

oakland LOCAL

Fruitvale Peace and Dignity mural celebrates unity of indigenous peoples



May 10, 2011

A tiny girl, her hair in neat pigtails, stops to gape open-mouthed at the bright orange nebulas swirling above her.

Another girl, an otherworldly blue aura outlining her frame, is frozen mid-stride in the mural above, holding a staff tipped with feathers. A few steps down the sidewalk, a man in a cowboy hat turns and calls to the pig-tailed girl with both impatience and tenderness in his voice, interrupting her reverie.

"!Mi hija!" He grasps her hand and hurries her along to their destination, further down International Blvd., as she turns for a last glimpse.

An ambitious two-block mural project has just been completed at the intersection of International Blvd and 41st Avenue by the aerosol mural collective the [Community Rejuvenation Project - CRP](#).

The mural is one of their largest mural projects to date, spearheaded by artists Desi W.O.M.E. and Mike360, involving many of other contributors such as Elijah Pfothenauer, Pancho Pescador, Beats737, Abakus, Dora Chavarria and several local youth.



"This is a landmark production for us in terms of the level of intricacy and detail that we put into it," [CRP Director](#) Desi W.O.M.E. said. "We spent a lot of time crafting it."

The mural, completed with the collaboration of the building's owner, Smart & Final, was sponsored by the city of Oakland's Community Economic Development Agency as part of its ongoing campaign to place murals in highly visible areas with histories of blight. Other CEDA-sponsored projects in the series include several murals on Highway 880, including projects by Estria and Refa. These murals represent an important shift in how the city approaches abatement.

"To the extent that there's community support for the art, and it's not just something imposed, we're thinking that that will help with people respecting what's there,"



explained Dan Seamans from CEDA's Redevelopment Agency. The city of Oakland plans to use murals as an alternative to painting and repainting frequently tagged locations.

"I think the mural is beautiful," Seamans continued. "I also think

that the artists were extremely successful in engaging the local community in the creation of the mural, which is very important for a project like this. Every time that I stopped by the mural, I saw them discussing their work with parties ranging from casual bystanders to school field trips, and I know that many people were invited to help paint as well."

The inspiration for the mural's content sprung from the Peace & Dignity Journeys that happen every four years to celebrate solidarity between native peoples of the Americas. Runners begin in Alaska, and others at the tip of South America, carrying ceremonial wooden staffs, which are passed from



runner to runner until they converge in Panama, to heal the rift between the continents. The mural depicts a wide range of participants, from elders to teenage runners to children, against a celestial backdrop. The intent is to take the prayer to heal the rift between Northern and Southern hemispheres back to Oakland to address the rifts between the Norteño, Sureño and Border Brothers gangs.

CRP collaborated with famed elders in the aerosol writing community P.H.A.S.E.2 and Vulcan, who contributed large, stylized centerpiece letters spelling "Peace" and "Dignity," each stretching the length of a block. P.H.A.S.E.2 , who lives in New York, sent a sketch,



which was then projected against the wall to bring his creative vision to life.

"Working with these elders who've been doing this for longer than I've been alive, it's been nothing but an honor. You know, straight up, a joy," said Mike360, 35. "They're building a separate reality out of the

linear structure of character forms we've been given."

The mural took three months to create and includes sections built up to resemble the spiny leaves of agave, embedded shells and feathers and metal particles, which add a sheen on sunny days.

Most passersby were happy to have the artwork in their community, flashing thumbs up, although others seemed perplexed.

"Obviously it's real nice," offered Dwayne Castillo, 62, a neighborhood resident. "It's just not my cup of tea." However, for neighborhood youth, it was a different story. Many participated eagerly over the course of the mural's creation.

Decide for yourself at the Peace & Dignity Mural Dedication and Block Party on May 22 from noon to 4 p.m., sponsored by the Community Rejuvenation Project. Music will be provided courtesy of Roots & Branches and food will be served.

Source: <http://oaklandlocal.com/article/fruitvale-peace-and-dignity-mural-celebrates-unity-indigenous-peoples>