



# INTERTIDAL KINNING FESTIVAL 2024:

INSIGHTS AND OUTCOMES

## ABSTRACT

This report details the planning, implementation, and outcomes from the Intertidal Kinning Festival, a series of events celebrating and raising awareness about the Fraser Estuary, an ecologically significant area facing numerous environmental challenges. The project was undertaken as part of the UBC Sustainability Scholars Program in collaboration with the Blue Cabin and Other Sights for Artists' Projects (Other Sights). The events included workshops, symposiums, and community engagements, all aimed at fostering a deeper connection between local communities and the estuary through the lenses of arts and environmental stewardship. This report provides insights into the creative process, community involvement, and the impact of these events on participants and stakeholders. Additionally, it offers recommendations for future initiatives that seek to combine art, community engagement, and environmental stewardship.

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**Disclaimer**

This report was produced as part of the UBC Sustainability Scholars Program, a partnership between the University of British Columbia and various local governments and organisations in support of providing graduate students with opportunities to do applied research on projects that advance sustainability and climate action across the region.

This project was conducted under the mentorship of Other Sights for Artists’ Projects staff. The opinions and recommendations in this report and any errors are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of Other Sights for Artists’ Projects or the University of British Columbia.

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## Executive Summary

The Intertidal Kinning Festival was organized to raise awareness and engage the community in the conservation of the Fraser Estuary, a critical ecosystem that supports a diverse array of marine, land-based, and airborne species, including humans. The festival included workshops, musical performances, nature walks, and a mini-symposium—each designed to connect participants with the estuary’s ecological significance. Despite initial challenges, particularly with low RSVPs for some events, strategic adjustments like converting the Youth Banner Making Workshop to an online format and intensifying outreach efforts led to significantly increased participation and meaningful outcomes for the remaining events. This report delves into the planning, implementation, and impact of the event series, emphasizing the importance of collaboration, adaptability, and community engagement.

## Territorial Acknowledgement

We respectfully acknowledge that the Intertidal Kinning Festival took place on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples, including the Musqueam, Tsawwassen, and Kwantlen First Nations. We are deeply grateful for the opportunity to work and engage on these lands and waters, which have been stewarded by Indigenous communities since time immemorial. Their enduring connection to the estuary and commitment to the estuary continues to inspire our efforts. Through this event series, we honor their rich cultural heritage, recognize their vital role in preserving the estuary, and strive to support their ongoing stewardship of these waters and lands.

## Acknowledgements

This event series would not have been possible without the support and collaboration of numerous individuals and organizations. I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to Other Sights for Artists’ Projects for their unwavering commitment to fostering public art that engages with environmental and social issues. Their approach inspired the vision for the Intertidal Kinning Festival.

I am especially thankful to my mentors, Sunshine Frère and Jay Pahre, whose expertise and guidance were instrumental in the success of this initiative. Their mentorship provided not only practical advice but also the creative and intellectual grounding that shaped the entire series. Their influence is reflected in every aspect of the events, from developing themes and ideas to community outreach strategies.

The Intertidal Kinning Festival was made possible through generous funding from Deux Mille Foundation, the PRE Fund at UBC, and Other Sights for Artists’ Projects. This initiative was supported by a diverse group of partners, including the City of Richmond, GreenSeeds Musical Society, Garden City Conservation Society, and the Blue Cabin Floating Artist Residency. The University of British Columbia played a crucial role in facilitating the project through the UBC Sustainability Scholars Program, providing a platform for applied research and community engagement.

# Introduction

The Fraser Estuary is a vital ecosystem, serving as a habitat for numerous species and a support system for local communities. The event series was conceived with the goal of fostering a deeper connection between the community and the estuary, encouraging stewardship and active participation in its preservation. Connecting local residents, conservation enthusiasts, and educational groups, the series aimed to blend education, art, and direct experience with the natural world.

## Event Descriptions

### 1. Youth Banner Making Workshop (Online)

Keely O'Brien is interdisciplinary artist known for her DIY approach and community collaborations. Her workshop was aimed at exploring the estuary's significance through hands-on activities, inviting participants to engage in the creation of sustainably sourced banners and found poetry, reflecting the unique spirit of the estuary.

RSVPs were low for the workshop; initially planned as an in-person event, we converted the workshop to be online to encourage participants to make their own banners at home. This shift reaches a broader audience, including non-local participants across the estuary's reach who otherwise might not have been able to attend. The session was recorded and will be made available as a resource for ongoing education and outreach efforts and will create an avenue for virtual engagement in future arts and sustainability initiatives.

### 2. Music Performance with the Green Seeds Musical Society (August 2)

Erzsi Institoris performed as part of the The GreenSeeds Musical Society at the Blue Cabin on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, with a significant turnout from the local community and neighbors local to Steveston. The GreenSeeds Musical Society delivered an engaging and lively performance, blending traditional and contemporary music inspired by the natural world. The atmosphere was one of communal celebration, with attendees expressing their appreciation for the fusion of music and nature. This event underscored the power of art to foster a connection with the environment.

