

The Healing Forest Public Art Project

William Frymire

June 21st, 2016

"Participants' interpretations of healing would serve as the building blocks of a great cross-cultural forest, each tile resounding with the energy and emotion of what reconciliation means to them."

William Frymire

The Healing Forest - Detailed Description

Trees provided our ancestors with shelter and sustenance, medicine and fuel. Today, a walk in the forest still soothes the spirit and mind as nature has been proven to provide a calming effect. In placing a facsimile of a natural element in an urban environment, it is my hope to create a nurturing place that engages users as well as making them feel sheltered and safe, ideas that I believe are integral to helping a community heal, bond and grow.

A forest is a fitting representation of reconciliation and healing as the ecosystem of a forest mimics the ecosystem of a community. A forest exists as a diverse collection of biological creatures living in a state of harmony. When the forest is damaged, the trees, animals and plants work together to repair their home, in some cases making the area more beautiful and diverse than before. Healing must take place on both an individual and communal level.

With this project, I will create a large scale free-standing transparent collaborative mosaic in the shape of the forest canopy that can be viewed from inside or outside. The forest will consist of seven trees to echo the seven aboriginal teachings. Each tree will be made of many images that people have submitted or created. The transparency of the piece and natural imagery of tree branches and leaves and the soothing green and earth tones will create a bright and uplifting space that gives hope and serenity to all who venture under its protection. It will resemble a green house not only in shape but also by invoking a sense of growth and new beginnings.

To create the mosaic, I will collect diverse offerings of many people and use my unique mosaic technique to recreate

the image of a forest. I will ask the question: What does reconciliation mean to you? It could be represented by a photo, a sketch, painting, spoken word or even a keepsake. Each participant's interpretation of reconciliation imagery would serve as a building block of the greater forest, each tile resounding with the energy and emotion of what reconciliation means to them.

By asking this question, I hope to invoke a sense of what reconciliation means to each person while using the forest imagery to create a positive feeling of safety and healing. To some it means an apology, to others it is about forgiveness. We can not do anything to change the past but by creating and giving a small contribution of our time right now, we show we care about our future together.

For the countless creators of this cross-cultural mosaic, it gives them a chance to add their voice and vision to the honest dialogue around reconciliation in a visual way while creating a permanent snapshot of our collective consciousness around this issue.

Each submission contributes to the whole art piece like the inhabitants of a forest bring their seeds, roots, and bones to nourish and heal the land. Like a real forest, the project will grow in unknown directions as each contributor brings their own story to the forest. Social media will become the root structure for connecting and collecting submissions, with users submitting their images, text and video through the on-line portal. Submitted material will be digitized and form a database that will become a part of the healing forest.



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The Healing Forest - Detailed Description

Education

Acknowledging the past is an integral part of the healing process. To this end, archival images, newspaper clippings and other memorabilia from the residential school era will be incorporated into the piece. The entrance of the canopy will be created from these educational elements which will gradually change into the healing imagery that will dominate the exit end. I hope to establish partnerships with keepers of the archival imagery and information such as the Residential School Research, Archive and Visitor's Centre. These partnerships will allow greater public viewing of artefacts that tell the truth about the residential school era in a non-confrontational environment.

I hope to obtain submissions from all involved parties, including Church groups and my local native school, which now exists as the Skelep School of Excellence. Additional material will be sourced through partnerships with existing reconciliation gatherings and workshops. My goal is to get input from as many perspectives as possible. First Nations, Inuit, Métis and non-indigenous groups all have different experiences and their own unique story to tell.

Visitor Experience

The artwork provides a place to learn about and experience the many aspects of reconciliation and what it means to the many contributors that together helped create this collaborative artwork.

For the visitor, it offers a dual viewing experience. Up close, a collection of interesting imagery captivates your interest, but take a step back and you see that we are part of nature's grand design.

The finished piece will also have a digital interactive element where tablets or cell phones can access more detailed information on the piece and each individual element. For instance, if someone was interested in a particular tile they could access the website and click on the interactive map and find out more information, including the contributor and any text, or audio that goes along with the image. Also, if a contributor to the project wished to find their tile, a search of their name would direct them to their tile location.

