MIDTERM EVALUATION REPORT

July 2020

INTRODUCTION

border crossings is an archaeology of the present. By using stories and narratives as the main resource to fuel alternative ways of seeing across a broad range of physical and cultural contexts. Led by a collective of Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists working together, the aim is to produce a significant body of work that transcends colonial politics and art making.

border crossings is an interactive community engagement lab, in which visitors are invited to share their stories and experiences with crossing borders - physical and metaphorical; geographical, linguistic, spiritual and personal. The project consists of animated activity stations, workshops and community-built installations and facilitated by the AGM's *border crossings* team, this is a space for forging connections and sharing experiences across the diverse community that make up Mississauga.

Through the generous support of the Ontario Trillium Foundation, continuing into the GROW phase (2019-2021), the project will extend increased access to unique experiences for Mississauga residents and visitors, collaborations and newer ways to present art to new audiences; and engagement of individuals from FIRST, NEW, and NEXT communities.

This report reflects the progress made in between January 1st, 2020 to June 30th, 2020, known as the first half of Year 2 of the *border crossings* project.

Year 2 (Jan - June)

During the first half of Year 2 of the *border crossings* project, a team was created with 4 new and 1 previous staff member consisting of a Project Lead, Community Project Coordinator, Community Animator (Social Media), Digital Innovator and Collaborator, and Evaluator. The challenge facing the team was to continue on with the project without the opportunity of onboarding from the previous staff.

In addition, as of March 18th, the City of Mississauga closed city hall due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As the Art Gallery of Mississauga (AGM) is located in city hall, this meant that the AGM was closed without access for the public or staff. This closure prompted the Board of Directors to temporarily lay off core staff with the thought that the closure would be short-term.

This unique situation challenged the new *board crossings* team to look for new ways of moving forward. Without access to previous project resources located in the office, as well as the AGM team and complicated with the pandemic restrictions, the programming transitioned from in-person to online. There was a period of experimentation to determine if online programming was a viable option. Furthermore, the team had not met in person and had to create a virtual team working remotely in order to execute the *border crossings* project.

COVID – 19 Adaptations

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic various adaptations had to be made to the program including the following:

- **Remote Working Conditions:** Due to the closure of the AGM, the team had to work remotely to implement the *border crossings* project. The AGM closure also limited team support by not having access to previous project material and limited support from AGM staff. Despite the team never having met in-person, they conducted weekly team meetings via ZOOM, phone, email and text to maintain constant communication between the team.

- **Virtual Programming:** Due to COVID-19 restrictions, group gatherings were prohibited. Furthermore locations such as the AGM and other partner locations were closed. In order to keep the project alive, virtual activities via ZOOM was the only way to continue to implement the project.

COVID - 19 Adaptations (continued)

- **Digital Transformation:** Digital transformation was the only options for the project. Previously all programming had occurred in-person. However the team quickly adapted to new software and operating procedures to execute activities effectively.

- **Online Marketing Strategy:** Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic online marketing and social media was an additional method to create awareness and encourage community involvement. Subsequently, it became the project's only source of community engagement as the project could not rely on AGM or City Hall walk-in traffic. This situation resulted in a more advanced and targeted marketing and engagement strategy to ensure project participation.

- **Limited Resources:** Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the scope of activities that the project could execute were limited because participants were confined to their homes, thus project activities could only consist of materials found in everyday households.

Evaluation Process

For the 2020 programmatic year, a mixed-research methodology was used to evaluate the *border crossings* project to ensure it was meeting its objectives.

The process evaluation methodology served to determine whether program activities had been implemented as intended and to evaluate the project's partnerships. A process evaluation was essential during this time period due to new team personnel transitions and the adaptations that occurred to the *border crossings* project due to COVID-19.

The outcome evaluation methodology served to measure program effects in the target population by assessing the programmatic outcomes that the project addresses. Specifically, *border crossings* project aims to achieve community connectedness, cultural awareness and expression of stories and experiences through art by program participants.

