



qeqən

HOUSE POSTS

A walking tour of
Musqueam House Posts
at UBC

A walking tour of
MUSQUEAM HOUSE POSTS
at the University of British Columbia

By Jordan Wilson

April 2018
(rev. April 2019)

THE RESERVE



"Totems at Musqueam," June 23, 1913, BC Archives H-07078. In this photograph, the *čsəmłenəx*¹ and *qiyəplənəx*² posts flank the entrance to the Musqueam catechism house on the occasion of the McKenna-McBride Commission hearing.

To learn about house posts, we need to begin on the Musqueam Reserve, the main village of the Musqueam people. Many students and visitors are unaware the reserve is not far from the UBC campus: the distance between UBC's Office of the President and the Musqueam administration office, for example, is just over seven kilometres. It is one of two Indian reserves located within the boundaries of the City of Vancouver.

While Musqueam people have lived on what is now Musqueam Indian Reserve #2 for over 3,500 years, it has only been a reserve since the early 1860s. Having been reduced in size several times, the reserve is postage-stamp small, currently measuring 190.4 hectares, or 1.9 square kilometres. I often hear people describe it as one of the smallest reserves per capita in Canada.¹ Federal government agents restricted the size of the reserve, under the justification that Musqueam are a fishing people, relying on the resources of the Fraser River – whose North Arm opens up to the Georgia Strait at the reserve – and therefore did not need a large land base. It is likely that the authorities assumed Musqueam populations would diminish in the

¹ According to the 2016 census, Canada had a population density of 3.9 per square kilometre. Musqueam, on the other hand, at the time of the census, had a population density of 654.7 per square kilometre. Data from Statistics Canada, *2016 Census of Canada Census of Population*. Catalogue number 98-316-X2016001 in Statistics Canada database online, Ottawa, released September 13, 2017, <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E>.

disassociate what might commonly be understood as “ethnographic objects” or “art” from politics, specifically sovereignty over the land and resources. In other words, while they referenced histories they were not understood as objects of a distant past, they were of contemporary relevance. This historical moment also warrants some speculation regarding how the commissioners understood the display: did they view them as decoration, meant to welcome them to the hall? This deployment of objects in a modern political context was not unique to Musqueam – during the McKenna-McBride Commission’s visit to Alert Bay, Kwakwaka’wakw chiefs wore their regalia and displayed masks and other ceremonial gear as a means to visually declare hereditary rights.⁵

This occasion also marks a slight transformation or perhaps signals the beginning of an ongoing shift in the display of house posts. Formerly, they were most often displayed in the interior of an individual family’s house for invited guests, such as those from neighbouring nations. In this instance, however, the posts faced outward and were displayed specifically for a non-Indigenous audience; the qiyəplənəx^w post was no longer supporting the weight of a crossbeam and ćsəmleñəx^w board not affixed to an interior post. In some ways, the posts came to represent Musqueam *as a nation*, in addition to distinct extended families, in its dealings with the federal and provincial governments. On the reserve today, recently carved reiterations of these two

posts flank the entrance to the Musqueam administration office, which includes the chambers of Musqueam chief and council, our contemporary political leadership.

As we embark on this walk, we will – in some ways – trace the various and not necessarily “complete” transformations of house posts: from architectural element to free-standing sculpture; from representations of specific ancestors and rights to “welcome posts,” and perhaps more broadly from Indigenous cultural objects to “art,” particularly “public” art for a broad audience. I see this reframing process as not simply a process of appropriation or consumption of these cultural practices by settler populations, but rather a series of responses to complex and changing circumstances. Put otherwise, I hope to convey a sense of agency in Musqueam’s engagement in this reframing process.

I will also speak to the Musqueam’s relationship with what is now known as UBC – the institution and the land it occupies – as well as the institution’s relationship with Indigenous peoples more broadly, although this endeavour is not meant to be exhaustive by any means.⁶

I write as a Musqueam band member, but want to acknowledge my views are my own. I do not speak on behalf of my community, but I will talk about how I have come to understand the Musqueam house posts, and how they resonate with me as a Musqueam person living in what is now known as “Vancouver,” and as someone involved in the university community.

5 Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia (1913-1916), “Chiefs and Headmen of Kwakwaka’wakw Nation in Ancient Dress,” May 1914. BC Archives, Victoria, <http://searchbcarchives.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/chiefs-and-headmen-of-kwakwaka'wakw>; Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia (1913-1916), “Ceremonial Masks of the Kwakwaka’wakw,” June 2, 1914. BC Archives, Victoria, <http://searchbcarchives.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/ceremonialmasks-of-kwakwaka'wakw-indians-alert-bay>.

6 For a more thorough history of UBC in relation to Indigenous peoples, including Musqueam, see UBC Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology’s interactive timeline, “Time and Place at UBC: Our Histories and Relations,” 2016, <http://timeandplace.ubc.ca/timeline/>.

Stop 1

THE BOTANICAL GARDENS



View of the Fraser River from the Musqueam Reserve, 2014. Photo: Reese Muntean.

Had we walked to campus from Musqueam along the shoreline, we would have reversed the path of $\chi e:l's$, the transformer, passing sites of historic encounters: $sqim\acute{a}k^w\eta\acute{a}t\acute{c}\acute{o}$, a spring where $\chi e:l's$ destroyed a giant octopus; $h\acute{a}m\acute{l}\acute{e}s\acute{a}m$, a man transformed to stone for being too stingy; and $sye\eta\acute{t}\acute{e}n$, a widow turned to stone. Musqueam elders remember when this shoreline was a long silver beach, rich with shellfish. Today it is more like a marshy wetland as a result of river dredging and the construction of the North Arm Jetty, the 753-kilometre-long spit that runs parallel to the shoreline. We would have walked past log booms where timber harvested from Indigenous territories across the province waits to be processed upriver. We may have left the reserve, but we have not left Musqueam territory.

