

ABCORIGINAL'S EXHIBITION 2024

Diversity and Innovation in BC Indigenous Art





Authors' Purpose

We are a team of high school students from Vancouver, British Columbia, committed to creating a magazine that illuminates the impact of Aboriginal art on Indigenous Canadians. As passionate artists, writers, and advocates, we are driven to educate the public about the vibrant cultures of Indigenous communities. Aboriginal's Palette's Vogue not only showcases diverse Indigenous talents but also strengthens connections that transcend cultural barriers. Our efforts aim to bridge the divide between modern society and Indigenous cultures, promoting cultural exchange, and nurturing deep friendships through impactful artistic expressions.

We strongly value the culture and heritage behind aboriginal art. It is important to us that we continue to protect the Aboriginal cultures, give people an identity, and raise environmental and cultural awareness. We believe in the right of all people to enjoy their freedom of expression. We assert our own in the hopes of highlighting resilience, resistance, reconciliation, and beauty all at once.

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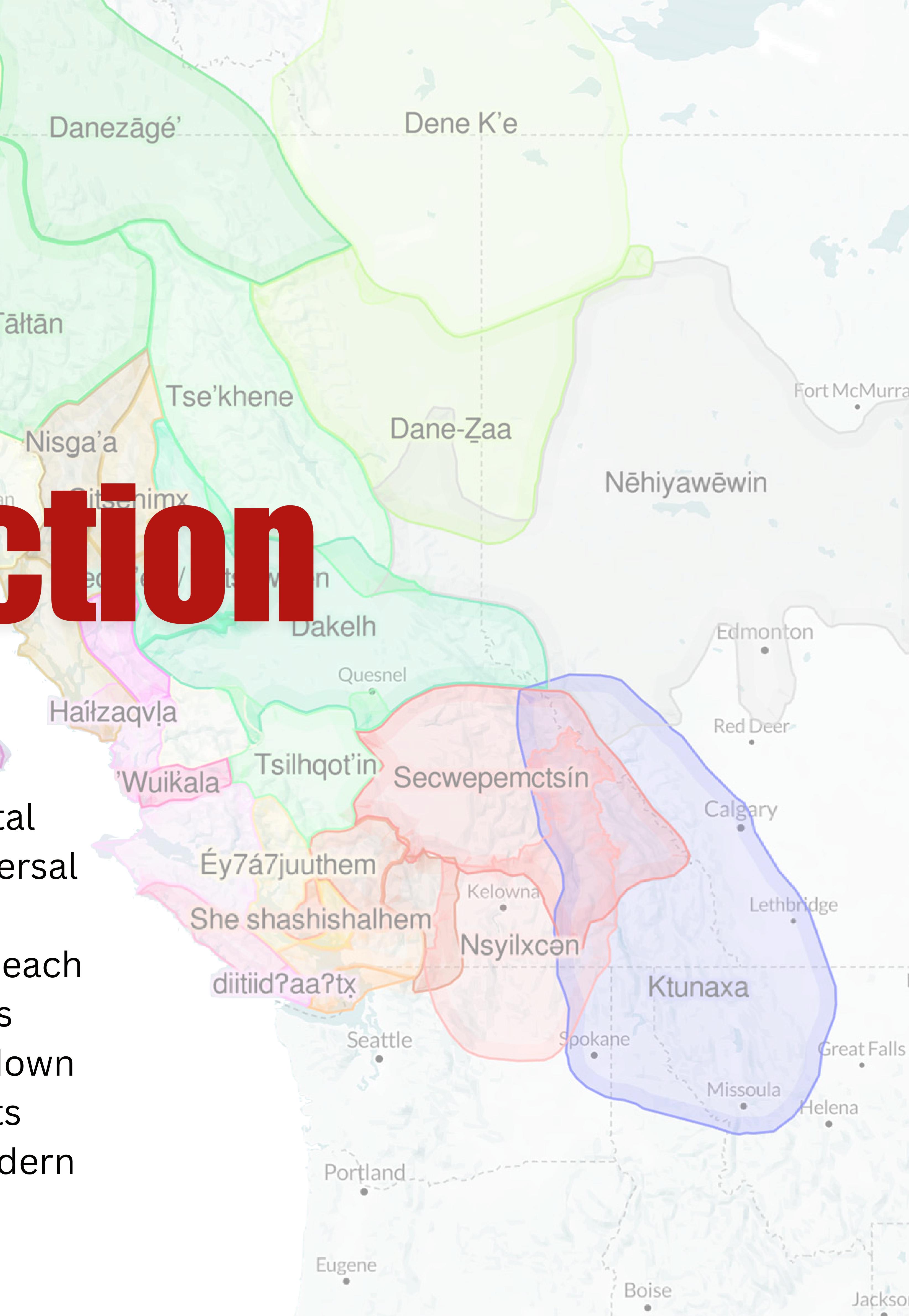
INTRODUCTION



Photo by Malik Anderson

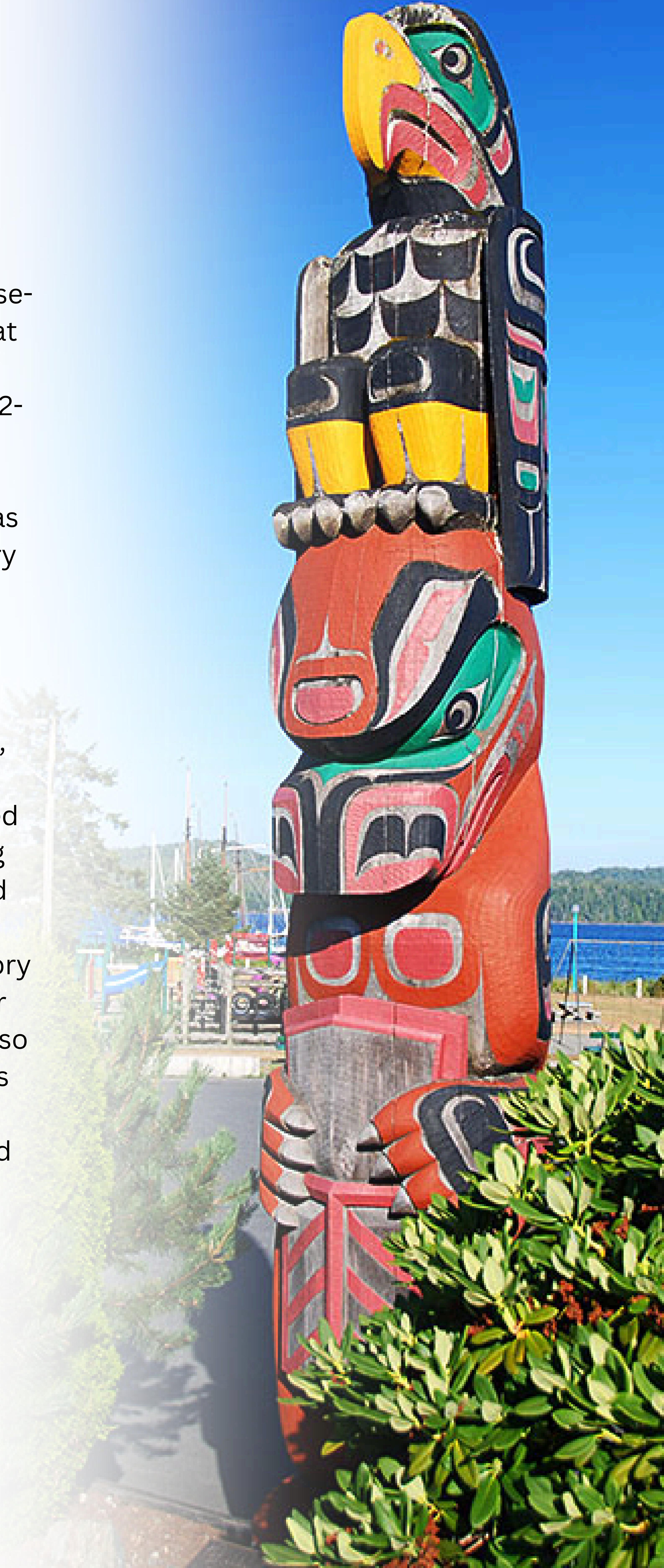
Introduction

British Columbia constitutes an extensive number of diverse First Nations tribes, comprising 203 total First Nations communities. A universal cultural tradition for Indigenous people – especially in art – is that each individual tribe's artistic traditions and characteristics were passed down through generations, continuing its impact and importance to the modern day.



