

Salmon Arm Art Gallery Presents

# Tsrep

Secwepemctsin for *tree*

An exhibition about the displacement of Indigenous trees and shrubs in the Shuswap region, featuring artists Doris Charest, Linda Franklin, Ellen Gonella, Hop You Haskett, David New, Delores Purdaby, Clea Roddick, Gerry Thomas, Mary Thomas and Sara Wiens, with historic photos from the archives of Salmon Arm Museum

## April 6 to June 22, 2024

Hours Tuesday to Saturday, 11am to 4pm

Opening Reception Saturday, April 6, 11am to 1pm

Tree Conversations Saturday, May 4, 1pm to 4pm

Coffee Break & Artist Talk Thursday, May 16, 2pm

Generously Sponsored by



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*Walk Along the Birch Trail - Mary Thomas*



# You are standing on the unceded and ancestral lands of the Secwépemc people.

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The board and staff of Shuswap District Arts Council acknowledge that they have benefited from the systems and structures that have oppressed Secwépemc people for nearly two centuries.

We pledge to support reparations and reconciliation through our mandate, using the arts to build respectful relationships, create cross-cultural community engagement, and to make space for Indigenous cultural and artistic expression. Our policies reflect the importance of supporting Indigenous voices, as well as guiding the education of settler cultures by including Indigenous perspectives in every exhibition and program.

Curator Tracey Kutschker wishes to personally thank Secwépemc Knowledge-Sharer Louis Thomas, as well as artists and storytellers Dolan Badger, Mary Thomas, Delores Purdaby, Aaron Leon, Gerry Thomas, Kenthen Thomas and Geri Matthew for their generous guidance, advice and wisdom over the past 20 years. We invite settlers to join the Arts Centre in learning a more complete history of this land and working towards the decolonization of unjust systems and structures that cause harm.

The Art Gallery implements four of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action. We work to advance call 14, by support the revitalization and preservation of Indigenous languages in our programs, 80 by honouring and recognizing Residential School Survivors with public commemoration, and 83 through collaborative arts projects that contribute to reconciliation.

# Curator's Statement

Tracey Kutschker

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The Art Gallery is situated on land that was once forest of fir trees, not far from the lakeshore that would have been thick with tulle and surrounded by sxwsméllp, the sxúsem berry bush that drew gatherers from all over the region since time immemorial. Sxwsméllp is the traditional name for the area that was named Neskonlith by the federal government, and it was once a thriving bio-region. Though settlement, development and colonial land management practices have made this all seem like ancient history, in geological terms, it was less than a heartbeat ago. When we seek solutions to the climate crisis, we can look to past ecosystems and those that still remember to find our way back to balance. This exhibition gives us a glimpse into that past.

Artists were invited to explore one species of tree or shrub that was found here pre-settlement, and to bring attention to the factors that led to its displacement. These incredible, well-researched works can help us explore how we can use our knowledge and understanding of what grew here before to inform land-based projects in the future – whether that be planting drought-resistant native species of trees and shrubs, or policy to prevent mass tree clearing for development. Through the *Tsrep* exhibition, and the arts in general, we seek to identify specific past, present and future acts that have impacted or will impact the region, but are still within our reach to change.

*In response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 14th call to action, Salmon Arm Art Gallery commits to supporting Indigenous language revitalization in collaboration with Secwépemc partners and teachers. Tsrep is the Secwépemc word for "tree." This exhibition title was provided by Secwépemc knowledge-sharer Louis Thomas.*

## Ellen Gonella

- |    |                   |                                 |       |
|----|-------------------|---------------------------------|-------|
| 1. | As Below So Above | <i>hawthorn and soopolallie</i> | \$50  |
| 2. | Sentinel          | <i>fir</i>                      | \$250 |

As a free-range child of the 80s in a rural Shuswap area, Ellen spent her childhood up in trees, collecting slime in swamps, hunting for wild strawberries, building forts and generally “being outside”. It gave her a deep love of the wilds, the forests, and the land in this neck of the woods. There is something special about the woods in this region – the smell in the summer, the dampness of the spring, the greenness of the moss, the shadows of the snow. It is ingrained in her childhood and she is grateful to have migrated back here as an adult. Ellen realized that the forest of her childhood is not the same ecosystem as what lies before her now. Land is getting drier, the summers are smokier, and the rivers lower. While the world is in constant flux, and (despite our fervent wishes) will not remain static in some nostalgic childhood perfection, there are some obvious shifts around us that are important to explore and recognize.

