



In Conversation with Michelle Loughery

Michelle Loughery is an artist, living in Alberta, but her work inspires nationwide. If you missed Michelle's work as an artist and her mural projects profiled in More magazine, you can view Michelle's work online at www.muralist.ca and learn about her community mural projects at www.merritmurals.com.

After reading the article, we briefly noted Michelle's work, in a [previous post](#).

On her [website](#), Michelle says, "Mentorship is a natural outgrowth of my work as an artist. It is part of my projects that flowed into community public art, and now I find the circle completed with a renewed interest in how community, culture, and change are part of the educational process."

Tell us about your work as a muralist. How did you come to this line of work?

I saw a muralist commissioned by our community. I was young and very interested. While being an administrator for a local art council I thought okay lets just do it, so I hired some local kids, got permission, and I just went for it.

In her online bio, Michelle describes her roots "I was fortunate to grow up surrounded by a family of musicians and artists who inspired my creativity – from a grandfather who masterfully played the fiddle to a mother who painted any surface available. As a young woman I was introduced to the fine art of muraling when the town commissioned an artist to paint murals in an attempt to revitalize itself. It was at that moment when my life's passion was ignited"

What were your greatest challenges in setting up and/or running the mural program?

Funding. Every community in Canada has an arena, or a curling arena that is publicly funded. The arts, well as we all know, not so much. So, I learned how to find funding.

What were your greatest joys of the last year?

My honeymoon. And getting funding for the next three years for my project.



What was the most surprising element of working with young hires in an alternative setting?

How much knowledge and love they are willing to share.

In what ways has the work helped you with your own artistry?

I learn everyday from the fearlessness of at risk youth. They have not been forced into required teaching methods.

In what ways has your relationship with seasonal hires changed when comparing your first day to the end of the project?

We became a family—a forced one, but a family.

Do you have one, memorable, or inspiring moment in the past school year?

Yes, my foreman, and his new baby.

What books are you currently reading?

Tao of Equus, by Linda Kohanov.

What are you currently working on now?

A First Nation mural and a BC-wide mural project, possibly Canada wide.

Is there anything you'd like to add? The name of your cat, the age of your kids? Your most secret professional desire?

My cat's name is Chaos. I also have four horses and three dogs. My secret desire is a new education system for artistic kids that take raw passion into world unbridled.

Quoting again from Michelle's website, she explains her responsibility to mentor young artists: *"I feel that as a public artist it is my responsibility to give back and mentor young artists to give them the opportunity to create. I also feel that it is important to demonstrate to these youth that as an artist it is imperative to be able to look at art as a business that can be sustained. I am able to find funding for every project that I initiate. I am also able to turn art into a tool for economic revitalization, while simultaneously offering young talent experience and training not available through traditional educational resources. I truly feel that until artists look at art as a business many gifted artists will never be known because their work will only gather dust in their private studios."*