Public Art Week in Nanaimo! May 12 to 16

What is public art?
Public art is created by artists for public sites. It can increase the sense of place for individual neighbourhoods and the city as a whole. Some art pieces can be permanent such as “Pacific Sails” on the Harbourfront Walkway, while others are temporary such as the Downtown Festival of Banners.

New Public Art Installations
City crews and artists will be installing two new outdoor art pieces downtown during Public Art Week.

Giant Octopus
by Dan Richey

Ts’awalk
by Laura Timmermans

The City of Nanaimo’s Community Plan for Public Art
Nanaimo’s Community Plan for Public Art began in 2008 as a Legacy Project under the Cultural Capital of Canada Program and was adopted by City Council in May 2010. The plan identifies the benefits of public art in the urban fabric, Nanaimo’s vision for public art and goals for implementing public art projects in the future. The plan also lays out a number of guidelines and tool kits for artists and decision makers developing and installing public art in an inclusive, fair and creative manner.

Public Art Week in Nanaimo, May 12-16
Over the course of the week, residents are encouraged to explore and celebrate the collection of public art that can be found throughout our city.

As well, the Nanaimo Art Gallery has donated the following two pieces of art to the City of Nanaimo. These pieces (originally created for temporary display) will now remain permanently within City parks!

Breaching Orca
by Carl Sean McMahon

Never Out of Season
by David Moench

Search the Public Art Inventory
Online or on your Mobile Phone:
www.nanaimo.ca/goto/publicart

“Culture and heritage defines us as a community and a place. It is not something we have, it is who we are. It’s everything we were and will be.”
More What’s New

Satellite City Unveiling Ceremony, May 12

Join us on Monday, May 12 at 5:00 pm in the Vancouver Island Conference Centre Ballroom Lobby, for the unveiling of Robert Naish’s “Satellite City”.

Robert Naish, Satellite City, 2009

Acrylic on canvas (using found objects as stencils)

Courtesy of the estate of Ms. Marlene Flater

Excerpt from the 2014-MAR-22 Nanaimo Daily News

Rob Naish’s piece ‘Satellite City’ was donated to the city from the estate of Marlene Flater, a supporter of the arts who passed away in March 2011. Naish completed the piece in 2009. The large canvas painting, approximately six feet by nine feet, represents an aerial view of the city and was done entirely through the use of makeshift stencils, the artist said. “Satellite City’ was in my mind for about four or five years before I started painting it,” Naish said. The colourful painting was also chosen to grace the cover of Nanaimo’s new cultural plan. Naish, who splits his time between Gabriola Island and his studio on Selby Street, said he took approximately six months to work on the piece. He uses a variety of objects to plot out spaces and structures on the canvas, then uses a paint gun to overlap and juxtapose their shapes. The technique creates a layered effect that does not require one dab of a paint brush. Naish will use children’s toys, kitchen items such as measuring spoons and apple corers and other miscellaneous objects found in thrift shops or things that people have thrown away. “What these shapes will all have in common is there’s a flat surface on one of their sides,” he said. The objects are strategically pinned to the canvas and paint is applied. Once the objects are removed, their shapes remain, which can then be combined with other shapes or mixed with other colours. Naish said he met Flater just once at an event in 2010. She left funds with instructions to purchase one of his pieces after her death.

Interpretive Sign and Mural Installed at China Steps

An updated interpretive sign has been installed at the entrance of the China Steps downtown. As well, a mural, painted by local artist Nadine Wiepning and depicting Nanaimo’s Chinese heritage and culture has been installed. DNBIA will officially reveal the mural at the end of May as part of the kickoff to the Summertime Music Series with CHLY.
Poem of the Month

Nitroglycerine by Edwin Turner

Demijohns of nitro shipped by sea up from Victoria into Departure Bay, nitro for the miners, coal miners of Nanaimo.

Took two strong men to load the demijohns on a wooden wagon for the trip up the steep and rutted, often muddy, Black Powder Road.

Only one man ever driving because he wouldn’t have it any other way, the demijohns of nitro out of sight behind him but always on his mind.

His horse slipping, wagon slithering, demijohns rocking, nitro sloshing, the driver cursing all the way.

Next road, Northfield, almost as rutted, just as muddy, until finally delivery, never after dark, to the powder plant outside Nanaimo on land now known as Beban Park.

A day like any other, the driver almost there, urged his horse as he always did, up and over the railway tracks, and the yellow liquid blew.

No one knows why it happened. Not a trace was ever found of the wagon, horse, or driver, just a hole the size of a house in blackened ground.

Not long after, Hamilton Powder built a plant on a gentle slope on the banks of Departure Bay. No more need for demijohns of nitro sloshing on a wagon, no more need for a driver cursing his way up muddy rutted roads.

Heritage Bike Tour, Sunday May 4

Join the City of Nanaimo’s Culture & Heritage Planner, Chris Sholberg, for a two-hour bike ride over moderately sloped terrain to learn about Nanaimo’s historic neighbourhoods, heritage buildings and sites.

