

SFU Press Releases Collection

These archival copies have been generated from web press releases maintained and originally written by SFU Communications and Marketing. Where possible, an effort has been made to preserve the public comments left on the website as well as any included photos or other images. All textual content should be faithful to the original press releases; contact numbers have been removed but they have not otherwise been altered in any way. However, this collection of documents spans multiple generations of web authoring software and not all formatting will be exact.

MEDIA RELEASE

Aboriginal sculpture celebrated at SFU

May 24, 2012

[Tweet](#) [Facebook](#) [Pinterest](#) [Email](#) [Print](#)**Contact:**

Chief James Hart, 250.626.5582, 604.612.8901

Erica Branda, SFU Advancement, 778.782.3353, ebranda@sfu.caDon MacLachlan, PAMR, 604.763.3929 (cell), donmac@sfu.ca[Photos on Flickr](#)

Haida master carver James Hart leads an Aboriginal blessing ceremony at Simon Fraser University's Burnaby campus Monday (May 28) to celebrate the installation of his sculpture, *Frog Constellation*.

Frog Constellation is Hart's tribute in cedar to a small shamanic piece, depicting a man and woman straddling a huge frog, carved by an unnamed master of Haida art, probably in the 1870s. Hart spent three-and-a-half years on the work. He calls it his "PhD."

"The frog is quite powerful in our thinking. It's one of the creatures that can go in two worlds, in the water and in the upper world, our world. . . The frog is one of my family crests, but I don't know the family story, how that came to be one of our crests."

Hart saw the original piece that inspired him, only once, a glimpse in a photo. "I asked an old gentleman here (in Haida Gwaii) about it. The story is an old Haida love story. The frog king took a young man's lady, and he couldn't find her. . .

"An old gentleman told him where to look, so he dug in the ground there and frogs came out; millions of frogs came out. The last one was the frog king, with the young lady on his back, and so he got her back."

Says SFU President Andrew Petter: "We are delighted to be the custodian of this beautiful work of art. *Frog Constellation* has already become a treasured symbol of SFU's commitment to honouring the history, culture and presence of Aboriginal peoples.

"Our sincere thanks to Ivanhoe Cambridge, Westminster Management Corporation and the Bill Reid Foundation for this important and invaluable gift."

Mike Robinson, CEO of the Bill Reid Trust and executive director of the Bill Reid Gallery of Northwest Coast Art, adds: "Chief Hart is one of the pre-eminent Aboriginal artists of our time, and we are so happy that through the collective donation of these three organizations its beauty will be shared with students, faculty and community members for generations to come."

Frog Constellation was originally commissioned by the Bentall organization (whose assets were later taken over by SITQ, which later merged with Ivanhoe Cambridge) for a building co-owned with Westminster Management in California.

Hart completed the piece in 1995, but it was never installed in California. Instead, it went into storage in Vancouver, owned jointly by Westminster and SITQ.

Twelve years later, George MacDonald, then director of the Bill Reid Foundation and the Bill Reid Centre for Northwest Coast Art Studies at SFU, initiated the idea of retrieving the sculpture.

The sculpture is now in the atrium of SFU Burnaby's Saywell Hall building (arts and social sciences), between the SFU First Nations Student Centre and SFU's Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology. It stands 5m high x 2m wide x 3.5m long.

The sculpture is another example of SFU's growing role as a custodian of northwest coast Aboriginal art. In September 2011 the [Bill Reid Foundation](#) gifted its entire collection of Northwest Coast art, worth more than \$10 million and consisting of 158 works (including 112 masterworks by Bill Reid) to SFU. In return, the foundation is contracted to continue managing the [Bill Reid Gallery of Northwest Coast Art](#) in downtown Vancouver.

Backgrounder: James Hart

Hart apprenticed with the late Bill Reid, working with him on some of his most famous pieces, including *The Raven and the First Man* (now at the UBC Museum of Anthropology) and *The Jade Canoe*, at Vancouver international Airport (and on the back of the paper Canadian \$20 bill). Hart also worked with Aboriginal artist Robert Davidson.

Hart has carved some 20 red-cedar poles for private collectors around the world. He has displayed his Haida designs on fabric at the Louvre in Paris, and shaped a 9m killer-whale pole for the King of Sweden's summer castle grounds in Helsingborg.

In August 1999, at the Memorial Chieftainship Potlatch at Old Massett, Haida Gwaii, Hart raised a 17-metre pole in honour of his family. And he received his Haida name as hereditary chief of the Stastas Eagle Clan, "7idansuu" [ee-dan-soo], the name once held by Charles Edenshaw, the legendary carver from whom Hart is descended.

--30--

No comments yet

[Comment Guidelines](#) 

[Admission](#)
[Programs](#)
[Learning](#)
[Research](#)
[Community](#)
[About](#)

[Maps + directions](#)
[Library](#)
[Academic Calendar](#)
[Road Report](#)
[Give to SFU](#)
[Emergency Information](#)

CONNECT WITH US

[Facebook](#)
[Instagram](#)
[Twitter](#)
[YouTube](#)

CONTACT US

Simon Fraser University
8888 University Drive
Burnaby, B.C.
Canada V5A 1S6

[Terms and conditions](#)
© Simon Fraser University