Using materials sourced from small-scale local mills and carefully foraged in small lots, Ellen endeavors to sculpt pieces that have us think about the threatened trees and shrubs around us in the context of this changing environment. The scale of trees and their seeming longevity often makes them feel ageless, but we see the effects of heat, fire, and dryness in the disappearing canopies that once shaded us and provided oxygen and carbon capture in the branchless hull sculptures. Flipping the shrubs (literally) from beneath our feet to dangling above our heads, also invites us to rethink how we view and engage with the “swill” of the woods, ditches, and hillsides around us. We often become so used to seeing the world around us in one way, and Ellen hopes that the pieces in this show will poke us into looking through new lenses, reconsider our assumptions on what the world will just absorb, and take a second look with wonder at the dynamic woods around us and how we interact with that world.

Ellen feels honoured to be part of an amazing group of artists exploring the changes and challenges, thinking about the local and global impacts of policy and practice (imbedded, inherited, intended or not), and the realities of the land we are all so blessed to call home. With thanks to Trish Wallenstein and Rick Hoffmann for their assistance and expertise.

*Ellen Gonella is a mixed media sculptor and floral artist living in Salmon Arm and practicing her art form in her business Wildwood Flower Emporium. In Ellen’s floral work, she integrates local and locally-raised flora, foraged items, farmed flowers, twiggy bits, and lichens into her designs. She enjoys the challenge of taking a theme and translating it into a floral sculpture, and many who visit the Art Gallery have found works Ellen has created to celebrate the opening of an exhibition – works that are inspired by the specific theme. She was excited to take on a larger scale sculpture for this exhibition, for which she has a particular passion.*

*100% of sales of Ellen’s work are being donated to the Art Gallery*

## David New

3.	Old Growth I	<i>reclaimed western red cedar</i>	\$1575
4.	Old Growth II	<i>reclaimed western red cedar</i>	\$1750
5.	Old Growth III	<i>reclaimed western red cedar</i>	\$2750

In his current practice, David has taken what he believes is truly beautiful and presented it back to the world with the series *Old Growth*. These are pieces of ancient Western Red Cedar trees, deemed to be unusable for the domestic lumber industry, whose life began in the 14th to 15th century. These “cast offs” were salvaged from burn piles at a local logging company site in 2018. They were destined for the fire.

David tries not to impose his ideas onto them, but rather work with them just enough to bring out their individual stories and astonishing beauty. He does not title or name his works, wanting each viewer to have their own interaction with them. Each of these works speak to us in a different way, and it’s important to leave room for that interpretation.

*David has a Master’s of Science in Forest Ecology from The University of British Columbia and a Fine Art diploma from Emily Carr University. He has spent the past 40 years in the forests of British Columbia, learning lessons from this part of earth’s environment, and honing his philosophies on the intersection of art and nature.*

*David wishes to acknowledge his privilege in being able to make art, raise a family and live his life among the Secwépemc People. He would also like to acknowledge that the trees his artworks are made from, prior to being destroyed, lived their lives on the traditional lands of the Sinixt, the Secwepemc, the Syilx, and the Ktunaxa People.*

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## Gerry Thomas

6.	Ball Cap	<i>birchbark</i>	\$200
7.	Grad Cap	<i>birchbark, deer hide</i>	\$300
8.	Top Hat	<i>birchbark, beads</i>	\$700
9.	Visor	<i>birchbark</i>	\$150
10.	Traditional Birch Uses	<i>birchbark, deer hide</i>	NFS

Gerry has been creating contemporary items with this traditional material for many years. He had a dream about ball caps and about how to make one out of birch bark. In his dream, his mother, the late elder Dr. Mary Thomas, showed him a pattern, and he built it based on her guidance. Since birchbark is water resistant, a person’s head won’t get wet if it’s raining, and the hat won’t lose its shape. The visor made from birchbark has been used by people picking berries for many years. The grad cap came to him while watching a graduation ceremony, and wanting to support Indigenous youth who are moving up from any level of education. The tassel is made from deer hide, with an elk bone in the top. To keep it straight, Gerry used saskatoon branches as a border, stitched into the hat with cedar roots. The top hat is worn for special occasions, and has a bead band made with milk bones.

