



## 19TH NATIONAL MURAL SYMPOSIUM

2019 REPORT



Saturday, November 2, 2019

The Spoke Club, Toronto

## SCHEDULE

8:30am	Registration & Breakfast
9:00am	Welcome & Land Acknowledgement: <b>Duke Redbird</b>
9:30am	Keynote Speaker: <b>PA System</b>
11:00am	Break
11:15am	Public Art, Colour and Mental Health: <b>Jacquie Comrie</b>
12:45pm	Lunch & Learn: <b>Golden Artist Colors</b>
1:30pm	Murals as a Medium:  Art and Diplomacy - <b>Rodrigo Ardiles</b>  Transforming Neighbourhoods with Utility Box Murals - <b>Michael Cavanaugh</b>  Mural Art in Iran: The Impact of Three Major Social and Historical Changes <b>Atessa Hooshvar</b>
3:00pm	Break
3:15pm	International Exchanges with Local Impact: <b>The STEPS Initiative</b>
4:00pm	Mentorship & Legacy: From Garage Doors to International Walls: <b>StreetARToronto</b>
4:45pm	Q&A
5:15pm	Closing Remarks
5:30pm	Optional Mingle & Cash Bar
6:30pm	Goodbyes

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## WELCOME

**Mural Routes' Managing Director - Marta Keller-Hernandez** began the day by welcoming everyone to the 19th National Mural Symposium, presented by Mural Routes. She discussed the exciting day ahead and the wonderful line up speakers that will allow us to feel connected and inspired and introduce us to new perspectives on mural art.

Marta then invited Elder Duke Redbird to give a land acknowledgement in order to recognize the traditional territory of the Indigenous peoples who called this land home before the arrival of settlers. Ojibwe artist and scholar Duke Redbird has been a trailblazing figure in Canadian Indigenous culture since the 1960s. He has an MA in interdisciplinary studies from York University and an Honorary Doctorate from OCAD University where he helped establish the first Indigenous Visual Culture program. In 2015, Duke was Elder and Mentor for Ring of Fire commissioned by the Art Gallery of York University (AGYU) and later appeared in their publication, *Imaginary Homelands*, where he was featured in an art project called *Writing on Water*; in 2016 his poetry appeared in the Art Gallery of Ontario's *Tributes + Tributaries* Exhibition; in 2017, Dr. Redbird was one of the major forces behind the curatorial process for the Luminato Festival, and in 2018, Duke was the inspiration and key Indigenous advisor behind the *Awen' Gathering Circle*, an Indigenous architectural presence on the waterfront in Collingwood, Ontario. He is curator of the Debwewin Gallery, guide, mentor and advisor to the Toronto Arts Council and Banff Centre for the Arts Leaders Lab, the Artist in Residence at the Toronto District School Board, and has recently worked with Myseum of Toronto on a floating art installation project called *Wigwam Chi-Chemung* which will bring an Indigenous presence to the waterfront in Toronto.



**Elder Duke Redbird** gave the land acknowledgement.

**Rob Watson, the Chair of Mural Routes' Board of Directors**, thanked Duke Redbird. Rob thanked everyone for being at the 19th National Mural Symposium and announced that Mural

Routes is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. Incorporated in 1994, Mural Routes was born to promote wall art (“murals”) as a public art form for the general benefit of communities within the province by commemorating the unique features of those communities in which such murals were located. Since then, Mural Routes has grown into an organization that has embraced public mural art as a way to change the feeling and the face of neighbourhoods in the busy urban sprawl of Toronto. Mural Routes has created over 50 murals in the past 25 years in collaboration with a wide array of communities and artists. From creating murals, we expanded our efforts into mentoring youth, supporting artists, and encouraging communities to create public art, always following our motto, “teach, learn, share, and grow.” Mural Routes has assisted many communities and artists in creating outdoor murals that enhance their neighbourhoods. The organization has become the “go to” place for education, information and advice on mural creation and continues to service a large network of artists, managers, and organizations. In 2016 we launched the Mural Art Learning Institute (MURALI), a continuum of training programs in all aspects of mural-making.

On behalf of Mural Routes’ Board of Directors, Rob thanked everybody who has been part of the organization in the past 25 years - members, past program participants, today’s Symposium participants, funders, sponsors, donors, partners, volunteers, board members and staff. He also said thank you to this year’s Symposium sponsors: StreetARToronto and Downtown Yonge BIA, and our Community Partner, YYZ Artists’ Outlet. Our funders, the Ontario Arts Council and the Toronto Arts Council, were thanked for their continuous support. Finally,

Rob thanked the Symposium Committee, who worked for the past year to bring us to this day and the staff for their hard work to make this Symposium happen.



**Tara Dorey, Mural Routes’ Program Director** then discussed the Symposium theme of “exchange” - highlighting and celebrating murals as a tool for Exchange and creative gateway for public dialogue. She let us know that presenters will share local and international projects and ideas that illustrate how the value of a mural lies not just in the art left behind, but in the process of exchanging skills, perspectives, stories and experiences. Tara welcomed keynote speakers PA System to address the room.