The evaluation process sought feedback from main stakeholder groups such as program participants and project staff. Feedback was obtained through in-person evaluation tools, which were then later adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic and executed online.

border crossings Team 2020

The new *border crossings* team was introduced in March 2020 and due to the COVID-19 pandemic were never introduced in person. The team was introduced virtually and has continued to meet remotely to implement the *border crossings* project during these unprecedented times.

Project Lead
Linda Thomas

Community Project Coordinator
Amanda Low

Community Activator (Social Media)
Devon Ross

Digital Innovation and Collaboration
Vasundra Srinivasan

Vasundra S. is an artists/facilitator and was brought on to the team due to her past experience in volunteering with the gallery, community connections and expertise in digital innovation.

Process Evaluation

Project team members were provided with an online survey, that was anonymous and confidential. The survey tracked project objectives and challenges by asking staff simple questions regarding **Who, What, When and Where.**

The results of these questions serve to determines whether project activities have been implemented as intended, and further explored the impact of team transitions and the COVID-19 pandemic.

All 4 team members responded to the survey which included the following questions:

- To whom did you direct your project efforts?
- Through your perspective, what has the project accomplished?
- When did your project activities take place?
- Where did your project activities take place?
- What are barriers to implementation of project activities?
- What are some challenges in this project that you have overcome?

In order to address the impact of team transitions and COVID-19, team members were also asked the following questions:

- How have team transitions affected the project POSITIVELY and NEGATIVELY?
- How has COVID-19 affected the project POSITIVELY and NEGATIVELY?

Process Evaluation

WHO?

Question: To whom did you direct your project efforts?

The project's efforts have been directed towards the local community members and artists of Mississauga and surrounding communities. There has been an emphasis of focusing programming towards Indigenous, newcomers and BIPOC populations within the community. However despite having a strong understanding of the targeted beneficiaries, further efforts are still required to further attract Indigenous and BIPOC populations.

"I directed my efforts towards BIPOC, but most of the people who have benefited are Non-Black and Non-Indigenous POC."
- border crossings Team Member 2020

Process Evaluation

WHAT?

Question: Through your perspective, what has the project accomplished?

All team members indicated that the project provided opportunities that empowered community members and educators to share and develop their skills through online programming. The transition to online programming has been invaluable to the community as these past 6 months personal interactions have been limited and social isolation has been pervasive due to COVID-19.

"Since March, the team has shown adaptability, resolve, creativity and teamwork to name a few. It has been shown that the project can successfully be taken online opening up a whole new platform for artists to engage in multiple communities, empowering them to do more workshops on their own and activating the community to an online format that is sustainable beyond the project."
- *border crossings* Team Member 2020

"It has given opportunities for educators to share their skills. These educators are people who otherwise may not have a platform to do so, and by giving them space and payment, they can have a voice while the community is engaged in the arts."
- *border crossings* Team Member 2020

Process Evaluation

WHEN?

Question: When did your project activities take place?

Project activities occurred more frequently and times were more flexible because the project was not restricted to Art Gallery and participant availability. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, participants were available to participate during the weekday afternoons. When compared to 2019 most workshops occurred in the evenings or weekends.

WHERE?

Question: Where did your project activities take place?

Project activities occurred solely online, team communications occurred ZOOM meetings, emails, messaging and phone calls. *border crossings* workshops were executed via ZOOM, and social media marketing was essential to create project awareness and to ensure workshop participation.

Process Evaluation

Barriers and Limitations

Question: What are barriers to implementation of project activities?

Team members indicated that barriers to implementation include team transitions, establishing and effectively executing online programming, and the lack of participant interconnections as a result of virtual programming.

"It would be great to have face to face, in person meetings but due to COVID-19 this has been impossible to date. Regarding the workshops, participants seem shy to share their stories and art so the team has had to create a more active role in encouraging this to happen."
- *border crossings* Team Member 2020

"The limitations of being confined to stay at home meant workshops could not be complicated, nor require materials that we would normally have a budget for. As such, workshops had to be simple and affordable, limiting the scope of what we could do."
- *border crossings* Team Member 2020

"Additionally, with a majority of the team from last year resigning, this meant the new team were picking up pieces left behind. A lot of things were unknown, and had to be figured out via one original team member, or by guesswork."
- *border crossings* Team Member 2020

Process Evaluation

COVID-19 Response

Question: How has COVID-19 affected the project?

