



A Community Story from Hornby Island

Building Out the Island's Vibrant Arts and Culture Sector



Meet Rachelle Chinnery.

Rachelle Chinnery fell in love with ceramics in Japan.

"Being linguistically illiterate made me more aware of visual and tactile literacy that happens in art," says Rachelle, who studied linguistics before pursuing a formal arts education in Canada. "Through ceramics I was able to function perfectly well, even though I was an English speaker in a Japanese world."

Fast-forward many years later and Rachelle's creative practice continues, albeit from an entirely different setting. In 2007, she and her husband traded in their urban life in Vancouver for an "empty plot of land" on Hornby Island, a ten-minute walk from the beach. Drawn to the Island's distinct sense of community, Rachelle turned her ceramic practice into a full-time profession.

"Hornby presents something quite unique – art as part of the community's fabric," says Rachelle, who is also a writer and photographer. "Everyone here is both a participant and a consumer of art."

After decades of effort, the Hornby Island Arts Council came to a pivotal moment. They could no longer rely on the Atco trailer or community hall to promote their art and culture. Annual events, such as the Herring Festival and Music Festival, were getting so popular that people were literally bumping paintings off the walls and spaces were double-booked with concert and exhibits.

"Arts are not just decoration for something else," says Rachelle, who has been volunteer organizing the Island's Arts Council exhibits for several years. "Art has a reason to exist on its own. It's not as a secondary event."

The new Arts Centre provides the vital infrastructure and programming needs to host exhibits from local, regional and international artists and enables residencies, teaching and selling opportunities. It also fulfills an invaluable social function.

"This Arts Centre will serve as a community anchor to help dissipate more arts funding as the underpinning of a social need," says Rachelle. "This space should be a welcoming place for social exchange where people come away feeling energized."

As both an artist and community member, Rachelle believes this project's effect on the creative psyche is huge.

"For locals, having this space – that is theirs to fill – means rising to the occasion. It is very much a privilege for a small community to thrive and create a cultural identity. The arts help change how we feel and how we are in the world."