## SESSION 1: KEYNOTE SPEAKER - PA SYSTEM

**PA System (Alexa Hatanaka and Patrick Thompson)** create public artwork and work in textile, printmaking, painting, and video. They exhibit in institutions internationally, such as the Canada House in London, the Fine Arts Center at Colorado College, and the Art Gallery of Ontario. They have created public artworks and community-engaged works across Inuit Nunangat (Inuit homelands within Canadian arctic), Canada and internationally. PA System has an ongoing project called Embassy of Imagination (EOI) based in Kinngait (Cape Dorset, Nunavut) working for and with Kinngait youth. EOI animates yearly art workshops, and creates collaborative community art projects, including public murals, performances, and exhibitions, within Kinngait, across Canada and internationally. EOI is a reciprocal sharing of knowledge and ideas, prioritizing youth voices, expressing cross-cultural collaboration and shared human experience as an embodied practice and in material form. PA System and EOI have created new work for the Toronto Biennial of Art 2019.

In their presentation, Alexa Hatanaka and Patrick Thompson (PA System) took us on a journey through their background with collaborative and socially-engaged projects. Their presentation demonstrated their experience with the exchange of knowledge and ideas as an embodied practice and in material form.

### 2009-2010

Alexa and Patrick met through creating murals, they used to travel together like nomads. Through their travels they gained a greater understanding of the existing inequities and of different cultures. From these experiences they used their acquired knowledge and ideas to begin experimental work, producing, reacting, and developing a way of working together. They found that living away gave them a new level of awareness.



During this time, they found opportunities to work in Nunavut - the word about their projects there spread rapidly, and they received great response from the local community. While in Nunavut, they were able to work quickly, using any materials they could find while being sensitive to the community's needs. The youth were eager to participate, learn and build skills. The murals that they created held

significance and weight because they were the only ones in the community. This experience led to establishing the Embassy of Imagination (EOI), a reciprocal sharing of knowledge and ideas, expressing cross-cultural collaboration and shared human experience as an embodied practice and in material form. It is a socially engaged art practice comprised of youth from Kinngait (Cape Dorset, NU) and PA System.

## 2014

Alexa and Patrick spoke about how they learn from the youth. Every year part of funding they receive goes to land trips as the youth have expressed wanting to learn directly from the land and the elders in their community.

## 2017

PA System/Embassy of Imagination was part of the Art Gallery of Ontario's: Canada 150 Every. Now. Then: Reframing Nationhood Exhibition. This exhibition explored three urgent questions through the eyes of some of the country's best emerging and established artists: where has Canada come from, what it is now, and where is it going?

In 2016 the school in which they were working as EOI burned down. They had to find another space, a shared space, with limited availability. They made it work and the youth made art in mornings in the new space. They also established, with the District Education Authority, a land-based experiential program through fundraising via their "Future Snow machines in Kinngait" project



where they built sculptures of snow machines using materials from the burnt high school. These sculptures in turn were for sale in order to fund the purchase of actual snowmobiles. Two snowmobiles thus far were funded as a result of this project. Youth were collaborators on this project.

The AGO windows showed videos of the group creating murals and the public encountered these works without going indoors. Patrick and Alexa liked the idea of this involuntarily encounter because it sparked a "healthy" curiosity about art and the projects they were delivering in Northern Canada without having to visit the museum.

Alexa and Patrick have been mentoring a young artist, Parr Josephee, who expressed his desire to travel. This prompted a mural project with several youth in 2015. Later, Parr and 4 other youth with EOI created a mural that summer in Ottawa and another in Kinngait. The Ottawa mural is in the ByWard market and depicts a tale of a hunter who found a whale that had a more than 100-year-old harpoon deep inside its body. The Kinngait mural was painted on the outside of the community hall. It was inspired by experiences on the land, country food and the local story of Tittalitq. The designs for this mural came from youth's drawings (ie. a feud of caribous). Parr Josephee is one of two EOI mentors, now taking on a mentorship role, teaching his brother and other youth.

Alexa and Patrick highlighted the power of using murals as a part of a larger objective - for example, fundraising for snowmobiles. It's about embedding the meaning of "reciprocity" within the art projects they create.

### **Examples of EXCHANGE**

- Intergenerational storytelling > learning from elders in the community and from the youth. Sharing stories through art that bring a real outcome: fundraising to purchase snowmobiles.
- Empowering the local community, exchanging ideas and knowledge with the youth, bringing a worldview into the public dialogue through the projects.
- Sharing skills and processes with the youth, offering mentorship opportunities. This leads to youth eventually doing projects on their own.
- Offering equitable opportunities to the youth.

### **PA System Q & A**

**Q** What is your next project?

**A** We are both doing individual residencies in different locations in Canada. We are also working on planning more art and land initiatives.