Art, to First Nations, has always been a method to preserve the expression of their culture and communities. Unique distinctive art styles are apparent between each First Nations tribe, and this issue of Aboriginal's Palette will primarily focus on the Coast Salish, Interior Salish, and Haida tribes. Subject matters relating to their cultural identities, connections with nature, and spiritual beliefs are consistently evident in the art they create.

The Coast Salish tribe is a large, loose-grouping Indigenous community that resides along the coast of British Columbia. Renowned for their bold 2-dimensional designs including intricate carvings, weavings, and basketry, they are often described as more minimalist and direct. Contrary to Coast Salish artistic traditions, Haida tribes, which traditionally occupied Haida Gwaii, British Columbia, are celebrated for their world of costumes and adornments, tools and structures. Art and technologies of Haida have remained intertwined for millennia, producing artworks that are both beautiful and sentimental and useful and innovative. Not only is the rich history of First Nations preserved with their artistic styles and qualities, but it also inspires and educates people across the globe. Join us on this deep dive into Coast Salish, Interior Salish, and Haida art history and culture.





Tribal Art Forms and Characteristics



Coast Salish: The Squamish-Lil'wat Nation

The artistic legacy of the Coast Salish people has long been evidence of the great spiritual depth and rich cultural legacy their people possess and is incredibly well-represented by the Squamish and Lil-wat Nations. Through tattoos, totem poles, and sculptures, they express themselves artistically; yet, their work serves a purpose much beyond mere beauty. Apart from being a timeless narrative language, it also acts as a link to the spiritual realm and is quite important for maintaining cultural identity over decades and generations. Ancestral stories and observations of the natural world guide every work's particular narrative. The close relationship between the Squamish-Lil'wat people and the ground they call home permeates this story.

Sculptures

For Squamish and Lil'wat people, cedar is not only a material but also a vital component of their spiritual and daily environment. Carving cedar is highly respected and revered since every piece of wood has a story just waiting to be discovered. To respect a tree's spirit, there are customs carried out before their harvest. These ceremonies mirror the spiritual beliefs of the people as well as the interdependence of the natural world.





Rich storytelling traditions abound among the Squamish and Lil'wat peoples; Ed Noisecat's "Bear Dancer" honours that. This artistic activity is highly valued and should receive much more attention than it does. In Coast Salish traditions, the bear has an incredibly important place as a giver of strength and protector of the community. In Ed Noisecat's work, the strong symbolism of the bear spirit is embodied on a cedar pole bearing a dancing bear carving. Apart from displaying the technical mastery of the artist, this piece of art masterfully captures the close relationship the local people have with their surroundings. "Bear Dancer" shows how Noisecat and his friend, Redmond Qgáwam Andrews, respect Indigenous stories through their artistic expression, managing to simultaneously capture the spirit of change while honouring tradition.



Another amazing creation by well-known Lil'wat carver Andrews that blends spirituality with art is "Transformation Mask." A mask within a mask, wearing this detailed wooden carving during ceremonial events allows the performer to reveal an inner human face hidden behind the outer animal one. This kind of mask captures the transitional space between the animal and human worlds as well as the ongoing metamorphosis that marks spiritual development. Andrews' carvings are created through meditation and intuition. The spirit he describes lurking in the forest, patiently waiting to be freed, lights his road. In his work, he deftly illustrates his belief—that spiritual interaction with the materials reveals art rather than the reverse.



Among the several materials Noisecat and Andrews enjoy, cedar is among one. They often combine it with other elements like bone, stone, and antlers. These pieces were chosen for their spiritual meaning as well as for their physical attributes. For instance, some believe that creating something from these materials connects with the divine. It brings together the respect of art with awe for the natural world. The use of antlers then bring the animal's spirit into the work.

Totem Poles



Totem poles, tall monuments of legacy, clan, and history, are part of Coast Salish tradition. These enormous carvings show the social stratification of the societies they represent and are also a graphic record of mythological creatures and ancestral stories. Totem poles are more than just symbols; they represent the continuous connection people have to their background and spiritual beliefs.

One well-known example of this kind of carving is the "Thunderbird and Killer Whale Totem" made by eminent Squamish artist Stan Joseph. Displayed boldly at the Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre's door, this totem depicts the mythical struggle between two strong characters in Coast Salish mythology, the killer whale and the Thunderbird. While the killer whale, below the thunderbird, stands for solidarity and unity, suspended from the pole the thunderbird stands for strength and supernatural protection. This fundamental meeting between the two entities in Coast Salish cosmology reflects the mirror image of both the spirit's fundamental forces and nature's. With his work, which is distinguished by the relevance of every carving and line, Joseph shows his command of the art of narrative through form.



Apart from being exquisite pieces of art, totem poles serve two purposes: they educate and protect cultural legacy for next generations. To guarantee accurate portrayal of the stories, it is advisable to work closely with seniors and seek their advice while building a totem pole. Clearly a result of this team effort is Stan Joseph's "Thunderbird and Killer Whale Totem," with its complex carvings and strong symbolic meanings. This helps everyone who interacts with the totem to access its rich cultural story.



Photo by the Georgia Straight

Tattoo Art

Human Art Tattoos are another long-standing artistic medium among the Squamish and Lil'wat people that still serves as a communal and very personal means of expression of identity despite their ancient origins. Typical images in conventional tattoos are geometric patterns, animals, or mythical creatures. These many forms and patterns represent a person's family tree, religious views, or accomplishments. Apart from being an obvious representation of one's spiritual road, these tattoos also act as permanent markers of social level.

