

# CREATING SPACE

STRATEGIC PLAN  
2023-2028



Nanaimo  
Art Gallery



The Gallery honours the Snuneymuxw people and the territory on which it operates. Gallery Staff, Board directors, and volunteers carry themselves with:

*Qwum Qwum Uy'shqwalawun:  
Operating In The Spirit Of  
"Good Heart, Good Mind."*

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Photo on front cover, page 4, page 15, page 16, and page 21 by Nanaimo Art Gallery Staff. All other photos by Sean Fenzl.

Inside cover: Elder Shxuysulwut Lolly Good | Page 14: Xulsimalt, Gary Manson

# Key Takeaways

1

## PURPOSE

The purpose of the strategic planning process for the Nanaimo Art Gallery was to inform specific capacity-building needs and a sense of context for its work in the broader cultural landscape, and as it moves towards creating a new facility. The process involved an organizational review; an analysis of the Gallery's positioning in its regional and provincial contexts; the incorporation of other planning initiatives and external engagement, as well as active participation from Gallery Staff and Board Directors.

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## CONTEXT

Nanaimo Art Gallery has re-imagined and enriched its work, and has focused on repositioning itself in the communities it serves and has gained traction through community collaborations and outreach. That said, a challenge remains that the Gallery has historically been less well-known to the public than other arts and cultural entities in the region. This, coupled with a region that is shifting from a traditional resource-based economy to a knowledge and service-based economy, places significant importance on communicating its impact and role in regional cultural development to the public.

3

## POSITIONING

The Gallery's current organization position—based on the non-profit life-cycles analysis and through internal engagement—is one of growth, with a focus on capacity-building. Staff note that the organization is 'small but growing,' 'feels energized and has a certain momentum to it now,' and 'is rooted in its values' with a team of experienced arts administrators and museum professionals.

# Key Takeaways

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## FOUNDATIONAL STATEMENTS

The organization has reaffirmed their foundational statements, placing continued emphasis on leading with the Gallery's values. Board and Staff identified that the Gallery hasn't been telling its *own story* and there is an opportunity for *ripening its narrative*. Efforts towards this are identified within the resulting strategic priorities.

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## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The strategic priorities are informed by the internal engagement activities which revealed key themes and focus areas. The Strategic Priorities for the Creating Space Strategic Plan 2023-2028 are to:

1. **Strengthen our capacity and financial sustainability.**
2. **Share stories and foster deeper dialogue with communities.**
3. **Create a welcoming and accessible experience for all.**
4. **Thrive as a creative space to gather and share artistic encounters.**
5. **Prepare for a new Nanaimo Art Gallery.**





# About Creating Space

## Nanaimo Art Gallery Strategic Plan 2023-2028

With multiple studies and planning initiatives underway as part of the Gallery's relocation project, Nanaimo Art Gallery recognizes the importance of working within an over-arching strategic framework to help make the best decisions in the next five years, to figure out what skills and resources are needed, and to clarify how its work fits into the bigger cultural picture, as it moves towards creating a new facility.

The strategic planning process was co-created with the Gallery Board and staff and included extensive internal engagement and reflection while gathering community inputs from the Gallery's ongoing outreach activities. An organizational assessment also formed part of the process to focus on the Gallery's capacity-building needs.

## Our Process



# Our Planning Context

## Considerations for BC<sup>1</sup>

**The importance of arts and culture is globally recognized as critical to building thriving and sustainable communities.**

The United Nations has identified the creative economy, which the cultural sector is part of, as one of the world's fastest-growing sectors for income generation, job creation and export earnings.

The economic benefits alone are telling—the culture sector, which includes galleries and museums, is an essential component of British Columbia's competitive creative economy.

With a combined workforce of over 102,579 cultural workers and a cultural GDP of \$8 billion, BC's cultural sector reaches into every corner of the province and has a substantial impact on hundreds of thousands of citizens each year.

British Columbia has more artists per capita than any other province and the third-highest cultural GDP in Canada.

