



### Project overview

In February of 2022, a call to artists was released seeking proposals for a road mural to be painted directly on the road in Chinatown on 3 Ave SE. The idea of a road mural was first imagined in relation to a redevelopment plan for Chinatown that the City of Calgary was working on called [Tomorrow's Chinatown](#). This City of Calgary initiative involved meetings between the City and representatives of Chinatown's residential, cultural, and business communities. The road mural was discussed as a planning initiative to help slow down traffic while adding vibrancy to the street.

A selection panel of seven local community members and subject matter experts, including members of the Chinatown community and an Indigenous Elder, reviewed 25 artist applications, and local artist Jarett Sitter was selected to complete the artwork.

Sitter designed a concept that was presented to several community organizations in Chinatown for an initial round of feedback. During an engagement meeting between the artist and a prominent community organization in Chinatown, it was brought to Calgary Arts Development's attention that painting on the road was considered culturally insensitive to some community members. A decision was made to pause, listen, and revise the concept.

Since May 2022, Calgary Arts Development has worked with the City of Calgary, the artist and community members to change the direction and location of this project. The artwork produced will now consist of wall panels on three exterior walls of two buildings in Chinatown – the Pho City Building (1st St. SE) and the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association building (4th Ave. SE).

Between January and June of 2023, a second round of community engagement was completed. The artist and project team met one-on-one with more than a dozen community leaders and organizations in Chinatown to share Sitter's new concept. Two public engagement events were held, on May 27, 2023 at Dragon City Mall and on May 28, 2023 at Bù Vintage Shoppe, both in Chinatown. Draft images of the artist's concept and additional information about the project was shared with members of the community. More than 300 people were engaged at these events, and Sitter made final adjustments to his designs based on the feedback he received from the community.

### What did we do and who did we talk to?

#### Online engagement:

Online engagement with Calgarians took place between Apr. 28 – Aug. 1, 2022, on [engage.calgary.ca/3averoadmural](https://engage.calgary.ca/3averoadmural). There were 138 visitors to the engage portal website. 25 participants provided feedback.



#### **Virtual Information Sessions:**

Calgary Arts Development and The City of Calgary collaborated on two public information sessions held over Zoom in January 2022 for artists planning to apply to this project and anyone interested in learning more about it. This session was translated into Cantonese and Mandarin and available in ASL.

The Virtual Information Sessions were attended by more than 60 participants.

#### **In-person / virtual targeted engagement meetings:**

We hosted 20 in-person / virtual targeted engagement meetings on:

- April 2, 2022 with Qing Ming Festival
- April 4, 2022 with CCECA, BIA, CCA
- April 22, 2022, with Asian Heritage Foundation/ACT2ENDRACISM
- April 20, 2022 with Indigenous Elders
- August 2022 and November 2022 with Clover Living
- May 3, 2022 with Calgary Chinese Elderly Citizens Association (CCECA)
- March 2023 with Indigenous Elders
- May 4, 2023 with the CCECA
- May 4, 2023 with the owners of the Pho City Building
- May 4, 2023 with the owners of the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association (CIWA) building
- May 4, 2023 with CEO of Calgary Immigrant Women's Association
- May 5, 2023 with President of the Chinatown BIA
- May 8, 2023 the Asian Heritage Foundation/Action Chinese Canadians Together Foundation
- May 8, 2023 with President of United Calgary Chinese Association & member of the Vietnamese Chinese association & Manager of Bowside Manor
- May 8, 2023 with president of Chinatown Community Association
- May 9, 2023 with Pho City building owners
- May 9, 2023 with Chinatown Community members
- May 24, 2023 with the President of the Chinese Cultural Centre
- June 5, 2023 with CCECA member

The 20 in-person / virtual targeted engagement meetings were attended by a total of approximately 70 participants.

#### **In-person engagement events:**

We hosted two public engagement events with the artist, Jarett Sitter, and members of the project team on May 27, 2023 at Dragon City Mall in Chinatown and May 28, 2023 at Bù Vintage Shoppe in Chinatown. We shared information and images on Sitter's concept with community members and were also joined by an interpreter fluent in Cantonese and Mandarin, who was available to speak with community members. Sitter's artist statement was available to be read in English and Traditional Chinese.

