

THE SCOTTISH DIASPORA TAPESTRY

A project to involve communities around the world in the celebration of Scottish heritage and culture.

Scots have migrated to every corner of the globe and have often had a profound impact on the areas where they settled. Now a new embroidery project will record the stories of 25 such communities worldwide.

The Scottish Diaspora Tapestry will consist of 250 individual panels, embroidered by volunteers in each community. Their Scottish links will be documented and incorporated into the panels, which will all be assembled and **displayed in Scotland as part of 2014 Homecoming**.

Backing for the project comes mainly from the Scottish Government, Creative Scotland and EventScotland. They are happy to support the project knowing the organisers have an excellent track record, having already created the massive Battle of Prestonpans Tapestry.

INSPIRED BY BAYEUX

The Prestonpans Tapestry is an extraordinary 104-metre artwork, embroidered by 200 volunteers from around Scotland. It shows the early part of the Jacobite campaign of 1745 and was inspired by the world-famous Bayeux Tapestry.

Since its completion in 2010 it has attracted thousands of visitors as it tours Scotland and beyond. Its huge success is due to the passion of the volunteers who created it, the astonishing quality of the artwork and embroidery, and the fascinating history it depicts.

Now that skill and enthusiasm is set to move to an international stage. The same artist, Andrew Crummy, will provide the outline designs - and the same organisation, the Prestoungrange Arts Festival, will manage the project.

2014 is the Year of Homecoming when Scotland will welcome descendants of Scots emigrants from around the world. The 12-month programme of celebrations will provide a perfect arena for the assembly of the *Scottish Diaspora Tapestry*, with representatives from each community accompanying their panels to Scotland for an extensive programme of festivities.

Enthusiasm for embroidery is universal and this project provides an opportunity for people of all ages and abilities to get involved. The Battle of Prestonpans Tapestry attracted an army of willing volunteers and has proved that this combination of crafts and heritage is extremely popular, both with participants and audiences.

THE CREATIVE PROCESS

The 25 Diaspora communities have been chosen to provide a representative and interesting spread of Diaspora tales. Volunteers are being recruited and their Scottish links documented, to produce material for between five and ten panels from each community, each measuring 50cm x 50cm.

Based on the Diaspora communities' stories, and with their design input, Andrew Crummy is creating the outline designs for the linen panels. This approach ensures an artistic consistency to the overall project although individual interpretation will be encouraged in the use of stitches and colours, to reflect local traditions.

As the project develops, other artistic collaborations will emerge within the Diaspora communities and in Scotland. The aim is for a range of art forms to contribute to the project, with each set of panels being accompanied by storytelling, drama and music, providing several dimensions to the historical background. Language differences, including Gaelic, will be accommodated as far as possible, both on the website and in supporting literature. Once completed, each panel will be interpreted for exhibition, using labels and a printed catalogue.

CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

Many Diaspora communities have historical connections to a particular area of Scotland, and they will be encouraged to become jointly involved in the project. Where no natural connections exist, communities will be helped to form new links with places in Scotland, so that there is a Homeland partner for each Diaspora community.

During 2013 these communities will be developing ideas for celebrating the tapestry when it is united during Homecoming. They can help research the links and families who emigrated, produce their own artwork, involve local schools and groups and host the completed tapestry in 2014.

As Scots emigrated abroad and influenced communities there, so people from these countries have migrated to Scotland. This project will also focus on several of these 'reverse' diaspora communities in Scotland and will work to involve them in the 2014 celebrations.

The arrival and assembly of the Diaspora Tapestry in Scotland will be one of the highlights of 2014 Homecoming. A massive party will take place to celebrate its arrival, with everyone associated with it invited to attend.

It will be exhibited at a number of prestigious venues over the summer, with performance opportunities available for other artists involved. The aim is to feature storytelling, music, dance, drama, film and literature from each of the Diaspora countries.

In the following weeks and months the partner Scottish communities will host local exhibitions and events to celebrate their own section of the tapestry.

Yvonne Murphy summed up the project by saying: "This tapestry is designed to bring people together across the Diaspora and to celebrate Scottish culture, ingenuity and courage as its is manifested across the world.

"We also hope that everyone involved will come to Scotland in 2014 so we can all get together for a fantastic big Ceilidh. There will be so much else happening in Scotland that year that it will definitely be the time to come!"

As a starting point, the project has targeted the following countries as Diaspora partners:

Argentina	Netherlands
Australia	New Zealand
Brazil	Northern Ireland
Canada	Norway
England	Pakistan
France	Poland
Germany	Portugal
China	Russia
India	Sweden
Irish Republic	South Africa
Italy	USA
Jamaica	
Lithuania	
Malawi	

<http://www.scottishdiasporatapestry.org>