

Nanaimo Art Gallery Phase 2 of the Realization of the Future Gallery

Public Engagement Summary Report

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Prepared for
Nanaimo Art Gallery

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1. About this Document

This Public Engagement Summary Report from the **Phase 2 Realization of the Future Art Gallery Project** presents the findings of survey and engagement outreach conducted at different community events in the summer of 2023. These events included Artful Resilience, GoByBike, Commercia Street Night Market, Pride, and the Youth Can Group. Nanaimo Art Gallery also participated at Tourism booths at Nanaimo waterfront, Woodgrove Mall, Vancouver Island Regional Library branches, Silly Boat Races, and the Cedar Market during the summer. Nanaimo Art Gallery had a physical presence at each of these events, surveying members of the public, engaging them in a 'Make Space' activity to envision the future of Nanaimo Art Gallery, and spreading the word of plans for a new facility.

2. Key Highlights

Key Summer Engagement Highlights:

- The public survey attracted **nearly 250 complete responses** and over 700 partial responses from diverse members of the public, across age groups and demographics.
- Of the 304 survey participants who opted to say if they self-identified with an under-represented group, 18% identified as LGBTQ2IA+, 11% as a person with a disability, 8% as Indigenous, 8% as a Person of Colour, and 6% as newcomers to Canada.
- **Over a third (36%) of public survey participants visit the Gallery every few months**, with most viewing exhibits (83%) and over half visiting the Gallery store (51%).
- When survey participants who have visited Nanaimo Art Gallery were asked what they like most about it, the top three responses included its **downtown location** (33%), the Gallery **support of local artists** (32%), and Art Lab/learning and engagement programs (26%).
- 46% of survey respondents who have visited the Gallery said they would like to see **new community spaces** in the future facility – including exhibition spaces for regional artists, areas that can be rented by the community, and/or a café with outdoor spaces – making this the most desired attribute.
- Of survey participants who had not visited Nanaimo Art Gallery, nearly half (49%; n=55) indicated that they would be interested in seeing **exhibitions featuring work by local or regional artists**, making this the most popular response.
- Qualitative responses to the interactive 'Create Space' engagement activity (which asked participants to envision how the Future Gallery could support positive community outcomes) indicated that participants want the Future Gallery to be a **vibrant and inclusive** space, **fostering creativity, connectivity, and wellbeing**.
- Compared to Open House engagement findings from earlier in the year, summer engagement participants were more likely to respond to the 'Create Space' activity by suggesting potential sites for the future facility, with responses centred on **downtown**. The increased likelihood of participants talking about sites may suggest that more people are now aware of the Future Art Gallery project and planning activities compared to six months prior when the Open House was hosted.

3. Public Survey Findings

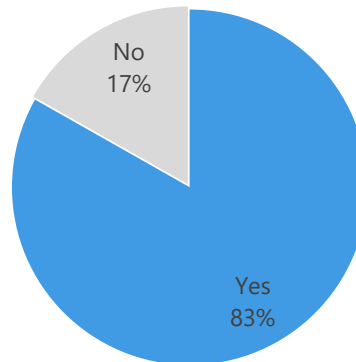
To gain valuable engagement input from the broader community on what they would like to see from a future Nanaimo Art Gallery facility, a survey questionnaire was deployed from April 21st to September 8th, 2023. The public survey was completed by participants at various in person community events throughout summer, as well as online.

The survey received **242 complete responses and 710 partial responses** from a wide range of community members. Participants shared their experiences at Nanaimo Art Gallery, and identified its strengths and challenges, and shared their hopes for the Future Gallery. Key findings from the survey are presented in the following sections. A full list of survey questions can be found in Appendix B.

3.1 Survey Results

To gauge participants' familiarity with the Gallery, they were asked if they had visited before (Figure 1). Out of the 381 respondents, a majority indicated they had visited before (83%).

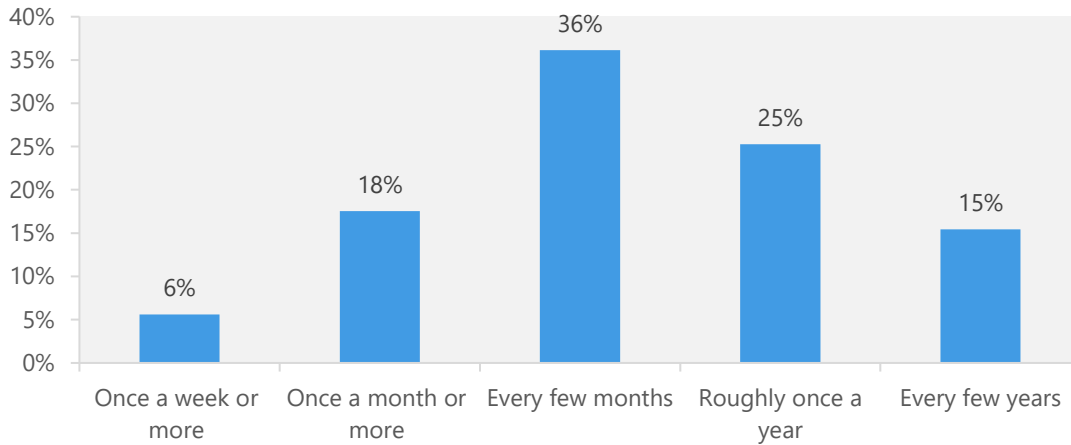
Figure 1 Have you been to Nanaimo Art Gallery? (n=381)



Source: Nanaimo Art Gallery Public Survey 2023

Moreover, participants were asked how often they visit the Gallery (Figure 2). Just over **a third reported they visited every few months (36%)** and a quarter said they visited roughly once a year (25%), while smaller numbers said that they visit once a month (18%), every few years (15%), or once a week (6%).