**Q** Where do you receive funding from?

**A** We apply to all three levels of government funding, the Toronto Arts Council, Ontario Arts Council and the Canada Council for the Arts. For the projects in the North the funding has come primarily from the Canada Council.

**Q** What have the youth gained from visits to the southern Canada?

**A** The youth have learned about other things youth enjoy, such as skateboarding. It has also



been a great opportunity to see Inuit work in galleries which means validation - some youth were able to see artwork created by their older relatives in local Toronto galleries.

**Q** What is the temperature like when you are working in the North, i.e. in the summer?

**A** The average temperature in July/August is 10-15C.

**Q** Is there a paint store in Cape Dorset, how do you acquire supplies for the mural projects?

**A** There are two grocery stores that have a hardware section, but the stock is limited. 3 times a year a sea lift brings heavy items and equipment. This means 3 large shipping ships arrive with non-perishables, building materials and other orders. This does not include fuel for the community's vehicles, or the diesel powered powerplant.

**Q** Have you encountered any generational tension in your projects in the North?

**A** Parr told them a story once about how some people in the community thought they were outsiders from the South during the first year. That PA System did not have a long-term plan to work with the local community. There was definitely some skepticism throughout the first year but things changed over time as they became more involved with local peoples.

**Q** How much time is given for the youth/community to develop art skills (i.e. creating straight lines) during mural projects?

**A** We allow room for improvisation and embracing "mistakes" as part of the learning process. Some of the participants need structure and uniformity and we provide that as well. We try to create as many opportunities as possible for hands-on experiences (i.e. the PILIRIQATIGIINGNIQ mural on Church and King in Toronto, painted by youth from Cape Dorset in 2015).

**Q** Where do you stay when you visit the North?

**A** Every time is different - sometimes we stay at a friend's place, sometimes at a teacher's place... it depends on availability, so we are always flexible regarding accommodation arrangements.

## SESSION 2: PUBLIC ART, COLOUR AND MENTAL HEALTH - JACQUIE COMRIE

*Jacque Comrie is a multidisciplinary artist whose vibrant body of work intersects contemporary art and wellness at a global scale. Colour is her medium of social impact and well-being at large. Whether as murals on buildings, large scale structures, or canvases, her work is a dynamic exploration of the science of colour as the universal language of human emotion. Colour has been proven to have a direct effect to human emotion, for which her palettes are consciously designed to cater to mental well-being. In such divisive times, and with mental health issues on the rise across the globe, her work continues to transform spaces into environments of mental elevation and reset, to ultimately help improve the quality of life of all individuals- one wall at a time.*



While studying at OCAD, Jacquie took a Psychology of Colour class which turned out helping her later in her career.

During her time working at a law firm she began to experience depression and medications were not enough to lift her out of it. She recalled waking up and looking at a bright painting one day and noted how it made her feel.

Jacque started looking for opportunities to repeat that experiment and to start exposing individuals to bright colours as a way to deal with their mental health issues.

She was given a small micro-grant to change the environment of a doctor's office - it was a small-scale project. She filled the grey walls with bright coloured abstract designs. This project required community engagement, she interviewed families who used to attend the doctor's office and asked what they wanted to be surrounded by in that space.

At this time her focus was on indoor space to uplift people.

She then began working outdoors at every opportunity and took us through a series of images of her colourful and impressive work throughout Toronto, Miami, Mexico, Spain and more.

Jacque also discussed the stigma in Latin America of conversation about depression and overall mental health.

Following her presentation, Jacquie guided the Symposium participants through a hands-on workshop: on a large canvas participants were invited to paint out some negative experiences and emotions, which were then covered with bright colours, creating a collaborative work of art. This workshop encouraged self-reflection, self-awareness and exploration of one's emotions through colour sensory.

The objective of this session was to raise awareness of colour as an effective tool in public art.



## LUNCH: LUNCH AND LEARN WITH GOLDEN PAINTS

Marta Keller-Hernandez introduced Dawn Bagnall from Golden Artist Colors. Golden Artist Colors is a company located in the US who, among other products, offers a special line of paint specifically created for mural production.



## SESSION 3: MURALS AS A MEDIUM

### Speaker 1: Art and Diplomacy - Rodrigo Ardiles

#### **Rodrigo Ardiles - Producer, Visual Artist and Cultural Agent**

*Rodrigo has been using technology and art to engage communities in the Americas and Europe since the mid-eighties. His passion is to depict the local testimonies of marginalized youth and artists across the globe through murals and creative arts. Rodrigo's award winning creative designs act as a tool to promote dialogue about the pressing social issues of our times. He was commissioned by Peter Gabriel to produce the first graffiti exhibition in the U.K. (2016). Rodrigo's latest initiative "Creative Cities" has led him to build innovative partnerships and produce Canadian murals in Portugal, Cuba and in Chile.*

Rodrigo is from Chile and he discussed the use of art to overcome siege and as diplomacy for change. The artist feels all the levels of a society; reflects in the community and can be the mediator in (re)building communities.

