



For Immediate Release (August 31, 2010): Salish Welcome Figure Blessing on Whistler Mountain

On Thursday September 2nd at 11:00am the Whistler Blackcomb Foundation's, Salish Welcome Figure will be blessed in front of the PEAK 2 PEAK Gondola on Whistler Mountain. The Welcome Figure is the culmination of the Cultural Journey, hosted by the Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) Nation and Lil'wat7úl (Lil'wat) Nation, and was made possible as the result of a grant from the Whistler Blackcomb Foundation.

The traditional blessing ceremony performed by the Squamish and Lil'wat people will honour Squamish Nation's carver Xwalacktun (Rick Harry) for his work on carving the figure. The ceremony will also acknowledge the work that the Whistler Blackcomb Foundation has done in increasing Aboriginal arts and culture within the Sea to Sky corridor. The ceremony will consist of traditional drumming and singing, calling of witnesses and blessing of the Welcome Figure. Following the traditional ceremony will be speeches from Chief Gibby Jacobs, representatives from Lil'wat Nation and Whistler Blackcomb Foundation President Dave Brownlie. Also in attendance will be Whistler Mayor Ken Melamed and local business partners.

The yellow cedar tree was harvested from the base of Symphony Bowl on Whistler Mountain. The Whistler Blackcomb Foundation presented the tree to the Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre and commissioned Squamish Nation master carver Xwalacktun (Rick Harry) to carve the figure. On the figure, the man at the top of the carving stands with his hands open in a ceremonial act of welcome and represents a commitment to revitalize and increase Aboriginal cultural practices and awareness throughout the Sea to Sky corridor. Around the pole are the handprints of those who assisted with the carving. The whistling marmot represents Whistler Mountain. The mountain was named after this furry little creature that can be found and heard running through the rocky bowls in the summer. The frog, located on the bottom of the pole, is a tribute to the Interior Salish people of Lil'wat Nation. The Squamish Nation and Lil'wat Nation have lived in the region for thousands of years and have built the Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre, located in the upper village of Whistler, a museum and collection of galleries showcasing their art, history, and culture.

The Sea to Sky Cultural Journey is an initiative designed to revitalize Aboriginal tourism in the Sea to Sky Corridor and to support the growth of the overall tourism industry through; the new Highway 99 sign shelters, gateway rock signs and aluminum guide signs, audio guided tour of the region, the Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre and increased aboriginal tourism job based training. Additional information on the Cultural Journey can be found at slcc.ca

The Whistler Blackcomb Foundation is dedicated to providing financial support to registered non-profit organizations whose activities provide benefit to residents of the Sea to Sky Corridor in the areas of health, human services, education, recreation, arts and culture and the environment with an emphasis on children, youth and family programs.

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