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A mural for women in





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Mr Cenz (Julian Phethean) recently painted a mural at Ndinawe Youth Resource Centre on Selkirk Avenue in remembrance of the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls from the community. The official unveiling took place on Thurs., July 26.

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Photo by Ligia Braidott

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# A powerful tribute on Selkirk Avenue

UK based artist gifts Ndinawe with mural

**BY LIGIA BRAIDOTTI**STAFF REPORTER

## NORTH END WILLIAM WHYTE

Using art to create awareness of an issue can be a safe way to have conversations that are hard to have.

On July 26, Graffiti Art Programming, Ndinawe Youth Resource Centre and London-based artist Mr Cenz (Julian Phethean) unveiled a new mural at Ndinawe (472 Selkirk Ave.) in homage of the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls from the community.

In celebration of its 20th anniversary, GAP invited Mr Cenz to come to Winnipeg and showcase his talents through the art installation and exhibit at Graffiti Gallery called *Behind the Lines*. The artist has been doing graffiti since he was eight years old and depicts powerful female portraits with layers of abstract and flowing forms.

In light of the topic that is so prominent in Winnipeg, Mr Cenz was inspired by a young North End Indigenous woman's photograph and created a painting that is bringing colour and vibrancy to the community and Ndinawe.

"His focus is on powerful women and we thought 'Wow, what a beautiful combination connecting him and the cause of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and the work that's being done," Steve Wilson, GAP executive director, said. "We are here to thank Ndinawe and take an example out of them and the work that they do because they are doing the work on the front line and they are seeing the situation as it evolves daily.

"We know it can get kind of dark some-

time and we hope that this will enlighten people."

Mr Cenz didn't have an in-depth knowledge of the missing and murdered Indigenous woman and girls in Canada and met with elders who instructed him on the different cases that wounded the community.

"It's been educational," Mr Cenz added.
"Without getting too political, but the growing racism that still exists is quite shocking."

The artist travels all over the world painting murals and was inspired by the New York subway trains' painting and the hiphop scene. He said the traditional mediums never excited him to create art as much as cans of spray paint. He describes his style as a mixture of several influences and his traditional graffiti art with abstract art.

"The colours and the movement were just amazing, and then I was hooked ever since (he was eight years old). It's a fun and really quick versatile medium. If I painted this wall with a brush, it would take me three times as long so you can do things quickly with bright colours."

Tammy Christensen, executive director at Ndinawe, said the mural means a lot to them and the youth they help because it's starting a conversation about a sensitive topic that people may sometimes be wary of talking about.

Mixed in among the many abstract forms that depict the young Indigenous woman is a black rose, representing the memory of Tina Fontaine who was known to many at Ndinawe and was murdered at age 15 in August 2014. Back in March, R.B. Russell Vocational School students Joseph Ginter and Trinity Harry welded a rose and presented it to Ndinawe as a gift in remembrance of Tina Fontaine, as reported by *The Times* in April.

While the painting is not representing Fontaine individually, it's representing women like her, Christensen said.

"Tina was someone that we had contact



Photo by Ligia Braidot

The painting depicts a young Indigenous woman from the community in a powerful and colourful image.

with, and she touched our hearts, and we're committed to try and make sure that her memory is not lost and that we are doing what we can to protect young people like Tina.

"Art is a medium that brings everybody together. For us, it spurs awareness, it spurs conversation, so for our young people it's something that they can see themselves in, and they understand the issues this is about," she said.

*Behind the Lines* is on display at Graffiti Gallery (109 Higgins Ave.) until Sept. 14.



Photo by Ligia Braidotti

Mr Cenz painting a mural at Ndinawe Youth Resource Centre that pays homage to the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls from the community.

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