

Press Release: Alberni/Clayoquot Wildlife Artist Mike Semkiw opens solo show in Victoria later this month

Victoria, BC – January 6, 2025 – Up Close with Nature, the solo exhibition by Alberni's celebrated wildlife artist Mike Semkiw, opens in Victoria on January 29, 2025. Semkiw's work is often compared to Bateman's, but with a contemporary realism style that stems from close encounters with wildlife.

"I've had over 500 black bear interactions in my life so far," says the artist. "My art isn't just about what I see - it's about what I've felt in these places. I want viewers to experience that same sense of awe and respect for these creatures."

This exhibition marks Mike's first show in Victoria, and offers an intimate look into his 50-year artistic journey of respect and appreciation for the natural world on Vancouver Island.

"Vancouver Island is teeming with undiscovered artists like Mike," says show organizer Jenny Farkas. "Kudos to Saanich's Arts and Culture Department for recognizing the value of showcasing talent from a different part of the Island."

A self-taught artist fortunate to have been mentored in his youth by renowned Alberni naturalist Fred Rollins, Semkiw made it his life's work to be a close observer of the world around him.

"I basically got paid to study local plants and animals," Semkiw laughs. "I worked for years on fish farms and throughout BC's coastal waters with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans."

The 40 works on display are geotagged to Mike's favourite places for hiking, camping and fishing.

"When you spend as much time in the wilderness as I have, you start to feel like you're part of the land," says Semkiw. "Every encounter with an animal teaches you something new about respect, patience and connection."

Farkas met Semkiw eight or nine years ago while working to connect the arts ecosystem on Vancouver Island. Through Creative Coast - a collaboration of the Island's arts, tourism and economic development organizations, Farkas and her colleagues have been conducting research to measure the value of the arts sector to local economies and communities, and piloting projects that fill gaps in supports for creative entrepreneurs.

"We now know Vancouver Island has an incredibly high density of creative talent that is largely underleveraged," explains Farkas. "One key way to tap into these strengths is to support Island artists to get exposure to the larger audiences in the South Island area."

This art show is being sponsored by Farkas' next ecosystem-building initiative: MakeSpace North Park, a new creativity hub opening this spring in Victoria's North Park neighborhood. For more information, visit makespacefor.art

Up Close With Nature: Mike Semkiw Solo Show runs from January 29 through February 12, 2025 from 8am to 8pm at the Cedar Hill Art Centre. Opening night is on Saturday, February 1, 2025, from 3 to 7pm.

Members of the Aunty Collective Indigenous Creative Practice Hub will start the show off in a good way with a welcome and song.

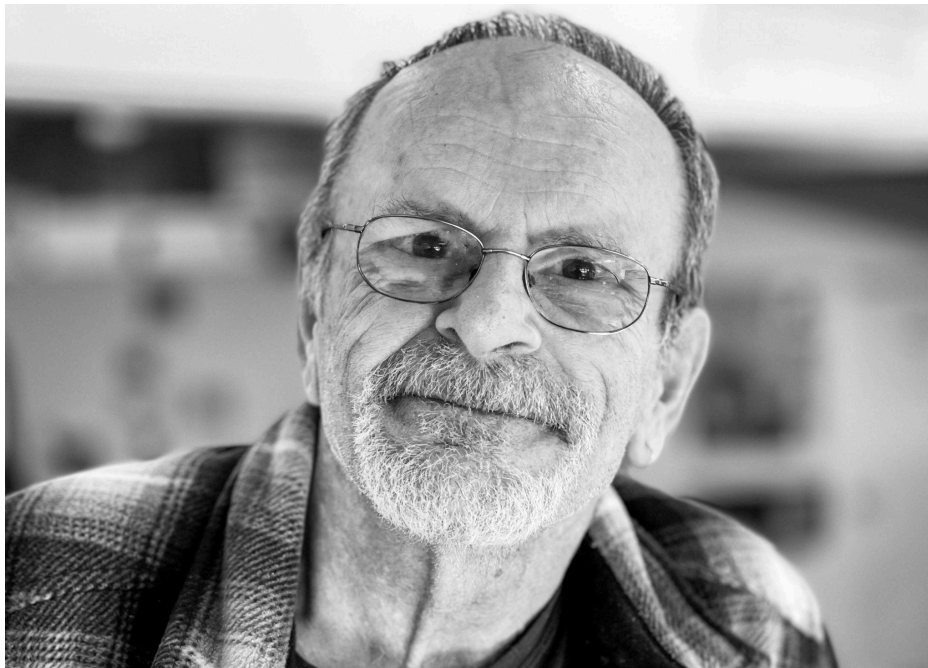
Visitors will have the opportunity to hear Mike's personal stories behind his works on opening night, and again on Sunday, February 8, 2025, from 2 to 4 pm when his stories will be entwined with those of local naturalist Ann Nightingale from the Rocky Point Bird Observatory and Victoria Natural History Society. Young wildlife artists can join Mike on Sunday, February 2, 2025, from 10 am to 12 pm for a sketching workshop. These two events are free, but registration is required as space is limited. Details at makespacefor.art/show

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Exhibition Details:

- *Title: Up Close with Nature: Mike Semkiw Solo Art Exhibition*
- *Dates: January 29 through February 12, 2025 - 8 am to 8 pm*
- *Location: Cedar Hill Arts Centre, 3220 Cedar Hill Rd, Victoria, BC*
- *Opening Reception: Saturday, February 1, 2025, 3 pm to 7 pm, with territorial welcome by The Aunty Collective at 3 pm*
- **Events:**
 - Workshop for Kids: Sunday, February 2, 2025, 10 am – 12 pm
 - Nature Talk with Ann Nightingale: Sunday, February 8, 2025, 2 pm – 4 pm

For more information about the exhibition and events, please visit makespacefor.art/show or email info@makespacefor.art



Mike Semkiw, Wildlife Artist. Photo Credit: Michael Moore