

For Immediate Release  
16-003

January 20, 2016

## **BC FERRIES AND FIRST PEOPLES' CULTURAL COUNCIL ANNOUNCE ARTISTS FOR SALISH CLASS VESSELS**

VICTORIA – BC Ferries, in partnership with the First Peoples' Cultural Council, has selected three Coast Salish artists to create designs for the new Salish Class vessels. The artists being commissioned to produce artwork for the new ships are Darlene Gait from Esquimalt Nation for the Salish Orca, John Marston from Stz'uminus for the Salish Eagle, and Thomas Cannell from Musqueam for the Salish Raven. The vessels are named to recognize the Coast Salish as the original mariners of the Salish Sea.

A call for artists was issued by the First Peoples' Cultural Council last August, and Coast Salish artists were invited to submit their portfolios for consideration. From 37 expressions of interest, a jury of artist peers and BC Ferries representatives identified a shortlist of nine artists. Their decisions were based on artistic excellence, Coast Salish artistic style, ability to express the vessel names through artwork, ability to provide digital images for fabrication and ability to meet the project timeline.

The shortlisted artists were commissioned to develop design concepts for one or all of the three vessels. From a total of 27 concepts submitted, three were selected. The artists who were chosen are working with BC Ferries to prepare their designs for final refinement to technical specifications. The designs will be shared publically as each is finalized over the coming months.

The Salish Class ferries are currently under construction at Remontowa Shipbuilding S.A. in Gdansk, Poland. The Salish Orca will be the first ship to arrive in 2016, and will sail on the Comox – Powell River route. The Salish Eagle and Salish Raven will arrive in 2017, and both of these ships will sail in the Southern Gulf Islands.

Under contract to the Province of British Columbia, BC Ferries is the service provider responsible for the delivery of safe, efficient and dependable ferry service along coastal British Columbia.

- 30 -

Quotes and Artist Biographies Attached.

Media Contact:  
BC Ferries, Media Relations  
Victoria: (250) 978-1267

Customer Contact:  
Victoria: (250) 386-3431  
Toll-free: 1-888-BCFERRY (1-888-223-3779)

First Peoples' Cultural Council Contact:	Artist Contacts:	
Megan Lappi, Communications Manager	Darlene Gait	John Marston
Tel: (250) 652-5952 ext. 214	250-709-4587	360-376-2494
Email: <a href="mailto:megan@fpcc.ca">megan@fpcc.ca</a>		
	Thomas Cannell	
	604-833-0393	

## Quotes:

“We received many worthy submissions and it was a challenging task to narrow it down to just a few artists,” said Janet Carson, BC Ferries’ Vice President of Marketing and Travel Services. “We would like to thank all artists who expressed interest in designing artwork for our new Salish Class ships. These ships will serve coastal communities for years to come and we look forward to seeing the artists’ work adorn the vessels and represent the rich culture and heritage of our coast.”

“It has been an honour to work with the artists and BC Ferries to facilitate these commissions,” said Cathi Charles Wherry, Arts Program Manager at the First Peoples’ Cultural Council. “This project has provided an amazing opportunity for B.C.’s Coast Salish artists to communicate cultural ideas and creative visions that will contribute to a greater awareness of First Nations arts. That this beautiful artwork will traverse the Salish Sea for many years to come is very positive for our communities, the general public and visitors to British Columbia.”

“I feel very blessed and grateful to have this experience. The support of my Aboriginal people and family, has given me so much confidence,” said Darlene Gait, Coast Salish Artist. “In return, I create art that inspires through stories and legends. With love for Nation, my Country and for my Ancestors, I will continue to pursue my career in the arts with excellence and pride. Hychka Ciam.”

“I would like to thank BC Ferries for the opportunity they have created for our Coast Salish Nations. The artwork for the new vessels is a visual representation of our culture,” said John Marston, Coast Salish Artist. “This art work will help create a dialog amongst all cultures living here in B.C. It speaks to the importance of what it means to our traditional way of life as First Nations here on the coast.”

“The artistic northwest coast community is abuzz with excitement stemming from the new Coast Salish ferries being added to BC Ferries’ fleet. It’s thrilling to be selected as one of the (three) artists and I am exceedingly proud to represent Coast Salish Peoples,” said Thomas Cannell, Coast Salish Artist. “This opportunity has been very well received, and no one was more surprised than myself to be chosen to be involved on this prodigious venture. There’s been a tremendous renewal of eminence observing Coast Salish art this millennium, and people’s awareness has never been better. The new BC Ferries artwork’s immense scale and viewership bolsters that point. It’s a good day to be indigenous.”