You might be wondering, since there aren't any house posts at the Botanical Gardens at this time: *Why does the tour begin here?* Ninety years ago, however, the same two Musqueam posts present at the McKenna-McBride Commission were sited at this location. On the condition they would be displayed on campus, they were sold for an unknown price to the University Alumni Association in 1927, which in turn gifted them to the University during the homecoming celebrations.⁷ These posts were likely the first “outdoor art” to be

⁷ For an extensive discussion of this transaction, see Susan Roy, “Making History Visible: Culture and Politics in the Presentation of Musqueam History” (MA thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1999).



"Lily Pond in Botanical Gardens," July 30, 1929, photograph by Leonard Frank, UBC Archives, 1.1/167. In this photograph, the ʕsəm̓lənəxʔ and qiyəplənəxʔ posts are visible on each end of a lily pond in the Botanical Gardens.

displayed at UBC and officials carefully considered where they would install the posts on the two-year-old campus, ultimately deciding to place them here, without consultation or consent from Musqueam, "which at one time belonged to this tribe of Indians."⁸ Paired together at what was once the edge of campus, they were installed "facing toward the Musqueam village they came from." They also faced the University Endowment Lands, a swath of land initially claimed by

8 "Totem Poles Are Presented to University," *The Ubysey*, November 9, 1927, <https://open.library.ubc.ca/collections/ubcpublications/ubysseynews>.

the British government as a Colonial Admiralty reserve in 1860, and subsequently reserved by the Province in 1910 for the University's future home and financial self-sufficiency. This land became the subject of Musqueam protest and political dispute in the late 1980s when, against the wishes of Musqueam, it was pronounced a regional park. While this essentially ignored the Band's Aboriginal title to the land, an affidavit signed by the Greater Vancouver Regional District acknowledged the park could be subject to Musqueam land claims in the future. In 2007, Pacific Spirit Park was again the subject of heated public debate, after it was announced that two portions of the park would be transferred to Musqueam as part of a settlement of three court cases involving the Band.⁹ The Greater Vancouver Regional District presents Pacific Spirit Park as a site of refuge within the city, of "nature" spared from development, and in the process erases Musqueam's extensive use of these lands.¹⁰ The Botanical Gardens represent "nature" through the practices of collecting, ordering, studying and displaying plant life. An interesting location for the Musqueam house posts, it calls to mind the way Indigenous peoples have been represented in natural history museums, as people without history: specimens to be collected, categorized, studied as part of nature. Was this siting, then, also intended to situate house posts in their "natural" environment (however cultivated it might be)?

What motivated UBC to display these Musqueam house posts? This is a question that warrants some consideration, both sweeping and fine

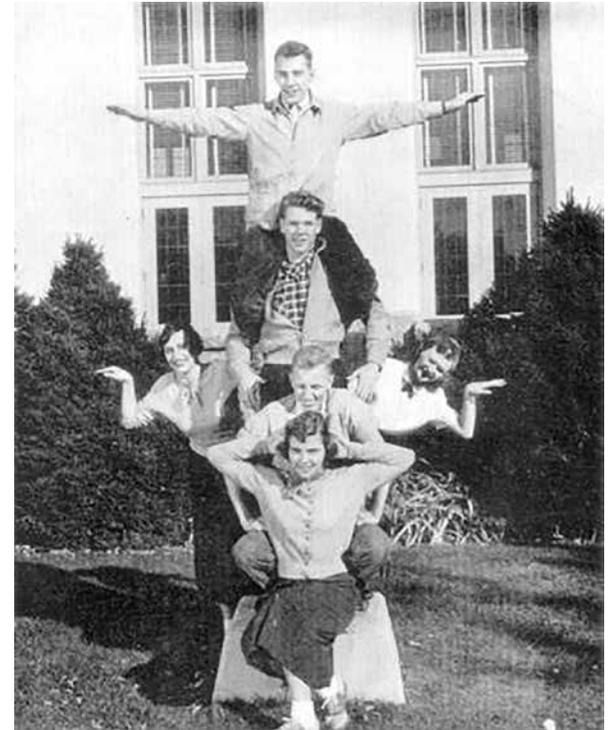
9 For an in-depth account of this history, see Marina La Salle, "Escape into Nature: The Ideology of Pacific Spirit Regional Park" (PhD dissertation, University of British Columbia, 2014).

10 La Salle provides a close analysis of Pacific Spirit Park in relation to Musqueam practices.

grain. First, we can consider the broader context of Indigenous-settler relations from the late 1800s onwards in Canada and British Columbia. European-Canadian settlers, driven by an urgent desire to create a distinct national, provincial and local identity, collected, documented and deposited in anthropology museums the Indigenous cultures that they assumed would soon vanish, as well as appropriated First Nations art, imagery and culture in names and emblems. This desire is especially true in British Columbia, where Northwest Coast totem poles promote tourism, greet travellers and signify a provincial historical identity.¹¹

UBC has not been immune to this practice and there are many examples that speak to this. After contemplating other potential team names such as “the Musqueam” and “the Indians,” the University named its varsity team “the Thunderbirds.”¹² (It was almost fifteen years after claiming this name that it was formally bestowed by the Kwakwaka’wakw.¹³) The university yearbook was called *The Totem*. Campus newspaper *The Ubyyssey* frequently used (or misused?) Chinook jargon, an Indigenous trade language of the Pacific Coast, and in its archived pages one can find First Nations-themed chants for campus sports events, and creative writing referring to the student body as “the Tribe.” In 1951 – the same year the Potlatch Ban of 1885

was finally lifted – UBC constructed Totem Park, having participated in the collection of totem poles from other parts of the province. 1963 saw the opening of Totem Park Residence, which used First Nations names – many now outdated and improper – for its buildings: Dene, Haida,



“Students replicating Brock Hall totem pole,” *The Totem*, 1952, p. 169. UBC Archives, 51.1/1195. Unidentified students mimic the *Victory Through Honour* pole only a few years after it had been ceremonially gifted to UBC by members of the Kwakwaka’wakw community, along with permission to use the Thunderbird as the UBC team name. This photograph provides some indication of the relationship between non-Indigenous students and representations of Indigenous culture on campus during the mid-twentieth century.

