



## **Paddling through the Waves of Change**

**by Phyllis Atkins**

This artwork was designed to inspire those meeting together to consider their decisions in context to the needs of the environment and the importance of community. The drawing presents a canoe riding on waves with the rising sun above. The canoe is a traditional Salish shape; a design capable of travelling not only on the river, but also across oceans. The three standing paddles represent a traditional greeting of Salish people, made when they approached the shore when visiting other territories. The design of each paddle blade is different and represents the diversity of people. The need for balance in the world is represented within the canoe by a male and a female salmon. The female is identified by the roe in her belly.

Immediately below the canoe are four waves, designed to represent the four directions of the world. In total the seven waves represent the seven traditional laws of the Coast Salish peoples. These laws are to be practiced and honoured throughout one's life, and guide not only our own conduct, but also help us keep in mind the next generation, our community and the needs of the environment. The values these laws teach are: Health; Happiness; Generations; Generosity; Humility; Forgiveness and Understanding.

These collective symbols form the artwork's overall meaning: we may each be different in some way from one another, but we are all in the same boat. In order for us to be in balance and move forward, we must respect one another, and work together: we must paddle together in the same direction.

The artist's name Q'woy'tic'a (pronounced K-why-deet-za) means "I wear the clouds like a blanket" or "Shrouded in clouds." Her name comes from the Nl̓eʔkepmx language and it was given to her by her maternal grandfather Hereditary Chief Anthony Joe of the Shakan Band (Thompson River People). Q'woy'tic'a was also her Great Grand Aunt's name, who lived to be 112 years old. The artist is also part Sto:lo (People of the river). Her parents, Hereditary Grand Chief Joe Gabriel of Kwantlen First Nation) and mother, Maureen had nine children; Cheryl, Donna, Gary, Carol, Brenda, Marilyn (Currently Chief of Kwantlen), Fern, Phyllis & Scott. She continues to live in Kwantlen Territory, together with her husband, artist Drew Atkins, and their three children. Together, they work out of the K'wy'i'y'e Spring Salmon Studio, to create both traditional and contemporary Coast Salish Art.