



## MURAL TRIBUTE TO ALANIS OBOMSAWIN

### MU INAUGURATES A 20<sup>th</sup> MURAL DEDICATED TO MONTREAL'S GREAT ARTISTS

**Montreal, November 5th, 2018** — **MU**, the charitable non-profit mural arts organization, inaugurated a new mural in the Ville-Marie borough paying tribute the great Abenaki filmmaker, Alanis Obomsawin. This new mural art piece is the 20<sup>th</sup> of **MU**'s collection *Montreal's Great Artists*, an ambitious undertaking that has been a source of pride for the organization since 2010, highlighting the creative minds and forces of those who have made outstanding contributions to Montreal's cultural scene. As part of this collection, **MU** was inaugurating, a year ago, a tribute to another Montreal great artist with the already iconic mural of Leonard Cohen overlooking downtown Montreal.

The event took place in presence of Mrs Marie-Josée Parent, associate councillor in charge of culture and reconciliation for the City of Montreal; Mr Claude Joli-Cœur, Government Film Commissioner and Chairperson for the NFB; Mrs Alanis Obomsawin and the artist, Meko Ottawa. Also present were Ghislain Picard, Assembly of First Nations Regional Chief and Richard O'Bomsawin, Chief of Odanak.

The mural is located on Lincoln Avenue corner of Atwater, in the heart of the Peter-McGill district, where Mrs. Obomsawin has been living for more than fifty years. This mural is **MU**'s fourth mural celebrating the heritage of Indigenous Peoples in Montreal.

Meko Ottawa, an emerging Atikamekw artist, was chosen to design the piece in homage to Alanis Obomsawin following a call for nominations dedicated to Indigenous artists. A native of Manawan, Ottawa is a multidisciplinary artist who uses video, illustration and installation as mediums to deal with subjects of importance to the Indigenous peoples. In 2016, she was chosen to participate in *Déranger*, NFB's intensive creative lab for Indigenous francophone artists. In 2017, her work – *Kushapetshekan / Kosapitcikan / A Glimpse Into the Other World*, an immersive installation done in collaboration with two other Indigenous artists – was presented at Montreal's Museum of Fine Arts.

Charged with symbolism, the piece is conceived as a dream-like portrait of Alanis Obomsawin based on a photo of her signing at the Mariposa Folk Festival in Toronto (1970). By honoring Alanis Obomsawin, Meko Ottawa also personifies and sublimates aboriginal women and their resilience, through to art and nature. As this is Ottawa's first mural art piece, a team of **MU** muralists, directed by muralist Rafael Sottolichio, accompanied the artist in the making of the mural, allowing a mutual sharing of knowledge and expertise.

« Paying tribute to Ms. Alanis Obomsawin with a public artwork is one of many ways to make the history of Aboriginal nations come to life and advance their cultures in our city. Montréal will continue supporting all efforts to restore better and more respectful relations with native peoples. In a spirit of great friendship, this mural celebrates the contributions of all these communities that enrich the landscape of our city and its international reputation for openness in every respect. In particular, I would like to commend Ms. Alanis Obomsawin for her unwavering commitment to native peoples and her work with children. I would also like to thank the artist Meko Ottawa and the **MU** team for this superb mural, which so eloquently honours Ms. Obomsawin, » noted Montréal Mayor Valérie Plante.

« It is an honor for **MU** to pay tribute to the great Alanis Obomsawin, a unique, sole artist. An engaged artist who has used her art, her voice, at the service of social change. Her commitment to the recognition of First Nations, her struggle for



education and the rights of children are fully in line with **MU's** core values. Alanis Obomsawin is one of the greatest indigenous artists of this world. We are proud to give her the admiration and recognition that she deserves, and we hope that the mural can contribute to empower youth in having a voice », said Elizabeth-Ann Doyle, **MU's** Executive and Artistic Director.

« I was so surprised when they told me I was receiving this honor. It's very important to me that there are children beside me on the mural. What joy! These are children from Moose Factory, on James Bay in Northern Ontario, who went to a residential school in 1968, and I would play with them at recess. And it is such a gift to know a First Nations artist was chosen for this project. Not only has Meko Ottawa given us her work, but it has given her a chance to learn and share with a group of artists who are experts in making murals. Personally, I'm thinking of my parents; I don't know what they would say. My father would look in silence and be moved. », added Alanis Obomsawin.

This mural is an initiative and production of **MU**, and was made possible thanks to Ville de Montreal's *Mural Arts Program – Volet 2*, in partnership with the Ville-Marie borough. **MU** would also like to thank the NFB for its collaboration in this project.

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#### **About Alanis Obomsawin**

Honored as commander of the Ordre de Montréal in 2017, Alanis Obomsawin is one of the most prominent indigenous filmmakers in the world. Having started her career with the NFB in 1967, she is currently completing her 51<sup>st</sup> film. Of Abenaki origin, she is also a singer, author and storyteller. She has campaigned all her life to defend Indigenous Peoples and their cultures, by giving them a voice. Numerous prestigious awards have highlighted her outstanding commitment, such as the Governor General's Performing Arts Award in 2008 and Québec's Albert-Tessier award in 2016. She was made member of the Order of Canada in 1983, and Officer of the Ordre national du Québec in 2016.

#### **About MU**

**MU** is a charitable non-profit organization whose mission is to beautify the city of Montreal by creating murals that are anchored in local communities. At the heart of its approach is the desire to see and experience art on a daily basis, to trigger a social transformation and to turn Montreal into an open-air art **MU**useum! Since 2007, **MU** has produced more than 110 murals in 16 neighborhoods of the city, and over 300 community-youth murals. [www.mumtl.org](http://www.mumtl.org)

#### **About the collection *Montreal's Great Artists***

Launched by MU in 2010, the collection of murals entitled *Montreal's Great Artists* highlights the creative minds and forces who have made outstanding contributions to the local, national and international reach of Montreal's cultural scene. The murals pay tribute to creators in a variety of artistic disciplines who are either from the city originally, or who have made it their home. Twenty artists have received this honor thus far, including Paul-Émile Borduas (2010), Oscar Peterson (2011), Norman McLaren (2015), Mordechai Richler (2016), Leonard Cohen (2017), and Daisy Peterson Sweeney (2018).

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**PRESS RELEASE**  
**UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL NOVEMBER 5<sup>TH</sup> 2018, 11 AM**



Photo by Olivier Bousquet

For photos of the mural's creation and inauguration: <https://photos.app.goo.gl/WGFp6KuJU8AJyuYA>