



For Immediate Release
16-017

March 29, 2016

**BC FERRIES, FIRST PEOPLES' CULTURAL COUNCIL AND ESQUIMALT NATION
REVEAL COAST SALISH ARTWORK FOR FIRST SALISH CLASS VESSEL**

VICTORIA – BC Ferries, the First Peoples' Cultural Council and Esquimalt Nation revealed today the first of three Coast Salish artistic designs for BC Ferries' new Salish Class vessels. Esquimalt Nation's Darlene Gait designed the artwork that will adorn the *Salish Orca*. The artwork will also be displayed inside the vessel for customers to view and additional exposure for the artist.

Last August the First Peoples' Cultural Council issued a call for artists and Coast Salish artists were invited to submit their portfolios for consideration. From 37 expressions of interest, a jury of artist peers and BC Ferries representatives identified a shortlist of nine artists who were invited to submit specific design concepts for the three Salish Class vessels. The jury reviewed the design concepts with attention to artistic excellence, Coast Salish artistic style, ability to express the vessel names through artwork, ability to provide digital images for fabrication and ability to meet the project timeline.

In January, BC Ferries and the First Peoples' Cultural Council announced the selection of three Coast Salish artists to create designs for the new Salish Class vessels; Darlene Gait from Esquimalt Nation for the *Salish Orca*, John Marston from Stz'uminus for the *Salish Eagle* and Thomas Cannell from Musqueam for the *Salish Raven*. The vessels are named to recognize the Coast Salish as the original mariners of the Salish Sea. The two other artistic designs will be shared publically over the coming months.

The Salish Class ferries are currently under construction at Remontowa Shipbuilding S.A. in Gdansk, Poland. The *Salish Orca* will be the first ship to arrive in 2016 and will sail on the Comox – Powell River route. The *Salish Eagle* will arrive in late 2016 and the *Salish Raven* will arrive in 2017, and both of these ships will sail in the Southern Gulf Islands.

Under contract to the Province of British Columbia, BC Ferries is the service provider responsible for the delivery of safe, efficient and dependable ferry service along coastal British Columbia.

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Quotes, Artwork Rendering and Darlene Gait Biography Attached.

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Quotes:

“Darlene’s design for the *Salish Orca* is a wonderful tribute to the Coast Salish people and our beautiful coast,” said Mike Corrigan, BC Ferries’ President & CEO. “We were pleased to partner with the First Peoples’ Cultural Council and the three artists on this unique project. These new vessels will serve coastal communities for years to come and we would like to thank Darlene for capturing Esquimalt Nation’s rich coastal culture and heritage in her design. We look forward to officially welcoming the vessel into the fleet later in 2016.”

“We are so pleased to see Darlene’s design revealed today,” said Cathi Charles Wherry, Arts Program Manager at the First Peoples’ Cultural Council. “Her creative vision will travel the Salish Sea for many years to come, creating greater awareness of First Nations arts for the general public and B.C. visitors. It has been an honour to work with the artists and BC Ferries on this project and we are so looking forward to seeing the other two artistic designs revealed later this summer.”

“I look forward to sharing my artwork,” said Darlene Gait, Coast Salish Artist. “It was created from a love that runs deep, a love that embraces my family today and those who we consider still with us but living in the world of spirit. The orca whales and wolves are also separated by two different worlds. I look forward to sharing with you my story.”

Artwork Rendering and Conference Photos Attached Below

Salish Orca



Salish Orca



Description

Depicted with optimistic colour and energy, Darlene Gait's pod of orcas appears as a family moving through the water.



Esquimalt Nation Chief Andy Thomas and Elder Mary Ann Thomas perform a blessing to open the ceremony.



BC Ferries President & CEO Mike Corrigan says a few words about the Salish Class vessels and the artwork.



Coast Salish artist Darlene Gait stands next to the rendering of her artwork that will adorn the Salish Orca.

Biography - Darlene Gait

Darlene Gait is an Aboriginal artist from Victoria, B.C. Born in Sidney, Victoria, she learned about multiculturalism from being raised in a blended family. She is a member of Esquimalt Nation, the first people of Victoria.

Darlene began painting as a child and excelled in graphics, illustration and wildlife painting in her twenties after graduating from Vancouver Island University in 1999. Known for her portraits of Aboriginal women and children, many of her paintings reflect unity between Nations and non-Native people and produce a connection to strength of history and culture, with different collections created over the past 30 years.

Many of Darlene's paintings can be viewed in outdoor murals throughout Victoria and the city's waterfront. "One Moon Gallery," located in the heart of Esquimalt Nation, holds a collection of over 180 paintings and limited edition prints. Darlene spends time in her gallery painting, creating and sharing her knowledge of the arts with other painters, children and youth.

The Royal Canadian Mint currently has a collection of 8 Aboriginal coins created by Darlene between 2013 and 2016. Her work can also be seen in Aboriginal and environmental children's picture and educational books that reflect strength of culture and spiritual themes.

Currently, Darlene Gait continues to paint, create and design and is very active in the arts.

Quote:

"I paint because it is my way of sharing with everyone, the love for my Aboriginal people and the beautiful place I was born and raised in. I am forever grateful for the drive and passion within me, to keep going, to keep exploring and learning all that I can. So that I may evolve into what I feel is my destiny as a storyteller through the arts."

- Darlene Gait