



CHEMAINUS - 25 years? OMG!

**What that lil' town that did,
does and will do!**

I recently had the pleasure and honour of attending the opening ceremonies of the 25th Anniversary of the Chemainus Murals Project in May and all I can say is that 'the little town that did', just continues to do it right! An amazing panorama of people were present, including a choir, marching pipe band, an official RCMP Mountie and local dignitaries, past and present, political and otherwise.



This is a community that truly has become more cohesive over the years since the mural project began. Whether it is the fact that people are surrounded by fantastic art flooding their field of view daily, or whether Chemainus just glows in a perpetual sun spot of optimism, the people of this community come and interact in a way that seems Shangri la in nature. A lot of genuine goodwill radiates and success has not made them smug or aloof, it is a special place with a very special and heartfelt warmth.

And they do attract a global audience - all 400,000 of them a year! Chemainus remains the focal point of an expanding appreciation of public art worldwide, the marriage between arts and culture and commerce are a powerful mix and Chemainus is a significant model of these principals in practice and how they can successfully be a catalyst to a continually growing community spirit.

The focus of the ceremony was on those individuals who took the instrumental first steps in bringing the revitalization of Chemainus's downtown core into being. As a former mural artist, I was truly honoured, along with artist Frank Lewis, to have been included among those who I remember well there 25 years ago. Chemainus, since taking those first ginger steps along what was an unconventional path to revitalizing their local economy has learned that forward-thinking, in advance of time, means one is better able to greet the future and position the community for success. This is the mark of a community that leads as a whole. Considering so many powerful personalities have managed to endure and find common purpose among their diverse opinions it is truly amazing and a very hopeful sign of an evolutionary model for other communities.

[Paul Marciano, virtual architect Artshway.]