There are limits to artists in a political/governmental avenue; artists always have stories to tell and bureaucracy stands in the way. Murals are a way to speak through unrest as they speak all languages. He sees muralism as a dialogue on the street, a tool to showcase true feelings as well as to change opinions through art. Art uses storytelling to find solutions, to convey for diplomacy. He stated that the artist must pay attention to what/how the art is depicted, since it can present resistance from local communities.

Rodrigo is currently doing an exchange with Tallahassee, Florida and advised that during an exchange, it can be beneficial to go to the Embassy for advice and art inspiration.

Rodrigo closed by telling us that we must have worthy partners to rally with and to never lose your passions.



## Speaker 2: Transforming Neighbourhoods with Utility Box Murals - Michael Cavanaugh

**Michael Cavanaugh** is an artist and since 2009 has been director of the Bell Box Murals Project, producing over 300 murals in 39 communities. Michael's own recent murals include the Neighbourhood of Nations Mural, the Cabbagetown Neighbours Heritage Mural, the Rose of Cabbage town mural and four Bell box murals.

Michael introduced the Bell Box Mural project by informing us that this is the 11th year of the project. Michael shared how Bell box murals facilitate the conversation of a community about itself by working with local project partners to identify box locations, choose themes, and select the final artists. He looks at this process as the "Harvest" cycle - the seeds are planted throughout the year and they grow in the summer.



Artists paint from June to September and preference is given to local artists in the area that they are working. There is an open call for submissions shared through the Facebook fan page. In 11 years they have produced 350 murals.

This model allows for murals to pop out of nowhere, since the Bell boxes are distributed throughout a neighbourhood. Also, they act as

"conveners" by involving stakeholders that are close to the box (the closest the better) and mixing up those who live in the neighbourhood.

Michael led us through "ABCD" – Asset Based Community Development

- Knits a community together - Relationships build community, people want to be connected
- Builds leadership, it empowers local leaders
- High ownership feeling because the artists lives near the box, there is a sense of belonging. This involves a lot of listening to the community.
- **Conspire to inspire** - residents can and should determine what neighbourhoods look like

A handout distributed during the Symposium can be found on page 23. The handout provides more information about the session and the Bell Box Murals Project.

### Speaker 3: Mural Art in Iran: The Impact of Three Major Social and Historical Changes - Atessa Hooshvar

*"I am a person drifting between the two worlds of Science and the Arts. I call myself a Right-brainer with analytical qualities. I studied mathematics at the University of Tehran (1991) and received training on Iranian literature, art and architecture history, and traditional music from early on. My thesis focused on the relationship between music/art and math. Since then, I have continued to work in music and visual arts professionally. I am a storyteller, illustrator, music performer and maker. In Toronto, I have participated in solo and group exhibitions and have had numerous musical performances in Iran and Canada."*

Atessa Hooshvar gave us an overview of Iranian mural art, within the context of three major historical and social changes: the Islamic Revolution of Iran 1977-1979, the Iran/Iraq War 1980-1988, and the Post-war and Development Era after 1988.

She explained how managing and choosing murals played a big role in reunifying the nation, introducing new morals, inspiring people to excitement and sacrifice, and calling the community to get engaged with the country's challenges in each era.

#### **Revolution 1978-1980**

Before this time murals were ordered by the government to impress the world with the power of the "Persian empire."

During the revolution Iranians created street art for people to see, reflect and engage. Revolution groups formed mural groups as a form of peaceful fighting. They expressed feelings against dictatorship, which were quickly painted over. A statement was re-written on top saying "shame cannot be cleared with paint". Many of these murals were painted over/erased.

#### **Wartime 1980-1988**

Murals created during this time were not very good quality. During this time of martyrdom portraits of martyrs were painted on the walls of the streets of their communities. Atessa shared the story of a 13-year old boy named Hussein who signed up for war. He sacrificed his

life on the front line and became a national war hero commemorated as a national hero in murals across the country.

### **Post-war 1988 >**

This was a time for love and peace with women artists memorializing truth/spiritual revolution instead of physical fight. This was a huge break change. Serious attention to urban beautification was taking place. The Organization for Urban Beautification was governing the mural contracts and professional artists were involved with mural creations.



Gradually, the concepts of Martyrdom, Revolution and Islamic advice were revisited and redid in an artistic manner, all supervised by a committee at the Organization for Urban Beautification.

Nowadays women are actively participating in mural creations and their works are recognized in artistic references. Graffiti is becoming popular in Iran and the youth have started executing that style of mural in some areas.



