



Creative Cowichan

Arts & Culture

Master Plan



Acknowledgment

The Cowichan Valley Regional District recognizes the long history of this region and the First Nations peoples who are tied to the land, the water, and who have lived here since time immemorial. We commit to respectfully and appropriately engaging with these First Nations in regional arts and culture strategies and shared opportunities.

■ *Photo from the Heart Lake Trail. (Rob Wilson / Tourism Cowichan)*

Summary

Creative Cowichan provides a practical guide to strengthen the impact of the CVRD’s Arts & Culture Division and uplift arts and culture across the region.

The Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) has crafted its first Arts & Culture Master Plan to uplift arts and culture over the next five years. This “made in Cowichan” master plan was developed through two rounds of community input as well as best practices in regional arts and culture planning. The plan builds on the expanding efforts of the CVRD’s Arts & Culture Division and—equally—on the region’s creativity, talent, and initiative. Creative Cowichan is dedicated to supporting the arts and culture community.



■ Photo of flowers and a mural in downtown Chemainus.
(Tyler Cave / Tourism Cowichan)

Creative strategies

Six strategies and 16 actions shape Creative Cowichan. Each strategy includes detailed actions, sub-actions, and tools to show how the CVRD may accomplish the goal.



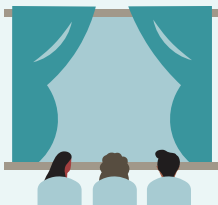
Information and resources

- 1.1.** Improve community-wide access to information about arts and culture offerings.
- 1.2.** Connect community groups and individuals across the region to understand aspirations and meet unique needs.



Programming

- 2.1.** Work with community-serving organizations to provide regional coordination and marketing to support cultural events and activities.
- 2.2.** Work collaboratively with the CVRD's Community Services Department on arts and culture program delivery and offerings.
- 2.3.** Encourage youth engagement in arts and culture activities and spaces across the region.



Spaces and facilities

- 3.1.** Increase access to spaces for arts and culture organizations and artists.
- 3.2.** Review and monitor access to CVRD facilities for arts and culture uses.



Partnerships and collaborations

4.1. Work with jurisdictions and electoral areas to align arts and culture goals, share resources, and build relationships.

4.2. Work with First Nations to align arts and culture goals, share resources, and build relationships.

4.3. Collaborate with the CVRD's Economic Development Division to further elevate the value of the creative sector and emphasize the impact of arts and culture on economic sustainability and quality of life.

4.4. Investigate future opportunities to develop collaborative initiatives with key community-serving organizations across the region.

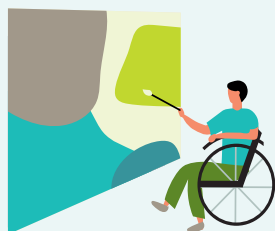


Funding opportunities

5.1. Improve access to the CVRD's Arts and Culture Grants to better represent diverse community needs and voices.

5.2. Increase the Arts & Culture Division's revenue and capacity to meet the needs of the CVRD and the community.

5.3. Increase CVRD funding streams to meet current and future community needs.



Public art

6.1. Identify and encourage new opportunities for public art.

6.2. Improve resources and policies to support public art.



Vision

Arts and culture connect and uplift community members across the Cowichan region. The CVRD supports opportunities to nurture talent and creativity, celebrate creative industries, reflect the region's diversity, and draw inspiration from natural beauty.

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Prepared by Happy Cities for the Cowichan Valley Regional District.
Published November 2024.

■ *Left: Photo of a public art mural on Jubilee Street, Duncan. (Rob Wilson / Tourism Cowichan)*

■ *Cover: Photo of a totem pole and mural on Craig Street, Duncan. (Rob Wilson / Tourism Cowichan)*

1 Creative Cowichan

Setting the stage

Arts and culture are essential ingredients for a healthy and vibrant community. In Cowichan, arts and culture can build on the unique identity and opportunities of the region to enhance quality of life for locals and visitors alike. This offers more than just economic value to the region—it creates opportunities for connection, innovation, and the intangible moments of joy and creativity that bring meaning to our day-to-day lives.

Working closely with the community, the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) has crafted its first Arts and Culture Master Plan to uplift arts and culture over the next five

years. This plan provides practical actions and resources to build creative capacity in both the CVRD and regional community.

Creative Cowichan fulfills a recommendation from the 2019 Regional Recreation Strategic Plan, to explore community needs through a new arts and culture strategy. It also defines the CVRD's role in supporting and dedicating resources to the vibrant arts and culture scene across the region.

In addition, Creative Cowichan aligns with a number of priorities from the CVRD Strategic Plan, Cowichan 2050 Regional Collaboration Framework, and Our Place Our Future. The plan was developed in close collaboration with the Economic Development Strategy.



Role of the CVRD

The CVRD defines its roles related to arts and culture as:

Operator

The CVRD owns and operates arts and culture facilities, including the Cowichan Performing Arts Centre and a number of community centres and halls across the region. The CVRD operates select programs at these facilities (in addition to encouraging community-led programming that meets local needs).

Funder

The CVRD distributes funding each year through arts and culture grants, allocation, and two youth art scholarships. In 2023, the total amount distributed was \$80,700 to 17 community organizations (which included \$50,000 to the five sub-regional arts councils).

Supporter

The CVRD supports community groups, organizations, and individuals in their creative programs and new opportunities (for example, by providing resources, training opportunities, and access to facilities).

Facilitator

The CVRD acts as a central source and distributor of information for arts and culture, sharing funding opportunities and enabling connections between individuals, community groups, businesses, and industry.

■ *Photo of unattributed art. The majority of public art across the CVRD is found at parks and along trails. (Monascherie Photography / Tourism Cowichan)*

