



First Nations Art Awards Announced for REC-REATE Aquatic and Wellness Centre

On January 12, the review panel convened to evaluate submissions for the First Nations Art Program for the REC-REATE Aquatic and Wellness Centre at Strathcona Gardens Recreation Complex. The panel was honoured to review an exceptional range of proposals, with the overall quality of submissions exceeding expectations.

The panel deeply appreciated the care, creativity, and thoughtfulness demonstrated by all participating artists and artist teams. Each submission carried merit and reflected strong cultural expression, making the panel's deliberations both meaningful and challenging.

A key consideration for the panel was the desire to showcase the work of multiple *Lig̓wiłdaχʷ* artists, while ensuring the opportunity was distributed equitably between both Nations. This resulted in a thoughtful and deliberate decision-making process, and the final selections were not made lightly.

The review panel consisted of the elected Chiefs of the We Wai Kai and We Wai Kum Nations — Chief Ronnie Chickite and Chief Chris Roberts — along with Ken Blackburn, a local artist and recently retired member of the Campbell River Arts Council; John Butterly of HCMA Architecture, one of the architects supporting the design and construction of the new Aquatic and Wellness Centre; and Wolfgang Parada, REC-REATE Project Manager and Senior Manager of Engineering Services for the Strathcona Regional District.

Art Awards

The We Wai Kai Nation, the We Wai Kum First Nation, and the Strathcona Regional District are pleased to announce the following art awards:

Jessica Chickite

Killer Whales and Sport Silhouettes

Social Heart mural

Ernest Puglas, with Hunter Puglas and Fisher Roberts

The Pride of the Lig̓wiłdaχʷ

Wall-mounted carved panel in the corridor connecting the Social Heart to the arenas

Greg Henderson, Bill Henderson, and Junior Henderson

Kwankwanxwaliye and the Ligʷiłdažʷ Sea Worm

Patio totem in raised planter

Brent Smith

Raven, Orca, and Bear

Carved figures for the outdoor patio in an at-grade garden bed

This approach aligns with the goals of the First Nations Art Program: to celebrate and honour the presence, stories, and contributions of the Ligʷiłdažʷ people, and to meaningfully integrate Indigenous art throughout the facility. By selecting four distinct works, the REC-REATE project will reflect a broader range of artistic voices and cultural expression.

The We Wai Kai Nation, the We Wai Kum First Nation, and the Strathcona Regional District extend their sincere congratulations to the successful artists and artist teams, and express deep appreciation to all artists who shared their time, talent, and vision through this process.

Gilakas’la