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“Windswept”: The creation of Lindsay Downtown’s first modern-day public art installation.

Walking through many of Ontario’s vibrant downtowns, several features might catch your eye: clean streets, attractive architecture, and beautiful public spaces. Among these, public art significantly contributes to making a downtown memorable and instilling local pride. While Lindsay’s downtown excels in many areas, public art has been notably absent. Despite the potential for transformation, motivation and funding have been the main barriers.

In winter 2024, the Canadian Urban Institute announced new funding for the ‘My Main Street’ program, supported by Fed Dev Ontario. Under the Community Activator stream, organizations could propose projects to enhance their communities and stimulate economic activity.

Donna Goodwin, Arts & Culture Officer for the City of Kawartha Lakes’ Economic Development department, saw an opportunity for Downtown Lindsay. She envisioned a project that would elevate the concept of a wall mural to something extraordinary, an ‘installation’ rather than simply a mural, with lighting elements. She identified the perfect location: often affectionately known as the ‘ValuMart Lot,’ a central downtown space, vacant since the Dedos tavern burned down in 1992. Rising above, on the wall of 121 Kent Street West, was a mural that had seen better days. Painted as part of the efforts to transform Downtown Lindsay into Small-Town-Kansas for the 1997 movie *A Cool Dry Place*, the painting of a midwestern farm field was in dire need of repair. The project was thus named ‘Space Reclaimed’.

The grant application, with the Lindsay Downtown BIA as a partner, was approved. A local task force was formed to review the dozens of submitted proposals. After examining numerous applications, the winning submission was one that perfectly blended modern elements with inspiration of the rural landscape of the Kawarthas.

The winner was Monique Legault of Sudbury.

Monique Legault is a Sudbury based artist and muralist that got her start early in life, working with her mother in her studio from the age of 13. At age 20 she opened her own studio where she continually immerses herself in many forms of creativity. In the 25 years since the opening of her studio, she was named 40 Under 40 at the Northern Ontario Business Awards, and is a prominent figure in the Sudbury arts community, sitting on their Arts Council, organizing the annual Sudbury Art Call, and was one of the Canadian Art Battle finalists in 2024. She is proud to have gallery representation at the Perivale Gallery on Manitoulin Island. Being primarily both a mural and fine artist, this piece was a major new challenge, and a huge step outside her comfort zone.

“The design loosely interprets what Kawartha Lakes offers. The wind element nods to the space we’re covering and symbolizes growth in renewable energy. The sycamore, one of the area’s oldest trees, holds lasting significance, while the agricultural parcels depict the landscape’s continuity. A wave of water represents the river running through the community and the remarkable waterfronts. I’ve included an osprey to honor the indigenous land we all cherish. These elements embody life in Canada’s most desirable landscape. The use of aluminum signifies the ever-evolving industry, the backbone of this thriving city. Backlighting the work creates a safe, atmospheric ambiance, gently illuminating the area and giving the piece new life in the evenings.” says Legault.

The wall was prepared and painted in the autumn of 2024, but an early winter and late spring meant that the installation didn’t make it up on the wall until June 2025. When weather was finally on their side, Legault and her installation crew made their way back to Lindsay to install what had only seemed like a dream for so many months.

Legault couldn’t be happier to see her vision come to life. *“After months of engineering challenges and moments of doubt, I realized how persistent and determined I could be. Seeing it finally mounted was absolutely thrilling. I’m so grateful to everyone involved. Many local businesses contributed, and I couldn’t have done it without them. This is my largest piece to date, and I’m incredibly proud. I’ve also made many new friends and feel like part of the downtown Lindsay family.”*

Melissa McFarland, Executive Director of the Lindsay Downtown BIA, couldn’t be more thrilled with the innovative addition to the downtown. *“I believe that this is only the first of many in terms of these types of projects in our downtown. Now that I’ve seen firsthand how a piece like this can transform a space, I believe our opportunities are unlimited. There is so much value to public art, and now that the streetscape of our downtown has been so vastly improved with the Downtown Reconstruction, it’s time to turn our attention to how we can take full advantage of its potential for beauty and creativity. It was a pleasure to work with Monique and be*

a part of her enthusiasm in this unique creation, and I can't wait to see how the customizable LED lights that illuminate the piece from behind will enhance special events and inspire community spirit".

On Friday, July 4th at 4:30pm, the public is invited to officially 'unveil' the installation during the Lindsay Downtown BIA's 'Summer Kickoff' event. The event takes place from 4:00pm-8:00pm, with live music, shops open late, sidewalk sales & in-store events, pop-up vendors and a Family Fun Zone, sponsored by Big Brothers Big Sisters of Kawartha Lakes Haliburton.

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