## SESSION 4: INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGES WITH LOCAL IMPACT - THE STEPS INITIATIVE

***Alexis Kane Speer** brings over 10 years of experience managing public arts, urban planning and community engagement initiatives across the public, private and nonprofit sectors. She is STEPS Executive Director and has served on the National Congress Committee for Culture Days, the Advisory Board of the Toronto Arts Council's Neighbourhood Arts Network, as well as the Adult Committee for the Skylark Youth Services Art Gallery.*

***Bebhinn Jennings** is STEPS Program Manager and has spent the last decade of her creative practice on developing interdisciplinary and intergenerational arts programs that build a sense of community, develop new skills and expose participants to opportunities within the arts sector.*

The STEPS presentation began by sharing their approach to community engaged public art.

### 1) **Connect**

Build relationships with local experts and cultural stakeholders.

Support International artists by identifying ways to engage in other work opportunities while they're in Toronto.

### 2) **Engage**

Community engagement is important - local residents can share their cultural values and vision for the area. They create a community research package to foster understanding between the artist and the community.

Connect the area with the artist.

Big and small businesses should be included in the neighbourhood where the mural is being erected to have a variety of input. It is also important to be able to translate all the feedback received.

The community can be engaged to crowd source design and donate to the project.



**3) Transform public spaces with as much community collaboration as possible**

They suggested doing a time lapse of the project to generate interest.

Have online and onsite engagement to keep people up to date and excited for the outcome. Plug in to existing cultural events for wider outreach.

Make sure to have photo documentation for future evidence of success.

Involve local youth in the full scope of project.

**4) Build Capacity**

Train emerging artists - especially women and underrepresented artists.

Provide mentorship opportunities.

Invest in youth employment opportunities and training

Support women identified collaboratives.

STEPS brings in other emerging artists to grow their talent as well, e.g. photographers, planners, communications, etc.

**5) Exchange**

STEPS often use community events as a form of consultation – not just for meetings; they suggest making it unique to the community and who's there.

**6) Celebrate!**

Different types of celebrations for different murals and neighbourhoods to mark the end of a project.

Celebrate local talent, culture and possibilities.

Mutli-disciplinary events that bridge sectors

*A handout distributed during the Symposium can be found on page 26. The handout provides more information about the session and the Steps Initiative.*

## SESSION 5: MENTORSHIP & LEGACY: FROM GARAGE DOORS TO INTERNATIONAL WALLS - STREETARTORONTO

**StreetARToronto (StART)** is a suite of innovative programs designed specifically for streets and public spaces. Initiated in 2012 as an integral part of the City of Toronto's Graffiti Management Plan, StART has been successful in reducing graffiti vandalism and replacing it with vibrant, colourful, community-engaged street art. StART programs encourage active transportation (walking and cycling), make our streets more beautiful and safe, showcase local artists, mentor emerging talent, reduce overall infrastructure maintenance costs and more.

**Catherine Campbell** has worked at the City of Toronto for the past 10 years most currently as a Project Manager for StreetARToronto in the Transportation Services Division. She holds a BFA from the Ontario College of Art with a major in Criticism and Curatorial Practices and a MES (Masters of Environmental Studies) in Community Art Practice and Storytelling with a certificate of Environmental Education from York University. Catherine has curated a number of art exhibits and community projects including University Settlement 100th Year Anniversary. She was an art educator and the lead facilitator for the Art Gallery of Ontario's Arts Access Program and a Program Officer for Montgomery's Inn Museum.

**Carolyn Taylor** is a Project Manager with StreetARToronto (StART). 1986 she launched ArtsWeek for the then Arts Foundation of Greater Toronto, followed by The Word On the Street Book and Magazine Festival in 1990, which grew to 5 cities across Canada during her tenure. After cycling across Canada, she project managed Toronto's 2008 Olympic Bid Arts & Culture Committee, which lead to her next start-up –a pilot project for an '08 Bid legacy called World Youth Centre. In and around this work she has produced concerts, galas and festivals for the culture and heritage sector, national recognition programs for emerging entrepreneurs, large-scale youth gatherings, a youth education program rooted in Olympic values and has participated on numerous boards of small to mid-sized culture and social-change organizations.

This session presented ways in which StART's suite of programs and workshops combine to provide a skills development ladder that, together with StART's online platforms and activities, showcase local artists, mentor emerging talent and seek to support Toronto artists in developing their careers while at the same time foster a sense of belonging for residents and achieve multiple city building objectives set by Toronto Council.

Catherine and Carolyn began by discussing how StreetARToronto's programs support City of Toronto's motto "Diversity Our Strength". Their programs embody a strong diversity in terms of gender, age, culture and artist style.

They have created a pipeline of various training that artists have access to such as:

- Working at Heights, usually run in partnership with Mural Routes
- Community engagement workshops
- Speaker series
- Networking events
- Mental health workshops
- Documentation and promotion workshops

Carolyn and Catherine discussed some of the street art projects StART has produced over the years. The programs they run in Toronto include:

- Outside the Box program
- Concrete Barriers program
- Laneways of Toronto (including a pollination project)
- Partnership grant for small walls and large walls
- Underpass program
- Monumental - Tall buildings



This suite of programs has been established to create a career ladder.



