

# New anti-graffiti mural honours students’ journeys through high school

Jason G. Antonio - Moose Jaw Express

A.E. Peacock Collegiate student Emma Rowlinson is excited that an art project on which she and other students have been working for four years is finally being installed in the community.

The Grade 12 student is one of 10 teens from Prairie South School Division who is a member of Project 104 High School Arts Collective’s anti-graffiti team. The group creates large murals that are designed to cover buildings where there is regular vandalism.

The group has created 15 murals since 2014 in partnership with the Moose Jaw Police Service.

Rowlinson and a few teammates — with help from officers — installed their latest mural on the alley-side of the Insight Law building behind Veroba’s Restaurant on June 9.

Putting their muscles to work, officers installed more than a dozen panels, with the artwork measuring 150 feet long, 16 feet high and covering three sides of the building.

The mural’s theme is students journeying through high school and blossoming as people.

“This is a spot that ... was a high activity spot for graffiti, so we were tasked with (putting) this one (project) up there,” said Rowlinson, who was responsible for the colour scheme. “Me and the team have been working on painting and cutting the wood and all that for a couple of years now.”

The Grade 12 student thought it was exciting to finally see the group’s work installed, considering some of them — like her — have been working on it since Grade 9. She particularly enjoyed seeing the colours sparkle in the sun.

Rowlinson was grateful to have participated and has included the artwork in

her portfolio. This project helped her be accepted into a post-secondary art school in Calgary for next fall.

“Being able to have a mural up before I graduate is wonderful (and) very exciting (to see) ...,” she added. “I’m very grateful for (group teacher) Cori Saas and the opportunity she’s given me to be able to do this. It’s out of this world; it’s amazing.”

While police were installing the murals, Saas, a teacher at Peacock, and Grade 12 Peacock student Sapphire Spicer-Smith were applying a graffiti sealant to protect the artwork from damage.

“When you put art on public spaces that are often sites of vandalism, the vandalism stops. And there’s all kind of research around that,” Saas said.

The high school teacher commended Police Chief Rick Bourassa for reaching out years ago and asking the group to help combat vandalism. Since 2014, the students and police have built positive connections through this initiative.

Saas explained that the anti-graffiti team started on this project more than three years ago, with Josh Burris — who graduated recently — designing the mural



Grade 12 Peacock student Sapphire Spicer-Smith (left) and Peacock teacher Cori Saas apply a graffiti sealant to the artwork to protect it from damage. Photo by Jason G. Antonio



Emma Rowlinson, a Grade 12 student at A.E. Peacock Collegiate, puts finishing touches on one of the last panels of the mural. Rowlinson was responsible for the artwork’s colour scheme. Photo by Jason G. Antonio

with input from his peers. The pandemic put the project on hold for two years before the students picked it back up.

“And I’m very grateful for Emma because to do a project of this size — of this immense magnitude — when it’s not her work,” she continued.

Saas lauded Rowlinson for making “bold” and “brave” colour choices, including not putting black dividing lines between colours. Rowlinson’s team also had to be brave in pursuing this vision.

The group faced challenges in painting the panels since it had to be done before and after classes and in rooms with

ventilation, which Saas’s room was not. This meant dragging panels throughout the school.

“The dedication of this team is extraordinary ... I’m really proud of them,” Saas said, adding she appreciated the police services’ commitment to supporting the students.

In a separate interview, Bourassa said the police service is planning projects for next year and applying for further funding. He also thought this initiative was important because it gave students meaningful work to accomplish.



Several officers install another panel on the back of the Insight Law building, including Supt. Taylor Mickleborough and Const. Reggie Pawliw. Photo by Jason G. Antonio



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