

# ǂe'ǂe' Sǂupǂstul u tu ǂhewum Qa' 'i' Kwaǂlkwa

Sacred Gathering of the Freshwater and Saltwater



ART AND STORIES BY  
Eliot White-Hill, Kwulasultun



I first want to acknowledge our Ancestors and Elders of Snuneymuxw, who leave the path for us to walk and the teachings for us to carry as we continue our way of life in our territory.

**Artist, Eliot White-Hill, Kwulasultun**



“The art and stories shared here speak to our connection to our territory and home as Snuneymuxw. Their telling in all different ways is a big part of what makes us who we are. I’m so proud to see Eliot using his voice as an artist to continue this work.”

**Elder Gary Manson, Xulsimalt**

“I am so happy to see the art installation at the Beban Park swimming pool come to life. This is an incredibly important initiative displaying a way of life and culture of the Snuneymuxw People. Educating the public about our connection to our territory and the shared history between the Snuneymuxw People and Nanaimo is important for everyone to deepen understandings about each other. Kwulasultun is doing very important work as an artist and it fills me with pride to see one of our young people working and celebrating our heritage.”

**Chief Mike Wyse, Snuneymuxw First Nation**

“This art project will contribute to a welcoming environment for the thousands of people who use Beban Pool each year. This talented artist’s work communicates stories, values and language that are critical to our understanding of the history of this land, our understanding of the present, and ultimately our shared future. I know this beautiful work will provide inspiration and joy, and I congratulate and thank Eliot-White Hill, Kwulasultun, and the people who helped him to realize this work for all of us to enjoy.”