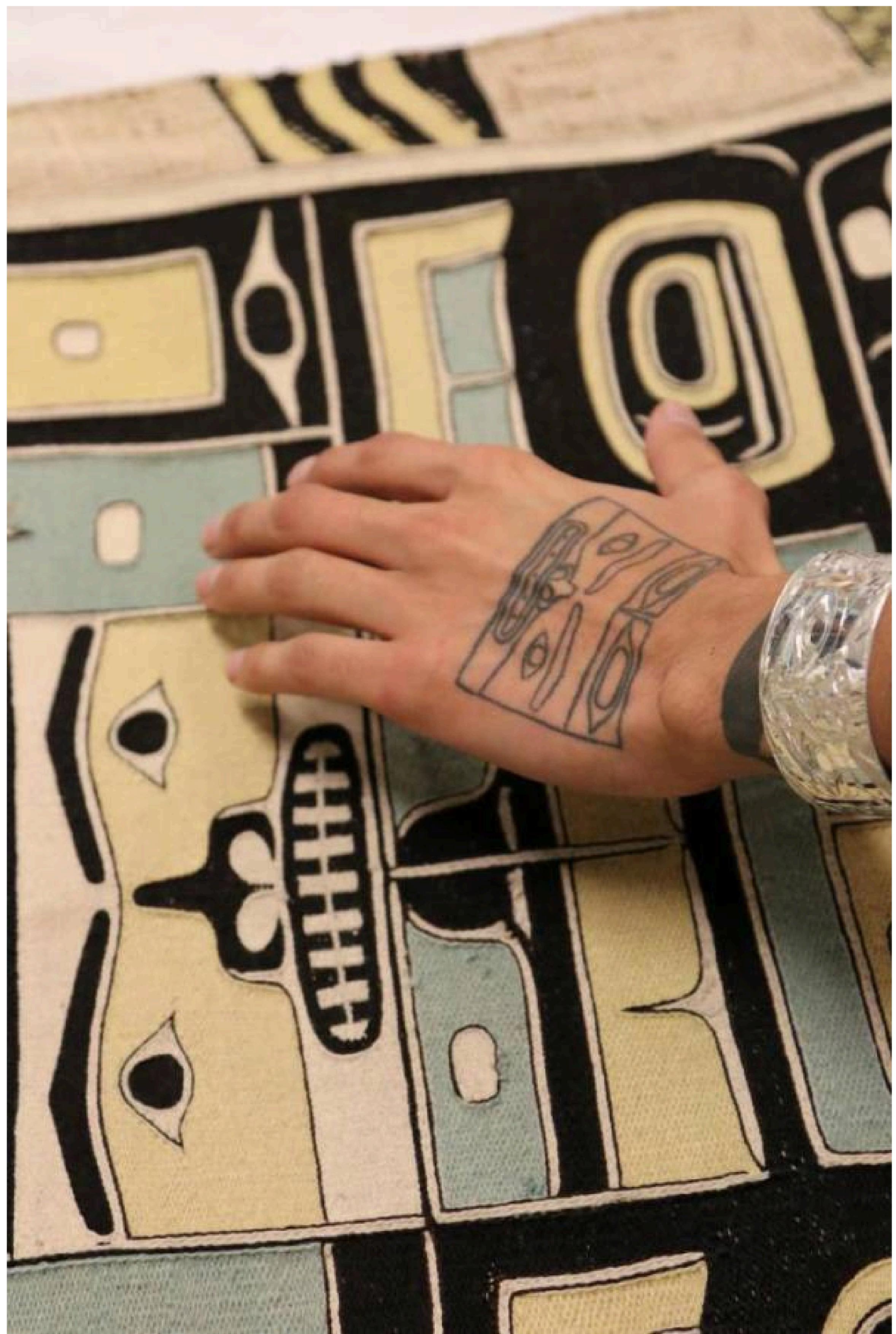


Photo by the Georgia Straight

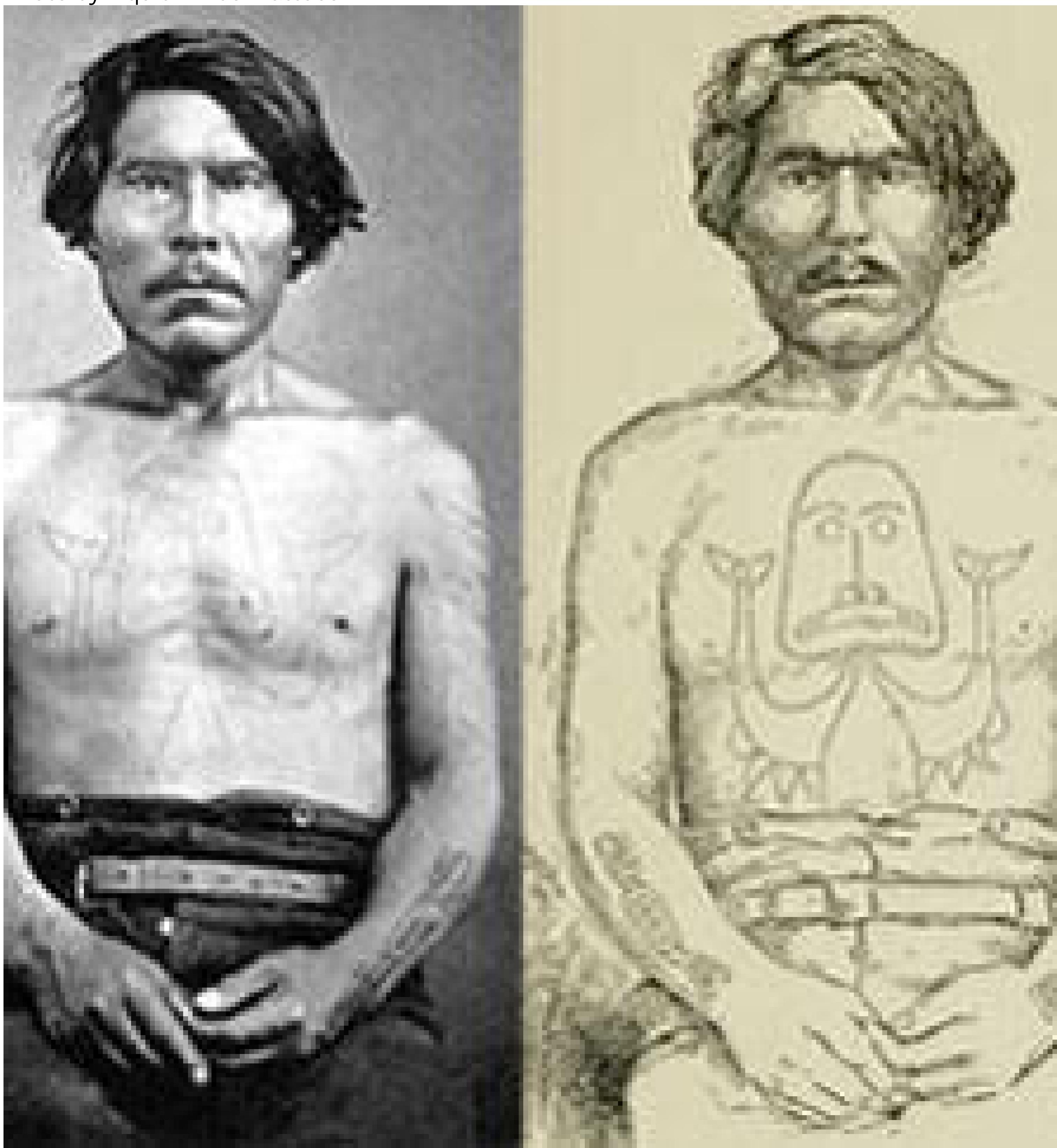


Photo by Anthony Duenas

For the Squamish and Lil'wat people, tattoos used to be a holy custom. This process needed tools fashioned from wood or bone and pigments taken from plants. To call the gods' blessings and protection on the occasion, one would often pray and chant before getting a tattoo. Because contemporary artists like MacDonald help to preserve these customs, tattooing has evolved from a simple tool for self-expression to a potent vehicle for cultural expression and religious symbolism.