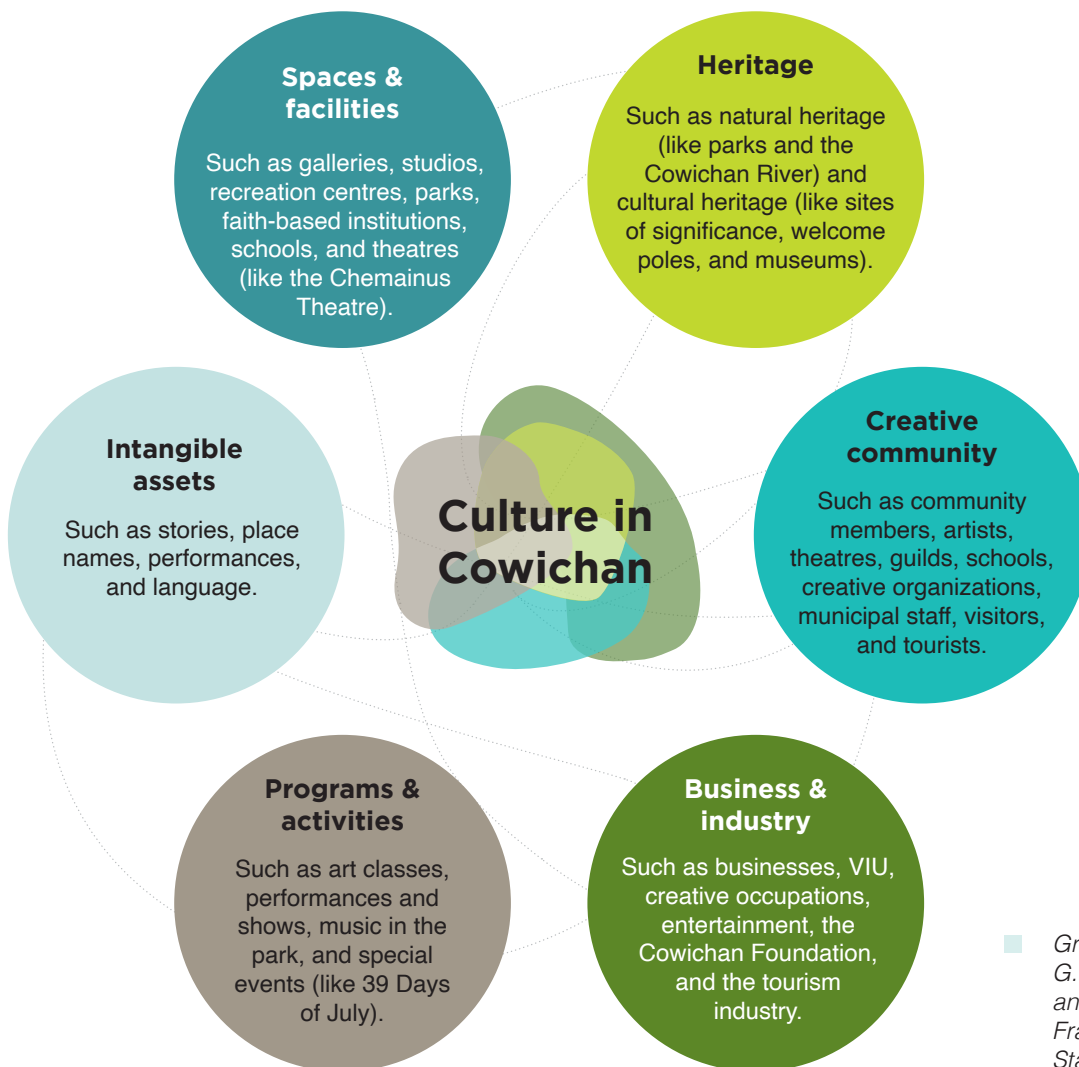


Defining culture and community

The Chemainus Theatre is the third-largest producing theatre in B.C., welcoming 80,000 visitors each year and providing up to 800 annual work weeks to artists.

The Cowichan Valley community defined 'culture' in their own words:

Culture is a reflection of the collective identity of the community. It bridges past and future through shared experiences and expression of the individual. It reflects ways of life, forms of expression, meaning and values, and enriches our lives. Culture acts as the creative DNA of the region.




Graphic adapted from G. Baeker, MDB Insights and the Statistics Canada Framework for Cultural Statistics.





Guiding principles

Creative Cowichan is built on principles that ensure that, through arts and culture, the CVRD can serve a growing, creative, and increasingly diverse community. These principles were developed with input from the community, and will guide decisions across the region over the next five years and beyond.

 Support local artists and creative organizations in practical ways.

 Celebrate the region's many cultures, backgrounds, and histories through arts and culture.

 Promote welcoming and equitable access to creative opportunities and programs.

 Showcase creativity and bring community together in vibrant spaces across the region.

2 Arts, culture, and community

The Cowichan Performing Arts Centre, operated by the CVRD, is the largest performance stage on Vancouver Island and second largest in all of B.C.



Community context

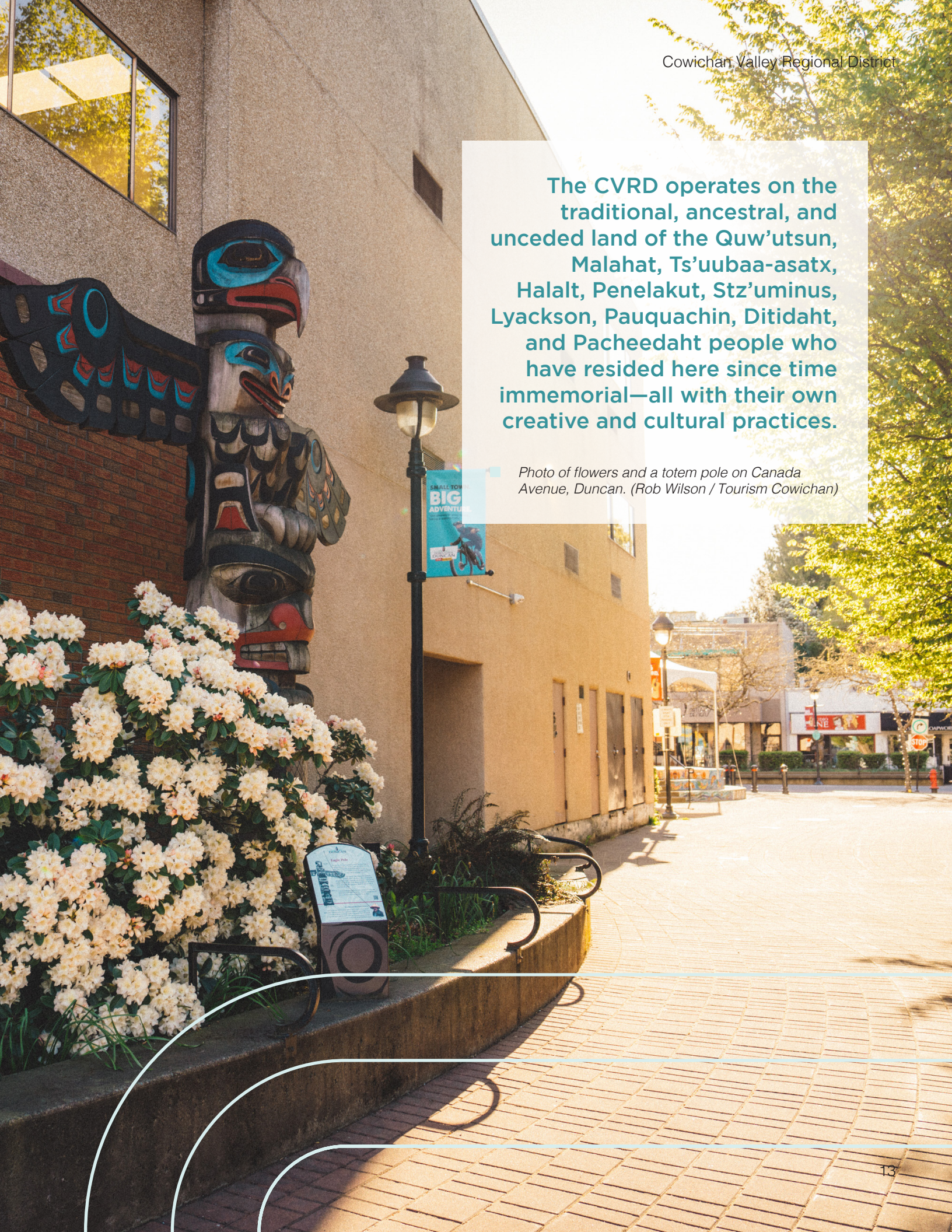
The Cowichan Valley Regional District lies centrally on Vancouver Island between Victoria and Nanaimo. Spanning over 3,400 square kilometres, the regional district covers four municipalities, 10 First Nations, and nine electoral areas. It is home to a variety of rural and urban communities, as well as inspiring natural landscapes—rolling farmlands and wineries, lakes, and several provincial parks connected to the sea and Gulf Islands by the Koksilah, Cowichan, and Chemainus Rivers. The region draws tourists from B.C. and beyond with its rich natural and human history and thriving creative scene.

