



GRADE 8 ARTIST CHOSEN FOR MAYOR NENSHI'S "HARD-HATTING"

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Everyone has probably seen the Mayor's 'white-hatting' ceremony of VIPs who visit our city or important community members who have contributed immense value to the quality of life of Calgarians. For Mayor Nenshi, we wanted to extend the same gratitude and celebrate the City of Calgary's long-standing support of our flagship project.

We collaborated with Willow Park School, an art centred learning centre, to create a memorable art piece for a 'hard-hatting' ceremony. And did they deliver!



The finished hard hat.

Distinguishing itself as a unique place for education in the city, the grade 5 to 9 school focuses on learning IN and THROUGH the arts. Eager to engage students with this creative opportunity, teacher Carrie Schurig (wife of our dynamic cSPACER, Deeter) developed a plan to engage the school's artist-in-residence, Morgan Free, along with the greater student body by running a competition for hard hat designs. With earth-shattering prestige and an artist fee on the line, 16 submissions were received from students in the short week following the release of the artist call.

A jury was assembled with an internal panel including the artist-in-residence and staff to determine the most promising concept. Grade 8 student Giovanna Acosta was chosen based on her proposed design and artist statement:

'For my hard hat, I put an eye in the middle of the hat because I wanted it to represent noticing deeply and how our eyes see art and how peoples' eyes see art in different ways.'



Giovanna works with artist-in-residence Morgan Free to execute her elaborate design

The statement continues on to describe how she 'chose to put two phoenix on both sides of the hat'. The mythic character represents how Willow Park School was reborn again after a school fire in 2013 and 'how the King Edward School will rise to be something more beautiful and stronger' because of its new arts purpose.

Pulled up alongside Mayor Nenshi to stand on the steps of King Edward during our groundbreaking ceremony to share her artistic intent, Giovanna will undoubtedly have a life shaping memory to reflect on for years to come!



Giovanna joins Mayor Nenshi at the podium to speak about her design.

The connection of Willow Park and the King Edward doesn't start and end with Giovanna. Coincidentally, Willow Park's Principal, Leslie Robertson, had her first Calgary teaching position at the King Edward. With fond memories of a 'circus themed artist-in-residency' and reenacting stories of elderly members from the local community in a student drama production, Robertson also reflects that King Edward "has always been a school that recognized the importance of welcoming our larger community into our learning space". That tradition of connecting the arts and community stretches back to William Aberhart, the King Edward's original principal in 1913, who brought the very first theatre production in a Calgary Board of Education facility to life with staff and student actors. Aberhart would later become 7th Premier of Alberta between 1935-1943.

It is the many moments and memories like these that make places resonate and have meaning. Collaborating with an art school, former teachers, inspiring artists and future creative leaders made a special event memorable for us as we launch into construction and the next steps of our transformation at the King Edward.