

Community Mural Project Guide

Tamara Thorpe

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This guide outlines the history of the Community Mural Project in Victoria, British Columbia. It also includes information and practical tips for those interested in engaging youth in meaningful and sustainable community service, by painting murals in your own community.

My experience on the mural was one of great community building, not just other workers, but also with the people in the community around us. Many people showed interest in our project; stopped to ask questions and watch us work, and were eager to see the finished product. You can really see the difference it will make even before you have finished the project. I am very proud of our finished mural and I like to show it off whenever I get the chance, it is wonderful to know that thanks to us a little piece of Victoria has been made more beautiful. It is really just a fun way of making friends and doing something great for your community.
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Mural Project History

The *Community Mural Project* was born out of youth's desire to create art in the community. In the spring of 2005, a small group of youth partnered with a local business to paint a mural to cover graffiti.



Later in 2005 and 2006, three additional murals were painted. Participating youth organizations included:

- The Power of Hope: Empowering Youth Through the Arts, www.powerofhope.org
- CISV Victoria: Building Global Friendship, www.cisvvictoria.ca
- St. Aidan's United Church Youth Program, www.staidansunited.com

Initiated by former Graffiti By-law Officer Walter Lowe and Tamara Thorpe in 2005, local youth organizations were paired with local businesses cited by By-law Enforcement to paint a mural to cover and deter graffiti. The following was proposed and agreed upon:

- By-law Enforcement informs businesses when cited of the option for a mural by a local youth organization.
- A list of interested businesses is sent to Tamara Thorpe, who coordinates sites with youth organizations.
- Interested youth groups contact the business owner directly.
- Youth organizations are responsible for communicating with the owner, developing a design that is mutually acceptable by all stakeholders, coordinating all supplies, the painting and clean up.
- The business owner is responsible for all expenses.

Benefits of the Community Mural Project:

- Youth engaged in civic issues and community service
- Cost effective solution for businesses to clean up graffiti
- A long-term solution for an ongoing problems with graffiti
- Supports civic and community partnerships with youth
- Sharing resources and increasing awareness of needs of the community



Future Goals:

- Strengthen partnership with By-law enforcement
- Increase awareness of project in the community
- Engage youth offenders in the project
- Create a database of participating youth organizations
- Sustainability!

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has. Margaret Mead

Completed Murals in Victoria, BC

Before



After



Painted by Power of Hope Youth, Spring 2005, Cook Street Village



Painted by CISV Victoria Youth, Spring 2006, Vic West, Catherine Street



Painted by St. Aidan's United Church Youth, Spring 2006, Victoria, Mason Street

Paint a Mural in Your Community!

This section of the guide includes information you will need to paint a mural in your community.



Get Informed

- Learn about the graffiti by-laws in your community. Contact:
 - Graffiti by-law enforcement
 - Local law enforcement and/or their TAG (Together Against Graffiti) programs
 - Local Business Association
 - Businesses effected by graffiti and tagging
 - Local art agencies or organizations involved with painting murals

Design the Mural

Once you have established a partnership with a mural site, a “to-scale” drawing of the mural design is needed.

- Recruit a volunteer artist to do the design. This could be a member of your congregation, organization or community.
- Engage youth in a creative brainstorming process to design the mural.
 - A question to ask, “What is it you want people to know about your and/or feel when they see the mural?”
- The mural design should be done in collaboration with the stakeholders (i.e. business owners, law enforcement, government agency).
 - Discuss any design elements they may desire, and then share them with the youth, and present mural design options to the stakeholders for approval.

Get Your Supplies

It is important to discuss any cost and expenses up front with the stakeholders. In the Victoria Community Project all business owners are responsible for the cost of paint and supplies. The expense of the murals has been significantly lower than other options to cover graffiti. Your youth group could apply for a grant or fundraise if so desired.



Get Your Supplies cont'd



- Contact local paint and hardware stores. **Green Tip:** To keep cost down and to have a smaller environmental footprint use mis-tint paints. Paint stores typically have a section of paints that have been returned that they are willing to sell at a discount. They may also allow you to return any unused paint, so you do not have to dispose of it or store any paint you do not use.
- **Green Tip:** Local dumps or recycling centers may have paint recycle programs. These paints may be available at no cost and any unused paint can be returned.

Tips and Suggestions for Success

These tips and suggestions are to assist you with a mural in your community.

