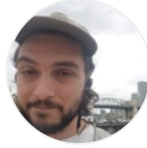


# Children of Takaya exhibition highlights emerging Tsleil-Waututh artists

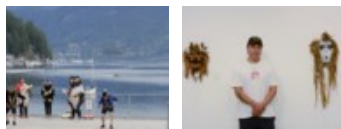


[Nick Laba](#)

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1 / 2 The Children of Takaya Dance Group performs in Panorama Park in Deep Cove ahead of a reception for the art show on Saturday, Aug. 13, 2022. | Nick Laba / North Shore News



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In the seaside community of Deep Cove, there's nothing to indicate you're on the traditional territory of the Tsleil-Waututh People.

TsuKwalton (Jonas Jones) is working to change that.

He's the curator of the Children of Takaya exhibition, which opened Saturday (Aug. 13) at Seymour Art Gallery. The show features works from seven emerging Tsleil-Waututh artists, including Jordan Gallie, Robert George, Ocean Hyland, Syvawn Paul and Jones himself.

Pieces are also on display from [Olivia George, whose art has been featured on Mt. Seymour seasons passes](#), and on medals for the Canada Rugby Sevens tournament in 2018.

With multiple artist residencies over the past year, including one with Vancouver Mural Festival, 27-year-old Jonas has been thinking about how to utilize space to generate more exposure for his culture.

"If you come to Deep Cove, there's no representation of my people. There's zero knowledge of what was here before," he said. "And I was thinking of, 'What's a contemporary way I can bring recognition to my people?'"

"So I said, 'What if I brought in other youth from my nation, and then put on a show?'"

In tandem with creating more recognition, Jones said he wants to make it a pivotal moment in teaching other ethnicities when they come into the room.

"Because artwork is more than just art to most Indigenous people," he explained. "In residential schools and the effects of what happened during colonization, it was all stripped from us.

The way we were able to hold on to our culture was through art, through carvings, through painting, through canoe making," he continued. "Our stories are going into these pieces... and that's how my ancestors had to carry on our knowledge."

Over the past two years, Jones has been apprenticing under master carver Ses Siyam (Ray Natraoro), of Sk̓w̓x̓w̓ú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation), a prolific carver of masks, totem poles and canoes. As Natraoro learned first-hand from artists like Simon Dick and Rick Harry, Jones learns everything from Natraoro by carving alongside him in person.

If Natraoro was doing a portrait, Jones would do a portrait. If Jones wanted to learn how to carve a moon, Natraoro would carve a moon.

"It's a process [where] he gave me a piece of himself, so I can excel quicker," Jones said. "And that's what I'll do for my apprentices."

He describes the experience of learning the ins and outs of curating an art exhibit as a step on his path to building up future generations of Indigenous artists.

"See those little guys, little cousins that are coming in here? They're looking at all of this stuff and they go, 'Wow, that's amazing, look at all this artwork ... maybe I could do that too,' which obviously they could."

Jones said he's not doing any of this for himself. Instead, he's looking at the bigger picture, for ways to help youth and other artists in his area progress.

At the same time, the momentum of his own career could lead to the kind of cultural recognition that's missing today.

Through his involvement with Vancouver Mural Festival, he spoke on a panel sponsored by Herschel. Now the backpack company wants to work with him on a project, Jones said. And through his carving, there are requests-for-proposals to make welcome poles for Tsleil-Waututh Nation.

When people see those beautiful carvings, he said people will be impressed by them.

"Then they're going to want one in Deep Cove."

The Children of Takaya exhibit opened with a reception and performance from the Children of Takaya Dance Group in Panorama Park on Saturday. There will be a closing reception when the show ends Sept. 10. Visitors are being warned of heavy traffic, especially on weekends. For more information about parking, visit the [Seymour Gallery website](#).

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