



## Statement:

It all started with a Willow tree.

Willowdale was named after ten beautiful Willow trees that grew in front of the post office on Yonge St. just north of Sheppard Ave. So much local history in one small community!

When Robin Hesse and Cristina Delago met with Mural Routes to discuss the idea of a mosaic mural for Willowdale, they were looking at design ideas, trying to put themselves in the residents' shoes and thinking: What could we do in return for all that Willowdale has done for us? A design featuring just one heart did not seem to be enough.

Former Mayor and founder of the City of North York, the City with Heart, Mel Lastman, always believed that Willowdale really was the "Heart of North York", so they decided to bring that to life and produce 19 mosaic hearts – each one a reason why they appreciate the neighbourhood, green space, diversity, friendship, family...each one a reason to be proud to live in this vibrant and lively community.

## About Mural Routes

[www.muralroutes.ca](http://www.muralroutes.ca)

Mural Routes activates communities by facilitating the creation of responsive, collaborative murals, and provides opportunities to build and advance careers in mural art. Our vision is to be a leading resource for all artists, organizations and communities creating mural art.

## Willowdale Mosaic Mural Project

The Willowdale Community Mosaic project was created in 2022-2023 by artists Robin Hesse and Cristina Delago, in partnership with Mural Routes.

The mural features 19 mosaic hearts - each heart depicts a reason why the community loves Willowdale. The content for the 19 hearts was determined by the local community who was engaged throughout the design process in various ways.

In Willowdale, the heart shape is considered an artistic and cultural symbol, and is deeply imbedded in its history - even small copper "heart" medallions are imbedded in the sidewalks.

Installed on planters on the West side of Yonge Street, between North York Boulevard (north) and Upper Madison Ave (south).

This mosaic mural aims to celebrate the area and contribute to the revival of the local economy which has suffered deeply due to the COVID pandemic.



Funded by the  
Government  
of Canada



**Project partners**



## Robin Hesse A.O.C.A

[www.robinhesse.com](http://www.robinhesse.com)

Robin Hesse is an honours graduate of the Ontario College of Art (Fine Arts 1983) and George Brown College (Graphic Design 2022).

Her practice focusses on community themed mural projects, which she executes in the summer months. Many of her brightly colored murals feature simple site-specific designs, commissioned by both public and private venues. In public spaces, often beside libraries, and other prominent public buildings. Robin has hand-painted traffic boxes, Bell Boxes, concrete barriers, and other outdoor surfaces.

Tied in with this work, is her long-time association with Toronto Public Library, where she has spent many years working in public services. This rich public service opportunity has enabled her to observe communities as they evolve and grow and has helped her to develop a keen awareness of neighbourhood demographics. Seeking ways to combine her knowledge of public service with her art practice, she has found community mural making to be a great way to combine community engagement with art.

Robin has been part of the Henderson Bridge Mural (2013) followed by StreetARToronto projects: Outside the Box, (2015-2021) The TTC Coxwell Laneway Mosaic (2016), The Bell Box Mural (2017), Light up the Laneway (2018), and The Lakeshore Barrier Bike Lane Project (2019), where she either produced individual works or was part of the artist team. Robin was awarded a Richmond Hill Community and Cultural Grant to create and manage her own Traffic box Program for Richmond Hill - The Richmond Hill Traffic Box Mural Project (2019). She then took part in a street beautification project for the Mount Pleasant BIA, in which street poles were hand-painted by artists on Mount Pleasant Avenue in Toronto. The same summer, a mural featuring "Henrietta the Hen" was painted across the road from the Hillcrest branch of Toronto Public Library (2021). She has also served on public art juries, including the Bell Box Murals Project and has facilitated workshops in public art making at Centennial College.

The Willowdale Neighbourhood mosaic is Robin's first major mosaic project and marks an exciting new direction for her future endeavors.

## Cristina Delago A.O.C.A

[www.cristinadelago.com](http://www.cristinadelago.com)

Cristina Delago was born in Italy, where her artistic spirit was nurtured. She moved to Toronto and attended the Ontario College of Art and Design. Cristina graduated with honours from the Design Department and shortly after graduation she participated in numerous art shows. At the same time, she started her own business creating handcrafted tiles, architectural elements and mosaics. On these projects, she works with some of Toronto's most recognized interior designers and architects.

Many of her mosaic murals can be seen throughout the city of Toronto. Some of her latest mosaic installations and most prestigious works are "Almonds and Wine" at Bathurst and Lawrence, which she was awarded through an artist call, as well as the TTC Coxwell Subway Station, Jack Layton Ferry Docks, and Cedar Ridge Community Centre mosaic murals, just to name a few. Presently, Cristina is the lead artist for two large community mosaic murals for Toronto Pearson airport. She uses mostly recycled material to create these mosaics.

Cristina's passion for teaching and community art work brought her to lead many mosaic mural workshops and mentor upcoming artists. She is also passionate about engaging communities and creating more beautiful and safe environments through her art.

Her work has been published nationally and internationally and she has received many awards and grants throughout her career. Cristina has also served on the board of Mural Routes

Cristina partnered up with mural artist Robin Hesse to work on this project in North York as they felt that this neighborhood needed some love after the pandemic and after the van attack of 2018.