The in-person engagement events were attended by a total of 305 participants.

A communications plan was developed to inform Calgarians and local organizations, businesses, and members of the Chinatown community of the project. Residents were directed to [engage.calgary.ca/3averoadmural](https://engage.calgary.ca/3averoadmural) and invited to attend one of the in-person / virtual engagement meetings, or to complete the survey to provide their feedback. We advertised our engagement events using:

- Calgary Arts Development's weekly e-newsletter
- The City of Calgary's monthly public art e-newsletter
- Advertisements in the Sing Tao weekly and Chinese Canadian Times newspapers.
- Posters placed in Chinatown businesses, community bulletin boards and thoroughfares
- Social Media (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter) through organic and paid advertising

## **What we asked**

Online engagement for this project took place via The City's engagement portal [engage.calgary.ca/3averoadmural](https://engage.calgary.ca/3averoadmural) between Apr. 28 – Aug.1, 2022. The engagement questions were presented in English, Traditional Chinese, and Simplified Chinese.

### **Online engagement:**

1. What word comes to mind when you think of Chinatown?
2. What's something you wish more people knew about in Chinatown?
3. What are your hopes for Chinatown's future?

### **Targeted engagement meetings:**

The objective of targeted engagement was to share the artist's concept with Chinatown community members to ensure their thoughts and feelings about the artwork were heard, and to allow the artist to make any necessary changes prior to proceeding with fabrication. Some of the general questions and /or the conversations / topics that were discussed were:

1. What do you think of the artist's concept?
2. Do you see yourself or your community reflected in this concept?
3. Do you have any concerns about the cultural sensitivity of the concept?
4. Are there any questions about the concept that the artist can speak to?



### What we heard

Below is a summary of the main themes that were most prevalent in our conversations with community members. A comprehensive list of all verbatim comments in their entirety that we received online is included in the “Verbatim comments” section at the end of this report. A verbatim summary of conversations between community members and the Cantonese/Mandarin interpreter at our engagement events in May 2023 can also be found at the end of this report.

#### Targeted engagement meetings:

Calgary Arts Development hosted several in-person / virtual targeted engagement meetings with Indigenous Elders from Siksika Nation and Îyârhe Nakoda Nation, Calgary Elderly Chinese Citizens Association (CCECA), Asian Heritage Foundation, Chinatown BIA, Chinese Cultural Centre, Bowside Manor, Clover Living, Pho City building and business owners, Calgary Immigrant Women’s Association building owners and staff, and Chinatown community leaders.

Below is a summary of these conversations. Due to the personal and, in some cases, confidential information disclosed by participants at the meetings, all personal identifying and confidential information has been removed.

#### Summary of key themes that emerged through engagement input – 2022

##### Concerns about painting directly on the road

- Community members shared concerns regarding the cultural sensitivity of painting directly onto the road. We heard that in Hong Kong and in the province of Guangdong in Southern China, the practice of painting the likeness of a person onto the road and walking over it is known as “villain hitting” and is a sign of disrespect.

#### Summary of key themes that emerged through engagement input – 2023

##### Shared history of discrimination

- Personal stories of the history of discrimination and racism against Chinese and First Nations communities were shared by many community members.
- Personal histories and stories of the subsequent friendships and relationships that were formed between early Chinese and First Nations communities were shared, and a desire to make this kinship and these relationships more well known.



### **Demonstrating that Chinatown is inclusive**

- Community members were glad to see the message of inclusivity in the artist's concept. Many community members expressed a desire to communicate that Chinatown is welcoming of all cultures.

### **Desire to ensure the stories behind the artist's concepts are understood and not misinterpreted.**

- The importance of the messaging behind the artist's concept being made clear to the public was discussed in several community conversations.
- Signage and the importance of translation was discussed.

### **Public Art as a way to increase Chinatown's vibrancy**

- Many community members shared their enthusiasm for public art initiatives in Chinatown and pointed out specific art installations in Chinatown that they believe have added to the vibrancy of Chinatown.

### **Representation of Chinese and Chinese-Canadian Artists**

- Community members highlighted the importance of hiring artists that are part of the Chinese community to complete public art projects in Chinatown and the importance of consulting with the community on these projects.