The CVRD provides a variety of services for the region's residents, such as recycling, emergency planning, economic development, and parks. Arts and culture is a relatively new service function, with the CVRD's Arts and Culture budget established in 2016.

The Regional District oversees 10 regional parks and over 200 community parks (over 2,000 hectares of public parkland), as well as 13 indoor facilities dedicated to sports, recreation, arts, and culture. Notably, the CVRD manages the Cowichan Community Centre, the Cowichan Performing Arts Centre, and several community centres and halls across the region.

The CVRD operates on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded land of the Quw'utsun, Malahat, Ts'uubaa-asatx, Halalt, Penelakut, Stz'uminus, Lyackson, Pauquachin, Ditidaht, and Pacheedaht people who have resided here since time immemorial—all with their own creative and cultural practices.

Photo of flowers and a totem pole on Canada Avenue, Duncan. (Rob Wilson / Tourism Cowichan)





Demographic context

A growing population

94,940 estimated residents in 2023.

+6.4% increase in population from 2016 to 2021.

The Cowichan Valley region is expected to grow by 20,000 people before 2040.

There are over 5,500 Cowichan Tribe members, as the largest First Nation Band in B.C.

A diverse population

12.6% are First Nations or Métis.

7.5% are recent immigrants.

5.6% identify as a person of colour.



■ Data sources: Stats Canada, BC Stats, Hills Strategies, City Population, and the CVRD Economic Development 2023 State of the Economy Report.

A creative population

2.2%

of CVRD residents are employed in arts, entertainment, and recreation.

50%

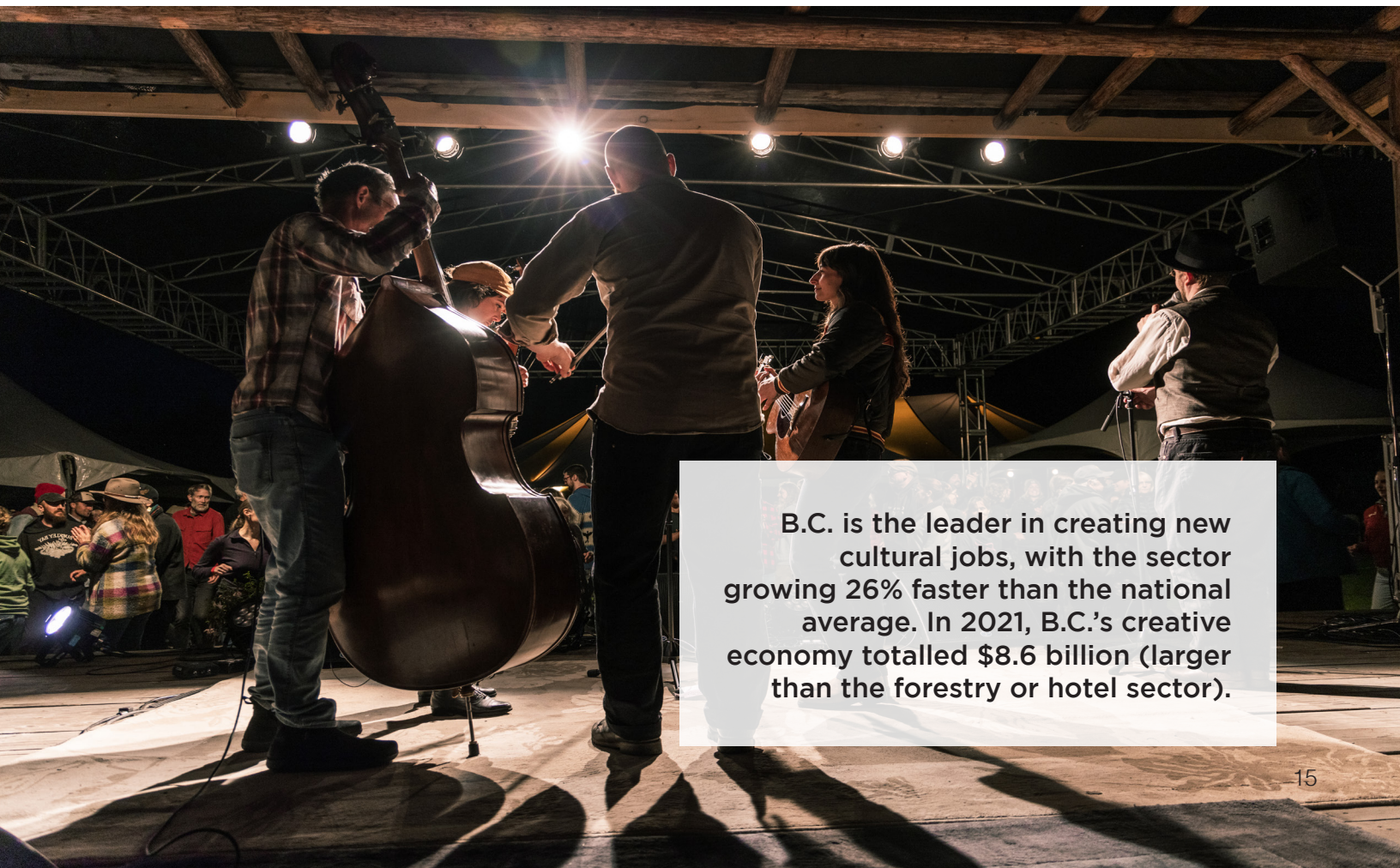
of survey respondents shared that they feel connected to culture in Cowichan.



2x

Arts, culture, and heritage organizations are twice as prevalent (proportional to the population) in rural areas and small towns than in cities.

