

NEWS RELEASE

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Announcing the 2026 Culture Award Winners

The City of Nanaimo celebrates local arts, culture and heritage excellence at the 2026 Culture Awards

Summary

Since 1998, the City of Nanaimo has celebrated local excellence in arts, culture and heritage through its annual Culture Awards. The awards recognize outstanding organizations, groups and individuals whose achievements strengthen Nanaimo's cultural fabric and enrich the community's economic, social and creative life.

The 2026 Culture Award recipients will be honoured at a free community celebration at the Port Theatre on Tuesday, April 14, 2026. The public is invited to attend an evening of celebration and live local entertainment recognizing the achievements of these extraordinary community leaders. Tickets are available through the Port Theatre.

Recipients are selected by City Council following a community nomination process and review by a panel of City staff, cultural and community leaders, and past award recipients. More information about the Culture Awards and past recipients can be found on the [City of Nanaimo website](#).

THE 2026 CULTURE AWARD RECIPIENTS:

EXCELLENCE IN CULTURE 2026: Leon Potter

This award recognizes an individual or organization that has achieved regional and/or national recognition in the arts and is a significant inspiration to others. Leon Potter is recognized for his demonstrated excellence as a theatre artist, educator, mentor and cultural leader whose influence has shaped Nanaimo's artistic community for more than two decades. A long-time faculty member and Technical Director at Vancouver Island University, Potter has trained and mentored generations of emerging artists while elevating professional standards across disciplines. Through his directing, adjudicating, producing and leadership in major cultural events, Potter's artistic integrity and commitment to collaboration have strengthened Nanaimo's reputation as a centre for creative excellence.

HONOUR IN CULTURE 2026: Luis Porretta

This award is presented to an individual, group, or organization known for their dedication and support of Nanaimo's cultural community. Luis Porretta is honoured for his long-standing dedication to enriching Nanaimo's music scene through the independent promotion of live performance, mentorship and artist advocacy. For more than 20 years, Porretta has supported and presented high-quality jazz and contemporary music through Quadwangle Music Productions, creating meaningful opportunities for local and emerging artists while bringing acclaimed performers to the community. Known for his generosity, mentorship and tireless volunteer efforts, Porretta's work has strengthened relationships between artists, venues and audiences and contributed significantly to Nanaimo's vibrant live-music ecosystem.

HONOUR IN HERITAGE 2026: Brian McFadden

This award recognizes outstanding service and dedication to the preservation and promotion of Nanaimo's heritage and history. Brian McFadden is recognized for his exceptional commitment to preserving and sharing Nanaimo's military heritage as a long-time volunteer and President of the Vancouver Island Military Museum. Over many years, McFadden has researched, designed and developed the majority of the museum's exhibits, ensuring

that local military stories are thoughtfully interpreted and accessible to the public. His work emphasizes Nanaimo's contributions to military service in both wartime and peacekeeping contexts, with a strong focus on education, remembrance and community connection. Through education, outreach, guided tours and advocacy, McFadden's leadership and scholarship have strengthened community understanding, remembrance and pride in Nanaimo's history.

Strategic Link: The 2026 Culture Awards align with the goals of the City of Nanaimo's Strategic Plan by strengthening the creative sector by investing in organizations and people who animate our cultural spaces. The Culture Awards also align with City Plan Policy C4.5.10, recognizing and promoting the role that culture and the creative sector play in the community with respect to community identity and quality of life.

Key Points

- The City of Nanaimo's annual Culture Awards celebrate and honour local excellence and achievement.
- 2026 recipients are: Excellence in Culture Award to Leon Potter; Honour in Culture Award to Luis Porretta; Honour in Heritage to Brian McFadden.
- 2026 Culture Award recipients will be honoured at a free community event at the Port Theatre on the evening of Tuesday, April 14th, 2026. Tickets: <https://www.nanaimo.ca/parks-recreation-culture/culture/culture-awards>

Quotes

"On behalf of City Council, I am pleased to congratulate the 2026 Culture Award recipients. Leon Potter, Luis Porretta and Brian McFadden represent the very best of Nanaimo's creative and heritage communities. Their passion, generosity and leadership enrich the vibrant cultural life for our city and continue to inspire future generations."

Leonard Krog
Mayor
City of Nanaimo

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Contact:

For media enquiries, please contact
Communications
City of Nanaimo
Media.Requests@nanaimo.ca
250-754-4251



View the online edition for more information -

<https://www.nanaimo.ca/NewsReleases/NR260209AnnouncingThe2026CultureAwardWinners.html>