Technology

Through technology, the work will expand to encompass a far larger pool of submissions than I could personally accumulate or facilitate. This is perhaps the most exciting aspect of this project. 10% of the budget is allocated to a web presence to gather imagery and create the database that will fuel the interactive aspect of the piece.

It will also bring together family and friends across generations as younger generations help older generations master the technology needed to submit. In this way, I hope the creation process will generate healing conversations within family and community structures that may not otherwise be initiated.

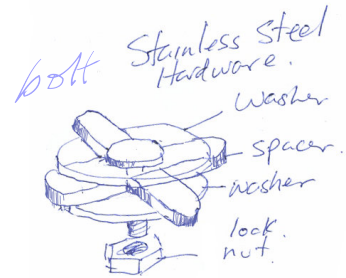
William Frymire

The Healing Forest - Detailed Description

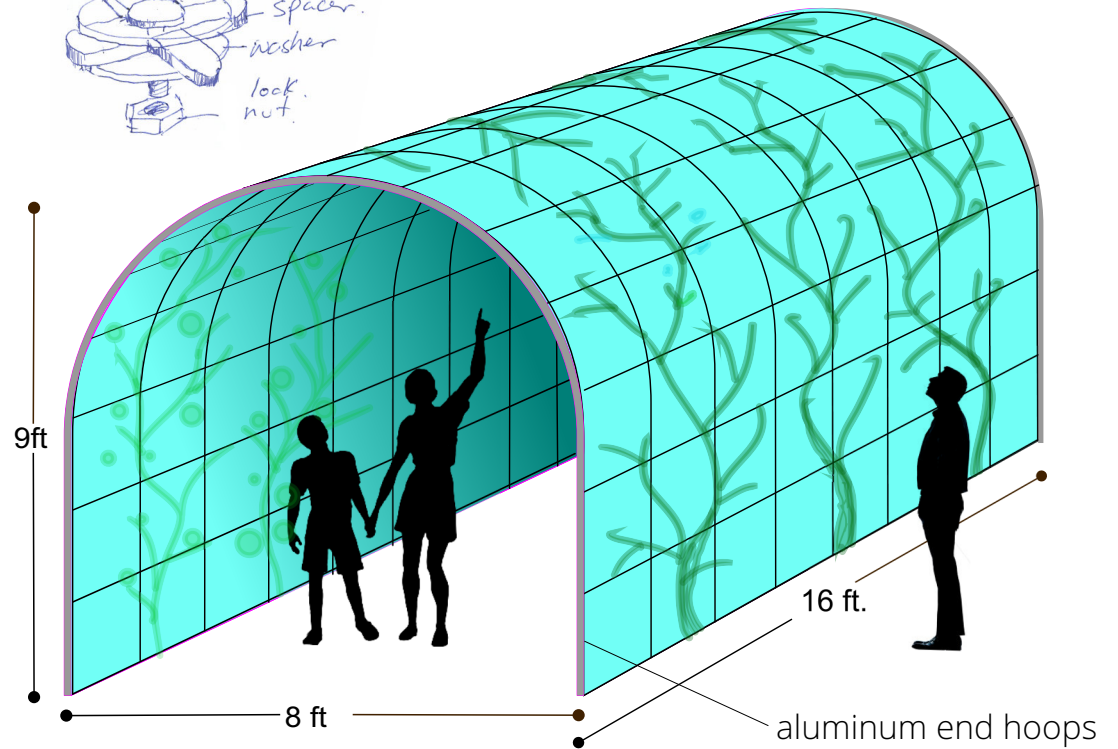
Construction

The physical mosaic will be constructed out of the thousands of transparent glass tiles, with the imagery visible from both the interior of the forest as well as the exterior. These tiles will be digitally printed with special ink and kiln fired into the glass substrate. This creates a durable UV safe transparent image that will not fade, chip or scratch. If any of the tiles break, an identical replacement can be reordered and replaced.