■ *Photo of the 2024 Cowichan Bluegrass Festival.*
(Tourism Cowichan)



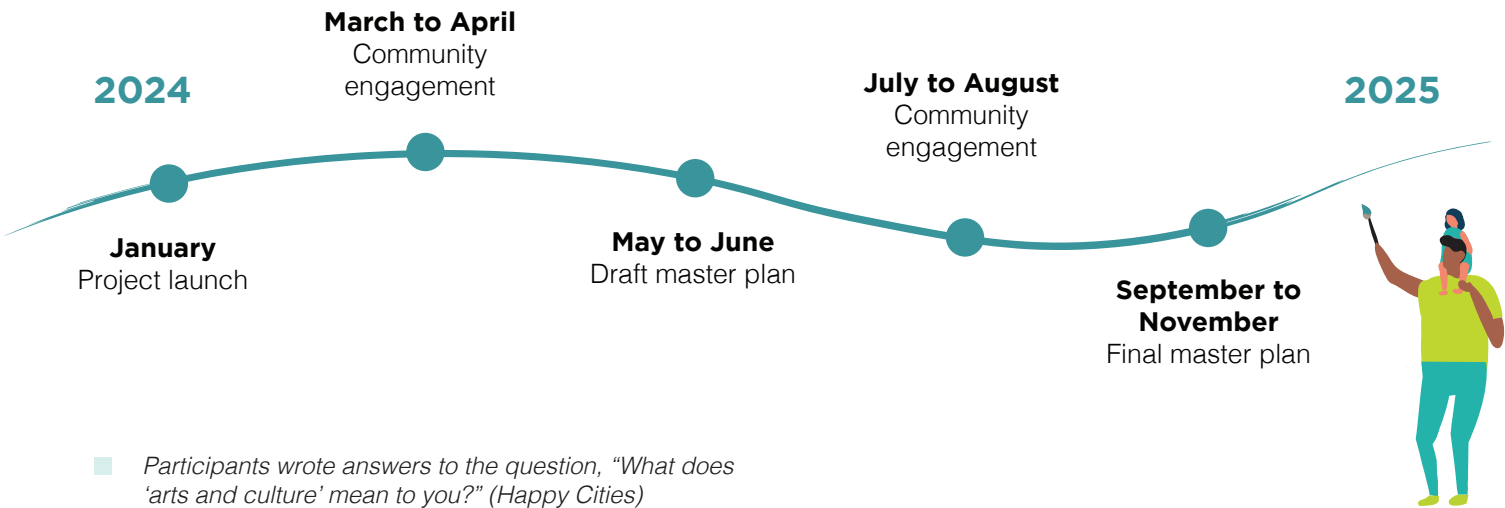
B.C. is the leader in creating new cultural jobs, with the sector growing 26% faster than the national average. In 2021, B.C.'s creative economy totalled \$8.6 billion (larger than the forestry or hotel sector).

Engagement overview

Recognizing that arts and culture are for everyone, the CVRD asked the community to share their priorities through two rounds of engagement—all with the goal of hearing from diverse and representative voices who live, work, and create across the region. This input guided the development of Creative Cowichan.

Read the Engagement Summary Reports at: www.cvr.ca/2089/Arts-Culture



Over 1,500 community members helped shape this Arts and Culture Master Plan.



First round of engagement

The goal of the first round of engagement was to hear community aspirations and priorities from across the region—to inform the direction of the plan and to identify opportunities for the CVRD to support arts and culture.

Activities

<p>Two pop-up events</p> 	<p>Online survey</p> 	<p>Representative phone survey</p> 	<p>Cowichan Valley Arts & Culture Summit</p> 
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Second round of engagement

The goal of the second round of engagement was to present the draft master plan to the community, including action areas and guiding principles, and explore any gaps.

Activities

<p>Six pop-up booths</p> 	<p>Online survey</p> 	<p>Three roundtable discussions</p> 
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A vibrant arts and culture scene is important to 86% of Cowichan residents.

Survey respondents shared that arts and culture offer an important way to celebrate diverse cultures and backgrounds, and create vibrant spaces across the region.

As the top responses, people shared that they would like to see more live performances, public art, art classes, and festivals across the region. People also highlighted that they would like to see collective spaces for artists, culture crawls, public art, a legal graffiti wall, support for local art galleries, a public art gallery, a pottery studio, a cinema, small and shared venues, funding for community-led activities, First Nations cultures, and more.



Participants agreed that local artists and creative organizations need to be supported in practical ways. Over 50% of respondents agreed that they would like to see the CVRD invest more into supporting arts and culture, including through:

- Providing or supporting spaces and facilities
- Organizing and supporting arts and culture programming
- Offering resources for community groups and individuals,
- Promoting events and activities, for example through an online calendar

Sixty per cent of people surveyed said that they find it easy to access arts and culture activities. People also noted barriers that can prevent them from accessing arts and culture across the region, including cost, lack of information, and limited offerings.

People shared that they most often find out about arts and culture events and activities on social media, through word of mouth, or in local news (commonly, the *Valley Voice* and *Cowichan Citizen*).

“The arts are not only important to our lives that affect us on a daily basis but also important to tourism and our economy.”

– Participant

3 Creative strategies

Six strategies and 16 actions shape Creative Cowichan.

These strategies and actions offer practical steps to implement the CVRD's vision to support arts and culture. Detailed sub-actions and tools accompany each action to show how the CVRD may accomplish the goal.

*Priority actions for short-term implementation (within the next one to two years) are indicated with an asterisk.



■ Photo of Miller + Co. Wood Studio and Pottery. (Johann Vincent Photography / Tourism Cowichan)



**“We need to see arts
and culture as important
to our communities as
sports and wine.”**

- Participant

■ *Photo of Arts on the Avenue in Ladysmith. (Paige Owen / Tourism Cowichan)*

Creative strategy 1

Information and resources

Goal: The creative community can access the information, practical tools, and resources needed to realize its aspirations.

1.1. Improve community-wide access to information about arts and culture offerings.

- a) Redevelop the CVRD Arts & Culture webpage as a more standalone site with relevant resources for the public and creative community alike. Requested resources include a link to an arts and culture events calendar, an inventory of public art, an inventory of active arts and culture organizations, information on facilities (availability, insurance requirements, fees, booking process), open and upcoming funding opportunities, workshops and skill-building opportunities, and links to jurisdictional resources.*
- b) Host or support an online calendar to promote arts and culture events, activities, and programs in collaboration with a partner from the creative community or tourism sector.*
- c) Improve public access to arts and culture events and activities through public resources, such as information boards and printed materials at CVRD recreational facilities and parks.

Impact reports (like the CRD Arts & Culture Impact Reports) showcase data on new public art, grant recipients, and highlight community stories each year.



