

## THROUGH THE INFLUENCE OF ART: HOW CEREMONIAL CHAIRS, A TALKING STICK, AND SENATE CHAMBER DOORS BE- CAME PART OF ONE UNIVERSITY'S FOUN- DATION FOR INDIGENIZATION

**Rheanna Robinson, PhD**

Associate Professor

Department of First Nations Studies

University of Northern British Columbia

Prince George, BC V2N 4Z9

**Ron A. Sebastian**

Northwest Coast Indigenous Artist

Community of Hagwilget, BC

***"I could still feel the warmth of them"***

**(R. A. Sebastian, Personal Communication, August 3, 2018).**

These words were spoken to me by Indigenous artist, Ron A. Sebastian, in August 2018, when I interviewed him about his creation of the Ceremonial Chairs, Talking Stick, and Senate Chamber doors that he was commissioned to make for the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) starting when UNBC opened in the 1990s. Ron, a Northwest Coast Indigenous artist is Wet'suwet'en and Gitksan and resides in the community of Hagwilget, BC. He holds the hereditary name, Gwin Butsxw (Likes-to-be-Packed) and is from the House of Spookw in the Lak Gibuu (Wolf) Clan. Ron reflected on the warmth of the Ceremonial Chairs as he recounted his visit to UNBC in June 2015 during UNBC's 25th Anniversary celebration. Ron was a special guest at the event and as he moved around the room with the Talking Stick amongst the modest size crowd at the Charles Jago Northern Sport Centre on the UNBC Prince George campus, I remember him humbly smiling with pride while holding his magnificent work of cultural representation and Indigenous knowledges.

Initially conceptualized by Ron to be "Chief's Chairs," UNBC's Ceremonial Chairs are occupied by the President and Chancellor every year in front of UNBC's graduating classes at the Prince George campus on the territory of the Lheidli T'enneh Nation. The Talking Stick, also called a Speaker's Staph (Wade, 1995), and normally called a mace at universities in Canada, is considered to be a symbol of power, authority,

and governance in Indigenous communities (Shearer, 2000; Stewart & Tait, 1993), and is utilized annually at UNBC's Convocation. Although UNBC holds annual Convocation celebrations throughout the region it serves, the Ceremonial Chairs and Talking Stick are normally only used in Prince George, on the official day all UNBC degrees are conferred.

But the Ceremonial Chairs and Talking Stick are only part of Ron's contributions. UNBC is home to Senate Chamber doors that were carved and painted by Ron, and he contributed to the design of UNBC's Coat of Arms. Ron has also donated many pieces of framed pictures on UNBC's Prince George campus and he carved the Raven that is displayed in the UNBC Robert Frederick Gallery. UNBC writes, "UNBC's Coat of Arms, as well as key art pieces, the talking stick, convocation chairs and Senate Chamber doors carry symbols of UNBC's relationships and agreements with First Nations people, the land, animals and plants at the university" (2016-b). Representing Indigenous knowledges and Indigenous knowledge systems, Ron's artwork occupies a space of conventional university practice and ultimately permeates Indigenization in unprecedented and foundational ways. Ron has now received an honorary doctorate from the university.

I did not know Ron when he was commissioned by the university to create the Ceremonial Chairs, Talking Stick, and Senate Chamber doors, but I do know, and clearly remember, the first time I ever saw the Ceremonial Chairs and Talking Stick at a Convocation ceremony. Although I started attending UNBC in 1995 as an 18-year-old Indigenous (Métis) undergraduate student, I had not yet attended a Convocation ceremony at UNBC until I graduated with my Bachelor of Arts degree in 2001. When I saw the Chairs and the use of the Talking Stick by university dignitaries I was mesmerized. I could not have imagined the impact Ron's work would have on my time at UNBC and my perspectives about Indigenization in the academy. I always wanted to interview Ron about the work he did for UNBC and write a paper with him. As an Associate Professor in the Department of First Nations Studies at UNBC, it is my privilege and honour to collaborate with Ron to share his story and offer an account of how early Indigenization efforts at UNBC exist in profound and enduring ways.