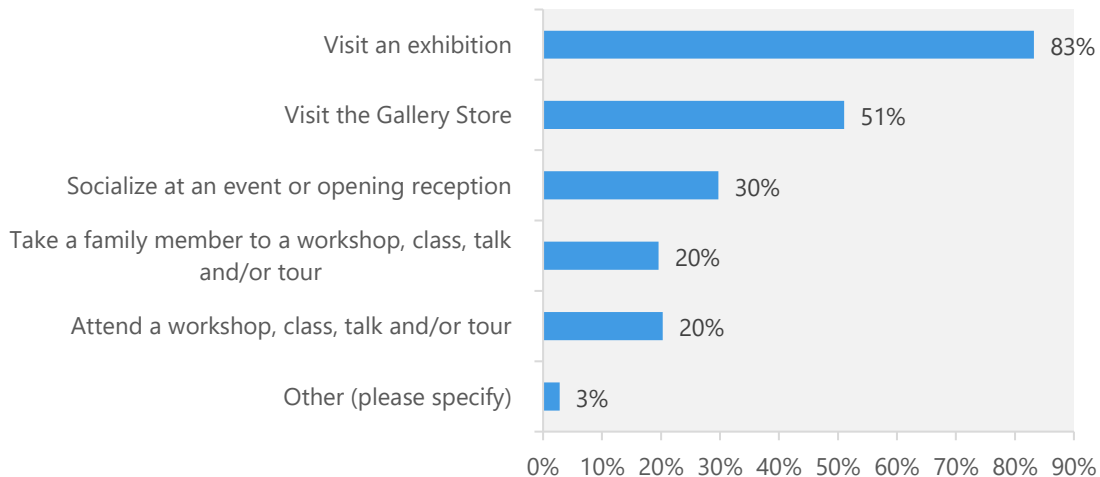
Figure 2 How often do you visit Nanaimo Art Gallery? (n=285)



Source: Nanaimo Art Gallery Public Survey 2023

Respondents were asked to share what they usually do at the Gallery (Figure 3). Participants could choose more than one response. Most visit to see an exhibition (83%), while over half visit the Gallery’s store (51%). Notably, nearly a third of respondents attend to socialize at events or opening receptions (30%).

Figure 3 What do you usually do at Nanaimo Art Gallery? Select all that apply. (n=286)

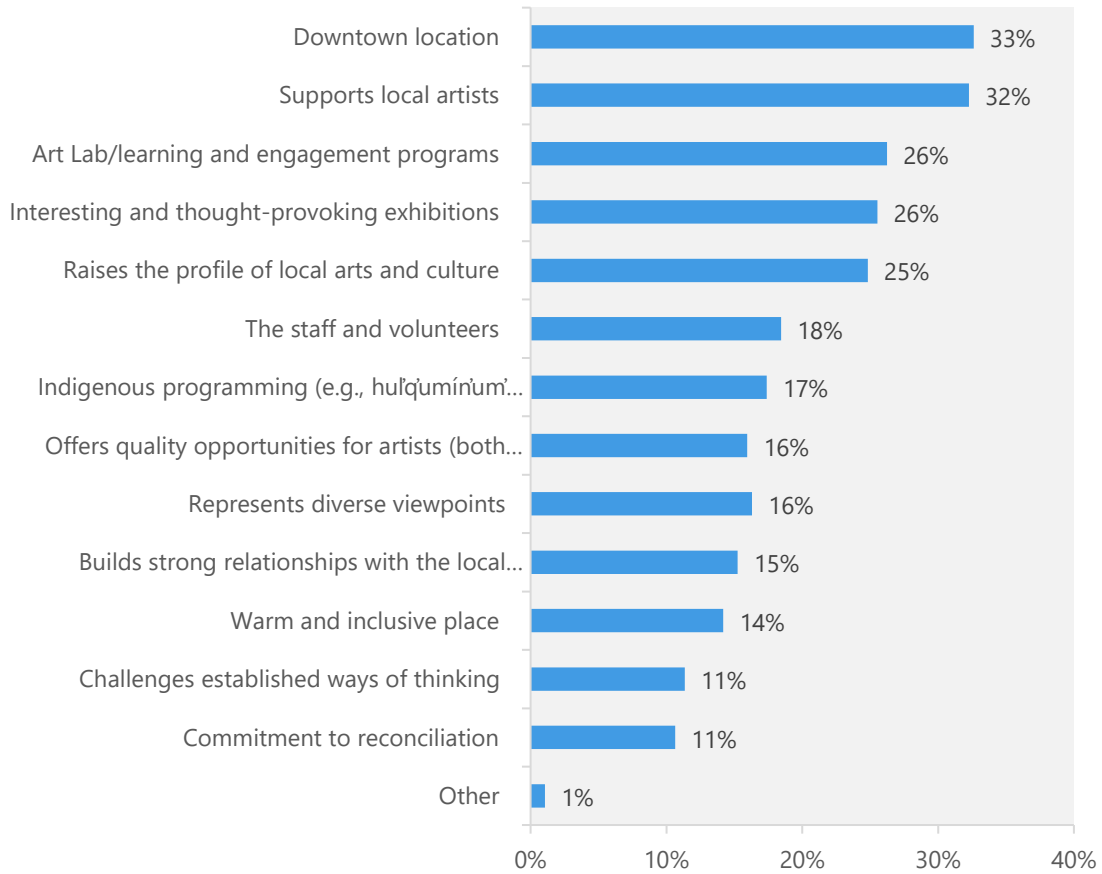


Source: Nanaimo Art Gallery Public Survey 2023

When participants who have visited Nanaimo Art Gallery were asked what they most like about it (Figure 4), **a third of participants responded that they appreciate the downtown location (33%) and the Gallery’s support for local artists (32%)**. The other three notable characteristics were the Art Lab/Learning and Engagement programs, which was highlighted by