- d) Create an annual cultural impact report to highlight ongoing initiatives and the value of the creative sector, with measurements of achievements and completed actions.*

Community members and arts organizations identified the need for a central place to learn about events and activities. One participant shared, “We need a tool to connect everything together so more folks are aware of what is happening in the Valley.”

1.2. Connect community groups and individuals across the region to understand aspirations and meet unique needs.

- a) Designate a staff member of the CVRD's Arts & Culture Division as a main point of contact for community groups and general inquiries (arts@cvrld.bc.ca).*
- b) Share a quarterly newsletter with relevant information and updates, and use it as a two-way communication tool to request data and resources from community organizations when needed (e.g., data to inform the annual cultural impact report and volunteer callouts).*
- c) Host an annual or biannual Arts & Culture Summit for organizational networking and to hear the priorities of the creative sector across the region.
- d) Consider informal ways to regularly hear from diverse voices across the creative community (for example, through quarterly standing meetings or surveys).
- e) Host ongoing grant writing workshops for arts and culture funding.*



Photo of the 2024 Cowichan Arts & Culture Summit, at the Cowichan Performing Arts Centre, which brought together over 70 voices from the creative community to share their priorities. (Happy Cities)



Policy alignment for creative strategy 1

- CVRD Official Community Plan
- CVRD Strategic Plan
- Cowichan 2050 Regional Collaboration Framework
- Regional Recreation Strategic Plan

Creative strategy 2

Programming

Goal: Regular activities and special events inspire and meet the needs of the community.

2.1. Work with community-serving organizations to provide regional coordination and marketing to support cultural events and activities.

- a) Work with the subregional arts councils and other creative organizations to coordinate marketing opportunities and information regionally.
- b) Work with the CVRD's Economic Development Division to collaborate with Tourism Cowichan on promotion to elevate arts and culture as a key area of focus for regional tourism.
- c) Consider opportunities for the CVRD's Community Services Department to further amplify arts and culture programs, events, and activities (such as through social media or the seasonal recreation guide).*
- d) Foster relationships with local media channels to promote and encourage a collaborative, regional marketing plan for the arts and culture scene.

2.2. Work collaboratively with the CVRD Community Services Department on arts and culture program delivery and offerings.

- a) Respond to community needs around regular CVRD programming and activities (including indoor and outdoor activities).
- b) Improve and develop outdoor spaces to better host arts and culture initiatives.
- c) Work with recreation staff to expand low-barrier creative programming for children and families (such as drop-in and after-school activities).*

Community members would like to see more live performances, public art, art classes, and festivals across the region. One participant shared, "The valley is already a vibrant area full of creatives. However, funding and support are always helpful and having arts opportunities locally encourages people to participate."

2.3. Encourage youth engagement in arts and culture activities and spaces across the region.

- a) Identify youth programming and space needs (learning from current successful initiatives, past initiatives, and working closely with youth, community partners, and/or local schools and jurisdictions).
- b) Support low-barrier and low-cost access to spaces and resources for youth-led and youth-serving initiatives when opportunities arise.

Many programs involve and inspire youth to be creative across the region, including Art in the Park, Cowichan Intercultural Society, Cowichan 2020 Can, Cowichan Tribes Youth Services, Ladysmith Youth Murals, SD Youth Advisory Committee, VIRL and Volume One summer reading clubs, and more!



■ Photo of Herb Rice. (Johann Vincent Photography / Tourism Cowichan)



Policy alignment for creative strategy 2

- CVRD Official Community Plan
- CVRD Strategic Plan
- Cowichan 2050 Regional Collaboration Framework
- Regional Recreation Strategic Plan

Creative strategy 3

Spaces and facilities

Goal: Inclusive and equitable access to spaces and facilities across the region uplift the community’s creative initiatives.

3.1. Increase access to spaces for arts and culture organizations and artists.

- a) Establish a searchable inventory to improve awareness of public and private spaces available to the creative community (considering spaces across sectors, such as hotels, businesses, sports and recreation, schools, and faith-based organizations).
- b) Provide practical resources to support community groups to access facilities, such as resources on rental agreements and insurance.*
- c) Encourage new, non-CVRD spaces and facilities led by community groups and organizations. These should complement existing CVRD services, align with strategic goals, and support best practices (for example, around multi-use spaces). This could range in level of involvement from providing a reference letter when a group applies for funding to indicating available community spaces for rent or sale with interested community groups.

3.2. Review and monitor access to CVRD facilities for arts and culture uses.

- a) Continue to track the use of CVRD-owned indoor facilities (comparing arts and culture, recreation, and unused time). Share findings with appropriate CVRD divisions and jurisdictions to encourage any changes to facility use or new facilities to better meet community needs.
- b) Update the Community Services and Parks and Trails rental and facility use bookings to track outdoor arts and culture initiatives.
- c) Assess the CVRD’s four-year asset management report to ensure that useful data is collected for the Arts & Culture Division.

Community members reiterated the need for facilities, including a mid-size theatre, public art gallery, gallery space for local art, and cinema. One participant shared, “This community is growing. We need more inexpensive venues for arts and culture activities.”



■ Photo of the 2024 Cowichan Bluegrass Festival. (Tourism Cowichan)



■ Photo of the Crofton Hotel, home to the Osborne Bay Pub. (Tyler Cave / Tourism Cowichan)



Policy alignment for creative strategy 3

- CVRD Official Community Plan
- Regional Recreation Strategic Plan

Creative strategy 4

Partnerships and collaborations

Goal: The CVRD facilitates opportunities for collaboration, connection, and support across the creative community.

4.1. Work with jurisdictions and electoral areas to align arts and culture goals, share resources, and build relationships.

- a) Create opportunities to work cross-jurisdictionally with municipalities and electoral area directors to align arts and culture goals, share resources, and build relationships. This could take the form of a new annual meeting for jurisdictional staff or a rotating program that highlights the art in a jurisdiction each year.
- b) Develop ongoing opportunities for the Arts & Culture Division to collaborate internally across the CVRD (with the Recreation, Parks & Trails, Economic Development, and Communications divisions as well as the Land Use Department).

Community members and arts organizations who were engaged hoped to connect youth to more meaningful opportunities to engage with arts and culture. One participant shared, “I’d like to see more done to bridge youth in public schools with local professional artists and performers.”

4.2. Work with First Nations to align arts and culture goals, share resources, and build relationships.

- a) Dedicate staff time and resources to building relationships with First Nations within the context of arts and culture. For example, this could include supporting (reviving) the Indigenous Film Festival annually with access to CVRD facilities, or creating an Indigenous Advisory Council with artists and cultural workers.*
- b) Prioritize attending First Nations cultural events and ceremonies that are open to the public to build genuine relationships, learn about community values and priorities, and identify opportunities to advance reconciliation.*
- c) Provide support, advocacy, and information to local First Nations to help secure arts and culture items to be returned from outside the region.
- d) Continue to explore relationship-building channels with local First Nations through arts and culture.*

4.3. Collaborate with the CVRD’s Economic Development Division to further elevate the value of the creative sector and emphasize the impact of arts and culture on economic sustainability and quality of life.