### **Prioritizing Indigenous presence**

It is not surprising that UNBC can boast to have some of its institutional structures and practices embody Indigenous knowledges. UNBC, a public, post-secondary institution that was created following the dream of Northern residents in BC to have access to higher education closer to home, began with a campaign in 1987 by local residents who created the Interior University Society (IUS), to ensure that the energy behind the desire for a university in the North would be realized.

Throughout the evolution and growth of UNBC, there has always been a stated commitment to Indigenous education and Indigenous learners. As part of the research for my PhD, *Weaving Indigenous Knowledge into the Academy: Promises and Challenges from the Perspectives of Three Aboriginal Post-Secondary Institutes in British Columbia*, I had an opportunity to learn more about the Indigenous-related institutional history of UNBC, and I am pleased to share some of my PhD research here (Robinson, 2016).

UNBC alumni Robert van Andrichem (2008) writes that when a university in the North was being planned, “[IUS] members toured the northern region selling the idea to residents, secured the services of a Swedish academic named Urban Dahllof with expertise on northern universities, and lobbied government politicians and bureaucrats” (p. 87). Then, on June 22, 1990, “the Provincial Legislature passed Bill 40, The UNBC Act, with all-party support” (UNBC, n.d.-b). The news of a new university in BC was unprecedented and captured the attention of people in the province and beyond. The story of such a prospect was printed in our local newspaper in my hometown of Smithers, BC, when I was still in high school. In planning for post-secondary education and contemplating moving away from my family and friends, news of UNBC dramatically changed my future post-secondary considerations.

When I began attending UNBC in 1995, there was an atmosphere that made my transition to university life much easier. As an emerging institution with a small student population, my meeting new people and becoming familiar with the ways of academic life did not seem as intimidating as I had anticipated. Again, van Andrichem (2008) writes:

During its formative years, UNBC aimed to be a university ‘in the north and for the north.’ This slogan was intended to characterize UNBC as a university like every other (with a broad range of undergraduate, graduate, and professional degree programs; a strong focus on research, excellence, and scholarly inquiry; and a commitment to community service) and one uniquely situated as a resource for the northern region. (p. 88)

The region that UNBC is committed to serving has a population that is the size of metropolitan Victoria and covers a land mass more than twice the size of France (Jago, 2004, paragraph 1). However, as an Indigenous undergraduate student, the mantra I came to know and understand at UNBC was the university’s desire to emerge as a leader in Indigenous education and Indigenous community engagement. Indeed, the 1990 Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-secondary Education for Native Learners (PACPENL) report recommended:

The Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology fully support the... recommendation for a division of Aboriginal Studies within the Faculty of Arts and Science within the

new Northern university; and that First Nations be represented on the University of the North's Board of Governors and Senate. (p. 16)

Indigenous students and members of the Indigenous communities became involved with course development and delivery and many faculty and students in the UNBC community welcomed the opportunity to share and integrate Indigenous knowledge in the post-secondary classroom (Evans et al., 1999).

UNBC was the first university in Canada to offer a Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts program in First Nations Studies (Anderson & Nyce, 1998, p. 288, Thornton, 1998, p. 90) and the university motto, "En Cha Huna", meaning "that person also lives", was adopted in honour and in the spirit of the Carrier (Dakelh) Peoples and their belief in the interconnectedness of all beings. The UNBC Prince George campus sits on the traditional territory of the Lheidli T'enneh Nation and the motto is intended "to foster the rich cultural diversity of Northern British Columbia and its peoples" (UNBC, 1997, p. 2).

In fact, the 1997 Final Report of the University Planning Committee reads: "UNBC has a special responsibility to serve the needs of the First Nations peoples of Northern British Columbia... the University is deeply committed to making university education available and a rewarding experience for First Nations students" (p. 10). The report also explains that influencing the academic character of UNBC was an initial mandate that included five priority areas: Environmental Studies, First Nations Studies, International Studies, Women's/Gender Studies, and Northern Studies. These emerged as the dominant disciplines that, from my perspective, both faculty and students were encouraged to explore.