- Have fun!
- Even a small group of youth can accomplish a lot.
- Encourage the youth to participate at all stages of the project.
- Schedule the mural for a weekend, in back to back days, with the first day being longer. If it is a large wall, and requires more time start on Friday evening or schedule it on a Pro-D Day weekend or long holiday weekend.
- Ask local artists and the paint store staff for tips and suggestions on painting.
- If you have a large group of youth, schedule youth in 2-3 hours shifts. This prevents having too many people to manage (it can be hard to keep track of the youth and supplies with a large group) and also allows youth who may have other obligations to participate.
- Invite members of the congregation, organization and community to join you.
- Send out a press release to create awareness (see media advisory in Resources).
- Plan for lunch and snacks. Youth can bring their own lunch or it can be provided, just let them know in advance.
- **Safety Tip:** On a warm day, have lots of water and sunscreen.
- Take before and after photos.

Once you have gotten underway, please feel free to contact me to ask questions or share lessons you have learned from your mural project. If you send pictures, I will post them on my web site www.tntdevelopment.org.

Supplies List

- Exterior Acrylic Paint (flat, no shine), multiple colors and shades
- Paint rollers and brushes in various sizes
- Paint trays and cups (**Green Tip:** use recyclable plastic containers from home)
- Plastic or tarp to protect ground or sidewalk
- Paint stirrers
- Paint can opener
- Rags for clean up
- Water buckets
- Ladders and step stool (**Safety Tip:** only to be used by participants 18 years and up)
- Trash bags



Set-up

The mural site must be a wall that is flat, dry and clean. Paint does not dry on wet surfaces or in very cold weather. If a site has moss or plant growth, it should be cleared prior to the day of painting. If the site has a wall texture that cannot be painted on directly with brushes and rollers consider putting up boards. *See the Cook Street mural on page 15.*



Like any painting project, it can get messy. A ground covering, rags, and vigilance should help keep the site clean.

Find out if there is access to water on site. If so, you can fill your water buckets on site, if not you have to have them filled before you arrive. The paint store has large paint buckets with lids that can be used to transport water to and from the site. **Green Tip:** Do not dump water used to clean the paint brushes and rollers at the mural site. Fill the buckets at the beginning of the day and use them for the whole day. Paint stores will dispose of the dirty water for you.



Clean-up

Have a plan before you paint for the disposal of water, trash and paint. The site should look better when you leave than when you arrived. Clean only brushes and rollers that can be reused. Others can be thrown out, rollers are very difficult to clean and take quite a bit of water to do so.

Green Tip: Paint can be reused by your group or returned to the paint store or recycling center.

Sample Letter of Interest

Church Youth Program
3703 B Street
Victoria, BC

October 23, 2007

To whom it may concern;

We are a group of youth working on a community building project sponsored by the Church. Our goal is to paint murals on walls with graffiti as a contribution to the community. We think that your wall would be an excellent place for a mural. Would you be interested?

This is an opportunity to cover existing graffiti, deter future graffiti and bring a positive change to the community. If you are interested in this opportunity, we are ready to start painting this fall. The paint and supplies are provided by Cloverdale Paint at a discount. We ask that you cover the cost and we will pick up all supplies, collaborate with you on the mural design, paint and clean up.

To contact us, please call our youth group leader at 514-XXXX. We will also give you a call in a couple of days to follow up.

Thank you for your consideration,

The youth at the Church,

Tabitha, Jacob and Kendra

Sample Media Advisory

December 7, 2007

Media Advisory

Community Mural Project: Engaging Youth in Service

Young people from the Greater Victoria Area will be painting a mural this weekend to cover up and deter future graffiti and tagging.

- Who: Church Youth Group (ages 14-18)
- When: Sunday, December 9th from 10 am to 4 pm
- Where: 1XXX Yates Street
- Contact: Tamara Thorpe, 250-514-XXXX

Media coverage of the event is invited. Youth are making a positive change in their community. Both business owners and members of the communities have expressed great enthusiasm and appreciation for the murals. Due to the increase of graffiti in the downtown area, “The Community Mural Project” is in greater demand and being encouraged and endorsed by Victoria By-law Enforcement and Victoria Police Department.

“The Community Mural Project” is a collaborative effort between Victoria By-law Enforcement, Victoria Police Department, Cloverdale Paint and Victoria’s youth to serve their community, clean up Victoria, protect business owners from future tagging, and express themselves creatively. Since 2005 local youth organizations have been paired with local businesses cited by By-law Enforcement to paint a mural to cover and deter graffiti. This is the 5th mural being painted and would be the first to be covered by the media.