- a) Consider opportunities through Economic Development to strengthen partnerships between the Arts & Culture Division and Tourism Cowichan, the chambers of commerce, and business improvement associations to elevate arts and culture and meet community needs.
- b) Facilitate access to festival funds from Tourism Cowichan to support off-season events and complement the timing of existing efforts (for example, a rotating gallery showcased during Dine Sip Cowichan).
- c) Develop measurable criteria to highlight the creative sector’s economic impact to be included within the State of the Cowichan Economy Report (for example, establish one to three new key metrics for the Economic Development Division to report on).

4.4. Investigate future opportunities to develop collaborative initiatives with key community-serving organizations across the region.

- a) Foster a collaborative relationship with Vancouver Island University (VIU) and School Districts 79 and 68 to meet youth needs around arts and culture through open and regular communication channels.
- b) Explore the development of a tourism passport program to encourage residents and visitors to explore cultural facilities and programs.
- c) Consider a partnership with the Vancouver Island Regional Library to launch a culture pass for low-barrier access to ‘check out’ cultural experiences such as museums.

“Any policies relating to heritage and culture should centre the local Indigenous worldview, and the reclamation of places/ intangible heritage elements connected to Indigenous history should be prioritized.”

– CVRD Social Equity Considerations - Companion to Bylaw 4343

Policy alignment for creative strategy 4

- CVRD Official Community Plan
- CVRD Strategic Plan
- Cowichan 2050 Regional Collaboration Framework
- Regional Recreation Strategic Plan



“We need to brand the
Cowichan Valley as a
destination for the arts.”

– Participant

Photo of the Duncan Farmer’s Market—the largest
on Vancouver Island and operational year round.
(Tyler Cave / Tourism Cowichan)





“The arts free us to revision the worlds we’re in; and imagine worlds that might be; they celebrate life’s joys and confront its horrors; they entertain and inform by amazing us with portrayals of who we are.”

– Participant

■ Photo of the Miller + Co. booth at the Fall Makers Market. (Tourism Cowichan)

Creative strategy 5

Funding opportunities

Goal: The CVRD supports the community in unlocking opportunities to access creative funding.

5.1. Improve access to the CVRD's Arts and Culture Grants to better represent diverse community needs and voices.

- a) Revisit the Arts & Culture Adjudication Committee membership and the terms of reference to better represent diverse community voices and organizations along with the sub-regional arts councils (for example, incorporate dedicated positions with honoraria for underrepresented and equity-seeking voices).*
- b) Update the Arts & Culture Grants terms of reference, eligibility, application process, and reporting process to meet decolonization and accessibility goals (expanding opportunities for new creative initiatives; reducing application barriers; and allowing initiatives to be measured in both quantitative and qualitative ways, and through different means, including written, oral and visual).*

5.2. Increase the Arts & Culture Division's revenue and capacity to meet the needs of the CVRD and the community.

- a) Increase capacity of staffing hours to meet needs of the Arts & Culture Division and implement Creative Cowichan.*
- b) Move toward maximum requisition available over the next five years in order to dedicate the resources necessary to implement the master plan's actions.
- c) Ensure the Arts & Culture Division applies for available federal and provincial funding streams to support CVRD goals and regional initiatives.

Community members and organizations who were engaged highlighted the need for arts and culture to be accessible to all, including financially. One participant shared, "Arts and culture is a key component within our lives both as individuals and as a community. It needs to be accessible to all regardless of socioeconomic factors."

5.3. Increase CVRD funding streams to meet current and future community needs.

- a) Increase the CVRD’s Arts & Culture Grants fund (reflective of Function 400 increases) to address funding gaps in needs of existing grant recipients and expand to new grant recipients.*
- b) Establish a grant program or scholarship within the Arts & Culture Grants to dedicate funding to under-represented arts and culture groups and individuals (including emerging artists and Indigenous artists).*
- c) Explore opportunities to increase the CVRD Youth Scholarships amount to reflect current needs.*
- d) Build funding into area director budgets for specific arts and culture grant-in-aid initiatives (for example, towards public art, special events, or a neighbourhood small grant program).
- e) Explore alternative and sustainable funding sources to support arts and culture efforts within the CVRD (not limited to private partnerships, sponsorship, and collaborations with business and industry, and community foundations—for example, a matching program for funds that meet community needs around arts and culture).

The Cowichan Foundation is a non-profit registered society concerned about the community and its needs, including arts and education. Over the last three years, the Cowichan Foundation has hosted an MC Poetry Contest to showcase the talent of young poets across the region.



Comparable B.C. regional districts arts and culture budgets receive more funding annually towards grant streams. For example, Comox Valley Regional District has over \$100,000 in funding for arts and culture grants for community groups and organizations (compared to \$30,700 in arts and culture community grants from the CVRD in 2023).



Policy alignment for creative strategy 5

- CVRD Official Community Plan
- CVRD Strategic Plan
- Regional Recreation Strategic Plan

Creative strategy 6

Public art

Goal: Public art is celebrated and incentivized as an asset across the region.

6.1. Identify and encourage new opportunities for public art.

- a) Explore locations and partnerships for a legal graffiti wall.
- b) Develop a framework for the CVRD to formally support murals, public art, and temporary art exhibits at indoor and outdoor CVRD facilities.*
- c) Work with the CVRD Community Services Department to catalogue existing public art and identify locations for future public art at CVRD facilities, parks, and trails.

The Capital Regional District supports LandMarks, a public art database to map and visually showcase over 180 artworks by location, artist, and discipline.

6.2. Improve resources and policies to support public art.

- a) Develop a coordinated approach to public art asset management across the region (for example, to inform a public art database).
- b) Review and recommend updates to CVRD bylaws and policies that impact arts and culture (for example, land use policies, transportation policies, public realm bylaws, and regulations on community-led activities and events).
- c) Adopt best practices around community amenity contributions and public art contributions for multi-family and commercial development through the CVRD's Land Use Services Department (such as a 1% for the arts fund).*
- d) Support jurisdictions across the region in advocating for best practices around community amenity contributions and public art contributions.



Community members and organizations who were engaged would love to see more public art across the region—to inspire creativity and joy, beautiful places, and foster community identity and pride. One participant shared, “Public art is so important to a community. We need to incentivize new builds to include art in their planning.”

Community members and organizations who were engaged noted the need for adequate funding to support existing and new initiatives. One participant shared, “Both the arts (especially performing arts) and sports contribute significantly to the wellbeing of the community and should be equally supported through our tax dollars over time.”



