



An Arts Center in the Heart of Chemainus?

Chemainus Valley Cultural Arts Society (CVCAS) is envisioning an “Arts Center” in the heart of downtown Chemainus.

CVCAS Background

CVCAS has been promoting arts and culture in the greater community since 2001. Residents, merchants, visitors and tourists benefit from CVCAS projects and initiatives including Rain Forest Art Gallery (featuring works from more than 50 Visual Artists in the Local Community) and Summer Concerts and Music in the Park in Waterwheel Park. We have also put on several winter performances each year, such as the renowned “Lady Day at Emerson Hall” and our monthly Open Mic series. All of these events have become important additions to Chemainus and help brand us as an Arts Town as was initiated by our beloved Murals and the Chemainus Festival Theatre.

Over the past couple of years new arts businesses, including Rainforest Arts, Maple Lane Guitars, JD Stevenson Gallery, the Maple Lane Candle Factory and Bound to be Different have sprung up, indicating new merchants also believe in our Arts persona. To further the efforts of these new arts businesses and our brand, the question becomes: ***How can we position Chemainus to go all the way and dare to become "Vancouver Island's Arts Capital"?***

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS: seize it NOW before it passes us by!!!

For quite awhile now, we have heard citizens (and visitors!) lamenting and worrying about the large store-front building that is EMPTY, directly across from our beautifully refurbished Waterwheel Square. This square is home to Waterwheel Park, the Museum, Visitor’s Center and the Chamber of Commerce. It is the hub of our summer festivals, summer market, CVCAS musical productions, and other community events such as our Christmas and Halloween events, Canada Day Celebrations and more. This space can and SHOULD become the crowning glory of our Arts Town in the form of a new Arts Center.

The old Chemainus Foods building is currently for rent, but Anthem Properties has told us they would be willing to sell it to the Municipality. CVCAS feels strongly that this key property should be owned and controlled by our own residents to take Chemainus to the next level as THE definitive arts town on Vancouver Island.

THEREFORE...

CVCAS is contacting local groups and residents to obtain support and become stakeholders and partners in founding a new Arts Center in the Old Chemainus Foods building. We are willing to demonstrate the feasibility, social and cultural advantages and sustainability of an Arts Center in the Municipality of North Cowichan's Chemainus. We need YOU to help make it happen.

Our task can be broken down into three major steps:

1. To form strategic partnerships with other service groups, businesses and interested parties in the Community to plan, establish and operate an Arts Center for the benefit of all. From these partnerships will be created a new society whose task it will be to construct and operate the Center.
2. To obtain full support from the Municipality of North Cowichan by helping with the acquisition of the building and lot formerly known as Chemainus Foods and dedicate its purpose as a public space for an Arts Center in the Chemainus downtown core.
3. Acquire funding from Federal, Provincial and Regional Government Institutions to help with renovations, equipment, management and programming in the space. Extensive research by CVCAS has revealed that such financial support is available from organizations like Arts BC, Canada Heritage, Island Trust and many more. Fundraising events shall also become important.

What is an Arts Center?

Members of CVCAS have visited the existing 11,000 sq. foot building. Preliminary plans have been drawn that could include, but are not limited to:

100-seat auditorium

- Offering musical performances and showcases throughout the year – an extension of CVCAS' very successful summer events in the Waterwheel Bandshell.
- Establish a community amateur theatre group - with such a successful professional Theatre in Chemainus, it is befitting that we encourage and develop new talent in theatre
- Rentals: Offer the auditorium to other groups for events, performances, travelling lectures, movie showings, short-film screenings, etc.
- Include retractable seating to allow the floor space to be used for other activities such as dance, yoga, recreation and more.

Gallery Space

- To fill a gap needed for Cowichan Valley Art Exhibitions
- Offer annual juried shows such as those currently held in Sidney and Sooke
- Create a climate controlled space to house professional travelling art exhibitions. Nothing of this kind exists in the Cowichan Valley.
- Invite local artists to hold private shows and exhibitions.
- House and display recovered First Nations artifacts.
- Offer gallery and retail space to our local tribes.
- Convertible for receptions and gala affairs.
- Available to local schools and youth to promote budding artists.

Kitchen Facility

- Refreshment bar (during events, performances and exhibitions...)
- Rental: Available for rent to organizations for AGMs, meetings, etc.
- Other?

Retail Art Gallery space

- Rainforest Arts would re-locate into a bigger space that would include storage and office space, currently required but not available.
- Rainforest Arts supports over 50 local artists and helps identify Chemainus as a major Arts Center in the Cowichan Valley. Expanded retail gallery space (and classroom space) supports and assists local artists in making a viable living.

Classroom Space

- CVCAS and other partners can offer classes, workshops, trainings and seminars in art, music, dance, performance and more.

Business: Arts or Social Enterprise (which would provide regular rental income to the Arts Center).

- **Artist Supply Store** – there are currently hundreds of artists who go to Victoria for this
- **Other** Arts and/or Cultural Related Retail businesses

We would love to hear more ideas from you, our potential stakeholders and partners. We are planning a special orientation and information session in January. In preparation for that meeting, we need to collect some important data regarding your needs and thoughts for such a building.

Please fill out the attached form stating your interest in taking the arts and culture in the community to the next level and helping Chemainus become **“Vancouver Island’s Arts Capital”!**

Thank you very much for your input and support.



Chemainus Arts Center Letter of Support

Name of your Organization: _____

Your Title/Position: _____

Date: _____ Contact Information: _____

Please check off all boxes that apply:

_____ Yes, our organization supports the establishment of an Arts Center in Chemainus

Intent to Use the Space.

- _____ Meeting Room
- _____ Auditorium
- _____ Exhibition Gallery
- _____ Kitchen Facilities
- _____ Classroom
- _____ Retail/Social Enterprise Business

Please use this space to expand on how the Arts Center would benefit your organization:

_____ I am interested in working with the Arts Center Committee

Please submit this form:

Drop off: Rainforest Arts, attention Peggy Grigor, Chair, CVCAS
Mail: CVCAS, Box 196, Chemainus BC, V0R 1K0 – attention Peggy Grigor
Email: Admin@rainforestarts.ca

Questions? Call Peggy Grigor at 250-416-1411 or email admin@rainforestarts.ca