

Aboriginal spirit displayed at Grandin LRT Station

The spirit of reconciliation enlivens the walls of Grandin LRT Station, reflecting the history and resilience of Edmonton's Aboriginal community.

The Grandin Murals are the outcome of two years of dialogue and consultation among Edmonton's Francophone and Aboriginal communities. They were created by artists Aaron Paquette and Sylvie Nadeau.



Aaron's Paquette's artwork is new. Sylvie Nadeau, who created the original mural, has added panels depicting an Aboriginal boy and girl.

"The City of Edmonton is proud to have been a part of making this project a reality," said Councillor Tony Caterina. "We are committed to building positive relationships with Aboriginal communities built on respect and understanding for a shared history. Together, the murals at Grandin LRT Station form a powerful symbol of that desire. They also remind us that in order to build a better future, we must learn from the past."

Displayed along 80 feet of painted panels on the station's east wall, local Métis artist Aaron Paquette's captivating and colourful mural depicts sacred symbols and imagery that reflect 10,000 years of Aboriginal history in the city we now call Edmonton.

"This mural is the culmination of many consultations, talks, visits and stories I had the pleasure of attending and hearing over the past two years," said Aaron Paquette. "They all built into a powerful, multi-layered narrative; small songs weaving themselves into a great symphony. It was a wonderful challenge to condense everything into one work of art, but, in the end, this mural is not me speaking for anyone, but all those voices speaking for themselves through something they helped create. I hope it offers a more complete understanding of history and our place in it. I hope I was able to make something that stands the test of time and reminds us that we are all connected, that we are all on this journey together."

Nadeau's new panels "speak" to Paquette's mural and reflect the journey of reconciliation. The artists worked in close partnership for two years and the resulting murals place Grandin Station as a site for understanding, awareness, and healing.

"Working alongside Aaron Paquette has been a privilege, and I am honoured to have been afforded this opportunity to be part of a solution," said Sylvie Nadeau, a member of the francophone community. "We see our works as speaking together from across a shared and troubled history, a symbol of moving towards mutual respect and understanding. Through this process of learning and healing, I've discovered that my artwork can still channel the love and peace I originally brought to it and I hope it will inspire more people to engage in the larger conversation about the history of Residential Schools."

Grandin station's original mural was commissioned by La Francophonie jeunesse in 1989 to honour Bishop Vital Grandin for whom the station and surrounding community are named.

However, some community members objected to the mural's imagery which, they felt, evoked the troubling history of the Residential Schools. In 2011, Francophonie jeunesse de l'Alberta and the City of Edmonton with the support of the Edmonton Arts Council and other community agencies convened a working circle to find solutions to the issue. The collective decision was made to re-envision the original work and commission a new mural.

"The Grandin station mural has been a long-term project for FJA and I'm happy to see that collaboration and reconciliation is at the heart of why we are all here today," said FJA president Samuel Gagnon. "Since 1989, we have led this project, and although I was not involved at the time, I can tell you that the original piece by Sylvie Nadeau was and still represents the Francophone community's contributions to this province. It is a part of our history as Albertans."

The majority of funding for the new and re-envisioned murals came from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission with additional funding from the City of Edmonton and the Community Arts grant program administered by the Edmonton Arts Council.

The [Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada](#) will end its national journey of healing in Edmonton from March 27 to 30, 2014. Three days of events are designed to educate Canadians about the effects of the Residential School System.

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