just over a quarter of participants (26%), the interesting and thought-provoking exhibitions (26%), and the Gallery's role in raising the profile of local arts and culture (25%).

Figure 4 What do you like most about Nanaimo Art Gallery? Select up to 3. (n=282)

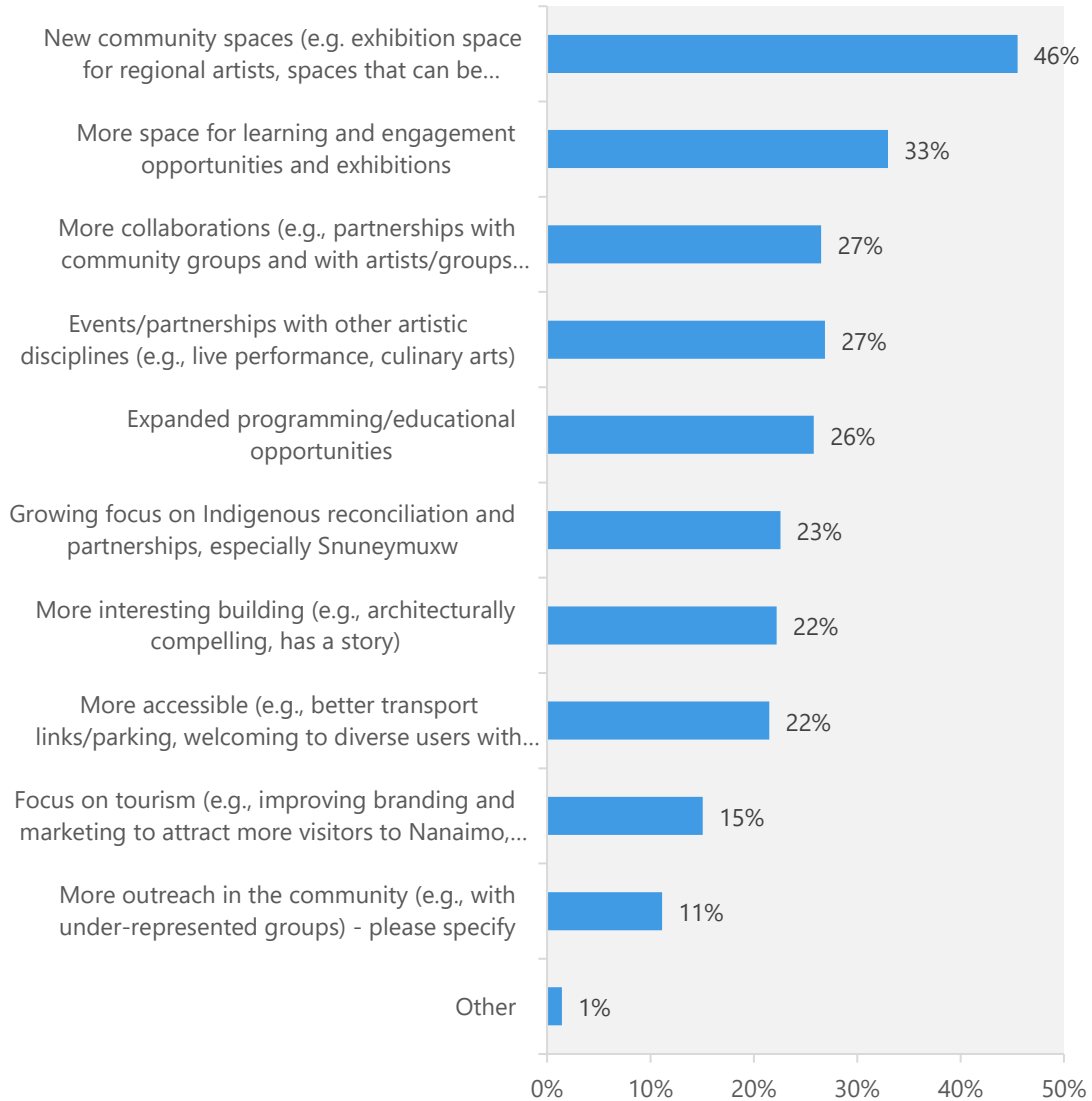


Source: Nanaimo Art Gallery Public Survey 2023

To better inform plans for the Future Gallery, participants who had visited the Gallery were asked, "What would you personally like to see (or see more of) in a new Nanaimo Art Gallery facility?" (Figure 5). The majority of participants indicated they would like to see **new community spaces** – including exhibition spaces for regional artists, areas that can be rented by the community, and/or a café with outdoor spaces (46%). Notably, participants were explicit in their comments about the need for space and the promotion of work by local artists. For example, "Downtown Nanaimo needs a gallery for local artists. It would be great if Nanaimo Art Gallery had a separate space for this."