■ Photo of a totem pole on Station Street, Duncan. (Rob Wilson / Tourism Cowichan)

Policy alignment for creative strategy 6

- CVRD Official Community Plan
- CVRD Strategic Plan
- Corporate Strategic Asset Management Plan
- Community Benefits Policy for the Electoral Areas

Future moves

During the development of this plan, the community voiced a number of needs and aspirations that are out of scope of the Arts & Culture Division's current capacity and resources. This feedback generally aligned with the CVRD's long-term goals, and is included as key learnings that may be relevant at a future time.

- a) Encourage an integrated planning approach that recognizes the broader needs of the region (for example, coordination between arts and culture, heritage, housing, and transportation).
- b) Support private and community-led initiatives to maintain existing facilities and establish new arts and culture facilities where need is identified (such as a public art gallery, cinema, or mid-size theatre) by exploring access to internal or external funding sources.
- c) Investigate options for ongoing collaborations and technical performing arts training programs through School Districts 79 and 68 and Vancouver Island University (VIU).
- d) Explore deeper cost-related discounts for arts programming and cultural events, (for example, a discount to cultural special events or programming with a low-barrier application process, such as a leisure access program).
- e) Include representative voices from the creative community in early planning stages to ensure that new or redeveloped CVRD facilities meet community needs.
- f) Set up public tax-deductible donations or bequests to the Arts & Culture Division to support capacity building, programming, and operations of local arts organizations (comparable to those of the Capital Regional District or Comox Valley Regional District).
- g) Assess the Arts & Culture Division's needs to initiate a public approval process to expand Function 400 funding (increasing the maximum requisition available) to dedicate the resources necessary to support arts and culture beyond the current master plan.

As of 2024, the Comox Valley Regional District's tax requisition is set at \$0.025 per \$1,000 (Bylaw 278) compared to CVRD's at \$0.01029 per \$1,000.



“Culture works as a binding force that signals what a communities values are. Culture is how we express ourselves.”

– Participant

Photo of a mural in Chemainus. (Tourism Cowichan)

4 Next steps

Creative Cowichan

Grounded in the community's needs and the regional district's goals, Creative Cowichan provides strategic direction for the CVRD to support arts and culture.

Creative Cowichan offers guidance to the Arts & Culture Division over the next five years, with priority actions highlighted for short-term implementation. After this time, the master plan will be reviewed and updated. This will ensure that the CVRD continues to meet the needs of a changing community, adhere to best practices in arts and culture, and reflect the Arts & Culture Division's growing capacity.

"[Arts and culture] comprises my social life, my community involvement and sense of belonging. It feeds my creativity, it brings me great satisfaction and joy."

– Participant



The CVRD recognizes the importance of allocating adequate resources to ensure the success of this master plan. This includes increasing funding and staff time for the Arts & Culture Division to pursue high-priority actions in the short term and implement the majority of these actions within five years. Through this commitment, the CVRD can fulfill its vision to support arts and culture across the region.



“A life without the music, theatre, dance, literature and visual art, would be very flat, dull and meaningless.”

– Participant

■ Photo of public art at Ride Island in Cowichan. (Tom Richards / Tourism Cowichan)



**“Culture is the
collective identity of a
community through the
expression of individual
experience.”**

– Participant

■ *Photo of carving by Coast Salish artist Herb Rice.
(Johann Vincent / Tourism Cowichan)*

Creative Cowichan Appendices

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Policy alignment

Key policy alignment for Creative Cowichan's strategies and actions include:

**CVRD Official
Community Plan
(Bylaw 4373)**

Complete Communities | DCO.3 Support multi-purpose warehouse/studio space in light industrial designations.

Arts, Culture & Heritage

DC.24 Encourage cultural expression through public art pieces that reflect diverse community backgrounds, interests and needs. Explore funding mechanisms, such as amenity charge bylaws, to help create more public art.

DC.25 Identify cultural conservation issues and update the Community Heritage Register to protect and enhance landscapes, buildings and features of cultural significance. Include First Nations in the consideration of sites, landscapes and buildings.

DC.26 Support arts and culture by sponsoring events and funding infrastructure upgrades.

DC.29 Support access to cultural, archival and museum collections that facilitate learning about the Cowichan Valley's past and present.

**CVRD Official
Community Plan
(Bylaw 4373)**

Employment Lands | RP.09 Communicate the value of economic activity in the region to the public.

Tourism | RP.30 Encourage the growth of tourism as a keystone industry that will help the region diversify its economy.

Parks, Recreation, Heritage and Culture

DCO.18 Provide a wide range of parks and recreational opportunities aligned with community, tourism and resident needs.

DCO.19 Sponsor artistic and cultural pursuits and activities.

Village Areas | DC.52 Enhance village areas with arts, culture and community facilities.

Urban Areas | DC.56 Provide a rich number of arts, culture, and community facilities.

Parks & Recreation | DC.32 Provide access to a diverse range of recreation programs and services in communities across the region. Explore innovative program and service delivery that can be facilitated outdoors or in schools and community halls through shared use agreements.

Tourism

RPO.13 Expand tourism opportunities, including agritourism.

RPO.14 Expand tourism infrastructure and explore the potential of off-season activities and attractions.

Community Design

DC.18 Support shared use agreements between the school district and Regional District, community groups and local First Nations to make greater community use of school buildings and lands.

DC.16 Support development that contributes to healthy and happy public spaces suitable for 8- and 80-year-olds, following the spirit of the 8-80 community framework.

Innovative Economy: RP.24 Recognize the value of post-secondary institutions as key to innovation and collaborate with VIU on economic development initiatives, such as innovation hubs or maker spaces.

**CVRD Strategic
Plan 2023-2026**

1.1 Support community-led reconciliation and relationship building through engagement with First Nations

2.4 Enhance community engagement and responsiveness with a variety of strategies including: website improvements and public information campaigns to raise awareness of the CVRD and its services.

4.1 Implement a new reporting regime that includes periodic strategic planning updates, project updates, and tracking of strategic initiatives.

5.2 Identify potential initiatives for investment and partnerships to enhance community public spaces in our rural centres through the Local Area Planning process

6.1 Encourage collaboration and coordination on the development of Official Community Plans, land use policies, and bylaws across Electoral Areas, Municipalities, and First Nations

12.3 Increase regional service coordination to support cost efficiency.

**Cowichan
2050 (Regional
Collaboration
Framework:
Backgrounder)**

Arts and Culture | Directions from across the region

Ensure that arts and culture can flourish.

Recognize and support artistic and cultural pursuits and activities.

Foster community partnerships in support of arts and culture.

Strengthen relationships with area First Nations.

Integrate arts and culture into community planning, recreation programming, and economic development.

Encourage a strong community identity and pride through arts, culture, heritage and recreation.

Arts and Culture | Looking forward

Continuing to provide support to the Cowichan Culture Project and the development and maintenance of the Cowichan Culture directory. [www.cowichanculture.ca]

Continuing the community-focused work of Cultural Connections.

