

## **What is your commitment to arts and culture?**

With election day around the, local arts organizations including Crimson Coast Dance, Nanaimo Art Gallery, Port Theatre and Vancouver Island Symphony reached out to each of the candidates for the Nanaimo-Ladysmith electoral district to learn where they stand on arts and culture.

As of the time of publication we have received responses from two candidates.

### **Michelle Corfield:** Liberal Candidate for Nanaimo–Ladysmith

As a lifelong advocate for community-led development and as a First Nations woman, I deeply value the power of the arts to heal, connect, and build resilience — both personally and politically.

#### **1. What role do arts and culture play in your life?**

Arts and culture are foundational to how I live and lead. From traditional ceremony and storytelling to contemporary creation, they shape identity, carry knowledge, and ground us in who we are. I have seen firsthand how creativity uplifts our communities and drives innovation.

#### **2. How will you support arts and culture in Nanaimo and Ladysmith?**

If elected, I will advocate for consistent, expanded federal investment in the creative sector — particularly in local infrastructure, Indigenous-led cultural revitalization, and sustainable funding for institutions like the Nanaimo Art Gallery. This riding has one of the highest concentrations of artists in Canada — supporting them supports our economy, wellness, and shared story.

#### **3. Will your party support the 1% commitment of federal spending toward arts, culture, and heritage?**

Yes. I support the Canadian Arts Coalition's call to raise cultural investment to 1% of federal spending. Under Mark Carney's leadership, the Liberal Party is committed to increasing funding to agencies such as the Canada Council for the Arts, Telefilm, the Canada Media Fund, and the National Film Board. We will also introduce a **Canada Strong Pass**, offering free access to national galleries and museums for youth under 18 — expanding cultural access for the next generation.

#### **4. What are your solutions for strengthening the arts sector nationally?**

We need sustained core funding, affordable creative space, and better support for working artists. I support a national strategy that includes:

- Expanded access to arts education and community programming
- Fair wages and employment supports for cultural workers
- Public investment in spaces where art is made, shown, and taught
- Stronger cultural infrastructure in housing, schools, and health institutions

Thank you again for the work you do to foster creativity and connection across our region. I look forward to continued collaboration and to building a future where the arts are fully recognized as essential to Canadian life.

**Lisa Marie Barron:** NDP Candidate for Nanaimo–Ladysmith

### **1. What role do arts and culture play in your life?**

Arts and culture is interwoven with all aspects of my life. We are so fortunate to live in this region that's not only one of the most beautiful natural spaces, but also one where the arts and cultural life is embraced and celebrated. Serving as a Member of Parliament is incredibly rewarding, and the schedule is demanding. I ensure I make time for arts, culture, and personal creativity because I know that it helps me keep myself well and grounded and also keeps me connected with the local community.

The pandemic further highlighted the importance of arts and culture to our collective mental health and wellness and to bringing together community. More than anything, we missed those opportunities to gather at galleries, theatres, or festivals for shared experiences. And it was to the arts and culture that many of us, including me, turned to make sense of what was happening and to express our responses to it.

### **2. How will you support arts and culture in Nanaimo and Ladysmith?**

Cuts by previous governments have left the arts, culture, and heritage sectors underfunded for too long. I will continue to advocate for increased federal funding for programming as well as for much needed new and upgraded infrastructure. Like with other transfer payments, it's time the federal government increased its responsibility instead of downloading more and more on provinces, cities, and non-profits. With a growing population, more funding – not less – needs to be allocated to programs like Canada Summer Jobs that help sustain non-profits like Nanaimo Art Gallery, and that give younger generations employment opportunities and experience in the sector. Programs like New Horizons for Seniors that help keep our elders involved as contributors and patrons. And I will advocate for new funding streams that support programs and physical facilities that are inclusive of all abilities, and that ensure an Indigenous focus is always present.

### **3. Will your party support the 1% commitment of federal spending toward arts, culture, and heritage?**

Yes. The NDP supports this federal spending commitment.

The outsized role that arts, culture, and heritage play in our collective wellness, mental health, Canadian identity, and our broader human connections to one another cannot be overstated. Simply put, it's a smart investment with big returns. The economic benefits to our local and regional communities are well known. In addition to keeping local dollars in the community, a vibrant arts and culture scene attracts visitors from away whose dollars directly support the

tourism industry including our local hotels, restaurants, and retailers. It creates local jobs within – and well beyond – the arts and tourism sectors, and it contributes to exciting, safe and inclusive community spaces where visitors and locals alike want to be.

#### **4. What are your solutions for strengthening the arts sector nationally?**

As a New Democrat, I believe in putting people first. That means pushing for a government that recognizes the importance of strengthening – not cutting – funding that improves equitable access to the arts, culture and heritage. Funding that reduces physical and economic barriers through inclusive facilities for people living with disabilities, and low-to-no fee options for lower income patrons. Government must also ensure more reliable multi-year funding streams for youth and seniors arts and culture programs that help these increasingly isolated demographics feel more connected. I also want to see the federal government create more opportunities for Canadians who work in the sector by enabling and supporting more Canadian content and talent: artists and performance artists, writers, archivists and curators, film and theatre crews are only a few examples. I will also advocate for more funding – not defunding – of our national broadcaster CBC/Radio-Canada and for independent community broadcasters and journalists who tell our local and regional stories. I truly believe there's more that unites us than divides us, and the arts, culture, and heritage sector is more important than ever as we face economic and existential threats to our Canadian sovereignty. Now is the time to celebrate our diverse voices, stories, and cultures, as well as our shared identity and values. It's a smart investment that benefits real people here in Nanaimo-Ladysmith and all across Canada.