POSITIVE EFFECTS

The team was able to successfully transition the project from in-person programming to online, despite a lack of resources and digital knowledge in this area. The team had a short time period and minimal preparation to undergo these significant changes. Despite the focus on the project being on execution and sustainability within this short time period, the team was also successfully able to produce high quality programming that reached a greater geographical area and developed deeper engagement with participants than last year.

NEGATIVE EFFECTS

Converting in-person programming to online programming has presented a variety of challenges around limited personal interactions. The online workshops lack the intimacy of in-person workshops and which further creates challenges when engaging and encouraging participants to share their art, stories and complete feedback questionnaires. In addition, this new method of programming effects the budget distribution as some aspects of the budget are no longer relevant - travel, space, food etc.

Process Evaluation

COVID-19 Effects - Responses from *border crossings* project team

POSITIVE EFFECTS

"It has shown the project can be done online, reaching and engaging a greater number of people, opening people's minds to think about crossing borders and what that can mean in a bigger picture, how it has impacted their lives, that they are not alone."

"Online workshops have given us the gift of deeper community involvement, wider geographical reach and agility to turn around a wider variety of programs."

"The pandemic has made people stay home, which meant that 1) we had a captive audience looking for something to do, and 2) workshops had to be held online, thus furthering our reach to outside of Mississauga."

NEGATIVE EFFECTS

"Online workshops lack intimacy that in-person workshops hold. We are also limited by what we can do due to the lack of materials available. Staff meetings are slightly more difficult, as they lack the intimacy and casual feeling that in-person meetings have. To this day we have not met in person, despite being a new team."

"It has presented challenges: it would have been great to work face to face as a team, engaging with participants personally in a live workshop, would have been easier to encourage the story telling and capturing images of the completed art pieces, would have been easier to have the participants complete the feedback forms."

Process Evaluation

COVID-19 Effects - Responses from *border crossings* project team

POSITIVE EFFECTS

"Our team came up with a digital adaptation strategy and with a collective calendar system, we have stayed constant with our social media engagement. Though prior workshops have failed to sell out, our online workshops usually sell out. Many of them reaching new audiences."

"Having to learn about the digital world and how to work with it. Convincing some that the project can work in an online environment while we were experimenting and adapting as we went along."

NEGATIVE EFFECTS

"Spending the grant funds as the nature of how we were programming no longer required certain spending categories such as travel, materials and supplies for the workshops, space rental, etc."

Process Evaluation

Team Transition Response

Question: How have team transitions affected the project?

POSITIVE EFFECTS

In March 2020, a new team was hired to execute the *border crossings* project, this new team has provided a different perspective to the project, and have navigated through these unprecedented times with the utmost focus on ensuring project objectives are focused. The constantly changing situational environment due to COVID-19 has also allowed the team to further explore the roles and develop new skills in digital programming and marketing.

NEGATIVE EFFECTS

The lack of on-boarding and past project information has proven to be challenging as the team had to depend on past AGM staff to learn about year 1 of the *border crossings* project. This proved to be a bigger struggle because the AGM team was laid off, the AGM closure and access to past documentations were not made accessible remotely.

Process Evaluation

Team Transition Effects – Responses from *border crossings* project team

POSITIVE EFFECTS

"Brought fresh perspectives to the project, new ideas on how to accomplish the project objectives, diverse skills and contacts in the community."

"I was originally meant to be in another role that required less administrative work. My previous position required me to do smaller tasks, such as creating marketing graphics and perhaps social media management. As I am new to my field, having only been in it for 2-ish years, this job gave me an opportunity to learn multiple skills. I've learned to create a project management from scratch that ensures everything follows a timeline, I've created a partnership with another organization, I've also continued to polish up my skills as a public speaker when I moderate the ZOOM workshops."

NEGATIVE EFFECTS

"Coming into this team with a lack of previous information was difficult. And when the AGM team got laid off, I had no one except one staff member to ask about previous projects."