**Regional
Recreation
Strategic Plan**

Strategy #1: Ensure that governance structures and guiding documents are reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

Establish regular timeframes / schedules (e.g. every 3 - 5 years) to review the Terms of Reference for Commissions, Committees, and other entities involved in the oversight and guidance of recreation services.

Strategy #5: Increase regional collaboration and synergies across all aspects of community services delivery and planning.

Partnering on major event hosting such as the B.C. Summer Games.

Inventory all past community services and related strategic planning (including plans developed for recreation, parks, leisure, trails, arts and culture, emergency response, etc.) and develop a future (10 year) schedule to align future planning efforts.

Strategy #7: Over the next five years, further explore specific needs related to arts and culture in the region.

**Community
Benefits Policy for
the Electoral Areas
(DRAFT)**

Cash in lieu of facilities provided pursuant to this policy should be placed in statutory reserve funds to be spent, with accrued interest, on community amenities.

**Corporate Strategic
Asset Management
Plan (2020 Citizen's
Document)**

Delivering a State of Infrastructure Report every four years.

Organizational chart of region

This umbrella chart visualizes the layers of institutions that support arts and culture in the Cowichan region. It is intended as a snapshot to understand the interplay of current support to the creative community— from the provincial to the local level.



Provincial

- Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport
- Gaming BC
- BC Live
- BC Arts Council
- Destination BC
- BIA BC
- BC Chamber of Commerce



Regional

- CVRD Arts & Culture Division
- CVRD Economic Development Cowichan
- Tourism Cowichan
- 4V1 Social Enterprise Group



Local

- Municipalities
- First Nations
- Electoral Areas
- Subregional arts councils
- Business improvement associations
- Local chambers of commerce

Provincial

- Gaming BC
- Ministry of Culture, Sport and Community Development
- BC Live
- BC Arts Council
- BC Tourism
- Business Improvement Areas of BC
- BIA BC
- BC Chamber of Commerce
- Arts BC

Regional

- CVRD
- Tourism Cowichan
- 4V1 Social Enterprise Group

Local

Municipalities

- City of Duncan
- Municipality of North Cowichan
- Town of Ladysmith
- Town of Lake Cowichan

First Nations

- Quw'utsun First Nation
- Stz'uminus First Nation
- Penelakut Tribe
- Lyackson First Nation
- Halalt First Nation
- Ts'uubaa-asatx Nation
- Ditidaht First Nation
- Pacheedaht First Nations
- Malahat Nation
- Pauquachin Nation

Electoral Areas

- Area A
- Area B
- Area C
- Area D
- Area E
- Area F
- Area G
- Area H
- Area I

Subregional arts councils

- Arts Council of Ladysmith and District (ACLD)
- Chemainus Valley Cultural Arts Society (CVCAS)
- Cowichan Lake Arts & Culture Society (CLACS)
- Cowichan Valley Arts Council (CVAC)
- Cowichan South Art Guild (CSAG)

Business improvement associations

- Chemainus Business Improvement Association
- Cowichan Bay Improvement Association
- Downtown Duncan Business Improvement Association
- Ladysmith Downtown Business Association

Local chambers of commerce

- Chemainus Chamber of Commerce
- Cowichan Lake District Chamber of Commerce
- Duncan Cowichan Chamber of Commerce
- Ladysmith Chamber of Commerce
- South Cowichan Chamber of Commerce

Snapshot of CVRD facilities

The following chart is intended to provide a 2024 snapshot of the CVRD's current arts and culture facilities. These indoor and outdoor facilities and parks are operated and maintained by the CVRD. Facilities with amenities that are available to the community and relevant to arts and culture are also noted. Programming at these facilities is operated both by the CVRD and through community-led initiatives.

Indoor facilities

- Centennial Hall: Stage
- Cowichan Performing Arts Centre: 730 seat theatre; rehearsal hall; recording and media studio; art gallery; lounge and reception room
- Cowichan Community Centre: Multi-purpose hall; Heritage Hall; multi-use meeting rooms; 2 dance studios
- Cowichan Community Centre Arena
- Cowichan Lake Sports Arena: Multi-purpose rooms
- Honeymoon Bay Hall: Gymnasium with stage
- Kerry Park Recreation Centre: 2 multi-purpose rooms
- Shawnigan Lake Community Centre: Small theatre space; dance studio; 2 multi-purpose rooms
- Mesachie Lake Hall: Gymnasium with stage
- Mill Bay Community Hall: Multi-use hall
- Youbou Community Bowling Alley
- Youbou Community Hall: Gymnasium with stage



Regional parks and trails

- Bute Island
- Chemainus River Park
- Cobble Hill Mountain Recreational Area
- Cowichan Valley Trail
- Kinsol Trestle Trail
- Sandy Pool Regional Park
- Spectacle Lake Park
- Stoney Hill Regional Park
- Osborne Bay Park



Community Parks

- Arbutus Park: Shelter
- Bald Mountain Park
- Bear Lake Park
- Blue Heron Park: Shelter
- Boatswain Park
- Briarwood Park
- Bright Angel Park: Two shelters; amphitheatre
- Cees and Miep Hof Memorial Park
- Central Park (by Honeymoon Bay Hall)
- Cherry Point Nature Park
- Coverdale Watson Park
- Cowichan Bay Boat Launch
- Currie Park
- Deloume Park
- Diana, Princess of Wales Park
- Dougan Park (Elsie Miles): Shelter
- Farnsworth Park
- Galland Road Park
- Galliers Road Park
- Gibsons Park
- Glenora Trails Head Park: Shelter
- Granfield Way
- Hammond Way Trail
- Hecate Park
- Hollings Creek Park
- Huckleberry Park
- Jack Fleetwood Memorial Park
- Kingburne Park
- Lily Beach Park
- Manley Creek Park
- Maple Grove Park
- Maplewood Park
- Marble Bay Park
- Masons Beach Park
- Mayo Lake Park
- Melrose Park
- Memorial Park
- Mesachie Lake Park
- Mile 77 Park
- Mill Bay Boat Launch
- Mill Bay Community Wharf
- Mill Bay Nature Park
- Old Baldy Mountain Park
- Old Mill Park
- Price Park
- Quarry Nature Park (Cleasby Bike Park)
- Recreation Road Boat Launch
- Saltair Centennial Park
- Shawnigan Hills Athletic Park
- Shawnigan Wharf Park
- Silvermine Park
- Stocking Creek Park
- Stoker Park
- Tom Bannister Park
- William Rivers Park
- William Shearing Park
- Yellow Point Park
- Youbou Little League Park



Happy Cities

Happy Cities is an urban planning, research, and engagement firm based in Vancouver and Halifax. We learn and play across disciplines to turn evidence into action for happier, healthier and more inclusive communities—working with cities, developers, and non-profits around the world on:

- Urban planning and design
- Community engagement
- Research
- Housing