



April 2, 2019

The Bastion Square Salish Welcome Pole Project

The Bastion Square Revitalization Association's (BSRA) purpose is to promote the social and economic health of downtown Victoria by implementing improvements to Bastion Square. In keeping with these goals, the BSRA is planning to commission a Salish Totem Pole of Welcome to be carved in Bastion Square and eventually with the approval of the City of Victoria, placed in the Square.

Background:

The Salish people have a close association with the Bastion Square vicinity as there was a village next to what became Fort Victoria for many years before the arrival of the Hudson's Bay Company. In recent years we have seen totem poles raised in the city mainly on Provincial lands, but almost all of these were not Salish. This then will be a great opportunity to have a traditional Salish welcome Pole in our city for locals and visitors alike to enjoy and experience.

The Vision:

The design envisioned by our carver Tom LaFortune tries to bring together our shared past. Victoria today is home to all of us. Crossing cultures and breaking down barriers is more important now than reconciliation. Tom's design incorporates both the traditions of his people and a representation of those who came more recently. He honors both. It is about cross-culture, sharing, and becoming one. As in times past, the central figure is the village elder with his talking stick facing the sea who will give future visitors, on behalf of all of us, a welcome to Victoria.

The Plan:

This coming summer work on the totem pole would be completed by our carver Tom and his family in Bastion Square. This would give visitors to our city the opportunity to experience and see the art and culture of our Salish people. The BSRA plans to have the totem in a protected area afterhours, but during the Market days (Thursday to Sunday) the totem would be accessible to the public. The BSRA would like to include Salish artisans and entertainers in this year's Market. We think it would be a great opportunity for our local Salish people to showcase their vibrant traditions and art. At the end of the summer the BSRA would like to see the pole raised in the Square and secured for future generations of Victorians and visitors alike to appreciate. With the introduction of the totem pole to the Square the BSRA thought this might be a good opportunity to repurpose the "Commerce Canoe", which could be relocated to a more central location, such as closer to the City's new bridge. This would allow it to be more visible and appreciated by more of the public. The BSRA could gift the artwork to the City and in return the City could help with the installation of the totem pole.

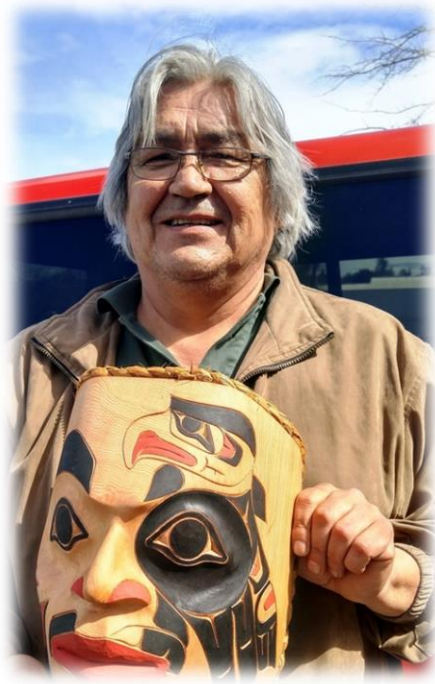
Action:

The BSRA plans to dedicate a portion of accumulated trust funds for the Totem Pole Project and will seek to share costs with other interested organizations, community groups and project supporters. In this early planning stage of the project, efforts are being made to identify the scope of work, a reasonable schedule, appropriate costs and a path through an approval process with the City of Victoria and other agencies that may require input.

At this stage, the BSRA invites the City of Victoria to make relevant comments and assist us in furthering the Totem Pole Project.

On behalf of the BSRA,

Randy Stewart
BSRA Operations Manager



Tom La Fortune

KETIWTEL/Katekwa Tom is a member of the Tsawout First Nation who has connections to several families whose ancestral lands are in the southern part of what is known as Vancouver Island. He finished his first carving when he was 11 years old. In the years that followed, Tom has carved masks, rattles, paddles, dishes, talking sticks, single figures and countless totem poles. He has also made painted drums. Today his work is distinguished by its fluidity and refined use of colour.

