



CVRD Arts & Culture Master Plan Engagement Summary Report

May 2024



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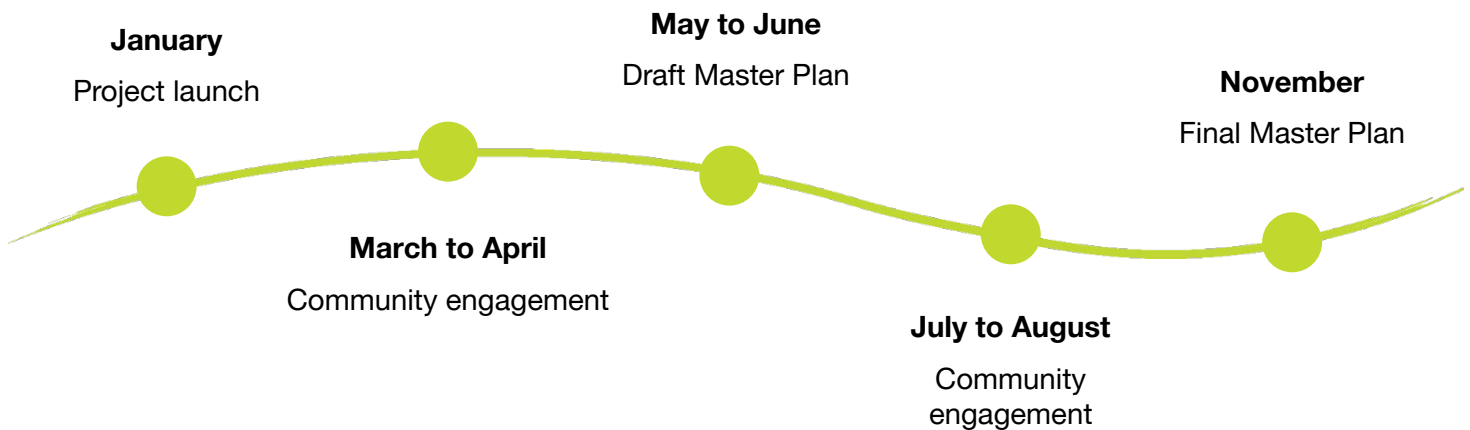


Creative Quw'utsun

The Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) has begun crafting its first Arts & Culture Master Plan, which aims to enhance arts and culture opportunities for locals and visitors across the region.

With a focus on building creative capacity, the new Arts & Culture Master Plan will guide arts and culture over the next five years. The Master Plan will provide practical support for existing assets and identify opportunities for new programming, physical spaces, funding opportunities, and public art. Recognizing that arts and culture are for everyone, the CVRD asked for input on community priorities. Recommendations will be built into the five-year Master Plan based on these community discussions and needs

The first round of engagement for the new Arts & Culture Master Plan included two pop-up events, an online survey, a telephone survey, and the 2024 Cowichan Valley Arts & Culture Summit—all with the goal of hearing from diverse and representative community members who live, work, and create across the region.



Engagement highlights

971 community members shared their input to help shape the new Arts & Culture Master Plan



Cowichan Community Centre Pop-up

This interactive and family-friendly pop-up event took place at the Cowichan Community Centre on the evening of a show and hockey game. Over 175 people shared their ideas.



Si'em' Lelum Gymnasium Pop-up

This interactive and family-friendly pop-up took place outside the Si'em' Lelum Gym at Cowichan Green Community's Seedy Sundays. Over 100 people shared their ideas.



Cowichan Valley Arts & Culture Summit

Over 70 arts and culture representatives participated to explore potential opportunities for the new Arts & Culture Master Plan.



Survey

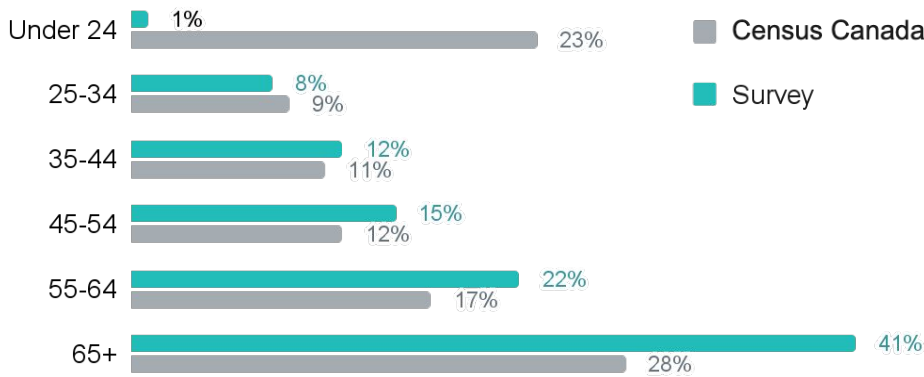
The survey (online, in print, and via phone) received 626 responses from community members who live, work, and create across the region.