The collaboration with GreenSeeds Musical Society was instrumental in attracting a diverse audience, including individuals who may not have previously engaged with conservation activities. The positive response from participants highlighted the effectiveness of using cultural expressions like music to convey environmental messages.

### 3. Miyawaki Forest Walk with Nica Derakh (August 3 - Estuary Appreciation Day)

As part of Estuary Appreciation Day on August 3, Nica Derakh led a Miyawaki Forest Walk, which was one of the most well-attended events in the series. The walk provided participants with a hands-on experience of the Miyawaki method, a technique for creating dense, biodiverse forests in urban environments. Nica offered detailed insights into the growth and ecological importance of these mini-forests, explaining how they contribute to habitat restoration within the estuary. This event took place at Terra Nova Rural Park, in the north of Richmond, providing a different point of view on the estuary and its connections to the region's geography.

Participants engaged in meaningful discussions and shared observations during the walk, deepening their understanding of urban conservation practices. One attendee remarked, "This walk opened my eyes to the potential of urban forests. It's inspiring to see how even small actions can contribute to the health of our environment." This feedback underscores the impact of the event and the growing interest in community-based conservation initiatives. Many participants expressed interest in joining volunteer efforts to create more Miyawaki forests in the future.

### 4. Estuary Conservation Mini-Symposium (August 10)

The Estuary Conservation Mini-Symposium focused on critical issues related to the Fraser River and Estuary from the perspective of how cities and organizations think about flood management and nature-based solutions to ecological concerns. The symposium featured two presentations:

- **Charlotte Milne** discussed the challenges of flooding along the Fraser River, emphasizing ongoing projects where flood management is being redesigned to ensure that fish and other non-human species are protected. Her presentation highlighted innovative approaches that balance human needs with ecological integrity, sparking a lively discussion among attendees.
- **Ilyas Kanybek** presented on the integration of nature-based solutions (NBS) in restoration practices within the Fraser River Estuary. He analyzed existing restoration projects, focusing on how these approaches can support long-term ecological resilience. The presentation led to a thoughtful exchange on the potential of NBS to address environmental challenges in the region.

The symposium served as a platform for sharing knowledge, fostering dialogue, and inspiring further action among participants. The diverse perspectives presented at the event underscored the complexity of estuary conservation and the need for collaborative, multidisciplinary approaches. Following presentations, the presenters engaged in a conversation about the intersections and differences of their approaches.

## 5. Lumin Photography Workshop with Desiree Patterson (August 11)

On August 11, the Fraser Estuary Event Series featured the Lumin Photography Workshop, an innovative session led by photographer Desirée Patterson. This workshop offered participants a distinctive opportunity to explore the estuary's beauty through print photography, utilizing found materials and sediment collected from the estuary itself.

Participants engaged in a hands-on experience that combined traditional print photography techniques with elements drawn directly from the estuary. Using sediment and natural materials gathered from the estuary, participants created unique photographic prints that reflected the environmental textures and colors of the landscape. This approach not only emphasized the artistic aspects of photography but also connected participants more intimately with the estuary's physical and ecological characteristics.

Desirée guided participants through the process of integrating these materials into their photographic work, encouraging them to capture and interpret the estuary's natural essence in new and creative ways. The workshop provided a profound appreciation for the estuary's intricate ecosystems, as participants worked with materials that told a story of the estuary's environmental significance.

The Lumin Photography Workshop was a meaningful component of the event series, enhancing participants' understanding of the estuary while fostering a deeper connection to the natural world through the art of print photography.

## Visuals and Multimedia

To capture the journey and impact of the Fraser Estuary Event Series, we recorded video footage of all events. This visual documentation is integral to providing a comprehensive overview of the series, showcasing the activities, engagement, and highlights throughout. The video is currently in the editing stage and will be made available soon. We believe this visual record will offer valuable insights and a richer understanding of the series' achievements and community impact. The videos will serve as a lasting resource, extending the reach of the event series beyond those who were able to attend in person.

## Feedback and Testimonials

Participants provided overwhelmingly positive feedback, particularly regarding the diverse range of events and the opportunity to engage with the estuary in different ways. One participant from the Miyawaki Forest Walk expressed, "This walk opened my eyes to the incredible potential of urban forests. It's inspiring to see how even small actions can contribute to the health of our environment." Another attendee at the music performance noted, "The blend of music and nature was both uplifting and thought-provoking. It was a beautiful reminder of the importance of preserving our natural spaces."

These testimonials reflect the deep connection participants felt with the estuary and the success of the event series in fostering that connection.

## Outreach and Marketing

Our initial event faced challenges with low attendance, but online adaptation of the workshop and festival documentation will ensure longevity for the program. Renewed outreach efforts increased participation through including distributing more flyers, posting in a wider community area, and leveraging social media platforms to reach a broader audience. These efforts proved successful, as attendance increased significantly for the remaining events; engagement on social media also saw a marked improvement.

