

Letter: Blue trees stir passion, dialogue

SQUAMISH CHIEF

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The blue trees in Squamish. Photo: Darryl Schwanke

While I have great respect for Chief editor Christine Endicott, I take issue with her editorial “Outcry about blue trees ignored” (Oct. 22).

There is not doubt the Blue Trees installation has caused a kerfuffle in town. But before The Squamish Chief and some area residents condemn the project, our community might want to keep an open mind about it and other public art.

Many here, myself included, want to see more culture – music, visual arts, dance, theatre – come to Squamish. After all, art, even controversial art, enriches society. In 1913, Igor Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring* premiered in Paris. Stravinsky’s ballet, a frenzied, cacophonous piece with unconventional (for the time) harmonies and rhythms, literally sparked a riot. Today, the *Rite of Spring* is considered a masterpiece. At first blush,

great art is not always fully appreciated or understood.

I understand concerns about the use of taxpayer funds for projects like Blue Trees. But that debate happens often when public monies are used to support art. As an American living here, I have seen repeated attempts by conservatives in the U.S. Congress to gut the National Endowment for the Arts, as well as to “regulate” art. It is certainly a delicate balance when spending tax dollars on art. But sculpture, paintings, music, poetry, dance and other forms of creative expression are as vital to society as bridges and roads. Publicly funded art will not always please everyone. Nor should that be its purpose. Art is meant to enlighten, stimulate, pique, inspire and, yes, provoke.

According to Vancouver Biennale president and artistic director Barrie Mowatt, artist Kon Dimopoulos created his Blue Trees idea to “bring attention to the tree as a critical element in the survival of the universe.” Mr. Mowatt further noted that the endeavour can help serve as a “catalyst for learning, community engagement, and social action.”

Blue Trees may not be for everyone. But I’m very thankful there are people in Squamish who are trying to bring art to town. And it appears that even before it has arrived, Blue Trees has accomplished what much art seeks to do: stir passions and dialogue.

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