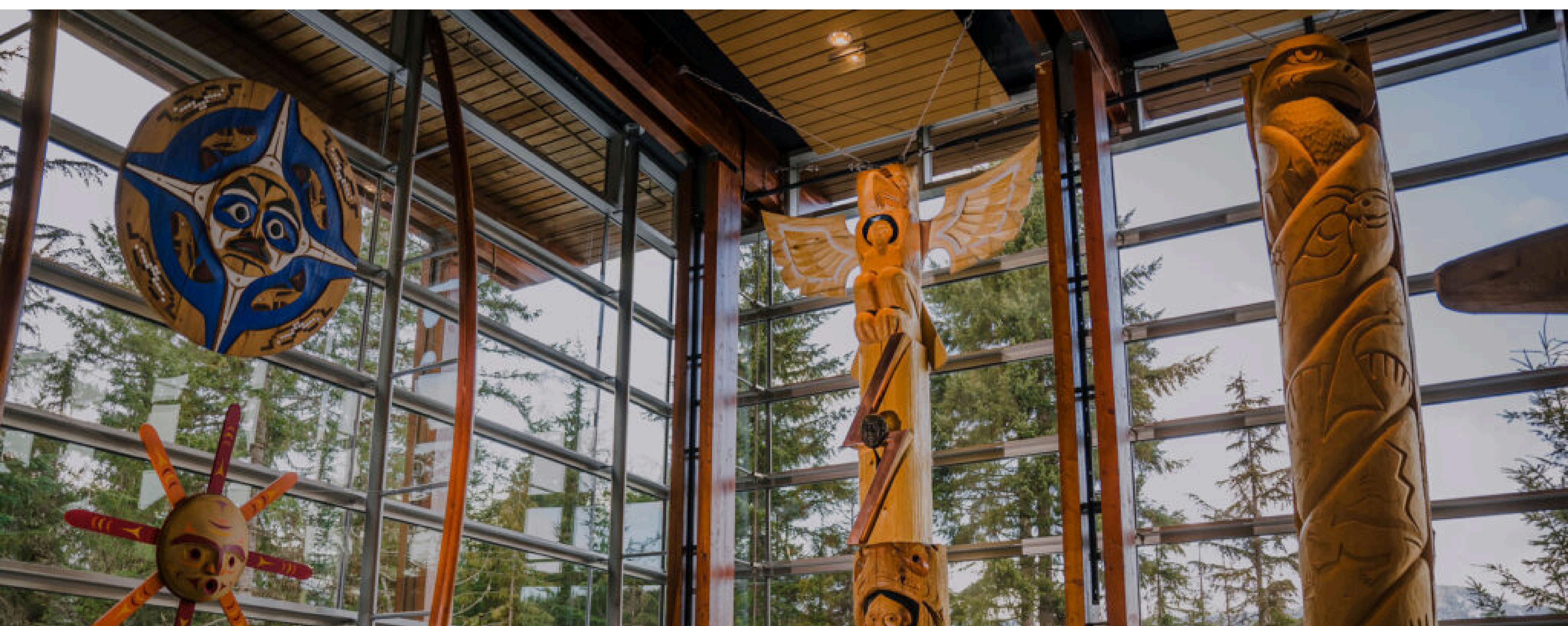
Renowned Squamish tattoo artist Leah MacDonald is part of the modern renaissance of traditional tattoos. MacDonald designs tattoos combining modern ideas with classic symbols. Among her most well-known creations is a raven tattoo that tastefully circles her arm. The tattoo represents the two traits strongly connected to the raven in Coast Salish mythology: knowledge and metamorphosis. MacDonald's work highlights the importance of tattoos as a kind of living art combining individual expression with the preservation of cultural traditions. She keeps traditional tattooing vibrant by honouring her ancestors in her tattoos and investigating modern aesthetics, so ensuring their evolution.

Photo by Liquid Amber Tattoos





Whether in the form of sculptures, totem poles, or tattoos, the Squamish and Lil'wat peoples' artwork powerfully reflects their cultural legacy, spiritual beliefs, and relationship with the surroundings. This is true independent of the creative medium. Works including "Bear Dancer" by Ed Noisecat, "Transformation Mask" by Redmond Quxáwám Andrews, and "Thunderbird and Killer Whale Totem" by Stan Joseph highlight the artists' ability to give old customs significance and lifespan. By doing this, they can respect their ancestors, forward their customs to the next generation, and create a closer and more physical link to their common past by employing art. The continuity that results from the past meeting the present and future reflects the ongoing influence of Coast Salish art as a fundamental tool for cultural resilience and renewal.



Interior Salish: The S'pilx & Okanagan Tribes

The Interior Salish nations, though less known, have influenced many aboriginal artists and art forms. They occupy territory in the interior of British Columbia, although some territories extend into the state of Washington in the United States. The spoken languages mostly consist of nsyilxcən, secwepemctsin, splatsin, and n̄leʔkepmxcin, however many inhabitants also speak english and french. The nations consist of five different tribes, one of which is called the Okanagan (Syilx) nation. Within this smaller nation, there are eight different communities - Westbank being one of them. One might ask: what might be the influence and art forms that this nation has had on the aboriginal art style? Here are a few examples:

okanagan (Syilx)

The Okanagan First Nation, also known as the Syilx, are renowned for basket weaving, leatherwork, painted designs, and metalwork. They tend to include unique, vibrant colours in their pieces. According to the Westbank First Nation, Syilx art isn't just found in "public art", but also in buildings, signs, and architecture within their community.



One piece, called the Veterans Memorial, was a sculpture made in 2014 by Virgil “Smoker” Marchand. It honoured the around 7000 indigenous soldiers who fought in the First and Second World Wars, as well as any other veterans who have served in the Canadian and American Armed Forces. The artist’s statement was considerably inspirational, stating that in life or death situations, it was important that everyone came together, regardless of race and whatnot, and fought. He said, “I wanted to show a strong Indian man. I wanted to show a strong Indian woman. And I wanted to show a soldier who could be any soldier—he could be Native, he could be any soldier—because I think it's important to represent all our people. My uncle said that when they got into the trenches, they were a band of brothers. There was no colour. There was no difference in who they were. They fought together, and I think that's really important.”

Syilx Art



Photo by Richard McGuire

Another feature that the Syilx are known for is their painted designs. Like many other nations, the Okanagan tend to express themselves and their culture through painting. At the University of British Columbia’s Okanagan Gallery, an exhibition called “You are on Syilx Territory” features recent acquisitions from UBC Okanagan’s Public Art Collection by Sheldon Louis, Coralee Miller, David Wilson and Manuel Axel Strain. The vibrant use of colours is what differs Syilx art from other First Nation art.





To conclude, the Interior Salish Nations, specifically the Syilx, have largely contributed to indigenous art. With their basket weaving, leatherwork, metalwork, and painted designs, these artists' pieces each serve a deep purpose and meaning. It is important not only to remember the art, but the reason behind each stroke or bend. For example, the Veterans Memorial was an honorary statue made to honour veterans of the First and Second World Wars who served in the Canadian and American Armed Forces, regardless of their race or status. According to Virgil, "...when they got into the trenches, they were a band of brothers. There was no colour. There was no difference in who they were. They fought together, and I think that's really important." The Okanagan First Nation, and other Interior Salish First Nations, have certainly displayed their culture through their art.



Photo by Salmon Feast Artwork Gallery

Haida: Haida Gwaii & Queen Charlotte Islands

The Haida are Indigenous peoples from the northern coast of British Columbia, specifically Haida Gwaii (also known as Queen Charlotte Islands and the southern part of Alaska). They are known for their advanced skills in woodworking and abilities in carving ceremonial masks and chests and building totem poles and canoes. Haida fine art has significantly impacted the development of the Pacific Northwest Coast native art styles. The Haida and Kwakiutl, Indigenous people of the coast of British Columbia, developed unique artistic traditions and their imaginative and sophisticated style has found its way into places and art around the world. Their art has majorly influenced American abstract artists and has inspired a revival of craftsmanship in the Northwest Coast art scene.

Argillite Art

What makes Haida art unique is their use of black argillite, a rare and exquisite fine-grained siltstone found exclusively in Haida Gwaii. This particular black type is only found at Slatechuck Creek on Graham Island, the largest island in the Haida Gwaii. Argillite represents a dense, black, carbonaceous shale: kwawhlahl in the Haida language. Depictions that represent meaningful stories, mythical spirits and animals, crests and other carvings are typically carved onto the stone. Carvings on argillite were first done in the 1800s and were originally intended to be used as an item of trade.





ARTIST PROFILES



Photo by Jackie Traverse

Susan Point



Susan Agnes Point is a renowned Musqueam Coast Salish artist based in the lower mainland of Vancouver, Canada, who is primarily celebrated for her intricate sculptures and totem pole creations and how she is one of the first Coast Salish female artists to receive wide recognition. She was born on April 5th, 1952 in Alert Bay, British Columbia, where her parents Edna Grant and Anthony Point were salmon fishers. Point's unique art style can be distinguished by her utilization of traditional methods, symbols, and iconology in a contemporary art expression, which is collectively attributed to the flourishing of contemporary Salish Art.

