

Chemainus Valley Cultural Arts CVRD report for 2024.

Introduction

This report describes the activities of the Chemainus Valley Cultural Arts Society (CVCAS or the Society) for the year 2024. The Society is involved with nine main activities, broken down into two divisions: performance arts and visual arts.

The CVRD grant will be split proportionately between Visual Artists, Writers and Performers during the 2025 year. This was also how we used the funds in 2024.

The traditional operations of CVCAS have been based around “The Band Shell” in Waterwheel Park. The Municipality of North Cowichan has given the Society responsibility for the operation of this facility, and it provides a home during June, July, August and September for outdoor shows and concerts. Many genres of music were presented during the summer months. There was something for everyone, with genres as varied as: classical, blues, bluegrass, country, rock and roll, rockabilly, singer-songwriter, Newfoundland music, punk, jazz and children’s entertainment. During the summer Waterwheel Park, has more than thirty concerts that were presented for the public to enjoy. The society hired entertainers of a high caliber for these shows. Our blues performances included Brandon Isaak nominated for a Juna Award in 2024. He was one of several of Canada’s leading blues performers presented by the society in 2024. The performance standards in all genres were equally high. Rockabilly was well represented by Zachary Stevenson, and Hank Angel and his Island Devils, who is based on Vancouver Island. The list of top performers goes on: Brandon Isaak, Tom Morrissey, Wayne Montgomery, Zachary Stevenson, some of these performances can still be found on www.cvcas.ca and the CVCAS YouTube site. This all came at a price, of course. The society expended in excess of \$59,000 for our 2024 entertainers, although the public was very supportive of the society’s efforts, showing up reliably for the weekend and Tuesday-evening shows.

Another highlight for 2024 was our new Wednesday night Classical music presented by the Vancouver Island Symphony and other classical performers. We are always pleased when we can interact with other genres of the arts.

Volunteers - Summer 2024 – (written by Brenda Bell volunteer coordinator)

It has been a wonderful summer of concerts in the park and all of the volunteers helped to make it a great success. I am very grateful to Bev Knight and the CVCAS Board for giving me this opportunity.

Here are some stats to support just how vital volunteers are to CVCAS. As you already know, we could not have done this without them.

CVCAS 2024 Musical events volunteer hours data

It was another good year for Chemainus Valley Cultural Art Society. A variety of musical events were made available to the community and were all successfully organized and staffed by volunteers. Volunteers are the lifeblood of CVCAS.

This season there were 50 volunteers on my spreadsheet. These volunteers were contacted frequently via email and offered the opportunity to help out at events. 30 of those volunteers were active for Music in the Park and other special events in 2024. Volunteer crews included Stage and Sound, Setup and Take Down, Hospitality, Concession, and Promotions.

Music in the Park Summer 2024

10 Tuesday evening concerts: 15 volunteers x 40 hours (10 events x 4 hours each) = 600

4 Wednesday evening concerts: 5 volunteers x 12 hours (4 events x 3 hours each) = 60

10 Day-long Festivals: 12 volunteers x 50 hours (10 events x 5 hours each) = 600

3 Saturday afternoon Concerts: 8 volunteers x 12 hours (3 events x 4 hours each) = 96

Sunday Afternoon Jazz Series 2024 at Osborne Bay Pub

16 Sunday afternoon Jazz Concerts: 2 volunteers X 48 hours (16 events X 3 hours each) = 96

Special Events 2024

2 Evening Dances: 14 volunteers X 12 hours (2 events X 6 hours each) = 168

1 Indigenous Day (June 23): 7 volunteers X 6 hours (1 event X 6 hours each) = 42

1 Canada Day Celebration (July 1): 10 volunteers X 6 hours (1 event X 6 hours each) = 60

1 BC Culture Days Kick Off (Sept 21): 9 volunteers X 4 hours (1 event X 4 hours each) = 36

1 Auxiliary 125 th celebration (Sept 25): 5 volunteers X 7 hours (1 event X 7 hours) = 35. This does not include the volunteers who helped with Little Town Christmas and the Volunteer Appreciation Evening.

The Indigenous Day Celebration in Chemainus.

