

2023 FNA BACKGROUNDERS

Shawna Kiesman, Victoria
Nisga'a, Ts'msyen, Haida
Crabtree McLennan Emerging Artist

Shawna Kiesman, an emerging artist from Victoria, is a testament to dedication and innovation in her craft. With a diverse heritage, including Ts'msyen, Nisga'a and Haida/German roots, Shawna's artistic journey began at the Freda Diesing School of Northwest Coast Arts and continued at Emily Carr University of Art + Design, earning a Bachelor of Fine Arts and supported by awards like the Audain Entrance Scholarship and BC Arts Council Scholarship.

As an emerging artist, Shawna's post-graduation career is thriving, marked by grants and residencies, including the RBC Audain Museum Emerging Artist Program. Permanent collections such as the Nisga'a Museum and Coast Mountain College house and celebrate her work. Each piece is a means of cultural exploration and identity reclamation that delves into her Indigenous heritage. Shawna's diverse portfolio includes digital art, textiles, drawing, and painting, and is known for its modernized take on everyday items. As a First Nations artist, she seeks to understand her ancestral culture and its complexities while ensuring its continuance and legacy.

Brent Sparrow, Vancouver
Musqueam

Musqueam artist Brent Sparrow developed his practice and artistry through apprenticeships with his mother, Susan A. Point, and John Livingston, adopted Kwakwaka'wakw artist and master carver. Collaborating with his mother, Brent played a pivotal role in creating and installing public art, gracing institutions like the Seattle Art Museum, City of Vancouver, City of Richmond, and Seattle Children's Hospital.

Beyond these collaborative ventures, Brent's portfolio boasts nearly two dozen large-scale public artworks, spanning bronze, glass, and cedar, while his private works grace collections and galleries. His art deeply roots itself in his Coast Salish heritage, respecting ancestral legacies and contributing to cultural preservation.

Educated at BCIT, he holds a provincial "B" Red Seal in welding, adding a necessary skill to his artistic tool kit. Recent achievements include the installation of cast bronze public art at the UBC Bus Exchange, symbolizing a warm Musqueam welcome to the UBC Vancouver campus.

Klatle-bhi, West Vancouver
Kwakwaka'wakw / Squamish

Klatle-bhi, a master carver, is celebrated for his exquisite red cedar masks and a diverse portfolio which encompasses panels and totem poles. With over three decades of experience, his carving has evolved, driven by a deep commitment to ancestral spirituality and culture.

Klatle-bhi's distinctive style seeks the pinnacle of craftsmanship and artistry. His roots in Squamish and Kwakwaka'wakw cultures are integral to his life, as he strives to preserve languages, dances, and songs.

A supporter of passing on traditions, Klatle-bhi not only creates art but also mentors the next generation of artists. His collaborations with Collingwood School in West Vancouver have produced meaningful totem poles representing academic, athletic, service, and artistic excellence.

Klatle-bhi's contributions extend beyond the studio; he has sung, danced, spoken, and shared his art at numerous gatherings and potlatches. His works are displayed in the Museum of Arts and Design in New York City and the Burke Memorial Museum of Natural History in Seattle.

Xwalacktun (Rick Harry), West Vancouver
Kwakwaka'wakw / Squamish
Award of Distinction

Xwalacktun is an internationally renowned artist with roots in the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish Nation) and Kwakwaka'wakw Nation (Alert Bay). His remarkable artistic career spans over 40 years, encompassing a wide range of mediums, from public art and sculpture to metalwork, jewelry, glasswork, drawing, printmaking, and his renowned wood carving. He seamlessly blends traditional Salish forms with contemporary expressions, a hallmark of his distinctive style.

His art has captivated collectors worldwide and graced exhibitions both locally and internationally. Xwalacktun's creative journey began with a degree in sculpture from Emily Carr University of Art and Design. Xwalacktun has shared his talent in Scotland, promoting its totem pole project and demonstrating his carving techniques in several Scottish communities. He is an artist, an educator and a mentor whose practice nurtures many apprentices, including his sons.

He played a pivotal role in preserving Salish culture as a contributing artist for Simon Fraser University's 2009 "A Journey into Time Immemorial."

Xwalacktun's artistic legacy is interwoven with his community involvement, attending local events, and offering cultural greetings. His numerous accolades include his 2022 Honorary Doctorate from Emily Carr University, the 2016 First Nations Art Award, and the 2012 Order of BC. His art adorns public spaces across Canada and internationally, showcasing his ability to seamlessly blend tradition with modernity.