

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Vancouver Art Gallery and BC Parks Foundation Partner to Promote Health Through Nature and Art

This groundbreaking initiative recognizes the healing power of art and nature in supporting long-term health and wellbeing



April 7, 2025, VANCOUVER, BC // Traditional Coast Salish Lands including the xʷməθkʷəy̍əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

On the occasion of World Health Day, the Vancouver Art Gallery is proud to launch a new collaboration with BC Parks Foundation's **PaRx**, Canada's national nature prescription program, which allows healthcare professionals to prescribe a nature-inspired visit to **Emily Carr: Navigating an Impenetrable Landscape** in support of patients' mental health and psychological wellbeing. Building on PaRx's success in over 17,000 healthcare providers issuing more than a million prescriptions for nature, this innovative initiative harnesses the proven healing power of both art and nature in supporting long-term health.

This collaboration is the first of its kind in Canada and will provide an immersive indoor art and nature experience in an urban setting. During the first year of the program, each prescribed visitor and their optional guest will receive free admission to the Gallery, thereby fostering social connections while removing financial barriers.

Visitors may return any number of times during the length of the project by retaining their PaRx nature prescription. A special printed guide for *Emily Carr: Navigating an Impenetrable Landscape* will be available,

encouraging visitors to *slow-look* at the paintings, connect to the images of nature, and reflect on how the experience makes them feel. The Gallery anticipates approximately 4,000 individuals to benefit from the social prescribing initiative during its pilot year.

Decades of research in medicine, psychology and art therapy link close engagement with art to improved physical wellbeing, reduced loneliness and improved life satisfaction, while hundreds of studies show that connecting with nature is one of the most effective ways to boost long-term health. Together, this collaboration bridges science, nature, and creativity.

While there is growing recognition that art can be a powerful healing method, the formal infrastructures that connect art to those who need it the most are still in their infancy. The development of programs that connect social prescribing with cultural organizations is vital and can alleviate significant pressure on our traditional healthcare system. Recognizing this need in the Greater Vancouver region, a formal prescription to an experience at the Gallery does not simply connect individuals to art but uses art to reduce stress, anxiety and social isolation—major public health risks linked to a wide range of diseases and negative health outcomes. Developed in close collaboration with renowned health and wellbeing experts, as well as organizations that believe in art's capacity to heal, this prescription ensures that specific individuals who could benefit from engagement with the arts have access to these experiences.

Curated by **Dr. Richard Hill**, Smith Jarislowsky Senior Curator of Canadian Art at the Vancouver Art Gallery, *Emily Carr: Navigating an Impenetrable Landscape* uses the spatial metaphor of closeness to and distance from nature to probe Carr's thinking about the BC forests and coastal landscapes she is known for painting. By immersing themselves in depictions of nature, visitors may experience their own connection to BC's landscapes. There is evidence that supports spending time in museums and galleries can reduce stress and cortisol levels; the Gallery experience—designed by Sirish Rao, the Gallery's Interim Co-CEO and Paula Toledo, the Gallery's Lead Wellbeing Consultant—not only encourages slow looking and mindfulness but also deepens a local viewer's connection to their land, language, place and community. Visitors are then encouraged to step outside and spend time exploring local parks or getting involved in protecting nature.

In conjunction with the experience, the Gallery is proud to publish *Colouring Carr*, a colouring book featuring Emily Carr's nature-inspired paintings and drawings from the Gallery's collection. Suitable for all ages, the pages in this book invite artists to slow down and connect with Carr's landscapes through the meditative act of colouring. *Colouring Carr* is available to pre-order in the Gallery Store.

For more information, please visit: vanartgallery.bc.ca/art-of-wellbeing



Media Partners:



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[Press images and press quotes](#)

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Image: Visitor looks at painting inside *Emily Carr: Navigating an Impenetrable Landscape*, exhibition at the Vancouver Art Gallery from January 25, 2025 to January 4, 2026, Photo: Vancouver Art Gallery

[ABOUT BC PARKS FOUNDATION](#)

BC Parks Foundation proudly acts as the official charitable partner and conservation financing mechanism for parks and Indigenous protected areas in British Columbia. We inspire and empower you to enjoy and protect parks and Indigenous protected areas in BC, so that they flourish for now, for all, forever.

[ABOUT PARX](#)

PaRx is an initiative of the BC Parks Foundation, driven by health care professionals who want to improve their patients' health by connecting them to nature. Featuring practical resources like quick tips and patient handouts, its goal is to make prescribing time in nature simple, fun and effective.

Each prescriber who registers with PaRx will receive a nature prescription file customized with a unique provider code, and instructions for how to prescribe and log nature prescriptions. The core aim of our program is to encourage patients to incorporate outdoor experiences in their local communities into their daily routines. Patients can also access special offers from our proud partners to reduce their barriers to nature access across Canada.

