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## Material for metal sculpture receives blessing

On January 3, 2007, Brenco Industries Ltd., Delta, British Columbia, began its part of the creation of a metal sculpture designed by Xwa-lack-tun (Rick Harry), a Squamish Nation artist whose works are internationally recognized. Xwa-lack-tun was born in Squamish and currently resides in the Xwemelchstn community in West Vancouver. Xwa-lack-tun requested permission to perform a traditional blessing ceremony on the material before the commencement of the cutting process. Out of respect for his wishes and his culture, Brenco plant operations ceased in both buildings. All machinery was shut down, and staff gathered to watch the ceremony.

What took place over the next hour was inspiring, to say the least. The Brenco staff was very fortunate to experience the wisdom and grace of the

First Nations culture. Historically, the First Nations people did not possess a written language, their culture and history have been transferred in the oral tradition from generation to generation. First Nations practices the custom of calling witnesses to later recall events. Xwa-lack-tun called upon some of the attendees to be witnesses who were later asked to share their thoughts and observations with the audience. First Nations people believe that events recorded on paper or film offer only one view of an event, but each witness's experience is something different and contributes additional dimensions to the retelling of the event.

Xwa-lack-tun did not speak directly to the audience. Instead, he spoke through his "speaker," Aaron Moody. When Xwa-lack-tun wanted to speak,

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The steel plate is cleansed with rainwater applied with cedar boughs.

### events calendar

#### March 2007

- 14-17 Metal Matters: The Premier Annual Conference for the Metal Fabricating Industry  
Lake Buena Vista, Fla.
- 14-17 TPJ Symposium  
Lake Buena Vista, Fla.
- 21 FabCast - Laser Cutting Techniques  
10-11:30 A.M. CDT
- 26 Turret Punch & Laser Workshop  
Alpharetta, Ga.
- 27 Industrial Laser Safety Seminar  
Alpharetta, Ga.
- 27-28 Fundamentals of Press Brake Operations  
Alpharetta, Ga.
- 29-30 Troubleshooting Your Press Brake and Shear Operations  
Alpharetta, Ga.

#### April 2007

- 10 Drawing and Stretching High Strength Materials  
Grand Rapids, Mich.
- 16-17 Practical Lean Manufacturing Certificate Program  
Grand Rapids, Mich.

Details at [fmanet.org](http://fmanet.org).

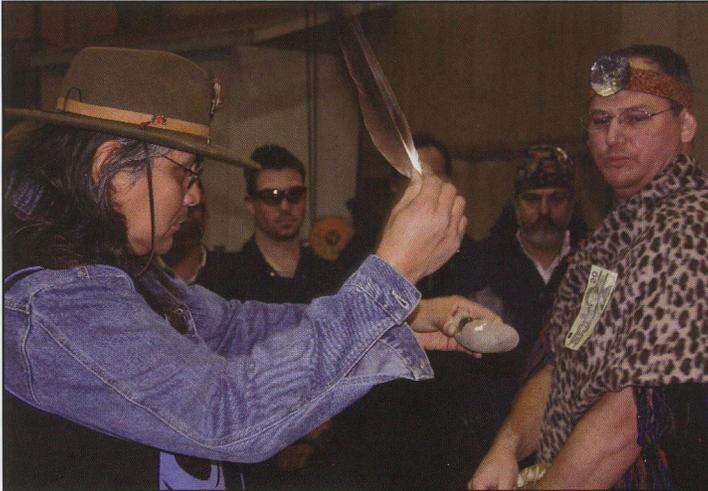
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# Material for metal sculpture receives blessing *cont.*

he would lean toward Aaron and whisper. Aaron, in turn, would speak to the audience on his behalf. This First Nations practice removes the artist from being the center of attention, focusing instead on the ceremony and the work itself.

The sculpture will be located in Ambleside Park in West Vancouver. It will stand 8 feet high and 22 feet wide. It is made from 1-inch steel cut on Brenco's waterjet cutting table. The unveiling ceremony will take place March 17.



*Above & Right:* Xwa-lack-tun and "speaker" Aaron Moody perform a song as Brenco employees look on. Aaron is wearing a \$20 bill pinned to the blanket. Both the blanket and the money were given to him by Xwa-lack-tun as payment for his services. The witnesses also received a ceremonial payment for their services.



## The Artist

The sculpture is a contemporary design by Xwa-lack-tun (Rick Harry), a Squamish Nation artist whose works are recognized internationally. Xwa-lack-tun was born in Squamish and currently resides in the Xwemelchstn community in West Vancouver.

## The Design

The design echoes the Lions Gate Bridge, which was named after "The Lions," two peaks that the Squamish people call "The Twins" or "Sisters." Two upright paddles in the design represent mutual respect. Between the paddles is a Squamish thunderbird head, which is the official logo for the Squamish Nation government. In the background, the great canoe represents a journey together to build a foundation for future generations within the communities of West Vancouver and the Squamish Nation. The sculpture was designed to blend into its natural surroundings without obstructing waterfront views. The sculpture cut from 1-inch-thick plate is 8 feet high and 22 feet wide. At the base is a traditional Medicine Garden of indigenous plants. Brickwork forms the exterior wall of the garden, patterned to create the impression of a woven cedar Squamish basket.

## Funding

This commission is financially supported by the Department of Canadian Heritage through its designation of West Vancouver as one of the 2006 Cultural Capitals of Canada.

Curtis Tavonius, waterjet operator, Mike "Plucker" Pratt, waterjet operator, Brian McDeere, programmer, Rob Legg, waterjet operator, and Mike Lanteigne, project manager, pose in front of the sculpture. Mark Hebner, production manager, was the only team member absent for the photo.