

# The Legacy of the qəyqə́yt village

The village of qəyqə́yt was a vibrant, permanent dwelling place and fish processing camp that existed on the shores of the Fraser River since time immemorial. The name qəyqə́yt translates to “resting place” in the hənqəmínəḿ language of the Coast Salish people.

Through family connections and traditional protocol to access the areas rich resources, this was a shared site that was used by First Nations fishers and traders to camp, harvest, and process fish during the abundant summer months. It is said that the river was so thick with salmon that you could walk on their backs; also abundant were eulachons, white sturgeon and other river species.

In the later part of the 1800s, qəyqə́yt was converted into Federal reserve land for the Musqueam and Kwantlen people, where families from these and other nearby communities continued to live. Connections to this area remained while the town of Brownsville developed around qəyqə́yt and the City of New Westminster across the river grew to become the former provincial capital.

It was here that residents of qəyqə́yt first encountered the Simon Fraser Expedition and Kwantlen Chief Whittlekainum saved Fraser’s life by dissuading violence against

the expedition and guaranteed them safe passage down the river.

In the 1940s these reserves were sold and the area became heavily industrialized over time and is now the location of Ocean Concrete. Two archaeology sites are now recorded in this area that reveal the extent of use and occupancy of the many generations of people that lived in and visited the village.

Descendants of this area continue to hold a strong cultural and spiritual connection to qəyqə́yt, the river, and the natural resources of the area that are so vital to First Nations.

The *Four Seasons* artwork, was commissioned to honour the land where the village of qəyqə́yt was located along the Fraser River, near the neighbourhood now known as Bridgeview in Surrey.



Photograph of Kwantlen First Nation ancestor, Theresa Clark (Gibson) taken at the qəyqə́yt village. Photo courtesy of her family and the Seyem’ Qwantlen Business Group .



This photo was taken from the qəyqə́yt village site, looking across to New Westminster. Photo courtesy New Westminster Museum and Archives, IHP0618

The *Four Seasons* artwork was presented as a gift to the City of Surrey from Lehigh Hanson Materials Limited on May 31, 2016. It was commissioned as an initiative of the Seyem’ Qwantlen Business Group to share the culture and history of the Coast Salish peoples with current residents.



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## About the artwork

### Four Seasons

The *Four Seasons* drums were created to celebrate the culture and history of the First Nations peoples whose traditional and unceded lands include the Fraser River's south bank area, where the Chuck Bailey Recreation Centre is located.

Inspired by views of the four directions seen from the building's circular walkway, Brandon Gabriel and Melinda Bige created these drums using traditional methods and materials, including tanned buffalo skin and painted them with original Coast Salish designs that represent the four seasons.

Installed on the north wall is the drum depicting *Winter: Time of the winter dance*, on the east wall is *Spring: Time of the murky water*. On the south wall is *Summer: Time of the sockeye* and on the west wall is *Fall: Time of the leaves falling*.

The winter drum is blue, with a moon face bordered with a pair of wolves, the symbol of the Kwantlen Nation.

The spring drum is green, with a spring moon face, surrounded by a design representing running water.

The summer drum shows the natural colour of the drum skin, and has a pattern representing salmon in yellow and white, also representing the warmth of this season.

The fall drum has a design representing trees and the colour of leaves in the autumn.



## About the Artists

### Brandon Gabriel & Melinda Bige

A member of the Kwantlen First Nation, Brandon Gabriel studied at Kwantlen Polytechnic University, focussing on anthropology. He continued at Emily Carr University and completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Visual Arts. His art has been exhibited internationally and other commissions have included the design for the medal for 2010 BC summer games, a sculpture for the Stave Dam in Mission, a mural for the Langley School District and a sculpture for the Surrey School District. Gabriel is also active as an educator.

Melinda Bige is Brandon's life partner and collaborator. She is of Lu'tsel'ké Dené heritage and is an accomplished scholar, activist and artist. She is completing a graduate degree in indigenous governance at the University of Victoria. Brandon and Melinda have a daughter named Jamie, born in March 2016. She is now an instructor at Kwantlen Polytechnic University.

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