<https://www.calgary.ca/arts-culture/public-art/goose-garden.html>

#GooseGarden

Goose Garden is a whimsical, larger-than-life, floating garden sculpture of a Canada Goose nesting in a bed of

water-cleaning aquatic plants. The sculpture will float at Prince's Island Park, a centrally located pond connected to the Bow

River, where geese have roosted their young since time immemorial. The sculpture will float in this park until the end of September 2023. Afterwards she is looking for a new home!

**Teachings**

áápsspini = Blackfoot   
ᓂᐢᑲ Niska = Cree

Goose Garden was created with consultation from Elder Marilyn Shingoose of the Saulteaux Nation, and Elder Grant Little Mustache of the Blackfoot Nation. Through these consultations teachings were shared about our Indigenous world view about animals and plants being our relations. Relations could be exchanged for the word “family”, and the goose could be seen as our cousin, that we are in a mutually beneficial relationship with this animal, and all beings on Earth.

This world-view is contrasted by the Eurocentric colonial Christian world-view which asserts humans are above animal life, that earth, her animals and plants are only here for our consumption and no responsibility exists to respect their habitat or existence.   
Instead, Goose Garden asks us to consider that geese have nested on the shores, now known as Prince’s Island Park, since before Calgary even existed as a city. This space is, in essence, the home of the goose first and our park second. If we view the goose as our cousin, we might ask ourselves   
“How do we conduct ourselves in our cousins’ home? How do we treat them when visiting their home?”

**The Project**

Goose Garden was constructed as part of the City of Calgary’s Artist Initiated Public Art Project <https://www.calgary.ca/arts-culture/public-art/artist-initiated-project-funding.html>

What is important to understand about public art is city planners and engineers often regard public art as an afterthought. Once the structures have been designed, locations of empty space are selected for a specific medium of artwork, a set size, budget and theme. \*If\* an artist can fit their design into those constraints, then they will have an opportunity to display their artwork. The Artist Initiated Public Art Project was the first time the city of Calgary asked artists what we would like to create, where it would go, what the medium will be and how it will interact with the public. This is an important change in the conversation municipal government have with artists, asking us what we would like to create instead of giving us narrow parameters within which we can create.

**The Goose**

Constructed using a swan paddle boat as the base, it was reimagined using sculpted fiberglass to create the back dome and nest for the garden planting. Randy Renolds from Fiberglass Repair Pro’s, with over 30 years of experience, assisted with this construction process to ensure it was both structurally sound and environmentally safe.

Over the winter, it was stored in the garage of Michelle & Darcy Robinson <https://www.nativecalgarian.com/> deep appreciation to them for the use of their space!

Using an environmentally safe boat paint, she was then painted with assistance from Bryson Ritchie of FoodScape Cooperative, the feather detail on the back took over 9 hours for the two of us to complete!

Finally, she was transported by Experienced Movers from the garage, to Prince’s Island Park.   
<https://theexperiencedmovers.ca/about.html>

**The Garden**

Within the 8 pots is native species of aquatic plants known for their water cleaning properties, bullrush or cattail has been successfully used to clean up toxins which have leeching into waterways, it has removed arsenic, pharmaceuticals, explosives, phosphorous and methane. It is also a traditional food source, medicine and weaving material used by Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island.   
<https://www.mtpr.org/arts-culture/2018-04-02/cattail-plant-of-a-thousand-uses>

In this setting the plants will be using the nitrogen from the goose droppings in the pond and converting them into usable nutrients for the plant to grow. Aquatic plant life produces 70% of all the oxygen on earth, which is why infrastructure which uses plants natural abilities to clean and detoxify water is so important in city planning. Marsh Marigold was also used in this years planting.

**Migration**

Goose Garden is seeking a new home for spring 2024, suitable options include

* natural and man-made ponds
* small lakes
* other shallow and slow-moving bodies of water

The body of water must include:

* a boat launch accessible by vehicle
* discourage swimming in the area (to avoid climbing on the goose)

Rental cost of Goose Garden from May to September 2024 is valued at $10,000, considerations can be made.

**Adoption**

Goose Garden can be purchased as a permanent installation for a municipality, community, or private business. It will be sold with a boat trailer and all documents related to the original project (including construction diagrams, anchoring system details, technical data sheets, and instructions on planting and seasonal maintenance)

Cost of purchasing Goose Garden is valued at $40,000.

Inquiries, please contact 403-605-0107 or 523hlm@gmail.com

Photos by Albert Woo