



Open Call to Indigenous Artists
Request for Proposals: Two Welcome Figures for the new Cowichan District Hospital

Submission deadline: August 29, 2025, 11:59 pm PST

Budget: \$350,000

Important Dates

August 5, 2025	Request for Proposals circulated
August 29, 2025	Submission deadline for Proposals
September 12, 2025	Shortlisted artists notified to proceed with Concept Plans
October 03, 2025	Deadline for expanded Concept Plans
October 2025	Interviews and selection of artist
October 2025	Commencement of work
December 31, 2026	Completion of work
January 2027	Proposed Welcome Figures raising

Island Health is seeking an experienced Indigenous artist, or artists, working in the local traditions to create site-specific artwork for the new Cowichan District Hospital (CDH), currently under construction in North Cowichan, BC and scheduled to open for patient care in 2027.

Island Health wishes to acknowledge that the new hospital is located on the unceded and unsurrendered traditional territory of the Cowichan Tribes through the commissioning of two (2) carved Welcome Figures. The two Figures will welcome all to the land on which the new hospital is being built.

This is an open call for artists to provide their proposed approach to creating original site-specific artwork for two (2) Welcome Figures for the main (West) entrance to the new hospital.

Please carefully read the full RFP (Request for Proposals) to learn more about the project and the details of this open call.

Territorial Acknowledgement

Island Health humbly and respectfully acknowledges Cowichan Tribes, on whose unceded traditional territory and ancestral lands the new hospital is being built, recognizing their stewardship and protection of the lands since time immemorial.

Service Acknowledgement

Island Health also acknowledges the new hospital will serve the Stz'uminus, Le'eyqsun, Spune'luxutth, MÁLEXEŁ, Xeláltxw, Ditidaht, Pacheedaht, Ts'uubaa-asatx, Métis, Inuit, urban population and Quw'utsun peoples.

Art@CDH Initiative at the Cowichan District Hospital Replacement Project

The Project Vision for the future Cowichan District Hospital is to build the most welcoming place of healing and hope for all patients, health care providers and visitors. Integrating art and thoughtful design into the construction of hospitals and other health care facilities can reduce stress and lead to improved outcomes for patients, according to studies. Art promotes healing and enhances the quality of health care experiences for all.

As part of Island Health's commitment to Cultural Safety, the CDHRP emphasizes Indigenous communities interpreting and implementing the integration of art in the design of the new hospital. Culturally safe services and care will include areas for Indigenous protocol, a Gathering Space for larger families, cultural safety training for people involved in the build and day-to-day hospital operations and will incorporate Hul'q'umi'num storytelling and signage. This work is guided by ongoing relationship-building with the local Nations and honours the knowledge, leadership and traditions of Indigenous artists and communities.

The CDHRP is being delivered by the Nuts'a'maat Alliance, whose partners include Island Health, EllisDon Corporation, Parkin Architects, BC Infrastructure Benefits and Infrastructure BC.

The art initiative at the Cowichan District Hospital (Art@CDH) is the strategic integration of purpose-driven art and graphics to create a healing environment for patients, families, care staff, and community members. An enriched healing environment promotes emotional and psychological wellness, reduces stress, and fosters a sense of welcome and inclusion. The interconnected relationship of art and wellness humanizes the hospital experience, plays a vital role in community bonding, and is an intrinsic part of healing for Indigenous communities. In short, art is medicine.

Highlighting Indigenous Artwork

The inclusion of Indigenous artwork in a hospital environment can bring comfort and a sense of home. It is the culmination of years of teachings, passed from one generation to the next. Indigenous art demonstrates history, traditions, resilience and a connection to the people and land. As part of Island Health's ongoing commitment to supporting Reconciliation in healthcare, Indigenous artwork is key to creating culturally safe care journeys in the future Cowichan District Hospital. This approach reflects our responsibility to uphold the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)¹, and British Columbia's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (DRIPA)². It also aligns with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and responds to

¹ United Nations, Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, A/RES/61/295, UNGAOR, 61st Sess, Supp No 53, UN Doc A/RES/61/295 (2007).