Moreover, respondents indicated a desire for **more spaces dedicated to learning and engagement opportunities, as well as exhibitions** (33%). They also expressed interest in more collaborations with communities and groups of artists from across Canada and internationally (27%), and in events or partnerships involving other artistic disciplines (27%).

Figure 5 What would you personally like to see (or see more of) from a new Nanaimo Art Gallery facility? Select up to 3. (n=279)



Source: Nanaimo Art Gallery Public Survey 2023

Participants who indicated they had never visited the Gallery were asked to elaborate on why they had not visited (Figure 6). The majority cited a lack of opportunity (56%), while a smaller group expressed uncertainty about why they had not visited (11%). Under the "other" category, a quarter of participants (25%) highlighted various **accessibility barriers**, including limited parking options, difficulties for individuals with walking disabilities, and elevated travel costs for those living outside the city to travel in. Further participants explained in open-ended comments that they had not visited because they reside in other cities or provinces. A few participants admitted they were unaware of the Gallery's existence and recommended increased marketing efforts.

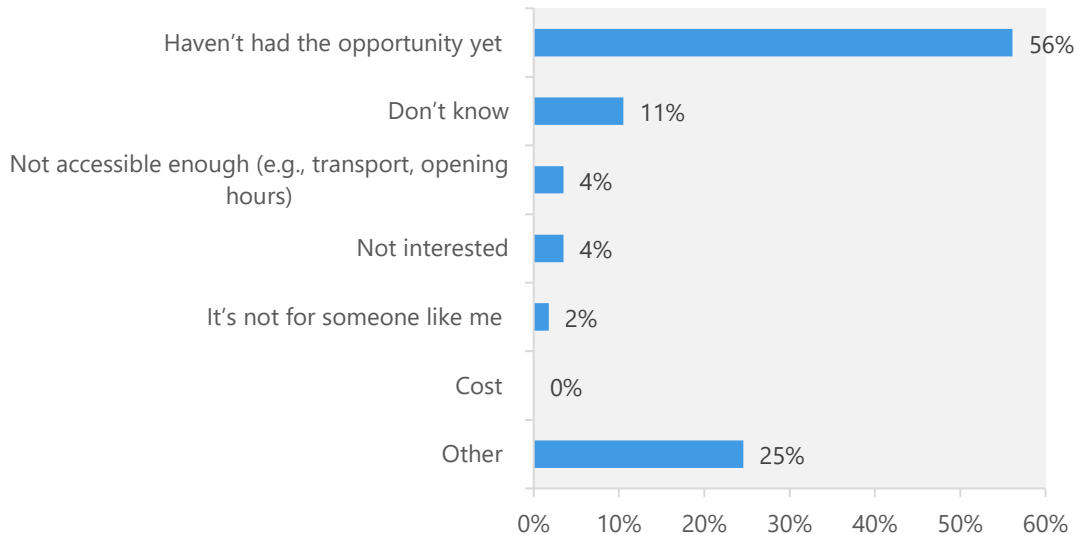
"Parking is the biggest issue for downtown Nanaimo. You can have great shows but if it's hard to get to people will get frustrated and give up..."

- Survey Participant

"I am an contemporary Indigenous artist living on Gabriola and the ferry line ups, cost, and parking ease have been a factor."

- Survey Participant

Figure 6 Why haven't you visited Nanaimo Art Gallery yet? Please select your primary reason. (n=57)



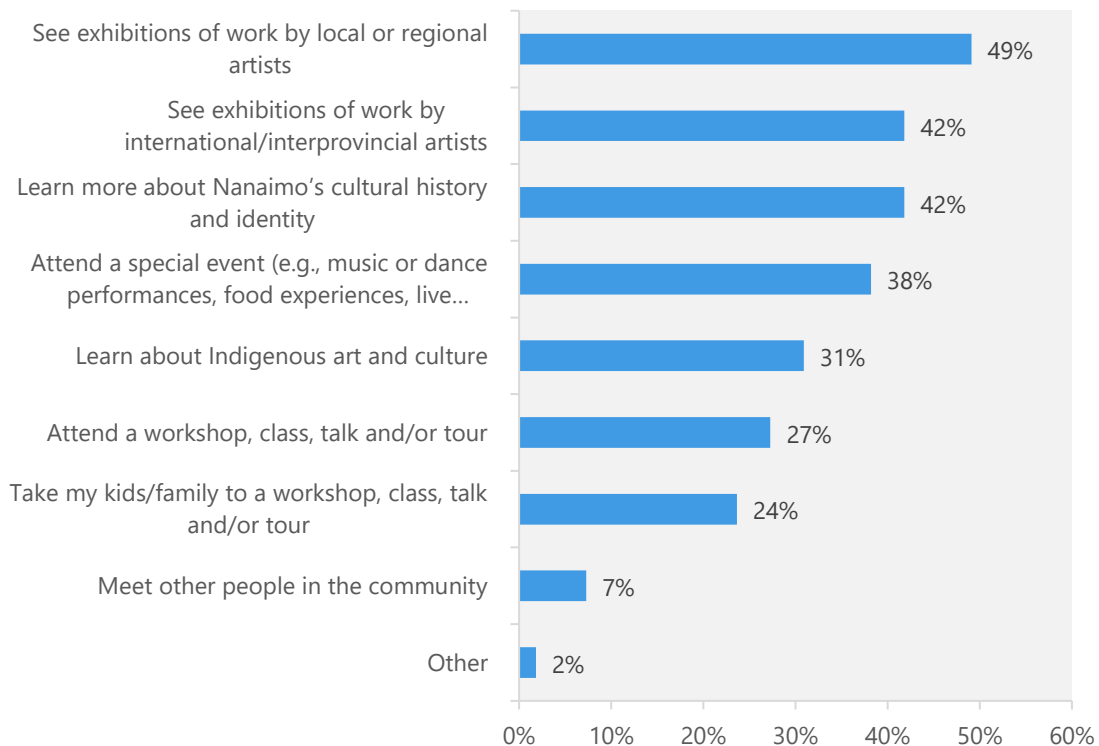
Source: Nanaimo Art Gallery Public Survey 2023