The thousands of tiles that make up the canopy will be adhered to 2'x2' acrylic panels that use a corner clamp system of stainless steel hardware to erect the self supporting archway. The mosaic canopy will be modular and portable for easy transportation, installation and relocation. Two aluminium supports at the ends of the piece will facilitate the assembly and disassembly of the artwork. A structural engineer will be contracted to oversee the design and ensure the structure is safe and durable.



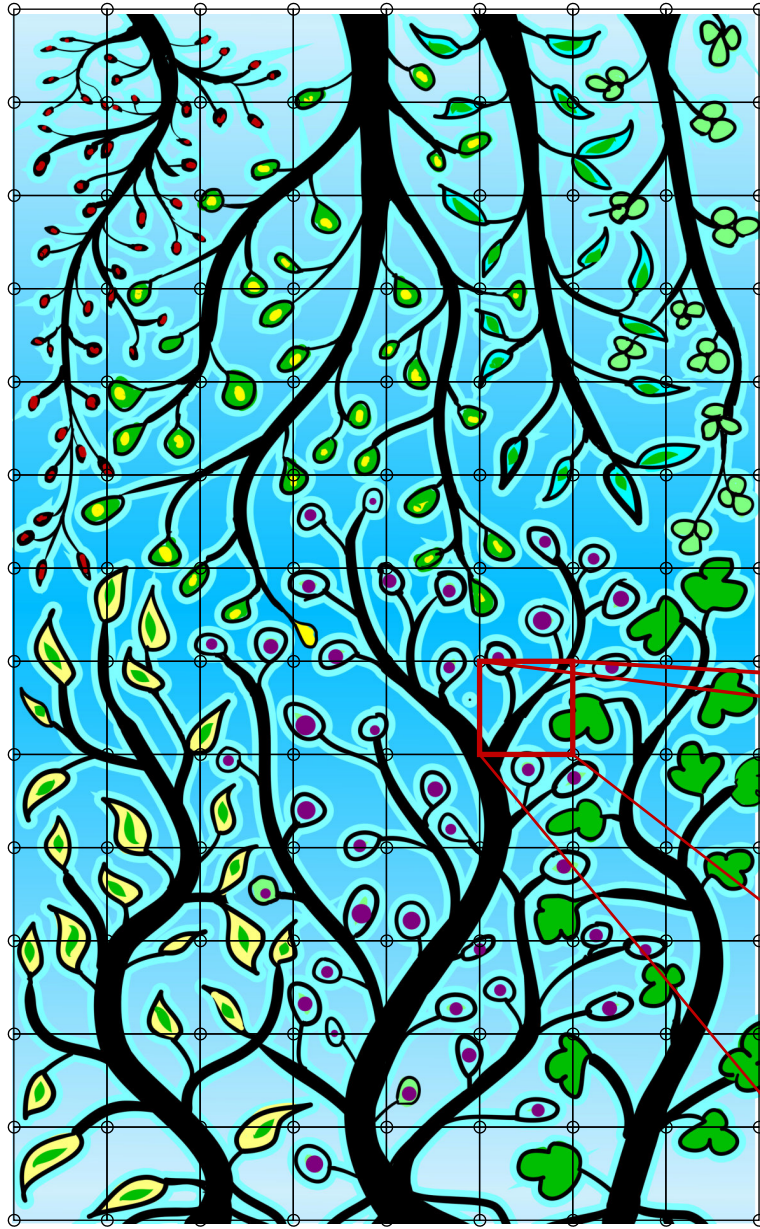
Support Structure using 2'x2' panels



The design of the canopy is such that it could be assembled on a flat deck trailer and driven cross country and uncovered for public viewing.

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The Healing Forest - Preliminary Diagrams



Preliminary Sketch of the 104 interconnected panels

Artwork

As a descendant of Cree and Scottish lineage I identify with and am drawn to the woodlands style of aboriginal art. One of my favourite artist is the great Norval Morrisseau, whose influence can be seen in my preliminary illustration of the Healing Forest on the left.