Provincial and municipal investment in a vibrant cultural sector is important to the social and economic prosperity of our province. It fosters a desirable environment for business development, community growth and well-being in its citizenship, enhancing the quality of life for all British Columbians.

Despite being in the top third of cultural producers in Canada, BC suffers from deferred federal and provincial support, especially in arts infrastructure funding.



<sup>1</sup> Sources: Statistics Canada Cultural Statistics Satellite Account; Patricia Huntsman Culture and Communication Planning Context Report and various municipal cultural plans (2022); Nordicity (2020); and the BC Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (2022).



# Our Planning Context

## Economic and Social Impacts of the Arts

There are numerous direct and indirect social and livability benefits resulting from investing in arts and culture, such as improved quality of life, which in turn leads to the attraction of skilled workers, tourism & businesses.

The economic and livability benefits of strategic cultural development have led to an understanding that cultural amenities, capital, and delivery are no longer a ‘nice to have’ or a ‘frill’ in local government.

Benefits of a culturally-invested community also include:

- Builds interpersonal ties and promotes volunteering
- Improves residents’ sense of belonging and attachment
- Builds community identity, social networks, and local pride
- Increases inclusion and celebrates diversity
- Fosters “a creative milieu that spurs economic growth in creative industries”
- Increases the attractiveness of the area to tourists, businesses, new residents and investors
- Contributes to well-being, mental health and emotional health

Increasingly, cultural development is included in the core suite of municipal services offered to strengthen a community’s cultural identity and grow its local economy—strategically.



# Our Planning Context

## Broader Cultural Sector Priorities

The arts, as a subset of the cultural sector, are evolving in response to transformative drivers of change such as the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, new approaches to art-making, generational considerations and digital strategies—all of which the Gallery takes into consideration in its planning context.



The image displays a grid of 15 icons, each representing a different priority in the cultural sector. The icons are arranged in three rows and five columns. Each icon is accompanied by a text label describing the priority. The priorities are: Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action (megaphone icon), Rapid Scale Prototyping to Respond to Community Issues (speech bubbles icon), Festivals and Events, Participatory Experiences (guitar icon), Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (JEDI) Accessibility Arts (gear with checkmark icon), Family Arts (palette and brush icon), Creative Placemaking and Co-Activating Spaces (hands holding a location pin icon), Lifecycle of Arts Organizations (circular arrows icon), New Operating Models (gear with lightbulb icon), Interpretative Assistance (head with lightning bolt icon), New Approaches to Art-Making (at odds with funding models) (head with lightbulb icon), Generational Considerations (three people icons), Climate Crisis Role (leaves icon), and Digital Strategies (computer monitor icon).

- Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action
- Rapid Scale Prototyping to Respond to Community Issues
- Festivals and Events, Participatory Experiences
- Justice, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (JEDI) Accessibility Arts
- Family Arts
- Creative Placemaking and Co-Activating Spaces
- Lifecycle of Arts Organizations
- New Operating Models
- Interpretative Assistance
- New Approaches to Art-Making (at odds with funding models)
- Generational Considerations
- Climate Crisis Role
- Digital Strategies

# Our Work

## How We Share Stories

- Learning and Engagement Programming
- Exhibitions
- Collections
- Outreach and Engagement
- Accessibility and Visitor Experience

*“Being able to welcome more people into the space and meeting them where they’re at”*—STAFF MEMBERS

Making people feel safe within the space and ensuring accessibility and inclusion are key drivers behind the Gallery’s work.

*“Having our language on the door... it is Big Medicine to be able to do that.”*



# Our Work

## The Role of the Gallery in Cultural Development

Nanaimo Art Gallery has re-imagined and enriched its integrated exhibition and education programs, created new partnerships, strengthened its relationships with artists and audiences and expanded its staff. It has worked to reposition itself in the communities it serves and has gained traction through community collaborations and outreach.

This role is also underscored by the Gallery's nationally recognized, peer-acclaimed, and locally driven curatorial and educational programming. Opening up new ways of experiencing and engaging with contemporary art is a key driver in its daily work.

Nanaimo Art Gallery plays a significant role in regional cultural development, and in turn, the potential success of tourism, economic and social initiatives.



