

Building Bridges - an art exhibit by local street community artists

Building Bridges is more than just an art exhibition featuring the work of artists in the street community. It is an invitation to the residents of Greater Victoria to come together to break down barriers of fear and prejudice that separate us, using the universal language of art.

The idea was born from a synergy between two local Victoria artists, Star Casement and Tanya Bub, who met during the filming of a documentary called *Sitting with Grace*. The one-hour documentary by local film maker Ross Whelan features eight unscripted interviews with members of our local street community, filmed in a single afternoon in Centennial Square. Bub created a collaborative sculpture/throne called *Grace* which acted as both an ice breaker and safe venue for the candid and heartfelt conversations. The final interview in the documentary with Casement, who makes an impassioned plea that strikes a powerful chord with audiences, was a call to action for Bub. "Star's ideas of celebrating people for their strengths rather than focusing on their weaknesses is so simple, yet powerful," said Bub, "and she has a broad vision and practical ideas about how to make it happen."

After the filming the two women began to work together to turn Casement's ideas of empowering artists in the street community, into a reality. The first step was finding a suitable venue and it seemed fate would lend a hand. By chance Shantael Sleight, a community arts programmer with the Municipality of Saanich, contacted Bub regarding an unrelated exhibit just before a screening of *Sitting with Grace*, which Sleight subsequently attended. Moved by the documentary, she worked with the two artists to find a space for the innovative exhibition, now titled - *Building Bridges: An art exhibit by local street community artists*.

"We have been so moved by the support and generosity from the District of Saanich and the community who have stepped up to help out with the exhibition." said Bub "It takes tremendous courage to cross these unspoken lines and we are particularly proud of the artists for taking a leap of faith to build bridges with Victoria's community with their beautiful art work, so mark your calendars and come see the show!"