



# Town of Huntsville Staff Report

**Meeting Date:** November 24, 2025

**To:** Council

**Report Number:** CS-2025-6

**Confidential:** No

**Author(s):** Jacqueline Surette, Manager of Recreation, Culture and Heritage

**Subject:** Public Art Donation

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## Report Highlights

- To review the potential donation of a bronze statue of Mahatma Gandhi from the Consulate General of India to the Town's Public Art Inventory.

## Recommendation

**BE IT RESOLVED THAT:** in accordance with the Public Art Policy, the Town of Huntsville add the donation of a bronze statue of Mahatma Gandhi from the Consulate General of India to its Public Art Inventory;

**AND FURTHER THAT:** the documentation to transfer ownership to the Town of Huntsville be completed to the satisfaction of the Chief Administrative Officer and the Director of Community Services;

**AND FURTHER THAT:** the Director of Community Services and Manager of Recreation, Culture & Heritage be authorized to sign all necessary documentation;

**AND FURTHER THAT:** staff work with Senior Leadership Team on a suitable location should the site conditions not allow for installation of the statue along the West side of the Civic Centre.

## Background

On August 11, 2025, Mayor Alcock, Deputy Mayor Armour, Councillor Morrison, the CAO and staff met with high-ranking diplomats from the Consulate General of India (Toronto) along with leaders from Huntsville's local Indian community to discuss a very unique opportunity for the Town of Huntsville to be the recipient of one of two bronze statues of Mahatma Gandhi commissioned by the Consulate specifically for the purpose of donating them to two communities in Ontario. Similar statues have been installed in other Canadian communities to foster people-to-people connections, celebrate cultural ties and highlight the richness of our collective diversity.

The Consulate chose Huntsville in recognition of its leadership and efforts to foster inclusiveness, in building welcoming communities, celebrating diversity, and for embracing symbols of unity and peace. In their own

words: "The gesture would stand as a lasting tribute to the community's openness and dedication to fostering dialogue, respect, and peaceful coexistence. Installation of Mahatma Gandhi statue would strengthen cultural and people-to-people ties between India and the Muskoka region. It would stand as a gesture of friendship and collaboration between India and Canada, reinforcing the shared aspiration for a world guided by tolerance, justice, and goodwill. Mahatma Gandhi and his ideals are symbols of peace, non-violence, and shared human values that transcend national boundaries. His universal message of truth and compassion resonates deeply with the Canadian society. Canadian communities uphold multiculturalism, inclusion, and respect for diversity, the principles that lie at the heart of both India's and Canada's ethos. The statue would serve as a reminder of these enduring ideals and as an inspiration to future generations to uphold harmony and social responsibility."

The bronze statue was created by artist Naresh Kumar Kumawat and depicts Gandhi mid-stride with his staff. It stands over 6ft tall and was newly commissioned by the Consulate for the purpose of installation in a public space in Canada. A detailed description is provided in Appendix A.

## **Discussion**

### **Town Acquisitions**

In accordance with the Town's Public Art Policy - 2010, all acquisitions, including donations, are to be evaluated in accordance with the criteria set out in section 2.1.3. Donations are further subject to section 2.2, requiring a juried process. They are to be accompanied by a maintenance plan and must be unencumbered. Furthermore, no work of art will be accepted if the donor requires the Town to locate the work of art in a specific location in perpetuity.

Staff therefore struck a jury consisting of subject experts from the Huntsville Art Society, Huntsville/Lake of Bays Chamber of Commerce, Huntsville Downtown BIA and Muskoka Arts & Crafts. The group met in person on Oct 29, 2025, to review the information provided by the donor, and set out in Appendix A, against these criteria. Below are highlights from the discussion.

### **Section 2.1.3**

2.1.3.1 Relevance to the Public Art Policy: The policy describes public art as a force for placemaking, for expressing and evoking connections among people and places that are meaningful to community and civic life. Public art has social purpose creating "places within community spaces" that foster curiosity and dialogue, attract visitors and residents, and sense of pride.

The jury saw the donation as a powerful visual representation of the Town's Vision as a growing community that is vibrant, inclusive, and healthy while protecting our heritage and natural features. The fact that it is supported locally and grounded in our efforts to build a welcoming and inclusive community demonstrates its clear connection to this place. As a tribute to our leadership, openness and respect for multi-culturalism and diversity, it would be a source of pride and belonging for our residents.