## Our Values

Board, Staff and volunteers are deeply attuned to the Gallery's values which they actively use in guiding their daily work.

**We honour the Snuneymuxw People and the territory on which the Gallery operates, carrying ourselves with qwum qwum uy'shqwalawun: operating in the spirit of "good heart, good mind."**

With this intention, Nanaimo Art Gallery's values are:

- 1 RELEVANCE**  
Our work is grounded in community and place
- 2 RELATIONSHIPS**  
We believe in building, nurturing and sustaining relationships
- 3 INNOVATION**  
We are at the forefront of creativity with quality programs and exhibitions
- 4 OPENNESS**  
We are a welcoming organization for all

## Our Mission

We engage and inspire community through art.

## Our Vision

The Gallery is a creative hub for the Island, where we build relationships, connect communities, and effect change through art.





## STRATEGIC PRIORITY

1

Strengthen our organization capacity and financial sustainability.

### GOAL

Nanaimo Art Gallery has reliable revenue streams and is supported by a strong foundation of management, governance, systems and resources.

## OBJECTIVE 1

Focus on capacity-building through sustainable systems, evaluation, policy, procedures and resources.

### SUPPORTING ACTIONS

- Build out our systems including policies, procedures, integrations, platform upgrades, records access and management.
- Develop a detailed operational plan and work towards clear key performance indicators and evaluation metrics.
- Take advantage of knowledge-sharing opportunities with peers and service organizations.
- Keep planning and decision-making within a sustainable scope.

## OBJECTIVE 2

Invest in organization capacity-building through training, professional development, retention, recruitment, team-building and growth.

### SUPPORTING ACTIONS

- Increase team capacity in keeping with operational planning.
- Focus on employee retention through policy, benefits, salary comparisons, learning and evaluation plans.
- Invest in and make professional development opportunities for staff one of the Gallery's priorities.

## OBJECTIVE 3

Further Board development and governance through policy development and succession planning.

### SUPPORTING ACTIONS

- Review expanding Board committee structure, and annual director evaluations.
- Focus on succession planning to ensure a balance of skills and community representation.
- Find opportunities for knowledge philanthropy to support the Board's work.
- Invest in Board development training opportunities.
- Expand policy development and guidelines for the organization.

## OBJECTIVE 4

Expand our financial strategy to further focus on fund development, diversified revenues, and increased grant funding to support the Gallery now and into the future.

### SUPPORTING ACTIONS

- Create a fund development plan based on a well-defined case-for-support. The plan would include an annual campaign, a capital campaign, sponsorship, corporate giving and individual giving strategies.
- Increase capacity through specialist advisors, staff, and contractors for fund development.
- Explore expanding earned revenues through programming, rentals, and retail opportunities within capacity limits.
- Work to increase grant funding to harvest resources for capacity-building and for capital funding opportunities.
- Continue to advance government relationships at all levels for cultural investment.



## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2

Share stories and foster a deeper dialogue with communities.

### GOAL

Nanaimo Art Gallery is known for engaging with community groups and is a celebrated creative asset.



## OBJECTIVE 1

Continue to identify and invest in relationships with communities.

### SUPPORTING ACTIONS

- Increase awareness to identify under-represented stakeholders, advocates and leaders.
- Further develop community connections through new collaborators and partnerships.
- Work on attracting more diverse communities (ethno-cultural and identity-based) and carry out periodic stakeholder mapping.
- Continue to work with Snuneymuxw, Stz'uminus, Snaw'naw'as and Qualicum Nations.
- Continue to engage and work with local artists and engender their support.
- Collaborate with peers and sector organizations.
- Nurture, develop and maintain deep, long-term relationships.



## OBJECTIVE 2

Share our own story and those of others through enhanced communications and engagement.