² United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, S.C. 2021, c 14.

the findings of the In Plain Sight³ report, which highlighted the urgent need to address Indigenous-specific racism in health care. By creating space for Indigenous voices, stories and expressions in the hospital environment, Island Health is taking tangible steps toward building respectful, culturally safe health care experiences in partnership with Indigenous peoples and Nations.

Location

The two (2) Welcome Figures will be installed at the main (west) entrance, at 6775 Bell McKinnon Road.



Budget

The total budget for the two (2) Welcome Figures is \$350,000, which includes (but is not limited to): artist fee, detailed design, transport, engineering and fabrication.

Island Health will provide log procurement, log preparation, construction coordination and installation.

Island Health will provide the artist with two (2) red cedar logs of a height sufficient to create two (2) finished 17-foot carved figures.

Welcome Figure Specifications

- *Welcome Figures Dimensions:* Each of the two (2) Figures will be a finished height of 17-feet tall. Lateral projections (based on the distance between the bases for the two Figures) no more than two (2) feet.
- *Welcome Figures Design:* The Figures will be visible from all sides by passing patients, families, staff and visitors. The Figures will be visible from Bell-McKinnon Road. Preference is for a full-

³ Turpel-Lafond, Mary Ellen. In Plain Sight: Addressing Indigenous-specific Racism and Discrimination in B.C. Health Care. Government of British Columbia, 2020.

round Welcome Figures design. The Figures will be free-standing, and consideration needs to be given to stabilization, which will be coordinated in collaboration with the construction team. The design must express authentic Coast Salish form line style.

- *Welcome Figures Carving/Construction*: Artists will need to organize their own carving shed/area for their log during the carving and build process. Inclusion of mentoring opportunities for young and emerging artists and succession planning is encouraged.
- *Working with the Project Team*: The artist(s) must be willing to work with a team, which includes the log provider and structural consultant. Artists will be required to provide bi-monthly progress updates.
- *Timeline for Welcome Figures Completion*: The two (2) Welcome Figures must be completed and ready for installation by late 2026/early 2027. The Figures will be installed, and a blessing ceremony will be conducted at the unveiling.
- *Welcome Figures Transport*: The Artist will be responsible for transporting the prepared logs from Island timber Co., 110 Thunder Road, Mill Bay, BC to their carving shed. The Artist will be responsible for transporting the two (2) completed Welcome Figures to 6775 Bell McKinnon Road.

Eligibility Criteria

Artists responding to this open call to submit Proposals must meet at least one of the following criteria, in order of preference:

- Members of the **Cowichan Tribes***
- **First Nations artists** from the hospital's catchment area.
- **Coast Salish artists** with demonstrated knowledge and practice in Coast Salish art forms

In addition to the above artist must meet the following criteria:

- As part of a collaborative process, willingness to share their work-in-progress and engage in dialogue with community members and Elders, as appropriate, and as guided by cultural practices
- As part of a collaborative process, willingness to participate in a collaborative session with the project team to explore and incorporate storytelling elements into the design, ensuring cultural relevance and narrative depth

*Preference will be given to Cowichan Tribes artists.

Selection Process

The process will be conducted in two phases and will be guided by a selection panel with deep knowledge of Coast Salish and Cowichan artistic traditions and practices. The selection panel, composed of art professionals and Indigenous community representatives, will review and evaluate all submissions. The panel will assess proposals based on artistic merit, cultural alignment, feasibility, and impact, and will recommend the artist for commission.

During Phase 1 of the selection process, the selection panel will review submitted proposals and create a shortlist. The three highest ranking proposals will move to Phase 2 of the selection process. Artists who are shortlisted will receive an honorarium of \$1,000 to help offset the costs incurred to develop a Concept Plan and acknowledge the value of the work undertaken to prepare a Concept Plan.

For Phase 2, shortlisted artists are asked to create a Concept Plan and provide an expanded written proposal. The selection panel will review Concept Plans and arrange interviews with artists. After the interview process has been completed, the panel will award the contract to the selected artist.