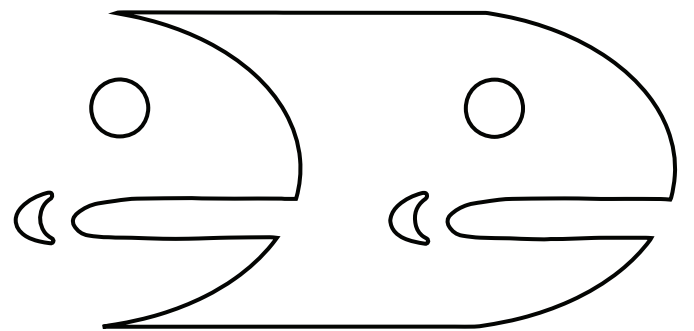
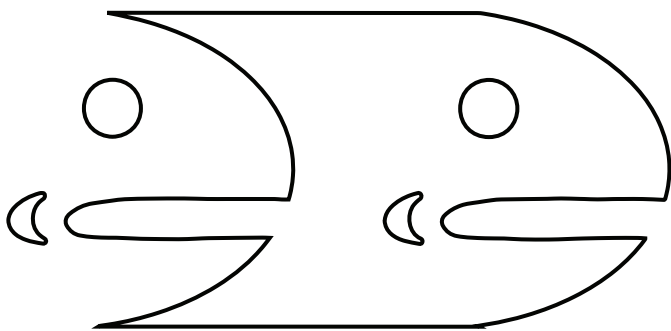
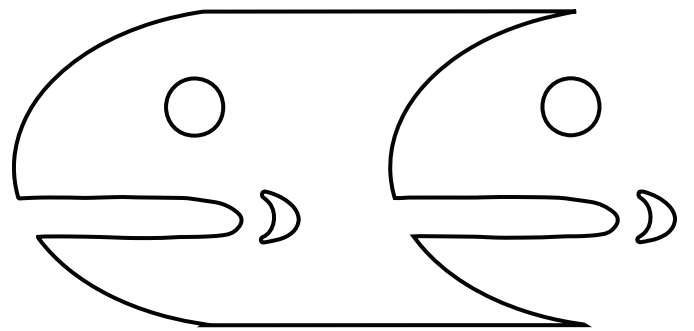
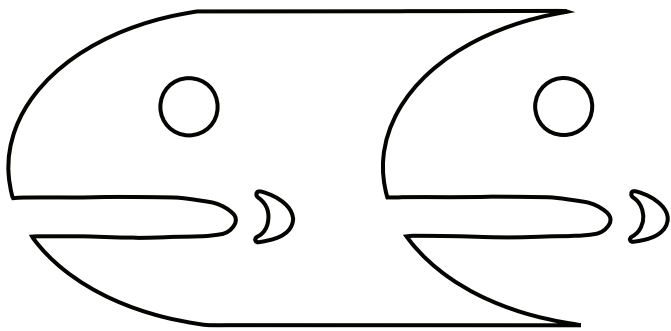
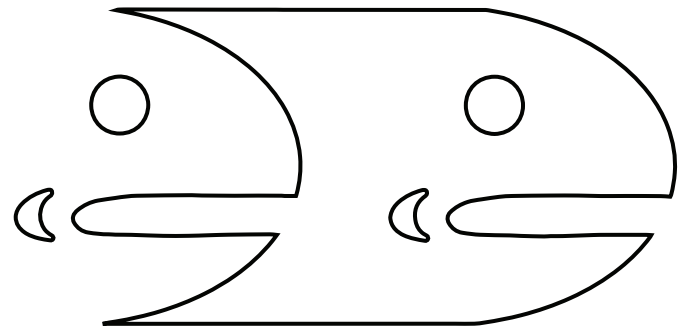
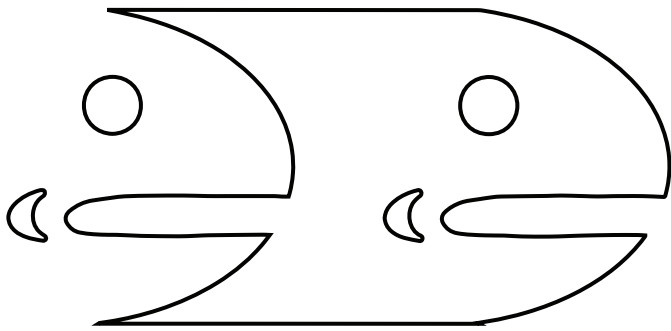
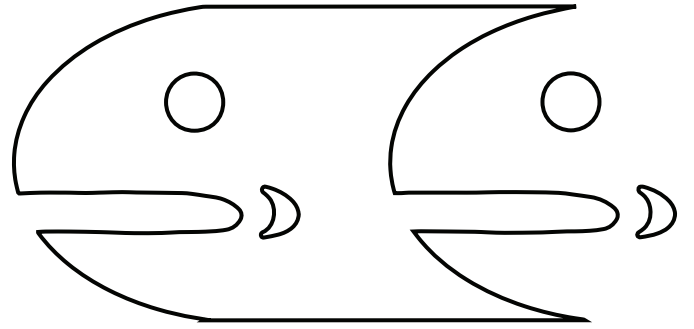
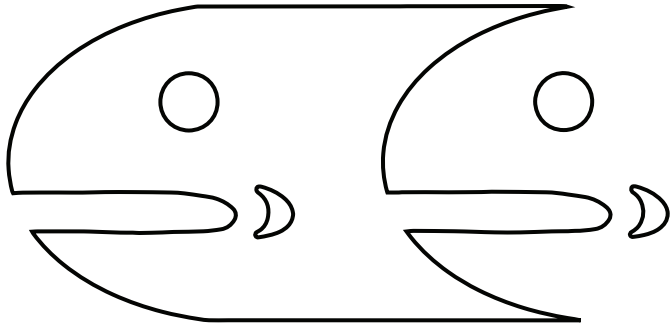
**Mayor Leonard Krog, City of Nanaimo**





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# ǻe'ǻe' Sǻupǻstul u tu ǻhewum Qa' 'i' Kwaǻlkwa

## Sacred Gathering of the Freshwater and Saltwater

*by Eliot White-Hill, Kwulasultun*



This art project is about showing respect to and celebrating Snuneymuxw stories, history, and how special our territory is to us. The Nanaimo River Estuary is a very important part of the land that the Snuneymuxw call home. The Snuneymuxw have lived here for thousands of years; we were created here. Our stories have been passed down by our Elders and are powerful reminders of the way that we should live and behave. They are part of who we are and connect us to the past and the different places here.

The Estuary is where the river meets the ocean. It is a place where things and energies come together. It is a gathering place. The relationships and connections hosted by the Estuary are the source of our teachings, the source of our food, and a source of who we are. Examples of how we should act and how to work together can be seen in the ecosystems of the Estuary. We all live here together. We can be together in a good way, a way that respects the land and respects each other.