Evans et al. (1999) note that, "a crucial direction in UNBC's innovative programming is the area of Indigenous studies, or First Nations Studies, and the institutional desire to make the University a place for Aboriginal people" (p. 193). One prominent example of fulfilling this desire, and also meeting the recommendation of the PACPENL (1990) report, is the fact that UNBC established a Senate Committee on Indigenous Initiatives (formerly called the Senate Committee for First Nations and Aboriginal Peoples). This sub-committee to the larger body of the university is a unique example of creating a space for Aboriginal voice in the academic governance of UNBC. It meets on a regular basis to review course curriculum and delivery before being forwarded to Senate for final approval.

This process has given university faculty who might not otherwise be affiliated with Indigenous programming at the institution an opportunity to see the engagement of the community and hear their perspectives on how particular courses could be realized. Evans et al. (1999) understand that "many complex issues are associated with developing and delivering Aboriginal curriculum, including the appropriation of

community knowledge into courses and the voice of presentation in the classroom" (p. 194). Having the Senate Committee on Indigenous Initiatives is one way to mitigate some of those complex situations I know from my own experience, that there are often major educational opportunities related to Indigenous knowledge, histories, and values that emerges as a part of the Senate Committee process.

Undoubtedly, universities hold a vital role in regional development and in growing capacity for qualified and skilled graduates. UNBC was, and still is, a prominent source for actualizing this potential in Northern BC (van Andrichem, 2008, p. 81). Although UNBC has struggled over the last few decades in meeting its targeted enrolment numbers, and there were and are shifts in academic, community-related, and Indigenous-led priorities, it is reassuring to me that there is still a demonstration of commitment to realizing the goals of the university's "special responsibility."

In the 2010 University Action Plan then UNBC President George Iwama stated that UNBC will continue to encourage First Nations content in all programs; develop offerings in Law with an emphasis on Northern and First Nations' opportunities; foster participation from First Nations alumni to transform the communities we serve; increase the number of joint research projects with Northern communities, and especially with BC First Nations; and bring First Nations' interests more effectively to our identity as a Green University (p. 1 - 2). Evans et al. (1999) explain that "one of the roles the University has in the building of northern BC is the facilitation of cross-cultural communication, learning, and understanding" (p. 193). UNBC continues to articulate its plans regarding relations with Indigenous Peoples and institutional Indigenous efforts.

### **Symbolic Foundations**

In addition to highlighting the formal documentation related to early Indigenous efforts at UNBC from the position of government and the community, it is important to capture the role and significance of Ron Sebastian's contributions to UNBC through his art, Indigenous knowledge, and cultural expression. The Ceremonial Chairs, Talking Stick, and Senate Chamber doors, Coat of Arms, and many prints Ron has donated to UNBC are profound examples of Indigeneity and symbolize a story, and a history, of a critical relationship at UNBC.

As I capture in my interview with Ron in August 2018, he began his work as an artist almost 45 years ago following an injury he had while working as a logger and faller. When Ron became introduced to Indigenous art, he realized he was a "natural artist" and knew he would continue with art because, as he says, "it is really important for [our] culture and to not lose that part of First Nations history... I started my

own business, had a gallery for 14 years, and now I have a small gallery in my basement at my home” (R. A. Sebastian, Personal Communication). He explained:

Our history. It’s quite the history, really. For Native People you know, they sure came a long way with all the suffering they’ve gone through. Especially like my parents and I didn’t want to see that in my life... I was born in the Pacific Ocean, on an O-hara2 fish packer going to Prince Rupert. My mother was a camp cook and so I lived in camps and then my Grandparents had a huge farm [in Hazelton] so that’s where we used to go and my Grandmothers used to live on by the Royal Bank up there [in Hazelton] and we used to have all kinds of smoke houses so I got raised up around here and then my mother lived in Prince Rupert. She moved Prince Rupert, so we used to go back and forth. I did a lot of good things in Prince Rupert while I was there. I used to play baseball for Hazelton and for Prince Rupert, so I have a lot of good memories... (Personal Communication, August 3, 2018)