The square below shows that the panels are actually made up of the individual tiles from contributors. Each tile's contrast and colour determines where it can go in the mosaic to best show the overall forest image. Digital manipulation of images can adjust imagery to help create the overall forest image.



Individual 4" glass tiles make up the forest image

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The Healing Forest

Project Timeline

- 1) Kick off meeting
- 2) Updated sketches provided. Research begins
- 3) Social media and image collection plan finalized
- 4) Artistic creation sessions
- 5) Engineering drawings finalized
- 6) Frame fabrication
- 7) Glass tiles manufacturer contracted
- 8) Visuals and data gathering completed. database started
- 9) Mosaic completed
- 10) Installation of the Healing Forest
- 11) Opening ceremony and information session
- 12) Travel and exhibition at secondary location.

Task 1 – Kickoff Meeting

A teleconference call kickoff meeting will be scheduled with stakeholders and William Frymire (the artist) to confirm the scope of work, proposed schedules, deliverables, lines of communication and billing information etc. The meeting will be scheduled shortly after the signing of the contract between the Canada Council for the Arts (CCA) and the artist.

Task 2 - Updated sketches provided. Research Begins

Following the teleconference kick off meeting, the artist will provide updated sketches, if necessary, to the CCA. The Artist will research further sources of material for inclusion in the project.

Task 3 – Social media and image collection plan finalized. Working with Spryberry.co and other web content specialists, a strategy will be created to facilitate the engagement and collection of imagery to be used in the project. Partnerships for archival imagery will be explored and confirmed. Also, a location in Kamloops for the artwork to be displayed will be secured.

Task 4 – Artistic creation sessions will take place in Kamloops BC and will include groups of all ages and ethnic backgrounds, providing additional material for the mosaic.

Task 5 – Stamped engineering drawings finalized
The artist will ensure stamped engineering drawings will be provided to the CCA.

Task 6 – Frame Fabrication

A CWB certified welder will be subcontracted to weld the aluminum frame for the canopy.

Task 7 – Glass tiles manufacturer contracted

A reputable vendor for transferring and firing the imagery will be located and contracted to produce the tiles.

Task 8) - Visuals and data gathering completed.

Using all the elements uploaded through the collection sites and artist sessions a database will be created to contain all the media to be used for the project.

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The Healing Forest

Project Timeline (cont'd)

Task 9 – Mosaic completed. The artist will use all available material to create the final version of the Healing Forest. Detailed drawings of the final design will be sent in advance of the completion to the CCA for approval if requested.

Task 10 – Installation of Healing Forest
Once the art is complete, the artist and an assistant complete the final installation of the piece on site.

Task 11 – Opening ceremony and artist community information session.
Upon completion, the artist will attend an opening ceremony event with First Nations rituals. In conjunction with this ceremony, the artist will provide an information session to share his creative vision and process for the Healing Forest. Anyone who contributed to the project will be invited to attend.

Task 12 - Travel and Exhibition at secondary location.
The artist will travel with the artwork to the designated location and provide another information session to share his creative vision and process for the Healing Forest.

Table 1: Approximate Timeline and Milestone Dates

Task	Description	Milestone Date
1)	Kick off meeting	Oct 2016
2)	Updated sketches provided. Research begins	Nov. 2016
3)	Social media and image collection plan finalized	Dec. 2016
4)	Artistic creation sessions	Jan.- Feb. 2017
5)	Engineering drawings finalized	Feb. 2017
6)	Frame fabrication	Mar. 2017
7)	Glass tiles manufacturer contracted	Mar. 2017
8)	Visuals gathering completed, database started	May. 2017
9)	Mosaic completed	Aug. 2017
10)	Installation of the Healing Forest	Sep. 2017
11)	Opening ceremony and information session	Mid Sep. 2017
12)	Travel and exhibition at secondary location.	Spring of 2018

William Frymire

The Healing Forest - Suitability of Applicant

Growing up as a student of a Catholic elementary in the early 70s, I attended school with students who were still living at the native residential school and bused back and forth to our school everyday. I have many vivid memories of visiting the residential school and my relationships with my fellow classmates left an indelible mark on my life. I witnessed first hand and unwittingly participated in the discrimination of my native brothers and sisters. I knew I had native ancestry, but like many in that era, did not self identify as such. I still feel shame when I think of some of my interactions towards these kids that were separated from their family. I now have an opportunity to make a difference and create something positive to right the wrongs from over 40 years ago.