There is a REOI (Request for Expression of Interest) form on StART's website that artists can use to apply to get their profile on the StART roster of artists.

In recent years, StART has been making it a priority to reach out to Indigenous artists as well as leading placemaking projects that involve Indigenous artists.

They announced that they will have drop-in sessions across the City of Toronto in early 2020 to answer artists and organizations' questions regarding submitting Partnership grant applications.

More information about these sessions, programs and other opportunities can be found on StreetARToronto's website [www.toronto.ca/streetart](http://www.toronto.ca/streetart)

**Marta Keller-Hernandez** wrapped up the day by once again thanking Elder Duke Redbird and the amazing speakers for generously sharing their knowledge with us. She also thanked the Symposium sponsors: StreetARToronto and Downtown Yonge BIA, and our Community Partner, YYZ Artists' Outlet. Without their support this event would not have been possible. The Ontario Arts Council and the Toronto Arts Council were thanked for their continuous support. And finally, the Board members, the Symposium Committee, the staff, and all of the attendees for being at the 19th National Mural Symposium.

The day ended with many attendees staying to network and enjoy refreshments.

**Sponsors:**



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Mural Routes would also like to thank our delegation and supporters: the artists, administrators, educators and volunteers who work year 'round in their own communities to create and enhance the public space with art.

# Bell Box Murals Project 2019

community feedback



## FEEDBACK FROM ARTISTS & PASSERS-BY

The favourable comments from the community quite exceeded all expectations and is clear evidence that people appreciate public art and want to see more in their own communities. The multiracial, multicultural Humber Summit neighbourhood enjoys public art that uplifts and brings joy. I received bottles of cold water from total strangers and was the subject of a short video as I painted by a tourist. CC

Many people made my painting experience a blast... particularly some curious kids who were fascinated by artists actually making art such as this, and for programs like these to even exist. They were not only inspired, but inspiring as well. HM

I got to know some of the residents who lived nearby and it was nice learning more about the neighbourhood and hearing all of their positive feedback about the mural. One person said the mural reminded him his home country, the Philippines, which was touching because that was my intent with the subject matter. I was lucky that one of the homeowners let me store my paints in his yard so I didn't have to carry them on the bus every day. TS

I asked the rabbi who was running the day camp what he thought of the box to see if there was anything offensive for him since the box does back right up onto the cheder school yard. He was often present while I was painting and encouraged the kids to talk with me and ask questions. He took a hard look at the work for me and he said the girl on the front was very nice as she was and that he was just wondering if I could cover the shoulders of the girl at the back. I did and he thanked me for my sensitivity. Other than that everyone was super gracious and encouraging throughout the process. The veterans who live across the street were especially supportive and happy to have me there. They let me use their washroom, they watched my stuff for me and fed me throughout the process. JM

So, it was the most luxurious Bell box painting for me. Thomas & Ann were so, so nice, they gave me coffee, tea and even fed me lunch. Made me stop working and eat, which is always really nice, because I forget to. They were wonderful! I really love them now hehe They loved the mural and so as their neighbours. Everyone would stop all day to say nice things. NK

Painting this bell box was an incredibly rewarding experience for me. The community is very happy with the work that I did and I heard repeatedly from many people that they loved the project and all the bell boxes that were painted in their neighbourhood. I would go to my bell box

frequently to paint in the evening after work and would find that people in the neighbourhood would come to walk over and visit me or when they would drive by they would stop to chat and see how the mural was coming along. The backside of the mural (along the sidewalk) even became somewhat of a community initiative. I found many children in the neighbourhood would love coming by with their parents and would want to come see me and to contribute. The design on the back of the box somewhat changed for this reason as I went with the flow and in the end created a different line style design that went along with the contributions of hearts, lines and shapes that were added in by the community. Everyone was friendly and kind I was lucky to be in such good company JK

It was wonderful to chat with the neighborhood community. Many were telling me kind words while I was painting. Some of them asked about the project and I've even met one artist who would like to apply in the future. VW

What I like about public art the most is the connection with the community I always can make. People pass by, they stop for a chat, I hear such diverse stories and make new friends :-)  
Quite a few people stopped by me and asked whether I installed this bell box to paint - they have lived for decades in the neighbourhood, but never noticed the box until it's got some colours!  
Three children ran up to me and asked if they also can paint as it looked so much fun, and so they did! They really enjoyed this short but fun experience and actually didn't want to leave. Finally finished, they were very happy to co-create the box they would be looking at from their window every day :-)  
KT

I liked the neighborhood, most of the people were very friendly and I got so many compliments. They really liked the colours and how well the design is matched with the nature, houses, buildings around that area. Some of them were very kind, they actually spent some time talking to me and thank me for making the city beautiful. YM

