

Call for Artists: 2026 Duntroon Nature Art Trail

The Highlands Art & Tree Trail launched in 2025, inspired by art trails such as [Crystal Bridges Art Trail](#) in Bentonville, Arkansas, [Cosby's Garden Centre: Concrete Creations](#) in Liverpool, Nova Scotia, [Singhampton Sculpture Forest](#), and [The Haliburton Sculpture Forest](#). In its first year, the Highlands Art & Tree Trail featured eight artists and their art installations, profiled at <https://healthwithnature.org/art-and-tree-trail/>. The trail had more than 500 people walk it in 2025.

Heading into 2026, we are seeking three more artists. We hope you can join us in celebrating the rich social and natural history of Duntroon Highlands and the surrounding area through art! Be a part of this unique initiative merging creativity, culture, and the great outdoors, inviting local and Indigenous artists to create art installations along existing hiking and biking trails located at Duntroon Highlands.

The Highlands Art & Tree Trail is an initiative of [HealthWithNature.org](https://healthwithnature.org). Find out more about this not-for-profit and its areas of focus [HERE](#). The art trail at Duntroon Highlands has been made possible through the generous support of Simcoe County as well as private sponsors.

Objective:

- Add 3 more art installations along the trails at Duntroon Highlands
- Showcase talented artists' creativity, highlighting regional, social and natural history.
- Encourage outdoor activity and connection with nature through walking, biking, skiing or snowshoeing the art trail

Locations:

Three possible art installation sites have been identified along the trail loop established in 2025. This trail is located at Duntroon Highlands Resort. The resort has made part of their property available to [HealthwithNature.org](https://healthwithnature.org) for the purpose of developing an art trail, which aligns with their sustainability commitments.

Each site has its own unique personality and features. Artists are encouraged to come for a guided visit of the trail to explore the proposed art installation sites and identify which of them inspires them the most.

Timeline Steps:

1. Deadline to email in Artist Submission Form (see Appendix A): December 31, 2025
2. Initial selection of three artists: January 23, 2026 (see Appendix C for evaluation criteria)
3. Deadline for three artists submitting detailed proposals: February 27, 2026
4. Final commitment and e-transfer of initial art installation payment: March 6, 2026
5. Construction of art installation by artists (at their studios): March 7-April 30, 2026
6. Setup of art installations at Duntroon Highlands: May 1-May 18, 2026
7. Target launch event at Duntroon Highlands: May 24, 2026

Art Installations:

- Three artist installation designs will be selected for one of the three tentative locations identified along existing trails. Final locations of installations will be agreed to together with the artist
- Installations must utilize natural or recycled materials (excluding plastic) including items such as old farm equipment (many located at Duntroon Highlands).
- Installations are intended to remain on the art trail year-round and be able to withstand the elements the four seasons can bring. No 'winterizing' should be required. Artists are not responsible for longer term maintenance but if major repairs are needed HealthWithNature.org may reach out to request assistance.
- The Trail Builder will assist with the final setup of each art installation so they can withstand the conditions which the four seasons bring
- Artists will be compensated for their time and materials based on the budget submitted as part of step 3: detailed proposal
- The based budget available for each art installation is \$1,500. However sponsorships or grants secured together with HealthWithNature.org can increase this budget.
- Upon final commitment (step 4), artists will receive an initial payment of \$750 immediately. The balance of their budget will be paid upon successful set-up of the art installation and no later than the date of the launch event (step 7)

Additional Information:

- Each installation will be accompanied by interpretive signage, enhancing the visitor experience and understanding.
- A new 2026 map of the Highlands Art & Tree Trail will be produced for visitors.
- Each artist and the artwork will be featured at HealthwithNature.org with additional promotion at the high traffic [Duntroon Highlands website](https://DuntroonHighlands.website).

Promotion Plan:

To effectively promote the art trail, attract visitors and highlight the contributions of local and indigenous artists, we have designed a promotion plan that includes social media, websites, media partners and more. This plan will utilise many media facets, building off the very successful 2025 campaign.

Sponsorship Opportunities

Do you have someone who is interested in commissioning you as an artist to create an art installation for showcasing in a public setting? Are you interested in being involved in this project but are not an artist? Sponsorship opportunities are available

- Sponsors will be provided the chance to support an art installation.
- Sponsorship amounts available start at \$1000.00 per installation.
- Each sponsor will have their name/logo associated with the art installation both on site and in descriptions available online
- Sponsors will also be acknowledged during the launch.
- Potential sponsors can contact Martin Rydlo at 705-441-1896 or info.healthwithnature@gmail.com.

Submission Information:

Join Us: Are you a local or Indigenous artist passionate about showcasing the beauty and history of our region? Please consider submitting an art installation idea!

Submission Guidelines:

- Artists should be local, have a connection to the area or identify as Indigenous.
- Artwork should reflect and celebrate regional social and natural history, using the theme *Pathway Through History and Rewilding* (see Appendix B for details) as a foundation for their art installation idea.
- Please complete the Artist Submission Form (Appendix A) and email it to info.healthwithnature@gmail.com (feel free to past the form directly into an email)
- Deadline for submissions: February 1, 2026 at 11:59 P.M.

Contact Information: For submissions and inquiries, please contact Martin Rydlo at 705-441-1896 or info.healthwithnature@gmail.com.