The stories I tell in this project come from Snuneymuxw through my family. They were told by my late great-grandmother, Dr. Ellen White, Kwulasulwut, and her late grandfather, Albert Wesley, Qwustenuxun. I am very proud and thankful to get to share my art and tell these stories in my own way. I hope that everyone who comes to Beban Pool will enjoy them and learn about Snuneymuxw and the places and things that are important to us.

# Origin of the K'waluxw (Dog Salmon) Run

## A STORY FOR KIDS



A long time ago, in a place far away (like Cedar—okay, maybe not that far away), there was an old couple who lived in a longhouse by the river. One day they were out in their canoe, and they caught a fish that they had never seen before. They gave it to their daughter to bring home. As she carried it home, it transformed into a man. He said, “I really like you, please come and be my wife,” and she said, “Hmm, okay” (she probably wasn’t sure but must have been bored of living at home with her parents and wanted to go on an adventure). So, they took off and went to the fish-man’s village way beyond the horizon.

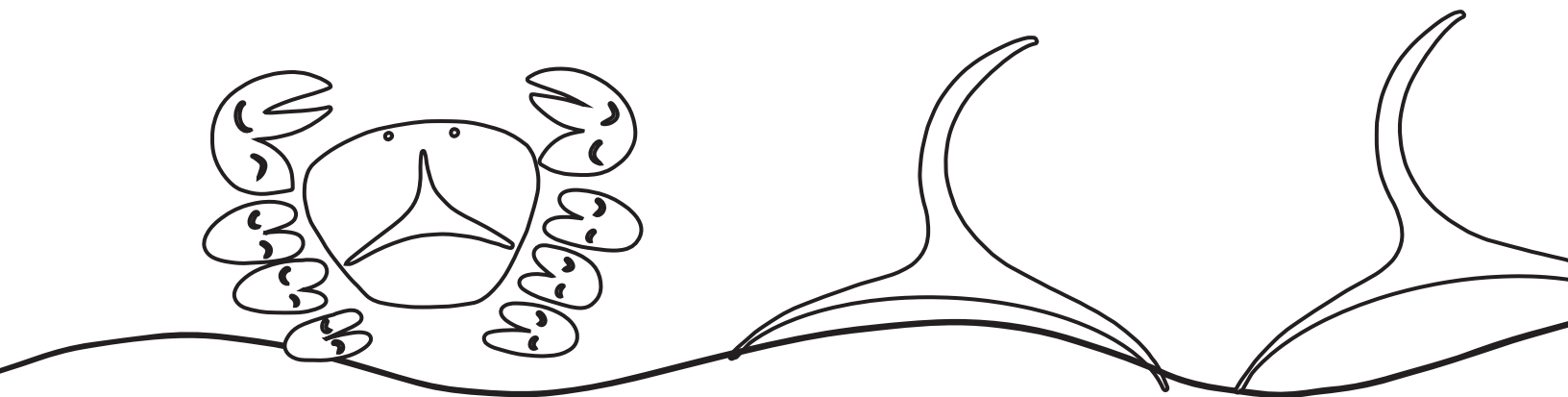
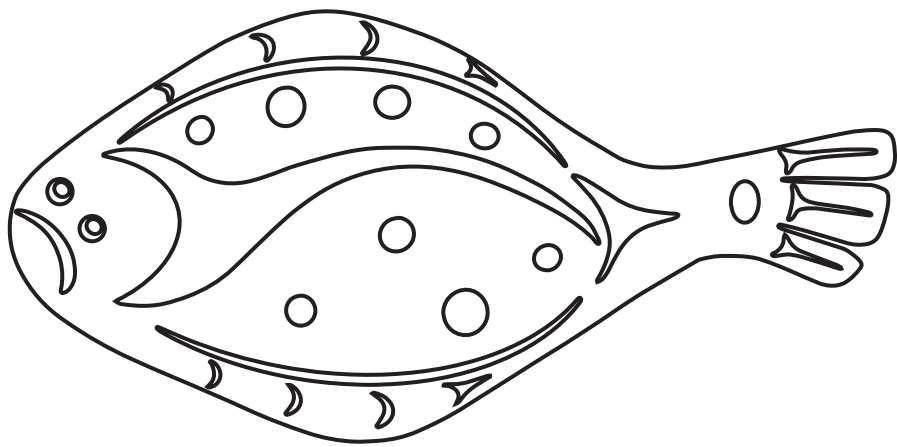
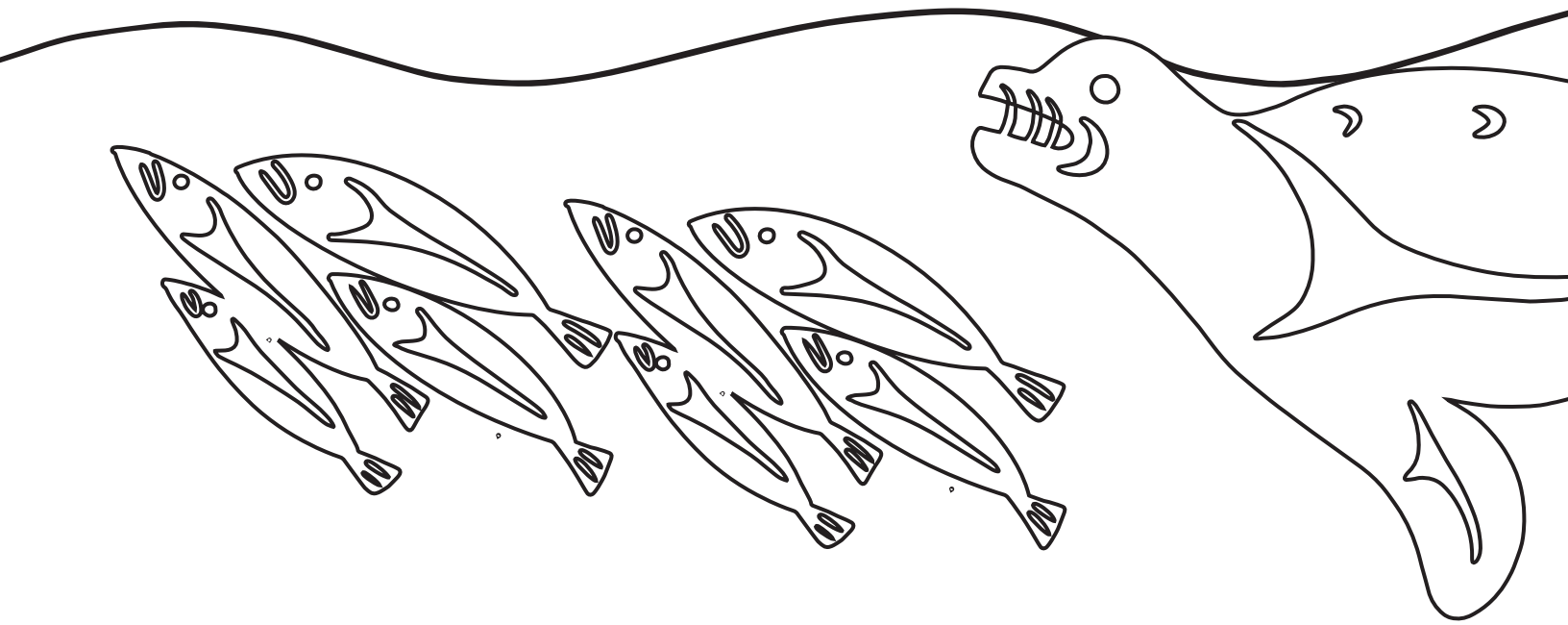
She left without saying goodbye to her parents (kind of rude), and her parents freaked out when they realized. They called all their cousins and nieces and nephews, and their nieces’ nephews, and even the friend of that one cousin they didn’t really talk to that much. They asked everyone for help finding their daughter, but no one could. So, they went on a big adventure to find her. Their daughter had sent a message (kind of like sending a text but in the old way) to tell them that she was okay and not to worry; she was actually in love now with the fish-man. But, they still went looking for her anyways.

