

## New art wall at Port Moody school



By The Tri-City News

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A new outdoor gallery space has been established in the most unlikely place — a concrete retaining wall in front of [Heritage Mountain elementary school](#).

For nearly two decades, a concrete cinderblock wall stared like a blank face at the Port Moody school until a collaboration of teachers, students and artist Tammy Pilon turned it into a canvass for 12 colourful works of art.

Last week before school finished for the year, the school held a celebration for the art installation and welcomed family, friends, school trustees and other supporters to the event.

"It's given us a sense of pride and a sense of ourselves," explained Craig Mah, the school's principal about the remarkable transformation of the retaining wall from a dull grey surface to a colourful play and work space.

The 12 painted plywood panels show typical Port Moody scenes, such as NewPort Village, Rocky Point Park

and city hall as well as plants and animals that live in the area.

Artist Tammy Pilon said the students brainstormed ideas about the images and then drew them using photographs as inspiration.

"I think it's really amazing that we are leaving behind a legacy that will be here for years to come," said Grade 4 student Anja Frohnsdorf, who painted one of the panels.

"People who used to walk through here never stopped to look. Now they will because it's beautiful," said her friend, Rula Hasan, who is in Grade 4 and another one of the student painters.

In all 28 students worked in small groups on the plywood paintings.

Teacher Carleen Liski said with the paintings now installed the corridor from her portable to the school will now be more usable for educational purposes. For example, the students plan to get rid of the weeds in the planter that fronts the retaining wall and start a community garden.

"It's made this a more special place," Liski said.

Teacher Sue Ewart said Heritage Mountain staff wanted to do something with the space for years but she jump-started the process this year by seeking grants for paint and supplies. She studied art with Pilon and thought she'd make an ideal facilitator, Breakfast Television provided a \$1,000 grant and the school Parent Advisory Council raised \$600 by raffling off the best seats in the house for the Christmas concert.

"It's fantastic," she said of the final product.

Now, people in the neighbourhood have somewhere to go beside downtown if they want to look at colourful art.

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