Participants who have not yet visited the Gallery were asked what they would like to do if they were to visit (Figure 7). **Nearly half indicated that they would like to see exhibitions featuring work by local or regional artists (49%).** Other things participants would like to do include viewing exhibitions by international or interprovincial artists (42%), learning more about Nanaimo's cultural history and identity (42%), and attending special events such as music or dance performances, food experiences, or live entertainment (38%). Of the 27% of participants who expressed interest in attending a workshop, class, talk, and/or tour, open-ended comments suggested a desire for workshops focusing on fibre arts, pottery, drawing, sketching, and knitting, as well as additional activities for children.

"I love the suggestions presented for the functions of this gallery and would have included more given the chance. The opportunity for the gallery to interact with the community as a whole is vital to its development and acceptance with a wider audience. The fact that the gallery is now expanding its educational offerings is a great step. Many of these skills and techniques are not offered by other institutions such as parks and recreation."

- Survey Participant

Figure 7 If you visit Nanaimo Art Gallery, what would you like to do there? Select up to 3. (n=55)



Source: Nanaimo Art Gallery Public Survey 2023

Finally, respondents were asked the open-ended question, "Where do you think the future Nanaimo Art Gallery facility should be located?" Over 230 responses were garnered. The following word cloud (Figure 8) visually depicts the topic responses received. **Downtown (as well as downtown area, and downtown core) was cited most frequently as the preferred location.** While most participants did not specify where downtown, those who did were most likely to suggest the **waterfront/harbour area or Old City Quarter** as desirable locations. A few participants also noted a desire for existing spaces to be repurposed such as the current Nanaimo Art Gallery location, the former A&B Sound building, and Jean Burns site. Further comments provided included participants stressing the need for the Gallery to have more space, parking, and to ensure that the Future Gallery is accessible by foot and/or public transit.

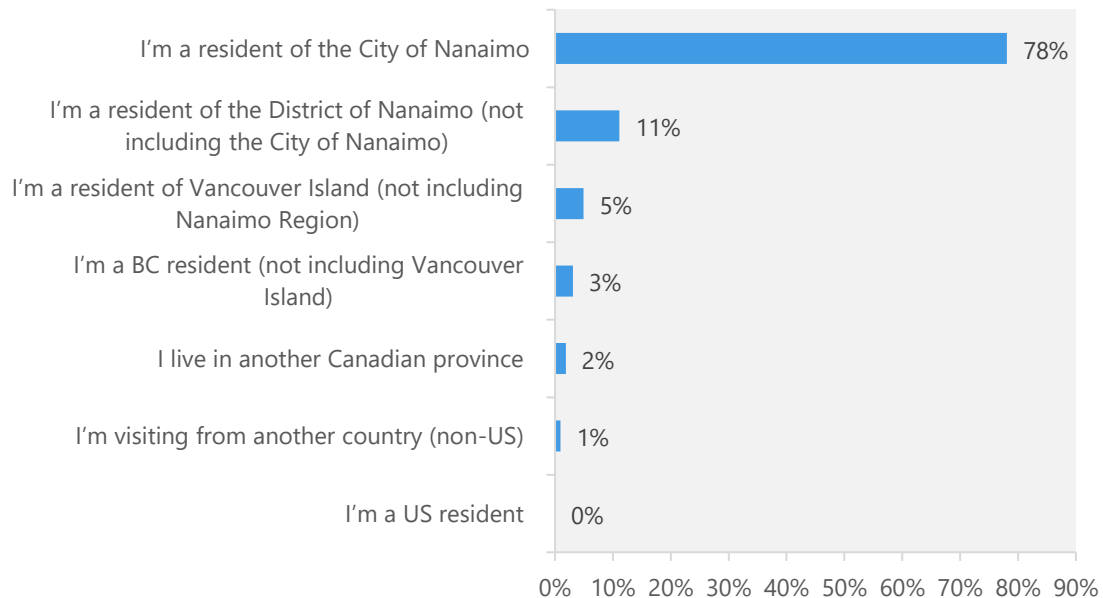
Figure 8 Word Cloud



3.2 Respondent Profile

The majority of survey respondents reported being residents of the City of Nanaimo (78%) (Figure 9). A smaller portion indicated residence in the District of Nanaimo, but not within the City itself (11%), while a much smaller segment identified as being a resident of Vancouver Island more broadly (5%). Out of the 324 respondents, a very small minority were international visitors (1%).

