of late resident Grant McKay, a ‘self-appointed care-taker of the ravine’ because of his dedication to cleaning and restoration over the years (Interviewee 1, 2015; Interviewee 2, 2016). His family donated his rock collection for the mosaic at the south entrance to Renfrew Ravine Park which now memorializes his connection to the place (Interviewee 1, 2015; Interviewee 2, 2016; Interviewee 9, 2015). One respondent feels that the efforts put into restoring and celebrating the ravine has created a sense of ownership of the space:

“So the words would just get out in the community about this place and the community started to take ownership of it very quickly and it stayed. I think the ownership stayed because a lot of members of the community invested their time and energy into the reclamation and recovery of the Ravine. They don’t want to see it forgotten or lost.” (Interviewee 2, 2016)

As this respondent suggests, ownership and care-taking demonstrate a connection to this place that is more qualitative or emotional. This suggests sense of place may be present at Still Creek.

#### **5.4.3 Connections to Still Creek**

Overall, respondents noted several ways in which Renfrew Ravine has become a place of meaning to them and others in the community. Through both the artistic and

environmental work at the ravine, respondents discuss the ravine as a place to connect with community and as a place that is meaningful:

“I also think that the work that’s been done with the schools and the kids and community members that are involved with the clean-ups. There was always lots of volunteer involvement....But I think it’s allowed for all sorts of opportunities for people to connect around the ravine and the caring for the ravine. So in people’s minds I think it’s a really strong place and making connections because of it.” (Interviewee 11, 2015)

“I think doing activities like celebrations, art workshops, environmental workshops, opportunities for volunteering it makes people care about their community and it makes people care about the environment, not only just the general environment but the environment in their own neighbourhood...So by doing these activities that directly relate to Renfrew Ravine it creates more awareness of how lucky we are to have this green amenity in our neighbourhood and how we should be also taking care of it as neighbours.” (Interviewee 3, 2016)

“That was meaningful because you realize you could really make a difference and community could feel like it belonged to its own neighbourhood. Because this place could very easily just be a bedroom community and sometimes it is. To change our own self-perception as not a place to leave to get things done but you can actually have your art and culture in your own neighbourhood and take care of your own neighbourhood. It’s a big change but it’s slowly, slowly happening here, I would say.” (Interviewee 1, 2015)

These quotes discuss the activities at the ravine in light of creating a sense of community. Activities at or near the ravine have facilitated opportunities to come together (e.g. events, workshops and activities) and connect with others in the community. This did not mean it was the *only* place for community connections, but one among other important places in the neighbourhood such as the community centre or Collingwood Neighbourhood House. Here we see some of these elements come to light:

“What I like about it is it gives me a feeling of being connected, that is gives me a feeling of purpose, and that’s important to me. It’s an emotional thing for me it’s my heart. The Neighbourhood House and the ravine, for me, are the centre of the community, as well the community centre too. They are great connectors for people. If you are not into the programs and services that the Neighbourhood House has to offer at least you can connect with people around the ravine. I think that helps to create a spirit of community.” (Interviewee 2, 2015)

I think the community feels more like a community. I think around Collingwood Neighbourhood House there is a sense of community. This part of the neighbourhood there is a little less so because there is not as many cultural nodes and even the ravine, it’s a solitary cultural node, and

it's not a gathering place so much other than at these festivals I create. But I think there is still more a sense of community and neighbourhoodness because everyone is proud of the ravine." (Interviewee 1, 2015)

"The work that's been done with the schools, the kids and community members that are involved with the clean-ups - there was always lots of volunteer involvement. I think it's allowed for all sorts of opportunities for people to connect around the ravine and the caring for the ravine. So in people's minds I think it's a really strong place and making connections because of it." (Interviewee 11, 2015)

Renfrew Ravine has provided new opportunities for community connections through Still Moon's artistic and environmental collaborations. The opportunities for involvement are unique and complementary to other community organizations operating in the neighbourhood (e.g. Community Centre). Still Moon has found a niche area for community engagement at Renfrew Ravine using both art and environmental stewardship to draw people into activities and to the ravine.