### SUPPORTING ACTIONS

- Further develop Nanaimo Art Gallery's brand story and voice—who we are, how we work, our values, what makes us different?
- Develop a communications and engagement strategy to include marketing tactics such as promotion, core messaging, and social media and print channels; to be maintained as an organic plan and reviewed annually.
- Engage in purposeful and regular storytelling reflecting Gallery voices, stakeholders and the community.
- Invest in communications, engagement, and marketing and develop relevant key performance indicators.
- Explore non-traditional spaces and off-site spaces to share artwork and stories to enhance dialogue, and to generate interest in Nanaimo Art Gallery.
- Host events and create opportunities for people to gather and interact in ways that will provide a measurable return on investment (consider: staff time, costs, outreach, community goodwill).
- Build membership base through relevant partnerships with peer cultural organizations.



## STRATEGIC PRIORITY

# 3

Create a welcoming  
and accessible  
experience for all.

### GOAL

Nanaimo Art Gallery is known for being a welcoming and safe space that centers diversity and accessibility throughout its everyday work.

## OBJECTIVE 1

To advance accessibility in all facets of the Gallery’s work to remove barriers to participation and enhance the visitor’s experience (physical, sensory, economic, cultural, informational, and technological).

### SUPPORTING ACTIONS

- Connect with accessibility experts to provide accessibility training.
- Resource accessibility through designated funding and role enhancement.
- Listen to diverse communities through focus groups and an advisory network.
- Employ accessible communication:
  - ▶ Invest in accessible communication tools.
  - ▶ Adopt broadly accessible language that is in keeping with sector recommendations to remove barriers to arts participation.
  - ▶ Develop digital experiences to enhance exhibitions.
- Continue to nurture a culture of safety (values in action) to further accessibility and explore our meaning of being ‘welcoming.’
- Create an evaluation framework and feedback mechanisms to better understand the visitor experience.
- Work on interim accessibility accommodations to our facility, and implement and follow standard operating procedures to make our exhibitions and programs more accessible.

## OBJECTIVE 2

Continue to advance our work in social justice, equity, diversity and inclusion (JEDI).

### SUPPORTING ACTIONS

- Create and/or expand justice, equity, diversity and inclusion standards, policies and initiatives to further centre this work.
- Continue to align with UNDRIP, the Calls to Action of Truth and Reconciliation, and DRIPA, and to further integrate Indigenous culture in our work.
- Identify and remove barriers to participation on a continuous basis, while advocating for broader social systems change in instances where some barriers are not removable at this time.
- Ensure diversity in Board and staff representation and promote a culture of safety for historically marginalized voices.
- Identify activities to welcome a wider range of community members:
  - ▶ Include art exploration with vulnerable community members.
  - ▶ Offer different access points via exhibitions, programming and engagement.
  - ▶ Identify more ‘reasons’ to gather at the Gallery (e.g. pop-up bar, coffee counter; more ‘Everyone Welcome’ events like Art Lab Sunday.)
  - ▶ Continue to work with diverse underrepresented artists.
  - ▶ Enhance Gallery wayfinding at street front and with internal navigation aids; enhance marketing and website to improve external presence.



## STRATEGIC PRIORITY

4

Thrive as a creative space  
to gather and share artistic  
encounters.

### GOAL

Nanaimo Art Gallery  
programming and exhibitions  
are vibrant ways of  
exploring and engaging with  
contemporary art.

## OBJECTIVE 1

Develop dynamic and innovative curatorial and exhibition offerings.

### SUPPORTING ACTIONS

- Create an engaging array of curatorial and exhibitions programming annually.
- Work with Snuneymuxw and other nations to amplify Indigenous voices and presence in the community and at the Gallery.
- Develop and maintain the collection, and our building as we move to a new space.

## OBJECTIVE 2

Create interesting and impactful learning and engagement opportunities.

### SUPPORTING ACTIONS

- Design an engaging array of learning programs on an annual basis.
- Broaden our reach into community spaces (e.g. use schools, venues, public spaces, artists-in-schools program, etc.).
- Create relevant digital content that is engaging, accessible, and intentional.





## STRATEGIC PRIORITY

5

Prepare for a new  
Nanaimo Art Gallery.

### GOAL

Nanaimo Art Gallery is implementing the key steps of the New Gallery Roadmap.

## OBJECTIVE 1

Clearly identify, communicate and operationalize the planning framework.

