

Welcome to the UBC First Nations Longhouse

About the Houseposts in Sty-Wet-Tan, the Great Hall

Artist: Lyle Wilson

Lyle Wilson, an internationally renowned Haisla artist, carved the house post at the southeast entrance to Sty-Wet-Tan Hall and the east-facing ceremonial door. The Beaver and the Eagle symbolize his parents' clan houses in Kitamaat Village.

Beaver and Eagle Housepost

The Beaver, facing outward, has the arms and legs of a person and the mask of a beaver. This mask is surrounded by a braided cedar rope and a flat oval base with inlaid rays shining out from the face. The hands reach up to touch the throat. The legs are bent as if in a dance stance. There is another face in the belly of the masked figure and there are two small faces on the backs of its hands. There are inlaid octagons like buttons in a row down the chest.

The Eagle, facing inward, is almost identical to the Beaver but with an Eagle mask. Unlike the Beaver, the buttons down the front of the Eagle are not octagons but circles. The carving is unpainted but the eyes, hand masks, circles and octagons are of a lighter coloured, inlaid wood.

Ceremonial Door

Lyle Wilson also carved the adzed finished ceremonial door. The door is east facing and depicts an Eagle. It is usually opened only twice a year for students to enter during their graduation ceremonies.

Artist: Susan Point

Susan Point is a Coast Salish artist, printmaker and jeweller from Musqueam. She carved the Raven with Spindle Whorl Housepost at the southwest entrance to the Great Hall.

Raven with Spindle Whorl Housepost

Raven, the Trickster, is a supernatural being who was present at the creation. Raven faces inward with gleaming eyes of copper which denote the wealth of the nobility of the Coastal people. The eye sockets, the inner beak and the three crescent shapes on the front of Raven are stained reddish brown. Two dark crescent shapes arch over the eyes giving Raven the transformational look of another form or of a mask worn at ceremonies. The Raven has two rows of feathers carved around the pole with tail feathers extending downward at the back and holds its wings in close like a blanket to keep warm. Its feet rest on a spindle whorl, the symbol of the powerful place of women in Northwest culture.

The spindle whorl was traditionally used by Coast Salish women to spin and ply goat or dog wool into yarn for weaving. It is said that a woman's wealth was judged by the number of wool-bearing dogs she owned. In the spindle whorl a Raven is looking up to the left with wings outspread as if to fly away. Inside his wings, two large eyes look out at the viewer, revealing the human spirit that lives within Raven.

Artists: Chief Walter Harris and Rodney Harris

Chief Walter Harris, a Gitskan artist from Kispiox and his son Rodney carved the housepost at the northwest corner of the Great Hall.

Wolf and Wolf Pup Housepost

Three human figures at the top of the housepost represent the students who have come here to learn. One faces left, one faces forward, one faces right. Two of the three have their mouths closed, signifying the importance of listening twice as much as speaking.

The large wolf stands upright holding the young pup in its hands. The hands have the look of claws on extended human fingers, the feet look like human feet, and the head looks like a stylized ceremonial mask.

Artists: Stan Bevan and Ken McNeil

Stan Bevan is a Tahltan-Tlingit-Tsimshian artist. Ken McNeil is a Tahltan-Tlingit-Nisga'a artist. Their Raven housepost stands at the northeast corner of the Great Hall. Their representation of Raven has him portrayed as the one who brings knowledge.

Man and Raven Housepost

A human figure at the top of the carving is smiling with his teeth showing. His hands are holding the wings of Raven who is looking up into his face. The Raven's beak is resting in intimate and trusting repose under the chin of the human. Raven's mouth, nostrils and one wing on each side are reddish brown. From the back, a sharp-nosed human face is smiling, looking out. His hands and feet protrude from under Raven's wing in a kneeling position. One of the intriguing aspects of the carving is the unity within the three figures of the housepost with Raven. The man and Raven are like two forms of the same person with the third peeking out from the back of Raven.

Artist: Don Yeomans

Don Yeomans is a Haida/Métis artist from Masset on Haida Gwaii. He started carving at the age of 11 with his Auntie Freda Diesing.

In 1992 he carved the two cedar roof beams in the Great Hall. The beams, each weighing 10,000 pounds, represent Sea Lion and Killer Whale.

Artist: Bradley Hunt

Bradley Hunt is a carver and former schoolteacher from the Heiltsuk Nation at Waglisla (Bella Bella). He began carving as a young boy and later attended the Vancouver School of Art and the University of British Columbia.

Salmon Doors

Bradley carved the pair of doors behind the stage on the north side of the Great Hall. The doors show a split Salmon with human figures both inside the fish and at the base of the image. The close relationship between people and fish is central to this design. The same Salmon and human images are painted on the reverse side of the carved doors.