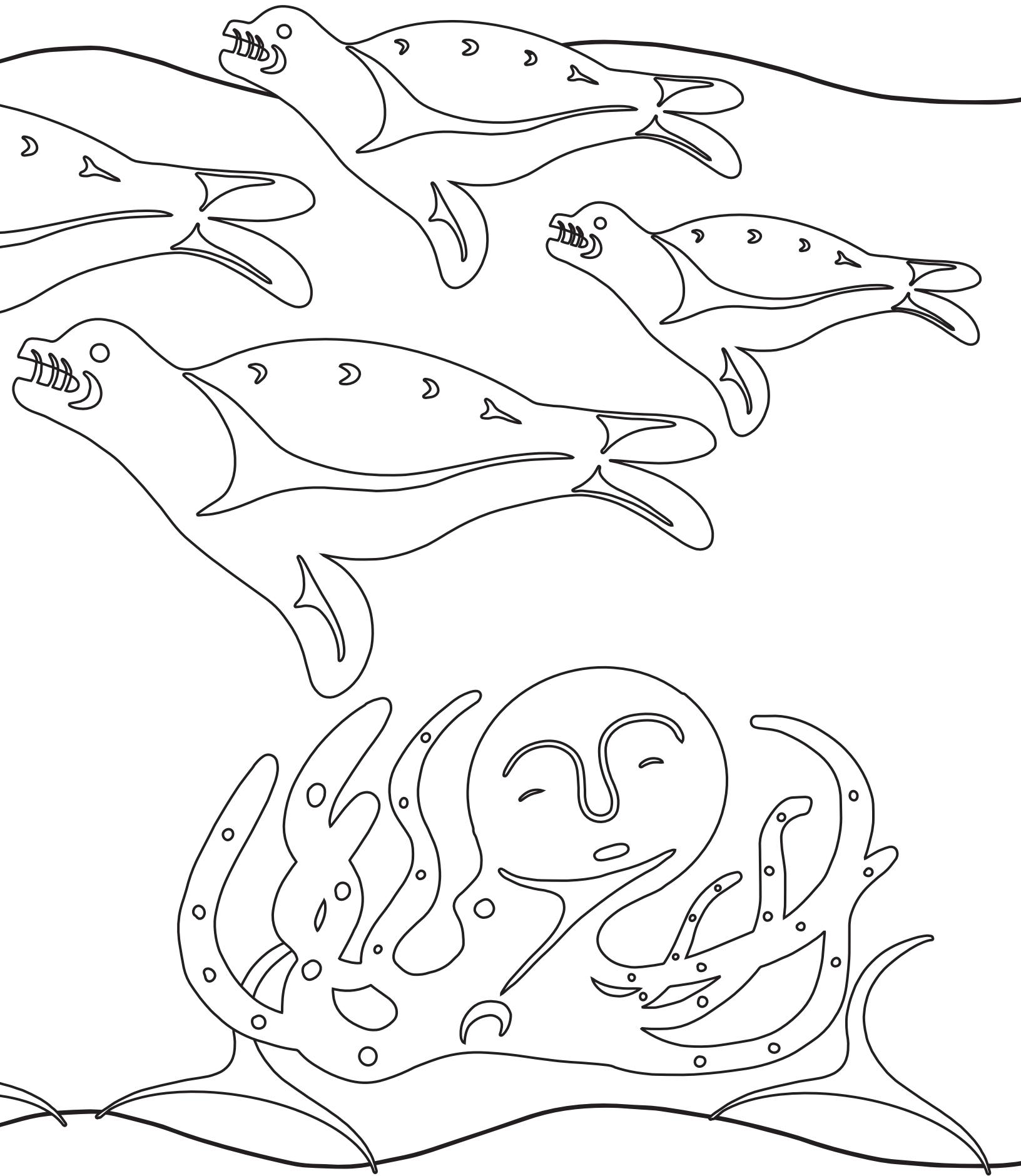


After a wild trip, the parents found her in the village of the Dog Salmon people. She said to them, “Wow, I already told you I was okay,” and they said, “Yeah, but we love you and were worried.” That’s how parents are. The daughter explained how she and the Dog Salmon-man (the parents learned that the fish was a kind of salmon called Dog Salmon) were married now and in love, and that every year they and all their Dog Salmon family would come to visit her parents’ home on the river. The parents were happy and relieved, so they went home.

As they got home, a huge run of salmon followed them and went up the river. There were so many salmon that you could walk across the river on their backs. They generously fed all of the Snuneymuxw who lived there, and everyone lived happily ever after.

