



Friends United to display artwork at Nova Scotian paramedic stations

By Drake Lowethers - March 30, 2023



HALIFAX: A new partnership is blossoming at Friends United with Emergency Health Services (EHS), as the center’s Indigenous artwork initiative expands to display artwork at select paramedic stations across Nova Scotia.

In an interview with *The Reporter* on March 27, Rolf Bouman, the founder of the Richmond County-based convention centre, advised artwork will be proudly on display at 60 different EHS locations from Sydney to Yarmouth.

“We do know when you call the ambulance; you don’t call it for fun,” Bouman said. “There is stress on EHS all the time and we rely on them so much, and we felt this was one way of giving back and saying thank you.”

Over the duration of the EHS partnership, Friends United will donate up to 60 pieces of art. Five of the pieces were donated to the provincial support office building in Dartmouth, and paintings from Mi’kmaw artists Loretta Gould and Mandy Julian are currently on display at the Sydney station.

After immigrating to Canada from Germany in 1986, Bouman has spent the past three decades working to eliminate prejudice and focusing the world’s attention on First Nation people.

“About six months ago, there was an opening at the EHS base in Sydney; former Senator Daniel Christmas helped to reveal the opening on our behalf, and that was the first phase of the collaboration between Friends United and EHS,” he said. “The second reveal, was in Halifax last week. The artwork really appears to trigger someone’s happiness, relaxation, and reflection. It helps tell people what was, learn from it and go forward together.”

Bouman’s son, Lucas, who is a paramedic, suggested his hope for the partnership is that it will provide benefits along two separate pathways.

“I wanted there to be a better understanding of Indigenous people and some of the barriers that they face. Secondly I wanted to support my coworkers, Indigenous and non-Indigenous,” Lucas told *The Reporter* in a written statement. “I had the opportunity to do both and the positive feedback I have received from my coworkers regarding this project was incredible. I had people who I never knew were Indigenous tell me that they were and what this meant to them. Hearing their stories is why I wanted to do this.”

Bouman indicated even as a child, his son has always wanted to help people, which is why it became a natural transition to partner his personal life with Friends United and his public life with EHS.

“Lucas saw what we did and he loved what we did and said that it was helping people also,” he said. “It was a conversation him and I had, some time back, and it just evolved.”

Adding colourful canvases onto what normally would be an almost bare or blank wall at the EHS station, Bouman indicated the paintings will make a big difference province wide.

“It gives the artists incredible exposure,” he said. “It’s almost like a candle, it sparks conversation. That’s really an important part. Reconciliation can’t only happen on the government level.”