As a cultural and diplomatic gesture symbolizing peace, non-violence and universal human rights, it is also meant to strengthen cultural and people-to-people ties between India, the Muskoka region and Canada. With a second statue to be installed by the Consulate in another Ontario community, and similar statues in Richmond Hill (ON), Carleton University, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg, and Simon Fraser University in BC, it would connect these communities in a unique way which can inspire new friendships and attract new residents and visitors.

2.1.3.2 Relevance to the Town of Huntsville's natural or built environment, cultural heritage, and/or history: The Town has a history of supporting artwork as an expression of its commitment truth, reconciliation and inclusion. Commitment Rock was installed in 2022 and includes the Town's land acknowledgement as a reminder that we are on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg and of our Town's commitment to reconciliation. Unity Circle has been approved and will be installed alongside Commitment Rock as a symbol of our Town's

commitment to diversity and inclusion for all people. The statue of Gandhi would add to the collection in a unique way as one of two communities chosen to display the work for emulating these values. The jury described this as an honour, and were excited to be a part of something that would leave a lasting legacy of Gandhi, his teachings and our town for future generations.

2.1.3.3 Quality of the piece of art: The work is made of bronze by a professional artist. It depicts Gandhi mid-stride with his staff, which provides an intimate experience for the viewer to join him on his journey of peace and harmony.

2.1.3.4 Suitability of the artwork for display in a public space: The subject and material are both suitable for the public realm. The donor notes, "Mahatma Gandhi is globally recognized and widely respected, making the artwork appropriate and inspiring in a civic setting. Furthermore, bronze is extremely durable, making it ideal for an outdoor installation.

2.1.3.5 Authenticity of the artwork: Provenance is easily established as a new work of art commissioned specifically for this purpose.

2.1.3.6 Condition of the artwork: It is new and will be created by a professional artist using high quality materials.

2.1.3.7 Town's ability to maintain and conserve the artwork: Placement of anything outside in the public realm comes with some inherent risks; however, made of bronze, the work is durable and should be mostly resistant to weather and vandalism. Bronze also requires little maintenance except for periodic cleaning.

2.1.3.8 Ethical and legal considerations regarding ownership: None. The work was commissioned by the Consulate specifically for this purpose and is the rightful owner. While similar statues have been installed in other Canadian communities, the statue is not a replica of another artist's work but based on publicly available, non-proprietary imagery. The fact that they are similar reflects the popularity of this likeness in the public domain.

## **Cost**

The donor and its local partners would cover all costs associated with the fabrication, transportation, and installation of the work, including engineered drawings.

## **Timeline**

The Consulate and local partners discussed unveiling the work in May of 2026 alongside the second-year anniversary of the ISKCON Muskoka temple in downtown Huntsville.

## **Insurance**

The Town currently maintains a Fine Arts Insurance Policy with a Per-item coverage limit of up to \$5,000 and a Deductible of \$50,000.

The artwork at its appraised value of \$10,850 exceeds the per-item coverage limit of the existing policy. As such, in the event of loss or damage, the Town would only be eligible to recover up to \$5,000 under the current policy terms provided the loss exceeds the \$50,000 Deductible. This is unlikely in the case of a single item valued below this amount.

Given these limitations, the Town would effectively be self-insuring the artwork.

## **Location**

While not a condition of the donation, there was discussion with the Consulate regarding a suitable location for the Statue, which included River Mill Park, Kent Park, King Street, at the ISKCON Muskoka's local temple, and next to the Civic Centre. The juried agreed that the preferred location would be the Civic Centre which is already home to Commitment Rock and the future site of Unity Circle. As noted within this report, all of these works share the Town's commitment to truth, reconciliation and inclusivity for all people, making it a fitting location for a statue of Gandhi whose message is one of peace, truth, harmony and shared human values. At the time of penning this report, staff had yet to work through all of the site logistics and would work with Senior Leadership Team to find an alternate location if required.

## Options

Option 1: To accept the donation of the bronze statue of Mahatma Gandhi from the Consulate General of India into the Town's Public Art Inventory. **(Recommended)**

Option 2: To not accept the donation of the bronze statue of Mahatma Gandhi from the Consulate General of India into the Town's Public Art Inventory.

## Capital

n/a

## Operational

n/a

## Relevant Policies / Legislation / Resolutions

Huntsville Public Art Policy, 2010

## Council Strategic Direction

- Town's Vision: A growing community that is vibrant, inclusive, and healthy while protecting our heritage and natural features.
- Corporate Value - Respect: We value the individualities and contributions of our community members and coworkers.
- Corporate Value - Understanding: We value, recognize, and empathize with the points of view of others, whether we agree with them or not.
- Corporate Value - Integrity: We value doing the right thing, even when no one is watching.
- Corporate Value - Empowerment: We value providing opportunities to learn and grow.