"When we first started this project, we had a lack of direction of how we were going to run workshops while at home. "

"Not knowing what to do in my position."

Partnership Evaluation

Project team members participated in three workshops that aimed to identify past and current partnerships. The first workshop served to definite partnership types within the *border crossings* project. The second workshop evaluated for strength and sustainability of each partnership, while the third workshop strategically determined partnership growth opportunities for the *border crossings* project.

This revision process was essential because due to the lack of on-boarding and documentation, past partnerships had to be reviewed to see if they were still active. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic had affected a vast number of organizations as some had also closed down or were re-directing their efforts to providing essential services to the community.

Based on the scope of the *border crossings* project, the following types of partnerships were defined:

Partnership Types

CONNECTION »»» **RELATIONSHIP** »»» **COLLABORATION**

- **Email Communications**
- **Phone Communications**
- **Cross Promotional Efforts**

- **Workshop Execution**
- **Workshop Implementation**
- **Digital Features** (Blog, Podcast, YoutTube)
- **Festival/Event Participation**

- **Multi-year Relationship**

![AGM - ART GALLERY OF MISSISSAUGA]

partnership Evaluation

2020 Partnership Outputs

Partnership Type		Outputs
CONNECTIONS	Allevents, insauga, Living Arts Centre, Heritage Mississauga, Misssiauga Arts Council, Mississauga Library, Mississauga News, Modern Mississauga, Peel Weekly News	11 Organizations
RELATIONSHIPS	Rainbow Sauga Alliance	1 Organization
COLLABORATION	Blackwood Gallery (closed due to COVID-19) Mississauga Writer's Group	2 Organizations

Partnership Evaluation

2020 Partnership Next Steps

The goal for the remainder of the 2020 project year, is to strengthen partnerships by making them more sustainable. The main plan is to direct ownership of these partnerships from individuals to the project. Every partner listed in the grant has been directly contacted via email and follow-up call with the purpose of connecting, explaining the program and develop a working relationship. This will ensure if there are future team transitions, partnerships that have been developed during the project continue to grow and develop. Furthermore, connections will aim to become relationships, and relationships will strive to be collaborations in order to increase the quality of partnerships.

As a result of the workshop, the *border crossings* team is now focusing their energy towards initiating partnerships with specific groups that support Indigenous, BIPOC, Newcomers, Refugees and LGBTQ2S+ individuals. This strategy is imperative in order for the *border crossings* team to capture and share the stories of these marginalized and vulnerable populations.

Project Engagement

Direct Engagement

	Participants	Artists	Workshops
STATUS	355	7	32
GOAL	540	36	36

A total of 355 participants have been **DIRECTLY** engaged through the 32 artist led workshops organized by community artists on topics such as embroidery, storytelling, spoken word, doodling comic and zine creation and crochet.

Pre-COVID-19 (Jan - Mar)

11 Workshops

During COVID-19 (May - June)

355 Participants
7 Artists/Facilitators
21 Workshops

Within the first six months of Year 2, the project appears to be on track towards reaching its participant goal of 540. The project has almost surpassed its workshop execution goal of 36 workshops. However, the project has engaged 7 facilitators, which is substantially less than the desired 36. These outputs are not too concerning since participant and facilitator outputs need to be updated prior to COVID-19 once the AGM reopens.

Social Media Engagement

Social Media Engagement

	Instagram	Facebook	Twitter	LinkedIn
REACH	5050	15921	27647	1829
ENGAGEMENT	540	2528	36	111
POSTS	17	90	46	16

Due to the AGM closure and online programming transition, online marketing has been essential for *border crossings* project awareness and engagement. The project used 4 different social media channels (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter) to engage with the community. These channels were used to create awareness on issues and provide information on activities related to the *border crossings* project.