Survey snapshot

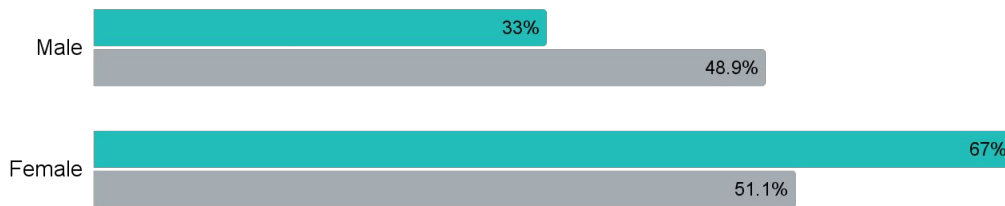
Below is a breakdown of survey participation and demographics (626 responses), with an age and gender comparison to data from Stats Canada (2021 Census). In particular, women were more likely to respond to the online survey than men.

Over 18,600 community members heard about the survey (through social media posts, online ads, posters, and an ad in the Valley Voice)

Age



Gender



Identity

77% of respondents were born in Canada, and 6% identified as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit

Family

20% of the respondents had children in their care, and 5% lived with parents or grandparents

Involved in arts and culture

20% of the respondents worked and 32% volunteered with arts and culture in the region

Locations

99.9% of the respondents live in Cowichan, with good representation for most municipalities and electoral areas

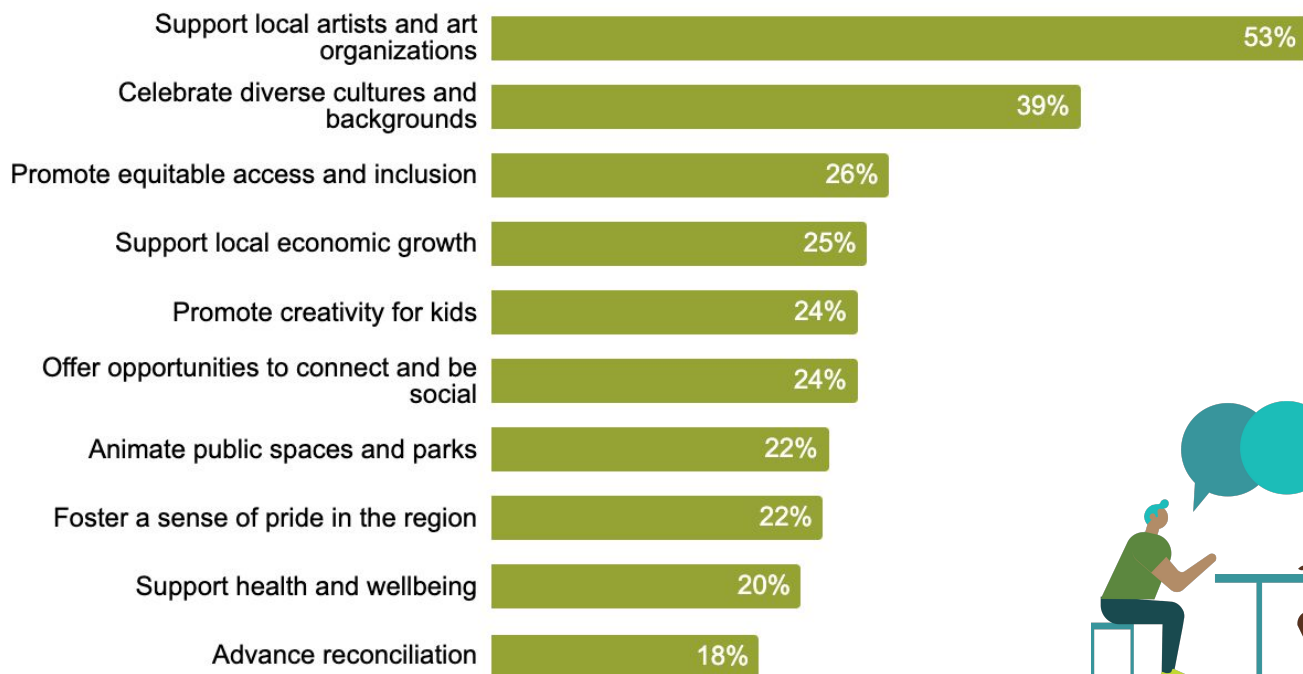
What we heard from the Cowichan community

