

DATE OF MEETING APRIL 16, 2025

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EVENTS

**SUBJECT APPROVAL TO BID TO HOST THE 2026 PACIFIC CONTACT
SHOWCASE AND FESTIVAL**

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To request a financial commitment from Council regarding the proposed bid to host the 2026 Pacific Contact showcase and festival.

Recommendation

That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council support the proposed bid to host Pacific Contact 2026 in Nanaimo and commit \$20,000 in 2026 of the 2025 – 2029 Financial Plan, funded from the Special Initiatives Reserve.

BACKGROUND

Pacific Contact is the BC Live Performance Network (formerly the BC Touring Council) annual showcase and festival for the performing arts. The event attracts approximately 250 performing arts professionals each year and takes place predominantly in cultural venues with a centrally-located conference hotel. Pacific Contact is an opportunity for the performing arts community to gather for networking events, panels, meetings, workshops and juried showcase performances by over 40 different artist groups.

Pacific Contact was held in Burnaby for 20 years until 2023. Host communities in 2023 and 2024 were New Westminster and Kelowna respectively. In 2025 the host city will be Vancouver (Granville Island). BC Live Performance Network is searching for a host community for 2026 and has encouraged the Port Theatre, a regular Pacific Contact attendee, to bid to host the event in Nanaimo.

The Port Theatre's Artistic Executive Director has shared the RFP package with staff, Tourism Nanaimo and the Vancouver Island Conference Centre (VICC). These partners all support a bid to host Pacific Contact in Nanaimo from 2026-OCT-01 to 03. The Nanaimo Art Gallery and the Nanaimo Museum are also in support and the Courtyard by Marriott, the Coast Bastion Hotel and the Best Western Dorchester Hotel have held room blocks and offered conference rates. The Port Theatre Society has initiated discussions with Snuneymuxw First Nation regarding welcoming protocols and programming considerations.

DISCUSSION

The Pacific Contact showcase and festival has never been held on Vancouver Island, so a successful bid would create an unprecedented opportunity for Island-based artists to attend and participate. Hosting Pacific Contact would bring visitors to Nanaimo and generate significant event spending in the downtown core. This bid partnership directly connects to City Plan policy C4.5, in particular:

- C4.5.10 *Recognize and promote the role that culture and the creative sector play in the community with respect to community identity and quality of life,*
- C4.5.3 *Make arts and culture visible and accessible throughout the city, in each of the designated Urban Centres, with a special focus on Downtown, and*
- C4.5.12 *Collaborate with partners to identify cultural planning and development opportunities.*

As noted in the Request for Proposal document (ATTACHMENT A), Pacific Contact attracts key cultural programmers and promoters from across BC and Canada. Hosting Pacific Contact provides the opportunity to showcase the City's arts and culture facilities and robust cultural community. Direct spending in Pacific Contact host communities is estimated at \$345,000, with direct event spending estimated at \$125,000 and visitor spending at \$75,000.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The bid package requires that the Host Committee (HC) provide written assurance that there is a licence fee of up to \$25,000 committed and in place, as well as in-kind support from the host community and its partners of up to \$25,000. The licence fee of up to \$25,000 does not need to be provided until the 2026 calendar year. Partners are able to provide the required in-kind support in the form of VICC meeting space incentives (ATTACHMENT B), theatre equipment, staff time and volunteer time.

Staff recommend a commitment of \$20,000, funded from the Special Initiatives Reserve, to support a bid for Pacific Contact 2026. The additional \$5,000 required for this bid will be covered by hotel incentives (ATTACHMENT B). The Special Initiatives Reserve has sufficient funding available with a revised projected 2026 closing balance of \$144,259. Should Council support the staff recommendation, the HC will complete the bid package and will work to obtain other financial support to cover additional elements of the event. However, for bid deadline purposes, the commitment is required for the bid package.

OPTIONS

1. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council support the proposed bid to host Pacific Contact 2026 in Nanaimo and commit \$20,000 in 2026 of the 2025 – 2029 Financial Plan, funded from the Special Initiatives Reserve.
 - The advantages of this option: Economic benefit to the community through promoting Nanaimo's performing arts community and cultural facilities. Hosting Pacific Contact provides the opportunity to host cultural programmers and promoters from across BC and Canada.
 - The disadvantages of this option: Commitment of staff time to the Host Committee and bid preparation. Less funding will be available in the Special Initiatives Reserve for other initiatives and projects.

- Financial Implications: The 2025-2029 Financial Plan will be amended for final to add the commitment.
2. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council not approve the \$20,000 commitment towards the bid to host Pacific Contact 2026 in Nanaimo.
- The advantages of this option: None.
 - The disadvantages of this option: Loss of the opportunity to fulfil the requirements of the Pacific Contact bid package and bring this showcase and festival to Nanaimo.
 - Financial Implications: Will leave funds available in the Special Initiatives Reserve for alternative projects and initiatives.
3. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend alternate direction to Council. |

SUMMARY POINTS

- Pacific Contact is the BC Live Performance Network (formerly the BC Touring Council) annual showcase and festival for the performing arts. Hosting Pacific contact provides the opportunity to host cultural programmers and promoters from across BC and Canada.
- The City of Nanaimo, The Port Theatre, Tourism Nanaimo and the Vancouver Island Conference Centre are preparing a bid package to host the event and request a funding commitment of \$20,000 from the City of Nanaimo.
- Direct spending in Pacific Contact host communities is estimated at \$345,000, with direct event spending estimated at \$125,000 and visitor spending at \$75,000.

ATTACHMENTS:

ATTACHMENT A: Pacific Contact Request for Proposal
ATTACHMENT B: Tourism Nanaimo Venues and Incentives Document
ATTACHMENT C: VICC Pacific Contact Schedule A, Quotes 1 & 2

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