#### 5.4.4 Still Creek contribution to neighbourhood character

The novelty and value of the ravine is an area is emphasized by many respondents. Both Still Moon Society respondents and external partners characterize the ravine using uniqueness, jewel, or gem to describe it. The emphasis on the novelty of having a ravine in the neighbourhood and the language that denotes the ravine as special suggests a kind of 'branding' has taken root among these respondents. Still Creek may be contributing to the identity of Renfrew-Collingwood neighbourhood. Here is how Still Moon respondents characterized the stream (emphasis added):

"Sometimes in the manicured parks, there is a lot of activity; there could be a ball game happening or something other activity. But the ravine itself is usually very quiet and you can sit and listen to the birds. Unfortunately, you don't hear as many songbirds around here as you used to. I don't know if that's because of the cats or the pesticides or who knows. But they are still around and you can still hear the birds. There are coyotes, racoons, skunks, rabbits – they all live in that ravine. They are quite visible to the people who live on the ravine. **I think the Ravine gives us a sense of uniqueness. It sets us apart from other communities.**" (Interviewee 2, 2016)

"I feel very fortunate to be able to access greenspace in the neighbourhood. It is not necessarily like park or a playground but just greenspace that's not been developed by the city of Vancouver. I don't

think there are a lot of places like that in Vancouver. I'm quite fortunate that I have that option to go for a walk in the ravine or access a waterway or to see salmon swimming through the stream closer to Grandview Highway. **Renfrew Ravine is a pretty amazing place and a lot of my neighbours call it a gem because compared to a lot of other neighbourhoods, they don't have as much access to nature.**" (Interviewee 3, 2015)

Further, two respondents external to Still Moon also referred to the uniqueness of the ravine in this way (emphasis added):

**"I see Renfrew Ravine as a unique gem on the East side of Vancouver.** You can see its one of the most significant swaths of green on the East side; Trout Lake of course is another major site. This is very much a hidden gem on the East side of Vancouver that very few people actually even know about. I think that is because it's tucked away in the residential fabric of the city and people aren't aware there is a creek in it unless you live in the neighbourhood. People discover it by accident when they are trying to cycle through. Maybe also we haven't done a good enough job of featuring or making the public aware that it exists." (Interviewee 8, 2015)

"It is certainly a slice of nature in the city. Every month we have stewardship events that happened there. And we take volunteers down to the stream and as soon as you dip into the actual ravine off of street-level, you feel like you're not actually in the city anymore, except for the pieces of garbage and the invasive plants that are all around you. And you can't hear anything, you're surrounded by trees. **I genuinely feel like it's a gem in the city but an entirely under-recognized one.**" (Interviewee 9, 2015)

Respondent qualify a unique value and character of Still Creek for the neighbourhood may reflect a sort of identity for those who work closely with it. It is unclear if this new character for the neighbourhood is widely shared but it resonates with those who have participated in Still Moon's work, as well as the city planners and collaborators. Note that the uniqueness of Still Creek and its value for the neighbourhood must be tempered by the being relatively under-recognized within the City of Vancouver and potentially the region. However, the return of salmon to the upper watershed has peaked interest in Still Creek in recent years.

#### 5.4.5 Return of the Salmon on the Perceived Value Still Creek

The return of salmon to the upper portions of Still Creek have increased awareness of and changed attitudes towards the stream. In 2012, chum salmon returned to spawn at the open sections of Still Creek near Lougheed Highway, just north of Renfrew Ravine the main focus of Still Moon's work. This was the first time in 70 years that the fish had been seen in the upper catchment of Still Creek. Long-standing restoration efforts by governments and community organizations were critical to the return of this species in the upper watershed of Still Creek (Interviewee 1, 2015). This success renewed enthusiasm and interest towards Still Creek and refocused restoration on re-establishing salmon populations in the stream (Parsons, 2015). The excitement generated by the salmon return has increased awareness of the value of Still Creek in the neighbourhood but also within Vancouver more broadly. Local media celebrated the return by sharing videos, articles, and images, and have continued to do so every year that they come back. Below are reflections on the importance of the salmon return:

"I think awareness in general is increasing. What really helps is when you get salmon up the creek. It's the first time in seventy years that they've come back. Who would have thought that would happen in the City of Vancouver? The salmon came back and people were going down there to look." (Interviewee 2, 2016)

"First week of November, I spent a lot of time down behind Canadian Tire looking at the fish. You get all the people from Vancouver Film Studios, taking the Skytrain home and various people coming out of Canadian Tire, they are all stopping and talking. They were telling all their fish stories and getting really excited about it, texting all their friends and taking photos. Lots of people are very, very excited that it's actually happening here, in this neighbourhood, in what is basically a dirty ditch. But it is a ditch that has been restored." (Interviewee 1, 2015)

The salmon symbolize an important turning point for the value for Still Creek in the neighbourhood. Still Moon noted that the excitement generated by the salmon had immediate impact in attitudes towards the stream like participants restoration of the salmon population in consultations of the Master Planning Process for Renfrew Ravine and Renfrew Community Park.