The following pages share input and priorities from the Cowichan community on arts and culture, as per survey responses (combined online and phone). Overall, feedback from the in-person pop-up events reflected the same trends. A separate section details findings from the Cowichan Valley Arts & Culture Summit.

50% of people said they feel connected to culture in Cowichan Valley

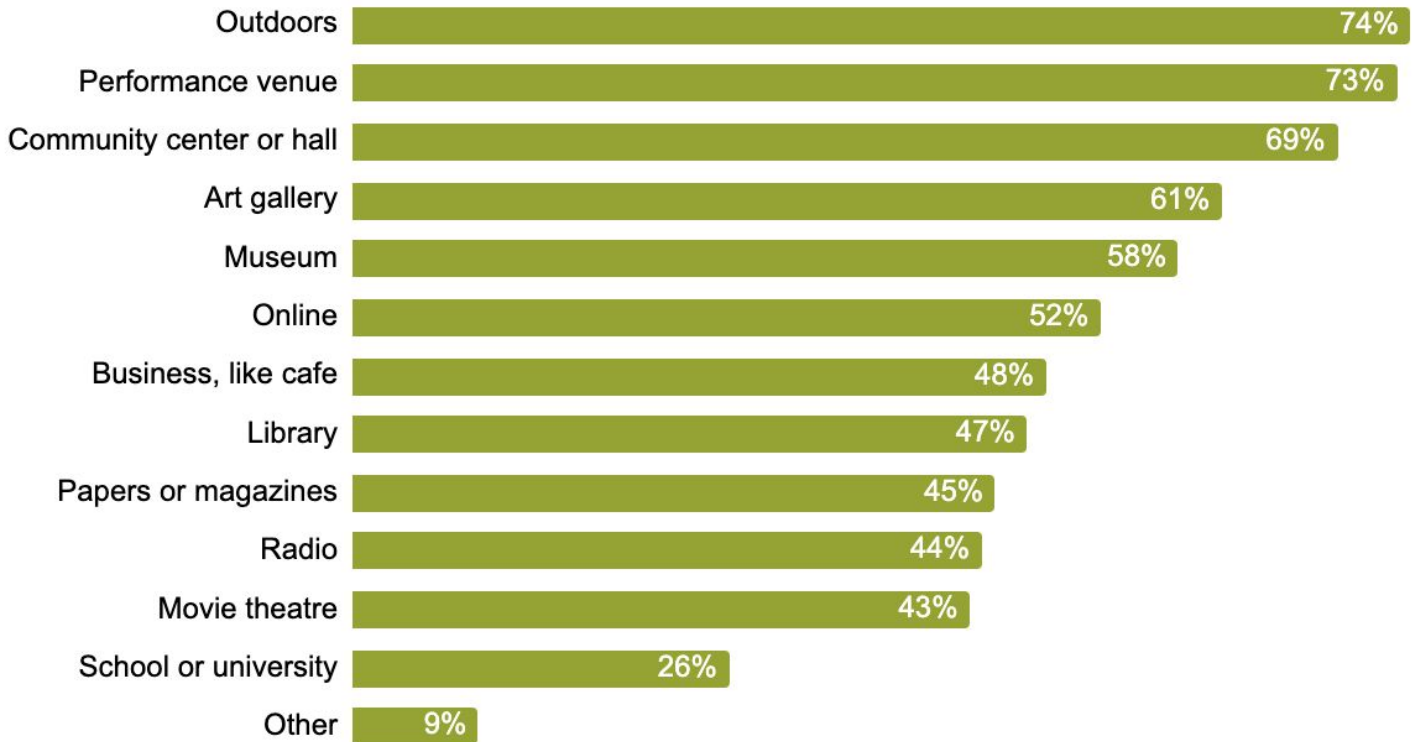
Guiding principles

Survey respondents shared what was most important for the CVRD to achieve through this Arts & Culture Master Plan. Most importantly, people felt that local artists and creative organizations need to be supported. Secondly, people shared that arts and culture offers an important way to celebrate diverse cultures and backgrounds across the region.