Nanaimo has many stories to tell. It has a rich and varied history that still speaks to us in the way the City has grown and developed over time. In particular, these stories are evident in the city’s historic neighbourhoods (Downtown, Old City, Newcastle and South End) and the heritage buildings and sites, which comprise the tangible reminders of each area’s history.

Tour begins at 3:00 pm (meet outside of Fibber McGees at 321 Selby Street) and costs $5 per family/couple (fee includes a bell or reflective light for your bike). You must have your own bike and helmet.

Register online at www.ireg.nanaimo.ca using code 132036.

Calling All Poets! Monthly Poetry Column

April was poetry month and to celebrate, the Nanaimo Daily News created a monthly poetry column to promote local poets and encourage people to write Nanaimo-themed poetry. A pair of anonymous poet judges review the submissions and choose a poem each month to be printed in the Daily News.

Thank you to everyone who has submitted their poems to-date! April’s Poem of the Month has been selected (left): Nitroglycerine by Edwin Turner.

Here’s why:

Poet Laureate looks at poetry committee’s pick written by Naomi Beth Wakan for the Nanaimo Daily News

It is very suitable that the selection committee chose an historic incident as the first poem-of-the-month. This poem is, as they point out, of local interest, and the subject is one with which anyone who has read anything of Nanaimo’s history will be familiar.

I agree with the selection committee that the whole poem lurches along the rutted road (when read aloud) just as the wagon did. It is not just a very visual poem, it also evokes emotions in the reader as they picture how the driver must have felt trying to ignore his dangerous load, yet constantly aware that it is just behind him.

We have to go back into our past to acknowledge what is there if we want to move forward, and that is just as true for the city of Nanaimo as it is for each of us. Thank you, Edwin Turner, for this evocative poem.

Please keep those Nanaimo poems coming in as yours could be the next poem-of-the-month, and even if it is not selected, you will have created a very special poem and, any way you look at it that will be a plus.

For guidelines and details, visit www.nanaimo.ca/goto/poetry and send your Nanaimo poems to callingallpoets@nanaimo.ca with the words “poetry submission” in the subject line. There is no deadline, so just keep those Nanaimo poems coming in whenever creativity strikes.

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Nanaimo’s Cultural Initiatives 1990-2014

1990 - The Parks and Recreation Department changes its name to the “Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture”.

1991 - City Council initiates the process of developing a cultural policy for Nanaimo.

1992 - A draft Cultural Policy is developed as a guide for cultural development in Nanaimo.

1993 - The Nanaimo Cultural Committee is appointed by Council to advise the Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission and Council on cultural issues.

1994 - The Nanaimo Cultural Fund is formed to provide operating grants to arts and cultural organizations.

1996 - A “Cultural Facilities Inventory and Needs Assessment” is completed. “Plan Nanaimo” is adopted by Council and culture recognized to be vitally important for a livable community (quality of life).

1997 - The City creates two annual Cultural Awards: Excellence in Culture and Honour in Culture.

1999 - The City of Nanaimo celebrates its 125th Anniversary with a yearlong cultural celebration involving numerous community groups and two gala cultural events.

2000 - Nanaimo becomes one of the founding members of the “Arts and Cultural Accord” and the “Arts and Cultural Highway”, a cultural tourism destination marketing partnership.

2001 - City purchases the CIBC building with assistance from the CIBC for “The Nanaimo Centre for the Arts”. City Council adopts the “Nanaimo Cultural Strategy” as a guideline for future cultural development. The BC Festival of the Arts Society announces that Nanaimo will host Canada’s largest multi-disciplinary event for emerging artists in 2004 (this Festival was later cancelled due to the withdrawal of provincial funding).

2002 - Tourism Nanaimo designates cultural tourism as one of its major marketing themes.


2008 - The City is designated by the Department of Canadian Heritage as a 2008 Cultural Capital of Canada and awarded $750,000 to celebrate its rich cultural diversity and showcase its energetic and creative people through live music, dance, storytelling, theatre, cultural celebrations, art displays, demonstrations and workshops. It was an opportunity to celebrate our arts and cultural achievements and build a legacy of cultural development in our community.

2009 - Nanaimo Cultural Strategy is revised.


2013 - Naomi Beth Wakan is honored as Nanaimo’s First Poet Laureate for a 3 year term. A review of the Cultural Grants Process and Criteria is approved and contracted to Melinda Mollineaux (to be completed in 2014). City Council approves two new award categories for the 2014 Cultural Awards: Emerging Cultural Leader and Lifetime Cultural Achievement. The Nanaimo Economic Development Corporation releases the “Arts & Culture Economic Impact Report”, which states that the arts and culture sector directly contributes $94 million and 880 jobs, with a total impact of $154 million annually, supporting 1,330 jobs in the community.


Contact Us

Our office is open Monday to Friday, from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. If you have questions or would like more information, please contact us:

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