Figure 9 Please indicate where you are visiting from today. (n=324)

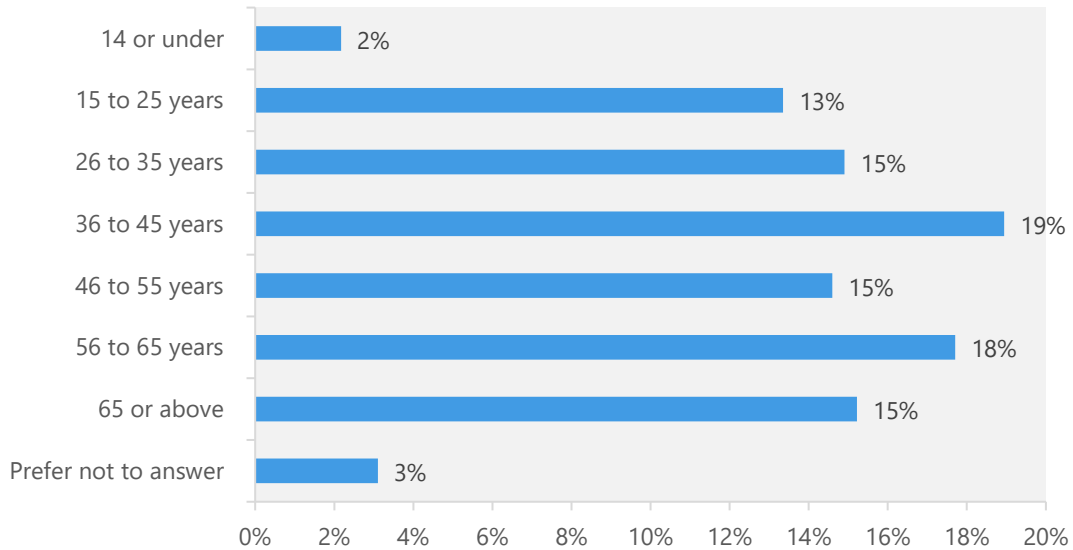


Source: Nanaimo Art Gallery Public Survey 2023

Survey respondents were also prompted to specify their age group (Figure 10). There was a **fairly even distribution of participation across age categories**. The most represented groups

were those aged between 36 to 45 years old (19%) and 56 to 65 years old (18%). The remaining respondents were dispersed among the 15- to 25-year-old age range (13%), followed by those aged 26 to 35 (15%), 46 to 55 (15%), and 65 or above (15%). Those under the age of 14 constituted a very small minority of respondents (2%).

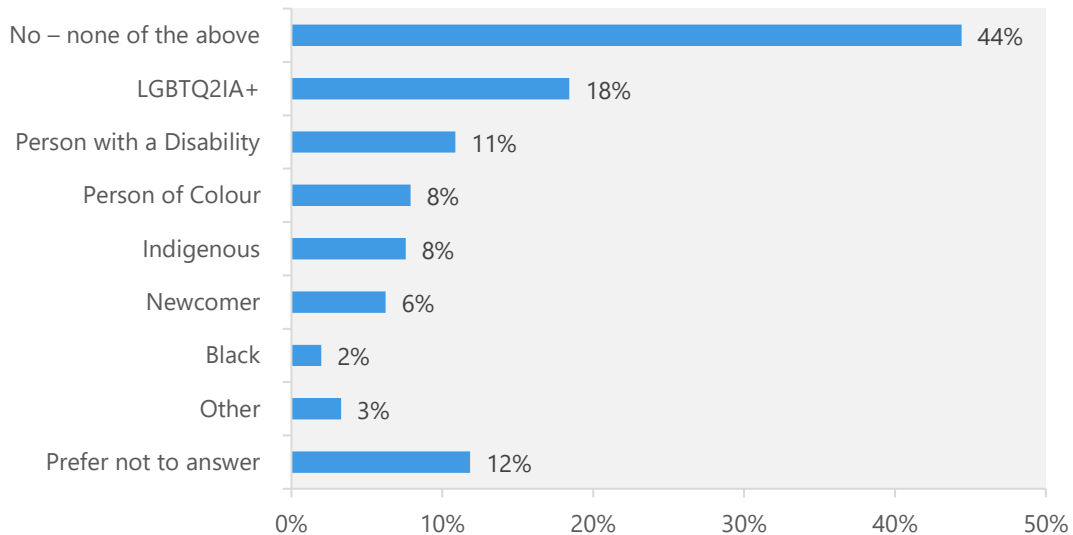
Figure 10 Please indicate your age by selecting the appropriate range below. (n=322)



Source: Nanaimo Art Gallery Public Survey 2023

For a more nuanced demographic evaluation, **participants were asked if they identified with any under-represented groups** (Figure 11). Respondents could select more than one response. Many did not identify with any of the listed categories (44%), although a considerable number identified themselves as being LGBTQ2IA+ (18%), or as persons with disabilities (11%). Smaller proportions identified as Persons of Colour (8%), Indigenous (8%), newcomers (6%), or Black (2%). Other participants specified unique identifications, such as being neurodivergent or seniors.

Figure 11 Do you self-identify with any of the following under-represented groups? Select all that apply. (n=304)



Source: Nanaimo Art Gallery Public Survey 2023

4. Public ‘Create Space’ Board Findings

This section looks at community participation during Summer Engagement outings which were facilitated by Nanaimo Art Gallery Staff and volunteers. Specifically, this section presents findings from passersby in response to the question “**How can the future Nanaimo Art Gallery create space for... Art? Community? Creativity? A thriving Economy? Wellbeing? Innovation? Sustainability? Celebrating Nanaimo?**” Appendix A includes an additional summary comparing and contrasting Summer Engagement findings with responses received at the Open House event earlier in the year.