**This story is one of the oldest in Snuneymuxw and has been told in a lot of different ways. What I just told you is only one way of many. It is an important story that talks about how the Dog Salmon who spawn on the river here are actually our distant relatives because one of our ancestors went and married into the Dog Salmon people. That’s how closely connected we are, and it’s because of that connection the Dog Salmon so generously continue to spawn here and feed us every year.**





## Beings of the Estuary

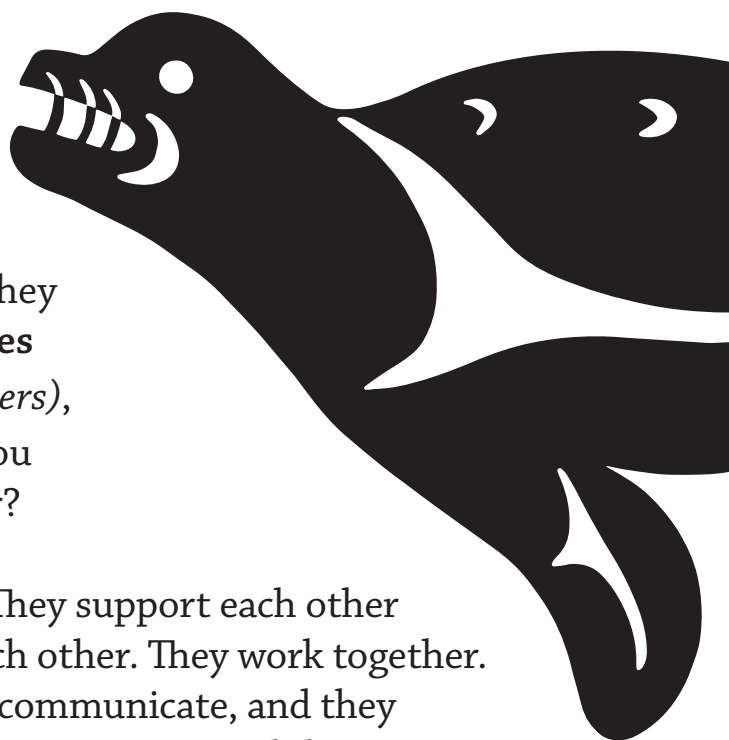


The mural and banners at Beban Pool are about the ecosystems of the Estuary and the way that all forms of life interact there.

The **lhuq̓us** (*eel grass*) plays an important role and is a special thing in the Estuary. The **slhewut** (*herring*) are one of the staples of the Coast Salish diet. Every spring when they spawn, all sorts of animals, such as **shes** (*sea lions*) and **qumut** (*hooded mergansers*), follow them. Do you see beings that you recognize from your time by the water?

All these beings are like a community. They support each other and look after each other. They feed each other. They work together. These are all beings who can think and communicate, and they do so with each other. Our way of looking at nature and the relationships in nature is more complex than predator and prey.

With these artworks I want to honour these beings and honour the ways that they have shown us how we should interact with each other and with the land. These beings are an important source of our teachings. When you go out into the world, how do you learn from what is around you?