¹¹ For more information on this phenomenon, see Marcia Crosby, “Construction of the Imaginary Indian,” in *Vancouver Anthology: The Institutional Politics of Art*, edited by Stan Douglas, 2nd ed. (Vancouver: Talonbooks and Or Gallery, 2011); Leslie Dawn, *National Visions, National Blindness: Canadian Art and Identities in the 1920s* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007); Diana Nemiroff, “Modernism, Nationalism and Beyond: A Critical History of Exhibitions of First Nations Art,” in *Land, Spirit, Power: First Nations at the National Gallery of Canada*, edited by Diana Nemiroff, Robert Houle and Charlotte Townsend-Gault (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1992).

¹² “A Name for the Teams,” *The Ubyyssey*, November 28, 1933.

¹³ “Indian Totem Symbolizes UBC Athletic Supremacy,” *The Ubyyssey*, October 24, 1939. The name was formally bestowed by Kwakwaka’wakw artist Ellen Neel and Kwikwasut’inuxw Haxwa’mis hereditary chief William Scow in 1948, along with the gifting of the *Victory Through Honour* pole.

Kwakiutl, Nootka, Salish and Shuswap.¹⁴ We can reason that from its earliest years, this University has been heavily invested in imagined representations of Indigenous people and their cultural practices, which has manifested in different ways in its operations and public spaces.

The collecting and display of the house posts, then, can be understood as both a result of the felt need to preserve Indigenous cultures and appropriative practices – two processes that run parallel to one another. University correspondence at the time notes a worry about the posts remaining on the reserve, in disrepair, underneath the catechism hall, rationalizing that bringing them to the University would save them from certain disappearance. An account of the homecoming event in *The Ubyyssey* also reveals how UBC representatives read the posts as symbolic of “the Peace, prosperity and glory of the province of British Columbia” and “symbols for all time, symbols never to be forgotten by the Indian and the white people.”¹⁵

What motivated Musqueam to allow these remaining posts to leave the reserve? We know that Musqueam community members participated in the homecoming ceremony. As historian Susan Roy has speculated, “the Musqueam may have viewed the event as a platform to make themselves be seen and heard in a society in which they

were becoming increasingly marginalized.”¹⁶ While we do not have a transcript of this event, we know from the account in *The Ubyyssey* that Chief čsəmłenəx^w addressed the audience in hə́nqəmihə́n about the posts, their imagery and histories, “translated into perfect English for the benefit of the audience by Casimir Johnny.”¹⁷ He spoke of his ancestor, the great qiyəplənəx^w, who “many years ago owned most of the land near the mouth of the Fraser and on Burrard Inlet.” Once again, the presentation of these posts included what was likely forceful oratory, framing them as an indication of Musqueam’s ownership of its territory. With distinct motivations at play, perhaps we can think of Musqueam’s engagement in this gifting and display as an expression of agency or a smuggling-in of Musqueam sovereignty.

You are likely wondering where these posts ended up. Somewhat ironically, in the 1940s, an attentive citizen registered his concerns over the declining condition of the posts to the University president; they were eventually moved to the newly established Museum of Anthropology, which was at that time located in the basement of the Main Library.¹⁸

14 Some of these names are misnomers; for information, see UBC Student Residence, “Totem Park House Names,” <http://vancouverhousing.ubc.ca/totem-park-house-names/>.

15 “Totem Poles Are Presented to University,” *The Ubyyssey*, November 9, 1927. Interestingly, the reporting journalist offered comment on čsəmłenəx^w and his fellow community members’ attire: “When Chief Tsem-Lano [čsəmłenəx^w], in warpaint and native costume, rose to speak, he presented a striking contrast to the modern furnishing of the Auditorium.” Perhaps this offers insight into the posts’ placement at the Botanical Gardens, where there would be less “contrast” to their supposedly “natural” environment. In other words, Indigenous people and their art forms were understood to be incongruous with modernity.

16 Roy, “Making History Visible,” 17. It was in 1927, for example, that the Indian Act was amended to prevent Indigenous people from obtaining legal counsel.

17 “Totem Poles Are Presented to University.” It is possible that Casimir Johnny was hired by čsəmłenəx^w to serve as his speaker, which is common practice in ceremonial gatherings, rather than his “translator.”

18 Correspondence from Hunter C. Lewis to UBC President Klinck, October 20, 1941. Minutes of the President’s Committee on Totem Poles, UBC Archives.



Simon Charlie, *čsəmłenəxʷ* house post (*Man Meets Bear*), installed at Totem Park Residence, UBC, 1974.
Photo: Michael R. Barrick.

