

# Commemorating The Underground Railroad At The Canadian Port Of Entry

The land where the Gordie Howe International Bridge project is located holds a rich historical past. For thousands of years, it has served as Anishinaabe Territory for the Three Fires Confederacy, consisting of the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi Nations. The Sandwich, Ontario, community is the oldest continuous European settlement area in Ontario, with French settlers arriving in the late 1700s. And to those escaping the US slave trade through the Underground Railroad, Windsor-Detroit was a destination representing hope and freedom for themselves and for their offspring. Many of these descendants remain in Sandwich and the Windsor-Essex-Kent region today. To commemorate the area's role on the Underground Railroad and the contributions its travellers provided to the region, the Gordie Howe International Bridge project will include artwork at the Canadian Port of Entry recognizing this important part of history.

## **ABOUT THE ARTWORK**

The new commission will provide a culturally significant, commemorative artwork that recognizes the area's connection with the Underground Railroad. The artwork will serve to symbolize hope and freedom and express Canadian identity and history. Located in a publicly accessible area at the Canadian Port of Entry, it will allow residents and visitors to learn more about this important part of local history. The commission is anticipated to be a free-standing work of art, consisting of durable, noble materials. The final art concept will be shared in late 2023, with installation coinciding with the opening of the Gordie Howe International Bridge project.

## **ARTIST SELECTION**

The artist selection process will follow guidelines identified by Canadian Heritage. The project team will issue a request for qualifications for professional Canadian artists of the Black, African and Caribbean diaspora living and working in Canada, followed by interviews with short-listed artists. A juried artist selection process will identify the artist. The artist selection process will launch in March 2023 and is anticipated to conclude in summer 2023. Details on the process are available at [GordieHoweInternationalBridge.com](http://GordieHoweInternationalBridge.com).

## **COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

WDBA has worked with local organizations to develop the commission. To continue community involvement, local community members of the Black, African and Caribbean diaspora will be engaged to provide themes and local history for the artist's consideration. Once the artist is identified, a public meeting will occur to allow the artist to share their initial thoughts on the commission and hear first-hand from community members.

The commission also includes a mentorship opportunity for a local youth identifying as a member of the Black, African and Caribbean diaspora from Sandwich/west Windsor to work with the artist. Information on the mentorship will be shared following artist selection.

For more information on the area's role in the Underground Railroad, visit Amherstburg Freedom Museum, Detroit River Project and the Essex County Black Historical Research Society.

For more information about the Gordie Howe International Bridge project visit [www.GordieHoweInternationalBridge.com](http://www.GordieHoweInternationalBridge.com) or call 1-844-322-1773. Follow us on Twitter at [Twitter.com/GordieHoweBrg](https://twitter.com/GordieHoweBrg), like us on Facebook at [Facebook.com/GordieHoweBridge](https://facebook.com/GordieHoweBridge) and connect with us on LinkedIn at [Linkedin.com/company/wdba-apwd](https://linkedin.com/company/wdba-apwd).