

The Tzinquaw Story



BALD EAGLE
(YUXWULE')

KILLER WHALE
(Q'UL-LHANUMUTSUN)

KILLER WHALE CALF
(Q'UL-LHANUMUTSUNAL-LH)

The story goes that the Qw'utsun' people were starving because the Killer Whale prevented the Salmon from coming up the Cowichan River. So the people prayed day after day, until finally their prayers were answered. The Tzinquaw (Thunderbird) came and picked up the Killer Whale, deposited it on Mount Tzouhalem; the Salmon started coming up the river again. In this case, the pole depicts the Thunderbird (mythical eagle figure) as a saviour and protector of our people; and the Killer Whale as a monster (Cowichan Tribes, Submission, 1986).

As a first process to carve a traditional pole you would burn the log, burn the outer layer with pitch. The result is a different colour on red cedar; it is sort of a grey-black. The black sea-going canoes were also prepared in this same manner. Today we would use the natural colours and not paint on the poles. (Harvey Alphonse, Interview, Nov 2012).[©]



1986 | Size: 15'1" (4.6 m)

Chief Swaletthul't'hw (Harvey Alphonse) and Kelly Antoine

Harvey was born in 1949 and is a hereditary chief with the Qw'umiyiqun (Comiaken) of Qw'utsun' Tribes through his grandmother Tstaaslewut (Catherine Lohe'), and her father Lohe' a hereditary chief. He carves masks for his family's sacred sxwayxwuy (mask dance) ceremonies. Kelly Antoine carved the upper figure of this pole; he is a carver from Samuna', (Somenos), of Qw'utsun' Tribes. Both artists are Coast Salish. Photo is of Chief Alphonse.[©]



Courtesy of Cowichan Tribes.