Art should represent the society of its time and place in history, providing a snapshot of humankind with an artistic interpretation of important issues of our time.

My current work achieves this by translating imagery from the natural world into mosaic artwork using technology to interface between image and material. In this community collaborative project, I will be interacting and initiating connective activities similar to past projects.

As my work has evolved from smaller scale mosaic into large scale public art, so my community involvement and partnerships within the community have changed. This evolution is evident in my recent works for Fort Saskatchewan, where I worked with community partners at city hall to realize their vision of community with both "Currents" - an exterior mosaic, as well as "Fabric of the Community". Both of these were developed in

collaboration with local elected officials, and the exterior mosaic was installed with the assistance of local experts in tiling.

Another example of my collaboration with community is my large scale work "Spirit Eagle" in Fort Chipewyan which was created for the Mikisew Elder Care Centre. The development of this piece was made in collaboration and with input from tribal elders, and the symbology within the work was specifically created to address the local cultural needs. Through this work, I also consulted with architects, engineers and the construction team to ensure that the project properly integrated with the spirit and physical aspects of the building as it was being built.

In my work "Inherit the Earth" a class at a local school used imagery of nature to help form an image of the earth on a leaf. This project was a true collaboration as each student approached the topic with their own ideas, and then the children's artwork was assembled into an image that I had previously created with photography. This work is installed in their courtyard, and I believe that through this project, each student thought deeply about their own personal impact on the environment. By seeing their work in the context of a larger whole, the project helped the students to understand the impact that each of us has on our environmental systems.



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The Healing Forest - Suitability of Applicant

Another local project that involved community participation was my tribute to Terry Fox, a project of up-cycled milk cartons which were adhered to a fence in a local park. Many local volunteers participated in the production and installation of this project. We worked together to map out and install the many pieces that make up the larger image using heat bonding. This sense of being part of a larger project brings people closer together, and helps them have a stake in the work. It is my hope to bring this aspect of togetherness to the Healing Forest Project.

My current local community project involves working with Thompson Rivers University to create a permanent sustainability themed installation on their campus using locally sourced up-cycled materials. The local community will be invited to participate during installation, helping to create a project with an environmental theme in both imagery and material. Through this I hope to help people re-envision what they might be able to do with materials that we normally discard, such as the used vinyl siding that makes up this project.

I have over 25 years of experience working as a commercial artist and illustrator, and am currently pursuing a career in sustainable Public Art, as well as creating fine art from found objects, natural stone and recycled materials. Environmentalism is a common theme in my work, as my participation in various recycled art exhibitions demonstrates.

In my Public Art I explore the connection of human activities with nature, which comes from my grandfather's teachings, and helps me understand and manifest my identity as Métis. My past projects, such as the Spirit Eagle canopy, have interwoven themes of spirituality, healing, and community.

My art conveys humanity's current evolution and the transition from analogue to digital culture. My work speaks to the integration of the pixel and computer based imagery into our current culture without throwing away ideals of beauty and craftsmanship of the past. This modern mosaic is representative of our new society where social media and technology have accelerated the creation of new communities that are bound together by common interest and inclusive of all people, regardless of colour, size or nationality.

For this project, research and community consultation are key. Documents such as: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action, and the Aboriginal Healing Methods for Residential School Abuse and Intergenerational Effects (Shelley Goforth) have helped educate me and given new insight and direction. I look forward to working with Elders, Reconciliation support groups, aboriginal youth and artists of all ages and backgrounds to create a collaborative art piece that provides a vehicle of expression for all affected by the residential school system. My hope is that this project will educate, inspire and continue the healing process for generations to come.



