

**To:** Arts and Culture Advisory Committee

**From:** Downtown Art Working Committee

**Date:** July 29, 2022

**Subject: Elliot Lake Immersive Art Initiative**

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## **RESOLUTION**

That the City of Elliot Lake, in conjunction with a working group of the Arts and Culture Advisory Committee, complete a series of interactive art pieces—murals, sculptures, and the like, of any media and style—to promote tourism.

## **BACKGROUND**

The City of Elliot Lake has successfully completed several Downtown Art projects over the years. While these have contributed greatly to the beautification of the downtown area, they do not provide a significant tourist draw.

The intention of this proposed project is to create a series of art pieces, connected by a singular theme that will be a focal point for visitation.

## **BENEFITS**

Each piece will be immersive to encourage more photo opportunities, which in turn will provide more promotion to the community, and thereby more tourism.

With the primary area of this art project focused in the downtown, this has the potential to increase foot traffic to our local businesses.

## **THEME**

In our search for a unifying theme that allows for all different media and approaches, we decided to draw upon our local assets and resources, namely our natural resources: rocks, trees, water, wildlife and also the people in our community.

The theme of “Woodlands.” was suggested as the woodlands pre-date our uranium heritage and their longevity will continue long after us. *Woodlands* is vague enough to be open to multiple interpretations—wildlife, landscapes, and rocks & geology, as well as recreational activities such as hiking and canoeing.

## ANALYSIS

A project of this size will need community partners both for financial support, and permissions to use property where applicable. An inventory of blank wall space (see attached) was put together by Prisca, a member of the Arts Committee. While these would be great prospects for interactive murals, we would also be looking for spaces where we can implement dimensional art pieces.

The committee believes it would be prudent to kick-off the project with a City commissioned piece. A recommendation is a letter structure spelling Elliot Lake, where the “i” is missing, inviting visitors to replace this letter with themselves. This structure could be placed strategically somewhere like at Spruce Beach, lined up so that the rock is visible in the cut out of the “o” for example.



## **FURTHER READING**

This type of Downtown rejuvenation project has been implemented successfully in local communities like Sault Ste. Marie, and communities of similar size and circumstance to Elliot Lake like Chemainus, BC.

### **Sault Ste. Marie's Downtown Mural Project**

"A partnership between FutureSSM and the Sault Ste. Marie Downtown Association, the Downtown Mural Project 2019 consists of 5 large-scale murals in the downtown core to support and coordinate with downtown revitalization initiatives.

The purpose of the mural project is three-fold:

1. Murals will increase Sault Ste. Marie's cultural vitality by introducing more art into the public sphere; public art initiatives allow for creative expression without cost barriers and promote a sense of identity and community. By connecting artists, businesses, government agencies and non-profit organizations in this collaborative, creative project, the development of murals themselves can advance the arts & culture sector in our community.
2. Murals create destinations resulting in increased foot traffic, while adding colour, vibrancy and character to an urban environment. A more vibrant downtown will attract more locals and tourists alike, who shop at local stores and eat at local restaurants, thereby supporting economic development in Sault Ste. Marie.
3. Finally, through the development of youth-oriented curriculum, the mural project will provide students in our community with opportunities for experiential learning and mentorship. FutureSSM is working with Batchewana First Nation, Algoma District School Board, Global Friends, Sault College, Algoma University, and others to involve youth in this process. The process will also provide the opportunity for local artists to connect with youth in a mentorship roll, connecting emerging and established arts practitioners"

Partnerships include: Equipment World, Color Your World, Cloverdale Paint, Kiwanis, Village Media, Batchewana First Nation, Michaels, Holiday Inn, Days Inn, Quality Inn & Suites.

More information available at <https://futuressm.com/downtownmuralproject/>

### **Chemainus' Mural Project**

"After being a one-resource community for over a century, Chemainus was up against the wall of a changing world, where new technologies and economic shifts threatened to leave this little town behind and disrupt the security of families who had depended on the forest industry all their lives.

The newly elected young Mayor of North Cowichan, Graham Bruce, was keen to encourage diversity and new directions that would keep the communities in the

Chemainus and Cowichan Valleys productive and stable places to live. He knew it would depend upon the initiative of the people themselves to do something of their own volition without waiting for the government. Already, many Chemainus residents had been discussing the issues, without result.

As the 1980s dawned, Mayor Bruce invited interested business people to consider taking advantage of the provincial government's Downtown Revitalization Program. Chemainus was the first BC community to respond, and the Chemainus Revitalization Committee was formed. The committee was made up of Graham Bruce, Alan Hussey, Rex Hollett, Sandra Heydon, Jerry Philippon, Gordon Swanson and Bill Jameson.

The "Group of Seven", as it was dubbed – Al Johnson, Vern Kay, Joe Hudak, Bill Jameson, Jack Jameson, Joe Jeles and Tony Monco – represented the interests of the Chamber of Commerce and were the leading proponents for revitalization. They formed the core of an active group of volunteers, men and women, who envisioned a new face and expanded economic opportunities for Chemainus. They chose tourism as the best adjunct to logging in the future that they pictured for Chemainus. It seemed a natural choice to promote the logging theme. Conceptual drawings were created, showing how the Chemainus story could be portrayed in murals as part of the Downtown Revitalization Program and so bring a new look to the downtown core.

The municipality then made an inspired decision to hire Karl Schutz as the coordinator of the revitalization project. Schutz was convinced that celebrating the history and heritage of Chemainus would work wonders on the spirit of the community and attract attention from all over the world. Wisely, he insisted that recognized artists paint the murals, thereby creating a distinguished outdoor gallery.

Schutz and the "Group of Seven" launched the program that accomplished the transformation of the downtown buildings into an attractive market for visitors, as well as for artisans and other merchants. The painting of the first murals in 1982 attracted new crowds, and the artists themselves were a major part of the fascination.

Wanting a separate body to oversee and preserve the enduring legacy of the murals, Schutz pushed for the creation of the Chemainus Festival of Murals Society and became its first Executive Director. Catherine Fyffe, a third generation Chemainus resident, became the first administrator.

Schutz's irrepressible energy earned for him inclusion among the Fifty Canadian Men of Influence for 1987. By 1988, the province recognized his contribution, not just to Chemainus, but also to Vancouver Island and BC, appointing him an Ambassador of Tourism for the province. In 1992, Her Majesty the Queen authorized a commemorative medal to mark the 125th anniversary of Confederation, honouring Canadians who have made a special contribution to their community and their country. Karl Schutz was one of those Canadians so honoured.

For more than 25 years now, the Chemainus Festival of Murals Society has been operated principally by dedicated volunteers. These unnamed individuals have been honoured by visitors from around the globe who have consistently expressed delight in their experience.

These honours are shared by all the men and women of Chemainus who have participated in making this vision a reality. The spirit of Chemainus stands as a testament of hope for all small communities in the new millennium.”

More information available at <https://muraltown.com/>