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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Background**

The Creative City Network of Canada (CCNC) announced the return of the Awards of Excellence on October 6, 2022 in Waterloo, Ontario. The Awards have been on hiatus along with the annual Creative City Summit since they were last presented in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan in 2019. The global pandemic shifted CCNC's focus to immediate support of its members during unprecedented challenges to the Canadian culture sector during that time. In 2022, six Awards were handed out to members of the Creative City Network of Canada in returning and new categories.

A volunteer peer jury conducted a review of all submissions and selected the successful candidates last summer. The recipients were celebrated at the CCNC's annual summit.

**Edmonton Arts Council awarded the Cultural Planning Award** – The Edmonton Arts Council has been awarded the Cultural Planning Award. This award recognizes a Canadian municipality that has developed, adopted, and implemented an excellent culture plan with a process that demonstrates outstanding visionary leadership and best practices in cultural planning or a Canadian municipality that has reviewed, revitalized and implemented a previously adopted Culture Plan. As noted in the nomination, "'Connections & Exchanges' lays out the vision for Edmonton's cultural development through its three Ambitions, eight Aims, and 55 strategic Actions that complete the roadmap which will guide transformation over the next decade."

The jury called this cultural plan a "shining star model" and celebrated its innovative approach to engagement and measurement tools as well as its creative way of working through a comprehensive and difficult project to navigate.

The jury also awarded **Honourable Mention to 'Culture Connects Whitby – Whitby's First Culture Plan 2021–2031' by the Town of Whitby, ON**. "Being part of the creation of Whitby's first culture plan was such a great experience, as it feels like we are making an impact to move culture not only in Whitby, but in Durham Region forward. Working closely with such passionate



and inspirational people gives me so much energy,” says Aimee Pugao, Planner, Community Services for the Town.

**City of New Westminster awarded Cultural Events Award** – The City of New Westminster, BC has been awarded the **Cultural Events Award for ‘Shine Bright New West’**. The Cultural Events Award recognizes a Canadian municipality that demonstrated visionary leadership by initiating, creating, and producing an exceptional cultural event or by empowering and supporting a community initiative that led to an exceptional cultural event such as celebrations, festivals, exhibitions, performances, and programs.

“Shine Bright New West is an innovative approach to holiday events that provides a more accessible, inclusive and meaningful opportunity for the entire community of all ages and all walks of life to connect with one another. The City collaborated with many stakeholders to offer a variety of light displays and activities from December 1, 2021 to January 31, 2022.” The jury commended New Westminster’s utilization of a challenging period for events during the pandemic to adjust how events are structured and for adopting lessons learned from these adjustments to events in the future. A description of the process states that “‘Shine Bright’ aligns with the City’s values for a healthy and vibrant community, innovation and cultural diversity. Shine Bright New West also supported the direction of the Public Health Officer by encouraging the community to partake in safer outdoor activities.”

The jury also gave **Honourable Mention to the City of Camrose, AB** in this category for their work on “Colour the Underpass,” praising its showcase of “how much can be done with so little”. The Recreation and Culture Department at the City of Camrose worked to create a project that incorporated as many individuals and groups from our City as possible by bringing individuals, business, non profits, cultural and recreational groups, and other community members together to paint 50 panels of an underpass. The jury celebrated the City’s ability to achieve so much impact while removing barriers to community participation.

