

TOWN OF WINDSOR AGENDA REPORT

Joint Windsor Town Council, Windsor Redevelopment Successor Agency and Windsor Water District Meeting Date: April 1, 2026

To: Mayor and Councilmembers
From: Olivia Lemen, Parks and Recreation Director
Subject: Water Is Life Mural

Recommendation to Council:

1. Receive status update on the “Water is Life” mural.
2. By motion, approve the conceptual design of the "Water is Life" mural.

Strategic Plan Element:

The recommended action supports the goal of Livability. Goal Statement: Preserve community character by maximizing the use of existing amenities and creating future opportunities that enhance quality of life for all.

Background:

On September 16, 2020, the Town Council approved a request from the Community Healing Group (CH) to install two future, semi-permanent murals on Town property. Since that time, CH has been working throughout Downtown Windsor with various property owners to identify locations for numerous artworks to be displayed. A map of all of these complete artworks can be found on the Windsor Chamber of Commerce website:

<https://www.windsorchamber.com/assets/pdf/Windsor+Murals+Map/>

The first of the approved murals on Town property was the Wisdom Tree mural project - envisioned as a way to bring greater awareness to the native Pomo community in the area. Following approval from the Public Art Advisory Commission (Commission) and the Town Council in 2020, CH entered into agreements with the Pomo artists, who were guided by local Native educator, storyteller, and Tribal community member Rose Hammock.

In late 2021, Hammock sent out a survey to members of the Pomo community, asking for their input on the mural's design. Their response was unanimous: they wanted to see a Valley Oak tree, acorns, leaves, dancers, salmon, birds of all varieties, and a fire. This information was shared with the mural artists: Pomo artists Bonnie Lockhart, Eric Wilder, and Jewelina Acosta.

Over the course of ten workshops in 2022 and 2023, members of the Pomo community were invited to express their thoughts through art, using templates of leaves, fish, and acorns. Elders and other members from local Tribes also attended and offered their support and guidance. In May of 2023, the Wisdom Tree mural was installed on the north side of the Huerta Gym.

Discussion:

Building on the success of the Wisdom Tree, CH has developed a new artistic team to complete the second public mural approved in 2020 – Water Is Life.

HONORING THE RIVER'S INDIGENOUS ROOTS

The Russian River has been the lifeblood of this region for over 10,000 years. The Pomo, Miwok, and Wappo tribes were the original inhabitants, living in sustainable harmony with the land and its abundant resources. While the river now bears the name of the Russian American Company settlers from the early 1800s, its true history is deeply intertwined with the ancestral and unceded lands of these resilient Native American communities. The Russian River watershed encompasses roughly 1,500 square miles. For millennia, this area teemed with natural life.

Imagine a time when fish were so plentiful you could cross the river on their backs, and majestic oak and redwood trees dominated the landscape before the advent of widespread logging and grazing. In this rich ecology, Native American tribes coexisted peacefully, sharing resources and respectfully tending to the land. The deliberate destruction of Native American traditions, culture, and ancestral lands unfortunately marks California's history. CH is dedicated to shedding light on these historical injustices and amplifying the voices of Native Americans. This mural project is a vital step in that journey.

WEAVING NATIVE STORIES INTO THE LANDSCAPE

The Water Is Life mural will be a 118-foot-long visual narrative, illustrating the profound significance of the Russian River and its watershed through the authentic stories of Native peoples. This mural will depict:

- Traditional villages and gathering places
- Intricate baskets and ceremonial clothing
- Indigenous foods and medicinal plants
- Sacred rituals, songs, and dances

This public art piece will serve as a powerful educational tool, fostering understanding, respect, and appreciation for Native American culture and traditions within the broader community. It will be a visually stunning enhancement to the local landscape, engaging residents, tourists, and school children alike.

The location approved by the Town Council in 2020 is along the exterior wall and fence line at the Public Works Corporation Yard, located at 8400 Windsor Road. This location was selected because it is the main water facility for the Town and the hub of current water distribution systems. This location is also directly across the street from Windsor High School. Native American high school students will participate in the painting process.

