

CAPTURED SPIRIT

A new gallery in Langley showcases an ancient West Coast Culture

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Times Reporter

The essence of ancient West Coast culture is about to come alive in downtown Langley.

Tribal Spirit Gallery has transformed the former location of an Asian furniture store at the corner of Fraser Highway and Glover Road, offering a stunning collection of First Nation art, both private and retail.

It's a partnership between the owner of the gallery, Jay Lyonnas, and his father, a long-time collector of Kwagwalth Coast Salish art, Eric Lynds, who scouted out the new home for the gallery.

"He saw this, and jumped on it," said Lyonnas, noting the gallery will pay tribute exclusively to the Kwagwalth culture, a West Coast community which traditionally inhabited the north-eastern coast of

Vancouver Island and is part of the greater Kwakwaka'wakw region (Vancouver Island and the central coast).

"We really want to keep it Kwagwalth, and not mix up the styles," added Lyonnas.

Much of Tribal Spirit Gallery's collection of carved totem poles, masks, canoes, paintings, and jewelry have been created by Alert Bay artist Trevor Hunt, considered a superior craftsman who also operates a school in Alert Bay.

"My father worked an exclusive deal to supply most of the art in the gallery," says Lyonnas.

"He is an extremely good carver." The gallery also represents Stan

Hunt, Trevor's father, who carved one of two prominently displayed 15-foot totem poles in the gallery. The gallery also features George Hunt III, who creates contemporary art, and William Cook, who creates original silver jewelry designs.

The private collection is housed in an area that is intended to represent a Kwagwalth big house.

The centre piece of that collection is a decaying 12-foot totem pole, which was carved in 1961 by prominent west coast artist, 83-year-old Mungo Martin in honour of his deceased son, David Martin. The totem pole came from a Kwagwalth community at Comox, and offered to Lynds because of its dilapidated state.

The gallery is hoping to keep it from disintegrating, as long as it can, in honor of the family.

"It does preserve the memory," said Lyonnas.

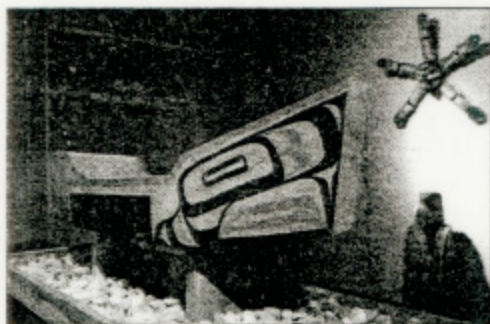
Both the interior of the private and retail collection were designed by

Lyonnas' sister Corrine Rose, which makes the new enterprise a family affair — a group who encourages everyone interested in traditional west coast art, to enjoy their collection.

"I really want this to be a destination store," said Lyonnas, adding the business is also offering custom pieces, a precedent-setting retail arrangement.

"We are the first people to offer custom totem poles in Kwagwalth style."

Tribal Spirit Gallery is located at 20538 Fraser Hwy, and will be open Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. For info, call 604-514-2377.



Clockwise from top, Tribal Spirit Gallery owner Jay Lyonnas stands with a Stan Hunt Welcome Pole. A cedar canoe is also on display, as is a George Hunt III drum in contemporary style.
John GORDON/Langley Times