

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

\$2 Million Gift from the Richardson Family Expands the Vancouver Art Gallery's Art of Wellbeing Program

Building on the success of an award-winning pilot, the newly named **Richardson Family Art of Wellbeing Lab** will expand research, programming and community partnerships



October 8, 2026, VANCOUVER, BC // Traditional Coast Salish Lands including the xʷməθkʷəy̍əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

Today the Vancouver Art Gallery announced a landmark \$2 million commitment from the Richardson Family that will anchor the future of its Art of Wellbeing program for the next five years. What began as a pilot has demonstrated the profound role art can play in supporting health, connection and wellbeing across communities. This transformational investment establishes Art of Wellbeing as a long-term strategic priority for the Gallery, providing the stability and resources needed to deepen its impact and reach in the years ahead. In recognition of this foundational support, the program will now be known as the **Richardson Family Art of Wellbeing Lab**.

Since the pilot launched in April 2025, 2,281 visitors have accessed the Gallery free of cost through Art of Wellbeing initiatives designed to foster social connection, build resilience and support mental wellbeing. These have included dedicated programs for seniors and youth, expressive art initiatives, accessible visits for

community groups, public debates, round tables with healthcare professionals, and social prescribing initiatives.

A significant cornerstone of the Art of Wellbeing Lab is the Gallery's partnership with BC Parks Foundation's PaRx initiative, Canada's national nature prescription program, which enables healthcare practitioners across British Columbia to prescribe nature visits to patients in support of their physical and mental health. The Gallery is now part of this program, offering distinctive art-based nature experiences within its exhibitions, including *That Green Ideal: Emily Carr and the Idea of Nature* and, moving forward, the British Columbia landscapes presented in *Highlights from the Collection*. The Gallery's partnership with PaRx received a 2025 Social Prescribing Changemaker Award from the Canadian Institute for Social Prescribing, recognizing its interdisciplinary approach to advancing social prescribing. The Vancouver Art Gallery and BC Parks Foundation have extended their partnership for a further three years, continuing to explore how museums can provide opportunities for reflection and connection with nature for people who may face barriers to accessing parks and green spaces.

"This work is vital because it responds to the needs of our communities," says **Sirish Rao**, Co-CEO & Executive Director at the Vancouver Art Gallery. "We are thrilled for this transformation into the Richardson Family Art of Wellbeing Lab in recognition of Dave Richardson's generous support and his longstanding commitment to championing the powerful role that art and nature can play in supporting wellbeing. His vision and leadership have been instrumental in seeding this work, helping us to build on what we have learned through the pilot and imagine what is possible in the future."

The Richardson Family's \$2 million investment will support the next phase of the Lab, expanding opportunities for people to experience the benefits of art and creating greater access for those who may face barriers to cultural experiences.

"Art and nature have the power to nourish the mind, body and spirit. They are a form of medicine, helping to lift our spirits, bring perspective and see the world more positively when life feels overwhelming. Both art and nature have a unique ability to connect people, inspire hope, encourage healing and create a sense of wellbeing," says **Dave Richardson**, Presenting Partner of the Richardson Family Art of Wellbeing Lab at the Vancouver Art Gallery. "I am proud to support the Gallery in developing a transformative initiative that brings art, nature and community together. My family and I are delighted to help expand the program's reach, creating more opportunities for people of all ages to experience joy and connection through meaningful engagement with art and nature."

For **Dr. Carla Fry, PsyD**, Director of the Vancouver Psychology Centre, who has been prescribing nature to patients since April 2025, the value of the program lies in creating a space where people can step outside the demands of everyday life.

"Nature and art share a doorway, and that doorway is awe. In front of a painting of a forest or a coastline, people are pulled into something larger than themselves, and the self-monitoring so many of us live with goes quiet", says Dr. Fry. "Loneliness is a serious public health problem, and slowing down beside someone in front of a painting is a practical response to it. Several patients have shared how the Gallery gave them a sense of calm they hadn't felt in weeks."

The Lab's pilot has demonstrated the potential for museums to contribute to wellbeing in practical and meaningful ways. Its next phase will deepen evaluation and research partnerships, develop new programs in response to community needs and strengthen relationships across the arts, healthcare, nature and community sectors.

The ambition is to develop an evidence-based, community-led framework that can be shared with organizations across Canada and internationally, contributing to a growing understanding of how cultural experiences can support health, wellbeing and social connection.

For more information, or to donate to the future of the program, please visit: vanartgallery.bc.ca/art-of-wellbeing.

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Image: [from left to right]: Eva Respini, Co-CEO & Chief Curator, Dave Richardson, Presenting Supporter of The Richardson Family Art of Wellbeing Lab; and Sirish Rao, Co-CEO & Executive Director, in *Emily Carr: Navigating an Impenetrable Landscape*, April 2025, Photo: Vancouver Art Gallery

ABOUT DAVE RICHARDSON

Dave Richardson is a Canadian entrepreneur, investor, philanthropist and community leader whose work reflects a lifelong commitment to innovation, sustainability, conservation and community wellbeing. Through leadership roles in clean technology, renewable energy, sustainable construction, healthcare innovation and environmental stewardship, he has championed initiatives that create lasting social and environmental impact.

As Chair and Co-Founder of the Stigma-Free Mental Health Society, Richardson has been a strong advocate for mental health awareness, inclusion and access to support. His leadership helped inspire initiatives such as the Rural Mental Wellness Toolkit, which addresses the unique challenges faced by rural, agricultural and Indigenous communities.

The Richardson Family Art of Wellbeing Lab embodies his belief that art, nature, creativity and human connection are powerful catalysts for learning, resilience, belonging and overall wellbeing, helping to build healthier and more inclusive communities for future generations.

ABOUT PARX

PaRx, Canada's national nature prescription program, is an initiative of BC Parks Foundation.

PaRx helps healthcare professionals prescribe time in nature, based on research showing that even two hours outdoors each week can support better physical and mental health. By making nature part of everyday care, PaRx is helping more people feel better, get outside, and build healthier habits, one prescription at a time.

Research also shows that people who spend time in nature are more likely to protect the places that sustain us. By strengthening the relationship between people and the natural world, PaRx contributes to both personal wellbeing and planetary health. It is a Made-in-Canada response to the interconnected challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss, and public health.

ABOUT THE VANCOUVER ART GALLERY

Founded in 1931 on the ancestral and unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations, the Vancouver Art Gallery is recognized as one of North America's most innovative visual arts institutions. The Gallery's celebrated exhibitions, extensive public programs and emphasis on advancing scholarship all focus on historical and contemporary art from British Columbia and around the world. Special attention is given to the accomplishments of Indigenous artists, as well as to those of the Asia Pacific region—through the Centre for Global Asias (formerly the Institute of Asian Art) founded in 2014. The Gallery's exhibitions also explore the impact of images in the larger sphere of visual culture, design and architecture.

The Gallery's new Art of Wellbeing lab furthers its commitment to community by promoting the role of art in fostering health and wellbeing. Developed in collaboration with healthcare professionals, researchers and Indigenous Elders, the lab creates opportunities for individuals to engage with art in ways that support mental, emotional and physical wellbeing.

Committed to inclusivity and accessibility, the Gallery welcomes hundreds of thousands of visitors each year to share perspectives, build community and shape our collective future through art.

The Vancouver Art Gallery is a charitable not-for-profit organization supported by its members, individual donors, corporate funders, foundations, the City of Vancouver, the Province of British Columbia through the B.C. Arts Council and the Canada Council for the Arts.