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From Squamish to New York City

'This 'Beautiful Day' art piece leaves Squamish

[Jennifer Thuncher](#) / Squamish Chief

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The Squamish sign in Times Square: this photo was taken during the recent Black Lives Matter protests, where much of the city was boarded up and riot police were positioned throughout the city. The main protests were happening just behind the street you see (7th Avenue) which was barricaded off as a police muster point.
Photo: COURTESY KRISTIN MCIVER

Squamish residents may not get to travel to New York City — or anywhere else — during COVID-19, but a piece of art inspired by our community is there, representing us now.

The sculpture "This Beautiful Day," which was located in the Xwu'nekw Park on the Mamquam Blind Channel since Biennale last came to town, was rehomed to Vancouver after temporary Squamish Helping Hands Housing moved onto that property, but a digital image of the sign is now shining in Times Square.

The popular piece, which can be seen as the Squamish backdrop of hundreds of social media posts going back years, is the work of Australian — and currently, New York-based — artist Kristin McIver, who was a [Biennale artist in residence at Quest University in 2015](#).

A digital image of the "This Beautiful Day," sign is part of the Alone Together exhibition by [ZAZ10TS](#).

"The exhibition, which runs 7 to 8 p.m. nightly, gives special thanks to the essential workers on the frontline of the COVID-19 crisis and provides inspiring messages to passersby in the centre of Manhattan," reads a Vancouver Biennale press release.

McIver says "This Beautiful Day" was conceived during her time spent with First Nations in Squamish.

"I was struck by the humility, humanity, and respect for the gift of nature that escapes much of the urban community. The phrase is a reminder that we are simply a part of a bigger ecosystem, and that every ray of sun, snowflake, butterfly, and breath of wind is something to be thankful for," McIver said in the release.

"When re-contextualized within the urban centre of Times Square — especially during a viral pandemic, a natural mechanism within the same ecosystem — this message serves as a counterpoint to the commercial messaging and reminds us of what lies beyond the walls of concrete. Time has slowed down. This busy metropolis now serves as a place of reflection, stillness, and gratitude."

In particular, the sign was influenced by her time with Squamish Nation artist, [Tsawaysia Spukwus \(Alice Guss\)](#), she said.

Spukwus was excited to hear the sign she partly inspired is now in New York, a city where she put on a drum-making workshop in September of 2019.

"It's exciting to see a part of our spirit bestowed in such a huge city. Who would have thought this inspiration/quote would be seen in New York?" she said.

"Reflection[s] of peace, tranquility, harmony, remind us that life is rich, beauty is everywhere."

She added her father taught her to say "Halth Skwile Te-staas!" which means, "It's a beautiful day!" in the Squamish language.

"So I use this line every time I do the protocol, introduction, and at a welcome ceremony."

The physical neon "This Beautiful Day" sign is now in Vancouver and will soon be installed on the roof of the Biennale building there, according to Barrie Mowatt founder, president and artistic director of Vancouver Biennale.

"We are hopeful, if a funder comes forward with \$30,000, that the neon will return to Squamish and be installed in a high visibility site welcoming all to the city," Mowatt told The Chief.

"I'd love to see it installed on the pedestrian overpass before the Sea to Sky Gondola where it could be seen by all travellers to Squamish, places beyond and in proximity to the Squamish First peoples."



Source: Heather Geluk

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