Appendix A

Artist Submission Form

Name:
Email Address:
Town You Live In:
1. Artistic Vision, Concept and Cultural Significance- Describe your art installation idea along with a rough concept sketch
2. Materials and Sustainability- What materials will be used in the art installation
3. Integration with Nature- What setting & foundation is needed to ensure the art installation fits harmoniously with the location and can withstand the conditions of all four seasons
4. Visitor Engagement- How does the art installation engage and inspire visitors
5. Technical Feasibility- Describe the construction of the art installation, including the budget for materials & creation, as well as what kind of foundation is required
6. Community and Partnership- Provide details about any partnerships envisioned for the art installation and/or unique ideas for promoting the art installation and the art trail

Appendix B

Theme: *Pathway Through History and Rewilding*

Duntroon Highlands is a truly singular place—an elevated world shaped by stone, water, forest, and the people who have moved through it for millennia. Nestled high atop the Niagara Escarpment, once known as *The Rockside*, this dramatic crescent of ancient limestone forms the backdrop for a landscape rich in memory, ecology, and ongoing renewal. The *Highlands Art & Tree Trail* invites artists to draw inspiration from this layered history and to create installations that reveal how nature, culture, and recreation intersect along this evolving pathway.

1. Natural History – The Ancient Foundation

The trail sits within a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve shaped over **400 million years**. Once part of a vast Devonian coral reef, the Escarpment's dolostone and limestone cliffs were sculpted by erosion, glaciers, and the retreat of **Lake Agassiz**, whose ancient shoreline once traced the brow of the Highlands. Artists may draw from this geological drama—deep valleys, exposed rock faces, headwaters and springs—to highlight natural forces still shaping the land today.

This ecosystem supports remarkable biodiversity: rare orchids, conifers adapted to thin soils, migratory birds, and sensitive species. The Highlands forms the **headwaters of the Batteaux Creek**, a life-supporting waterway for trout, salmon, farms, and villages on its journey to Georgian Bay. Themes of water, flow, origin, and interconnectedness are central to understanding and expressing the region's natural identity.

2. Human History – Lives Shaped by Land

For thousands of years, Indigenous peoples—including the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee—lived with and cared for these lands, hunting, fishing, gathering, and navigating the varied terrain. European settlers arrived in the 1800s, shaping the village of Duntroon and farming the Highlands despite its rocky soils. Many remnants of those early fields—stone piles, rusted implements, forgotten tools—remain visible along the trail and may be integrated into creative works.

The Highlands has been a place of industry and innovation: timber harvesting, limestone quarrying, farming, and later the development of a four-season recreation area envisioned by Sampson and Sinclair families. Surprising artifacts—such as the hidden container of bowling balls, benches, and tables from Sampson's Collingwood Bowling era—speak to the layered modern history of the land. These materials, along with reclaimed farm equipment, are available for artists to repurpose into installations.

3. Today's Recreational Retreat – A Living, Rewilding Landscape

The Highlands is now a vibrant **four-season outdoor sanctuary** powered by conservation and rewilding efforts. Its trails connect forests, creeks, ridges, and viewpoints across 400 acres once home to farms and a schoolhouse. Flora and fauna are returning through habitat restoration, and new ecological corridors are developing thanks to conservation initiatives—including recent acquisitions by the Bruce Trail Conservancy.

Visitors hike, bike, golf, ski, snowshoe, and explore the landscape year-round. Every season reveals a different layer of its character—from spring blooms and summer forests to brilliant fall colours and quiet winter expanses. The trail offers artists the opportunity to create spaces that invite reflection, curiosity, and connection to nature's cycles.

Guidance for Artistic Interpretation

Artists are encouraged to explore the theme **“Pathway Through History and Rewilding”** by illuminating:

- The ancient geological forces that shaped this land
- The cultural stories, artifacts, and memories held within the Highlands
- The ongoing process of ecological renewal and conservation
- The relationship between humans and landscape—past, present, and future
- The trail as a journey through time, transformation, and nature's resilience

Installations should consider their setting within the forest, fields, and escarpment edge. Works that create contemplative environments—inviting visitors to pause, notice, and appreciate the natural and cultural richness of the Highlands—are strongly encouraged.

Appendix C

Evaluation Criteria

1. Artistic Vision, Concept and Cultural Significance
Relevance: The artwork celebrates the regional, social and natural history of Duntroon Highlands and surrounding communities. While also incorporating elements of their own culture and heritage.
Creativity: The proposal demonstrates originality, creativity and a clear artistic vision that can engage or inspire potential visitors. Further enhancing visitors' understanding and appreciation of the social and natural history of the area.
2. Materials and Sustainability
Natural or Recycled Materials: The proposed artwork is constructed from primarily natural or recycled materials, excluding plastic.
Environmental Impact: The installation has minimal negative environmental impact and will not harm the surrounding ecosystem.
3. Integration with Nature
Site Compatibility: The proposed artwork fits harmoniously within the designated location along the trail, enhancing trail values.
Durability: The installation is able to withstand outdoor conditions and require minimal maintenance.
4. Visitor Engagement
Promoting Activity: The artwork encourages visitors to further explore the trail.
Stimulation: Installation enhances the experience of being in nature and portrays a story of the history of the installation area.
5. Technical Feasibility
Installation Plan: The proposal includes a rough idea of an installation plan.
Budget and Resources: artist provides a realistic budget and outlines the resources required for the project's completion.

6. Community and Partnership
Collaboration: Preference will be given to projects that involve collaboration with local communities, organizations, or other artists.
Support and Promotion: Artists are willing to participate in promotional activities and events related to the Nature Art Trail.