Participating in arts and culture

Survey respondents shared they enjoy participating in arts and culture in both outdoor settings and event venues. A third of respondents have kids in their care, whom they bring to these spaces to enjoy arts and culture together. Other "fill in the blank" responses included engaging in arts and culture at home and through connecting with nature.

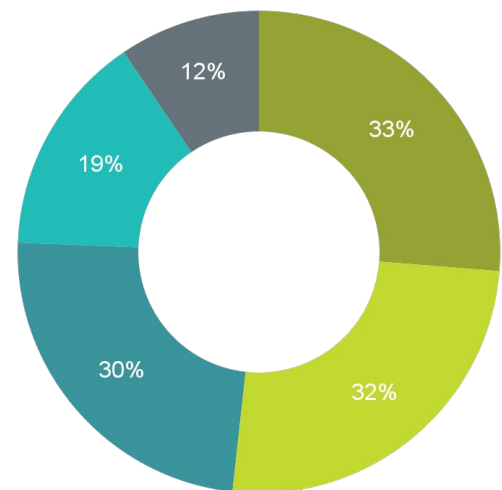
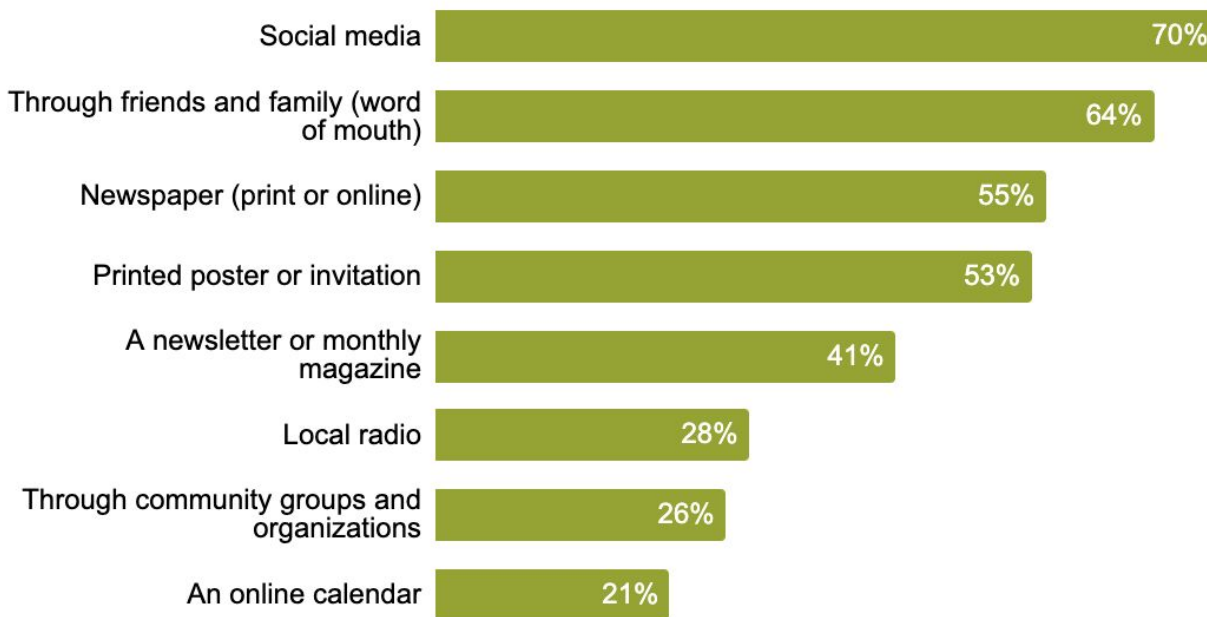


In particular, people shared that they would like to see more live performances, public art, art classes, and festivals (as the top four most popular responses). In particular, women noted family-friendly activities and cinema as top priorities. There was general support for more art exhibits, concerts, and live theatre!



