

## [Monday Mag](#)



*Loreisa Lepine, one of six youth artists hired to paint phase two of the Land and Sea Mural, is hard at work.*

Credit: *Dean Kaylan*

# Canada's Unity Wall

**Posted By:** Mary Ellen Green  
06/01/2011 12:00 AM

## **Second phase of Land and Sea wall to be unveiled at Ogden Point Breakwater**

Tourists visiting Victoria by cruise ship and locals alike are learning the history of this land, the sea that surrounds it and the First Peoples that inhabited the area through the Land and Sea Mural at Ogden Point, which will have its latest phase unveiled this week.

It is the first time that Lekwungen, the "sleeping language" of the First People of the region will be used on a mural. The message translates to "Blessed is this place."

"There are only three people left who can speak it fluently," says contemporary Aboriginal artist, Darlene Gait of the Esquimalt Nation who designed the mural.

"Most people wouldn't know who the First People of Victoria were until they actually see the image and now there's all these questions coming up, like 'Where are they?' Right, they're stuffed way back in Esquimalt," Gait says. "People go to the museum and think we must have died off a long time ago. A lot of people will see the totem poles and think they belong to us, but they're not our poles, people from the other end of the Island put those there, they have nothing to do with us. We're invisible. It's only until now that our presence is opening up."

Gait was commissioned by the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority to create the mural along with

wood carver Butch Dick of the Songhees Nation. The two came up with the Land and Sea concept before hiring six local Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal youth to paint their design on panels that are four feet wide and eight feet tall — which were then hung on the breakwater's bare concrete wall. It now stretches over 840 feet. When it is finished, the mural will be almost 2.5 kilometers long — the longest in Canada and hopefully the world.

“We're trying for the Guinness Book of World Records,” Gait says.

This is the second phase of the project, which will have five phases. The first was undertaken in the summer of 2009. The second was painted last summer, but due to unforeseen circumstances, it wasn't unveiled when it was finished in September. Six youth were hired to paint the first year and a different group was hired to paint the second year.

This year's artists include: Bonnie Quaitte, Jesse Campbell, Eddie Thomas, Loreisa Lepine, Dahlila Charlie, Adele Green, Keilah Luckenbill-Williams and Chirstine White. Each artist got to create one image that was included in the mural.

The project, which is called “Canada's Unity Wall” (Na' Tsa' mant in Lekwungen) by those who painted it, was created as part of the Harbour Authority's plan to establish economic development and awareness programs for the Coast Salish People of the area.

“We wanted to initiate employment for youth from the reserves as well as initiate unity between the Native and Non-Native people of Victoria because it's a huge issue, still to this day, dealing with racism and ignorance,” Gait says. “The only reason that I even cared about doing this wall is for that reason, to help eliminate the idea of there being racism with youth. I grew up with that and it's like a big thorn in my side.

“It's important to show people what it looks like to work with Non-Native and Native people, because it's never really done, especially here in Victoria. A lot of the projects are done by either Native people or they're done by Non-Native people, but you never see them working together in unity. This is an important step for humanity to see that.”

The Land and Sea Mural will be unveiled Saturday, June 4 at 1 p.m. In the pocket park facing the Ogden Point breakwater. M

## Comments [Post a comment](#)

1. \* **NOTE:** Name and email address are required, but only your name will be published. Comments will be posted immediately. Comments that appear on this site are NOT moderated and are not the opinion of Monday Magazine. While we value and respect your input, and take all possible steps to protect the spirit of this site, we cannot be responsible for the actions of others who may abuse this opportunity. Comments limited to 100 words maximum. Spelling and grammar will not be corrected. By posting you agree to the [Terms and Conditions](#).