Throughout Point's entire career, she mainly self taught herself the cultural traditions of Salish art because minimal research had been done prior to when Point began creating art. However, Point did have a few mentors who were major influences for her work. Point embarked her art career creating jewelry in Northwest Coast artistic forms, where she had learned with Jack Leyland at the Vancouver Community College. Another mentor of Point was master carver John Livingston, who had taught her wood carvings. In 1981, she decided to create art solely in Coast Salish forms instead of the Northwest Coast form. It was also around this time when she collaborated with other artists including Stan Greene, Rod Modeste, and Floyed Joseph, who shared the same determined initiative, to revive Salish art.

Point stated herself that she inherited traditional values of the Salish peoples primarily from her mother, Edna Grant. To learn more about the art styles of her ancestors, Point conducted studies of the art collections belonging to the Coast Salish Peoples at the University of British Columbia's Museum of Anthropology and at the Royal British Columbia Museum. With the inspiration from the stories of her ancestors, Point was a leader in promoting the Salish art traditions in an art market characterized by significant favoritism towards Northwest Coast artworks with formline design principles.

Point's unique artistic style usually contains motifs and symbols connected with traditional Coast Salish arts and closely linked with women's art. Furthermore, due to her location of residence at the mouth of the Fraser River in Vancouver, the imagery in her prints are often inspired by nature and animals including frogs, birds, grasses, flowers, sturgeons, killer whales, bears, and deers. The ladybug symbol is also widely present in Point's works, as that is her personal symbol. Point's ideology for her art progression is a never-ending process where it will never be fully completed and she will continue to push herself. According to Point herself, her art is constantly evolving because new experiences contribute immensely to her art style.

Susan Point

“I continue trying to push myself one step beyond my goals, or one step in a new direction so often. There is always another stride to make. My art is never really finished; there is just a point where I have to stop myself.”

Point also categorizes her art career into two distinct periods. Emphasis on reintroducing and preserving ancestral art techniques is placed in the first period while she now explores the contemporary form of artistic expression. Her in-depth investigation of the formal qualities of historical Salish art established the groundwork for her contemporary art works, which can be seen most prominently in the adaptation of traditional spindle whorl carvings into screen printing. Since 1981, Point has been commissioned for several monumental public and private works for institutions such as the University of British Columbia’s Museum of Anthropology and the Vancouver International Airport. Perhaps her most famous work is the world’s largest red cedar spindle whorl that spans 16 feet in diameter named “Flight,” which is installed at the Vancouver International Airport.

Point received numerous awards throughout her art career. Those worth notably mentioning are the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal (2012), lifetime member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts (2004), Officer of the Order of Canada (2005), and the Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts by many universities. She has also been involved in multiple group exhibitions as well as countless solo exhibitions. Her first exhibition, called Art of the Northwest Coast, occurred at the London Regional Art Gallery in London, Ontario in 1982. Point is broadly acclaimed to be the inspiration and influence for the next generation of Indigenous artists, and her works have engaged recent scholarly attention to the Coast Salish culture.



Chris Paul



Chris Paul is a Coast Salish Artist who is gaining international recognition for his unique art style of combining traditional Salish art techniques with contemporary interpretations to create limited edition giclee prints, cedar panels, and glass sculptures. Paul was born in 1969 near Victoria, British Columbia as a member of the Tsartlip nation. Paul creates a wide variety of art forms ranging from sculptures to jewelry and from paintings to serigraphs with a mixture of different processes and materials.

According to Paul, he was immersed in and exposed to Coast Salish art ever since he was a child, however he only decided to pursue his career as a full-time artist in his late 20s. Paul completed a total of two training for his art study: a one year training at En'owkin and at the Gitanmaax School of Northwest Coast Art in 'Ksan and a two year apprenticeship with the famous Tsimshian artist, Roy Henry Vickers. Paul subsequently developed his distinctive art style under the mentorship of Vicker. The teachings and heritage he has learned about both his art and culture has propelled him to make teaching a significant facet of his career, where he would teach his childrens and local schools the traditional Coast Salish art style.

Paul's art primarily depicts flora, fauna, and mythologies linked with his Salish culture and his residence on Vancouver Island, and he also creates works upon inspiration from moments in everyday life. His illustrations of the Salish Sea design on metal, canvas, and paper are possibly the most known symbols to the public. Paul finished one of his major commissions in 2007, when he created three large scaled etched glass panels for the lobby of the Sidney Pier Hotel and Spa and smaller panels for each of its 55 rooms. Additionally, he has been commissioned from several other institutions including University of Victoria, Camosun College, Tillicum Mall, Gulf Islands Operation Centre, and Victoria Conference Centre.

Paul and his prints have recently gained monumental exposure from the hit television series, Grey Anatomy.

He was also the first Coast Salish artist to be invited to participate in the Visiting Artist Program in Anthropology at the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Victoria. Paul continues his impact to aspire the next generation to create Coast Salish art and design through his teachings and workshops.

Janice George



A master weaver whose craft is intricately bound up with the spiritual and cultural practices of the Coast Salish people, Chief Chepximiya Siyam' Janice George is both an inherited chief of the Squamish Nation and an accomplished artist. George has devoted her life to teaching others how to weave using traditional Coast Salish wool techniques and keeping those techniques alive and well. George owes a great debt of gratitude to her late grandma Kwitelut-t Lena Jacobs and other Squamish elders for imparting the spiritual wisdom and knowledge that permeates all of her work [Indigo Arts Alliance].

At a basket weaver's gathering in 2003, George met Salish weaver Susan Pavel, marking the beginning of her late-in-life journey into weaving. Pavel and Subiyay-t Bruce Miller of the Skokomish Nation continued to guide her as she formally learned the art of Salish weaving after this encounter. George approaches weaving with a profound reverence for the spiritual and cultural importance of the art form. She stresses that the prayers, love, and spiritual protection that go into each woven item link the wearer to their family's heritage [MONTECRISTO Magazine].