**City of Ottawa receives first Cultural Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility (IDEA) Award** – The City of Ottawa has been awarded the Cultural IDEA Award for work done on ‘City of Ottawa–Anishinabe Algonquin Nation Civic Cultural Protocol and Implementation Plan (2022–2026)’. This new award recognizes significant contributions by an individual, organization, or municipality working in the cultural sector that exemplifies the principles of IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility) through cultural programs and initiatives including reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and communities. Led by Natalí Zúñiga, Ottawa’s Indigenous Cultural Developer and a member of the Cultural Development and Initiatives team, the collaborative process of developing this plan meaningfully engaged the Anishinabe



Algonquin Nation, the Host Nation in Ottawa. Host Nation partners included The Algonquin Anishinabe Nation Tribal Council, the Algonquin Nation Programs and Services Secretariat, Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation and the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation. These Host Nation bodies represent the eleven federally recognized Anishinabe Algonquin First Nations. The inaugural Implementation Plan was developed with the participation of key City collaborators such as the City Archives and Public Library, Cultural Funding Support, the Office of Protocol and Intergovernmental Affairs, Community Recreation and Cultural Programs and the Public Art Program, and more. In March, 2022, Anishinabe Algonquin Nation Elders and representatives spoke in support of the Plan to the City of Ottawa Community and Protective Services Committee.

The impacts of the Plan include municipal and public awareness that Ottawa is built on unceded Anishinabe Algonquin Nation land, and that the peoples of the Anishinabe Algonquin Host Nation have lived on this territory for millennia; inclusion of the Host Nation in cultural planning and policy development at the City of Ottawa for the first time; and increasing inclusion of Host Nation members as full and leading partners in municipal, federal and community arts, heritage and cultural initiatives, including archival exhibitions, museum projects, public art commissions, library programs, development of educational tools and cultural funding assessment. Approval of the Protocol at Ottawa City Council in April 2022 has resulted in rapidly increasing municipal and community requests for information, learning and connection with the Anishinabe Algonquin Host Nation. “People are beginning to realize what they don’t know,” says Cathy Shepertycki, Cultural Development and Initiatives Unit Coordinator

This year, the Public Art Network Council, a working group within the Creative City Network of Canada has altered the traditional Public Art Award to recognize the different purposes and community value between permanent and temporary public art and to set up projects with smaller budgets for recognition in the field of Public Art.

**City of Kingston receives first Legacy Award** – The City of Kingston, ON has been awarded the new **Public Art Legacy Award** for the ‘Alderville First Nation Commemoration Project: Manidoo Ogitigan (Spirit Garden) by Terence Radford’. The Legacy Award recognizes a Canadian municipality that demonstrated visionary leadership by supporting an excellent program and process that led to a successful public art project or program. Specifically, permanent public art projects valued over \$75,000.00. The Alderville First Nation Commemoration Project is a public art project that commemorates the historical and contemporary ties between Alderville First Nation and the Kingston region. Praising the ‘Spirit Garden’ for its “challenge of what public art can be and should be”, the jury noted the placekeeping approach of the work and the artist’s respect for the environment and community:



“It was about respect all around and not wanting to be invasive”.

Manidoo Ogitigan (Spirit Garden), located in Lake Ontario Park, is a landscape installation intended to function as a symbolic reclamation and physical restoration of the land. It explores how the shared experiences of colonization, along with attempts at cultural assimilation, have impacted the living culture of Alderville First Nation. The jury celebrated the interactive nature of the work, which stood out to them as a highlight.

The jury also awarded **Honourable Mention to the City of Ottawa, ON** for the O-Train Stage 1 Public Art Program. A call to artists for non-integrated artwork in June 2014 resulted in the commission of seven permanent, stand-alone artworks at six themed stations located in Ottawa’s downtown core. The jury appreciated that “the pieces animate what is a concrete and barren area.” There are two distinct commissions for uOttawa station, and the Algonquin-themed Pimisi Station remained exclusive for artwork designed by Algonquin artists along with requirements to collaborate closely with nearby Algonquin Anishinaabe communities.

**The City of Mississauga, ON awarded the new Public Art Sustainability Award** – The City of Mississauga has received the Sustainability Award for the sidewalk mural ‘Blissful Release’ by Vivian Rosas. This Award recognizes a Canadian municipality that demonstrated visionary leadership by supporting an excellent program and process that led to a successful public art project or program. Specifically, any temporary public art project or a permanent public art project valued up to \$75,000.00. The large-scale sidewalk mural was hand-painted and community-informed. It celebrates and honours 2SLGBTQ+ communities and depicts a crowd of people of all backgrounds, ages, genders, and abilities, dancing in a rainbow, finding joy and belonging with one another through music and dance.

