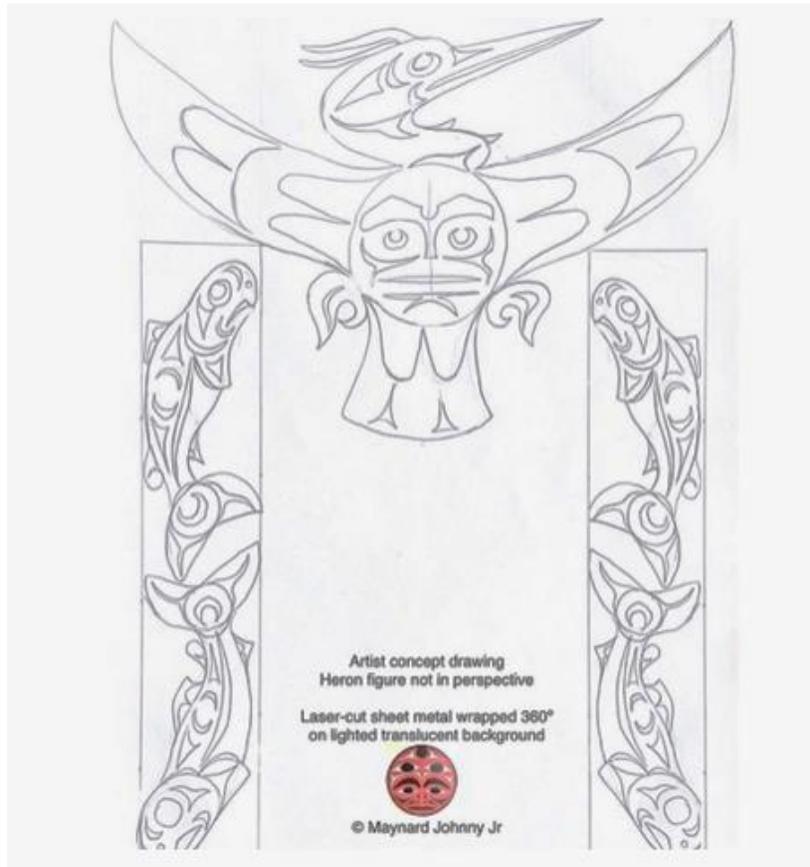


CHEMAINUS SALISH WELCOME ARCH A STRONG STEP TOWARDS RECONCILIATION

Joint artistic project offers opportunity to bridge cultural divide and revitalize local economy



Example of Welcome Arch provided by Chemainus Festival of Murals Society

COURTENAY, 8 December 2022 – The Chemainus Festival of Murals Society, alongside the Penelakut First Nations, the Municipality of North Cowichan and local community organizations are embarking on a unique and collaborative First Nations artistic creation, as part of Island Coastal Economic Trust’s [Community Placemaking program](#).

The new and permanent piece of outdoor public art will be placed in Waterwheel Park and has a significant role in facilitating public gathering around a culturally and historically unique creation.

“The new Chemainus Salish Welcome Arch comes at a pivotal moment for us,” says Tom Andrews, President Chemainus Festival of Murals Society.

Designed and led by Penelakut artist Maynard Johnny Jr., the arch will consist of five-metre cylindrical supporting posts, incorporating a salmon theme, with a horizontal arch across with the theme of a Great Blue heron, regarded as the 'sentinel' of the coast. The inside of the plastic tubing will be illuminated by LED lights.

"This has been a real community effort towards reconciliation and economic rebuilding, utilizing a diversity of local capacity," says Tom. "The installation of the public art piece on the historic village site symbolically allows Penelakut Tribe to take a step in reclaiming their cultural history."

Since time immemorial, the site where Waterwheel Park is today was the original location of the Penelakut Village. This was prior to the community's displacement to Kuper Island (now Penelakut Island), a 20-minute ferry ride from Chemainus.

While the town has long been reputed for its outdoor murals, which draw in local and international tourists, the pandemic provoked a substantial limitation on visitors. The decrease in commercial activity, coupled with the aging factor of many murals including the deterioration of an earlier wooden arch that sat on the same site in Waterwheel Park, provided an opportune moment to confront their history.

"The removal of this previous piece created an opportunity to install a new welcome arch that better represents the community of Chemainus and marks a new partnership with the Penelakut Tribe," says Tom. "Our community has historically limited First Nation involvement in the creation of our murals. It is well past time to set a new direction and we hope this project is a catalyst for future projects."

As Truth and Reconciliation efforts and momentum grow across the country, the First Nations Welcome Arch in Chemainus sends a strong message that the community's actions are aimed at confronting an unequitable history.

"We are honoured to support this inspiring project that breathes life into continuing reconciliation among Penelakut people and residents of Chemainus," says Island Coastal Economic Trust CEO Brodie Guy. "This not only showcases the creativity and artistic talent within this community, but it also serves as a great example of collaboration, the deepening of good relations, and wider understanding of unique histories."

The project also builds on other community actions aimed at reconciliation, including the purchase of 49th Parallel by Penelakut Tribe and the annual community march in support of Penelakut children.

The Chemainus Salish Welcome Arch will receive \$50,000 and is supported through a collaborative funding arrangement between the Island Coastal Economic Trust and the Targeted Regional Tourism Development Initiative (through 4VI). The [Community Placemaking program](#) provides one-stop funding support of up to 100% of project costs to stimulate and promote vitality in downtowns, Main Streets and business districts across the region.

"We continue to support the efforts of placemaking and place branding in the Vancouver Island Region," says 4VI President and CEO Anthony Everett. "As a social enterprise with a mission to ensure that travel is a force for good for Vancouver Island, we work with community-led projects to enhance the liveability and character of our Island communities."

The project is set to get underway shortly.

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[About Island Coastal Economic Trust](#)

Founded by the Province of British Columbia in 2006, the Island Coastal Economic Trust works to build a sustainable and resilient coastal economy in reciprocal relationships with First Nations, municipalities, and regional districts across Vancouver Island, the Sunshine Coast, and islands and inlets from the Salish Sea to Cape Caution. Serving over half a million residents, we partner with communities in the development and financing of their

economic infrastructure and diversification efforts through our unique structure that is led by, and accountable to, communities.

Since our inception, Island Coastal Economic Trust has approved more than \$58 million to economic development initiatives that have attracted over \$308 million in new investment to our region. These investments have created over 2,750 permanent jobs, and countless positive impacts, across the coast.

Island Coastal Economic Trust acknowledges that we work for communities across the ancestral and unceded territories of the Kwak'waka, Nuuchaan' uł, Éy7á7juuthem, Ligwilda'xw, Pəntl'áč, shíshálh, Hul'q'umi'num', diitiidʔaatx, SENĆOŦEN, Lekwungen, and T'Sou-ke speaking peoples.

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