

Rodolfo Redstone Serna

Fibers of History

September and October 2020

For thousands of years, murals have been used to share stories and experiences. This mural by Rodolfo Redstone Serna was created to draw connections between the indigenous peoples of the Willamette Valley and the indigenous peoples of Latin America. Serna's work celebrates the rich beauty, power, and diversity of these cultures, while also touching on the fear and loss that has been experienced. The ultimate hope is to increase awareness of historical issues faced by marginalized communities of color and encourage a dialogue around solidarity, reciprocity, unity, and resistance.

Serna visually weaves together elements of narratives shared by more than 25 indigenous and Latinx community members. After designing the concept and refining it with these community members, Serna invited a larger group of all ages to help bring the mural to life. Participants painted with joy, knowing that they were provided a space to be represented in Downtown Eugene. This artwork is a creative expression and interpretation of many aspects of indigenous and Latinx cultures and experiences, but it does not claim to represent all perspectives of these broader communities.

Each element of this complex composition is a symbol that contributes to a larger timestamp of the past to present moment. The mural's initial conception came from the land acknowledgment that was shared with the artist, which inspired the focal point of mother nature providing corn and salmon. The eagle has a large presence as an important aspect of indigenous spirituality. Field workers, traditional fishermen and children are represented below, while in the sky are patterns from the baskets used by the indigenous people of the region. A final addition was the condor, to tell the prophecy of the two great birds finally coming together. The use of color, texture and natural imagery sets a celebratory and peaceful tone with many references to the positive and powerful aspects of the cultures represented.

The mural also incorporates some elements that represent struggles faced by Latin American immigrant communities. An officer in uniform pulls at an ear of corn, which is a symbol of these diverse communities. Up above is a local Chicano activist, who is not only present because of their story, but is symbolic of the tension held by generations of trauma, protest, and loss.

This mural was never intended to focus on only one element. It is an expression in paint to bring awareness to the beauty, complexity, and dynamic history of the cultures represented, as well as the tension and fear that is present for many indigenous and Latinx community members. Some elements of the mural have been difficult for members of our community. It is our hope that as a community we can reflect upon and understand one another's experiences to create meaningful dialogue and ultimately strengthen the fabric of our community.

This project was part of the 2020 Fiesta Cultural celebration, a partnership between Lane Arts Council, City of Eugene Cultural Services, and community members.