



Tagging of murals "gutting"

A TE KUITI art project designed to beautify unused walls in the central business district has been hit by taggers.

'Empty Spaces' was led by local artist Brigid Allan, who with help from a group of Waikato-based artists and young people, completed a number of large scale paintings last month which received very positive feedback from the community.

The murals include a falcon on Taupiri St, a tui and a Maori pattern on Rora St and a young child and floral design behind the Waitomo District Library.

But during the weekend, down the PGG Wrightson alleyway on Rora St, a painting by young Te Kuiti artist Stanley Chan depicting a woman dreaming was tagged with pink-coloured spray paint.

Other tags were also spray painted along the alleyway's walls.

Fortunately no other 'Empty Spaces' murals were affected.

MAYOR GUTTED

Waitomo mayor Brian Hanna is "gutted" by the graffiti.

"This is a very popular community project and I've already put a few calls in to police because the sooner

we catch the culprit the better," he says.

"This was done to beautify our town and for someone to tag over one of those amazing pieces of work, is totally unacceptable.

"I'm gutted. This was a labour of love by local artists, so I'm sure there will be many local people who will want to know who did this. We should not have to tolerate this."

"This was done to beautify our town and for someone to tag over one of those amazing pieces of work, is totally unacceptable. I'm gutted."

Brian Hanna

POLICE VIEW

Te Kuiti Police Senior Constable Jacky Fitzgerald says police have been informed and are investigating the damage.

"After all the hard work that was done to complete this project and

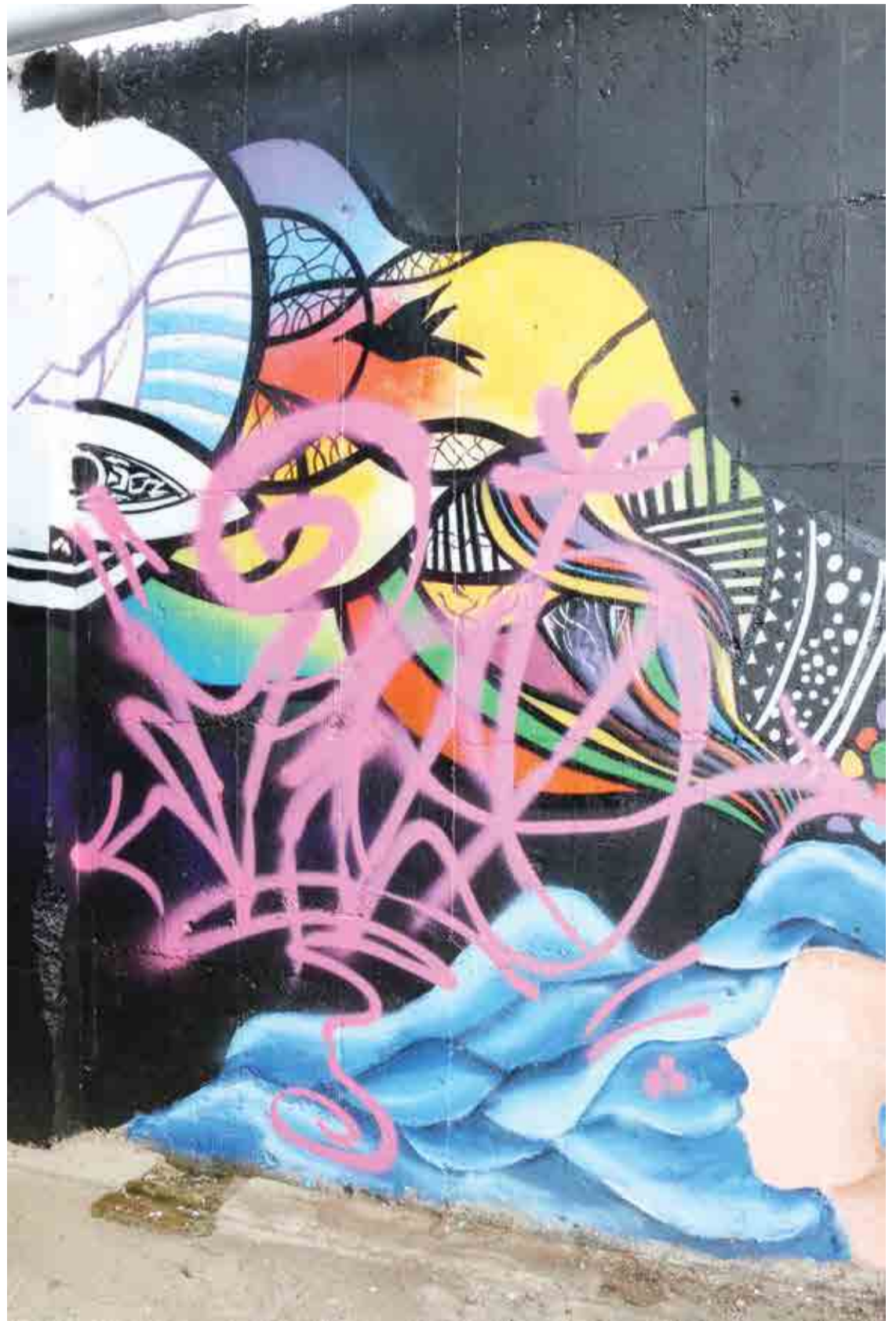
things were really starting to look good in town, this sort of behaviour is really upsetting," she says.

"We will certainly be using all the technology we have including CCTV cameras to try and identify the offenders.

"But this is not only a police issue, it's a community issue.

"So if anyone has any information, they can call us confidentially at the Te Kuiti Police Station or call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111."

A large part of the graffiti-affected mural was re-painted yesterday.



UNACCEPTABLE: This mural by young Te Kuiti artist Stanley Chan depicting a woman dreaming was tagged during the weekend - an act Waitomo mayor Brian Hanna says is "totally unacceptable".

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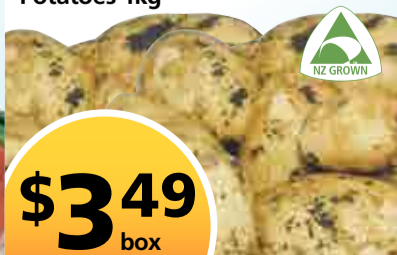
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