

Brantford public art salutes Lawren Harris

News Oct 25, 2017 by [Mike Peeling](/halton-author/mike-peeling/86A9926D-9B8C-4D09-B9C3-BCD28A53B68E/) (<mailto:mpeeling@brantnews.com>) Brant News

The first annual Lawren Harris Week in Brantford ended with the unveiling of a piece of public art created with an unprecedented amount of community support.

Local artist Dave Hind won the competition to create the piece, but didn't want to undertake the project alone.

"The idea of competing against my fellow artists did not sit well with me, so when my proposal was accepted, I wanted to open this project up and involve as many of my friends and as much of the art community as I could," he told a packed room at the Brantford Public Library's main branch downtown on Colborne Street.

The west exterior wall of the library is home to the piece.

"No one really knew what the mural would look like when it was done," Hind said. "That took a huge amount of trust. It was a huge opportunity. Thank you for letting us do this. It makes the project very much about the community."

Hind's art team became known as the Aluminum Quilting Society.

The weeklong celebration of Harris, a member of the famed art collective the Group of Seven and whose family co-owned farm Brantford equipment manufacturer Massey Harris, included a paint night, walking tours, open houses and a play.

Harris would have turned 150 on Monday.

The project was the brainchild of a group known as the Lawren Harris Movement.

Named *La Landscape de Kanata*, Hind's concept was selected from 21 entries from across North America.

Six Nations artist Bonnie Whitlow thanked Hind and the Lawren Harris Movement for involving several Indigenous artists. Whitlow said the project was very much in the spirit of reconciliation.

"I like difficult and critical conversations," she said. "It's where I learn the most."

Whitlow also thanked Hind for supporting young artists.

Six Nations artist Daniel Hill has worked with Hind a number of times over the past 10 years and was happy to contribute to the Harris piece.

"I think the best part was that it was a collaborative effort that involved the community," Hill said.

Hill described his contribution of a depiction of Six Nations writer and performer Pauline Johnson as "touch and go."

"Assembling the work, you are often waiting on the contributions of others," he said. "I was used to working on my own vision, but we all had to work together to realize a collective vision."

Ana Olson of Glehyrst Art Gallery said no community art project has ever drawn so much interest in Brantford.

"People were calling us daily to ask how they could help," she said.

Glehyrst secured funding from the province, the City of Brantford, Brant Community Foundation, the Crew Real Estate and Murky Productions.

Mayor Chris Friel marvelled at the contributing artists and all artists as "the most courageous people I know" because of their willingness to share their work with the public.

Harris' grandchildren Toni Chowne and Stewart Sheppard, and his wife Clemencia, attended the unveiling event.

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Artist Dave Hind worked with several others to achieve community vision honouring Group of Seven member

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Lead artist Dave Hind, middle front, is surrounded by contributing local artists at the official unveiling of La Landscape de Kanata on Lawren Harris Day at the main branch of the Brantford Public Library on Monday. - MARIA VISOCCHI

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