



Photo courtesy of Bill Reid Gallery

Totem poles maintain Haida oral history

by DONG YUE SU

A passion for story and language, has Haida artist Gwaii Edenshaw using his knowledge of Haida stories to help find the hidden within ourselves at the new exhibit *Godanxee'wat: Stone Ribs* showing at the Bill Reid Gallery (Jan. 12 until Jul. 5). Edenshaw – who apprenticed with Bill Reid when he was 16 – also incorporates the legacy to help people in their contemporary lives.

After spending seven years carving a totem pole on a Yellow Cedar, Edenshaw has now embarked on a journey to dig out the truth of the Haida oral stories and help teenagers discover their true selves through experiencing these sto-

The first thing Edenshaw did was to get the story right: he found out some anthropologists' account of the Haida stories were inaccurate. While researching various sources he found more reliable information, including an early record of Haida oral stories from the 1910's as well as the personal record of Edenshaw's grandmother Diane Brown.

"Haida cultures have an issue of contact. A lot of time they are taken out of context," says Edenshaw.

The experience of the Haida training camp

Edenshaw will be part of the world-renowned Rediscovery Program, a two-week training camp for teens and pre-teens run by Haida Elders. In the program, which has been in place for 35

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Gwaii Edenshaw, Haida artist

ries. Edenshaw's totem pole has been cast into bronze in the current exhibition at the Bill Reid Gallery in downtown Vancouver.

"Bronze is more durable," says Kwiaahwah Jones, curator of the exhibition, suggesting the long-lasting material symbolizes the resilience and strength of the Haida legacy.

Edenshaw started to carve the oral stories he found during his research into totem poles. Anyone familiar with the Haida culture can get the story by seeing Edenshaw's totem pole, says Jones.

A quest for the true stories

The exhibition includes seven editions of the cast totem poles, which contains the mythical characters from Haida culture. The final color of the patina was chosen to reflect the famous polished black argillite carvings, exclusive to the Haida. Each pole is 8.5 feet tall, 16 inches wide on the base, and 300 pounds in weight.

Stone Ribs, one of the strongest supernatural beings featured in Haida oral history, is featured on the poles. A cultural hero, Stone Ribs saved the people in the Southern village of Hlgaadaan on Haida Gwaii from the terror of Kaa'Gwaay, a five-finned sea monster. *Godanxee'wat* in the Haida language means someone finding the hidden things within themselves.

"These hidden things are held dearly within people, and we [who practice a certain Haida culture] are helping people discover their hidden things and come to realize who they really are," says Edenshaw.

years, participants are required to disconnect themselves from all the distractions of modernity for the duration of the camp. They are taught essential skills for survival in the forest, such as building a shelter and gathering food.

Towards the end of the camp, each participant is expected to meet the ultimate challenge and survive alone in the wild for 24 hours, with few necessities: a few potatoes and three matches, provided to them. Those who are able to complete the program are given the name Stone Ribs. It is a moment of very high honor and includes receiving ownership of the story of Stone Ribs.

"I have lived through this program myself when I was a teenager. The learning experience helped my transition from a boy to an adult," says Edenshaw. "Now as a program facilitator, I have seen many inspiring stories of the participants, including kids and parents. All these experiences are condensed into my carving."

Edenshaw sees the Rediscovery Program as a means to reconnect the culture and the land; and sees his bronze totem as a way to consolidate the Haida culture in context.

"Edenshaw brings together his personal experience with Haida Gwaii Rediscovery, Haida oral history, and classical Haida carving expression to present this beautiful continuum of storytelling," says Jones. ✍

For further information about *Godanxee'wat: Stone Ribs*, visit www.billreidgallery.ca

Music on the Point

Our Journey

Music on the Point series continues February 27 at UBC's Barnett Hall

Vancouver - Join us on our journey of music reminiscent of other times and places. Julia Nolan (alto and baritone saxophones), David Gillham (violin), and Jane Hayes (piano) perform on UBC's Music on the Point series at Barnett Hall on Friday, February 27. The music chosen aims to ignite the imagination, anticipation, and joyous fun of travelling with friends.

"We will begin with "Autumn" from Astor Piazzolla's *Four Seasons of Buenos Aires* as we three friends embark on this musical adventure", says Julia Nolan. Each piece paints a picture and tells a story. For instance "the Chaconne by Athanasios Aronis reminds me of the discussion among friends about the places they'll visit and the attractions they'll see" continues Nolan. *Cavatina* by Joachim Raff, performed by David Gillham and Jane Hayes depicts the anticipation for the impending departure. Marc Eychenne's *Cantilène et Danse* is a sentimental song and lively dance from folk tunes of days gone by. Then it is into the heart and soul of an eastern European celebration with Nikola Resanovic's *Trio for Violin, Saxophone, and Piano*. Piazzolla's *Oblivion* evokes that feeling of being lost. There is a melancholy tone to this lovely piece hauntingly portrayed with the alto saxophone and piano. Reminiscent of Debussy and Ravel's music, Jean-Luc Defontaine's *Couleurs d'un Rêve* has luscious, evocative and dream-like musical textures. With a flair, a moment of repose, and a final flourish of activity we return home to familiar surroundings. Our Journey ends with "Spring" from Piazzolla's *Four Seasons of Buenos Aires*.

Julia Nolan and David Gillham are two very active performers on faculty at the UBC School of Music. Jane Hayes travels with Julia on musical adventures often, and teaches at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. Visit music.ubc.ca/music.on.the.point for more information.

The Music on the Point series features UBC School of Music personalities performing and sharing glimpses - through engaging commentary - of their unique interpretation. Each concert begins at 7:30pm (no intermission) and includes light refreshments afterwards so audience members can mingle with the artists.

Presented in partnership with UTown@UBC.

When Friday February 27, 2015 at 7:30 pm
Where Roy Barnett Recital Hall, Music Building, 6361 Memorial Road, UBC
Tickets \$25 for Adults | \$15 Students
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 - In person at the Chan Centre Ticket Office (hours at www.chancentre.com/tickets)
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