### SUPPORTING ACTIONS

- Rethink what a Gallery is and looks like, and centre the land and this place in our planning. Work alongside Snuneymuxw First Nation to realize this goal.
- Create and implement a fund development plan that includes:
  - ▶ Annual campaign and capital campaign strategies supported by engagement, marketing and communications planning; and campaign cabinet.
  - ▶ Select an architecture partner who aligns with our values, and engage with internal stakeholders, community, and sector colleagues to complete the Site Selection and Concept and Functional Program of the new Gallery site and space.
  - ▶ Support the new Gallery with a business plan based on the Site Selection Concept and Functional Program.
- Identify ways to have a visible presence around the community during planning and report out (e.g. public art sites and engagement events as we move to a new Gallery).
- Continue to work on our government relations plan to ensure reliable public investment in this vital cultural amenity.
- Ensure major milestones are clearly communicated to the community and link to engagement-supporting actions of Strategic Priority 2.
- Identify the external resources required for the plan implementation (soft costs including consulting partners and interim supports) to complement the core Gallery team.
- Leverage current Gallery building as a potential community cultural amenity for the future.



# Our Impact\*



**21,889**

**TOTAL AUDIENCE SERVED**

↑ 240% over pre-pandemic numbers



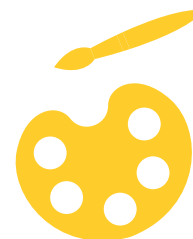
**4**

**EXHIBITIONS**



**9,048**

**GALLERY VISITORS**



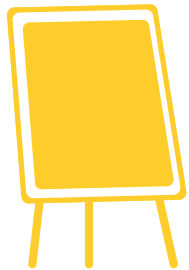
**1,200**

**ARTISTS IN THE SCHOOLS PARTICIPANTS**

\*2022-2023



# Our Impact\*



**30** + a collection of documentation and ephemera  
**WORKS ADDED TO THE COLLECTION**



**5,713**  
**OUTREACH ATTENDANCE**



**150**  
**ARTISTS WE WORKED WITH**



**5,928**  
**PROGRAMMING ATTENDANCE**

↑ 500% over pre-pandemic numbers and almost double last year

\*2022-2023

## *Create Space for Art*

Nanaimo Art Gallery's Board and Staff are proud to share *Creating Space*, a strategic plan that invests in the future of the Gallery and community.

This multi-year strategic planning framework outlines the priorities needed to realize our vision for a New Nanaimo Art Gallery. It is the result of many months of internal and external engagement around Gallery programming, operations, visitor experience, museum practices, and tactical communications.

*Creating Space* will guide our decision-making over the next five years and is intended to define future directions, resource priorities, context considerations, funding mechanisms, and actions to build capacity and establish a sustainable organization and contemporary art gallery.

We are committed to rethinking what a public art gallery on Snuneymuxw Territory can look like and are honoured to be working closely with Snuneymuxw in this dynamic period of change for the Gallery and its future.

It is a privilege to operationalize this plan with our dedicated and experienced Staff team, Board of Directors and community partners. This work is made possible with the support of our funders; the City of Nanaimo, the Province of BC, BC Arts Council, the Canada Council for the Arts, and our valued members and donors. Thank you.

Leading with the strength of our values, we will continue to build meaningful collaborations in the region and will implement the 2023-2028 *Creating Space* strategic plan with gratitude, enthusiasm and focus.

We look forward to engaging with you through art.

Carolyn Holmes  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Debra Jacklin  
PRESIDENT, BOARD OF DIRECTORS



## *Way Forward: Leading With Values*

*Creating Space* will be implemented through the organization's annual operating plan. The strategic priorities will guide decision-making and activities of the Gallery over the next five years. Some of these strategic priorities build on the existing work of the Gallery, while others express a deeper focus and broader direction.

An implementation framework for measurement and evaluation will accompany the plan for the purposes of tracking our success. For each priority, a goal is identified along with objectives and supporting actions. The supporting actions form the Gallery's operating plan and will be reviewed annually for implementation against metrics for evaluation, resource considerations, and timelines.





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