NEWS RELEASE

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City supports inaugural year of Hub City Walls

Three local artists create murals for downtown

Summary

2020 marks the first year for Hub City Walls, a project designed by a local non-profit, Humanity in Community, to promote Nanaimo as a cultural hub, support local artists, foster community pride and rehabilitate urban spaces. The City of Nanaimo awarded funding for the Hub City Walls project through its Downtown Event Revitalization Fund and has partnered to offer up three City-owned concrete walls for painting by local muralists.

Originally planned as a larger festival with multiple mural painting sites, music events, live demos, a pop-up art market and other activities intended to draw crowds of people downtown, organizers Lauren Semple and Lys Glassford adapted the festival to align with provincial health guidelines around COVID-19. Committed to realizing their vision, they scaled their project plan to focus on the creation of three murals in prominent locations in the Arts District downtown.

From over 30 submissions from local, regional and international artists, three Nanaimo-based artists were selected for 2020: Kara Dee Harrison, Russell Morland (aka LURK), and Austin Weflen. Walls were identified by Semple and Glassford, who are keenly focused on urban rehabilitation through public art—they honed in on under-utilized and under-loved areas. Painting began on August 5 and is scheduled for completion by August 15.

ARTIST BIOS & MURAL LOCATIONS

KARA DEE HARRISON is painting near 151 Front Street on a concrete slab embedded into the cliff-face. Harrison's craft has been honed through training and apprenticeships with painters and tattoo artists. Her playful design features characters inspired by local marine life in her signature colours, turquoise and gold.

RUSSELL MORLAND (LURK) is painting a wrap-around retaining wall in the parking lot at 95 Cavan Street. Morland is known for work which ranges from detailed, psychedelic paintings and illustrations to digital drawings and collaborative products like skateboards, shoes and more. Morland draws inspiration from the worlds of lowbrow, street art, skateboarding and board games.

AUSTIN WEFLEN is painting at 119 Skinner Street at the Bastion Street parkade. Island-born and raised, he is a lettering and design connoisseur and is passionate about creating large-scale artwork with brushes, pens and aerosol cans.

Strategic Link: This project supports Council's strategic Livability goal by supporting arts, culture and recreation as an integral part of everyday life.

Key Points

- 2020 marks the first year for Hub City Walls, a project designed by local non-profit Humanity in Community to promote Nanaimo as a cultural hub, support local artists, foster community pride and rehabilitate urban spaces. Painting began on August 5 and is scheduled for completion by August 15.
- From over 30 submissions from local, regional and international artists, three Nanaimo-based artists were selected for 2020: Kara Dee Harrison, Russell Morland (aka LURK), and Austin Weflen.

Quotes

"It's terrific to see this initiative to support local artists and enhance downtown. Projects like these add to a sense of vitality, safety and well-being, and a create a welcoming environment for the people who are downtown every day to work, live, shop and dine.
"

Councillor Sheryl Armstrong
Acting Mayor
City of Nanaimo

"It’s a privilege to support this project in its first year. Many enthusiastic City staff from across departments have been involved, in a behind-the-scenes way, and everyone is eager to see Hub City Walls animate these shared public spaces with vibrant designs. Murals are transforming these locations! We’re grateful to the artists and organizers for their vision and their work to make our city more colourful and more connected."

Julie Bevan
Manager, Culture & Events
City of Nanaimo

"It’s been a pleasure to work with these talented, local artists and watch them take their designs from paper concepts to large-scale murals on the walls of downtown. I’m excited to see the finished pieces in a few days. My goal for 2020 was to curate a diverse selection of new styles and genres for Nanaimo locals and visitors to enjoy."

Lys Glassford
Artistic Director
Hub City Walls

"The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Community members and businesses are pumped about the newest public art additions to the downtown core and are following the artist’s progress online. We’re also seeing folks from elsewhere on the Island and across the province taking an interest in Nanaimo’s growing collection of murals. This support and enthusiasm provide a great foundation to build our 2021 festival on."

Lauren Semple
Festival Producer
Hub City Walls

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