"The timing was perfect that they were doing the [Renfrew Ravine and Renfrew Community Park] plan two weeks after the salmon returned for

the first time in eighty years. That was pretty good timing so then everybody was saying, ‘Yeah, what we want is a Master Plan where salmon can spawn right up to 29<sup>th</sup> avenue and I wasn’t the only one saying that. Dozens of community members were writing it on forms. We want salmon spawning in Renfrew Ravine. And two weeks before that, we never even saw that was possible. So that’s pretty exciting.’ (Interviewee 1, 2015)

The salmon were an unexpected way that people became interested in Still Creek that had a direct impact on how they valued the stream. Still Creek was suddenly viewed as habitat for salmon. Still Moon embraced this emerging priority by celebrating the return of the salmon and the restoration of salmon populations has been integrated into holistic vision for the Still Creek watershed.

#### **5.4.6 Advocacy for Restoration and Holistic Management of Still Creek**

Still Moon has played a role in communicating community priorities for Still Creek with local governments. One respondent observed that as the community started to care more for the ravine, they noticed that the local government has also paid more attention to it (Interviewee 4, 2015). For example, Still Moon were concerned about the master planning process prioritizing access to the ravine over ecological conservation (Interviewee 12, 2016; Interviewee 9, 2015, Interviewee 1, 2015). This issue was discussed in the consultations for the parks master plan and the final plans addressed accessibility of the ravine in balance with ecological integrity, say respondents. Viewing platforms and access points were positioned away from the streambed at Renfrew Ravine instead of high impact paved pathways to the stream (Interviewee 8, 2015; Interviewee 1, 2015; Interviewee 9, 2015).

Still Moon continues to advocate for the holistic management for Still Creek and restoring the creek on broad-scale. The latest collaborative project brings together many organizations to restore parts of Still Creek (Still Moon Arts, 2016f). The project is a collaboration of Silva Forest Foundation, Simon Fraser University, and Vancouver Foundation “to provide science, funding, and community vision that are required to bring more native plants and animals back to Still Creek,” through a watershed-wide restoration plan that collaborates with residents, property owners, and local schools (Still Moon Arts, 2016f). It will pursue restoration projects like native plantings, rain gardens, and others enhancements to the stream, where practical and possible (Still Moon Arts,

2016). The project is decisive move towards a more holistic approach to restoration and enhancement of Still Creek by non-profits, universities and other civil society organizations beyond the restoration plans initiated by local government and regional organizations. Notably, the environmental restoration at Still Creek is being framed as a cost savings measure. One of the three objectives of the collaborative restoration plan seeks to improve the natural ecosystem as a 'cost effective strategy for flooding and the long-term management of storm water' (Still Moon Arts, 2016f). By recognizing this value for cost-savings, they are communicating the value of restoration with municipal priority of mitigating financial risks associated with storm water management. Together, these elements demonstrate efforts to value and restore Renfrew Ravine and Still Creek as a place. The changing attitudes and behaviours towards the ravine, ownership over the space, and the references to a 'strong place' for connections suggest placemaking is occurring at the site. Further, respondents are using language that emphasizes the uniqueness of this ravine for the neighbourhood which suggests that the ravine may be growing an identity of the neighbourhood, at least among those who work closely with it. The salmon return marked a significant shift towards valuing Still Creek and Still Moon has helped celebrate this return and integrated salmon return as a priority for the creek. The advocacy to create new restoration plans and the holistic management of Still Creek also demonstrates the importance of this place for Still Moon Society, but also a new group of funders and collaborators.

The impacts of these activities will be explored further in the discussion section. But first, I will summarize some of the challenges faced by this community group and for the Still Creek.

## **5.5 Challenges**

### **5.5.1 Funding**

A key challenge for Still Moon's work at Renfrew Ravine is the long-term and stable funding to implement their vision and maintain programming at the ravine (Interviewee 1, 2015; Interviewee 9, 2015). This continuity is vital for a small organization with limited capacity in terms of full time employees. Funding and support has come by way of various municipal grants, provincial partnering programs and even federal funding for youth employment, for example. This tends to be short-term and

project-based, making longer term planning and organizing on the part of the organization more difficult. While funding they have leveraged has enabled work, ongoing grant writing diverts energy away from on the ground work of improving, restoring and celebrating the ravine in the community. One respondent felt that local governments should invest in people and organizations that care about places in their community:

“The struggle for municipalities and the region with regards to stewardship is that you can't force someone to care about a space. If you have individuals who are passionate about a particular space, it is worth providing resources and whatever assistance they need to further that work because their passion is going to drive a lot more action on the ground than a municipality has the capacity to do.