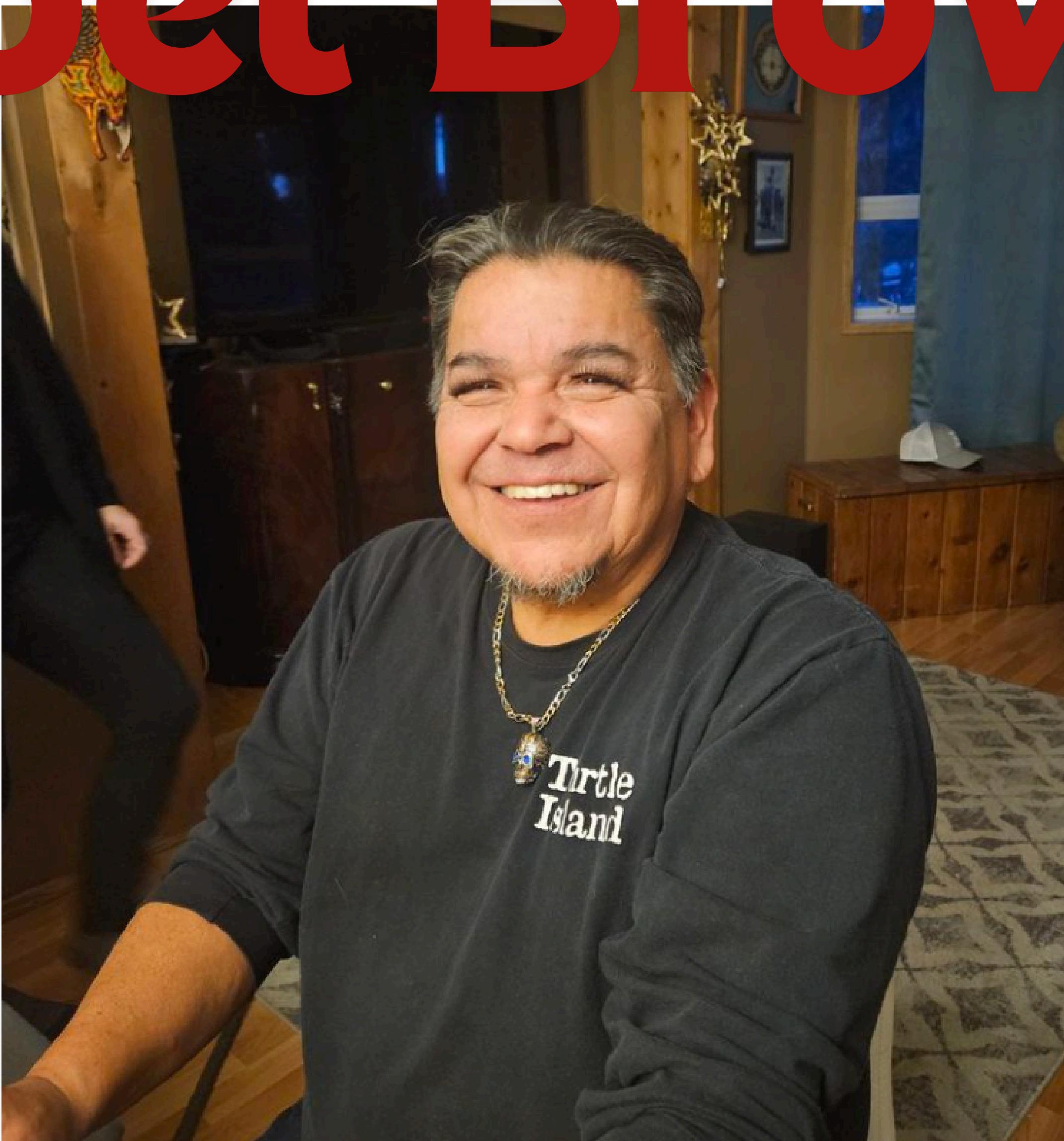
The L'hen Awtxw Weaving House was co-founded in 2005 by George and her husband, Skwetsimeltxw Willard "Buddy" Joseph. Its purpose is to maintain and transmit the traditional Salish wool weaving techniques. As a result of their efforts, more than 2,500 students have learned Salish weaving from George and Joseph, guaranteeing that the skill will be passed down through the generations. Outside of the classroom, they have collaborated with Leslie H. Tepper to write Salish Blankets: Robes of Protection and Transformation, Symbols of Wealth. This book serves as a reference for scholars as well as a manual for aspiring weavers [Museum of Anthropology at UBC; TEDxWhistler].

The Squamish Nation's attire at the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics—traditional Salish robes wove by George and her students—attracted worldwide attention and brought George's work into the spotlight. The significance of Indigenous peoples' identities and the power of traditional arts in claiming cultural independence were brought to light by this worldwide cultural representation. The Salish robes, which were woven using ancient techniques and decorated with complex geometric patterns, were a symbol of the Squamish people's strength and vitality during centuries of cultural suppression and colonization [MONTECRISTO Magazine].

George attended Capilano University and the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico, so she is not only an accomplished artist but also a qualified museum curator and educator. The preservation, respect, and public accessibility of Indigenous knowledge and art are central to her curatorial practice, which is in turn informed by her artistic practice. George's dedication to building a community and common goal among Indigenous weavers was on full display when she spearheaded the planning of the inaugural Canada Northwest Coast Weavers Gathering [Indigo Arts Alliance].

At the heart of George's weaving practice are the cultural and spiritual aspects of her work. According to Salish belief, weavings originate in the supernatural and are manifested in the material world by means of the weaver. The wisdom and good fortune passed down through George's family lineage are imbued in every item, creating a physical link between generations. Thus, George's weaving is more than just an artistic endeavour; it is also a means by which her people's spiritual and cultural traditions will be carried on [TEDxWhistler].

Noel Brown



Noel Brown was born in Nanaimo, British Columbia in March 1970 to parents of Coast Salish and Kwakwaka'wakw heritage. A successful artist, his cultural and spiritual connection to the Snuneymuxw First Nation greatly influences his work.

In 1994, Brown made the transition from non-artistic woodworking to professional carving. His mentor and inspiration, James Lewis, was a prominent Northwest Coast artist, and his relationships with Lewis had a significant influence on his work. Spirit Gallery notes that Brown's practice was enhanced by the instruction he received from artists such as Darin Lewis, Richard Baker, and Matthew Baker, who helped him grow as a craftsman and educated him in Indigenous carving techniques.

Brown pays homage to the classic styles and forms of Coast Salish art while maintaining a minimalist aesthetic in his own work. He began by perfecting his woodcarving techniques, which have long been central to

Indigenous art in the Pacific Northwest. His impressive public commissions include two fifteen-foot totem poles for the City of Nanaimo, which demonstrate his expertise in wood carving. With the same painstaking attention to detail seen in Coast Salish art, Brown exhibits his talent for creating monumental works in these towering and ornately carved totem poles. Made in Canada Gifts, these poles serve as public representations

of the cultural resilience of the Snuneymuxw people and highlight the significance of Indigenous art in contemporary Canada. Although it requires new skills, silverwork gives Brown the opportunity to maintain his

minimalist aesthetic. He started using it in his practice a few years ago. By switching from wood to silver, Brown demonstrates his flexibility and commitment to exploring new forms of expression while staying true to Indigenous art traditions. His silver jewellery displays the geometric shapes and straight lines typical of Coast Salish design, much like his wood carvings. The Kwakwaka'wakw heritage is also reflected in it, though, through the Spirit Gallery components.

