

STRING GAMES

IMPACT REPORT

AUGUST 16 –
SEPTEMBER 14, 2025

Experience contemporary art
on the Bonavista Peninsula

**BONAVISTA
BIENNALE**

BonavistaBiennale.com



Sancia Miala Shiba Nash, *Kuroshio*, 2025, video still, 2-channel video with sound, 20 minutes. Courtesy of the artist.
Co-commissioned by Bonavista Biennale and Hawai'i Triennial.

2025 Bonavista Biennale Artists

Brian Amadi • Sarah Baikie • Dáiddadállu • Eastern Owl • Andrea Flowers • Clara Clayton Gough • Maureen Gruben • Michael Massie • Ethan Murphy • Lisa Myers • Marianne Nicolson • Douglas Penney • Toby Rabinowitz • Daniel Rumbolt • Sancia Miala Shiba Nash • Inuuteq Storch • Haruna Sugisaki • Melissa Tremblett • Larry Weyand • Nellie Winters • The Women's Institute

2025 Bonavista Biennale Team

Executive Director: Sue Balint

Artistic Director: Rose Bouthillier

Curator: Dr. Heather Igloliorte

Graphic Design: Mark Bennett

Website Developer: Matthew Hollett

Publicist: David Sorensen

Program Assistants: Chloe Lundrigan & Georgia Morris*

Installation Team: Kym Greeley, Jojo Greeley, Julie Oh, Michael Pittman, Bethany MacKenzie, Kenzie Dean, Josh Jensen

** Program Assistant positions were supported in part by the Canada Summer Jobs program*

2025 Bonavista Biennale Board of Directors

Paul McDonald, Chair

Margaret Ryall, Vice-Chair

David A. Hood, Treasurer

Cassandra Filice, Secretary

Members: Angela C. Antle, Andrew Bell, Robert Bradbury, Megan Burt, Marc Losier, Logan MacDonald, James Quinlan, Luke Redmond, Terri Roberts, Karen Skinner

Bonavista Biennale gratefully acknowledges that the land on which we gather is Ktaqmkuk, traditional unceded Mi'kmaw territory. We further acknowledge with respect the diverse histories and cultures of the Beothuk, Mi'kmaq, Innu and Inuit of this province, and the ongoing connections with the past, present and future in our relationships with Indigenous and other peoples in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Andrea Flowers, left to right: Ladies kamek, c. 1990s, Children's kamek, 2006, Nick's kamek, 2018, Ross' kamek, 2015, ivaluk (sinew), commander, wool. Installation view, *Stiches We Share: From Grandmothers' Hands to Ours*, Union House Arts, Port Union.



2025 Bonavista Biennale at a glance

ARTISTS: 21 artists and collectives from across Ktaqmkuk, Nitassinan, and Nunatsiavut (Newfoundland and Labrador), Canada, and international island and circumpolar geographies including Sápmi/Norway and Sweden, Kalaallit Nunaat/Greenland, Japan, and Hawai'i.

THEME: *String Games*

String Games are one of the oldest forms of play and handcraft, invented by cultures around the world. Through the careful manipulation of strings of thread, fiber, or sinew, fleeting shapes are formed to tell stories and share wisdom. They are woven through time and space and passed down through generations, intertwining the past with the present. With endless possibilities bound in a single loop, these games speak to skill, resourcefulness, the spark of imagination, and collaborative world-building.

The 2025 edition of Bonavista Biennale invited artists and visitors to consider what ties them to place. Many of the participating artists were from islands or remote locales, where isolation has fostered close-knit communities, ingenuity, and interdependence.



Maureen Gruben, *Stitching My Landscape*, 2017. Installation view, Tuktoyaktuk, NWT, April 2017. Commissioned by *Partners In Art for Landmarks/Reperes*, 2017. Photo: Kyra Kordoski.

2025 Bonavista Biennale at a glance (cont.)

SITES: 17 indoor & outdoor sites throughout the Bonavista Peninsula, covering a 165 km coastal loop

- 16 Site Partners across 8 communities
- Four additional projects still on view from previous Biennales (by Reinhard Reitzenstein, Jordan Bennett, Marcia Huyer, and Born in the North)

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT: 13 events and additional programs presented alongside installations including:

- Live opening performance by Eastern Owl
- Biennale Conversations: a two-day program of conversations between Biennale artists, curators, and special guests at Garrick Theatre, Bonavista
- Two performances of *Guoddi* by Dáiddadállu members Ann-Sofie Kallok, Ánna-Katri Helander, Sebastian Björkman and Anthoni Hætta (Sápmi / Norway and Sweden), presented in partnership with Dáiddadállu
- A braided rug workshop hosted by Heritage NL, artist demos by five Biennale artists, and artists in attendance on-site with their project during the Saturday of opening weekend
- A geohike co-presented with UNESCO Discovery Global Geopark; three public tours at Douglas Penney's Garden of Silent Stones and the Port Union-Catalina Women's Institute



Key results: Visitors

Highest attendance to date.