Ron has had a lifetime of traditional teachings and described he learned more about art by:

...studying designs... even going into the Royal Museum in Toronto and also the National Museum of Man in Ottawa to study the designs... I gave it a good four and a half years of 16 to 18 hours of work a day. (Personal Communication, August 3, 2018)

His work is found in areas of the world far beyond Northern British Columbia. He said:

I’ve got a Talking Stick in the Victoria Museum and I believe at one of the universities in Vancouver. I also have a 10 feet by 10 feet mural in Hull, Quebec in the old Indian Affairs building there and a small totem pole in London for a Doctor in London. Then there is the doors for the Tourism Centre in Prince George also. I did that with students and that turned out quite well. (Personal Communication, August 3, 2018)

Undoubtedly, his passion and talent has been recognized by many.

As Ron was busy operating a store in New Hazelton and caring for his family, UNBC approached him to create the integral, and important, Ceremonial Chairs, Talking Stick, and Senate Chamber doors for the university. Ron said that:

[My relationship with UNBC] started somewhere in the early 1990s... I forgot how I was introduced to UNBC when they first commissioned me with the [Ceremonial] Chairs, but I believe they did some research, and they came across me and I’ve been with [UNBC] ever since. (Personal Communication, August 3, 2018)

Finding a Master carver like Ron is undeniably UNBC's good fortune.

### UNBC's Ceremonial Chairs

When one attends a UNBC Convocation ceremony, you are seated or standing in front of a platform where the Ceremonial Chairs hold a place of prestige and prominence. The beauty and cultural representation of the Chairs stand out to the audience. When commissioned to make the Chairs, Ron was entirely aware of the task in front of him in creating the Ceremonial Chairs given the immense Indigenous representation in the region of British Columbia UNBC serves and the fact that the University President and Chancellor would be using them. Including representation from all Nations and being mindful of the power and symbolism of the animals (Mills, 1997; Shearer, 2000; Stewart & Tait, 1924) Ron would use in his crest carving and design was important. Ron explained:

I pretty well covered [Crest/Clan representation] all the way from Quesnel to Atlin... I believe there is something like 1700 different Crests that goes with different Clans, and they go all together, and it became really impossible to figure it all out, but it eventually all came together on the [Ceremonial] Chairs... (Personal Communication, August 3, 2018)

As described by UNBC (2016-a)::

[UNBC's] Prince George campus is situated on the traditional territory of the Lheidli T'enneh and is part of the Dakelh (Carrier) First Nations... The South-Central Quesnel campus is situated on the traditional territory of the Lhatko Dene (Red Bluff Band), Nazko, Lhoosk'uz Den Nation (Kluskus Band) and ?Esdilagh First Nation (formerly Alexandria Band). Lhatko, Nazko and Lhoosk'uz are Dakelh (Carrier) First Nation and ?Esdilagh is a member of the Tsilhqot'in Nation. The Northeast campus in Fort Saint John is situated on the traditional territory of the Doig River, Blueberry, and Halfway River First Nations. The Northwest Regional Terrace campus is situated on traditional Ts'msyen territory of the Kitsumkalum and Kitselas First Nations [and] includes a satellite campus in... Prince Rupert. Terrace also serves as the economic and central hub for many Haida, Haisla, Tahltan, Métis, Gitxsan, Wet'suwet'en, and Nisga'a peoples. [UNBC] holds an affiliation agreement with the Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl Nisga'a Institute (WWNI), [and] WWNI is located in the Nass Valley and the village of Gitwinksihlkw, BC. (p. 4)

But putting the ideas Ron had for the Ceremonial Chairs together did not come easily. Ron explained:

When I first got the contract, I was thinking of Chiefs Chairs,

but Chief Chairs are built on the floor [so] you have to sit down on the floor. I couldn't see the President and the Chancellor sitting on the floor, so I designed the Chairs as a throne-type Chairs; one for the President and one for the Chancellor. (Personal Communication, August 3, 2018)

