

Edmonton River Festival Proposal



Vision: Position Edmonton as the world's largest open air gallery of art in a setting of natural beauty, stretching along the river valley and depicting the diverse artistry of its many people of all ages and abilities.

Aim: Bring Edmonton's residents, Indigenous peoples, children, immigrants, and visitors together to dive in to experience the river valley and enjoy diverse forms of art including visual, food, music and dance in meditative space that recognizes our ancestry, creativity and aspirations, building the global profile of Edmonton and its biologically diverse river valley while encouraging people to enjoy it sustainably.

Goal: promote Edmonton as an attractive international leader offering the world's largest outdoor art walk.

Format: This is envisaged as a free program for the public over a weekend at venues such as the [kihcihkaw askî-Sacred Land](#), [Fort Edmonton](#), [Alfred H. Savage Centre](#) and [John Janzen Nature Centre](#), each of which could showcase artwork made by local creatives. These could include First Nations, Métis, Canadian and International artists, who could each showcase various art forms, e.g. paintings, prints, murals, sculptures, ceramics, glassworks, textiles, knitwear, beadwork, tattoos, graffiti, virtual reality, music, etc. Barcoded signs would indicate the identity and inspiration of the art, QR-codes would lead to websites with further information, maps would show people where to walk/bike to find various artists. Over time this could be expanded for a longer art walk along the river from Terwillegar Park to Rosedale and downtown, including [End of the World](#), [Hawrelak Park](#), [Emily Murphy Park](#), [John Walter Museum](#), [Re/Max field](#), and eventually the renovated former [Rosedale Power Plant](#), incorporating exhibits and green spaces near the river's edge. Venues could also provide food and drinks as well as offering light shows and dance and musical experiences.

Visibility: The [Face of Edmonton](#) project invites and recognizes artwork and designs each year, making this available to the public. We are now exploring scaling this for all creatives to submit and display their work.

Structure: Run as a non-profit like [Jane's Walk](#) with government organizations and businesses giving venue access and support, with volunteer event organizers and partners working along with a steering group.

Finances: The costs would be minimized by use of existing assets including buildings, trails and bridges to display art and engage the public. Existing galleries, museums, art collectives, festivals and the public would be invited to join in, display and assess art, with options to gift or barter in person or purchase online.

Competition: There is no similar festival in Edmonton's river valley. The largest festivals in Edmonton such as the [Folk](#), [Fringe](#) and [Heritage](#) do not focus on exhibiting visual art at venues along the river's edge, and [RiverFest](#) has not run since 2018. While [ArtWalk](#) attracts ~400 artists to Whyte Ave and is partnering with St Albert, it does not bring them into the river valley and Old Strathcona offers limited space for exhibits.

Comparators: 1) [Berlin Wall Gallery](#) displays 1.3 km of open-air murals by the River Spree, 2) [King's Day](#) in Amsterdam's Vondelpark allows residents including children to sell home-made goods without a permit, 3) [ParisInternationale](#) and [Paris+ par Art Basel](#) 4) [teamLab: A Forest Where Gods Live](#) in Kyushu, Japan, 5) [Salt Spring](#) is a biennial competition and exhibition of Canadian visual art, and 6) [Pasadena Chalk Festival](#) is billed as the world's largest street-art festival according to the Guinness Book of World Records.

Logistics: This is in the ideation stage following a consultation with hundreds of indigenous peoples, artists and designers as well as leaders of business and government organizations. We are looking to form a steering group and leadership team to pursue funding, partners and event planners. We envisage running a small trial event initially, growing this into an annual event with additional venues and capacity over time.

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