

STITCHING STORIES – THE POWER OF THE NEEDLE AND THREAD

A new programme for women along the Fermanagh/Leitrim border gets underway with a one day exhibition and talk on how women across continents and history tell their stories through the art of stitching. Women have worked with fabrics and textiles throughout time, but interwoven into this is their own stories and the stories of their families and their communities.

‘Women Along the Border’, a Fermanagh/Leitrim cross-border initiative of the North Leitrim Women’s Centre will run a series of workshops, events and classes for women over the course of the project.

‘Stitching Stories – The Power of the Needle and Thread’ is a one day/two location exhibition and talk by Roberta Bacic, born in Chile and now resident of Northern Ireland, who is the founder of Conflict Textiles, an international collection of ‘arpilleras’ or ‘story quilts’ from around the world, illustrating women’s lived experiences. It was when Roberta came to live here that she started to compile her collection to use as a resource.

‘They have become an inherent part of my life, but it has only been when I arrived in Northern Ireland that I was asked to find new methods to work with communities opposed by conflict, which is when I started using arpilleras as a resource. At that moment, I rediscovered textiles I had bought and been given as a present, and I started a collection.’

Roberta explains how textile art can contribute to peacebuilding and mutual understanding in all areas. ‘How can we strengthen the aspects of life that help us to move on? This is where community work and the reinforcement of community ties become important, because whatever happens to one person also happens to others.’

‘Stitching Stories – The Power of the Needle and Thread’ exhibition and talk will be on Thursday 26th April at 3pm in the Healthy Living Centre in Belcoo and at 8pm in the Gillaroo Centre in Garrison and will lead to a series of craft workshops with an opportunity to depict experiences of living in this border area. Participants are invited to bring along a piece of fabric which has sentimental meaning for them.

‘Women Along the Border’ is supported by Leitrim County Council through the Leitrim County PEACE IV Partnership. The project will work with women along the Fermanagh Leitrim border, comprising the areas of Kinlough, Rossinver, Garrison, Kiltyclogher, Glenfarne, Cashel and Belcoo. This project has been supported by the European Union’s PEACE IV Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB).

Project Development Worker, Isobel Cleary explains, ‘Our aims are to provide opportunities for women to continue to live, learn and socialise together across this border area; to share our experiences; to define ourselves as a strong cross-border community; and to find a way to express our hopes and concerns for the future of this area that we all call home.’

For further information about Women Along the Border Project, please contact Isobel at North Leitrim Women's Centre: Phone +353(0) 719856220 or email womenalongtheborder@gmail.com