Stop 2 TOTEM PARK

Tucked in between the “Salish” and “Haida” houses you will find a “replica” of the *čsəmłenəxʷ* board that has been subject to the elements for over forty years. It is slowly deteriorating; on my recent visit, I noticed the surface is caked in green moss and the human figure’s left foot is almost nonexistent. Gently pressing against its back I could feel it waver. Most interesting is the bronze plaque at its base, particularly in the absence of any other documentation of this post’s unveiling. The plaque’s language provides some insight into how this rendition was understood by the University when the work was installed in 1974. It titles the post *Man Meets Bear*, and renders both the “original” carving and this version as “welcome poles,” a term which has proliferated in regards to house posts over the past couple of decades. There is no mention of *čsəmłenəxʷ* or Musqueam for that matter, despite the fact that its unveiling was attended by the late Vince Stogan, who then carried the name *čsəmłenəxʷ*. According to those who have carried the name, the “man” in the title refers to the ancestor *čsəmłenəxʷ*, who possessed a special power enabling him to hunt bears – and is thus represented coaxing a bear out of its den with rattle and song.¹⁹

The plaque also tells us this rendition was carved by the late Simon Charlie, a well-respected artist and knowledge-keeper from the

¹⁹ “Tsimalano House Board,” UBC Museum of Anthropology online collection, Catalogue note no. A50004.

Cowichan tribes – although on the plaque he is described only as “Salish.” It is worth thinking about the concept of authorship in this circumstance. I have yet to locate information about the role of “artists” in historical Coast Salish societies, but if we look elsewhere on the Northwest Coast, we know that primacy was often given to the person who received or commissioned the work rather than its maker. Talented artists, however, were recognized and works were commissioned specifically from them; those works were often made to represent the privileges and status of the chiefly owner and so were more closely associated with the owner’s name and house, family or clan. Today it is not known who imagined and executed the imagery of both the *čsəm̓lenəxʷ* and *qiyəplənəxʷ* posts, but the names associated with these specific objects persist. To my knowledge, this is a distinct understanding from non-Indigenous art for which an artwork’s value may be heightened by who collects and owns it, but rarely is the artist unidentified. It is interesting to see Charlie’s name here; it reflects an intersection or influence of Western concepts of art and perhaps that this post was understood as “art” rather than an expression of inherent rights. The plaque, then, with its invented title and its omission of *čsəm̓lenəxʷ* further disconnects this post from its origins, namely its family connections, as well as its association with Musqueam. By rendering it a “welcome pole,” the post seems more connected to the thematic of Totem Park, perhaps intended to welcome students to their temporary homes at UBC, as opposed to Musqueam welcoming visitors to its unceded territory.

You can view the historical *čsəm̓lenəxʷ* board on display inside the

Museum of Anthropology; this is not the original rendition of the board, but perhaps the second version.²⁰ This suggests recreating a specific portrayal is not a recent phenomenon having come about as a result of Musqueam-settler interactions, but is an Indigenous practice. Reiterating a specific post, then, is one means of carrying forward legacies, teachings and rights.

Before you leave, take a look at the recent additions to the Totem Park complex, which bear *hən̓q̓əmi̓n̓əm̓* place names: *həm̓ləsəm̓* and *q̓ələχən*. These names were gifted by Musqueam to UBC in 2011. More recently, Musqueam bestowed the name *čsnaɽəm* for the latest new building in the housing complex.²¹ No longer are Totem Park residences named after Indigenous groups without their input; they are now being named in collaboration with Musqueam.

²⁰ “Tsimalano House Board.”

²¹ For more information on these names, see UBC Student Residence, “Totem Park House Names,” <http://vancouverhousing.ubc.ca/totem-park-house-names/>.



Brent Sparrow Jr., *qiyəplənəx^w house post*, installed at Allard Hall, UBC, 2012. Photo: Michael R. Barrick.

Stop 3

ALLARD SCHOOL OF LAW

What is now known as “Point Grey” includes the site of ǫləḵən (“stockade”), a Musqueam warrior outpost led by qiyəplənəx^w. It was from here that qiyəplənəx^w the second, a powerful warrior, launched a retaliation against Laich-kwil-tach raiders. It is an event carried forward to this day by oral tradition: the Musqueam Warriors dance group reenacts this historical event in its performances, for example. ǫləḵən was strategically located, since from here you could look out to the Georgia Strait and see raiding parties travelling from the north. Here stands another, more recent reiteration of qiyəplənəx^w, made in 2012 by Brent Sparrow Jr., one of many descendants connected to the qiyəplənəx^w genealogy.

To describe qiyəplənəx^w as an important ancestral name feels like an understatement. The name carries a legacy which I feel unqualified to speak to. For example, Musqueam oral history holds that the second qiyəplənəx^w greeted Spanish explorer Narváez, who anchored west of present day Point Grey on July 5, 1791, and Captain Vancouver in 1792. Ancestral names are passed down through the generations, along with associated rights and responsibilities. Big names, or names of a high status, as one might imagine, are associated with positions of leadership and jurisdiction over lands and waters. In other words, inherited names are an integral part of Musqueam governance. Charlie

Capilano, who also carried the name qiyəplənəx^w, was present at the McKenna-McBride Commission. Today, respected Musqueam elder Howard E. Grant carries the name.²² Simply put, it is important to recognize the continuous legacy of qiyəplənəx^w and the recent post is but one expression of this.

On numerous occasions I have heard Dzawada'enuxw artist and scholar Marianne Nicolson declare that in her community, material practices such as regalia and ceremonial gear are not just “beautiful objects.” Instead, she argues, they should be understood as *legal documents*, or title documents, that confer or speak to her community’s rights and title to their ancestral territory. As she has noted, these types of objects “tell the story of how we came to be in the land, and our right to be there.”²³ The collection and recontextualized display of such items in museums and art galleries is a depoliticizing act, Nicolson has argued, and is tightly connected to the colonization of First Nations lands and resources. I also think about ideas expressed by Joe Martin, a Tla-o-qui-aht canoe carver, about literacy. When non-Indigenous people arrived, Indigenous peoples were illiterate in the English language, yet settlers were also illiterate, having no understanding of how to read the visual language of Nuu-chah-nulth totem poles.²⁴ I find these perspectives are a useful way to think of the Musqueam house posts – they too can be read – not in the popularly

held idea of telling one story, but as representative of a distinct legal system of ownership and property, both tangible and intangible.

