

## Executive Summary

1. That the request is from a local non-profit and/or recognized community organization or other local government;

Art Action Earwig is a recognized community arts collective.

2. The name of the contact person, mailing address, email address and telephone number of the person applying for the grant on behalf of the particular organization;

Provided in the REQUEST FOR SUPPORT APPLICATION FORM

3. Background information on the organization requesting the letter;

Minah Lee and Wryly Andherson, local lead artists of Art Action Earwig, interdisciplinary multimedia and performance collective, have been based in Nanaimo since early 2022. We started collaborating/working with Snuneymuxw and other Indigenous knowledge-keepers to learn more about the place we call home. In 2023, our solo exhibition “Give Birth Love Tooth” was exhibited at Nanaimo Art Gallery where we’ve made many exciting connections to work with broader community members. As we were building more shared concerns and interests with local groups and individuals, in amplifying ecological work through arts and culture, we started seeking resources to initiate the project Pulling To Gather. With positive support from a key funder the City of Nanaimo and local stewardship and arts organizations, we successfully pulled this ambitious project together in 2024, with our Earth Day celebration, presented by the City of Nanaimo.

4. Funding source of the proposed program, including any grants from other governments;

In addition to the City of Nanaimo’s in-kind support, we are pursuing Canada Council for the Arts (CCA) grant funding to pay artists and cultural workers, and cover project costs.

5. Services that are to be offered;

Pulling To Gather 2025-26 is an eco-art project, co-produced by Art Action Earwig (AAE) and Nanaimo Forest School Co-operative, bringing ecological restoration and arts together through a series of local artist-led and community-driven activities/events. Evolving from our initial Pulling To Gather in 2024, which focused on English Ivy removal in Colliery Dam Park and arts creation using pulled ivy as the key material and inspiration, we aim to create another edition of the project to broaden creative conservation and deepen sustainable understanding of the local ecology:

Phase 1 (Aug-Oct 2025): This cleansing and seeding phase gathers diverse community members, to introduce ourselves to the land we are nurturing. River's Day in September is a great opportunity for us to inform Nanaimo community of our work for long-term health of the land and people: establishing a Coast Salish food forest and restoring salmon habitat in the Cat Stream area, which is a sensitive and important native vegetation habitat, Our partner SEED, a key neighbourhood stewardship organization, facilitates the creation of a native plant forest garden, in collaboration with Snuneymuxw First Nation knowledge-keepers and AAE.

The River's Day celebration at Robins Park features an array of local artists, both Indigenous and settler. Besides long-term residents, community participants include new immigrants and refugees who benefit from learning more about the history, people and ecology of the land as they strive to put down roots and feel deeper connections to the place. For the larger scope of the project, we are removing invasive plant species throughout the fall and planting an Indigenous Food Forest in the Cat Stream area in October.

Phase 2 (Feb-May 2026): This growing and feeding phase gathers deeper knowledge and more hands, to prepare for the summer and harvest season. The Earth Day celebration in April marks the one-year anniversary of our community initiative, removing ivy from Nanaimo's Colliery Dam Park and making art with it. For Earth Day, temporary land-art pieces are presented in the Cat Stream area through collaborations between local artists and community members. 4 diverse artists will be curated by AAE and partnered with 3-10 community participants. Invasive plants they remove together will be the key material for these ephemeral art pieces. The event celebrates and continues the legacy of cultural change we have been mobilizing. This public event gathers people to learn about upcoming needs for the food forest and encourages them to join in mulching, watering, and other care processes.

Leading up to this, we host 3 invasive plant pulling sessions in both neighbourhoods, Cat Stream and Colliery Dam. With Snuneymuxw Elder Geraldine Manson and ethnobotanist Nancy Turner, we offer a Native Plant Walk on each site. The Cat Stream walk focuses on Coast Salish food and medicine plants we've planted and are growing. The Colliery Dam walk focuses on the importance of Native plants under ecological threat from invasive species. AAE creates a contemporary ritual for the season, composing a new song for the growing food forest and recovering river stream. Michael of Nanaimo Forest School leads a biochar-creation gathering with community members. Biochar offers us a meaningful opportunity to celebrate the protective power of fire while learning to make/store it to create art, fertilize the garden and filter the water stream.

6. Target groups to be served, including the number of individuals to be served and where the services will be offered;

We aim to serve diverse community members including children, youth, university students, seniors, Indigenous People, newcomers, LGBTQIA2S+, local farmers, gardeners, biologists, and more. We estimate to serve about 300 people throughout the project periods.

7. Timeframes or dates of when the proposed program is expected to be administered.

Phase 1: September-October 2025

Key Event: Nanaimo Rivers Day celebration at Robins Park. Saturday September 20th, 11am-4pm (prep from 8am, strike by 5:30pm)

Phase 2: February-May 2026

Key Event: Earth Day celebration. Location TBD. Saturday April 26th, 2026, 12-5pm

Please note that all the above plans are dependent on securing the CCA grant, and the details of the timeline may change if needed.

8. Anticipated outcomes of the program;

-Encouraging and inviting a variety of community members and stakeholders to learn more, participate in and collaborate on the long-term stewardship process, preparing the ground for seeding/planting in the Fall 2025 and growing and harvesting in 2026.

-Implementing Indigenous Forest Garden with Snuneymuxw knowledge keepers through their protocols:

- Meaningful exchange and collaboration between Indigenous and settler communities.
- Learning about and enhancing food security in culturally and ecologically respectful ways.
- Gaining skills in growing local food and sharing among diverse community members.

As a result, a new Indigenous Forest Garden will be established in the neighbourhood, which also enhances the ecological health of the Cat Stream. Community members and stewardship groups will continue the legacy of nurturing, harvesting, and sharing through this communal asset.

9. The proposed budget, in detail;

The City of Nanaimo committed to the following in-kind items:

- The City can provide some equipment to assist with the work part activities along the Cat Stream approximate value \$500
- The City can contribute some staff time in a liaison capacity towards certain activities being planned for the event such as the restorations/work party activities along the Cat Stream. Approximate value \$2000
- The City is interested in being a participant at the event by hosting interactive booth. The City would provide all the equipment and staff to facilitate this booth at the event. Approximate value \$1000
- The City could assist in distributing marketing materials to all recreation facilities throughout the City to help promote the event. Pulling To Gather would be responsible for the creation of all marketing materials used to promote the event.

10. Indication of whether or not similar programs exist in the Regional District of Nanaimo area;

Not that I know of.

11. Indication, if known, of other organization(s) applying for the same funds;

Not that I know of.

12. If this is an on-going or continuation grant or project, indicate results of previous years, and

We initiated Pulling To Gather 2024 as a one-off project and we were successful in securing a CCA grant and The City of Nanaimo's sustainability grant. We are inspired to create a new edition of the project to continue our work in a new way. Since we are an arts collective solely dependent on one-time project grants, we will try again to secure necessary resources to make this happen.

13. Coordination with other entities.

Partners promising protocols/ in-kind resources: Snuneymuxw First Nation, SEED Neighbourhood, Nanaimo Forest School Co-operative, City of Nanaimo.