

# Town of Whitby

## Staff Report

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### Report Title: Final Artist Selection - Indigenous Public Art Piece for the Whitby Sport Complex

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**Report to:** Committee of the Whole

**Date of meeting:** October 28, 2024

**Report Number:** CMS 15-24

**Department(s) Responsible:**

Community Services Department

**Submitted by:**

John Romano, Commissioner of  
Community Services

**Acknowledged by M. Gaskell,  
Chief Administrative Officer**

**For additional information, contact:**

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#### 1. Recommendation:

1. That report CMS 15-24 be received for information.

#### 2. Highlights:

- The Whitby Sports Complex Project (WSC) included for the commissioning of a landmark Public Art Piece from a Professional Indigenous Artist to be placed within or adjacent to the new facility.
- In September 2023 a call-to-artist was issued to all Professional Indigenous Artists and Artists teams residing in Canada. While this was a national competition, Local and Regional Artists were encouraged to apply.
- On September 27, 2024, the Selection Panel reviewed the proposals and selected Kathryn Corbiere as the successful candidate to complete the Indigenous Public Art for the WSC.

#### 3. Background:

The Town in collaboration with Steps Consulting invited Canadian-based Indigenous professional artists (including artist teams) to submit their Expression of Interest for a competition to complete public artwork(s) that will be installed within or adjacent to the forthcoming Whitby Sports Complex (WSC).

The Selection Panel reviewed and evaluated 19 submissions received during Stage One of the request for quotation (RFQ).

Shortlisted artists/artist teams were ranked by the Selection Panel individually with the top ranking three (3) artists/artist teams being shortlisted. Shortlisted artists were selected based on qualifications demonstrated from the artist's application including their curriculum vitae, connection to community, portfolio of past work, and letter of intent. The Selection Panel members shortlisted the following three (3) artists to proceed to Stage Two in accordance with the RFQ process:

- David M General (ON)
- Tessa Shank (ON)
- Kathryn Corbiere (ON)

### **Selection Panel Composition**

The Selection Panel members included representatives from:

- Town of Whitby
- Regional Indigenous Professional Artists

Each shortlisted artist/artist team was responsible for the following:

- Attending a virtual site walk through
- Preparing a draft proposal for Technical Review
- Preparing a three (3) minute video of their proposal for a virtual Community Open House hosted by STEPS
- Preparing a complete final proposal for review by the Selection Panel

### **Technical Review**

All proposals were reviewed by a technical team composed of Town of Whitby staff from relevant departments who commented on the technical feasibility, safety, and maintenance requirements of each proposal.

#### 4. Discussion:

The Indigenous public art at the Whitby Sports Complex (WSC) is intended to contribute to the character of the facility by enhancing the quality of public spaces and spaces that are publicly accessible and visible.

The Indigenous art piece selected for the WSC will facilitate an expression of Indigenous heritage and identity using the guiding principles:

- celebrate and recognize regional Indigenous culture and heritage;
- enhance the quality of life for both visitors and established neighbouring communities;
- add value to the cultural, aesthetic, and economic vitality of the facility;
- build civic engagement and social capital and encourage civic discourse;
- help reinforce a strong sense of community pride, ownership, and a sense of belonging.

Over the last few months, the Selection Panel reviewed the three artists' proposals using the following criteria:

- Artistic Vision
- Artistic Excellence
- Community Engagement
- Technical Merit, Feasibility, and Artist Capacity

On September 27, 2024, the Selection Panel reviewed the proposals and selected Kathryn Corbiere as the successful candidate to complete the Indigenous public art for the WSC.

The piece is called: We come from the stars – Anangoong Nidonjibaamin

This proposed work considers the network of corridors in the building's design as a constellation of pathways leading to a gathering place under a constellation of stars. In a time when we are facing a climate emergency and divisiveness, this work invites people to consider Indigenous teachings and knowledge, to join in community.



Upon award, Kathryn will begin the Community Engagement Plan for the piece that includes the following components:

A virtual conversation with 3-5 local knowledge keepers and elders from the Territory to discuss the sculpture and to learn what teaching stories, symbols, shapes and words are important to them to share in the sculpture, which should be prioritized for the shape of the constellations and the number of stars for each constellation.

A gathering – a gathering of community members, with a particular focus on elders and youth to enable intergenerational sharing, passing on traditional knowledge from elders to youth, and for youth to carry forward this knowledge and to integrate their perspectives hopes and dreams. A knowledge keeper from the Territory would be invited to share star stories to orient the gathering.

## **5. Financial Considerations:**

The project budget of \$150,000.00 for the public art piece is included in the Whitby Sports Complex Project Budget. This includes all costs directly associated with the artwork: including fees for design, fabrication, shipping, installation, engineering and professional services, insurance, permits, travel, and other incidental and production expenses.

## **6. Communication and Public Engagement:**

The Town in collaboration with Steps Consulting completed the Community Engagement for the three shortlisted Art Pieces from August 14, 2024, to September 5, 2024. The engagement provided an opportunity for residents to review the artists proposals comment on the three shortlisted pieces.

A survey was issued as part of the community engagement asking respondents for feedback on the following questions:

- Does the proposal resonate with you?
- Do you find it compelling?
- Would you be excited to see this artwork at the facility?

125 Responses were received with 79.2% in support of the proposed piece.

## **7. Input from Departments/Sources:**

In addition to Community Services, individuals from Strategic Initiatives were included through the development of this project

## **8. Strategic Priorities:**

The installation of Indigenous Public Art selected for the WSC is identified as a priority in the 2023-2026 Community Strategic Plan. This initiative is identified in Action 2.2.3 under the second Pillar: Whitby's Natural & Built Environment. It contributes towards achieving the objective of "Enhance community connectivity and beautification" and it demonstrates a commitment to investing in Public Art

Attachments:

N/A