The passers-by were very friendly and sounded happy to have something new to look at in the neighbourhood. It was largely older Russian-speaking people taking walks, or occasionally parents with curious children. One of the men who stopped by turned out to be a fellow OCAD U alumni! Him and a few others asked about the box painting and I told them about the Bell box murals program. Everyone who stopped by was very kind and encouraging. LB

The people who walked by were very friendly and would stop by to chat often. People seemed really happy to have the boxes brightened up and to see live art going on in their neighbourhood: "I walked by every day and looked forward to seeing your progress", "Walking by and seeing this, it just brings a smile to your face." I received great feedback from the community, many who lived in the building. I probably spoke or interacted with easily over 50 people. Everyone who asked about the program seemed really happy that artists were paid. "I love that they're supporting artists" was something more than one person said. EM

Such a lovely neighborhood and nice people I heard a lot of nice compliment, encouraging sentences, heartwarming feedbacks and horn honking from commuters! MS

I had dozens of positive comments from passers-by and neighbours; other people honked and waved, and neighbours brought me glasses of water. And I met Margaret Atwood when she walked by on my last day! I was star-struck. ACK

Many, many people stopped to chat and ask about what I was doing, what inspired my idea, how I got the opportunity to do the mural, etc. I especially had more comments towards the end when it was looking mostly finished. The feedback itself was all very positive, mostly quick comments like "Looking good!" Some people had seen me working on it over the few days I had been painting, and specifically commented that they enjoyed watching it come together. VB



The residents of the building and also the pedestrians always share their positive energy and good feelings about the work, sometimes brought me water, and snacks! The building provided me a free parking as a community service for me! All was very helpful and built up my energy. The design is based on Persian carpets design and it was recognizable by Iranian people who passed by. They were very happy to see a familiar pattern in the city that they call home. AS

The interactions I experienced with the community during this project were constant and positive. From people waiting for buses to pedestrians to people pulling over in their cars on Centre St., I had so much positive feedback from the community. People asked me questions about the Bell Box program and how they wished all the boxes could get painted. Others asked me about my own personal history in art and in Oshawa or we just talked about the salmon that swim through the creek. One ten-year-old artist in training had questions for over half an hour while she waited for a bus with her grandmother. She wanted to know everything from how long I had been painting to if I got hungry while I worked. I was happy to fill her in. The seniors who live in the Sunrise Centre are lovely and very curious and social. A group of them were there for a couple hours sitting outside and chatting with me and complimenting my work. One man named Michael, brought me water and helped me bring my things back to my car. Another, Gerta, helped me out by taking a process picture and posing in one of my final shots. MCK

Many folks of all ages came by to see what the project was all about and offer encouragement and positivity. I was overwhelmed at the support I received while painting, it was such a pleasure to meet so many of the friendly people in this neighbourhood! HL

The project was very new to Oshawa's residents. They welcomed me and they liked the idea. The location of the box was just perfect, up on the hill, and very visible from the street. Mostly cars passing by say good things and honk at me while I was painting. Not too many pedestrians walking by but I had some conversation. There was a lady, she said she was following my design from Day 1, and she was very curious about the result! There was a guy, he does graffiti, he showed me his designs and he said that the artists like you covering our designs, but I told him that he is a talented artist too and he needs to do it legally. He showed me his spray, then said that he is not going to do anything to my box cuz he liked it! Overall I got great feedbacks. :) YM

*Interesting interaction with the graffiti tagger. Once again, it's very specific interactions on the ground between the artist and passers-by that are the real force of change and transformation generated by this project. No authority could stop that tagger, but in a short, personal conversation Yasaman changed his mind and earned his respect for the artwork. By acknowledging his own artistic talent, Yasaman opened the door that maybe in the future he could be applying to paint a Bell box instead of tagging one.*

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Michael Cavanaugh  
Project Director

**BELL BOX MURALS PROJECT**

*transforming neighbourhood spaces*

[www.facebook.com/bellboxmuralsproject](http://www.facebook.com/bellboxmuralsproject)

[bellboxmurals@gmail.com](mailto:bellboxmurals@gmail.com)

Community Matters Toronto  
260 Wellesley St. E., Unit 102  
Toronto, ON M4X 1G6



# International Exchanges with Local Impact

STEPS is committed to inspiring cities across Canada and around the world to create welcoming public spaces that reflect local culture. We develop unique arts-based engagement strategies that foster vibrant communities and strive to develop initiatives that incorporate diverse lived experiences and foster inclusive spaces for people to gather, connect, and participate in building vibrant cities.