- **Phase 1: Initial Applications**

- An Open Request for Proposals will be circulated. Artists are asked to submit:
 - Provide a written proposal comprehensively addressing the project's goals, requirements and evaluation criteria. It should articulate the proposer's understanding of the project, propose a solution to demonstrate relevant experience and provide a realistic timeline and budget.
 - An artist statement
 - Resume/CV (if available)
 - Portfolio of past work (or images of their previous work - up to 10 images)
 - Media publications (as applicable)
 - Two references, with contact information
- A selection panel will review submissions using the eligibility and selection criteria.
 - A shortlist of artists will be recommended to proceed.
 - Shortlisted artists will receive an honorarium of \$1,000 per proposal to develop a detailed Concept Plan and provide an expanded artist statement. Artists are limited to submitting one (1) proposal.
 - Interviews will be conducted with shortlisted artists who have submitted the requirements for Phase 2.

- **Phase 2: Concept Plan Development and Final Selection**

- The panel will reconvene to review the Concept Plans.
- Final evaluations will be based on the Evaluation Criteria
- One artist will be recommended for the commission.

Evaluation Criteria

- Artistic merit, creativity, quality of proposed artwork
- Demonstrate the potential impact of the proposed artwork
- Demonstrated feasibility to complete the project in terms of the proposed budget, timeline, implementation, safety and maintenance
- Experience in designing and carving traditional Welcome Figures, including relief carving, panel and round style, and painting (examples of past work to be provided)
- Willing to build their Welcome Figures according to the Welcome Figures Specifications, described above

Selection of Panelists

- The selection panel will consist of 3 to 5 members selected from the local community and recommended by the CDHRP art team, based on their expertise and connection to Cowichan region art styles, history, and cultural knowledge
- All panelists will attend an orientation session to understand the project scope
- Panelists will receive an honorarium for their participation (exception: Island Health contract team members)

RFP Submission Instructions

Interested artists must submit their Proposal in writing, including:

- Include Artist CV/Resume of carving expertise and experience, with full contact information. Please provide your Band name and Band number
- Digital images (up to 10) of examples of previously completed work (a website link may be included)
- Demonstrate experience in designing and carving traditional Welcome Figures, including relief carving, panel and round style, and painting
- Two references, including contact information

Please email the above submission documents to art.newcdh@islandhealth.ca. In the subject line, please use the following format: RFP Your Name. Up to 10 images may be submitted using the following format: jpg, PDF, with a maximum file size of 2MB per image.

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Assistance

If you require assistance with the application process, please contact Emem (Mimi) Okpongete, Project Manager, Indigenous Relations team at art.newcdh@islandhealth.ca.

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Appendices

- Curatorial Vision (Appendix 1)

Appendix 1

Art@CDH curatorial vision

Qushintul / Walking Together will be a visual and cultural expression of shared presence, care, and connection. Through a range of integrated media – including framed commissioned art, large-scale digitally printed graphics & murals, interpretive exhibitions, and sculptural installations – *Qushintul / Walking Together* will highlight themes of land, language, history, Indigenous teachings, and community belonging. In a hospital setting, where people experience some of life's most challenging moments, art plays a vital role in creating a calm healing environment that is welcoming, grounding, and inclusive.

At its core, *Qushintul / Walking Together* is about the journey of collective healing – between individuals, communities, and the land. This collection will be rooted in deep respect for the traditional territories of the Quw'utsun' Hul'q'umi'num'-speaking peoples, whose languages, stories, and presence remain foundational to the Cowichan Valley and all who inhabit it. *Qushintul / Walking Together* will include other local Indigenous populations within the hospital's catchment area. It will also include the layered histories of other communities who have made vital contributions to the region – including South Asian, Japanese Canadian, and Chinese Canadian – as well as other community partners and cultural institutions.

The art initiative at the Cowichan District Hospital will not only be a representation of the region's past and present – it will also be an invitation to all peoples of the Cowichan Valley. An invitation to walk together – across cultures and histories, across differences and shared humanity – towards a future shaped by inclusion, respect, and compassion.