



EJ Hughes Mural Unveiled

For Immediate Release

May 14th, 2009 - The E.J. Hughes mural entitled 'Captain Malaspina Sketching the Gabriola Galleries' was officially unveiled this morning. Twelve years after being salvaged from the original Malaspina Hotel, including fifteen months of exhaustive restoration, the impressive mural has now found a permanent home in the Piper Lagoon Lobby at the Port of Nanaimo Centre.

EJ Hughes was commissioned by the owners of the Malaspina Hotel to create the piece in 1938. Hughes went on to become one of Canada's most important artists. He is famous for his depictions of landscapes of British Columbia. He received numerous awards and honorary degrees, including the Order of Canada. He and his wife lived in the Cowichan Valley for many years. He passed away in 2007. Family members were in attendance at the unveiling.

The piece was rediscovered in 1996 by the Nanaimo Community Archives Society as they were documenting the building prior to redevelopment. Realizing what they had stumbled upon, the society began a major fundraising campaign to salvage the piece and have it restored. Enough money was raised to remove the massive mural, but not to cover the cost of restoration. For the next eleven years, the society made many applications for funding from various sources, none proving successful.

In 2007 the Community Archives Society approached the City of Nanaimo to take on the task of restoring and ultimately displaying the mural. In 2007 City Council voted in favour to cover the costs of restoration and public display of the piece. Over the course of the next fifteen months art conservator, Cheryle Harrison worked at bringing the mural back to life. The sheer size and weight of the mural had proved a challenge when considering public display sites in the past; however the newly constructed Port of Nanaimo Centre met the requirements.

"This is a piece of art to be enjoyed by the entire community," says Councilor Larry McNabb, Chairman, City of Nanaimo Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission. "This project was a big undertaking especially for a community our size, but it speaks to the community's level of respect and support of our local heritage and culture. It is important that the public knows this piece belongs to them and is here for their enjoyment."

More...

The piece is now available for public viewing and is located in the Pipers Lagoon Lobby on the main floor of the Port of Nanaimo Centre, near the Vancouver Island Conference Centre administration office. For more information please contact Bob Kuhn at 250 755 7512.

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