The burls from the birch have plenty of uses. It can be used to make tea, and is medicine for arthritis. It can be used to take fire to a new location, and will light a fire even if it is raining and the wood is wet. People from the coast would come up and trade their ocean shells and trade them for furs, so shells are often used to hold the burl ember to carry it for making fire. Birchbark that has been found already off the tree are dried and hard, and can be used to make small drums for children.

*Gerry Thomas was born at home in Salmon Arm, and at the age of 12 was taken to residential school in Kamloops for one year. After that, his family moved off reserve to the coast, then to the Okanagan. Gerry graduated in 1973, and moved back home to be with his grandmother, Christine Allen. Back then there were no care homes, and certainly none for Indigenous elders. He stayed with his grandmother, and made his first birchbark basket with her guidance. He still has her digging stick that they used to dig up roots in the bush. Gerry worked at various jobs for many years, including forestry and fire fighting, and now finds his cultural knowledge is most helpful working within the schools. He teaches children about Secwepemc culture and traditional skills, and performs as a bear dancer and storyteller at many cultural functions.*

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## Salmon Arm Museum & Heritage Association

In partnership with Salmon Arm Museum & Heritage Association's Deborah Chapman and Erin Stodola, these photographs were selected from the archives to show the landscape around Salmon Arm prior to or during early settlement and development.

### 11. Alex Dennys Farm

Taken after the 1914 Larch Hill fire, which was believed to have been caused by lightning. Photographer: Rex Lingford, c. 1914

### 12. Clearing cottonwood trees on the Salmon Valley with a view to Fly Hills.

Slash-and-burn is a 12,000 year-old farming technique where forests are chopped down, allowed to dry, and then burned to pave the way for agriculture. The ash and debris leave a nutrient-rich layer of soil that makes it easier to grow crops. Farmers were known to spend every last dollar they had on stumping powder to blast trees. In May 1909, an epidemic of forest and clearing-related fires raged from Carlin to Armstrong, destroying homes, barns, and at least three sawmills. Photographer: Rex Lingford, c. 1909-1910

### 13. The Station

This station was constructed in 1890 on the lake side of the railway tracks. It was hard to buy tickets when the train pulled into the station. In 1913 a new station was opened on the south side of the tracks. A year later the old station was moved west and repurposed. Photographer: A.L. Bedford, c. 1920

### 14. View of Mallard Point

Taken from *Orpen's Ranch* with a westerly view of Mallard Point. Early settlers called the landform *Edwardes Point*, Secwepemc people called it Xgwelcwéllcw (fox's den). It's now known as *Engineer's Point*. Photographer: Albert L. Bedford, c. 1920

15. Little Lake

Now known as McGuire Lake with views to Kault Hill and Shuswap Lake. Homesteaders used a slash-and-burn technique to clear the land. Photographer: unknown. c. 1892

16. New Home

Alex Dennys and his partner Bryan Heaney purchased 42 acres from Fred A. McLeod. In a writing about his new home in May 1912, Dennys said, "I like the look of the country awfully, & cannot accurately pen my joyful feelings about it... Wild Violets [are] out. Also wild strawberries & wild gooseberries...." Photographer: Rex Lingford, c. 1914

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## Linda Franklin

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|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|-----|
| 17. Wet Lands: At My Feet         | <i>mixed media collage</i> | NFS |
| 18. Getting to Know My Neighbours | <i>mixed media collage</i> | NFS |

In her pursuit of celebrating Canada's wetlands in order to ensure their conservation and restoration, Linda Franklin has incorporated collage into her print-making and painting techniques. These works result from an intuitive process of adding paper elements previously generated by the artist in her botanical printmaking practice. The components are laid on the dried underpainting and moved around and added to until the composition is finalized, then stabilized with glue, varnish, an isolation layer, and a cold wax polish.