Once the design is approved, the mural will be painted off-site and installed as a complete artwork in 2026. Installation will occur along the stucco wall, black mesh fencing, and stucco posts seen in the images below. In total, the full mural will be 118 feet long by eight feet high and will include approximately (30) four-foot by eight-foot exterior plywood panels, coated to protect it from weather and graffiti.

THE DESIGN TEAM

This project emphasizes a collaborative, culturally informed approach, led by a Native American cultural advisor and artist.

Ras K'Dee - Native Cultural Advisor

Ras K'Dee is a Pomo/African musician from Sonoma County. He is a community educator, and

renowned lyricist, producer, lead vocalist and keyboardist for Bay Area-based Audiopharmacy- a live, world hip-hop ensemble that has toured together for 16 years from local to international venues around the globe. In 2003, Ras co-founded, and is current director of, a Native youth media organization called Seventh Native American Generation (SNAG). Its annual magazine features the art, photos, music, and writings of Indigenous youth. Ras also leads summer youth workshops and is a producer and occasional co-host of a Northern California radio program, "Bay Native Circle." He has been featured in numerous publications, such as Smithsonian Magazine and Native California News. His many awards include "Most Earnest and Up and Coming Band", KQED American Indian Local Heroes Award, and American Indian Film Award Best Animation Short for "Injunuity".

Through Ras's deep connections within the art world and the strong working relationships he has developed with Native artists through the magazine, artist Nikila Badua was recommended as the lead artist on this project given her ability to work effectively with communities and her demonstrated artistic skill set.

Nikila Badua – Native Artist

Nikila is originally from the island of Oahu yet was raised primarily in the Bay Area neighborhood of Eastside San Jose. Inspired by an earth-based wisdom of roots and culture, she is a self-taught multimedia artist, community organizer, mother and advocate for youth, Indigenous, and environmental rights. She goes by the alias "MamaWisdom." Nikila currently co-directs the urban arts youth mentorship organization called 808 Urban and is a freelance artist. She calls California and Hawaii home. Samples of the artist can be seen in Attachment 1.

THE DESIGN PROCESS

Phase One: Cultural Storytelling and Design – *In progress*

The process began with gathering relevant transmission stories and collective cultural histories from tribal representatives. The Native Cultural Advisor and Native Artist guided this vital phase. These cultural advisors have also connected with local tribal members and artists to refine the design. This ensures the mural accurately and respectfully reflects the diverse heritage of the local tribes. Together, they developed a comprehensive rendering of the mural which was presented to the Public Art Advisory Commission on January 28, 2026 and the Commission unanimously recommended the design to the Town Council for final approval.

Phase Two: Bringing the Mural to Life

Once the design is approved, the painting phase will commence. The Native Artist and Cultural Advisor will lead this stage, supported by a small team of assisting artists and advisors, as well as select Native American high school students from Windsor High School.

This intergenerational collaboration aims to provide valuable experience and mentorship. The mural will primarily be painted off-site in workshops, allowing for dedicated artistic focus, and then installed on-site once completed.

THE DESIGN

The conceptual mural design (Attachment 2) to be presented achieves the following goals and objectives:

- **Educate the community** about the historical and cultural significance of the Russian River to Native American tribes;
- **Promote understanding, respect, and appreciation** for Native American culture and traditions;

- **Create a visually stunning public art piece** that enhances the local landscape and serves as a powerful symbol of indigenous heritage.

Fiscal Impact:

The Community Healing Group will be fundraising to cover the direct costs related to this project. Any fiscal impact will come from staff time to prepare the sites and installation of the murals. Any material costs related to the installation and the ongoing maintenance of the murals on Town property will come out of the Public Art Special Revenue Fund. There is funding allocated in the FY25-27 budget for this purpose.

Environmental Review:

This action does not constitute a “project” within the meaning of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15378 and requires no environmental review.

Attachment(s):

1. [Nakila Badua Mural Samples](#)
2. [Conceptual Mural Design](#)
- 14.2 [Water is Life PowerPoint \(Distributed 2026.03.30\)](#)

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Approved by:

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