So I think the lessons is that community groups that have a particular connection or passion for a space are of huge value and unrecognized value. There are certainly members of the municipality who recognize exactly what Still Moon is doing and the efforts they have put in. But in a broader sense there is a lack of understanding of just how important that work is.” (Interviewee 9, 2015)

While this organization has remained committed to Still Creek for nearly fifteen years, the volunteer-based nature of the initiative is both a strength and limitation as well. From the perspective of local government, volunteer commitment can wax and wane in light of other priorities (Interviewee 8, 2015). The dormancy of another volunteer-based stewardship organization, Still Creek Stewardship Society, is used as an example (Interviewee 8, 2015). Further, the role of Artistic Director Carmen Rosen as a champion for Still Creek is well recognized in the community (Interviewee 12, 2016; Interviewee 9, 2015; Interviewee 8, 2015). She has contributed commitment, vision, and passion for Still Creek and the neighbourhood over the years, and some wondered how the work would proceed in her absence (Interviewee 12, 2016; Interviewee 9, 2015; Interviewee 8, 2015). However, the mentorship and capacity building of youth leaders and collaborative organizations demonstrates how the work at the ravine goes beyond any one individual. Still, others who have contributed recognize the large shoes to fill should Rosen retire in her role.

### **5.5.2 Buy-In and Follow-Up by Local Government**

While there has been interest and support from local government, there are also challenges with these relationships. There are differing ecological priorities for Still Creek among stakeholders, at times. While there has been interest and support for community priorities by local governments, storm water management is the top-most priority at the city in contrast to restoring ecological health using an ecosystem approach (Interviewee 1, 2015). With increasing studies on Still Creek and restoration plans, some have noted a shift towards valuing habitat resilience and biodiversity as objectives that would support storm water issues (Interviewee 1, 2015; Parsons, 2015). Others found that since the community has become more interested in and valuing the creek, the city has also followed suit but the bureaucratic processes can also impede buy-in and support (Interviewee 4, 2015; Parsons, 2015).

The challenges with the relationship between Still Moon and the City of Vancouver are bureaucratic, political and financial limitations, also found by Parsons (2015). Several people described bureaucratic limitations when it came to addressing issues at the ravine such as lack of central body to address concerns (Interviewee 1, 2015; Interviewee 2, 2016; Interviewee 3, 2016). There is also an issue with continuity of relationship at the city. With the Still Creek Enhancement Plan completed, the investment of time and effort fostering a strong relationship with this department risks being lost. While by the Greenest City Fund has provided funding for the new restoration initiative at Still Creek, this is a new relationship and it remains to be seen if and how community priorities will be valued in this arrangement and with other organizations involved. Further, concern was expressed about the follow-up and implementation of the Renfrew Ravine and Renfrew Community Park Master Plan (Interviewee 1, 2015; Interviewee 3, 2016). After completing the plans in 2013, no work on the ground has begun.

### **5.5.3 Challenges for Environmental Restoration and Holistic Management of Still Creek**

The ecological reality faced by Still Creek in the upper watershed is a challenging one. There are several barriers to implement the holistic management of the ravine that the community envisions (Parsons, 2015). These include the physical limitations of

implementing the ecosystem based approach in the urbanized watershed, and political buy-in with local government with limited financial resources, as well as private property ownership in the watershed as a barrier to a widespread restoration (Parsons, 2015, pg. 74). Even with new value for Still Creek and restoration projects, some of these challenges will be difficult to overcome in light of the extent of the problem, allocated funding, and implementing watershed-level change necessary to improve some ecological objectives (e.g. improved water quality).

## 6 Discussion

In the discussion, there will be an assessment of key aspects of placemaking at Still Creek against the literature including contributions to sense of place, and sense of community, and a discussion of how this case contributes to the understanding of 'sustainable places'.

### 6.1 Placemaking at Renfrew Ravine

Respondents are clear that the various community engagement initiatives associated with the ravine are helping to build sense of community. Still Moon has used a participatory approach to both arts and environmental activities that emphasizes participation and involvement of residents in the process that has positive impacts in the community. Participation and involvement are essential to fostering a sense of belonging that builds a sense of community (Silberberg et al, 2013; Project for Public Spaces, 2015).

The high attendance of the festival and the active participation in art installations demonstrates the value of arts as a means of engaging community (Brown et al, 2011; Lowe, 2000; Flinn & McPherson, 2007; Lewis, 2013). The Moon Festival is a meaningful event that contributes to the sense of belonging and sense of community because it encourages participation in the event, provides opportunities to volunteer, and mobilizes a large network of people in the neighbourhood to perform, organize and execute the event. This is high on the engagement spectrum described by Brown et al (2011), where the audience can both co-create and are the artists themselves in the festival. Through its active engagement of the neighbourhood, the Moon Festival is meaningful ritual repeated year after year that connects with others in the community.