## **Biography - Darlene Gait**

Darlene Gait is an Aboriginal artist from Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. Born in Sidney, Victoria, she learned about multiculturalism from being raised in a blended family. She is a member of Esquimalt Nation, the first people of Victoria, B.C. Canada.

Darlene began painting as a child and excelled in graphics, illustration and wild life painting in her twenties after graduating from Vancouver Island University in 1999. Known for her portraits of Aboriginal women and children, many of her paintings reflect unity between Nations and non-Native people and produces a connection to strength of history and culture, with different collections created over the past 30 years.

Many of her paintings can be viewed in outdoor murals throughout Victoria and Victoria's waterfront.

"One Moon Gallery," located in the heart of Esquimalt Nation, holds a collection of over 180 paintings and limited edition prints. Darlene spends time in her gallery, painting, creating and sharing her knowledge of the arts, with other painters, children and youth.

The Royal Canadian Mint currently has a collection of 8 Aboriginal coins created by the artist between 2013-2016. Her work can also be seen in Aboriginal and environmental children's picture and educational books that reflect strength of culture and spiritual themes.

Currently, Darlene Gait continues to paint, create and design and is very active in the arts.

Quote:

"I paint because it is my way of sharing with everyone, the love for my Aboriginal people and the beautiful place I was born and raised in. I am forever grateful for the drive and passion within me, to keep going, to keep exploring and learning all that I can. So that I may evolve into what I feel is my destiny as a story teller through the arts." ***Darlene Gait***

## **Biography – John Marston**

'Qap'u'luq'

John Marston

Coast Salish Carver

John first started carving at the age of eight. In earlier years, his parents Jane and David Marston and Simon Charlie began teaching him carving and the legends of the Coast Salish people.

John took part in the Thunderbird Park carving program during its last years. There he was able to spend four years carving with artists from different nations from all over British Columbia.

In 2006, John participated in a cross cultural documentary that took him to Papua New Guinea. The award winning film 'Killer whale and Crocodile' has been showing all over the world by broadcasters this film is about similarities between cultures and art forms.

In 2009, John traveled to Japan on another documented Cross Cultural Exchange to visit Ome City, and participated in 'Ome City Art Jam' also taking part in the exhibition 'Bridging the Pacific' at the Prince Takamoto Gallery in the Canadian Embassy in Tokyo. Later that following year he helped host 'Art Jam 2010' continuing the exchange here on Vancouver Island.

In 2009, he was honored with the BC Creative Achievement Award for Aboriginal Art. Later that year John and Luke opened a collaborative exhibition titled Honoring the Ancient Ones. A three year collection of works at Inuit Gallery. Most recently, in 2013 John opened his first solo exhibition with the same gallery. John's public works include pieces at the Museum of Anthropology in Vancouver, the Vancouver and Nanaimo Airports, the Vancouver Convention Centre and The Department of National Defense. His work is also in private collections worldwide.

### **Biography – Thomas Cannell**

Thomas Cannell is a Coast Salish artist born on Musqueam traditional territory in 1980. He has lived his entire life on the Musqueam Reserve in Vancouver, B.C. and has been engrossed in the time-honored art and cultural traditions of his ancestors.

Thomas still willfully studies and works alongside his mother, Coast Salish artist Susan Point. She has mentored his talents as a carver and designer. Beginning his calling as a young apprentice carver more than a decade ago, he has now worked on dozens of international, large-scale public art works in many different mediums alongside his family and on his own. Thomas has also produced a number of limited edition prints. He engages his audience with a new style of Coast Salish art; Harmony and *Illume*, both compliments to the way simple Salish elements are everywhere in life. In his public art pieces such as examples found among Terra Nova Park in Richmond, B.C., and two at Spirit Square in Deer Lake Park, Burnaby, B.C., a distinct style emerges unique to Thomas Cannell. Strong, simple form lines create imagery new to Coast Salish style by using universal contemporary impressions.

Though Thomas has studied ancient artworks from books, photographs, slides, and interviews in the Coast Salish arts archives and at museums, he's attentive to the always-evolving artwork of Susan Point, as they have made the creative digression together.

Always a keen learner, Thomas enrolled at Pilchuck Glass School, Langara College, and Capilano University, studying many aspects of art history, photography, and graphic design. He

graduated from Capilano University, reflecting his passion for the environment and his belief in the importance of eco-social tourism and sustainability within travel culture. In 2014, Thomas's significant role in the creative life of British Columbia was recognized with a British Columbia Creative Achievement Award for First Nations' Art.

Thomas enjoys the challenge and experience of every artistic medium that comes before him. Nevertheless, his principal curiosities remain working with natural materials, as he finds every element of Mother Earth's gifts desirable.