The celebration included local artists and did an outstanding job of promoting Indigenous musicians and artists in the area for this event. For the last 2 years Connie Crocker has been the producer of the “Salish Sea Solstice Celebration.” It is important for CVCAS to build strong community relationships with the help of all community organizations, such as CBIA, and with the Indigenous peoples and Connie felt that this happened with the help of this event.

The main successes of the project were celebrating with the community, artists, performers and establishing on-going relationships for this annual event. Connie’s focus this year was to make her people aware of resources available should one want to access them. Connie’s focus was with her tribe Penelakut making help accessible when it is most wanted. Connie invited “Women Against Violence” and promoted the Moose Hide Campaign (created as a way to engage men and boys in efforts to end violence against Indigenous women and girls) stimulating conversation and sharing resources available for help should they be needed. This is important for isolated communities. In the past years Connie found that if we celebrated on June 21st it took away from the FN’s community event. So, in 2024 for the first time, we tried celebrating the weekend after Indigenous Day allowing people to celebrate with their nation and the caterer, performers, artists could then have additional days to be vendors. This celebration was held on June 23rd to allow this to happen. The actual day of June 23rd was cold and windy, and this effected our attendance, but we cannot change the weather. It was still a good event.

Amanda Crocker was this year’s feature artist at the Rainforest Art Gallery. Her art and jewelry featured from June 4 - July 27. On Indigenous Day Amanda held a demonstration and meet & greet. Amanda works with natural pigments, paints, and binders that include cinnamon and turmeric for example.

The Anishinabbe Mitchell sisters joined our event for the second year. They are amazing!

Photo

This is the memorial banner or in our language Hi'kw'asum for the known dead and 160 orange shirts for the unmarked graves from the Kuper Island

Residential School. Women Against Violence contributed the cost of the banner and CVCAS displays it.

The project met and exceeded the goals set by Connie and this was her 3rd Indigenous Day as organizer, and she felt that there remains a bridge to be crossed but the journey has begun. In order for us all to get to know each other we must meet on neutral ground and educate ourselves. The CVCAS allows for this while respecting everyone. WE invite from all local first nations Cowichan Tribes, Halat Stz'minus and Pene'luxuth'. The Pune'luxutth tribe now feels comfortable enough to host their events such as the "Walk for the Children" at the CVCAS bandshell. The community of Chemainus is accepting and inviting in increasing the first nations presence in the art gallery "Rainforest Arts" and in town murals as well as a Welcome Figure soon to be unveiled by the Chemainus Festival of Murals.

Tuesday Evening Concert Series

During 2024, the Society organized a successful concert series which took place Tuesday evenings throughout July, August and September. We took advantage of the wonderful weather we were having and extended our season by an extra Tuesday and Wednesday. This series has been taking place each summer for a number of years, and in 2024 attracted audiences of more than 4,000 people. 2024 proved to be a successful year. The size of the crowds for the Tuesday night shows consistently exceeded our expectations. Highlights included Beatlemania Unplugged, local performers "The Porter Brothers" and The Naden Band who always draw a crowd. A new addition this year were the Cowichan Pipes and Drums. They were very enjoyable. We are looking forward to another successful Tuesday night series in 2025.

Chemainus Valley Blues Festival

The festival was held for two days in July and provided a fun music filled weekend for many Blues fans. We held it in conjunction with the Chemainus Market Days put on by the Chemainus Business Improvement Association. The CBIA encouraged us to continue with this arrangement. The festival was well attended and was outstanding in the caliber of the performers. The Blues Festival is always a hit event and financially it is a viable endeavor especially with the help of a Community Events Grant from BC Arts Council of \$6000. There were 10 bands in total and the weather was great! We plan to continue

this two-day festival in 2025. A \$20 suggested donation per adult attendee helped with the festival expenses.

Chemainus Bluegrass Festival

The 2024 version of the annual Chemainus Bluegrass Festival was very successful in terms of both quality and attendance. CVCAS managed to attract five very fine bands to play at Waterwheel Park on the Saturday afternoon. A large crowd of locals and visitors enjoyed the afternoon's entertainment.