Bearing this in mind, it seems fitting that Sparrow’s work is situated here – a representation of Musqueam law in close proximity to the University’s law school. Moreover, Musqueam has had a lengthy history of engaging with Canada’s legal system to assert its jurisdiction over our lands and waters. Musqueam’s actions in court have led to precedent-setting decisions for Aboriginal rights and title in Canada and beyond, with the *Guerin* (1984) and *Sparrow* (1990) decisions in particular being of continuous significance. Brent Sparrow Jr.’s rendition of qiyəplənəx^w elaborates on its historical precedent; he has added a large base to the sculpture, which includes a spindle whorl composition rendered in glass. The scale of the post is imposing, amplifying the post’s divergence from an architectural element to freestanding monumental sculpture.

²² For more information, see Larry Grant, Susan J. Blake and Ulrich C. Teucher, “Meanings of Musqueam Ancestral Names: The Capilano Tradition,” *UBC Working Papers in Linguistics* 14 (2004): 45–66.

²³ Marianne Nicolson, untitled presentation presented at the *Carving on the Edge Festival*, Tofino, BC, September 8, 2017.

²⁴ Joe Martin, personal communication with author, September 10, 2017.



Susan A. Point, *Raven with Spindle Whorl*, installed at the First Nations Longhouse, UBC, 1993.
Photo: Michael R. Barrick.

Stop 4

FIRST NATIONS HOUSE OF LEARNING

If you are a non-Indigenous reader, I politely request that you be respectful as you visit this space.³² You might have to peek through the windows to see Susan Point's house post, *Raven with Spindle Whorl*, which is part of the Longhouse's architecture, installed during the construction of the building in 1993. It is Point's first monumental sculpture, and does not make reference to a historical post. Here I am interested in how the post retains its architectural quality, as the Longhouse is modeled after historical Musqueam longhouses. These post and beam structures were shed-roofed, with massive cedar-planked walls. Point has observed that Musqueam house posts were typically flat-backed, but this post was carved in the round for seismic reasons.³³ This Longhouse is an amalgamation of artistic traditions and traces the historical circumstances that have brought these distinct groups together; prior to settler-colonialism, it is unlikely that a single house would consist of the traditions of the Haida, Haisla, Heiltsuk, Musqueam, Nisga'a, Tahltan, Tlingit and Tsimshian, who are very disparate groups, geographic and otherwise. Here, the longhouse as an architectural form, much like house posts, exhibits a degree of responsiveness and agility.

³² The Longhouse is a safe space for Indigenous students on campus – a home away from home.

³³ Susan Point, personal communication with author, March 21, 2018.



Susan A. Point, *Imich Siiyem – Welcome Good People*, 1997. Collection of the UBC Museum of Anthropology (Nb2836).
Photo: Michael R. Barrick.

Stop 5

THE MUSEUM OF ANTHROPOLOGY

The Museum of Anthropology (MOA), in addition to currently holding the two posts that were previously located at the Botanical Gardens, is also site to three contemporary house posts by renowned Musqueam artist Susan Point, all installed in 1997.

Imich Siiyem – Welcome Good People is the first post you will see. From my understanding, this post is an original creation and like much of Point's work, imaginatively draws on imagery from historical Coast Salish objects. It bears some resemblance to the *qiyəplenəxʷ* post, for example. But this is not to suggest the imagery is without culturally specific meanings. The figure holds a fisher, an animal associated with both positive and negative powers. The base features hands raised, often described as a welcoming or thanking gesture. The head of the figure has celestial symbols. This post also has a plaque, which in its opening statement reads, "This Musqueam figure acknowledges the estimated 10,000 years the ancestors of Musqueam people have lived on these lands, and through the present generation represents the continuum into the future." This figure, commissioned for this prominent location outside MOA's entrance, is intended to acknowledge Musqueam's extensive history on our territory, but also to welcome the many visitors to the Museum. Unlike the plaque for the 1974 *čsəmlenəxʷ*, it is clear who is doing the welcoming here. (This

welcoming is reinforced by the engraved stone at the top of the stairs, which was added to mark the addition of two new Musqueam works in 2010, one by the late Joe Becker and the other by Susan Point.)

To the west of the Museum are two posts that refer to historical Musqueam posts now located in New York City. These contemporary posts warrant a revisiting of a historical moment. The old posts were sold to the American Museum of Natural History at the end of the 1890s, after repeated visits to the reserve by Harlan Smith, who was working for famed anthropologist Franz Boas. Research by Susan Roy and anthropologist Brian Thom reveals that Smith was persistent, often attempting to convince people into selling their possessions by showing them photos of the Northwest Coast Hall at the AMNH, where the items would be shown.²⁵ He faced resistance or indifference from Musqueam community members, who either turned down his offers or offered their items at prices outside of his budget. For example, the *čsəm̓lenəx^w* post was offered to him for \$100, which he felt was far too high a price. Smith was ultimately successful in purchasing a house post from Chief Johnny *χ^wəyχ^wayələq*. Smith wrote to Boas:

Bought for \$10.00 at Musquiam Reserve near Eburne BC May 18th 98 by Harlan I. Smith on condition to be labeled from house of Kapl.nux [*qiyəplənəx^w*] grandfather of present Chief Nuxwhailak [*χ^wəyχ^wayələq*] from whom it was obtained. It was understood that he let us have it because we wanted it for educational purposes and the 10.00 was *not payment*. The pole was *part gift* to museum.²⁶

²⁵ Brian Thom, "Precarious Rapport: Harlan I. Smith and the Jesup North Pacific Expedition," *European Review of Native American Studies* 14:1 (2000): 6 and Roy, *These Mysterious People*, 63-66, 68.

