

DodoLab and SACY (Sudbury Action Centre for Youth) have been thinking a lot about public spaces in downtown Sudbury. We've been exploring, documenting and discussing people's experiences and perceptions of places like the bus terminal, library, Market Square and Memorial Park, as well as the streets of the urban core and semi-public (but really private) spaces like the Rainbow Centre Mall. We've heard many stories of people being discouraged, for a variety of reasons, from being in these public areas. For many of the SACY youth, there is a strong sense of being targeted as a problem element, but we have also heard their perspective echoed in the experiences of other community members in the downtown. A consistent complaint is that the primary tools (signage, by-laws, security people and technologies) employed in an attempt to create safer more appealing public spaces seem to focus on discouraging activity rather than nurturing and encouraging the use of public spaces. Often, there are contradictions. Bike racks next to no bicycling signs, benches next to no loitering signs, people being asked not to linger in a public park unless they have a purpose or reason for being there (as if being in a park is not reason enough). There is a strong sense that many of these rules are at odds with the very qualities of successful urban spaces that communities aspire too.



THIS FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 12TH
SACY + DODOLAB
PRESENT

THE FIRST ANNUAL
**TOURNAMENT
OF BEASTS**
CROQUET COMPETITION

AT MEMORIAL PARK
FROM 12 TILL 2

No Golfing Cats or Dogs.
All Others Welcome.



Tournament of Beasts (Sudbury)

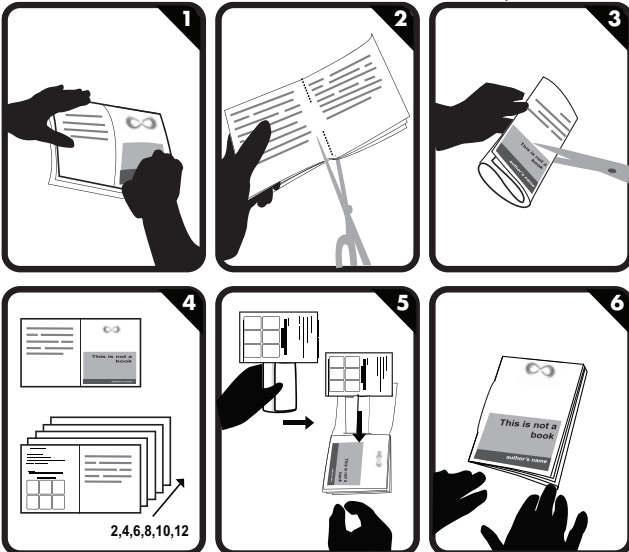
DodoLab & SACY

Part of a larger initiative developed collaboratively with the Musagetes Foundation, Ontario Trillium Foundation, SACY, Carrefour Sudbury and the Sudbury Metis Council.

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cats, but then we decided we didn't really want to break the posted rules. Our goal was to create an event that would encourage dialogue and discussion about the kinds of things we choose to inhibit and what we may be inadvertently discouraging in public space. While our project was staged at Memorial Park, the issues explored there are relevant to the entire urban core, particularly the areas around the Bus Terminal, Tom Davies Square and Market Square, for example.

What opportunities are being missed around the bus terminal, a place where many must linger for extended periods between buses? Does "hanging around" the bus terminal need to continue to be viewed as a problematic activity or could it be a space of positive community connection and transition? What's really wrong with skateboarding, an activity that brings many youth together? Could a space for it not be opened up for it in the core, as part of the core? How does the community become more actively involved in determining the culture of public spaces in the city through use and being present? While we are exploring these issues in the city's core, they are issues that are relevant to pockets of public space throughout Greater Sudbury and in other communities as well.

These limits on public behavior seem to discourage the kind of dynamic community presence often pointed to as critical to a lively downtown. Why do we always need to be going somewhere, buying something or doing something specific to be allowed to be in public? Furthermore, much research and lived experience has shown us that spaces that are actively used and occupied by the public become safer, more lively and more successful. It is use, and not constant monitoring, that creates truly public spaces.

On Friday, November 12th, 2010, DodoLab and SACY staged the *First Annual Tournament of Beasts* in Sudbury's Memorial Park. The project featured a croquet competition between a half-dozen animals (raccoon, bear, wolf, rabbit, deer and moose) and was staged as a catalyst to encourage public discussion about the use and control of public spaces. The project developed in response to one particular sign at the entrance to the park that explicitly singled out the drinking of alcoholic beverages, dogs & cats, and golfing as targets of prohibition. Discouraging the public consumption of alcohol is obviously a common concern, but why specifically dogs and cats (why not ferrets, snakes, rabbits or ponies) and why just golf (and not frisbee, lawn darts, polo or croquet)? Our initial response was to stage a golf tournament for dogs and





