

Across the Lines

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The Glens Centre's *Across the Lines*, IFI funded project, is about supporting the building of community cohesion and peace-building along the border area of north Leitrim, south west Fermanagh, and west Cavan. The programme is cognisant of the impacts of historical division and conflict which lead to the break-up of community across the border region. Like other rural areas, the border region is also challenged by outward migration and layered on top of this is the new uncertainty around Brexit. *The Glens Centre* recognises the power of arts and creativity to bring people together to enable new understandings and expressions. Therefore the *Across the Lines* programme as an outreach

programme sits very well alongside *The Glens Centre* arts resource remit.

Across the Lines activities with groups, partner organisations, and stakeholders are devised to support new cross-border and cross-community connections. It seeks to encourage and deepen cross border connections, and enable further appreciation and valuing of cultural and community diversity in north Leitrim and the border area. The open community spirit of Manorhamilton and border villages in Leitrim and Fermanagh is an important dynamic as suggested in these recorded reflections of what *Across the Lines* needs to address.

 INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR IRELAND

- Two communities have grown up facing in different directions, with their backs to one another
- This is an opportunity to create inclusiveness and not silos
- We can learn about each other and rejecting stereotypes
- Bringing people together around their interests rather than differences
- Communities are not monolithic, subtle divisions can exist within what appear to be 'the same community'
- This kind of work peels away stereotypes and mis-perceptions

The current programme is delivering a number of projects: A cross border Men's Project, Women's Project, Youth Project, a cross border choral Song-lines project. Improving employability in the area is also a priority along with developing the capacity and opportunity to develop new working relationships for all the stakeholders involved.

Important conversational spaces have been created around Kabosh's Green and Blue production, a theatre piece based on research with serving officers in the *An Garda Síochána* and the *RUC*. A positive sharing of reflections and insights took place about the relevance of Luther in a contemporary society following a performance of Splódar's production *The First Protestant*. Further discussions are being planned for next year, around the Irish Language and around 'the protestant imagination'.

Highlights from the current programme to date include: 12 women coming together over 8 weeks with the filmmaker Róisín Loughrey to develop creativity skills which lead to the creation of a short film 'Everyday Heroines', which will be screened again around International Women's



Day 2019; Manorhamilton's Junior and Senior Youth theatre groups, led by Tori Lee and Declan Drohan have come together with a Fermanagh based youth theatre group lead by Sally Rees (Enniskillen Royal School).

Up to 22 young people have been researching the Sligo Leitrim Northern Counties railway which once enabled community connections and the movement of agri goods north to south, south to north. Young people have been working with Carlo Gébler and Seamus Dunbar and will be going into rehearsals in the new year to perform in a new script on 30th March 2019 in *The Glens Centre*.

This new north south relationship between young people is one we hope develops beyond Brexit Day! Transformative storytelling workshops with Michael Patrick MacDonald have brought Men from different community backgrounds and from Enniskillen, Lisnaskea and North

Leitrim together to create a body of poems. Other connections have made between Fermanagh and Leitrim based groups, e.g spoken word/open mic, *The Thing Itself*, *Open Mic Manor*, *Fermanagh Live*, *Dylan Quinn Dance Company*, a number of choral groups, musicians, drama groups, church, cultural, sports, community groups, schools and colleges, and we hope to be able to grow and develop these partnerships during the remainder of the programme.

The current programme is ongoing. Initially funded from July 2017 to June 2019 — with an extension being developed. You can find out more here, and we look forward to reporting on additional highlights this time next year.

www.theglenscentre.com/international-fund-ireland-across-lines/