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Art students make the grade with psychedelic salmon on downtown Kelowna office building

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New UBC Okanagan course in murals teaches students how to turn a concept into reality

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A group of 16 UBC Okanagan students have been painting a mural as part of a course, and the fruits of their labour will be unveiled in downtown Kelowna on Aug. 18. (Dana Kelly/CBC)

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A professor and his 16 students have spent countless hours, both in class and on their own time, collaborating on a bold new mural in the heart of downtown Kelowna, B.C.

The 240-square-metre piece features a large "psychedelic" salmon, in bright shades of blue, orange and yellow, and can be seen on the side of the CTQ Engineering building on St. Paul Street.

It's part of the first mural-making course at University of British Columbia Okanagan, which teaches students how to not only paint a large work of art on a wall, but also what kind of paints to use, project proposals, budgeting and more.

The course features two components, one being the actual painting of the mural, and the second based on assignments and research into developing murals.



Katie Chamberlain said she's always wanted to paint a mural, and now she has the skills to do so. (Dana Kelly/CBC)

"We're trying to give the students an opportunity to explore what's going on in the wider context of muralling," instructor David Doody said.

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Amelia Ford, a third-year fine arts student, said painting a mural is vastly different from working in a studio because you're out in the community, talking to passersby who are curious about the work.

"They ask a lot of really interesting questions and it broadens your perspective on what people's assumptions are about art," she said.

"When people see it, it makes them want to support the arts."



From what kind of paint to use, to how to budget for large-scale art projects, these UBC Okanagan students have been learning everything they need to know to paint murals. (Dana Kelly/CBC)

Coming from Nelson, B.C., home of an international mural festival, she hopes to take what she's learned about murals back with her and help out with the event in the future.

Second-year student Katie Chamberlain said she's always wanted to work on murals, and she also hopes to put her newfound skills to use in the future.

"I'm so glad that I took this class," she said. "It's a hoot."

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Doody said the first semester of the course has been a "full success."

"We're actually getting better success than I ever dreamed."

The official unveiling of the mural is scheduled for Aug. 18.