

Youth of Today, City of Tomorrow

Running from 2006 to 2008, UNA-Canada's **Youth of Today, City of Tomorrow (YTCT)** was an innovative project that engaged youth in learning and debating the issues of urban settlement and sustainability. The project raised awareness among youth and their communities on human settlement and urbanization issues, while engaging and inspiring young Canadians to take action that influences positive change.

Youth of Today, City of Tomorrow Mural in Little Italy, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

As a landmark YTCT project, the Edmonton Branch of the United Nations Association in Canada partnered with [The Places, Art & Design in Public Places Program](#) to produce an 8' high and 80' long mural created by artist Ian Mulder with assistance from youth artists from the Edmonton community. The goal of the project was to "put the future of cities in young people's hands" using themes of the eight discussion papers commissioned by the [Western Economic Diversification](#) (WD) for the [Third Session of the World Urban Forum](#) (WUF3) that took place in Vancouver in June 2006. These themes included: youth empowerment, green space in cities, drug and gang-related violence, definition of the ideal city, urban sprawl and much more, to empower youth to take a critical look at their own local urban realities and formulate workable solutions to bring about positive changes locally and internationally. The ideas presented by community youth were then integrated into the overall concept and design of the artwork.

Artwork Title: Youth of Today, City of Tomorrow 2006-07

Mural Title: "Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going?"

Artist: Ian Mulder and youth artists Layla Folkmann and Jacob Amon

Artwork Description: 8' high by 80' long, acrylic paint on 40, 4' x 4' crezone panels

Location: Giovani Caboto Park, Edmonton. The upper portion of the south-facing wall of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Edmonton building located at 9425-109A Ave.

Sponsoring Producer: The Places, Art & Design in Public Places Program

Community Partners: Action Electrical, Boys & Girls Clubs of Edmonton, City of Edmonton Youth Council, Delcor Painting and Flooring, Howard House Bridges Program, I-Human Youth Society, Landale Signs & Neon McCauley Community League



The Youth of Today, City of Tomorrow mural poem

This poem was written to accompany the mural. It is etched onto a plaque next to the mural.

***A Wall to tell you children dear
The future's yours to love and steer.
The dreams that come when you're asleep,
Of hope for peace that's yours to keep,
Heads of castles up above,
Do not want to hear of doves,
They hold the walls in castles strong-
Forbid the voice of childhood song.
The past is theirs, the future nears,
Make it yours and do not fear.***
- Savino Sfregola

Comments from Anna Reitman, the project coordinator:

"While I was the regional coordinator in Edmonton, I had the opportunity to travel to Afghanistan and so left the YTCT project in other people's hands. But before I did, I made a request: that the contributed creative ideas from the youth group at the [Edmonton John Howard Society's](#) Howard House would be reflected in the mural. They are the heart and inspiration behind the mural.

In Kabul, I met Savino Sfregola, an English teacher with an Italian-Australian background and we had some interesting times at the university where we both worked. Upon coming back to Edmonton and getting updated on the YTCT project's development, I told him about the way my request turned out and that story is how he came to send me the poem.

I took a group from Howard House to see the mural and plaque. I pointed out some of the elements.

One of the boys said: "If I was the artist, I would put my own face and friends in it."