The “Create Space” engagement materials were displayed on panel displays at Nanaimo Art Gallery pop-up tents at some of the community outings, depending on staff availability to facilitate the activity.

how the Future Gallery could attract community members. Another spoke to how the Future Gallery should provide space for community members to feel safe to “share unique cultures and ways of knowing”.

Creativity

When asked **how the future Nanaimo Art Gallery could make space for creativity**, participants responses focused on the types of programs and activities they would like to see more of at the Gallery. Examples provided included adult art programs, toddler programs, writing workshops, theatre sports, and sip/eat and paint sessions.

A Thriving Economy

Contributing to a **thriving economy** is another key theme for Nanaimo Art Gallery. While a limited number of responses were garnered for this theme, the number one desire was to see the Gallery gain a coffee shop/café. A patio for the café would encourage visitors to linger at the Gallery longer, and provide visitors with a connection to nature. One unique idea from a participant is for the Gallery to support a creative business owners’ panel.

“It would be nice to have indoor and outdoor exhibition spaces or installations in outdoor spaces around the city.”

- Summer Engagement participant

Wellbeing

Participants understood the theme of **making space for wellbeing** primarily in terms of health and environment. For example, some participants described how they would like the Future Gallery to have “green space, outdoor seating, and outdoor group space” to contribute to wellbeing. Others described how they would like to see more of the Future Gallery “doing art outside” or the desire to see

“peaceful nature exhibits” at the Gallery.

Innovation

In terms of **how Nanaimo Art Gallery could make space for innovation**, a limited number of responses were garnered compared to other themes. Participants provided examples of what that could look like through exhibits and programs. Examples included the Future Gallery hosting “table talks,” and exhibiting “interactive art pieces”.

Sustainability

When participants were asked **how the future Nanaimo Art Gallery could make space for sustainability**, three main topics were highlighted. The first was the connection between sustainability and the development of an energy-efficient building for the Gallery. One participant spoke about achieving “zero carbon,” through practices such as “planting garden beds” and being “LEED Certified”, following sustainable building standards. Another participant identified encouraging “active transport” as a way that the Gallery could encourage and support sustainability. Finally, another participant spoke to the combination of sustainability and art themes, if the Future Gallery were to provide “nature art and sustainable design classes”.

Celebrating Nanaimo

Lastly, when participants were asked **how the future Nanaimo Art Gallery could make space for celebrating Nanaimo**, responses tended to focus on new site locations for the Future Gallery. Several participants noted a strong desire for the Gallery to “stay downtown”. Furthermore, one participant specifically highlighted the desire to see Nanaimo Art Gallery move to Maffeo Sutton Park, with the work occurring in partnership with local host nations.

“Nanaimo needs something to be proud of; an arts centre. Nanaimo needs something to provide hope and opportunity for youth; a gorgeous arts centre. Nanaimo needs a world class art gallery, theatre, museum, and music house. Nanaimo needs to become the Island’s Art Centre. Build something architecturally stunning; the ‘biggest house’ for all to gather, celebrate and play in. Elevate our hope and joys. Let art and the arts fill up our centres as well as provide a centre. Invite everyone, near and far to \$ up for something more glorious than we are now imagining.....Futuristic.”

- Summer Engagement Participant

Summarizing Public Engagement Themes

The summer engagement activities revealed a range of comments, ideas and possibilities for the future Nanaimo Art Gallery. Ultimately, across the responses, there was a strong desire to create a **vibrant and inclusive space that fosters creativity, connectivity, and wellbeing**.

Appendix A. Comparing Summer Engagement Responses with Open House Responses

This short section draws some comparisons between the “Create Space” activity responses received via the summer engagement activities versus the Open House event findings which occurred on February 17th 2023.

The themes of “Art”, “Creativity”, “A Thriving Economy”, and “Wellbeing”, garnered comparable findings at the summer engagements and Open House activities. For “Art”, the findings from both the summer engagement and Open House sessions emphasized the importance of prioritizing and creating space for local artists. Regarding “Creativity”, the comments received both at the summer engagements and the Open House centered around exhibitions and programming. For “A Thriving Economy”, the focus was on enhancing food and beverage offerings to boost business and tourism. Regarding “Wellbeing”, participants at all events responded both in terms of opportunity to enhance the environment as well as personal health.

In contrast, responses from summer engagement and Open House session varied when it came to the “Community”, “Innovation”, “Sustainability” and “Celebrating Nanaimo” Themes. For “Community”, while the Open House findings primarily spoke to the Gallery’s programming and partnership needs, the summer engagement responses spoke more to community values and space needs. For the “Innovation” theme, the Open House findings gathered a much wider range of ideas and examples than the summer engagement activities – perhaps because the participants at the Open House were more likely to be highly familiar with Nanaimo Art Gallery and more active within the arts. In terms of “Sustainability”, Open House responses focused on how Nanaimo Art Gallery can play a role in supporting sustainability of arts and arts programming in the community, while summer engagement responses focused on sustainability practices in terms of developing a green and energy efficient-building. Finally, for the “Celebrating Nanaimo” theme, Open House participants’ comments focused mostly on community connectivity, while summer engagement comments focused more on where a new gallery facility should be located.

Overall, fewer engagement findings were obtained from the summer engagement. However, there were more responses focused on future potential sites for the new facility, which may suggest that more people are now aware of the Future Gallery project and planning activities compared to six months prior.

