

# Edmonton students replace graffiti in Inglewood with mural

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Edmonton school children, Katelin Mercer, Jada Prince, Fahad Khan, Myeisha Smith, Remmi Russell, Damien Woodman and Alicia Rohlehr banded together to cover graffiti on the Inglewood Community League building with a mural.

*GREG SOUTHAM / EDMONTON JOURNAL*

Remmi Russell was pleased after a new mural was completed in Inglewood this week.

“It really just adds a lot of brightness to the community,” said Remmi, 14.

Remmi and other children from the Inglewood community worked on the mural, titled Remmi and Friends, and finished painting the mural this week. The mural features her and other children in various poses across a sea of bright colours.

“It brought a lot of us together,” she said. “Once the painting started getting worked on, I was out here almost every day of the week.”

The project began after offensive graffiti was found on the wall of an old hockey rink building in 2015. The building sits across from Inglewood School, 11515 127 Street, and is next to the school’s playground.

Though community members initially painted over the graffiti, there were concerns that leaving the wall blank could welcome more vandalism.

“I was incredibly disappointed,” Savannah Westgarde said of the graffiti. Westgarde is the community recreation co-ordinator for the City of Edmonton “And then at the same time, I saw an incredible opportunity for the community to make a statement and reclaim the space.”

Westgarde worked with Inglewood community groups, Capital City Clean Up and artist Agnieszka Matejko to organize and fund the mural’s creation.

“We looked at it and said we should change some stuff,” said Katelin Mercer, 9. Katelin helped Matejko choose what poses to use and where to place them on the mural. “Our principal didn’t want kids seeing all the swearing.”

The Inglewood Community League is looking into using an anti-graffiti coating to protect the new mural, Westgarde said.

“If it got painted over with the bad graffiti again, I would be so sad,” Katelin said.

While in 2015 there were 977 reported cases of graffiti, instances of graffiti have dropped 50.6 per cent since 2010.

“This space is going to be incredibly vibrant and welcoming space,” Westgarde said. A new playground for the school will also be built this summer.

There are four more murals planned at Stony Plain (<https://domain.com/tag/stony-plain>) Road, Matejko said. She will work with the

community to create art that focuses on the community's interests, such as skateboarding.

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