Twitter was able to reach and create the highest awareness on the *border crossings* project per post (601 individuals per post). While Instagram was able to generate the highest engagement per post (31 individuals engaged per post).
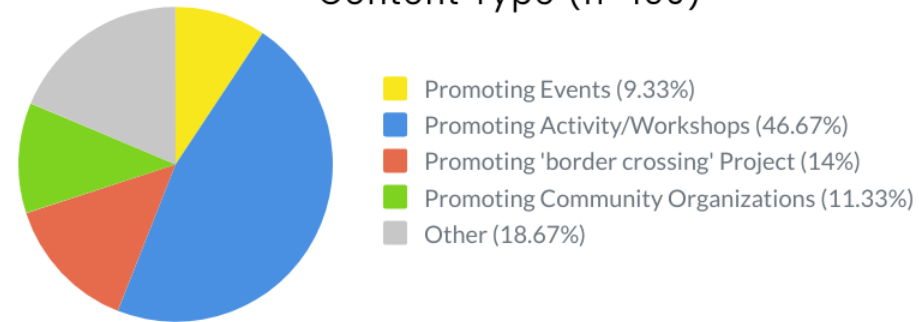
In addition to social media engagement, since May 2020 a news letter has been sent weekly to over 5,200 contacts establishing 46,800 connection points, creating awareness and evoking participation in the *border crossings* project.
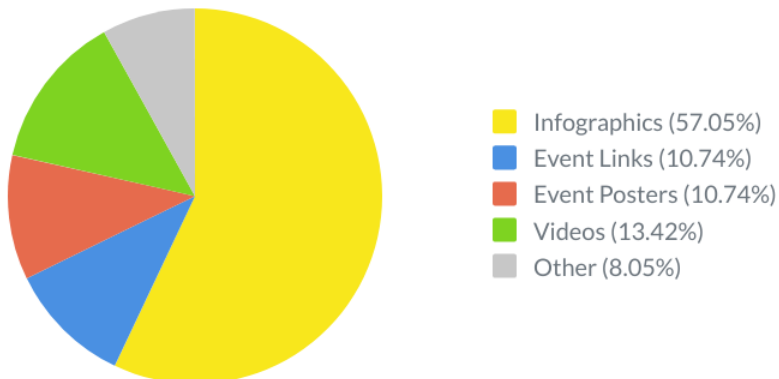
Social Media Content

Social Media Content

Social media was mainly used to promote 'border crossing' Project activities and workshops (**47%**). Partnership development was also another aspect of the Social Media strategy and community events and organizations were also promoted (**20%**).
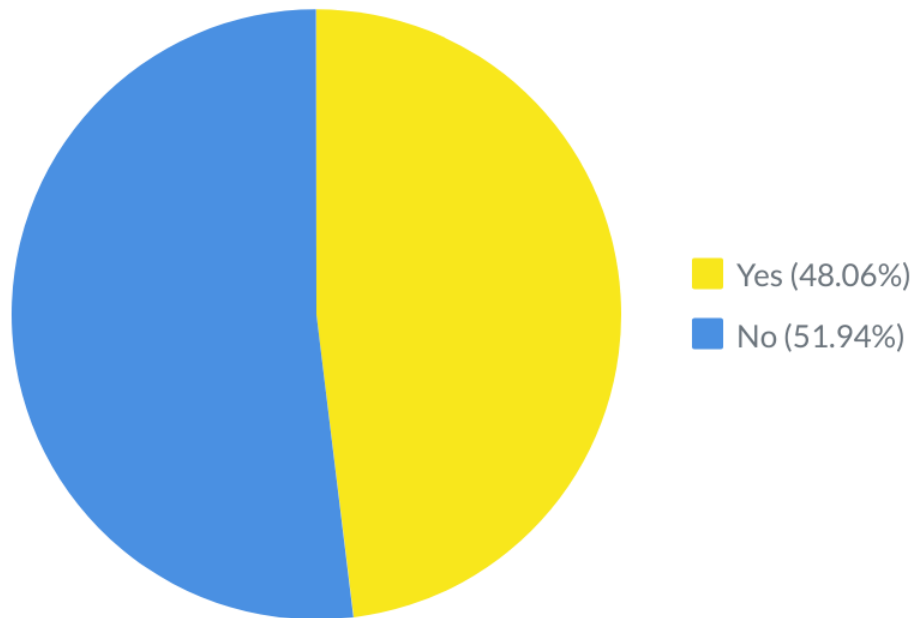
Content Type (n=150)

