

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Txwnch7árñnew'as kwis eslhíhkw'iws "Entwined Histories – Gifts from the Maisie Hurley Collection" Exhibition at the North Vancouver Museum and Archives**

Squamish Nation – *January 25, 2011*. The "Entwined Histories" exhibit opened with a private and moving Blessing ceremony for the Squamish people, Squamish leaders, and special guests. The official opening of "Entwined Histories" was a resounding success for the North Vancouver Museum and the Squamish Nation. However, the exhibit met with mixed reaction from within the Nation, and with neighbours, undoubtedly fuelled in part by Kevin Griffin's Vancouver Sun article. The article focused on a ¾ replica Sxwáyxwey mask that Chief August Jack Khatsahlano, a dancer himself, carved and gifted to the Hurleys.

A debate centers on the culturally sensitive matter of the replica mask gifted to Maisie Hurley. Coast Salish images, practices, prerogatives, customs that include stories, songs, and dances, are privately held by individuals and by families. Elder Charlie, a niece of Khatsahlano wants to convey to everyone, that the work was done in a respectful way with the Museum and with the Squamish Elder's language advisory, education staff, and cultural practitioners. "Maisie and Tom Hurley were family", says Elder Charlie, "and my Uncle held them in high esteem and gave them a mask". However, because of the community's reaction, she will be removing the replica Mask from "Entwined Histories" in a culturally appropriate way.

Chief August Jack Khatsahlano was a visionary, and his work with Major Mathews, the first Vancouver City Archivist, holds value for the Squamish people collectively. Deborah Jacobs, Squamish Nation Education Department Head says, "There are many teachings of Chief Khatsahlano our team share within "Entwined Histories, primarily, collaboration is still important, Squamish culture and traditions continue to evolve, because culture is not static". The exhibit has evoked strong emotional and intellectual responses from a diverse audience. For those doing innovative work in museums and educational programming visitors and students will be encouraged to challenge their own perceptions about the Squamish People, and see "Entwined Histories" through a Squamish lens and in the Squamish voice.

Deborah Jacobs contends prerogatives such as the Sxwáyxwey hold immeasurable value, and continue to remind us of the sacredness of ceremony and ritual in today's world. But a challenge that First Nations face is the continued transmission of this knowledge given the critical status of First Nations languages in Canada. Squamish language in fact is categorized as critically endangered, given that there are less than 10 highly proficient speakers. The work of dedicated elders like Charlie and others on the language elder's advisory will ensure that much larger conversations are held within the Squamish communities. For that Elder Charlie says, "Thank you, each and every one of you for your concern".

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