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To: ["Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"](#)
Date: 4/27/2023 11:23:17 AM
Subject: Platforms: Nine Places for Seeing, Indigenous Public Art initiative for 2023-2024
Attachments: ACCS - GM - Memo (Council) - Platforms_Nine Places for Seeing, Indigenous Public Art initiative for 2023-2024 (2023-04-25).pdf

Dear Mayor and Council,

The attached memo from Sandra Singh, GM of Arts, Culture and Community Services, provides background to, and an update on 2023/24 edition of *Platforms: Nine Places for Seeing*. This year's edition of *Platforms* features a series of Indigenous-focused public art projects led by the Public Art team.

Key points include:

A short history of this award-winning program, its vital role in supporting artists through the Covid-19 pandemic, and the ways this iteration of *Platforms* was adapted to support key deliverables outlined in UNDRIP and the 2019-adopted *Culture|Shift* strategy; and,

An overview of 21 commissioned Indigenous artists who are currently in the process of creating work for numerous public-facing platforms throughout the city.

- Please note that the first round of finished works will be in place by June of this year, planned to coincide with the National Indigenous Peoples Day

Should you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact Sandra Singh directly at sandra.singh@vancouver.ca, and she will ensure responses are provided through the weekly Council Q&A.

Best,
Paul

Paul Mochrie (he/him)
City Manager
City of Vancouver
paul.mochrie@vancouver.ca



The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the x̱məθḵʷəy̱əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

MEMORANDUM

April 25, 2023

TO: Mayor & Council

CC: Paul Mochrie, City Manager
Armin Amrolia, Deputy City Manager
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager
Rosemary Hagiwara, Acting City Clerk
Maria Pontikis, Chief Communications Officer, CEC
Teresa Jong, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office
Mellisa Morphy, Acting Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Trevor Ford, Director of Operations, Mayor's Office

FROM: Sandra Singh, General Manager, Arts, Culture and Community Services

SUBJECT: *Platforms: Nine Places for Seeing*, Indigenous Public Art initiative for 2023-2024

RTS #: N/A

PURPOSE

This memo is to inform you about the City of Vancouver Public Art Program's upcoming 2023-2024 *Platforms* program, which is commissioning 21 local Indigenous artists to create work for temporary installation on civic buildings, transit infrastructure, and billboards throughout the city.

BACKGROUND

The Public Art Program at the City of Vancouver has run its award-winning *Platforms* program since 2010. The works commissioned for *Platforms* are two-dimensional, temporary, and exhibited on a number of sites throughout Vancouver. The opportunities include transit shelter posters and digital advertising screens, the glass walls of Canada Line stations, the Queen Elizabeth Theatre, the Playhouse and the nearby light box in ᓄᓃᓄᓄᓄᓄ Xwtl'a7shn Plaza, billboards, the VanLive! video screens at Robson and Granville, and banners in the atrium at the Vancouver Public Library Central Branch. The works are installed for between one month and one or more years, depending on the site. The program is marked by constant energy and movement; new artworks are installed and publicized monthly.

This energy and quick turnover poised the *Platforms* program to quickly respond during the Covid-19 pandemic, which had economic and other impacts that were particularly heavy on Local artists. When Vancouver started to shut down in March 2020, Cultural Services initiated

Platforms 2020: Public Works, and had new pieces installed across the city by June of that year, connecting with a newly isolated community and giving artists new and welcome sources of income. In total, thirty-five artists exhibited work reflecting on social isolation, disability, uncertainty, and illness. As the year progressed, and the Black Lives Matter movement drew attention to racialized violence, works also addressed these issues.

In 2021, the Public Art Program continued its Covid-19 responsive *Platforms* series with a new call, *Platforms: We Are Here, Live*. This call shifted its intent to consider artwork that looked at the still unfolding pandemic, the deepening and magnification of the social, health and economic inequities of our society as a result of Covid-19, and works that asked the question, “What comes next?”

DISCUSSION

What does come next is the upcoming *Platforms* series. This series, *Platforms: Nine Places for Seeing*, is working with 21 Indigenous artists who live in Vancouver and/or are from xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) or səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

This is the very first *Platforms* that is completely dedicated to commissioning Indigenous artists. Policies that guided us to this iteration include the recently adopted UNDRIP strategy with its calls to action on social, cultural and economic well-being, as well as *Culture|Shift*, the City’s Culture Plan for 2020-2029. *Culture|Shift* has as one of its primary actions the commissioning of public artworks that increase the visibility and voice of xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) on their unceded territories. Ways of addressing these mandates through public art include commissioning temporary projects by Indigenous artists and mentoring Indigenous artists who are new to public art commissioning processes.

Commissioning Process

Platforms commissioning opportunities typically begin with open calls for artworks and adjudication of applicants by an external panel. Because recent City calls for artists have not been very successful in their outreach to Indigenous communities, staff decided to run this program as a direct call supported by the work of three Indigenous advisors, including representation from each of the three Host Nations. Each advisor was asked to meet with and select eight artists whose work they were interested in supporting. To further relationship-building and expand access, artists were given the opportunity to transmit their concept proposal to the *Platforms* project manager through oral means, instead of writing up a proposal. Although the concept proposals exist as written documents, they were created through phone calls and conversations between the project manager and the individual artists.

From this process twenty-one Indigenous artists have been contracted to create work for *Platforms*. Fifteen of these artists are Coast Salish, with eleven acknowledging lineage from xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) or səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. The remaining six artists are Urban Indigenous, with roots from northern BC and nations to the

east. Themes of the proposed artworks include intergenerational trauma, community safety, Indigenous presence, intercultural histories, joy, transformation, and origin stories.