- Promoting Events (9.33%)
- Promoting Activity/Workshops (46.67%)
- Promoting 'border crossing' Project (14%)
- Promoting Community Organizations (11.33%)
- Other (18.67%)

Post Type (n=149)

- Infographics (57.05%)
- Event Links (10.74%)
- Event Posters (10.74%)
- Videos (13.42%)
- Other (8.05%)

57% of the posts were infographics, containing a combination of images and information. **20%** of the posts were either event links or posters and **13%** of the posts were videos.

Program Participation

Have you participated in a program at the AGM before? (n=258)

■ Yes (48.06%)
■ No (51.94%)

52% of *border crossings* project participants were new to the AGM. The remaining **52%** of participants had previously been involved with the AGM.

As the project continues to grow and establish itself, our hopes are for users to continuously be engaged in *border crossings* project activities.

Comparing pre-COVID-19 to COVID-19 programming, the *border crossings* project acquired more first-time users.
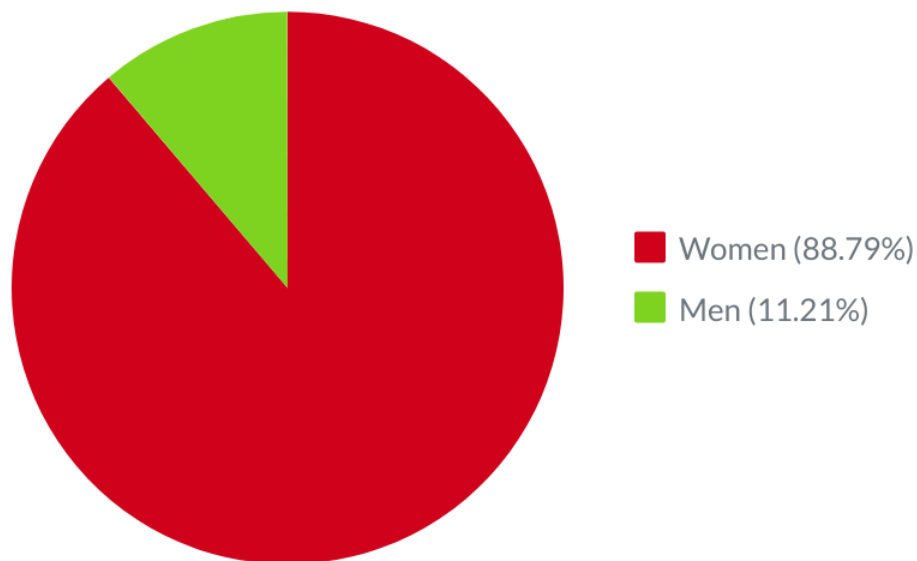
Pre-COVID-19	**During COVID-19**
YES - 61%	YES - 54%
NO - 39%	NO - 45%

Participant Identity

How do you identify (n=107)

- ■ Women (88.79%)
- ■ Men (11.21%)

89% of 'border crossings' Project participants identified as female, while **11%** identified as male.

When reviewing the Social Media analysis, the *border crossing*s posts engaged a similar percentage of females and males.
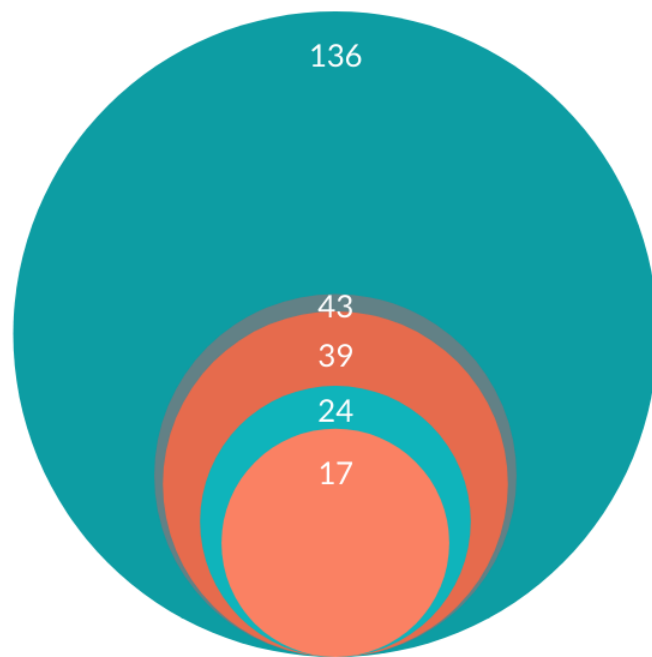
It would be ideal if the project could engage an equal amount of women and men, and be more inclusive to other genders.