When CVCAS has carried out surveys at this event, the results show that about one third of the audience is made up of local people, while the other two-thirds are made up of visitors to Chemainus. This has the effect of providing local audiences with top, professional entertainment at a very affordable price, and of attracting out-of-town visitors to this part of the Cowichan Valley. The method of payment to attend this festival is by voluntary audience donation. CVCAS does suggest a suitable donation – of which some pay more, and some pay less. But the price always works out to be a small fraction of the amount one would have to pay for a similar festival elsewhere. In this way, the festival not only attracts out-of-town visitors, but also provides top, professional entertainment at a very affordable price to local people.

In 2024, the organizers tried a new feature, with a local band Sweet Harmony providing a Sunday morning gospel set. This was followed by music played by anyone who wanted to get up and perform. This is a feature that CVCAS will consider again in future years.

Vancouver Island Rockabilly Festival

CVCAS organizes the annual Vancouver Island Rockabilly Festival at Waterwheel Park. In 2024 this proved to be a very popular event, with Zachary Stevenson and his band attracting a great crowd. Hank Angel and His Island Devils, and the Jay Stevens band The Chosen Ones completed the afternoon's entertainment. This is a popular event in the CVCAS year.

Chemainus Open-Mic at the Legion

CVCAS began a regular open-microphone event in late 2023 and has continued to organize it throughout 2024. The event takes place on the first Saturday of each month at the Chemainus branch of the Royal Canadian

Legion. Starting at 3:00 PM, the open mic continues until 6:00 PM. Individuals, duos and threesomes can perform, with a CVCAS volunteer providing the PA system and acting as sound engineer. There is always a great variety of performers, with both new and experienced performers able to show their stuff on stage, before an appreciative audience. CVCAS does not charge anything for performers or audience members. This event provides a wonderful opportunity for people to gain experience playing for an audience, with a professional-level sound system to flesh out the performance.

Chemainus Song Circle

The Chemainus Song Circle is a community-based song circle that brings together musicians and music lovers of varying ages and experience for an afternoon of music featuring vocals, guitars, fiddles, mandolins, harmonicas, banjos and other acoustic instruments. We provide a welcoming and supportive environment for musicians to play their favourite songs, explore new tunes, learn from each other, and share music with other members of the circle. Participants alternate leading a song or may choose to just listen or raise their voices and instruments with others in the joy of making music.

Community Focus and Benefits

The Chemainus Song Circle is a casual and inclusive drop in gathering where musicians and music lovers can connect and grow together through the warmth, creative exchange and camaraderie of a community-driven music event. It provides local musicians and community members an ongoing opportunity to connect, collaborate, share a common interest in music and musicianship, and develop friendships. The supportive and collaborative environment encourages musicians to share their skills with new participants, explore new and original music and fosters artistic growth.

The Chemainus Song Circle also supports the region's music scene. By playing in public spaces, we remain accessible to those who love to play, sing and listen to music. In the summers we play at the Water Wheel Park.

These events help us to foster more connections with the wider Chemainus community and support and promote events supported by the Chemainus Valley Cultural Arts Society (CVCAS).

Venues:

The Chemainus Song Circle meets bi-monthly on Sundays from 1- 4 pm in mid-September until June at the RCL Legion 191 Hall. June through September our sessions are held at the open-air Rotary Water Wheel Park

Stage. Many of our attendees favour this venue because it is so readily accessible to passersby who want to stop and listen and to drop-in visitors to Chemainus. It is very gratifying to have an audience to listen to our tunes. Many thanks go out to CVCAS and their tireless organizers and volunteers for arranging this venue for us.

Attendance:

On average we have 12 members per session (lately the norm seems to be as many as 20; occasionally, as few as 6). Quite often new attendees drop in to join our core members. This year we were delighted to welcome back drop ins, once regulars, now living elsewhere in British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Volunteers

The Circle is a collective with volunteers who assist with communications, set up, CVCAS events and bingos, and sound. We extend our thanks to Jennifer Drummond, Diana Sly, Sam Robins, Monty Mann and Michael Holland for taking on these important roles in 2023, 2024 and 2025.

We are grateful for the ongoing support of CVCAS including assisting us in paying for and providing venues for us to meet. Without this support we would not be accessible to all musicians and music lovers regardless of age, ability and income.

Community Activities

Penelakut Elder Group: Walk for the Children: This walk organized by the Penelakut Elders was a huge success. The only concern was for safety on the day as 500 people arrived at the Waterwheel Park. CVCAS assisted by providing the venue and assisting with parking, safety, and set up. I think we made progress joining our communities for a mutual stand on an important issue.

