

Creating the “Gardens of Life” Mural

1. Receiving Permission

Once a preliminary design for the entire wall of the mural was finalized, Jesse used her connections within Fruit & Veg to ask the CEO, Bryan Coppin, for approval. It was learned the Fruit & Veg was about to embark on a new branding effort in 2016 to have the image of being the locally-grown-and-sold food mart. Jesse was able to have the mural added to this new image for the store. It was understood that Khulisa’s Streetscape garden could be at the forefront of this effort but it required a facelift, which is where the mural would fit in. The slogan under the “Tree of Life” design was changed to “uplifting the local community” to better fit this effort while still maintaining its original intent. The final request from Fruit & Veg was to include their Food Lover’s Market logo on the wall.

2. Gathering Materials

Because we worked on a budget, we first tried to get materials donated. However, after various tries without success, and because time was an issue, we decided to buy the materials that we needed. Thankfully, we met Holmes, a young artist that works for Knobs and Tassels gallery. Holmes was working on a mural inside Chopchop cafe when we first met him and he instantly showed interest in our project. We invited him to work with us and formalized our partnership a few days later. After agreeing on the payment and deliveries deadline, Holmes took us to a local trading store, where we bought most of our materials for a very reduced price.

3. Painting the Mural

Work began on the mural on a Monday. Holmes, Lenny, Theresa, Alicia and Tati began work on transferring the design onto the wall in chalk. After measuring out the wall, a chalk line was used to create a grid of perfectly straight lines on the wall. This grid was then used by Holmes and Lenny to add the more detailed outlines of the mural to the wall. Once the design was fully transferred to the wall in chalk, work began on coloring in the mural with paint. By the end of the first day, the Tree of Life design was on the wall in full color. On the second day of work, black outlines were added between the colored spaces. Touch ups to these lines and the color continued throughout the week.

Holmes was studying graphic design and, as such, provided expertise in that field. After the team took his insights into consideration, stencils for the title, slogan and poem were printed so the words could all be cleanly spray painted onto the wall. Through this process, we also faced some difficulties, such as keeping up with the schedule and communicating clearly. However, the mural was fully transferred to the wall by that same Friday and was only missing its protective top clear coat.

4. Community Day

In order to involve the wider community in the project, we invited those who live, spend the day, park and work around the lot to participate in a “Community Day” on the Thursday during the painting week. During this event, people had the opportunity to put their handprint on the wall, mingle and learn more about our project goal, as well as

acquire a better understanding about the street individuals who live in the region. In order to let their creativity flow, our team brought different color paints and helped those who came to the event by painting their hands in the color(s) they chose. Some people made solid handprints while others used multi-color designs. The individuals then placed their handprint anywhere inside the white circle around the tree of life design and took the paint off by washing their hands with soap. In just 3 hours, the entire circle was filled with hands that differed in size, color, orientation and position, both from street individuals and other members of the community.