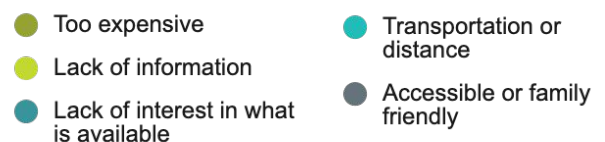
Learning what's on the go

People shared how they are most likely to find out about arts and culture events and activities that are taking place across the CVRD, notably on social media, through word of mouth, or in local news. When asked about specific calendars and platforms, people most commonly mentioned the Valley Voice, Cowichan Citizen, 89.7 Sun FM, the CBC, and various local newspapers. Radio is more commonly used by those under 65 years of age, and newsletters/monthly magazines by those 45 years of age or older. Online calendars were used by every age and gender, comparably. Other “fill in the blank” responses included email lists, schools, and ads.



Barriers to participating

60% of people said that they find it easy to access arts and culture activities in the area. However, people also noted barriers that can prevent them from accessing arts and culture across the region. These included cost as well as a lack of information or interest in what is offered. Of note, cost was a barrier for women more so than men, and accessibility was mentioned most commonly by seniors (age 65+).

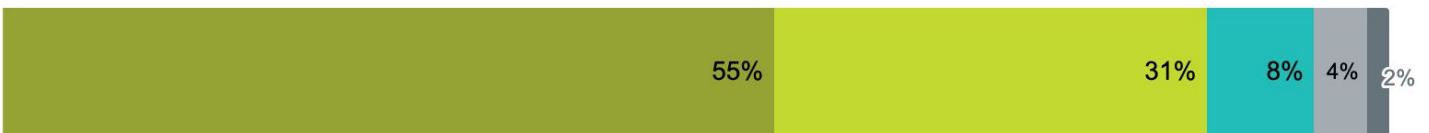


Priorities for arts and culture

Survey respondents shared their priorities for arts and culture across the CVRD, including how important arts and culture are to them, how easy it is for them to access arts and culture events and activities, and if they would like to see more investment by the CVRD toward creative initiatives.



A vibrant arts and culture scene in Cowichan is important to me:



I find it easy to access arts and culture activities and events in my area:



I would like to see more investment by the CVRD in arts and culture initiatives:



The role of the Regional District

Survey respondents were asked to share how they think the CVRD could best support arts and culture across the region—for example, through supporting activities, providing spaces, and offering resources and information to the community. With regards to the first question below, a number of people noted that the CVRD should prioritize supporting new and existing community-led programming (instead of organizing programming on behalf of the regional district).

■ Yes ■ No ■ No opinion



The CVRD should organize or support arts and culture programming:



The CVRD should provide or support spaces and facilities:



The CVRD should offer resources for community groups and individuals:



The CVRD should share events and activities through an online calendar or website:



The CVRD currently provides enough support:



Cowichan Valley Arts & Culture Summit

Over 70 arts and culture representatives attended the 2024 Cowichan Valley Arts & Culture Summit to share their priorities and explore opportunities to inform the new Arts & Culture Master Plan. The summit received positive attendance and responses. Indeed, many people shared the value of convening with other arts and culture professionals and stakeholders from across the region.

At the summit, participants also identified the voices that were missing from the conversation—both in person at the Cowichan Valley Arts & Culture Summit and generally across the arts and culture scene in the region. Specifically, arts and culture initiatives can become more inclusive, responsive, and reflective of the broader community's needs and interests by including youth, marginalized communities, non-profit organizations, and the business sector.



A snapshot from arts and culture organizations

A short questionnaire was distributed prior to the summit to identify key areas of focus for informing the mini round table discussions at the event. Participants shared:

Representation

Many creative groups attended: Sub regional arts councils, societies, museums, arts schools, guilds and musical groups, community foundations, the tourism industry, and more.

Areas of support

Aside from funding, groups would like more promotion (55%), collaborations (53%), and grant writing support (47%), followed by access to facilities and more volunteers (both 40%).

Space related needs

Most organizations reported that their current spaces do not meet their creative needs, especially around storage, rehearsals, and exhibits.

Funding sources

Top funding sources for arts and culture groups include earned revenue (63%), grants (58%), and monetary donations (30%), followed by sponsorship and fundraising (both 8%).

Through mini-round table discussions at the summit, participants explored a number of topics. A summary of the discussion (including challenges and opportunities) for each of the below topics is included on the following page:

1. Collaboration and partnerships
2. Funding opportunities
3. Grant writing
4. Volunteer and staff
5. Business administration and bookkeeping
6. Technical skills and resources
7. Facilities and spaces

Top “blue skies” opportunities

- Greater funding and budgets
- Medium-sized performance venue or arts centre
- Volunteer or professional fairs
- Art crawls or passports
- Collaborations with tourism
- Partnerships to share facilities (recreation, hotels, businesses, etc.)
- Collective and creative spaces
- Promotional campaigns and calendars
- Shared administrative and grant writing support between groups
- Access to professional resources
- Low barrier programs and opportunities for youth



Skills and resources

Participants explored the role of technical skills and resources in achieving their organizational goals.