Through her studies with Scholars Without Institutions, Franklin has moved through a voyage of discovery from "viewing" the wetlands as an interesting place from which to depict the lake and distant mountains, to becoming more and more intimate with the swamps and marshes that comprise local wetlands. In this hands-on research, Franklin has noticed Indigenous plant species being displaced by invasive species, and worries that the wetlands around her long-time home is forever altered by the change.

As wetlands disappear, with their infill for construction of roads and housing, we need to assign value to their role in water quality, which is indisputable. We must all work to preserve their health and well-being and care for the water quality of Shuswap Lake. Franklin hopes that her artwork resonates with viewers, and that they will check out and support the work of Shuswap Watershed Council to this end.

*Linda Franklin was born in the Shuswap and was involved in making art from childhood. She studied art at the Chelsea School of Art in England and went on to train and have a career as an architectural designer. Many homes in the Shuswap area are the result. She completed several Fine Arts courses at both OUC and in the BFA program at TRU, interrupted by Covid. In 2020, she joined the Kamloops Printmaking Studio to peruse her interest in etching. She learned Lino printing at home during the Covid isolation and joined members of KPMS in a show in the fall of 2021 at the Public Gallery in Salmon Arm, showing a series of 46 linocuts. In 2021, she joined with five other artists to form Scholars Without Institutions, in order to pursue an extended academic approach to the study of art in a group setting. Franklin's work is concerned with water quality and wetland conservation on Secwepemc Territory. In the past year she has been painting and also learning to produce botanical monoprints of the plant life of the marsh.*

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## Sara Wiens

19. The Price of a Lake View

*mixed media on canvas*

\$4800

In the Spring of 2023, Sara's neighbour logged his 7-acre property in north-east Salmon Arm, violating federal, provincial, and municipal laws prohibiting tree removal during nesting season. The birds cried loudly that night, grieving over losing their homes and eggs and young ones. "I am the only one that matters," shouted the neighbour as people begged him to stop cutting the trees. It was a Sunday morning, which meant no one could call the bylaw officers. Presumably the loggers were getting paid enough to cover the fines.

From that day on, Sara's daughter no longer heard the owls outside her window at night. An injured deer spent the summer recovering in another neighbour's yard. Devastated neighbours gathered in the street to lament. Biologists and birders catalogued the species affected. The land was a dry brown tinder box throughout a summer of wildfires.

This thoughtless act had Sara considering the legacy of settler attitudes of personal property and land ownership. The presumption by an individual landowner is that no consideration need be given to future generations or the lives of other beings that inhabit that land. To Sara, this is a blatant disregard that our own survival is connected to foliage, feathers, and fur. It is also at odds with the understanding of the land as kin and the importance of reciprocal relationship with land that is valued by many Indigenous cultures.

The diptych, *The Price of a Lake View*, takes the perspective of looking up from the land that was razed, not the beautiful view of the lake that was desired, but of the destruction that took place in order to possess the view. Looking without turning away has allowed the artist and other devastated neighbours to process the loss as well as to organize. This incident has inspired many to lobby for stricter tree removal bylaws in Salmon Arm. Documenting this tragic experience through her medium, Sara has depicted the mansion as insubstantial, although it towers over the ruined landscape, its transparency is a signal of hope for a shift in attitude towards stewardship of the land and all beings who share it.

*Growing up on the West Coast of Canada embedded the power and beauty of the ocean, mountains, and forest into Sara's being. After receiving her Bachelor of Arts in Studio Art and Bachelor of Art Education from UBC Vancouver, Sara moved to the beautiful city of Salmon Arm in the North Shuswap. Since then she has shown her work in various small group and solo shows in galleries throughout the province. Her contributions to her community include many years teaching art at the Heartwood Learning Community and collaborating on public mural projects in 2020 and 2023. Sara is currently represented by Gallery Odin at Silverstar Mountain Resort, British Columbia.*



## Mary Thomas

20.	Walk Along the Birch Trail	<i>photography, birchbark</i>	NFS
21.	Birch Trees in the Meadow	<i>photography, birchbark</i>	\$250

Mary walks between her home in the Neskonlith community into Salmon Arm almost on a daily basis. Along her walks, she has a unique perspective of the bay area. Mary is among the many Secwepemc folks who have seen a significant decline in certain types of birch trees in their lifetime. Since different birch species are best for specific kinds of baskets, the decline of the water birch is a terrible loss. Water birch bark is best for making baskets for holding and storing water, and for steaming. Paper birch, which grows further away from the shoreline, has bark that is best for storing food. Since most birch have a short life span, it is especially important for the birch forests to replenish themselves. However, this is not happening due to the drier summers and lower lake levels. Basket makers are having to go further afield to find materials appropriate to their basket making tradition, and away from highways and railways in order to avoid the blackened, polluted bark.