## Attachments

[Appendix A Consulate General of India Donation](#)

## Consultations

Rachel Hunt, Downtown Huntsville BIA  
Halley Clover, Huntsville/Lake of Bays Chamber of Commerce  
Brynn Kirybson, Muskoka Arts & Crafts  
Karen Cassian, Huntsville Art Society  
Sara White, Collections Coordinator, Town of Huntsville

**Respectfully Submitted:** Jacqueline Surette, Manager of Recreation, Culture and Heritage

**Manager Approval (if required):** Jacqueline Surette, Manager of Recreation, Culture and Heritage

**Director Approval:** Simone Babineau, Director of Community Services

**CAO Approval:** Denise Corry, CAO

## Appendix A: Consulate General of India Proposed Public Art Donation

The information in this document was provided by the Consulate General of India.



| <b>Title of work</b>             | <b>Description/ Medium</b>  | <b><u>Provenance</u></b>  |  |
|----------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Mahatma Gandhi<br>Feb 2023       | Statue of Gandhi walking with staff<br>Bronze – composite copper 80-85%,<br>zinc 2-5%, Lead 2-5%, Tin 2-5%<br>Weight: 380kg | New commission by Consulate<br>for the purpose of installation in<br>a public space in Canada |  |
| <b><u>Donor</u></b>              | <b><u>Tax Receipt</u></b>   | <b><u>Size</u></b><br>(wxhxd)   |  |
| Consul General of India, Toronto | No  | 24" x 72" (6ft) x 2"  |  |
| <b><u>Artist</u></b>             | <b><u>Appraised Value</u></b>   |   |  |
| Naresh Kumar Kumawat             | \$10,850Cdn   |   |  |

### Purpose for Donation

Huntsville has been suggested as ideal place for statue of Mahatma Gandhi in recognition of Huntsville’s leadership and efforts to foster inclusiveness, in building welcoming communities, celebrating diversity, and embracing symbols of unity and peace. This gesture would stand as a lasting tribute to the town’s openness and its dedication to fostering dialogue, respect, and peaceful coexistence.

Installation of Mahatma Gandhi statue would strengthen cultural and people-to-people ties between India and the Muskoka region. It would stand as a gesture of friendship and collaboration between India and Canada, reinforcing the shared aspiration for a world guided by tolerance, justice, and goodwill.

Mahatma Gandhi and his ideals are symbol of peace, non-violence, and shared human values that transcend national boundaries. His universal message of truth and compassion resonates deeply with the Canadian society. Canadian communities uphold multiculturalism, inclusion, and respect for diversity, the principles that lie at the heart of both India’s and Canada’s ethos. The statue would serve as a reminder of these enduring ideals and as an inspiration to future generations to uphold harmony and social responsibility.



*Figure 1. Presented to show the sculpture’s relative size. The photo was taken outside of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. The child on the right is approximately 5 feet tall.*

## Costs

The Consulate and its community partners would be covering the costs associated with transportation to Huntsville, pedestal fabrication, and overall installation.

Our policy asks for financial support for future conservation. The Consulate notes that there is little to no maintenance required except for periodic cleaning using waterjet/water spray and therefore no financial support from the donor will be provided.

## Section 2.1 of Huntsville Art Policy

**Relevance to Public Art Policy:** The statue is intended as a cultural and diplomatic gesture, symbolizing peace, non-violence, and universal human values.

**Relevance to Huntsville's Environment, Heritage, and History:** As a community embracing multiculturalism, Huntsville will find resonance in Gandhi's ideals which complement the town's ethos of inclusivity and harmony.

**Quality of the Piece:** The statue will be of high artistic and sculptural quality, created by professional craftsmen using durable material suitable for long-term public display.

**Suitability for Public Space:** Mahatma Gandhi is globally recognized and widely respected, making the artwork appropriate and inspiring in a civic setting.

**Authenticity:** The statue will be an originally commissioned work, sourced from empaneled artisans by Indian Council for Cultural Relations.

**Condition:** The piece will be delivered in new condition for first time installation.

**Maintenance and Conservation:** No maintenance is required except for periodic cleaning using waterjet/water spray.

## Conditions of the donation

None. It was discussed that the preferred location for the statue would be next to the Civic Centre but this is not a requirement for the donor.