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Traditional language comes alive on breakwater



Team leader Bonnie Quaitie of the youth artist group prepares to paint a panel of the Land and Sea mural. The project's second stage is now installed on the Ogden Point breakwater. It will be blessed by First Nations elders on Saturday (June 4).

Photo by Dean Kalyan Photography
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By [Travis Paterson - Victoria News](#)
Published: **June 01, 2011 6:00 AM**

Land and Sea mural's second phase done

Despite being three years from completion, the beauty and relevance of the Land and Sea mural already decorates 256 metres of the Ogden Point breakwater.

"It'll be four years to complete all of the mural," said artist and designer Darlene Gait of Esquimalt First Nations.

Elders and healers from the Songhees and Esquimalt nations will be on hand to bless the second stage of the mural on Saturday (June 4).

Last month the second stage of the mural was installed – adding another 100 eight-by-four-foot panels to the 100 put up in 2010. Eventually the mural will wrap both sides of the breakwater.

"It's an ongoing, outdoor exhibition for people to learn about the Songhees and Esquimalt nations in Victoria and the Island," Gait said.

The fluent design of the mural is different this year than last year's first phase. Most notable is a blessing in Lekwungen, the original language of First Nations in what is now Victoria, written along the top of the mural.

"It's the first time the public will see the traditional language of the Songhees and Esquimalt people," Gait said.

She added that only three people speak Lekwungen fluently in the world.

One is Tom Sampson, who teaches the language through a course at the Songhees Nation and translated the message now written on the mural. The English version of the blessing is posted on a kiosk on site.

Initially, the Land and Sea mural was orchestrated and funded by the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority. With the project now on its own financially, Gait expects community fundraising and other donations will allow the

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project to be completed.

Gait is lead designer on the project, unifying the art and style of herself and Songhees artist Butch Dick. The drawing and painting is being done by teams of youth artists, a different one each year. The group consists of two Songhees artists, two Esquimalt artists, one from an outside tribe and one non-First Nations artist.

Saturday's blessing begins at 1 p.m.

sports@vicnews.com

Built to last

• The Land and Sea mural was originally to be painted directly onto the cement of the seawall. That was deemed impractical for a variety of reasons. Instead, the art was painted on weather-treated plywood panels, which were later coated with material that organizers hope will endure the ocean elements for 50 years. They were then permanently installed on the seawall.

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