### **Importance of certain animals to Chinese and Indigenous cultures**

- As the artist's concept presents several animals who are culturally significant to Chinese and Indigenous communities, these animals were the subject of much discussion on the history and significance of certain animals such as the dragon, the phoenix, the bison, the golden eagle, and many more.

## **Next Steps**

After our Spring 2023 targeted engagement meetings and community engagement events, the artist made final adjustments to their concept. This project is ongoing. Due to unexpected scheduling delays, we do not have a confirmed installation date yet. Please check Calgary Arts Development's webpage for updates.



## Verbatim comments

Below is a comprehensive list of all verbatim comments input by participants on [engage.calgary.ca/3averoadmural](https://engage.calgary.ca/3averoadmural) between Apr. 28 – Aug. 1, 2022. The comments have not been edited in any way, including content, spelling, grammar, etc. The only exception to this includes the presence of profanity or personally identifying information, which has been redacted and indicated in brackets.

### Online verbatim comments

#### 1. What word comes to mind when you think of Chinatown?

Good food and old Chinese people jaywalking
Wonderful foods and smells lots of people on the sidewalks
Food... authentic groceries, restaurants... traditional medicine shops. Older Chinese people feeling comfortable hanging out with friends
Unknown. I don't go through Chinatown a lot. I feel that there is a lot to offer there, but I don't have any reason to go.
Fusion
Asian
Unique
Hidden Gem
Cool
red.
Friendly
Movie classic, starring Jack Nicholson.
Best bubble tea!
Hidden Gems
Unassuming
Food, family, culture, chinese words, cantonese/mandarin language, dragons, chinese people

#### 2. What's something you wish more people knew about Chinatown?

Story of the murals and the hidden gem for Asian food and snacks.
The history of Chinatown(s) in Calgary. I feel like this information is out there, but not many people take the time to look.



3. What are your hopes for Chinatown’s future?

That it is still there.....
My hope for Chinatown is that it becomes a feature of Calgary, like Inglewood. An area where people want to go and spend the day
A vibrant, unique corner of downtown.
More interesting Asian stores and event centers
Making it pedestrian-focused so it's easier/safer to spend time in the area.
Walking is prioritized over motor vehicles
An active, exciting place where people from all cultures/backgrounds/languages can visit, gather, and share experiences in the city.
To become fully pedestrian friendly
Appreciation for the people who live and work there and those who came before.
For murals in Chinatown, I would like to see more traditional style water colour painting (e.g. landscape) done by a Chinese person
family, safety, chinese + asian food, chinese vendors, chinese Calgarians gathering



**Brief – Feedback from Cantonese/Mandarin Interpreter at Engagement Events**

Calgary Arts Development – Public Art Project in Chinatown -

May 27 , 2023 inside the Dragon City Mall, 328 Centre Street, SE

May 28, 2023 inside the Bu Vintage Shoppe, 110 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave., SE

“After I read the handout – Artist Statement, I was so moved by what was written, please tell the staff how much I appreciate all the efforts Calgary Arts Development have put and set up the booth in Chinatown to let us know what happened and what will happen next”

“When will the public arts be put up on the mural in Chinatown? What would that be?”

“Would that be the Chinese Art – that famous painting – named as “Along the River during Ching Ming Festival” or “Along the River during the Tomb-sweeping Festival” that was painted on the wall on Centre Street in the corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave., SW, that was really nice!”

“I suggest the City should host a contest, let the artists know about the goal of putting the art on the mural, I mean artists from different ethnic background, by then artists can showcase/present their artwork, let the panel of members to decide which pieces of arts will be put on the mural.”

“It is a good idea, I like the arts done by that artist, Chinatown will be very colourful after putting the arts on the mural.”

“I can’t wait to see that happens, I suggest to put the description of how and why the artist depicts his concept into his drawing/art, put that on the lower corner of the art, so that the public will know about the story of different art piece.”

“Let me take both versions of the handout – Artist Statement, one in English for my daughter, I read the Chinese version, my daughter is studying Arts at the university, so I wanted her to know and to come see your booth.

“Through the images of the Artist’s art, we learn the unspoken history of the relationship between the Chinese and the First Nation people in Canada.”

“We like to see more public arts in Chinatown.”