William Frymire

The Healing Forest - Public Engagement / Dissemination

Through this project, I will engage the public in the gathering, creation and exhibition phases of the project. The Healing Forest is meant to connect diverse people in conversations around healing by asking the question: What does reconciliation mean to you?

By introducing this question, I hope to invoke conversations within families and communities about reconciliation and forge a path forward towards a better future together.

Submissions may be anything - a photo of a loved one, a drawing, painting or words of wisdom. The extensive variety of submissions will help form the overall imagery of the healing forest. With a balance of indigenous and non-indigenous contributions from both the general public and artists, I hope to gather submissions and integrate them into the mosaic to show people that despite differences, people can come together to heal and help each other create stronger communities.

The gathering stage will be done on-line, with participants up-loading imagery through a custom web page or through existing social media channels such as Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook.

In addition, as the lead artist I will hold and coordinate artistic creation sessions with the artwork produced from these sessions used in the creation of the overall mosaic. Other artists from both indigenous and non-indigenous backgrounds will be engaged with and asked to submit their own creative vision to the project.

All material will be original to the project, and used with permission of the contributor. By using the internet, I can gather many diverse objects and stories, but it is also my hope that participants will share their submissions with those closest to them, or may even ask for help submitting if they are not very computer literate. In this way, I hope to initiate the sometimes difficult and important conversations in family and community around past experience, survival and healing.

In the creation phase of the project, I hope to integrate local support from Tk'emlúps te Secwepemc and other aboriginal and non-aboriginal youth community groups in collecting and entering all the information about the imagery into a cohesive on-line database that can be accessed during the exhibition phase of the project to inform the public about each image. During this stage I hope to foster cross-cultural youth connections and inspire young people to see that we are stronger together rather than alone. I also hope that through the entering of healing stories into the database, youth can gain perspective and understanding of older generations and their healing process.

During the exhibition phase, my intention is to display the piece initially in my home town of Kamloops on the site of the old residential school. As the piece is modular and transportable, the initial budget has included the cost of setting up a secondary site. I will pursue the possibility of displaying the work at the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation in Winnipeg. I will also set up a network of volunteers in each community to help set-up, take-down and talk to viewers about the piece, reaching out to local community groups as well as Aboriginal groups in the area. I hope that by invoking diversity in not just the project piece itself, but also in the people around it, the work will foster important and healing conversations between diverse networks of people within the community.



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The Healing Forest - Public Engagement / Dissemination

Following the two initial exhibitions, it is my hope that the piece will find a home either touring the rest of Canada or as a permanent public art work in a community that has been deeply affected by the work of reconciliation, possibly my own home town of Kamloops, BC.

Local support

I will continue to explore the use of my community in assisting me with my work, as well as using the work as an opportunity to teach others about the issues that face the modern First Nations People. Technology will also play a large role in expanding the realm of the possible with this project. I hope to break new ground between what is possible with traditional imagery and techniques and what can be imagined and created with the addition of modern technology. This project, creating a hybrid of art and interaction, will be a product of many hands and resonate with many voices and views.

I have already garnered some key support from a local network of artists, professionals and community groups. I plan to expand this network of support as I reach out across the nation for input from all peoples from all corners of our nation.

The Links page contains links to letters of support from supporters of the project:



William Frymire

Links

Artist's Fine art website

www.frymire-art.com

Social Media and website partner

<http://spryberry.co>

Additional material including Letters of Support:

<http://www.frymire-art.com/the-healing-forest/>

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Proposal Summary

With this cross-cultural collaborative project, I will create a large scale free-standing transparent mosaic in the shape of the forest canopy. Each tree will be made of many images that people have submitted or created with their own personal interpretation of "Reconciliation" through social media or artistic sessions. Archival images from the residential school era will also be incorporated into this digitally interactive piece. For creators of this cross-cultural mosaic, it offers a chance to visually add their voice to the honest dialogue around reconciliation while creating a permanent snapshot of our collective consciousness around this important issue.