# Story of the Qullhánnumucun (Killer Whale) Transformation

A STORY FOR KIDS

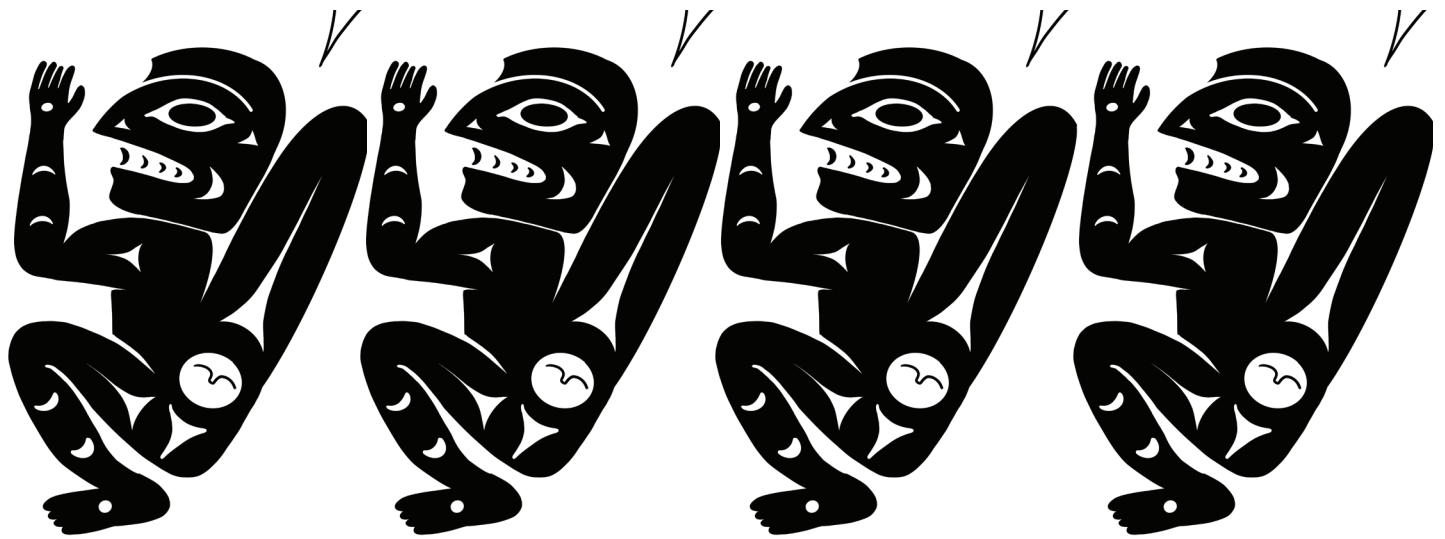


Once upon a time, there was a group of young Snuneymuxw children. They really wanted to learn—like *really* wanted to learn. If they were kids today, they would never leave the library. The librarian would have to kick them out, and all the spines of the books would be falling apart from how much the books were read.

Anyways, these kids loved learning, but there was a problem. The Elders whose job it was to teach everyone (in the old days it was the grandparents' job to teach all the kids) had said that these kids weren't ready to learn! "What do you mean?" the kids asked. They were stunned. "You have one job, to teach us, and you don't want to do it?" they asked. "Nope, nuh-uh, no way," the Elders responded, "Come back in a few years when you're older, then you'll be ready." Holy smokes these kids were mad. So, they got together and came up with a plan. They were going to learn no matter what those old folks said.

First, they started sneaking around and listening as the older kids were being taught. This was a tough one because in the old days the longhouses were pretty wide open. It wasn't like you could crawl into the air conditioner vents and listen like in a spy movie (please don't do this, leave it to the professionals), so instead the kids would just lie around on the ground just outside of where the teaching was happening. It must have looked pretty weird, all of them lying in a big pile on the ground. They told






everyone they were just sleeping. The adults started saying, “Those kids must not be ready if all they do is sleep all day.” Gee, that one really backfired.

But the kids still learned a lot lying there pretending to sleep. They learned all of the special things you do to get help from the world, like talking to the things you’re making. When you really talk to them, they will talk back and help you (might sound weird, but with the right training it can be like a superpower). The kids took what they learned and went off into the woods and practised. You might not believe it, but it worked. The cedar bark and leather and rocks the kids were using to make things started talking back to them. “Thank you, thank you,” the things said, “You’re doing amazing work. We’re going to help you.” The kids were thrilled. This was when they came up with the grand finale to their plan. They were going to transform into a Killer Whale.

“It’s really going to surprise them,” they said. “When the Elders





see us all transformed into a whale, they'll definitely say we're ready." It was foolproof. What could be more impressive than transforming into a whale? They made teams and split into two. One team would stay in the village and get everyone's attention, and the other team would transform into a whale. And that's what they did.

They spent weeks preparing. They made a whale skin out of a bunch of leather hides. They made the bones out of wood. Everyone had a job and made sure to talk to the things and ask for help. When the day finally came, it worked. They went out into the water and got into the whale they had made, like getting into a submarine, and then, just like magic, they became a whale. The team who stayed behind ran into the village chanting, "There's a whale, there's a whale, everyone come look at the whale!" All the people came running, since whales did not come into the Estuary often.

The old people knew it was unusual, so they got in their canoe and paddled out to the whale. When they got there, they could hear the kids inside the whale. They realized what had happened. They started crying. They knew that the kids wouldn't be able to turn back into humans. The whale swam out to sea and didn't come back. The people of the village were sad, and they missed the children. They knew it was their fault and that if they had done a better job including the younger ones in the teachings, this never would have happened.