Our most impactful projects:

Increase feelings of safety, connection and pride in public spaces

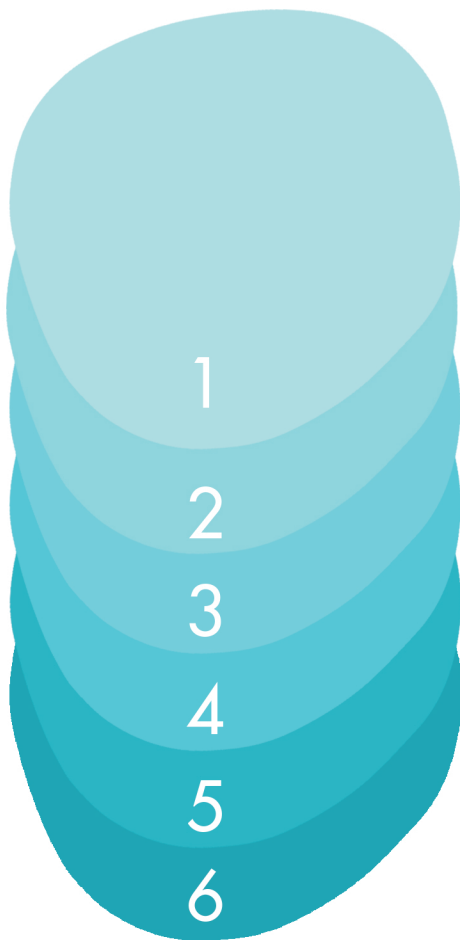
Reflect and enhance local identity

Create cultural destinations for locals and visitors alike

Build capacity of emerging artists, youth and community-led groups

This remains true whether we are facilitating a project in collaboration with a local or international artist.

## Our Approach to Community Engaged Public Art



We support our collaborating artists in engaging directly with the community through these five stages:

1. **CONNECT** with local experts and cultural stakeholders. Cultivate relationships among local and international collaborators.
2. **ENGAGE** local residents in sharing their cultural values and vision for the area through both creative and traditional consultation methods. This includes providing space for co-creation and collaboration among community members and artistic facilitators.
3. **TRANSFORM** public spaces with as much community collaboration as possible!
4. **BUILD CAPACITY** through training, embedded learning and mentorship opportunities for local artists, youth and community.
5. **EXCHANGE** skills, stories, and build connections among community and cultural partners both during and after production.
6. **CELEBRATE** local talent, culture and possibilities.

This handout was prepared for the 19th National Mural Symposium.

# The Administrative Side of International Exchanges

The following information are learnings from the experience of The STEPS Initiative. You should always seek your own advice from Canada Revenue Agency, Citizenship and Immigration Canada or other legal professionals that is specific to your circumstances. We assume no responsibility for the accuracy of this information or that it is current with any changes in law. We especially encourage you to contact the Canada Revenue Agency's International Tax and Non-Residents Enquiries division.

## General Administration

Ensure all the info matches exactly! This includes all contracts, invoices and waiver information.

Ask at the start if artists operate or bill through aliases, companies or agents/managers.

Some artists have star corporations setup to benefit them for tax purposes, and if this is the case all contracts, invoices and CRA forms should be completed to match the corporation.

In order to enter Canada legally, an artist will need to provide a letter at the border outlining the work for which they are being engaged in on company letterhead. The letter should include a description of work, fees, reimbursable expenses, arrival and departure information.

## Money, Money, Money

In general, artists who are not Canadian citizens or permanent residents are taxed on Canadian income. It is an artist's net income that is considered and typically taxed at 23% unless they receive a waiver indicating that they are not required to remit this amount. Work expenses such as travel to and from Canada, accommodation and meals can be deducted from gross earnings to calculate the "net" amount if the artist has paid for these expenses.

At the time of preparing this handout, STEPS understands that:

- Artists coming from the US have a "straight exemption" of \$5,000
- Artists coming from countries other than the US have an exemption of no more than \$15K Canadian in a calendar year, including reimbursable benefits
- An artist can submit the following to request a tax exemption: R105 Regulation 105 Waiver Application.
- If the Artist's net income will be less than \$15,000 they may be eligible to complete a R105-S Simplified Waiver Application for Artists and Athletes Earning No More Than \$15,000, which exempts them from completing the above waiver process.

In order to complete either the R105 or R105-S, an artist will require an individual tax number (ITN). They can obtain one by completing: T1261 Application for a CRA Individual Tax Number (ITN) for Non-Residents. This needs to be mailed in hard copy with an original signature. The application must include photo ID (notarized copy of passport, which host organization can "certify the likeness" by signing). The application must also be accompanied by a Letter of Representation by which the artist grants permission for the host organization to liaise with CRA on their behalf. The application form and certified passport need to be sent by mail to the provided address.

The entire process should theoretically take six (6) weeks according to CRA quoted processing times, however we have found that it can take considerably longer. Start early and make sure you have permission to speak to CRA on the artist's behalf in case you need to advocate for them!

If the artist cannot provide a tax waiver, the payee is obligated to withhold 15% if they have not completed a waiver or simplified waiver process, and remit this amount on their behalf to Receiver General with Canada Revenue Agency.

If you have other CRA accounts (i.e. HST, payroll etc) you must make sure that remittances are well labelled, otherwise CRA will likely apply this payment to one of your accounts (which is very difficult to fix!)

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