Visitors from outside the province trending up.

Total 2025 Attendance: 20,250

2023 attendance: 19,789

2025 Visitor Origin:

Bonavista Peninsula: 18%

Rest of Newfoundland and Labrador: 49%

Rest of Canada: 26%

USA: 4%

International: 3%

Visitors experience Douglas Penney's Stone Garden Tour



Brian Amadi, *Foreigner at Home*, 2024-2025, digital images on canvas. Installation view, Two Whales Coffee Shop, Port Rexton.

Renewed publicity strategy drove increased interest in 2025

Feedback from artists, locals and visitors confirmed we are now reaching province-wide and national audiences through marketing efforts

- Collaborated again with graphic designer Mark Bennett to create a unique branding and visual language for this year's printed collateral and signage; strong feedback from public; increased distribution throughout Bonavista Peninsula and the Avalon
- FAM (familiarization) Biennale tours hosted for several national / international writers
- Riddle Fence (St. John's) once again produced a special Biennale issue to coincide with opening weekend
- Advertising spots taken out in print, online and radio outlets including Inuit Art Quarterly, C Magazine, Akimbo, Newfoundland Quarterly and Coast FM.

Media features reached international audiences

Coverage appeared in international publications in both English and French

The Biennale was featured in Downhome, Forbes, CBC Radio (The Signal live lunch hour broadcast), CBC Arts, CBC Labrador Morning, CBC Weekend AM, Akimbo, and Beaux Arts (France).

Click images below to view / listen to features.

This artist made a 7-foot-long lobster, which doubles as a self-portrait

Larry the Lobster is on display at the Bonavista Biennale



Alex Kennedy - CBC News - Posted: Sep 13, 2025 1:00 PM NDT | Last Updated: September 13



Artist Larry Weyand created Larry the Lobster for the Bonavista Biennale. The lobster is seven feet long, made out of stuffed fabric textiles, beads and glitter. (Melissa Tobin/CBC)

Bonavista Biennale 2025: String Games, Newfoundland

By Allison Graves



Bonavista Biennale signage for Site 1, Keels Cove (photo: Brian Ricks; courtesy of Bonavista Biennale)



CBC LISTEN [Live Radio](#) [On Demand](#)

Arts

Every two years, Canada's art world looks to the craggy cliffs and town halls of Newfoundland

The fifth Bonavista Biennale brings contemporary artwork to communities across the eastern peninsula

Didier Morelli - CBC Arts - Posted: Aug 27, 2025 5:30 PM NDT | Last Updated: August 28



Installation view of dreaming of caribou by Melissa Tremblé at the South Bird Island picnic platform in Maberly, N.L., for the 2025 Bonavista Biennale. (Brian Ricks)



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Followers continue to increase on social media channels and other digital platforms

Digital word of mouth is an organic driver

- **Facebook followers** increased by **15%** since the 2023 Biennale
- **Instagram followers** increased by **24%** since the 2023 Biennale
- **E-newsletter subscribers** increased by **17%** since the 2023 Biennale



Brian Amadi



Sarah Baikie



Dáiddadállu



Clara Clayton Gough



Maureen Gruben



Sancia Míala Shiba Nash



Ethan Murphy



Marianne Nicolson



Douglas Penney



Inuuteq Storch



Haruna Sugisaki



Melissa Tremblett



Toby Rabinowitz, *Joyous Cats*, 2025, acrylic on canvas. Installation view, FPU Store, Port Rexton. *der*, 2023, latex paint on clapboard.

Key results: spending on the Peninsula

Economic benefits are being felt throughout the Bonavista Peninsula, in both remote and more popular tourist communities

Number of paid jobs: 29

One year-round full-time, One year-round part-time, 27 seasonal / contract workers

