

ONE WAVE'S LONGHOUSE PROJECT

Celebrating Cross-Cultural Peoples

One Wave has celebrated the arts and culture of the international Pacific community on Lekwungen Territory (Victoria, BC) since 2008. In 2017, motivated by ongoing steps towards reconciliation, Pacific Peoples' Partnership presented an enriched and expanded One Wave Gathering. A committee of community members, elders and knowledge-keepers from Indigenous nations of the North and South Pacific identified the theme 'healing through celebration' to guide all aspects of the event.

The result was an unprecedented gathering of peoples from the Pacific region. Guided by unique protocols and histories, dozens of nations from across the North and South Pacific gathered on the lawn of the BC Legislature to create a village. Thousands of members of the Victoria public, including political leaders from various levels of government, came together to build meaningful relationships with one another in community-led spaces.

The event was marked by a unique symbolic installation: the **Longhouse Project**. Under the direction of Nuu-chah-nulth artist Hjalmer Wenstob, and with the active support of the Esquimalt Nation, Songhees Nation and BC Legislature, four Indigenous and Maori youth were selected to design art for the façades

of the temporary longhouses. The houses were created in the styles of the Coast Salish, Kwakwaka'wakw, Nuu-chah-nulth, and South Pacific Islands respectively. Inside each longhouse, elders and community members from each area had full rein in creating welcoming and educational interactive spaces for the public throughout the day. Outside, the day was filled with cultural presentation, dance, speeches from local Chiefs, slahal ('bone game') and theater performances.

Longhouse designs were created by Sarah Jim (Coast Salish), A.J. Boersen (Nuu-chah-nulth), Juliana Speier (Kwak'waka'wakw), Jazzlyn Markowsky (Maori) and a phenomenal dance curtain, later gifted to Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, was created by James Goldsmith-Brown (Esquimalt Nation). The journey of youth, participating artists and community members who produced and programmed within the longhouses was captured in a documentary directed by Chesa Abma-Slade (Esquimalt Nation), with support from Desiree Goldsmith-Brown (Esquimalt Nation).

In the eight months preceding the event, Event Producer Siobhan Powlowski worked carefully with the local First Nations (as well as the other cultural communities present

at the event) to carefully shape the way the space was looked after. This led to a second unique element of the event: all text on site was produced in Lekwungen and English, including a detailed history of the site shared by Esquimalt Nation.

Motivated by ongoing steps towards reconciliation, the public came together to build meaningful relationships.

One Wave was made possible through the generous support of event partner MediaNet, the countless hours contributed by our volunteers, and the financial support of the Leon and Thea Koerner Foundation, the BC Arts Council, City of Victoria, the Province of British Columbia, Center for Asia Pacific Initiatives, UVic's Indigenous Governance Program and the Capital Regional District.



Project Organizers:

Siobhan Powlowski is the project's Event Producer and is of mixed Ukrainian-Irish heritage and raised in Northern Ambae, Vanuatu. She has a strong background in multiple artistic disciplines.

Hjalmer Wenstob is the project's Lead Artist and is from the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation (Tofino BC), as well as of Norwegian and English ancestry. His work has been to shed light on preconceived notions of First Nation art and to create a balance between traditional art and art of now.

April Ingham is the Executive Director of Pacific Peoples' Partnership. April has previously contributed to and learned from many BC organizations such as BCMA, BCAC, First Peoples' Cultural Foundation, and Peace Gallery North in Fort St. John.

Chesa Kai Abma-Slade is the project's Documentary Director and a member of the Xwsepsum (Esquimalt Nation). She is of mixed Frisian and Lekwungen ancestry. Currently, Chesa works with children and youth as an Indigenous Education Assistant in the W̱SÁNEĆ territory.

Photo: Chief Andy Thomas of Esquimalt Nation telling the story of the Lekwungen village displaced from the BC Legislature Site.
Photo credit: Don Craig