



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## 24-FOOT PLANT SCULPTURE WILL TAKE ROOT AT RAILSIDE AT THE FORKS

*Large-scale artwork by local artists commissioned through a competition will bring more public art to the new development.*

**The Forks, Winnipeg, Treaty One Territory, April 9, 2026** – The newest piece of public art selected for the mixed-use development **Railside at The Forks** takes inspiration from the surrounding 52 acres.

The work, ***common leaf***, by emerging Manitoba artists Natalie Baird and Toby Gillies will be prominently featured in one of the courtyards at Railside at The Forks. The 24-foot-high sculpture is modelled after the broadleaf plantain, a plant commonly found around The Forks.

*“This wonderful new work of art is a creative way to bring something that’s often overlooked onsite into view as a meaningful piece,” said Sara Stasiuk, President and CEO, The Forks. “Public art is central to The Forks experience, creating a stronger sense of connection to place. Art will play a key role in making Railside look and feel like it’s ‘More of The Forks.’”*

Residents and visitors approaching the massive sculptures at Railside at The Forks will be drawn in by the tall seed pod and a tower of hearts reaching up between buildings towards the sun. The sculpture will be made with painted and weathering steel, along with Tyndall stone blocks. The large-scale, colourful graphic shapes will create a playful, interactive space for photographs.

*“We wanted to magnify an everyday plant to remind us that it is something worth noticing,” said Toby Gillies, artist. “Scaling it up felt like a way to reflect on the quiet relationship between people, place, and the small things that endure.”*

The Forks site is home to more than 30 works by artists from Manitoba and around the world. The ***common leaf*** installation at Railside will join Winnipeg artist Ian August’s piece, ***The Candle***, which was announced last year. August is also mentoring Baird and Gillies.

*“Ian’s mentoring has been terrific. We’ve never made a piece this large before, and we’ve never had to plan for how it will deal with the weather and with thousands of people interacting with it,”* **said Natalie Baird, artist.** *“It will be a thrill to see our work become part of The Forks.”*

The artists were selected through an emerging artist competition in 2025 that invited local artists to submit expressions of interest. A shortlist of finalists was then asked to create proposals, which were reviewed by an Artist Selection Panel. The call was developed in partnership with STEPS Public Art, a national charity that works with communities across Canada to create public art in shared spaces.

*“At The Forks, we believe in fostering creativity and making space for emerging artists,”* **said Stasiuk.** *“Bringing established and up-and-coming artists together creates opportunities for collaboration, connection, and shared growth. That, along with incredible artwork, is a win for all.”*

With construction now underway, Railside at The Forks will transform two former surface parking lots into a thriving residential neighbourhood where public art and community life are built in from the ground up. A \$200,000 capital grant from The Winnipeg Foundation is helping bring this vision to life in the 3.5-acre network of publicly accessible green spaces, courtyards, alleyways, and of course, public art.

*“It’s always exciting to support new public art in Winnipeg,”* **said Megan Tate, The Winnipeg Foundation’s VP of Community Impact.** *“Public art brings a special sense of identity to a space, helping make it feel complete in a way that’s truly memorable. Over time, these works become part of how people experience and remember our city. The Winnipeg Foundation is proud to partner with The Forks on this project and looks forward to seeing ‘common leaf’ come to life.”*

Natalie Baird and Toby Gillies are a visual art duo based in Winnipeg. Their practice spans many mediums, approaching art as a process of discovery and a record of collective meaning-making. Over the last ten years, their projects have included animation, documentary filmmaking, drawing, photography, and public art. Developing multigenerational relationships through shared art experiences is a focus of their practice; whether that be inside locked healthcare units, in city parks, or on the sea ice. For many years, Natalie and Toby have been artists-in-residence at Misericordia Health Centre, creating projects with patients and long-term care residents.

Renderings of *common leaf* can be found [here](#).

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