Canada Day is a big event in Chemainus. We were called upon to work with Chemainus Business Improvement Association with their **Canada Day celebration**. We provide entertainment, stage management, sound and volunteers.

The Chemainus Hospital Auxiliary asked us for help with their 125-year anniversary. We provided sound, stage management, a team for hamburgers

and hotdogs and volunteers for setting up and tear down. Our organization is very community minded, so we joined in the fun as long (as it is within our mission statement.) Unfortunately, it was a cold dreary day. We really had a full plate in 2024, and our volunteers really came through for us.

Chemainus Little Town Christmas

Saturday, December 7, 2024 – 1 – 4:00 p.m. Chemainus Legion – Community family Free Event. This really was an event that showed some real community involvement. The Hotdog Station was run by the Legion – free for kids over 12 by donation – 11 dozen hotdogs served by 3:00

Smore Station ran by the Chemainus Rotary Club – Club provided all supplies. Activities included: Face painting, 4 Games, prize table child could select one prize, Inspiration Station where children could make a Christmas ornament to take home, Wreath/Swag station.

Visit from Santa, picture with Santa and Mrs. Santa. There was a photobooth that was popular for families to have their picture taken and they then left with framed photograph.

Coffee/Tea/Hot chocolate Station one of our local Bakeries donated 100 cookies. Sweet Harmony – live band played throughout the day.

Goody bag for each child. Volunteers from the community, and the Chemainus Valley Cultural Arts Society made this event a huge success. We had well over 100 children attend. It was truly a good time had by all that attended Little Town Christmas.

The Writers Forum

The Writers Circle continues to meet twice each month in the homes of members. The group does readings and critiques of works in progress and shares writing prompts every second week. It has been a very supportive venue.

Valley Voices stories were published in the Cowichan Valley Voice Magazine which sponsored the initiative by providing a full page monthly at a much-reduced rate. The stories were formatted with accompanying photos included as an ongoing encouragement to writers. The pages were also an introduction of local literature to the community. The submitted stories were shared on the CVCAS website.

In partnership with Rainforest Arts, the Writers Forum has been promoting Convergence: Images + Words, which will see Cowichan Valley authors create

prose and poetry responsive to art that will be on display in the gallery from mid-January to the end of March. The literary responses will be posted beside the artworks. The Writers Forum has collaborated with planning, raising awareness, and reaching out to writers to participate in the event. Looking forward to encouraging Cowichan Valley and Island authors and poets in the year to come.

Rainforest Arts

Rainforest Arts rents their gallery space from the Coastal Community Credit Union. Our gallery is now celebrating over eight years of outstanding success.

Our mission statement is “To showcase and support Island artists and to promote excellence and creativity in all forms of visual arts.” Rainforest Arts represents local artists in all mediums with 70% of sales going to support us.

In addition, we are continually improving our tiny, four hundred square foot space by building new plinths, painting, adding more wall space for the Featured Artists, and First Nations displays, improving lighting and 3D displays. We feature an artist every two months along with themed group shows for our members. We had our second annual Indigenous Featured Artist, Amanda Crocker’s in June and July featuring.

Amanda/s paintings, dream catchers, and beaded jewelry.

Rainforest Arts remained open to the public for 12 months, thanks to the generosity of the Credit.

Union and our many dedicated volunteers. We are the only Art Gallery in Chemainus

representing over 50 Island Artists both 2D and 3D, including pottery, jewelry, woodwork, metal work, fiber art, painting in acrylic and oils, watercolor, print making, photography and mixed.

media. We show contemporary art through to traditional art.

We showcase our artists, allowing them a space to show and sell their works.

The gallery is well promoted on social media. The Featured Artists and themed group shows are advertised in Cowichan Valley Voice Magazine, along with articles and posters which get distributed locally.

The town of Chemainus is all the richer for the cultural and artistic activities the gallery has to offer.