**This is a story about how important it is to make sure that the young people in the community are being acknowledged and taught properly, and that they feel seen and respected. The Elders in this story did not do their jobs properly, and because of that, a generation of children was lost. In Coast Salish teachings, we have a serious responsibility to look after those who are younger than us and future generations who will come after us. Even if we think we are doing the right thing, we always have to be willing to ask questions, to look for better ways, and especially to talk to those who are most affected and ask what they think and feel.**



# Hul'q'umi'num' Words and Phrases



## Hul'q'umi'num' (*hull-kuh-me-num*)

This is the language that Coast Salish people from mid-Vancouver Island speak. There are many dialects and other kinds of Hul'q'umi'num'.

**K'waluxw**  
(*kwah-luh-H*)  
DOG SALMON

**Lhuqus**  
(*l-huck-us*)  
EEL GRASS

**Musuqw**  
(*muh-suck*)  
CRAB

**Puwi'**  
(*puh-wee*)  
FLOUNDER

**Qulhánumucun**  
(*kull-ha-nuh-mutt-sun*)  
KILLER WHALE

**Qumut**  
(*kuh-mutt*)  
HOODED MERGANSER

**Shes**  
(*sheh-ss*)  
SEA LION

**Skwlhey'**  
(*sk-wuhl-hey*)  
LITTLENECK CLAMS

**Slhewut'**  
(*ss-l-hay-what*)  
HERRING

**Smuqwa'**  
(*smuh-kwah*)  
HERON

**Sqe:tl**  
(*sk-eh-kl*)  
RIVER OTTER

**Stuixwuth**  
(*stuhl-H-wuh-th*)  
OCTOPUS

**Tumulqh**  
(*tum-uh-l-kl-h*)  
STAR FISH

**Yuǰwule'**  
(*yuh-H-wuh-leh*)  
BALD EAGLE



### **Snuneymuxw** (*snuh-neigh-muh-X*)

SNUNEYMUXW PLACE, SNUNEYMUXW PERSON, SNUNEYMUXW LANGUAGE

The word Snuneymuxw is used for the place where Nanaimo is, the people who live there, and the Hul'q'umi'num' dialect of the region. Pronounce the “X” sound in this word as if you are clearing your throat.

### **Huy ch qu** (*h-aye-ch-kuh*)

THANK YOU

Say in the traditional way while raising your hands (palms facing in) to the person you're thanking.

### **Namut kwu** (*nah-mutt kw-uh*)

YOU'RE WELCOME

Say in response to someone saying “Huy ch qu!”

### **Si'em'** (*see-em*)

HONOURED PERSON

To show respect, add after saying “Huy ch qu”. The phrase Huy ch qu si'em' means “Thank you honoured (person)” but is really like saying “Thank you very much.” To be more polite, the word si'em' can be added at the end of other words too.

### **'I u ch uw uy al?** (*ee-ch oo-h aye-all*)

HOW ARE YOU?

This is the most common greeting in Hul'q'umi'num'. It translates literally to “Are you good?”

### **Huye wulh** (*huh-yay-with*)

GOODBYE

Pronounce the “th” sound in this word with the tip of your tongue pressed behind your front teeth.

Eliot White-Hill, Kwulasultun, is a Coast Salish artist who comes from the White family of Snuneymuxw and the Rice family of Penelakut and has roots in the Nuu-Chah-Nulth world through the Hamilton family of Hupačasath from whom he carries the name Kwaayas. He is a graduate of Vancouver Island University and is a storyteller, published author, and artist.

For this project, Eliot White-Hill consulted with the Snuneymuxw First Nations Elders Advisory, Hul'q'umi'num language teacher Elder Gary Manson, Elder William White, and Joan Brown.

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Design and layout by Common Foundry Design Studio.

Published by the City of Nanaimo to coincide with ǂe'ǂe' S'qupástul u tu ǂewum Qa' 'i' Kwaǂlkwa, Sacred Gathering of the Freshwater and Saltwater, an Art Project for Beban Park Pool, Nanaimo, British Columbia, August, 2021.

City of Nanaimo  
455 Wallace Street  
Nanaimo BC

Printed in Canada





