

Marvin Louie, Community Mentor

The main contributors (part of the PLAY Youth Leadership Program and with planning as well as on-site painting) were students Alexis, Maya, Katlyn, and Preston. Other students that helped with some of the onsite painting were Josh, Kaeden, and Sapphire.

The on-site local mural Artist name is Sarah Fahey (see her statement below). She and Michele Woitzik (Learning Support & Resource Teacher) were the 'driving forces' behind this great project.

Sarah Fahey, On-Site Artist

January 12, 2021

Hi my name is Sarah Fahey and I am the on-site artist for the 'You Are Not Alone' mural project at [a school in southern BC]. In April 2020 I participated in an online international mural festival. A New Zealand-based mural festival had transitioned their festival to an online format and utilized Zoom to host real time discussions, and interviews with select artists working on their murals. The festival provided a sharing platform for mural participants to share their photos and process-videos. I wondered if this format would work for a youth mural project.

Over the years, Michele (Learning Support & Resource Teacher) and I have talked about teaming up to do a youth mural project. I contacted Michele to see if it was a possibility. At this time, schools in BC were closed because of COVID, and most schools had transitioned students to online learning by providing internet access and devices to all students. Michele had a leadership project in mind that she thought would be a good fit.

Michele started the students off with written questions in response to how COVID-19 measures had impacted them. I met the students and Michele on Zoom once a week and we began the process of creating a mural that was designed by the students. The students came up with images and drawings to the written responses. The schools opened back up and I was able to go and meet the students and work on the layout or how they wanted to combine the images to make a mural. Slowly, an idea formed and select images were chosen. The mural would be 8ft x 8ft. I drew out a few options and the leadership students were given drawing tasks. And then summer break hit. Michele and I chatted about trying to make the mural happen over the summer, but restrictions on the number of people who could gather were changing rapidly. We shelved the project for the summer and I really thought that that was it, it wasn't going to happen.

September rolled around and schools opened back up in mid-October 2020, Michele contacted me and asked if I would come and continue the project. By session two we had the mural boards up in the library and I white washed it and I drew the layout. Each week the primary students assisted in painting the base background colours. Kaitlyn and Maya, the leadership students, who had graduated to high school, came back to the school to paint every week. By the end of November 2020, the COVID cases [in the region] began to rise rapidly and regulations changed again. I Zoomed in each week from home, and Kaitlyn, Maya and Michele and other students continued to work on the mural.

Christmas break came and went, it is now January 2021 and I am back to putting the finishing touches to the mural. For all the starts and stops I am so proud of us for finishing this. It was so cool to witness how when the paint and brushes come out, the students gravitated to the canvas and painted without hesitation. How other students visiting the library would tell me about their artist dad or brother, how the little ones would just stare in silence. It was a unique space to paint in, and I am so grateful to have been a part of this project.

Miigwetch,
Sarah Fahey