[ABOUT THE VANCOUVER ART GALLERY](#)

Founded in 1931 and located on the unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh nations, the Vancouver Art Gallery is Western Canada's largest public art museum. Our mission is to create—through art—paths to share perspectives, build and engage communities and shape our collective future together. This is expressed through exhibitions showcasing outstanding examples of historical, modern and contemporary art from British Columbia and around the world; education programs that encourage dialogue and understanding; and publications that advance scholarship on a wide range of artistic subjects. Our permanent collection, representing the most comprehensive resource for visual culture in British Columbia, has more than 13,200 works. Committed to inclusivity and accessibility, we serve a broad public across the

region. Each year, hundreds of thousands of children, youth, students, families, adults and seniors of all backgrounds benefit from our programs.

We are guided by six strategic imperatives: to bring our new Gallery to life; to sustain the excellence and relevance of our programming; to build organizational and leadership capacity and ensure sustainability; to build a strong and admirable culture; and to continue to grow and deepen our fundraising and revenue capacity. These strategic imperatives are underpinned by the following core values: being respectful of the unceded Indigenous territories upon which we are situated; creating an inclusive and respectful environment; believing that curiosity is a pathway to innovation; establishing clear goals and expectations to cultivate a culture of accountability; and fostering successful collaboration through communication and active listening. The Gallery also commits to providing equitable access to everyone. We actively support accessibility, anti-racism, LGBTQ2S+ inclusion and encourage diversity in our staff, visitors, volunteers and programming.

The Vancouver Art Gallery is situated on the ancestral and unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations, and is respectful of the Indigenous stewards of the land it occupies, whose rich cultures are fundamental to artistic life in Vancouver and the work of the Gallery.
vanartgallery.bc.ca



QUOTE SHEET

“The Vancouver Art Gallery is honoured to collaborate in this visionary program, which represents a major step towards growing a culture of care in our community. We look forward to bringing the restorative power of nature indoors — creating a welcoming and safe space for healing, reflection, and connection at the Gallery. To the best of our knowledge, this marks the first collaboration of its kind between a nature prescription program and an arts institution anywhere in the world.” - **Sirish Rao**, Interim Co-CEO at the Vancouver Art Gallery

“Nature offers itself to our imagination. If we listen, as great artists do, we hear the cedar trees whispering wisdom for living, the sedge grasses soothing our sorrows with their songs, the humpback whales breathing wealth into our mind’s dwindling reserves, the Canadian geese startling awake our sleeping spirits. We behold the sky and stars, our awe lifting us beyond our grief, our limitations, and our struggles. This partnership celebrates the power that is British Columbia, and British Columbians. It celebrates how artists like Emily Carr have passed along a deep, shared truth through their great works: experiencing our nature is to be inspired, healed, and joined into the family of life.” - **Andrew Day**, Chief Executive Officer at BC Parks Foundation

“Nature and culture have long been recognized for healing effects. I hope many British Columbians benefit from this unique Art Gallery program.” - **Honourable David Eby, KC**, Premier of British Columbia

“A significant body of knowledge shows that access to nature experiences, both indoors and outdoors, can improve health conditions ranging from depression and anxiety to high blood pressure and chronic pain—and the growing evidence behind the health benefits of art is similarly impressive. Museums and galleries have a wealth of potential to become healing places where people can simultaneously experience the health benefits of nature and art through social prescribing. Combining social connection, creativity and natural landscapes in one space is a uniquely powerful way to improve people’s mental and physical health. I can’t wait to start prescribing visits to the Vancouver Art Gallery.” - **Dr. Melissa Lem**, Director, PaRX Prescriptions

“My work surrounding the science of how art can promote wellbeing, along with my own transformative experience of receiving an art prescription, drive my passion and support for the PaRX collaboration. This initiative combines the strengths of both art and nature, which are vital for fostering connections. Research shows that interactions with art and nature can evoke feelings of awe and inspire wonder. In these moments, where people feel interconnected with something larger than themselves, they can often feel a greater inclination towards community involvement and pro-social actions. Due to rising rates of loneliness and social isolation, this collaborative prescription program has the potential to address these public health concerns, providing Vancouver residents with valuable opportunities to nurture social connections that can greatly improve their health and wellbeing.” - **Paula Toledo**, Mental Health Advisor and the Vancouver Art Gallery’s Lead Wellbeing Consultant

“To me, nature is an art form. When the beauty of the natural world is exhibited in a gallery, as a painting, or photograph, which is my medium, I feel that I am helping feed minds, creating positive emotions and happiness for the observer. Let the art of nature dwell in your mind, and in your dreams. Let it feed your energy, your emotions, and your emotional wellbeing. It gives great pleasure to Pamela, our sons and I, to help support the wonderful programs at the Vancouver Art Gallery. They are designed to provide sustenance for your soul, and your wellbeing.” - **Dave Richardson**, Supporter of Art and Wellbeing Programming at the Gallery