Current challenges included:

- Allocating money to secure spaces, wages, and training (especially for non-profits)
- Lack of current opportunities that cater to and generate interest from youth (which require free or low-cost spaces)
- Low civic engagement and volunteerism in recent years
- The perception of operating in silos across the region

Opportunities included:

- Training opportunities for digital skills (website, app development, media, etc.)
- Training and collaborations (i.e., across generations)
- Training and programs not currently offered on Vancouver Island
- An online database to share volunteer opportunities
- A community makerspace with technical equipment and tools

Participants also shared that public art can be supported by government through grants and partnerships (as a key opportunity to collaborate and advance reconciliation).

Business administration and bookkeeping

The discussion emphasized the importance of collaboration and resources from the CVRD and other jurisdictions to support business-related needs.

Opportunities included:

- Improved marketing and shared promotional platforms
- Building capacity, for example through mentorship programs
- Access to shared administrative staff and collaborative spaces
- Sustainable, long-term funding for organizations to invest in administrative needs

Collaboration and partnerships

Participants emphasized the importance of collaboration in their endeavours—around programming, performance art and exhibits, public art, and more.

Challenges included:

- Youth participation and engagement
- Difficulty engaging with businesses around public art and activations
- Slow or bureaucratic processes (e.g., approval processes and access to funding)
- Dispersed locations and lack of knowledge sharing across the region (e.g., of existing resources and community groups)

Opportunities included:

- Collaborating with municipalities, First Nations, and provincial governments to access funding and resources
- Increased channels for communication and information sharing
- Support for youth arts education and participation
- Sharing costs and resources (e.g., staffing and spaces)

Funding opportunities and grant writing

Participants identified the need to increase available funding and also remove barriers to accessing those opportunities.

Barriers included:

- Eligibility of organizations (especially small groups) and capacity to apply for funding
- A perception of low funding and support for the arts
- Inadequate facilities that hinder organizations (especially in securing affordable and accessible spaces that meet diverse needs, like storage)

Opportunities included:

- Expanded funding
- Access to a master list or portal of grants
- Offering grant writing training courses or workshops
- Sharing a grant writing or coordinator position (paid or volunteer) to assist numerous groups
- Providing low-barrier funding opportunities for youth-led initiatives

Volunteers and staffing

The discussion explored overcoming barriers to volunteering and staffing, fostering youth engagement, and building collaborative networks within the arts community to support its growth and sustainability.

Barriers included:

- Lack of training and educational opportunities
- Securing wages for temporary and permanent positions
- Communicating volunteer and staffing needs

Opportunities included:

- Apprenticeship programs for youth involvement and skill building
- Shared staffing resources
- New initiatives and events to engage volunteers



Facilities and spaces

Summit participants explored the current and anticipated space-related needs of their organizations, as well as how new facilities could involve the wider community and uplift the role of the arts.

Barriers included:

- Limited existing facilities that meet a variety of diverse individual and group needs and anticipated uses (including accessibility, storage, exhibits, nighttime use, etc.)
- Funding is often allocated to sports and recreational facilities

Opportunities included:

- Shared and collaborative spaces
- Community hub with flexible spaces and uses
- A mid-sized performance venue (for cinema, theatre, and flexible use)
- Safe and accessible space for youth



Moving forward

Thank you to everyone who participated so far! This input from the community will help guide the Arts & Culture Master Plan as it is crafted—providing direction on key community priorities as well as shaping the role of the CVRD in delivering key support and resources to the region.

Additional community engagement is anticipated for Summer 2024. The second round of engagement aims to bring the draft direction of the master plan back to the community for feedback, to ensure that everyone's voices and creative aspirations are reflected in the final Arts & Culture Master Plan.

For additional project updates
and information, visit:
cverd.ca/2089/Arts-Culture

COWICHAN VALLEY ARTS & CULTURE SUMMIT 2024



Graphic illustration by
Scott Sassaman, capturing
discussion from the 2024
Cowichan Valley Arts &
Culture Summit