



For Immediate Release | March 21, 2018

Art open house highlights mental health and substance use connection

KELOWNA – An open house was held today at Interior Health’s Community Health & Services Centre (CHSC) to showcase local artists on display throughout the new downtown Kelowna building. The variety of art pieces has helped create a more inviting atmosphere for patients and members of the public, many with strong mental health connections and meanings.

“Art is a powerful and positive tool that can be a healing force for people facing mental health challenges” said Mental Health and Addictions Minister Judy Darcy. “In addition to its therapeutic benefits, this art installation is also a great way to create a sense of community and contribute to a welcoming, compassionate and warm environment for all those who visit or work at the centre.”

“The CHSC has a diverse population ranging from clients requiring our services to staff providing care and health system supports,” said CHSC Art Committee Chair Givonna DeBruin. “When seeking art pieces for the second floor, the Art Committee mindfully sought out pieces that were therapeutic to our clients as well as to the clinicians who provide service. We also sought participation from our staff members, patients, and the general public to ensure a sense of community was felt.”

The CHSC is home to over 40 pieces of art from emerging and professional artists across Interior Health. In partnership with ARTSCO, through their Artscape Program, a variety of rotating art exhibits are on display throughout the building by young and emerging artists. Rotating exhibits by staff members also appear on the fourth and fifth floors.

“The Arts Council of the Central Okanagan seeks to empower our vibrant artistic community and creative economy,” says ARTSCO Executive Director Dustyn Baulkham. “This partnership with Interior Health provided an awesome opportunity for a local artist to be adequately compensated for their incredible workshops and subsequent artworks that will benefit everyone who enters the space.”

The building is also home to one of Canada’s 150 Mosaic projects, adding colour and vibrancy to the main lobby. The mosaic celebrates Kelowna as a healthy community and is a primary attraction to visitors.

“We are so grateful that our artists’ work is part of the incredible collection at CHSC. Art helps people with mental health challenges overcome isolation, achieve a sense of belonging, and build stronger connections to the community,” says CMHA Kelowna Executive Director Shelagh Turner. “It empowers people to engage in self-discovery and look at creativity as an avenue to support mental health and recovery.”

Feature artists in attendance and with work on display for the open house included: Dennis Evans, Don Berger, Erika and Florian Maurer, Jose Hernandez, Jack Hambleton, CMHA Senior Artists, and Jessica Hedrick.

Interior Health is committed to promoting healthy lifestyles and providing a wide range of quality health-care services to more than 740,000 people living across B.C.’s vast interior. For more information, visit www.interiorhealth.ca, follow us on Twitter [@Interior_Health](https://twitter.com/Interior_Health), or like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/InteriorHealth.

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