²⁶ Quoted in Roy, *These Mysterious People*, 64 (emphasis mine).

Chief Johnny *χ^wəyχ^wayələq* made clear stipulations around the removal of these posts from the reserve, intending for them to continue to represent the legacy of *qiyəplənəx^w*, even if they were a continent away. The notion of the transaction being "part gift" is particularly fascinating. Roy speculates about the nature of gifting and exchange within a Musqueam economic system, suggesting it was possible that *χ^wəyχ^wayələq* expected the establishment of a reciprocal relationship of mutual obligations. Perhaps part-gifting was to ensure that the stipulations on how the posts would be contextualized would be met. I wonder if it was also meant to convey that the value of the post exceeded any monetary worth, in that to put a price tag on it would be of disservice to what it represents; that part-gifting disallows the post to be completely commodified and absorbed into a capitalist system.

Smith, Boas and the AMNH never did fulfill their end of the agreement. The post, along with three others collected from the reserve the following year, have been on display for over 100 years now, without mention of *qiyəplənəx^w* or Musqueam. Instead they have been subsumed under a broad category of "Coast Salish," as part of Boas's cultural group approach to representing the peoples of the Northwest Coast. As Roy observes, "Despite Franz Boas's concern for the cultural context of collected objects, their recontextualization in anthropological exhibits and texts emphasized the category 'Coast Salish' and de-emphasized local identities, histories and cultural meanings."²⁷ Roy views this as part of ethnographic practice at the time, which "served to distance Aboriginal peoples from their past";²⁸

²⁷ Roy, *These Mysterious People*, 55.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

however, as their positioning during the McKenna-McBride Commission attests, these posts were anything but irrelevant to the present. Recontextualizing the posts can be viewed as an act of depoliticization – much like what we have seen with the *čsəmłenəx^w* board in Totem Park or the staging of the posts in the Botanical Gardens.²⁹

Like Brent Sparrow Jr.'s reinterpretation of the *qiyəplənəx^w* post at Allard Hall, the two contemporary posts are not exact copies. The new posts are created with an architectural element – supporting beams – as the old posts formerly would have had. They are now arch-like, standing overtop of a path that leads to a reconstructed Haida “village.” This location is purposeful, as to access the Haida houses and totem poles visitors need to first pass through what can be seen as gateways that are Musqueam in origin. Point employs a similar tactic at Stanley Park, where three monumental gateways – also post and beam structures – are the entry points to the stand of totem poles imported from elsewhere. In both settings, Point's works are long-overdue interventions. For decades, northern Northwest Coast art, particularly of the Haida, has been privileged by non-Indigenous audiences and in many ways Vancouver has been somewhat of a ground-zero to this phenomenon, contributing to an erasure of local nations' distinct artistic traditions. Coast Salish art has historically been underappreciated until only relatively recently, largely as a result of Susan Point's prolific output. The historical house posts displayed on campus can be viewed

as the earliest representations of Musqueam (and Coast Salish) art in what is now Greater Vancouver and Susan Point's works are some of the first contemporary Coast Salish public artworks.

The new posts visibly gesture to their historical precedents' current location in New York and are thus updated to mark history. At the base of the poles, Point has added water patterns to represent the Fraser River, home to Musqueam, and the East River, the river nearest the AMNH. Above the water on both posts are representations of the sun rising and setting, which can also be read as the crown of the Statue of Liberty. Point also adds a rich colour palette to the posts. On the historical posts, the imagery is a bit less certain: one features a human figure holding a pair of bird-like creatures by their necks, a circular shape with a crouching human and three disks. A catalogue note, presumably written by Smith upon acquiring it, states that the disks represent stars, sun and moon, while the humans represent the ancestors who taught about them.³⁰ The other post features a bird-like being with a human face, with its claws clutching a two-headed creature. As respected anthropologist Wayne Suttles speculated, these posts “seem to combine inherited privileges, ... representations of creatures seen in visions, ... and perhaps ancestors as well.”³¹ In Coast Salish communities such as Musqueam, spiritual visions were kept private; it is quite likely that both Smith and Suttles were not privy to specific meanings.

²⁹ Fortunately, the AMNH has recently announced its intention to renovate the Northwest Coast Hall in collaboration with the communities it represents, as described in Marsha Lederman, “A Vision of the Future for a Historical Hall,” *The Globe and Mail*, September 25, 2017, <https://beta.theglobeandmail.com/arts/the-multimillion-dollar-project-to-update-restore-and-convert-a-historic-hall-at-the-american-natural-history-museum/article36377199>.

³⁰ Wayne Suttles, “Productivity and its Constraints: A Coast Salish Case,” in *Coast Salish Essays* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1987), 121.

³¹ *Ibid.*



Susan A. Point, *Untitled house posts*, 1997. Collection of the UBC Museum of Anthropology (Nbz837 and Nbz838). Photo: Michael R. Barrick.



Thomas Cannell, *Twin Thunder and Lightning Birds*, installed in its original location at Thunderbird Arena, UBC, 2009. Photo: Phillip Jeffrey, fadetoplay.com.