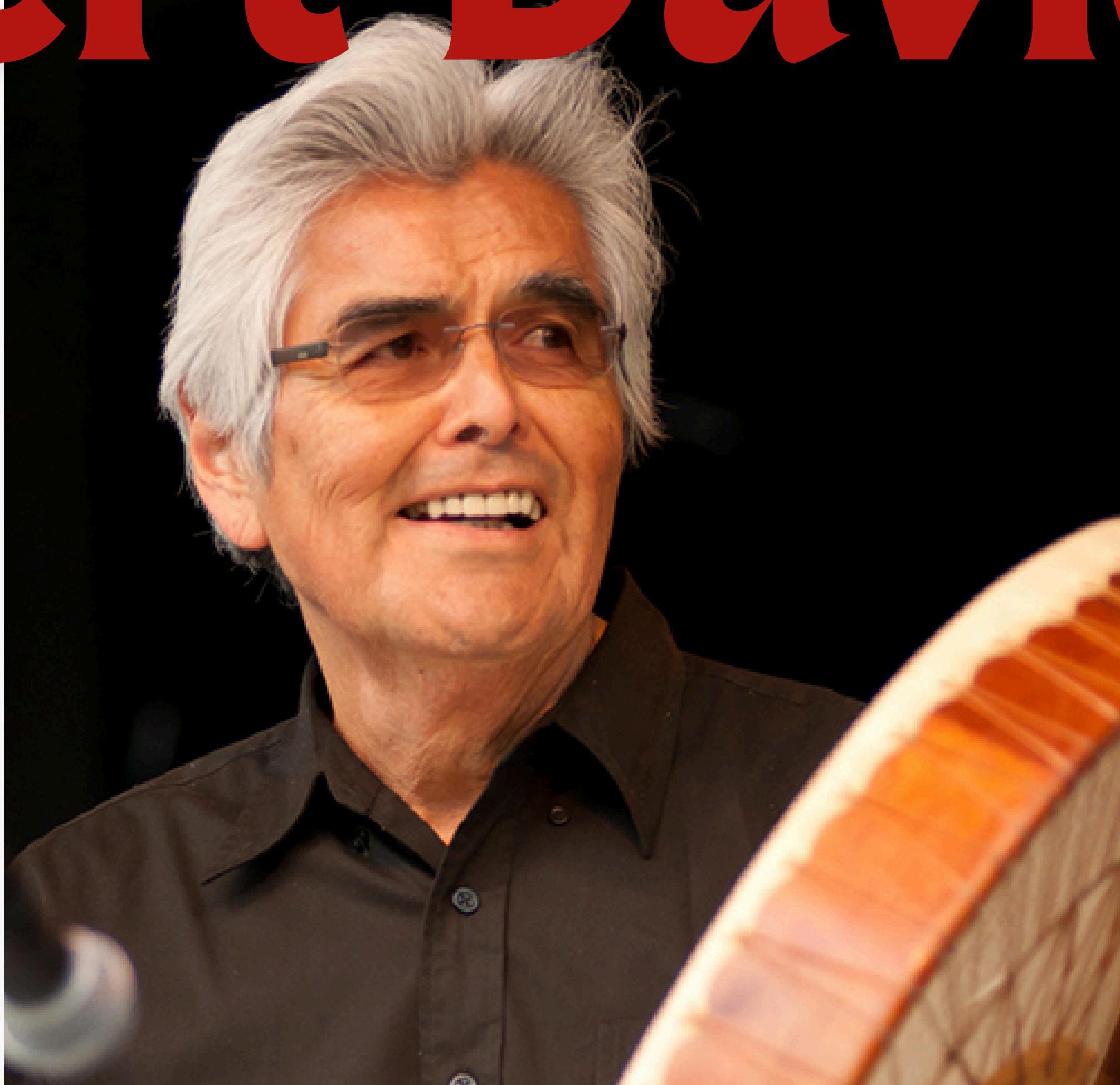
Brown has artwork in both private collections and well-known public places. He has made sure that his carvings are visible to a large audience by placing them prominently in the Nanaimo B.C. Museum, the Departure Bay terminal of B.C. Ferries, and the Nanaimo cruise ship terminal. The public artworks showcase Brown's role in the broader initiative to revitalize Coast Salish artistic heritage. His works embody the stories and traditions that define him as an Indigenous artist, reflecting the artistic principles held by his people

[Made in Canada Gifts].

In addition to preserving traditional practices and creating new media, Brown has made many significant contributions to Coast Salish art. His works show that Indigenous artistic practices can survive and even

flourish in this modern world. Brown continues to take a stand that affirms the worldwide and local importance of Indigenous artistic practices through his public commissions and growing silver body of work.

Robert Davidson



Robert Davidson, (also called Guud Sans Glans, meaning "Eagle of the Dawn") is a distinguished Indigenous artist of Haida and Tlingit heritage who is acknowledged internationally for his exceptional skills in painting, carving, and printmaking. Davidson was born and raised in Hydaburg, Alaska on November 4th, 1946 before moving to Vancouver, BC to attend highschool. Robert Davidson comes from a family with rich artistic heritage, where creativity and craftsmanship have been passed down through generations. He is great-grandson to renowned Haida artist, Charlie Edenshaw, son to Claude Davidson and brother to Reg Davidson, all artists from different generations. At an early age, his grandfather Robert Davidson Sr. introduced him to the art of carving and in 1966 he became an apprentice to Bill Reed which later opened a door to future opportunities.

For more than 50 years, Robert Davidson has committed his career to fulfilling his passion "to revive and perpetuate a variety of forms of Haida cultural expression" (Guud). In addition to creating artwork, Davidson communicates his cultural expression in dedication to his elders as a chance for them to celebrate their culture. In 1984, Davidson created three monumental totem poles for the Maclean Hunter building in Toronto. The totem poles were called The Three Watchmen, demonstrating his commitment to innovative art and Haida culture. That same year, he also completed a bronze sculpture of a Frog for PepsiCo's sculpture garden. In 1986, he produced another large bronze piece, Raven Bringing Light to the World, for the Canadian Museum of History as well as a three-pole grouping titled Three Variations of Killer Whale Myth. In 2004, the Museum of Anthropology at UBC organized Robert Davidson: The Abstract Edge, featuring 30 of his works and touring from 2005 to 2007. In addition to art, he has an interest in dance, music and film. Davidson co-founded with his brother "Rainbow Creek Dancers," a contemporary dance troupe. They performed dances taught to them by their grandmother and created masks and ceremonial objects to use in performances. Davidson is also a founding member of the Haida Gwaii Singers Society. Director Charles Wilkinson examined Robert Davidson's art and life in the documentary "Haida Modern," which premiered at the Vancouver International Film Festival in 2019. Davidson was also featured in two short documentaries by the National Film Board: This Was the Time (1970) and Now Is The Time (2019), both of which dive into aspects of Haida history and culture.

Robert Davidson's unique artistic style has not only shaped Haida art but also created a lasting legacy that continues to inspire many. Over the decades he has accumulated many awards and honors in acknowledgment of his dedication and effort. Starting in 1995, he received the National Aboriginal Achievement Award for Art and Culture. In 2010, Davidson received the Governor General's Award and in 2002 was presented with Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee Medal and Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee Medal later in 2012. Throughout the decades he has also accumulated many local awards, such as the Vancouver Arts Award, British Columbia Aboriginal Art Lifetime Achievement Award and the City of Surrey's Civic Treasure Award. Davidson is a remarkable local Haida artist whose work reflects Haida culture and will continue to encourage appreciation for Indigenous traditions.

Lisa Hageman



Lisa Hageman Yahgulanaas, (also called Kuuyas 7waahlal Gidaak, meaning “Precious Potlatch Woman”) is a rising Haida artist who focuses on bringing a modern perspective incorporated with Indigenous art. Lisa Hageman Yahgulanaas comes from a family of Haida weavers, which inspires her to carry on their traditional practices. Yahgulanaas is recognized for her unique emphasis on traditional weaving, particularly specializing in Yelth Koo (Raven's Tail), a classic geometric weaving technique.

Yahgulanaas has won various awards in the past few decades in recognition of her advanced weaving style. In 2010, she was one of six First Nation artists to receive the BC Creative Achievement Award. That same year, she was honored with an award of excellence from the World Art Market at the Museum of Anthropology at UBC for her Woven Sea Robe. Over the years her artwork has been featured in exhibits and galleries around Canada. For instance, the robe "Raining Gold" was showcased in the exhibition of Indigenous art at the National Gallery of Canada.

