

Squamish and Lil'wat Nation Artists Celebrate Tradition and Lift Modern Art

The carriages on the Peak 2 Peak gondola act as outdoor art installation, presenting First Nations art in a unique way.

Writer Jack Lowe



What does it mean to represent your culture? There is no easy answer. Artists, poets, singers and ordinary people have grappled with the question forever. If what we do is the product of where we come from, with all the diversity and nuance that involves, it becomes obvious that expressing oneself, in whatever form that takes, is the truest representation of a culture because it comes from the most important part of it: the people. For cultures as old and as rich in history as the Squamish and Lil'wat Nations, there is the added pressure of maintaining, respecting, and honouring centuries-old practices while keeping pace with the modern world.

"I think I'm still connected to the ancient traditional values of it. But they're filtered through my new brain," says artist Levi Nelson. He is discussing his painting *Red* and in particular its use in the Gondola Gallery by Epic at Whistler Blackcomb. Organized by Vail Resorts, the Gondola Gallery is "an outdoor art installation and film series that celebrates the unique backgrounds of skiers and snowboarders." The first two installations—*Uplifted* by Lamont Joseph White in Park City and *Creating Your Line* by Jim Harris—debuted late last year, and now Nelson's contribution has been revealed.