Stop 6

THUNDERBIRD ARENA

Late 2009 and 2010 witnessed a proliferation of new public artworks by Musqueam artists throughout the Vancouver area in anticipation of the 2010 Winter Olympics. Musqueam, along with Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh and Lil'wat, was one of the "Four Host First Nations" who cohosted the mega-event with its thousands of athletes and spectators. The branding of the Olympics, from its logo and mascots to its merchandise and Team Canada uniforms, heavily drew upon Indigenous culture and imagery, and in the process created opportunities for Indigenous artists to represent their nations in a highly visible way.

The Thunderbird Arena, opened in 2008, was the main site for Olympic activity at UBC, and its interior and exterior environment features an abundance of Musqueam artworks. As you may recall, the Thunderbird, as a team name and symbol, came to UBC via Kwakwaka'wakw traditions. Here, however, the supernatural creature is in a way reclaimed; it is rendered by Musqueam artists in their own, distinctly local forms, situating it in Musqueam oral histories and beliefs. Thomas Cannell's house post, *Twin Thunder and Lightning Birds* (see image on previous page), is a part of this suite of works. Cannell was inspired to create this post by his late great-uncle Dominic Point's recounting of the Musqueam runners who kept watch for incoming raiders, and with great athletic prowess, would relay messages to notify Musqueam

villages of any potential threats. He also depicts the Thunderbird with imagery of salmon and water, referencing the powerful spirit's ability to intervene in times of drought, bringing storms to restore the river's water level for the wellbeing of the salmon, and thus of the Musqueam people. As with the house post we are about to see, Cannell draws on community-held narratives to represent Musqueam as a nation. With its vibrant palette, layered imagery and experimentation with sculptural form, *Twin Thunder* continues to push forward what a house post can look like, while remaining strongly connected to Musqueam histories and ways of knowing.



Brent Sparrow Jr., *s̓ɪ:ʔqəy̓ qeqən*, installed at the University of British Columbia, 2016. Photo: Michael R. Barrick.

Stop 7 CAMPUS BOOKSTORE

The most recently installed house post on campus is our final stop. *s̓ɪ:ʔqəy̓ qeqən*, created by Brent Sparrow Jr., was unveiled in 2016 to mark UBC's 100th birthday and commissioned by UBC in partnership with Musqueam.

The post is carved to depict the narrative about the origin of the name Musqueam. This story is imparted on the accompanying text panels and can be understood as commonly held by the community, although specific tellings can perhaps best be understood as belonging to families. In this instance, the post depicts the story as told by the late James Point; the commission process included Point's grandson, Johnny Louis, who carries the ancestral name of his grandfather, *məneʔɬ*. The post, rather than representing a specific family or ancestor, is representative of the Musqueam nation and its history as a whole.

This post possesses some intriguing formal qualities. It is of a particularly large scale, lending to increased visibility from distant vantage points. It is located near the heart of campus. This post is also installed in water, which is unusual – longhouses are not built on top of moving water, as far as I know. However, the water element makes sense as a reference to the Musqueam creek. In other words, this sculpture is almost something different than a house post. And yet, it

is very much still a house post in its function – similar to the way the community deployed the two posts to assert ownership during the McKenna-McBride Commission, Musqueam has positioned this post in the heart of campus to remind students, staff, faculty and leadership that this is still Musqueam territory. I have also seen this post described as a gift to the University.³⁴ If the artist was compensated for his work – and he was – what exactly is being gifted? I have heard Musqueam elder Larry Grant refer to Musqueam as the University’s most important benefactor given the value of the land this campus sits on. Perhaps less cynically, it is the immaterial which is being gifted, that which the post represents – the narrative and knowledge.

What motivated UBC to commission this monumental house post? These days it is a relatively common occurrence to hear UBC acknowledge that it occupies the unceded, ancestral and traditional territory of the Musqueam people. Unlike in 1927 when the land was understood to have “once belonged to” Musqueam, today there is recognition that the land this campus is on continues to belong to Musqueam. I still view UBC as invested in Indigenous peoples, cultures and histories, as it was – differently – in the early and mid-1900s, albeit in recent years it manifests in less appropriative and more respectful ways. The First Nations House of Learning, the UBC-Musqueam Memorandum of Affiliation, the UBC Aboriginal Strategic Plan and other initiatives too numerous to list all speak to this commitment. The transformations that have occurred over

the past decades have come about not purely from the institution’s benevolence, but by Musqueam leadership applying consistent pressure to the University alongside the persistence of a growing number of Indigenous staff, students and faculty.

As this walking tour draws to a close, I hope I have conveyed how the Musqueam house posts on campus, both past and present, are markers of Musqueam’s relationship with its territory through time, particularly with the land that is now commonly known as UBC. For over a century, Musqueam leadership and artists have been active participants in how house posts are displayed according to Musqueam understandings of these sculptures. While posts have undergone transformations and can perhaps be described as public or outdoor art, they are still invested with particular meanings and still transmit specific histories, teachings and inherent rights; they are tangible expressions of Musqueam ways of knowing and being. I have little doubt that the relationship between UBC and Musqueam will continue to shift and house posts, now commonly seen throughout Musqueam and other Coast Salish territories in the public realm, will be part of this transformation.