2024 Rainforest Arts Highlights

2024 RFA Stats

Monthly Sales Average # of visitors per day

24-Jan	\$2,936.90	12.2
24-Feb	\$2,037.00	16.7
24-Mar	\$6,870.50	21
24-Apr	\$2,706.26	24.3
24-May	\$2,337.60	24.2
24-Jun	\$3,102.00	26.78
24-Jul	\$4,260.05	33.41
24-Aug	\$5,138.65	35.87
24-Sep	\$3,214.40	31.35
24-Oct	\$5,015.00	18.34
24-Nov	\$2,510.25	22.36
24-Dec	\$5,227.59	27.5

\$45,356.20

Monthly Average \$3,779.68 24.50

*Compared to 2023 the average monthly sales total was \$4,677.90 and the monthly visitor total was 24.09

The feedback we get from our local and visiting tourists is they find the gallery an oasis, a place of beauty and tranquility.

Thanks to our strong volunteer base we are able to stay open five to seven days a week.

In 2024 RFA displayed work from 65 area artists. This year we welcomed two new 2D artists and 1 new 3D artist.

In 2024 we started the year off with our annual 'BIG' show followed by our Featured Artist show,

'Wool, Silk and Silver' featuring two silk painters, a wool felt artist and a silver jeweler, creating a beautiful and tactile exhibit. For the months June and July, we featured Indigenous Artist Amanda Crocker, paintings using natural dyes from various plants, large dreamcatcher using found objects as well as beaded jewelry. Her demo was very engaging and well attended.

Painter and jewelry artist, Robert Cerins was featured for August and September, holding several demos at the gallery. Photographer and guitar

maker, Bruce Whittington exhibited in October and November also with demos and guitar playing. The group Christmas show the 'Mostly Green Show' was a beautiful and harmonious exhibit for the holiday season. The gallery also invited a harpist to play on Sundays for the month of December. In 2024 the Gallery sold 26 pieces by First Nations Artists, for a total of \$2,741.

Program Plans for 2025

We are changing things up a bit this year and trying a bit of comedy. On January 23 we have Chemainus Comedy Club with Katie-Ellen Humphries. It is a sold out show. Excited to be changing things up a bit.

On February 15th with the blessing of Penelakut Chief Pam Jack we are going to have a Benefit Concert for the folks who lost everything in the fire on Penelakut. Musicians and our local sound technician Damion have volunteered their time and talents to make this a success. Local Newfie Tom Morrissey got the ball rolling by contacting us and making this great suggestion.

We are now in the planning stage of getting 2025 organized. Our Song Circle and Open Mics are continuing at the Chemainus Legion. Our Jazz program in Crofton at the Osborne Bay Pub will continue under the leadership of Preston Davies until the end of June. We are hoping to have a Newfie Kitchen Party with Tom Morrissey sometime in April which always proves to be a highlight of the year. Newfie music, food, and the possibility of people becoming an honorary Newfie. When May rolls around, we have the beginning of a great season of music and cultural events planned. June will be our Indigenous Day Celebration. Canada Day will be our official kick off for our 2025 season with Copper Canyon Band entertaining the masses who always turn out for our Canada Day celebration.

Our Tuesday nights which will run from July 1 to September 2 are yet to be announced. We are looking towards a great season. Capital City Syncopators, Ryan McMahan, Chris Noel, Tropic Mayhem and many others may grace our stage this summer. We have decided to run the Naden Band on another night of the week so that we can start hiring music for the Tuesday nights. They have told us that they are coming but no date yet.

We will continue to have our Blues Festival, Bluegrass Fest, Rockabilly, Country Music and Accordion. The summer will be jammed pack with a wide variety of talented musicians and concerts.

Our partners help us, some financially and some enthusiastic encouragement. Chemainus BIA, Chemainus Legion, Penelakut First Nations, Chemainus Art Group, Chemainus Rotary Club, Chemainus Mural Society, Chemainus Chamber of Commerce and many local businesses. We continue to partner with the Imagination Station to provide a creative venue for the young at heart.

Conclusion

The year 2024, was a year of stretching our volunteer resources but they came through with flying colours. We had to learn new skills and fulfilled our mandate of **providing “many forms of visual, literary and performing arts and entertainment that encourage, promote and celebrate cultures within the areas of Chemainus and Crofton.”** How did we do that? We utilized our outdoor venue going over our usual dates and continued into September. We provided gallery space for First Nations and other local artists to display and sell their art in the centre of the community. This proves beneficial to the artists, to people who enjoy viewing art, and to buyers of the artists' product.