## Impact and Outcomes

Attendees and participants included artists, local community members and neighbors, scholars, and students from across the region. Participants expressed having a greater appreciation for the estuary, and a deeper sense for the estuary's impacts across the ecologies of the region. The events inspired participants to take an active role in protecting this critical ecosystem.

The success of the series is reflected not only in the increased participation and positive feedback but also in the heightened awareness and interest in estuary conservation that it generated. Moving forward, these outcomes will inform the planning of future initiatives, ensuring that they continue to build on the momentum created by this series.

## Challenges and Solutions

We faced challenges with outreach for the first event of this series (Youth Banner Making Workshop), but converting to an online format provided a new avenue of engagement and a wider audience in the future. This also underscores how virtual formats can be a valuable tool for future conservation education efforts, and can support audience engagement across a wider geographical area.

Subsequent events were well attended through renewed outreach strategies, and we believe a longer runway for program creation and publicity would strengthen attendance in the future. Flexibility and adaptability remain important aspects of event planning, particularly for festival programs like Intertidal Kinning.

In the future, we will look to continue partnerships begun through this series and develop events focusing on collaboration with local organizations doing this work. This will not only broaden reach and depth of engagement, but create sustainable audiences for workshop and event participation moving forward.

# Recommendations

## 1. Strengthen Early Engagement Strategies:

- Begin outreach earlier, with a focus on building relationships with local schools, community groups, and conservation organizations. This will help generate interest and secure commitments from participants well in advance of the event dates.
- Consider developing partnerships with local media outlets to promote the event series, including interviews, feature articles, and event previews.

## 2. Enhance Digital and Social Media Presence:

- Invest in a dedicated social media campaign that includes targeted ads, event countdowns, and interactive content to boost visibility and engagement.
- Develop a content calendar that aligns with key environmental dates and themes, using these as opportunities to amplify messaging about the Fraser Estuary.

## 3. Incorporate Virtual Components in Future Events:

- Given the potential reach of the online Youth Banner Making Workshop, explore the possibility of hybrid events that combine in-person and virtual elements to maximize accessibility and participation.
- Develop a library of recorded sessions, workshops, and presentations that can be accessed online by those unable to attend in person, extending the reach and impact of the event series.

## 4. Deepen Collaboration with Indigenous Communities:

- Continue to build relationships with Indigenous communities, incorporating their knowledge, perspectives, and leadership into future events.
- Explore opportunities for co-hosting events with Indigenous organizations, ensuring that their voices are central to discussions about the estuary and its future.

## 5. Evaluate and Iterate on Event Formats:

- Conduct a thorough post-event evaluation with participants, partners, and collaborators to gather insights and feedback on what worked well and what could be improved.
- Use these findings to refine and iterate on event formats, ensuring that future series are even more impactful and engaging.



## Conclusion

The Intertidal Kinning Festival was a success, bringing together a diverse range of participants and partners to celebrate, learn about, and engage with this vital ecosystem. Despite early challenges, the series achieved its goals of raising awareness and fostering community stewardship of the estuary. The lessons learned and the feedback received will guide future efforts to ensure that the Fraser Estuary remains a vibrant and thriving ecosystem for generations to come.

## Appendix A: Event Photos

1. Flora placed on substrate for Lumin Photography Workshop led by Desiree Patterson, August 11, 2024, Blue Cabin Floating Artist Residency. Photo by Ihomehe Agbebaku.
2. Participant reading information on Mini Forests at Miyawaki Forest Walk led by Nica Derakh, August 3, 2024, Miyawaki Forest, Richmond. Photo by Ihomehe Agbebaku.
3. Docks on the Fraser River, August 1, 2024, Blue Cabin Floating Artist Residency. Photo by Ihomehe Agbebaku.
4. Surveying the Blue Cabin Floating Artist Residency for suitability before workshops, July 25, 2024, Blue Cabin Floating Artist Residency. Photo by Ihomehe Agbebaku.
5. Keely O'Brien doing a demo for the Banner Making Workshop she led, August 1, 2024, Blue Cabin Floating Artist Residency. Photo by Nessie Blanes.
6. Blue Cabin Floating Residency where most events were held, August 1, 2024, Blue Cabin Floating Artist Residency. Photo by Nessie Blanes.
7. Erzsi Institoris and a participant after the Green Seeds Society musical performance led by Erzsi Institoris, August 3, 2024, Miyawaki Forest, Richmond. Photo by Nessie Blanes.
8. Nica Derakh leading participants back after the Miyawaki Forest Walk, August 3, 2024, Miyawaki Forest, Richmond. Photo by Nessie Blanes.
9. Participants and team members engaging in discussions after the Mini Symposium led by FERSC Scholars Charlotte Milne and Ilyas Kanybek, August 10, 2024, Blue Cabin Floating Artist Residency. Photo by Nessie Blanes.



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