The colourful sidewalk mural is described as a “rainbow road like no other”. The jury commended the City of Mississauga on their inclusion of equity into all stages of project development, calling the process “leading edge”. They noted that Blissful Release was a “simple end result with high impact; an example to community arts organizations that you don’t have to have a big budget but that you need to have strong conversations to create impactful work”.

The jury also awarded **Honourable Mention to the City of Nanaimo, BC** for their work on Ǫe’xe’ Sǫpástul u tu Ǿewum Qa’ i’ KwaǾkw (Sacred Gathering of the Freshwater and Saltwater) by Eliot White-Hill, Kwulasultun. The work includes four key installations: three painted murals and a set of hanging banners in the interior of Beban Park Pool. The work is complemented by a free storybook for children written by the artist and carries specific language goals, incorporating words and phonetic pronunciations that describe the beings shown in the



murals in the language of its territory. Artist Eliot White-Hill, Kwulasultun (Coast Salish) took inspiration from the Nanaimo River Estuary, offering images and traditional stories told by the artist and directed to a youth audience. “Visually, the work is strong, but also, it lives beyond the children’s storybooks by using this static piece as a tool for Reconciliation” said the jury. “We know that children will see these images. This is an incredible way to introduce the aspect of Indigenous naming to children.”

Finally, **The City of Waterloo has been awarded the new 2022 Stand Up for Culture Award.**

This one-time award is open to a Canadian municipality that developed, adopted, adapted, or implemented a program, initiative, or policy over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic (March 2020–present) that ensured their local culture professionals had the resources needed to continue to deliver important community programs or support local artists during lockdowns and reduced work opportunities. In partnership with local organization Pat the Dog Theatre Creation, Waterloo Arts & Culture committed \$10,000 from the Economic Development Reserve Fund to micro-grants for local creators and the creation of new works, administered by Pat the Dog. The jury commended the City of Waterloo for its fast action, true partnership, and removal of barriers and remarked that this work shows “how municipal support can be a catalyst to find other support for artists”.

The City staff stated that “based on the success of this program, the City of Waterloo received an incredible amount of interest from other municipalities inquiring about the partnership, the success of the program, and how we were able to work internally to fund the program. This enthusiasm and inquiry was also echoed by other provincial and federal funders, local economic development agencies, and by other community-based funders.” In 2021, after the success of the pilot year, Waterloo Arts & Culture received an additional \$20,000 to support an expansion of the program. Working with Pat the Dog, Waterloo Arts & Culture was able to assist in leveraging the funds to secure an additional \$15,000 from the Kitchener Waterloo Community Foundation for micro-grant funds in 2021. Grants were increased to \$1000 and a total of 36 artists were awarded creation grants from Pat the Dog. Sonya Poweska, Culture Program Specialist added that “the quick adaptation of Arts & Culture programs not only kept staff employed, but unlike other municipal colleagues working in the area, we were not subject to redeployment. This meant that we could continue investing in our artists as well as the community.”

The jury noted in its report that the care in administration throughout the award winners was particularly to be commended: “Administration can play an important role to uplift and support the community.” They also praised the “strong sense of relationship building and holding and cultivating of trust to move things forward and not just sustain”. The nominations that resonated



with the jury had deliberate efforts of connection and care with the community.

CCNC congratulates all recipients of the Awards of Excellence, the honourably mentioned, and the nominated municipalities and projects across all categories for their work over the past three years of immense challenge. The dedication of CCNC members to their communities and local cultural ecologies has showcased the resilience of this sector and dedication of local culture professionals to supporting the cultural offerings of Canada's towns and cities that make them not only livable, but vibrant.

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