³⁴ Mark Yuen, “Video: Musqueam Post a Gift to UBC,” *Vancouver Sun*, April 7, 2016, <http://vancouver.sun.com/news/local-news/video-musqueam-post-a-gift-to-ubc>.

qeqən: A WALKING TOUR OF MUSQUEAM HOUSE POSTS AT UBC

is part of a larger initiative of the Belkin Art Gallery to animate outdoor artworks on campus, both within and outside of its collection. The house posts discussed came to UBC through the collecting processes of a range of different university faculties and entities. This guide provides context for how the house posts relate to one another, Musqueam territory and to UBC history. For a list of outdoor artworks in the Belkin's permanent collection, visit www.belkin.ubc.ca/outdoor/

JORDAN WILSON

Jordan Wilson is a Vancouver-based emerging curator and writer and was a curatorial intern at the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery (2017/18). He is a member of the Musqueam First Nation, whose traditional, ancestral and unceded territory encompasses what is now Vancouver, BC. Wilson holds an MA in Anthropology (with a focus on critical museum studies) and a BA in First Nations Studies (now First Nations and Indigenous Studies), both obtained at the University of British Columbia. Wilson was a co-curator of the exhibits *čəsnałəm, the city before the city* (2015) and *In a Different Light: Reflecting on Northwest Coast Art* (2017) at the UBC Museum of Anthropology. He is currently a PhD student at New York University.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I raise my hands in thanks to auntie Leona Sparrow and uncle Howard E. Grant for their review of this text. I am thankful for the assistance provided by Vanessa Campbell and the Musqueam Language and Culture Department. I would also like to thank Lorna Brown, Karen Duffek, Susan Rowley, Susan Roy and Aaron Wilson for their helpful suggestions, Judith Steedman for her sensitive design, and Jana Tyner for shepherding this project.

Jordan Wilson

The second printing of this guide has been made possible through the University of British Columbia in support of its Indigenous Strategic Plan. The Belkin acknowledges the support of the BC I Canada 150: Celebrating B.C. Communities and their Contributions to Canada Fund for the original printing of the guide, as well as the ongoing support of the Canada Council for the Arts, the Province of British Columbia through the BC Arts Council and our Belkin Curator's Forum members. Jordan Wilson's Curatorial Internship at the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery was made possible through the British Columbia Arts Council Early Career Development Program.



1 numbers correspond to entries in booklet

Pacific Spirit Regional Park
to Wreck Beach

0 200 400 m

MUSQUEAM RESERVE
Entrance 1
UBC Botanical Garden and Centre for Plant Research

Greenheart Tree Walk

OLD MARINE DR

to UBC Farm

to Westbrook Village

Campus

to The Village

Chancellor Place

Hawthorn Place

University Endowment Lands

Cecil Green Park House

Tower Beach



Chancellor Hall

Chapel of Epiphany

Coast

Allard Hall

Green College

Rose Garden Plaza

University Centre

Frederic Wood Theatre

Thea Koerner House

Museum of Anthropology

International House

Liu Institute

Norman MacKenzie House

Nitobe Garden

Place Vanier Residence

West Coast Suites

East Gage Residence

Westpoint

North Commons

Hillel House

Brock Hall

Buchanan Tower

Wyman Plaza

Old Aud

Choi Building

International House

Asian Centre

Nitobe Garden

Place Vanier Residence

St. John's College

Marine Drive Residence

Exchange Residence

Westpoint

North Commons

Hillel House

Brock Hall

Buchanan Tower

Wyman Plaza

Old Aud

Choi Building

International House

Asian Centre

Nitobe Garden

Place Vanier Residence

St. John's College

Marine Drive Residence

Aquatic Centre

War Memorial

Old SUB

AMS Nest

Alumni Centre

Security

Bookstore

BioSciences

David Lam

Somerset Studios

Audain Art Centre

Ponderosa Commons

St. John's College

Marine Drive Residence

St. John's College

Marine Drive Residence

War Memorial

Old SUB

AMS Nest

Alumni Centre

Security

Bookstore

BioSciences

David Lam

Somerset Studios

Audain Art Centre

Ponderosa Commons

St. John's College

Marine Drive Residence

St. John's College

Marine Drive Residence

Marine Drive Residence

Hospital

Urgent Care

Hospital

Woodward Library

Westbrook Building

Security

Bookstore

BioSciences

David Lam

Somerset Studios

Audain Art Centre

Ponderosa Commons

St. John's College

Marine Drive Residence

St. John's College

Marine Drive Residence

Life Sciences

Urgent Care

Hospital

Woodward Library

Westbrook Building

Security

Bookstore

BioSciences

David Lam

Somerset Studios

Audain Art Centre

Ponderosa Commons

St. John's College

Marine Drive Residence

St. John's College

Marine Drive Residence

Thunderbird Parkade

Thunderbird Arena

Thunderbird Parkade

UBC Skate Park

TEF3

Thunderbird Residence

Doug Mitchell Centre

Thunderbird Arena

Thunderbird Parkade

UBC Skate Park

TEF3

Thunderbird Residence

Thunderbird Arena

Thunderbird Parkade

UBC Skate Park

TEF3

Thunderbird Residence

Rugby Centre

Thunderbird Arena

Thunderbird Parkade

UBC Skate Park

TEF3

Thunderbird Residence

Rugby Centre

Thunderbird Arena

Thunderbird Parkade

UBC Skate Park

TEF3

Thunderbird Residence

Rugby Centre

Thunderbird Arena

Thunderbird Parkade

UBC Skate Park

TEF3

Thunderbird Residence

Rugby Centre

Thunderbird Arena

Thunderbird Parkade

UBC Skate Park

TEF3

Thunderbird Residence

Rugby Centre

Thunderbird Arena

Thunderbird Parkade

UBC Skate Park

TEF3

Thunderbird Residence

Rugby Centre

Thunderbird Arena

Thunderbird Parkade

UBC Skate Park

TEF3

Thunderbird Residence

Rugby Centre

Thunderbird Arena

Thunderbird Parkade

UBC Skate Park

TEF3

Thunderbird Residence

Rugby Centre

Thunderbird Arena

Thunderbird Parkade

UBC Skate Park

TEF3

Thunderbird Residence

Rugby Centre

Thunderbird Arena

Thunderbird Parkade

UBC Skate Park

TEF3

Thunderbird Residence

Thunderbird Residence