Water birch grows in areas with high water tables, and the shallow rooting of the trees on such sites regularly results in windfall. It grows on a wide variety of soil textures and has high nutritional requirements. While it lives in many zones in BC, it is not a plentiful tree species, and has been identified as a species of concern.

*Mary Thomas was born and raised in Salmon Arm. She is a Kamloops Indian Residential School survivor – 10 years. As an adult, Mary reconnected to the land in her walks between Neskonlith and Salmon Arm along the foreshore. Mary began her career as a Native Internship worker in the 70s, and worked in many outreach roles until in 1982 became a Client Service Representative at Service Canada, where she worked for 30 years. Mary walked to and from work nearly every day until she could afford a car. She began taking photos with her instamatic camera back in the early days, and discovered digital photography in 2015 when she got her Samsung phone. Many of Mary's images are a documentation of the changing landscape, water systems, creatures and trees.*

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## Doris Charest

22.	Treasure Hunt	<i>mixed media</i>	\$950
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Doris focuses on the tiny things - seeds, branches, and leaves - from the forest floor. These are the elements that we often miss because of the hurried way we approach our time in nature. If we slow down, we notice the simple and lovely things around us. Although Doris is not from this area, she visits her nearby family often, and enjoys the area's plants and scenery during her hikes. The Saskatoon plant was an important food source for the Secwepemc people, and it is a shrub she came across often in her time here. Saskatoon berries are a good source of vitamin C, and Doris learned that people would break off branches to pick the berries, which helped the shrubs grow more berries the next season. Saskatoon shrubs have diminished in quantity since she was young, likely because of the shortage of marshy areas that the shrubs love.

Placing dried Saskatoon berries, tree seeds, and other small bits and pieces from the forest floor into the eggshell containers gives the viewer a delicate treasure trove to peer into. Supported by branches from the cottonwood tree, which symbolizes hope, healing, and transformation, these sculptures are grouped to reflect a series of small poems that give homage to mother nature.

*Taking care of nature is important to Doris Charest, and from her days growing up near Peace River, Alberta, she has enjoyed a special connection to the land and the diverse ecosystems within. Now working as a multimedia artist in Edmonton, she approaches each art project with a fresh lens, and chooses the medium that best suits the idea. She has travelled widely, with one of her favourite places being the Shuswap. Inspiration comes from the Japanese art form kintsugi, which repurposes broken or rejected objects. When viewers experience Doris' sculptures, she wants them to find the small beautiful bits that exist in the places often ignored.*

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## Neskonlith Youth Group

23. Sxúsem (Secwepemctsin *soopolallie* or soapberry)      *mixed media*      NFS

This series of sxúsem (soopolallie) drawings and paintings were created by young artists in the Neskonlith Youth Group in 2018 for the Kume installation in the exhibition A Seat at the Table. Sxúsem was one of five Indigenous food plants explored in that project, and kids used hand-made paper to depict sxúsem in the blossom, leafy and berry stages.

The area around Salmon Arm Bay, and for several kilometers south through Salmon Valley, was a sxúsem harvesting area that attracted Indigenous groups from all over the Interior at harvest time. The name for this area is Sxwesmélp (Switzmalph) which is the Secwepemc word for the sxúsem bush, and demonstrates how important this harvesting area was before settlement by Europeans and the construction of the CP Railway.

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## Delores Purdaby

24. Cedar Root Baskets      *cedar roots, cherry bark*      NFS  
*from the private collection of Tania Willard*

Delores gathers cedar roots in areas where there is sandy soil or near riverbanks. Roots are best dug about ten meters away from the tree. The roots are then cleaned and split in preparation for weaving. Weavings made of cedar are used primarily as cooking vessels, baby cradles, mats, hats, clothing or for the transportation and storage of goods. Cedar is so useful because it expands when wet and shrinks when dry, which allows for ventilation in hot weather and resistance against water in damp and rainy weather.