Appendix B. Public Survey Questions

1. Have you been to Nanaimo Art Gallery?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

2. [Show if yes - logic linked to question #1]
How often do you visit Nanaimo Art Gallery? [Single choice selection]
 - a. Once a week or more
 - b. Once a month or more
 - c. Every few months
 - d. Roughly once a year
 - e. Every few years

3. [Show if yes - logic linked to question #1]
What do you usually do at Nanaimo Art Gallery? Select up to 3.
 - a. Visit an exhibition
 - b. Attend a workshop, class, talk and/or tour
 - c. Take a family member to a workshop, class, talk and/or tour
 - d. Visit the Gallery Store
 - e. Socialize at an event or opening reception
 - f. Other (please specify) [open-ended comment box]

4. [Show if yes - logic linked to question #1]
What do you like most about Nanaimo Art Gallery? Select up to 3.
 - a. Builds strong relationships with the local community
 - b. Downtown location
 - c. Interesting and thought-provoking exhibitions
 - d. Warm and inclusive place
 - e. Represents diverse viewpoints
 - f. Commitment to reconciliation
 - g. Challenges established ways of thinking
 - h. The staff and volunteers

- i. Art Lab/learning and engagement programs
 - j. Indigenous programming (e.g., hulqumínú'm classes, weaving, storytelling)
 - k. Supports local artists
 - l. Offers quality opportunities for artists (both local and visiting)
 - m. Raises the profile of local arts and culture
 - n. Other (please specify) [open-ended comment box]
4. **[Show if yes - logic linked to question #1]**
What would you personally like to see (or see more of) from a new Nanaimo Art Gallery facility? Select up to 3.
- a. More accessible (E.g. better transport links/parking, welcoming to diverse users with all types of abilities)
 - b. New community spaces (E.g. exhibition space for regional artists, spaces that can be rented by the community, and/or a café, outdoor spaces)
 - c. More space for learning and engagement opportunities and exhibitions
 - d. A more interesting building (E.g. architecturally compelling, has a story)
 - e. Expanded programming / educational opportunities
 - f. Growing focus on Indigenous reconciliation and partnerships, especially Snuneymuxw
 - g. A focus on tourism (E.g., improving branding and marketing to attract more visitors to Nanaimo, considering experiences tourists would want)
 - h. Events/partnerships with other artistic disciplines (E.g., live performance, culinary arts)
 - i. More collaborations (e.g. partnerships with community groups and with artists/groups from across Canada or around the world)
 - j. More outreach in the community (E.g., with under-represented groups) - please specify [open-ended comment box]
 - k. Other (please specify) [open-ended comment box]
5. **[Show if participant has not visited the Gallery - logic linked to question #1]**
Why haven't you visited Nanaimo Art Gallery yet? Please select your primary reason. [Single select]
- a. Haven't had the opportunity yet
 - b. Not interested
 - c. It's not for someone like me

- d. Cost
 - e. Not accessible enough (e.g., transport, opening hours) - please specify [open ended comment box]
 - f. Don't know
 - g. Other (please specify) [open-ended comment box]
6. **[Show if participant has not visited the Gallery - logic linked to question #1]**
If you visited Nanaimo Art Gallery, what would you like to do there? Select up to 3.
- a. See exhibitions of work by international/interprovincial artists
 - b. See exhibitions of work by local or regional artists
 - c. Attend a workshop, class, talk and/or tour (please specify) [open-ended comment box]
 - d. Take my kids/family to a workshop, class, talk and/or tour
 - e. Attend a special event (e.g., music or dance performances, food experiences, live entertainment)
 - f. Learn about Indigenous art and culture
 - g. Learn more about Nanaimo's cultural history and identity
 - h. Meet other people in the community
 - i. Other (please specify) [open-ended comment box]

7. **[Show for all participants]**
Where do you think the future Nanaimo Art Gallery facility should be located? Please be as specific as possible. (Optional) [Open-ended]

8. **[Show for all participants]**
Is there anything you would like to add while this process is underway? (Optional) [Open-ended]

9. **[Show for all participants]**

Please indicate where you are visiting from today. (Optional) [Single select question]

- a. I'm a resident of the City of Nanaimo
- b. I'm a resident of the District of Nanaimo (not including the City of Nanaimo)
- c. I'm a resident of Vancouver Island (not including Nanaimo Region)

- d. I'm a BC resident (not including Vancouver Island)
- e. I live in another Canadian province
- f. I'm a US resident
- g. I'm visiting from another country (non-US)

10. [Show for all participants]

Please indicate your age by selecting the appropriate range in the drop-down menu below.
(Optional) [Drop-down list]

- a. 14 and under
- b. 15 to 25 years
- c. 26 to 35 years
- d. 36 to 45 years
- e. 46 to 55 years
- f. 56 to 65 years
- g. 65 and above
- h. Prefer not to answer

11. [Show for all participants]

Do you self-identify with any of the following under-represented groups? (Optional)
[Multiple choice selection]

- a. LGBTQ2IA+
- b. Indigenous
- c. Black
- d. Person of Colour
- e. Person with a Disability
- f. Newcomer
- g. Other (please specify) [open-ended comment box]
- h. No – none of the above
- i. Prefer not to answer

12. [Show for all participants]

Please leave your details if you would like to be entered into the competition to win one of two prizes. (Optional)

Prize 1: Limited Edition E.J. Hughes prints, valued at \$1,000.

Prize 2: Gift basket valued at over \$200.

[First Name]

[Last Name]

[email address]

13. [Show for all participants] (optional)

- a. I would like to be added to Nanaimo Art Gallery's mailing list.

Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey!

[END]