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January 31, 2022

File #: 0290-20

Ms. Alison Slater
General Manager
Southern Interior Local Government Association
PO Box 27017, CityView PO
Kamloops, BC V2E 0B2

VIA EMAIL: yoursilga@gmail.com

Re: Nomination Letter for the SILGA Community Excellence Awards – Social Responsibility and Economic Development

Dear Ms. Slater, *Alison,*

The District of Summerland would like to showcase an important community project that was completed in 2021: The **George Ryga Arts & Cultural Centre**.

The Summerland Cultural Plan (2016) offers a clear path for leveraging the community's values and cultural assets to crystalize Summerland's identity and help bring about economic prosperity and social cohesion. Under the Plan's strategic direction to enhance public spaces and cultural places, it recommends the establishment of an Arts and Cultural Centre.

When the Okanagan Regional Library vacated a District-owned building and moved to a new building in town, the District of Summerland—in partnership with the Summerland Community Arts Council—began envisioning the dream of a fully functioning Arts Centre for Summerland and fundraising efforts began. With the receipt of BC Gaming funding, a contribution from the Rick Hansen Foundation, and capital funds allocated by the District of Summerland, significant building renovations were completed. Renovations included: energy efficiency electrical and HVAC upgrades which will improve the District's commitment to GHG reduction; washroom upgrades to improve accessibility; fire and life safety improvements; new lighting, flooring, and partition walls; and functional multi-use spaces including a new Art Gallery with Artist-in-Residence rooms, meeting rooms and storage.

The Summerland Community Arts Council is the main building tenant with an exclusive no-fee lease on the main floor which includes their Art Gallery. The Arts Council administers the second-floor community activities which include arts and cultural programs and events, recreation and wellness programs, and community rental space. Revenue from building rentals is shared between the Arts Council and the District of Summerland.

The Summerland Cultural Plan includes a recommendation to name a street or public space after George Ryga, a nationally acclaimed playwright who wrote most of his major works at his Summerland home.

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Council made the unanimous decision to name the building the George Ryga Arts & Cultural Centre at the August 23, 2021 Council Meeting as building renovations were just finishing up.

This project embraces **social responsibility** by providing an opportunity for the community to volunteer, socialize, be creative, get active, and enhance mental well-being. The George Ryga Arts and Cultural Centre develops a connected community that is inclusive, accessible, and affordable for all ages and social groups. The project also promotes **economic development** through supporting artists to advance business opportunities through the Artist-in-Residence program; present and sell their artwork through the Art Gallery and Gift Shop; and coordinate and lead programs and events. This new facility is a draw for tourists to come to downtown Summerland to not only visit the Centre, but also patronize local stores and restaurants. Artisan sales at the Arts Council's *Light up the Arts* holiday gift store increased 50% over the previous year; this is directly attributed to being in this new and vibrant facility.

Please consider this letter as the District of Summerland's nomination for a 2022 SILGA Community Excellence Award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Toni J. Boot". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "T" and "B".

Mayor Toni Boot
District of Summerland