

For Immediate Release:

First Nation Blessing for Whistler Olympic Plaza's New Welcome Figure

All are welcome to attend the National Aboriginal Day celebrations – Tuesday June 21

Whistler B.C. June 13, 2011: On Tuesday June 21 in celebration of National Aboriginal Day, the Resort Municipality of Whistler along with the Squamish Nation and Lil'wat Nation will be blessing the latest addition to Whistler Olympic Plaza – the Olympic Lightning Figure.

The traditional blessing will take place at 10a.m. in Whistler Olympic Plaza and will honour the carvers as well as Whistler's commitments to preserving First Nations art and culture. Leading the ceremony will be community members from Squamish Nation and Lil'wat Nation, as well as speeches from local representatives, including Whistler Mayor Ken Melamed.

The welcome figure created by Squamish Nation master carver Ray Natraoro (Sesiysm) and Lil'wat carver Delmar Williams (Bankscht) honours the Olympic legacy, the families of the area, and the legend of lightning snakes which is depicted in the pole carving design. The lightning snakes brought skills and tools to the Squamish and Lil'wat people to allow them to flourish here in their traditional territory. The placement of the piece in Olympic Plaza is a tribute to the Squamish Nation and Lil'wat Nation's role as host First Nations to the 2010 Winter Games and their welcoming of the world to the region.

This celebration is a component of Cultural Journey Phase II, a Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre initiative supported by Western Diversification and provincial, municipal, and corporate donors designed to increase cultural tourism in the Sea to Sky corridor through a combination of capital and educational programming activities.

Along with the blessing ceremony, the Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre will also be holding a variety of activities to celebrate National Aboriginal Day. From 11a.m. – 5p.m. activities will include: a fashion show highlighting regalia created for the 2010 Olympic & Paralympic Winter Games, and a screening of films about cultural practices created by Lil'wat youth. Guests will also have the opportunity to see how salmon was traditionally cooked over hot coals, bake bannock on a stick, and sample Xuseum – a traditional soap berry soda. The Café will be holding a summer BBQ with grilled salmon burgers and bison sausages offered for sale. Throughout the day admission to the centre will be by donation.

About the Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre (SLCC)

The Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre in Whistler, winner of the 2010 National Tourism Award for Cultural Tourism Excellence, showcases the art and heritage of the Squamish and Lil'wat Aboriginal people in an experiential format. The spectacular Centre features a museum, modern gallery, exhibits, gift shop, café, and theatre.

Phase II of the Sea to Sky Cultural Journey

On March 16th 2011 Phase II of the Sea to Sky Cultural Journey was announced under the Western Diversification Program. The program includes a comprehensive mix of capital projects and educational programming that will consist of innovative programming as well as projects and developments including welcome figures carving, feature exhibitions and additional info kiosks. These efforts are supported by several key partners and are delivered in collaboration with local partner attractions, museums, and educational facilities.

About the Resort Municipality of Whistler

The Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW) is Whistler's local government led by an elected council and administered by an executive team and staff on behalf of 10,000 residents and two million annual visitors. The RMOW manages municipal planning and development, park and Village operations, sports facilities and recreation, public utilities and environmental services, bylaws and enforcement, fire rescue, fiscal planning and financial services, legislative services, human resources, communications and the administration of the Whistler2020 Comprehensive Sustainability Plan and Whistler's Official Community Plan.

The municipality's Whistler Olympic Plaza was the site where global audiences gathered nightly to see the best athletes in the world step up to the podium at Victory Ceremonies during the 2010 Winter Games. Designed as a lasting legacy, The Plaza can accommodate audiences of up to 5,000 and is now a permanent venue for recreation, community celebrations, arts and culture.

<p>Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre Media Contact Gwen Baudisch Marketing Manager TEL: (604) 964.0997 E-MAIL: gwen.baudisch@slcc.ca WEBSITE: www.slcc.ca FACEBOOK: Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre in Whistler</p>	<p>RMOW Media contact: RMOW Communications TEL: (604) 967-3030 E-MAIL: media@whistler2010.com WEBSITE: www.whistler.ca TWITTER: @RMOWWhistler FACEBOOK: RMOW</p>
--	--