Social Media Analysis

Women –89%
Men – 11%

Participant Location

Which community do you live in? (n=259)

136

43

39

24

17

● Mississauga (52.51%) ● Toronto (9.27%)
● GTA (15.06%) ● Canada (6.56%)
● Outside of Canada (16.6%)

53% of *border crossings* project participants live in Mississauga. **15%** are from the GTA area and **9%** are from Toronto.

When programming became virtual **7%** of participants were from other provinces in Canada and **17%** of participants were from outside of Canada. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic the *border crossings* team had a greater reach within its immediate and neighbouring communities.

Pre-COVID-19
Mississauga - 61%
Toronto - 12%
GTA Area - 27%
(n=49)

During COVID-19
Mississauga - 51%
Toronto - 9%
GTA - 11%
Canada - 8%
Outside of Canada - 21%
(n=207)

Outcome Evaluation

In-person program participants were provided with a post-program in-person survey. During the online programming participants were provided with a link at the end of the workshop to provide feedback, participants were also sent a follow-up email which also linked to the online survey. In-person surveying was more effective than online surveying as the facilitator had a greater accountability and it was easier to remind them, then a passive reminder email.

The participant survey assesses the following areas:

- Topic interest, workshop satisfaction, learning, inviting others to the event and future participation.

As a result of the programming, participants were also asked to assess the impact of the programming on:
- Self-confidence
- Skill Acquisition
- Community Connectedness
- Culture Connectedness
- Culture Awarness
- Relationship Development

74 *border crossings* project participants responded to the post-program survey and identified with the following statements...

99%

of the participants indicated that the topic(s) was interesting.

99%

of the participants would participate in other AGM programming.

Workshop Experience

100%

of the participants learned new things.

97%

of participants would invite others to participate in this workshop.

A high quantity of participants indicated positive outcomes from the workshops. Participants indicated that the workshop topics were interesting and allowed them to learn new things. In addition, participants were willing to participate in future programs and invite others to participate as well.

WORKSHOP OUTCOMES

As a result of participating in the workshop....   n=74

80%   **of the participants indicated they are more confident sharing their opinion with others**

96%   **of the participants indicated they acquired a new skill**

67%   **of the participants indicated they felt connected to their community**

72%   **of the participants indicated they felt connected to their culture**

76%   **of the participants indicated that they learned about a different culture**

62%   **of the participants indicated that they created connections with other people**

Conclusions & Takeaways

Qualitative Data

The *border crossings* project is on track to accomplishing its deliverables. The project was able to effectively transition to online programming that resulted in high quality engagement from participants.

Unfortunately due to the online programming, it has been more difficult to capture and review participant artwork and stories to share back to the community.

Project Sustainability

Further development of partnerships with other organizations and continuing to implement a highly active social media marketing strategy will ensure project sustainability. The *border crossings* project has increased its community involvement and engagement, not only in Mississauga but also throughout the Greater Toronto Area and other Canadian provinces.

Diversity of Beneficiaries

Executing workshops online has proven to be successful as current participant demographics represents individuals from all ages and from various geographical regions. However, additional attention should be focused on attracting participants that identify as minorities including those that identify as BIPOC or Indigenous.

Participant diversity can be increased by creating partnerships with organizations that represent marginalized or vulnerable populations that support the *border crossings* project.