Tom has a great appreciation for the late Simon Charlie, a true master carver who gave him the opportunity and encouragement to find his artistic ability and continue to learn with each piece of art he creates. Some credit can be extended to his two older brothers Doug LaFortune and Francis Horne who along with his three younger brothers Perry, Howard and Aubrey LaFortune have shared their different views of carving techniques and design all of which has

enhanced the style Tom uses today.

Tom's work can be found in collections all over the world. Some of his most notable works include the Harvest Time and Owl Spirit poles completed for Duncan's City of Totems project, the totem pole commissioned by the CBC and featured on television coverage of the 1994 Commonwealth Games, a single owl figure overlooking the Ross Fountain at the world famous Butchart Gardens in Victoria, S'ael, a twenty-five foot pole completed as part of Royal Roads University's 75 years of changing lives celebrations, and a Salish arch for the Fort Rodd Hill National Historic Site he has completed all have special meaning.

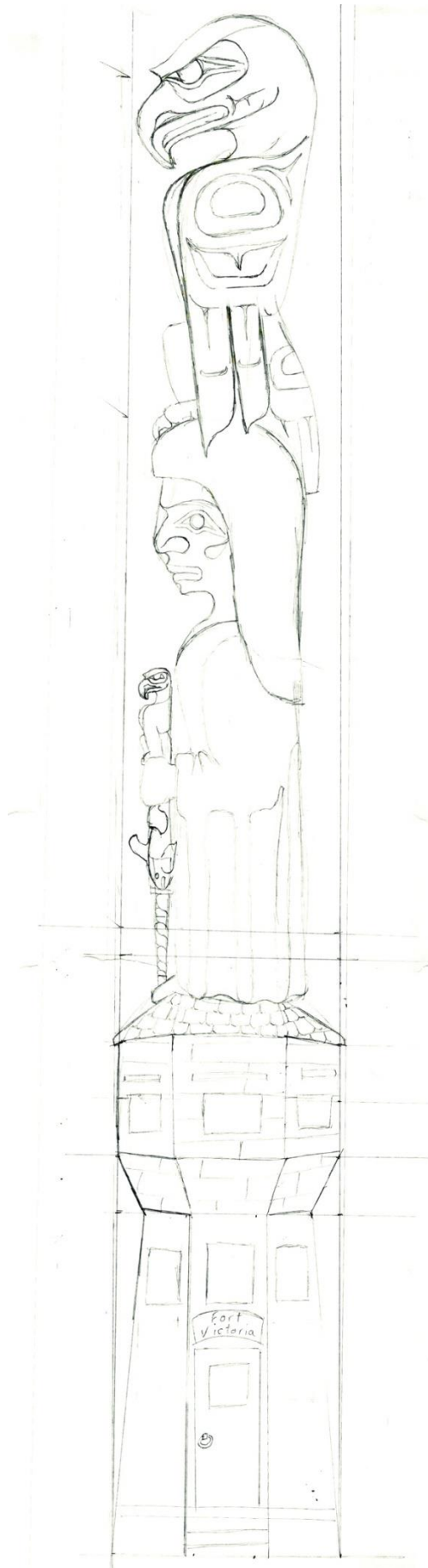
Other works of art include: three 20 foot house posts, two which are joined by an arch and a 28.5 foot loon figure which stands at the center of the Songhees Wellness Centre.

Last summer he completed a 25 foot totem pole at the Royal BC Museum which was jointly commissioned by Timber West, the Ministry of Health and the Royal BC Museum. Titled; Crossing Cultures and Healing. While carving each day he enjoyed the interpretive conversation with the public many of whom were visitors to Victoria.

He still enjoys producing and sharing his creativity with young and upcoming artists. Teaching a contemporary and new refined style of Salish art.

Tom lives with his partner Doreen whom encourages him and continues to be his biggest supporter and he is close to his two sons and large extended family.







**Totem Pole
Centered in octagonal
area, facing the harbour**

**Totem Pole
Replacing the Commerce Canoe
sculpture, facing the harbour**

**Proposed Totem Pole Locations
Lower Bastion Square**

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