The process of the Moon festival, art installations and stewardship activities all bring people together to connect in community. Research shows that these connections assist with health and wellness by making friends, being happy, and generally reducing social isolation (Lewis, 2013, pg. 9; Newman et al, 2004). With the community projects were open and collaborative which has help volunteers and organizers feel the sense of pride and accomplishment in achieving a shared goal (Lowe, 2000; Dang, 2005; Flinn &

McPherson, 2007). As shown through the Moon Festival, arts activities are an attractive way to get youth involved and create capacity, learning and even leadership like they have in Renfrew-Collingwood (Dang et al, 2005b).

In particular, the festival has made efforts to celebrate diversity of the community and create an inclusive event for everyone to enjoy. Opening people to new ideas and experiences is an important asset of the arts-based models that was found to contribute to social cohesion (Flinn & McPherson, 2007; Dang, 2005; Reinsborough, 2008). Through the festival experience, people are brought together who may not otherwise meet and neighbours are able to have a collective experience with each other enjoying the art and culture performances, despite cultural differences or language barriers. This is how arts and cultural at the Moon Festival has helped bridge differences in community and create an inclusive event that help all members of the community feel like they belong.

Social capital may be a factor in the Moon Festival as a community process. The network of volunteers, artists and organizations that collaborate and work together to achieve the Moon Festival suggests social capital may be present. Placemaking projects have seen social capital evolve from collaborative processes (Hou & Rios, Semenza et al, 2006). Still Moon and collaborating organizations have attributed successes at the ravine and success as a community to the collaboration that goes on between community organizations. These relationships operate in both directions; Still Moon supports and contributes to other community events and festivals like the Earth Day Parade put on by the Leadership Group at Windemere Secondary School, and those partners support Still Moon in return. This collaboration is evidence of community in action; to act like a community is to feel like community, and reflects upon the ability to mobilize among the network of partners as mentioned by social capital. Further research is needed to understand how social capital functions within these relationships but there is a distinctive community effort at work around the Moon festival.

Evidence suggests people's perceptions of place at Renfrew Ravine and Still Creek is changing. Various factors may be contributing to people's concept of this place from one where garbage is dumped, or is scary, to something that is sacred, important and valued. The changes in perceptions mentioned include perceiving nature as sacred, and the memorable experience of the festival lasting well beyond the day. The enduring

nature of the festival and the growth in attendance can help to reinforce this sense of place by creating a community tradition around the ravine and memories year after year (Dang et al, 2005a, pg. 3; Carruthers, 2006).

Findings also suggest that Renfrew Ravine is imbued with meaning, memories, experiences, and connections for volunteers and potentially residents in the community. A sense of place can be fostered through experience in a place over time that creates meaningful connection, memories and ties to that place (Project for Public Spaces, 2015; Williams, 2008, pg. 14). Sense of place is being fostered and reinforced by connecting people through multiple activities that bring people to the physical space in different ways such as the Moon Festival, art installations at the ravine, and education, stewardship, and restoration activities. Through these organized activities, the use of the ravine is increasing, if only at the time of the event, by bringing people to together at the ravine. Further, by engaging in different streams of these activities, Still Moon are attracting different users at the ravine and offering multiple ways for citizens to participate in the community. Multiple uses and attractions are elements of a 'strong place' which has been associated with vibrancy and resiliency (Project for Public Spaces, 2015).

Art installations can also contribute to the sense of place by helping to improve the comfort and image of place (Project for Public Spaces, 2015). The art at the ravine have served as a reminder that this place is special and cared for, and helped invite people into the space. Greater invitation and comfort is important at Renfrew Ravine as it had a reputation as being scary and inaccessible. Comfort has grown with increased use of the space although some illicit activities were still reported. Accessibility remains an issue at Renfrew Ravine, but as noted, there is a dynamic tension between accessibility and protecting ecological sensitive habitat. Still, art installations at the ravine can help counter perceptions of safety and fear that existed in the past and welcomes those who pass by. Even though use of this space may not have greatly increased beyond scheduled events and activities, key informants suggest the image of the place has improved within the neighbourhood.

Collecting and sharing stories also contributes to sense of place and identity associated with place. Research has discussed the importance of storytelling in creating a collective identity, sharing history and contributing to a shared sense of place (Cilliers

et al, 2015; Sandercock, 2012). “Stories change people’s appreciation of places and change the way they feel about places...Using stories is an approach that enhances the social connection between people, the users of the space, and the qualitative place.” (Cilliers et al, 2015). Stories and memories from Still Creek’s are being shared through the Still Creek Stories project and animated by like performance art at the Moon Festival (Still Moon Arts Society, 2016l). Further, the role of memory in the annual nature of the Moon Festival provides an opportunity to create new memories with family and friends, as a volunteer or performer in a park in their neighbourhood. These stories connect people to place but also to the social and ecological history at the Renfrew Ravine and the Still Creek watershed more broadly.

