

Concrete Moose group has a face

BY GRAHAM STRONG
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The secret society behind the concrete moose statues that have appeared in Thunder Bay parks over the past year has come forward — sort of.

Although the artist still wants to remain anonymous, Jason Dampier said that he was invited to become the “face” of the somewhat mysterious Society of Concrete Moose.

“It’s not really about an individual,” Dampier said. “That’s part of the reason why the artist wants to remain anonymous, because it’s not really about him. It’s more about promoting community and the city.”

“That being said, it’s nice to have a real person and a face to a project,” he said.

Indeed, the society is becoming more accessible: it has its own website (concretemoose.ca) and has launched a Facebook page.

The society reports that it placed 185 statues in Vickers and Waverly parks Tuesday morning and an additional release of around 20 moose is

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set for the weekend at the Franklin Street Splash Pad.

Last year around the summer solstice, about 285 concrete moose statues were placed in Vickers, Hillcrest and Waverly parks with an additional “maggie” (what the society calls a herd of concrete moose) of 110 appearing at Boulevard Lake in October.

Brian Kroeker said that he noticed comments on Facebook about the moose, but didn’t pay much attention to it until he and his wife came upon one in Vickers Park.

He said he initially thought it had been stolen and dumped there, until he saw dozens more.

“I’m taken with the idea of making people welcome to Thunder Bay and meeting new people,” said Kroeker, who moved here from Winnipeg years ago.

“I’m impressed that an artist would go to all that effort.”

Kroeker said the moose will go in to their vegetable garden.

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More moose to hit parks

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At least three moose have shown up at other sites this year. Brenda Gilham, administrative assistant at the Thunder Bay Art Gallery, and co-worker Vivian Alexander found two on the sidewalk in front of the gallery Tuesday morning. Two girls driving by picked up a third moose there, Gilham said.

She said she didn’t know anything about the concrete moose project until she read the tag accompanying each statue.

“We were all so excited,” Gilham said. “I like the community part of it ... moving it along to someone else after a certain period of time. I just think it’s great.”

She said she would follow the code and give her moose to someone else within the year.

An entry on the society website states that the concrete moose design is “very much influenced by Ah-moo’s sculpture,” which may explain why moose were placed at the art gallery.

The moose are made five at a time by pouring concrete into rubber molds. With the help of Lafarge, the society created its own mix this year to strengthen the moose. Some contain pigments like red and brown, Dampier said.

He said it takes about 15 hours, including drying time and a final polishing, to produce five moose.

The project is privately funded, Dampier said. “It’s the artist’s and the society’s gift to the residents of Thunder Bay,” he said.

The society recommends giving the statue as a welcoming gift to newcomers to the city, though returning one to a park is also acceptable.

“I’m watching for ‘For Sale’ signs (in the neighbourhood) so when a new neighbour comes in, this might be an opportunity to welcome them and hand off my moose,” Dampier said.



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Jason Dampier and his daughter Darla Dampier, 4, look over a concrete moose at the Franklin Street splash pad. More moose are to show up at the Thunder Bay park this weekend.