



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

29 May 2026

## Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery Announces Departure of Executive Director Shirley Madill

Visionary Leader to Step Down December 31, 2026 After Fifteen Years of  
Transformative Service; Search for Successor to Launch in June

KITCHENER, ON — The Board of Directors of the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery (KWAG) has announced that Executive Director Shirley Madill will conclude her tenure on 31 December 2026. After fifteen years of extraordinary leadership — and a career spanning more than four decades in the Canadian museum sector — Madill is stepping down to pursue independent creative and professional projects. A national search for her successor will launch in June 2026.

"Shirley has given fifteen years of visionary, principled, and deeply committed leadership to this institution and to this community," said Board Chair Danielle Deveau. "Under her stewardship, KWAG has been transformed — financially,

institutionally, and culturally. She leaves the Gallery stronger, more inclusive, and more publicly engaged than at any point in its recent history. We are profoundly grateful for everything she has built here, and we celebrate her as she turns toward the next chapter.”

During Madill’s tenure, KWAG achieved milestones that few mid-sized public galleries reach. The Gallery’s longstanding accumulated deficit was fully retired in 2023, the result of disciplined management, strategic fundraising, and a clear vision for long-term sustainability. The Permanent Collection vaults were modernized to museological standards, and a major renovation of the Gallery’s lobby and public-facing spaces transformed the visitor experience and signaled a renewed institutional commitment to accessibility. Acquisitions and exhibitions were deliberately diversified to broaden the representation of Indigenous, Black, and racialized artists, and women artists, ensuring that KWAG’s collection better reflects the communities it serves. These achievements unfold against the backdrop of the Gallery’s 70th anniversary — a milestone made all the more meaningful by the institution’s strength and resilience today.

Madill’s impact extends well beyond KWAG’s walls. A respected voice in the Canadian museum sector for over forty years, she has curated, written, and published on Canadian art with a particular focus on under-represented voices, helping to expand the canon of Canadian art history. She has mentored generations of curators and directors, many of whom now hold leadership roles across the country. In 2023, she received the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Waterloo Region Arts Awards, and she was selected to participate in the Bloomberg Harvard City Leadership Initiative — recognition of her standing as a civic and cultural thought leader of national significance.

“The time I have spent at KWAG in this role has been nothing short of an honor and pleasure,” said Madill. “It has been a great privilege to work with a team of dedicated and passionate people for over a decade. We should be proud of what we have accomplished. KWAG is a bastion of inspiration, innovation, and most of all, bravery. The Gallery is fortunate to have an exceptional and dedicated Board of Directors, and I thank them for their support.”

The KWAG Board will launch a national search for the next Executive Director in June 2026. The Board is committed to a thorough and inclusive process that will identify a leader capable of building on the Gallery’s strong foundation and carrying its mission forward.

### **About the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery**

Since 1956, the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery (KWAG) has been Waterloo Region’s leading public art gallery, connecting people and ideas through art. Its nationally acclaimed exhibitions and programs welcome all to be inspired and challenged through a deepened understanding of ourselves, our cultures, and our communities.

Now celebrating 70 years, the Gallery cares for a permanent collection of over 4,400 works and continues to offer dynamic public programs that inspire creativity and an appreciation of the visual arts in the Region and beyond. Admission is free.

## Land Acknowledgment

The Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery respectfully acknowledges that we are located in Block 2 on the Haldimand Tract: land promised to Six Nations, which includes ten kilometers on each side of the Grand River.\* This is the traditional home of the Attawandaron (Neutral), Anishinaabeg, and Haudenosaunee Peoples, whose resilience we honor by offering this Gallery as a space to reflect and learn from one another.

We are committed to reconciliation and ensuring that our Gallery's programs and Permanent Collection demonstrate more diverse, culturally relevant Canadian art and artists.

## Media Contact

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## Connect with us

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## Visit Us

Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery, 101 Queen St North, Kitchener, ON N2H 6P7

[www.kwag.ca](http://www.kwag.ca)

## Accessibility

Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery is an accessible venue that has been recognized with Gold Certification from the Rick Hansen Foundation. We are also certified as dementia friendly through the Blue Umbrella Project®.

## Funded by



## Image credit:

Shirley Madill headshot, photo by KWAG.