

## NEWS RELEASE

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### **City of Nanaimo announces selection of 2026 Temporary Public Art Projects**

*Public art projects by Eliza Gardiner and Isaiah Kingdon, and Twyla Exner will invite reflection, play and community participation*

#### **Summary**

Two innovative and community-focused projects have been selected for the City of Nanaimo's 2026 Temporary Public Art Program. The projects, "Forest Flowers" by Eliza Gardiner and Isaiah Kingdon, and "Encrustation: Barnacles of Belonging" by Twyla Exner, will transform public space through vibrant sculptural forms, participatory processes and connections to Nanaimo's natural and cultural landscape.

"Forest Flowers", a collaborative project by Nanaimo-based artist and arts educator Eliza Gardiner and emerging artist and designer Isaiah Kingdon, will feature a sculptural cluster of three oversized, vividly coloured flower forms installed in a neighbourhood park. Inspired by the Crown Brodiaea, a rare, regionally significant wildflower native to the Harewood Plains, the installation will introduce an unexpected burst of colour into the surrounding greenery.

Evoking the quiet beauty of local meadows and forests, the sculptural flowers will appear to grow organically from the earth, casting tinted light onto the ground below and creating a playful and uplifting experience for park visitors. An accompanying plant identification plaque will provide educational context, encouraging viewers to learn about local flora and deepen their connection to Nanaimo's natural environment. "Forest Flowers" will celebrate shared public space, local ecology and the joy of encountering art where it is least expected.

In "Encrustation: Barnacles of Belonging", artist Twyla Exner proposes a participatory sculptural installation inspired by the humble barnacle, an often-overlooked yet iconic feature of coastal ecosystems. Drawing on Nanaimo's waterfront identity, the project will invite community members to take part in hands-on workshops to sculpt their own barnacle forms, which will later be cast in durable materials and collectively affixed in a location along the city's waterfront.

The resulting installation will form a dense cluster of larger-than-life barnacles, each carrying the unique imprint of its maker while contributing to a shared visual ecosystem. The work explores themes of belonging, attachment to place and the ways individuals leave traces on their surroundings. By blending themes of nature with collaborative making, "Encrustation: Barnacles of Belonging" will create a living archive of community participation - one that is playful, tactile and deeply connected to Nanaimo's coastal character.

Twyla Exner is an Assistant Teaching Professor at Thompson Rivers University and an experienced community-engaged artist whose practice often merges handcrafted forms with recycled and industrial materials. Her work has been exhibited widely across Canada and is held in several public collections. Eliza Gardiner is a professor at Vancouver Island University with a longstanding commitment to arts advocacy, access and community engagement, while Isaiah Kingdon is completing a diploma at Selkirk College in Digital Fabrication and Design, bringing technical expertise in digital fabrication and sculpture, grounded in both traditional craftsmanship and emerging technologies.

The City of Nanaimo's Temporary Public Art Program supports artists in creating temporary artworks that activate public spaces, encourage civic dialogue and provide opportunities for residents and visitors to experience art as part of everyday life. Projects may include sculptural installations, community-engaged works and site-responsive interventions across the city. More about the Temporary Public Art Program can be found on the [City's website](#).

**Strategic Link:** The Temporary Public Art Program aligns with the goals of the City of Nanaimo's City Plan by facilitating opportunities for the public to encounter art and culture in public spaces throughout the city and as part of their daily experiences.

## Key Points

- Two innovative and community-focused projects have been selected for the City of Nanaimo's 2026 Temporary Public Art Program: "Forest Flowers" by Eliza Gardiner and Isaiah Kingdon and "Encrustation: Barnacles of Belonging" by Twyla Exner, will transform public space through vibrant sculptural forms, participatory processes and connections to Nanaimo's natural and cultural landscape.
- "Forest Flowers", a collaborative project by Nanaimo-based artist and arts educator Eliza Gardiner and emerging artist and designer Isaiah Kingdon, will feature a sculptural cluster of three oversized, vividly coloured flower forms installed in a neighbourhood park.
- In "Encrustation: Barnacles of Belonging", artist Twyla Exner proposes a participatory sculptural installation inspired by the humble barnacle, an often-overlooked yet iconic feature of coastal ecosystems.
- The City of Nanaimo's Temporary Public Art Program supports artists in creating temporary artworks that activate public spaces, encourage civic dialogue and provide opportunities for residents and visitors to experience art as part of everyday life.

## Quotes

"Temporary public art has a remarkable ability to bring people together and inspire us to see our city through a new lens. These two projects celebrate Nanaimo's natural environment and coastal identity, while inviting residents to participate, learn and connect through creativity. I look forward to seeing them come to life!"

Leonard Krog  
Mayor  
City of Nanaimo

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