Workshop

Another aim of this *Platforms* iteration is building stronger relationships between City staff and Indigenous artists, and among the artists themselves. To this end, Public Art staff organized a day-long workshop for the artists, advisors, select staff from Public Art and the Park Board, and arts and culture professionals who presented on visitor protocols, Coast Salish design principles, artists contracts and issues of copyright in Indigenous art. Several Indigenous attendees pointed to the fact that this was the first time in their recollection that so many Coast Salish artists had been gathered together under one roof, and that it was about time that something like this happened. Other participants commented on the energy that was generated in the room with the presence of so many master artists. Staff purposely did not photograph or record that day's events, and instead focused on making connection, having a safe space for learning, and being fully present.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The *Platforms* commissions have been funded from the Public Art General Reserve, which receives payments related to staff oversight of private sector public art projects delivered as conditions of rezoning, and from payments made to Cultural Services as part of the agreement for the VanLive! Screen at the corner of Granville and Robson. The program pays professional rates to participating artists, and is supported by auxiliary staff.

To ensure continuing support for this important program, staff are currently working to identify new sources of funding for the program.

NEXT STEPS

The first of *Platforms: Nine Places for Seeing* commissions are to be installed in June of this year, with the program running through until June of 2025. Public Art will work with City of Vancouver communications staff to publicize this program. This will include short videos that introduce some of the artists and their work through City social media channels.

The new *Platforms* initiative presenting work by local Indigenous artists will create an unprecedented opportunity for Vancouver to connect with the work of a large number of brilliant artists finding new ways of working within traditions dating back to time immemorial. It also is a major step toward building relationships of trust and respect between City staff and Indigenous artists, a basis for future projects. Lastly, and perhaps most significantly, it has created new opportunities for mentorship and connection among Indigenous artists working on unceded Musqueam, Squamish, and Tseil-Waututh Nations territory.

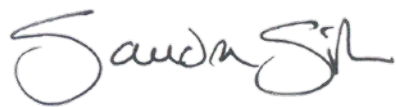
FINAL REMARKS

During the Covid-19 pandemic, *Platforms* has offered dozens of artists the opportunity to address a broad public in prominent sites across the City of Vancouver. By working quickly and conscientiously to select and support artists, the City has given financial support and visibility to

emerging and established artists at a time when their place in the City has been made increasingly precarious. The program has also created new dialogues as artists have connected in real-time with contemporary issues and crises.

This relationship building, between City staff and local Indigenous artists, and between the artists themselves, is meant to be seen as a seeding of the ground for the development of a cohort of local Indigenous artists experienced with City-led Public Art processes. This work can be built on as staff work with Host Nations on the *Culture|Shift*-mandated action to commission large-scale permanent xʷməθkʷəyəm (Musqueam), sk̓wxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səlilwətał (Tseil-Waututh) signature artworks throughout the city and at sites of cultural significance.

If Council requires further information, please feel free to contact me directly at sandra.singh@vancouver.ca and we will provide response through the weekly Council Q&A.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sandra Singh'.

Sandra Singh, General Manager
Arts, Culture, and Community Services

sandra.singh@vancouver.ca

Appendix 1 – Table

Aaron Nelson Moody	Squamish	Western typography and Coast Salish imagery tell a story. Lightbox
Adele Arseneau	Nehiyaw/Metis	Images of cradleboards and moss bags to honour missing children. Transit shelters.
Atheana Picha	Kwantlen	Illustration showing spring awakening on the west coast. Playhouse Theatre vinyl.
Austin B. Harry	Squamish	Animated spiritual creatures enliven the coastline and city. Video screen.
Caitlin Aleck	Tsleil-waututh	Images of two weavings related to children. Transit shelters.
Chase Gray	Musqueam	Drawings of museum-based Musqueam belongings. Arbutus billboards.
Cody Tolmie	Stó:lō	Animated Xe:xals creation story in contemporary setting. Video screen.
Cory Douglas	Tsimshian/Haida	Thunderbird illustration. Lightbox.
Eliot White-Hill	Snuneymuxw	Painting representing Indigenous joy. For Marine Drive Station vinyl.
Gordon Dick	Tsleil-waututh	Image of dragon with Salish and Chinese design elements. Transit shelters.
Jonas Jones	Tsleil-waututh	Illustration of wolf and xxx to represent his two nations. Transit shelters.
K.C. (Kelsey) Hall	Heiltsuk	Illustrations of Raven and his search for light and humans. Transit shelters.
Kitty Guerin	Musqueam	Illustrations of sʔi:ʔqəy̓, the double-headed serpent. Library banners.
Lauren Crazybull	Blackfoot/Dene	Collage depicting the absence/presence of Indigenous faces. Marine Drive station.
Lisa Lewis	Squamish	Photographs of two weavings, created in honour of MMIWG2S. Transit shelters.
Olivia George	Tsleil-waututh	Illustration of bees and beehives with Salish design elements. QE Theatre vinyl.
Robin Roberts	Squamish	Illustrations related to transformation and performance. Transit shelters.
Shain Jackson	Sechelt	Illustrations of Eagle Woman in sequential dance positions. Arbutus billboards.
Shoshannah Greene	Haida	Illustration of Transformer Raven visiting the big city. Canada Line City Centre Station.
Soloman Chiniquay	Îyethka Nakoda/Pomo	Photographs and ink drawings of individuals and their landscapes. Arbutus billboards.
Zac George	Tsleil-waututh	Illustrations of crows and salmons. Central Library banners.

Appendix 2 – Images



Olivia George – detail from Detailed Design



K.C. Hall – image from Concept Proposal



Atheana Picha – detail from Detailed Design



Shoshannah Greene – sketch from Concept Proposal



Lauren Crazybull – image from Detailed Design