Delores is currently teaching a cedar root basket making course through a project with Bush Gallery, bringing Secwepemctsin vocabulary into the teaching of this traditional skill.

*Delores Purdaby arrived in the Neskonlith community as the young bride of John Purdaby. She was born in Spallumcheen, daughter of Joseph A. Bell and Dora G. Clema. Delores has learned traditional weaving techniques from many elders throughout her life. She remembers her mother-in-law Theresa Purdaby, grandmother Lena Arnouse, elders Mary Thomas and Sara Phillips all teaching her weaving skills over the years. She has an open-door policy when it comes to passing on her knowledge and techniques, and will happily take anyone out into the forest to learn harvesting techniques. Delores was the recipient of the 2017 British Columbia Creative Achievement Award for First Nations Art.*

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## **Clea Roddick**

25. Paper Birch Scrolls

*paper, charcoal*

NFS

This work is a poetic inquiry that seeks to represent the vast knowledge of paper birch trees. The poetry was created outdoors in two locations: one with birch trees that grow within walking distance of the artist's home, and one with an ancient birch in the Interior Temperate Rainforest that survived the 2021 Queest Mountain forest fire. All poems were made by returning multiple times to sit near the trees and write in a notebook or make voice notes. They are accompanied by birch bark rubbings, made with charcoal on paper.

Paper birches are struggling with the impacts of being undervalued by settler land use, conventional forestry practices, and climate change. The decline of paper birch means a loss of much needed moisture in forests, as well as habitat loss for many other species. Recently, forest ecologists are taking note of how vital the paper birch is to the health of whole forest. This fact has been known, documented, and expressed by local Indigenous Peoples for many years. Rewilding areas of urban forests and farmland and advocating for more sustainable forestry are ways to help preserve this keystone species.

*Clea Roddick was born in Athabasca, Alberta. She grew up on an off-grid ranch between two slough lakes along the Athabasca Trail in Treaty 6 territory, where prairie crocuses are the first flowers of spring. Her ancestors came mainly from Scotland and England. She is a mother, musician, and director of a community arts space called Song Sparrow Hall, located on Secwépemc Nation territory in Salmon Arm, British Columbia. In over 15 years as a recording and performing songwriter, Clea played on many stages, had music licensed for TV and film, and was added to over 300 independent radio stations across North America. Her work as an artist and community arts advocate has been supported by Creative BC, Arts Starts, The Banff Centre, The Alberta Foundation for the Arts, and FACTOR. She pays attention to the healing powers of arts and nature, holding a diploma in Contemporary Music and Technology, a B.A. Interdisciplinary Studies, and a M.A. Environmental Education and Communication.*

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## Hop You Haskett

26.	The Healing Cedar Tree	<i>cedar, mixed media</i>	\$600
27.	Raven	<i>cedar, mixed media</i>	\$500
28.	Frog	<i>cedar, mixed media</i>	\$500

From his career as a forester, Hop brings an extensive knowledge of cedar as medicine, resources and a harbinger of climate change. The Healing Cedar Tree shows us how many uses and roles the cedar tree has in this part of Turtle Island. The Raven represents a responsibility to all living creatures. The Frog reminds us that water and wetlands are critical to the survival of trees and other living things. The Western Red Cedar has been slowly disappearing from the Shuswap ecosystem, as wetlands disappear, rivers dry up early in the season, and drought continues to dry the forests. We have the ability to help the earth, right here in the Shuswap, by practicing land and forest management in balance with nature.

*Hop is a self-taught woodcarving artist gifted with a background in two cultures. Hop's mother is Secwepemc te Splatsin and his father Chinese. His creations bring to mind the special relationship with the animals around us. His deep understanding of Nation and Secwepemc ancestry are reflected in his numerous carved texts and wall plaques on Splatsin buildings. The Splatsin and Salmon River cemeteries are dotted with crosses made by Hop to mark the passing of loved ones. Hop works quietly but his works are of enormous significance to all Indigenous people in the area.*

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