Behaviours towards the ravine suggest that awareness towards and value of the ravine may be growing. Respondents associated better treatment of Renfrew Ravine as a result of the work in the neighbourhood in terms of reduced dumping and illicit activities such as intravenous drug use. Several studies suggest that attachments to place can encourage people to have pro-environmental behaviours (Brehm, 2013; Vaske and Krobin, 2001; Ardoin, 2006) However, I acknowledge there may be other factors impacting dumping such as demographic shift or increased environmental education not associated with the project. These nuances could be explored in greater depth in another study. Further, people participating in illicit activities in the ravine in years past may not have had this issue addressed in a meaningful way. They may have simply moved elsewhere in the community or the city as interest and use of the ravine rose. This could be a negative impact associated with the project for this population. It reveals a potential weakness of the placemaking model when certain populations’ uses of a space aren’t taken into account, even when those uses are negative.

Ownership, caretaking and advocacy on behalf of Renfrew Ravine and Still Creek are important indications of the value of this stream in the community. The Project for Public Spaces (2015) notes that placemaking will foster ‘self-management’ which several key informants have demonstrated at Renfrew Ravine. There is a sense that those who acted as caretakers were doing so because the place is meaningful to them. With the return of the salmon sparking an interest and value of Still Creek, there has been greater community advocacy on behalf of the creek in traditional planning process and for new collaborations to restore sections of Still Creek in the neighbourhood. The

salmon have served as an important symbol of possibility and opportunity for Still Creek restoration.

Lastly, Renfrew Ravine and Still Creek may be contributing to aspects of identity for some people in the neighbourhood. Those involved had a sense that Still Creek's presence in the neighbourhood adds to its uniqueness and character. Through activity and attention towards Still Creek, Still Moon may be helping fostering a community identity around this ravine, a process supported by placemaking research (Lowe, 2000; Dang et al, 2005a).

## **6.2 Placemaking and sustainability**

This case study has suggested that placemaking is occurring at Still Creek in the activities around Renfrew Ravine. The case offers several lessons to the sustainability of placemaking projects. This includes the value of an interdisciplinary, collaborative approach, youth engagement, and a long-term commitment to place through ongoing maintenance, and restoration of place.

Collaboration was shown to be a crucial aspect of the work of placemaking at Still Creek. Through collaboration, likeminded and complementary groups came together. This helped to strengthen the network of people, human capital and financial capital mobilizing around Still Creek, and the potential new ideas, perspectives, and values for the creek. Collaboration is foundational aspect of placemaking and it will continue to be part of sustainable places, especially as the goals to move into greater interdisciplinary work and restoration (Robertson, 2015). Where the work involves one of more disciplines, it may be necessary to collaborate with other people and organizations in areas of interest or expertise, and to bring their perspective. One particular collaboration that been successful for Still Creek is the involvement of youth from the local secondary schools.

Increased engagement of youth can offer passion, energy, and leaders in placemaking practice. In this case study, youth have been a strong source of volunteers and have made substantial contributions at the ravine through arts and stewardship activities. Youth mentorship and peer-based-learning were important strategies to encourage participation and leadership among youth volunteers. Many youth volunteers

were involved from children to young adults and deepened their involvement and responsibility over time such as assuming leadership roles in the activities at the ravine and within Still Moon Arts Society. An effective youth engagement strategy will encourage involvement and help foster the next generation of stewards, art-makers, and advocates at Still Creek. These findings have application in other placemaking contexts in that youth, and also children, are real and valuable stakeholders in community efforts to create, reinvigorate, and restore public spaces. By engaging youth in places, findings suggest there is a greater likelihood of sustaining the meaning, quality and value of that in the long term and potentially, through generations. Engaging youth, and even children, is a prerequisite of sustainable placemaking practice.

This case also emphasizes the role of interdisciplinary placemaking to achieve sustainability objectives. The work of Still Moon and their partners shows that different disciplines can collaborate like biologists and artists. This has served to strengthen the interest in Still Creek and the ability to accomplish goals in different areas (e.g. restoration, artistic skill building). As a result, sustainable placemaking can consider that art and environmental education, stewardship, and restoration are unlikely allies that can be quite complementary. Arts and cultural activities can be used as mediums for environmental messages, and help to celebrate nature, natural places, and parks. The sense of place fostered through one medium can be reinforced through the other, perhaps deepening the connection to the place. For placemaking practice to move towards sustainability, this case study suggests there would be greater interdisciplinary work as appropriate to the context including environmental stewardship and restoration.