Direct spending on the Peninsula: \$182,919

Wages, goods and services

New tourist spending: \$424,600

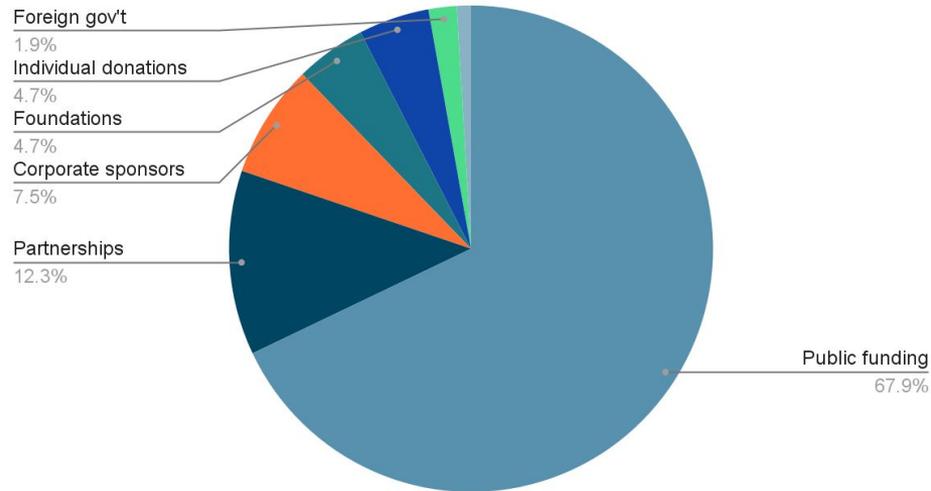
Estimated, based on # of visitors who travelled specifically to attend the Biennale

Total economic impact: \$607,519

9% increase over 2023

Case for support: public funders remain extremely supportive

Revenue streams have diversified since 2023, but there is still plenty of room for growth in this area.



Michael Massie, *stringy but, not stingy*, 2025, wood, brass, paint, mosquito screen and fish line; detail on right.





Impact on Artists

There is something so eye opening to this biennale in terms of knowing and building relationship with a place on the eastern edge of the country, but also expanding art communities and communities in general. I met artists I would never meet otherwise and was inspired by their work and the curatorial decisions made from site to site. The land and waters here create such an amazing nest for art practices to thrive and grow. Chi miigwech to everyone for making such an amazing rural art biennale.

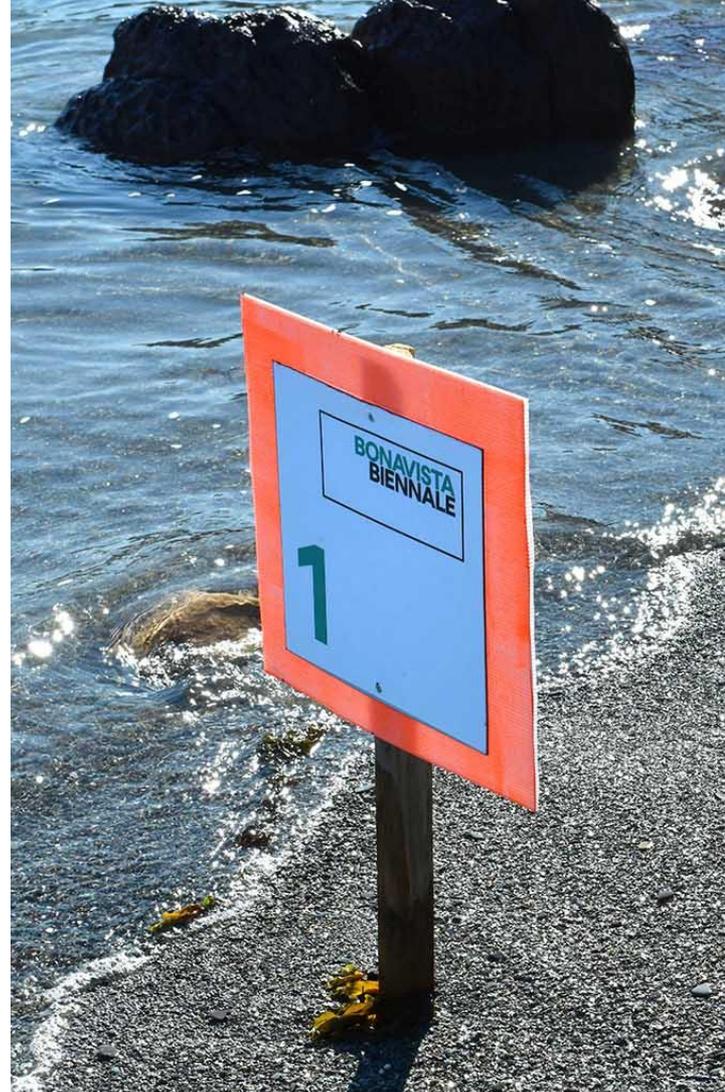
- Lisa Myers, 2025 artist

Sarah Baikie and Ella Jacque during the installation of *Stiches We Share: From Grandmothers' Hands to Ours*, at Union House Arts, Port Union.