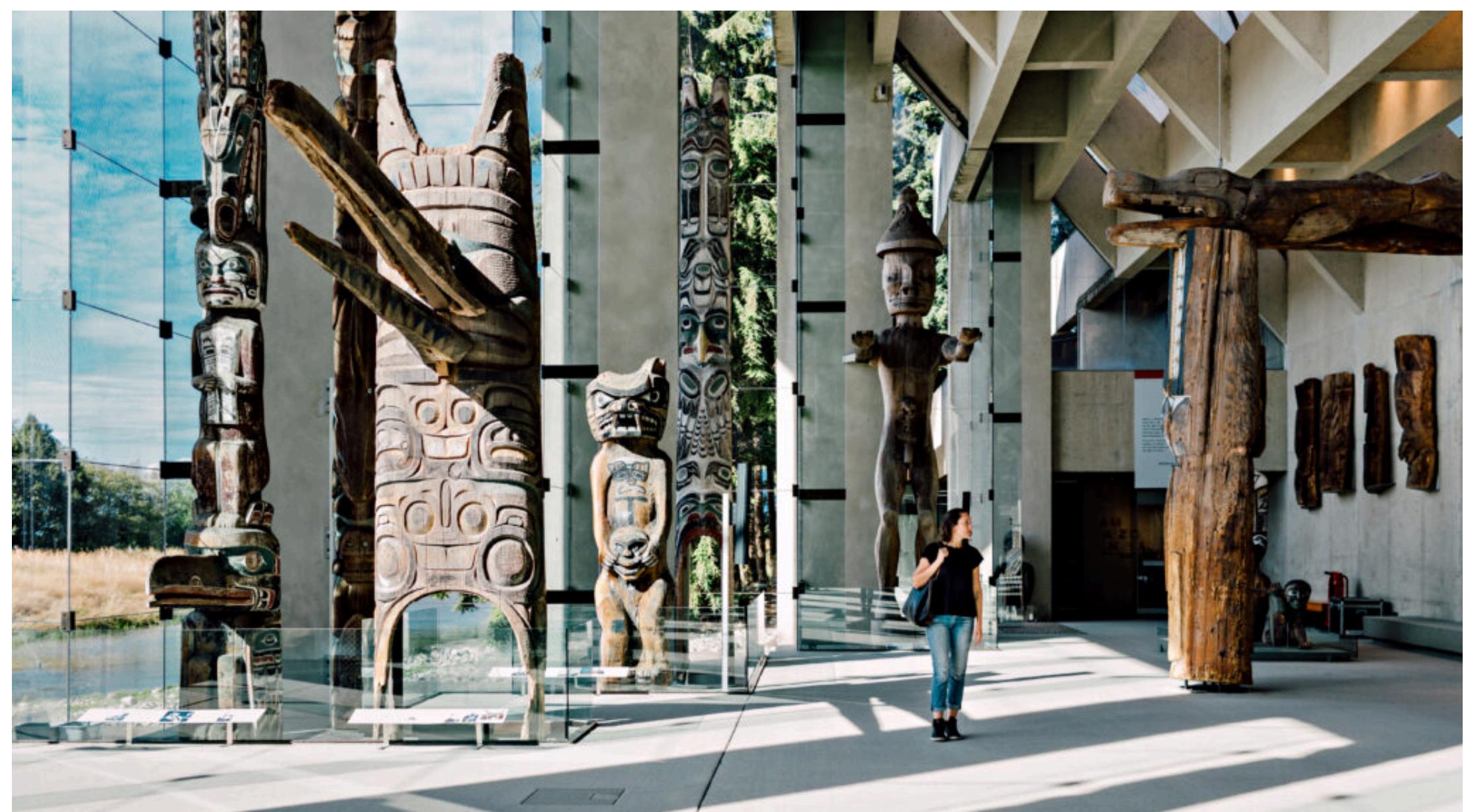


Art & Cultural Preservation



Cultural Heritage and Preservation

British Columbia is home to many diverse First Nations cultures, each with its own distinct artistic traditions that are important for the preservation and celebration of their heritage. The art produced by these communities—whether it's carved totem poles, weaved baskets, or vibrant red and black paintings—serves as a form of cultural preservation to their ancestors and traditional practices. BC's First Nations art and culture make up much of Canadian tradition and history, thus it is important to preserve these parts of the Canadian and aboriginal past to maintain the Indigenous peoples' cultures.



The importance of cultural heritage and preservation ultimately derives from three key points: **Identity, education, and community.**

First Nations art is not merely for decorative purposes, but is also deeply embedded with cultural significance. It helps maintain and transfer indigenous knowledge, stories, and values across generations as First Nations people have a cultural tendency to storytell rather than write. By preserving these artistic traditions, communities ensure the continuity of their cultural identity in today's fast-evolving world.



Art can also serve as an educational tool for both indigenous and non-indigenous populations. Through aboriginal art, people learn about First Nations' histories, traditions, and beliefs. This fosters a much greater understanding of different cultures and helps address stereotypes and misconceptions that people who lack in knowledge might have.

Many First Nations artworks are fundamental to ceremonial practices and community events. They often visualize spiritual and communal values, as well as play a role in rituals—which are important to most First Nations cultures.

Social Impact and Sustainable Development of Art

Indigenous art is known to have large social impacts, as well as be a sustainable form of art development.

Aboriginal art tends to play a crucial role in raising awareness about social and environmental issues. Through paintings, sculptures, and dance performances, Indigenous artists often address themes like environmental stewardship and social justice. For instance, artworks that depict traditional ways of life or environmental degradation can often lead to discussions about conservation and the rights of Indigenous communities.

The creation and exhibition of Indigenous art also contributes to the preservation of cultural traditions and languages. Most art, whether it be woven baskets or paintings, tend to have a message or meaning behind them, of which are often stories, symbols, and practices that are central to First Nations identity. By maintaining these artistic traditions, communities can keep their cultural practices alive and flourishing, while also providing a living record of their histories and beliefs.



Community and Government Supported Initiatives

There are also many initiatives that are widely supported by different communities and the government. To illustrate, there are many cultural revitalization programs, along with government support policies and partnerships.

In the past, various First Nations communities have established programs aimed at restoring traditional arts and crafts. These include workshops, mentorships, and cultural festivals that celebrate and teach traditional art forms in order to bring attention to them and their culture.



The Canadian government, along with provincial initiatives, have also supported cultural preservation through grants, funding programs, and policies that prioritize indigenous art. For example, the CAC (Canadian Arts Council) and a variety of other provincial arts organizations provide financial support to artists and cultural projects.

There have also been plenty of collaborations between First Nations communities, museums, and educational facilities—like schools—that have led to initiatives like the repatriation of cultural artifacts and the formation of culturally dedicated centers to preserve and showcase Indigenous art. For example, UBC recently had an indigenous art exhibition opportunity that took place last year in the summer (2023, July 7th-Sept 27th), displaying Syilx art.

Sustainable Economic Development Through Art

There are plenty of economic opportunities for artists. Selling artworks, participating in exhibitions, and receiving commissions can provide financial support and help sustain livelihoods both in and out of Indigenous communities. This economic benefit can be particularly important in communities where other employment opportunities might be limited, especially in those that tend to be more traditional, such as the Inuit.



Government and non-governmental organizations often tend to provide grants and funding for certain artists, specifically for Indigenous art and cultural projects. This financial support is often a huge help in quickening and promoting artists to produce new work, develop different skills, and participate in a broader spectrum of cultural dialogues. By supporting Indigenous art with funding, these organizations contribute to the sustainability and growth of modern Indigenous art.



All in all, celebrating, as well as preserving, diverse artistic traditions of the BC's First Nations communities are a large factor in maintaining Canada's cultural richness. These forms of art, ranging from totem poles to traditional paintings, are vital for the sustainability of cultural identity, passing down knowledge, and fostering community bonds. Supported by many different initiatives and fundings, such as the CAC, not only educates and raises awareness, but also provides opportunities for aboriginal artists. By continuing to support and promote these artistic traditions, we can ensure the vitality of an ongoing recognition of Indigenous cultures in today's constantly changing world.

News sources:

'So empowering': Indigenous designers showcased at Calgary fashion show
<https://globalnews.ca/news/10605711/indigenous-designers-showcased-at-calgary-fashion-show/>

About: First Nations designers from throughout Western Canada go to Calgary to showcase their creations at the Indigenous Elegance Fashion Show.

Regina artist creates beaded poppies in honour of Indigenous Veterans Day
<https://globalnews.ca/news/10076610/regina-artist-beaded-poppies-indigenous-veterans-day/>

About: Julie Kinistino creates beaded poppies in order to honour Indigenous veterans for customers and war veterans to wear.

Calgary Indigenous artists share 'incredible diversity' of wearable art traditions

<https://globalnews.ca/news/10214066/calgary-indigenous-artists-share-art-traditions/>

About: Local Indigenous artists spend January at Sparrow Artspace to give Calgarians a chance to get in touch with some old aboriginal traditions.

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