The trend towards sustainable places is largely marked by the move towards ecologically responsive and restorative projects. This case shows that the arts and cultural events are a strong compliment for environment. Ultimately, when people care about a place, that place has meaning which, they are more likely to treat it better and care for it. While the measurement of sense of place was not the purpose here, the findings suggest that the festival, art in place and ecological art may provide a deeper connection to place that reinforces environmental messages but also can inspire better environmental behaviours and attitudes. This may be especially important where the restoration context is challenging (ie. the urban environment). Still Moon and their partners have learned over the years that the challenges to restoration in the watershed include the high expense associated with restoration projects and local government buy-

in to those approaches. Community organizers should assess limitations, strengths, opportunities, and challenges of restoration in their context. It should be noted that many of the successes derived at Still Creek came from a long term commitment.

The enduring commitment towards Still Creek over the years reflects the need for ongoing maintenance of places for sustainable places to be achieved. Still Moon and their partners have been committed to Still Creek for over 15 years, and have shifted their areas of focus over time. The organization has adapted to strategic opportunities as they are presented, like the return of the salmon to Still Creek, to redirect and renew their efforts, for example. All the while, they have maintained a rotating annual schedule of events that keep people coming back to Still Creek. Literature confirms that the commitment and flexibility is critical to achieving the impacts of placemaking objectives- community building, developing sense of place. The enduring nature of many of the events, like regular creek clean ups and annually activities such as the crow bike ride, the Moon Festival, re-instill, time and again, the connection to the creek and connections with others. The concept of 'placekeeping' is particularly salient for the Still Creek and sustainable placemaking.

Still Moon's experience at Still Creek confirms the need for the investment in and value of long term maintenance in place. In Still Moon's case, the support from local government exist on an ad hoc basis with even a new funding mechanism in place for the new restoration plan. In order to keep a consistent focus on the stream, a long term funding of this area would have greatly assisted the community work at this site. Others confirm there is there is a lack of foresight or investment in the long-term maintenance of public space in the practice (Dempsey & Burton, 2012, pg. 11). 'Placekeeping' advocates for long term investment in high-quality, sustainable spaces to avoid deterioration of public spaces into degraded environments with litter or anti-social behaviour such as crime (Dempsey & Burton, 2012, pg. 13). For placemaking to embrace sustainability, this gap should be bridged to explore investment models and opportunities with citizen groups activating a place like the Still Moon Society.

## 6.3 The Future at Still Creek

This research has explored the relationship between art - place – ecology in a case study at Renfrew Ravine, part of Still Creek in Vancouver, BC. The marriage of arts-based placemaking and environmental stewardship and restoration appears to have created the avenue for a growing sense of community and sense of place around Still Creek in the neighbourhood. There are important caveats; the ravine is still unknown to many, and greater effort is needed to make its value known in the community and the city writ large. However, the work at Still Creek is an example of a community coming together to change and transform a derelict and underused place to one that was valued and even, partially restored. Through the interdisciplinary collaboration, youth involvement, environmental restoration and the long term commitment at Still Creek, Still Moon contributes lessons for the movement towards sustainable placemaking.

Future plans at Still Creek in Renfrew-Collingwood neighbourhood have both promise and challenges for the community and this place. It remains to be seen how the implementation of Renfrew Ravine and Renfrew Community Park master plan will impact existing efforts at Renfrew Ravine and Renfrew Community Park over the next few years. There are many improvements planned for these two parks that create opportunities for increased awareness of the ravine in the community. But it is unclear how community-led initiatives, like the Moon Festival and stewardship, would proceed during the implementation of the master plans.

The project to restore aspects of Still Creek is also on the horizon. It is a promising opportunity for Still Moon to apply its best practice in community engagement around place to achieve greater restoration in the watershed. Hopefully, this project will continue to instill Still Creek as a meaningful place for people in the years to come through creative and active engagement at these sites.

## 6.4 Future Research

This project has identified several opportunities for future research. Research could explore aspects of environmental education and awareness of the Still Creek Watershed in the neighborhood especially geographic and/or particular populations. Future project could also follow up on the application of ecosystem-based management

in the Still Creek watershed and document the community process for the new restoration project at Still Creek. Further, it would be useful to explore the community's relationship to Still Creek upon the implementation of the Master Park Plan for Renfrew Ravine and Renfrew Community Park to whether sense of place is impacted at the site.