Impact on Artists

The Bonavista Biennale gave me the opportunity to raise my profile as an artist and to expand my practice. What started out as a small idea grew into a very large immersive sculptural work that lived outside in the landscape. Creating the work for the Biennale was a huge learning experience....I can't say enough about how the Biennale has changed my artistic practice, along with the opportunity to meet other great artists from around the world.

- Melissa Tremblett, 2025 artist





Melissa Tremblett, *dreaming of caribou*, 2025, structure with plexiglass, aluminum and wood. Installation view, South Bird Island picnic platform, Maberly.



Impact on Artists

To be part of the Bonavista Biennale for the first time was a really important connection to make, and to see what respect and recognition for Indigenous groups there is. For me as an Indigenous artist it is really important to make connections with other Indigenous artists within an international context.

- Sebastian Björkman, 2025 artist



Scenes from Biennale Conversations at Garrick Theatre, Bonavista.
Below: members of Dáiddadállu, Ánna-Katri Helander, Ann-Sofie Kallok and Sebastian Björkman

Impact on Artists

This was such a magical event and a pivotal opportunity for my career. All of the participating artists were wonderful and I connected with writers and curators that I haven't seen in years. You deserve all the accolades in delivering a wonderful and accessible program. Also, having site ambassadors is such a wonderful touch to the event. They are knowledgeable about the region and bring a fresh and well-needed perspective to the work.

- Larry Weyand, 2025 artist

Top: Haruna Sugisaki working on *Memory in Ice*; Larry Weyand with *Fabulous Little Lobster*, installation view, Ryan Premises, Bonavista.





Impact on local communities

I particularly enjoyed seeing participation options for community, especially Haruna Sugisaki's work, and I heard positive comments from participants who attended the rug making event. The symposium also offered many opportunities for reflection and was well organized.

- Biennale Board Member



Top: Braided rug workshop hosted by Heritage NL at Union House Arts; Bottom: participants engaging with Lisa Myer's installation at Keels Cove Community Hall.



Haruna Sugisaki and visitors finalizing the installation of *Memory in the Ice*, 2025, at Landfall Municipal Park, Bonavista.



Impact on Visitors

The Biennale has created a wonderful sense of community among locals, visiting artists, and visitors. I had the best chats with the women from the Women's Institute in Port Union. Incredible fiber artists. So delighted they were involved. It's a wonderful thing - to bring local and international art and artists together. I think the Bonavista Biennale is one of the most unique and exciting visitor experiences in the province. It's well organized and thoughtfully curated...it's incredibly important to the region.

- Biennale Board Member

Michael Massie, *pop art in suspension*, caribou antler, aluminum, copper, brass, jute, twine and artificial sinew



Impact on Visitors

Marianne Nicolson's monumental installation made of painted wooden logs, depicting a whale emerging from the grass facing the ocean is striking in its simplicity and power.

It affirms the Kwakwaka'wakw philosophy, where land and sea are inseparable, and reminds us that art can be both an act of resistance and an ecological prayer.

- Françoise-Aline Blain, *Beaux Arts Magazine*

(translated from the French)

Eastern Owl, *Strings of Time*, seven-channel audio, interactive volume controls, textiles and natural materials. Installation view, Calvin Hayley Event Centre, Elliston.



Marianne Nicolson, *From a Distance*, 2025, land-based installation with painted wood rounds. Installation view, Pat Murphy's Meadow, King's Cove.



Daniel Rumbolt, *cast away & caught ashore*, 2025, woven grey retro reflective polyester. Installation view, Keels Cove.

Community and Site Partners

Partnerships & in-kind support from local communities makes the Biennale possible

Maudie's Tea Room at Mesh's General Store

Pat Murphy's Meadow (Town of King's Cove)

Landfall Municipal Park (Town of Bonavista)

Calvin Hayley Event Centre (Tourism Elliston)

King's Cove Community Hall (Town of King's Cove)

Lester-Garland House (Trinity Historical Society)

South Bird Island picnic platform (Town of Elliston)

The Factory (Sir William F. Coaker Heritage Foundation)

Port Union-Catalina-Little Catalina Women's Institute

Fishermen's Protective Union Store (Town of Port Rexton)

Generator Shack (Bonavista Historic Townscape Foundation)

Keels Community Hall (Keels Catholic Women's Association)

Hiscock House (Provincial Historic Sites, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador)

Ryan Premises (Parks Canada)

Union House Arts

Two Whales Coffee Shop

Biennale Supporters



Biennale Partners





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All photographs by Brian Ricks.

Eastern Owl performs their new song, *Strings of Time*, to open the Biennale Conversations program at The Garrick Theatre, Bonavista.