

NEWS RELEASE

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City of Nanaimo unveils a new Temporary Public Art installation by Jackie Wong

Lost Intersections by artist Jackie Wong illuminates the histories of Nanaimo's Chinatowns

Summary

The City of Nanaimo is pleased to announce the unveiling of “Lost Intersections”, a new temporary public art installation by artist Jackie Wong. Installed at three downtown locations, this series of illuminated place markers pays tribute to the sites of Nanaimo’s historic Chinatowns and invites residents and visitors to reconnect with an important but often overlooked part of the city’s heritage.

The installation consists of three satellite locations featuring red neon lights shaped into the Chinese characters for the numbers one, two, and three, each representing one of Nanaimo’s successive Chinatowns. Mounted on gold backing and enclosed in Plexiglas, the artworks are located near the intersections of Esplanade and Victoria Crescent; View Street and Bing Kee Street; and Pine Street and Hecate Street. To ensure environmental responsibility and neighbourhood compatibility, the pieces are solar-powered, energy-efficient, and designed to emit soft, focused light that minimizes brightness and avoids light pollution.

Chinese immigrants began arriving in Nanaimo in the late 1800s to work in the coal industry, establishing vibrant communities that supported daily life, culture, and commerce. As the city grew and land values increased, the first two Chinatowns were relocated; the third was later destroyed by fire and never rebuilt. Today, little visible evidence of these communities remains. “Lost Intersections” serves as a contemporary wayfinding system, reconnecting present-day Nanaimo with these layered histories.

Each installation includes an accessible QR code linking viewers to historical information about the Chinatown that once stood at that location. By blending visual impact with research-based storytelling, Wong’s project encourages reflection and a deeper appreciation of the contributions Chinese Canadians have made to Nanaimo’s development.

Inspired by the neon signage commonly associated with Chinese restaurants throughout the 20th century, the artwork also reflects Wong’s personal history. A Chinese Canadian artist whose grandparents immigrated to Canada in 1907 and whose father operated Ming’s Restaurant in Victoria, Wong uses neon as both a cultural reference and a material expression of memory, identity, and diaspora.

“Lost Intersections” will remain on display through the City’s Temporary Public Art Program until 2030. More information on the project 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 public art that is accessible and freely available to everyone throughout the community to experience and enjoy.

Key Points

- The City of Nanaimo is pleased to announce the unveiling of “Lost Intersections”, a new temporary public art installation by artist Jackie Wong.
- The project consists of three red neon installations marking the locations of Nanaimo’s historic Chinatowns.
- Each installation includes a QR code linking to historical information about the site.
- The work honours the cultural, social and economic contributions of Chinese immigrants to Nanaimo’s early development.

Quotes

"Public art plays an important role in helping us understand the full scope of our shared history. Lost Intersections shines a light on stories that are not always visible in our urban landscape and invites residents and visitors alike to pause, reflect and learn."

Leonard Krog
Mayor
City of Nanaimo

"My work seeks to gently illuminate what once was and is now often overlooked. By marking the sites of Nanaimo’s three historic Chinatowns with neon light, I hope to honour the communities that once found refuge and belonging there. These installations are not only place markers, but invitations to pause at familiar intersections and remember the lives, labour, and resilience of these diaspora communities."

Jackie Wong
Artist

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View the online edition for more information -

<https://www.nanaimo.ca/NewsReleases/NR260224CityOfNanaimoUnveilsANewTemporaryPublicArtInstallationByJackieWong>