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## Appendix A: List of respondents and their affiliation

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Description</b>
Interviewee 1	Still Moon Arts Board Member	Internal
Interviewee 2	Still Moon Arts Board Member	Internal
Interviewee 3	Still Moon Arts Board Member	Internal
Interviewee 4	Still Moon Arts Board Member	Internal
Interviewee 5	Representative of Collingwood Neighbourhood House	Collaborating Organization
Interviewee 6	City of Vancouver Employee 1	Local Government
Interviewee 7	Local Historian on Still Creek	Collaborating Individual
Interviewee 8	City of Vancouver Employee 2	Local Government
Interviewee 9	Collaborating Non-Profit Association	Collaborating Organization
Interviewee 10	Representative of Collingwood Neighbourhood House	Collaborating Organization
Interviewee 11	Representative of Renfrew Collingwood Community Centre	Collaborating Organization
Interviewee 12	Representative of Windemere Secondary School	Collaborating Organization

# Appendix B: Interview Questions

## Placemaking at Renfrew Ravine: the role of art for resilient cities

### Interview Questions

*Julia Fryer, Simon Fraser University*

1. Tell me about Renfrew Ravine. How would you characterize it as a place?
2. Do you feel connected to this place?
3. How did you become involved with the Still Moon Society?
  - a. What is your role?
  - b. What are your objectives for being involved?
  - c. Have you learnt anything through the volunteer experience? (about yourself, your community, the Ravine, art etc.)
4. What are the objectives of the Still Moon Arts Society?
5. What activities does the Still Moon Arts Society perform to achieve those objectives?
6. Who is engaged in Still Moon activities? Who is the organization trying to involve in the community?
7. What is the Still Moon Arts Festival? Describe the event for me.
  - a. What is its purpose?
  - b. Who is involved in organizing the festival?
  - c. What activities lead up to the festival?
  - d. What is the structure of the festival day?
  - e. Who attends the festival?
  - f. Has the festival changed over the years?
  - g. In your opinion, what is unique or special about this event?
8. Does Still Moon Arts collaborate with other organizations in the neighbourhood around Renfrew Ravine?
9. Why does Still Moon Arts collaborate with other organizations?

10. What is the role of art in community?
11. What is particular about community-based art? Does it have a different purpose?
  - a. How does making or participating in art impact or change the individual?
  - b. How does making or participating or witnessing art impact or change a community?
12. Do you think that the activities Still Moon performs are creating a sense of community in the neighbourhood?
13. Do you think these activities Still Moon performs are contributing to a sense of place at Renfrew Ravine? In the neighbourhood?
14. Do you see or feel effects or impacts of the community art work in the neighbourhood (e.g. social, cultural, environmental, economic)?
15. Do you think art can connect people to the environment? And raise their level of awareness about environmental issues?
  - a. Based on your knowledge and experience, what is the level of awareness of environmental services that Renfrew Ravine provides in the neighbourhood? If so, do you have an example.
16. What is the reception of city planning processes in the neighbourhood (E.g. Renfrew Park and Ravine Master Plan Consultation)?
  - a. Do you sense that activities at Renfrew Ravine affected the planning process in any way?
17. 'Placemaking' is a term used to describe events or activities that build social interaction in a location that generates a sense of community and a sense of place. Do you think that placemaking is present at Renfrew Ravine? Why or Why not?
18. Any other comments or questions?

**Placemaking at Renfrew Ravine: the role of art for resilient cities**

**Interview Questions**

*Julia Fryer, Simon Fraser University*

1. How would you describe or characterize Renfrew Ravine as a place?
2. How is your organization involved with Renfrew Ravine?
  - a. What are your objectives in doing those activities?
3. What kind of collaborating have you/your organization done with the Still Moon Arts Society or other arts activities in the neighbourhood?
  - a. Did you or your organization draw any lessons from this collaboration?
4. Have you attended the Still Moon Festival? If so, describe for me what the festival is like for someone who hasn't attended.
5. Do you think Still Moon Arts has been effective at engaging the community in their neighbourhood around Renfrew Ravine? Can you provide an example of how you would measure this success?
6. In working with Still Moon, have you noticed any outcomes of their work in the neighbourhood (e.g. social, cultural, environmental, economic)?
7. Based on your knowledge and experience, what is the level of awareness of environmental services that Renfrew Ravine provides in the neighbourhood?
  - a. Do you feel their work has contributed to this awareness?
8. Do the arts activities affect your work, planning processes or initiatives in any way?
9. Placemaking has become a common term used to describe events or activities that build social interaction in a location that also generates a sense community and a sense of place. Do you think that placemaking is present at Renfrew Ravine? Why or Why not?
10. Do you think there is a connection between placemaking and a connection to the local environment?
11. What is the role of art in community?
12. Any other comments or questions?