Then Ron noted:

My first thought was, "How can I put the chairs together so they wouldn't fall apart for years to come?" That was something I really worked on and now it has been 25 years or more and they still look like [I made] them yesterday. (Personal Communication, August 3, 2018)

Made from Western Red Cedar, Ron got the wood from the Westcoast because "Western Red Cedar is a lot better than our cedar [in the Hazelton, BC area]. Our cedar kind of has the wide grain and the Western Red Cedar has got the tight grain, and it seems to be a lot softer" (Personal Communication, August 3, 2018). The Chairs were made in the basement of Ron's home in Hagwilget. He brought everything to his house and described how:

I used acrylic paint. It is one of the finest paints that Native carvers use nowadays. In choosing the colours [I used] our traditional way of designing it... and put all the colours and designs in the right places. Like for instance, when you do a design like on a raven your outline is always black and you never use the colour red inside an ovoid. You don't ever, unless the whole design is painted red. So those were pretty strict rules [Indigenous artists] had many years ago and the research that has been done on it got me to know the paint they used to use, the tools they used to use. Artists didn't have [all the paint and tools] we have today. (Personal Communication, August 3, 2018)

Indeed, creating the Ceremonial Chairs was a tremendous amount of work and commitment. Ron described:

When I first started it [I was doing] 16 - 18 hours [of work] a day. [At the same time] there was just no ending to learning or even knowing our culture. We [used to] govern ourselves and we had laws and also had our own policemen, yeah, Watchmen. So that was all before the people from all over came in. A lot of our customs changed. (Personal Communication, August 3, 2018)

Despite this, Ron has been able to draw on traditional teachings to master his artistic expression. However, he does remember a time when the Ceremonial Chairs almost didn't make it to UNBC. Ron recalled that when he was transporting the Chairs from his home in Hagwilget to UNBC:

We just about lost the chairs at Bednesti (45 minutes West of Prince George) ... there was a truck coming around the corner

too fast and I had to swerve over... That was scary (Personal Communication, August 3, 2018)

Ron has been able to witness the reaction from students in Northwestern British Columbia from Hazelton, Witset (Moricetown), Smithers, and Terrace and he is proud for people to know that he is the person to offer the Ceremonial Chairs for the world to see. Ron also completed the creation and design of the Talking Stick for UNBC.

### **The Talking Stick**

The Ceremonial Chairs are not the only work of Ron's creation people can see at a UNBC Convocation ceremony. Each year, as part of the Convocation ceremony and ceremonial procession, the Talking Stick is brought to the main stage where it is tapped four times to signal the start of the graduation. The Talking Stick is made from Western Yellow Cedar and Ron ensured the Stick would represent the diversity of Nations served by UNBC, and their Crests and Clans, in its structure and design. The Talking Stick is UNBC's mace and is a notable representation of conducting the order and business for UNBC's graduating students. As described by the University of British Columbia (UBC), "the University Mace is a symbol of the authority of the Chancellor. It is displayed on ceremonial occasions, most notably during the congregation ceremonies but also during the Installation of a President or Chancellor" (n.d.). UNBC's Talking Stick, with its intricate art and design of Crests and Clans, is emblematic of the Nations and knowledges UNBC represents.

When I asked Ron about the number of clans represented in the Talking Stick, he said:

I believe there is 17... The main Clans were the most important to put on there. That was the Wolf, the Killer whale, the Fireweed, the Frog, and also the Eagle. Eagle in this area [Hazelton] is very few and the Eagle is found more towards the Coast. So, I put designs like the Bear clan or Wolf clan [on the Talking Stick as well] ... the Killer whale... Fireweed... Grouse [Clan] and the Owl... I can't remember all of them off hand... Anyways, on the Gitksan side, there's lot of Frogs. There's a big frog, the small frog, and the flying frog. In that same House (kinship group) you could also have the Caribou and the Raven. In some places Caribou and the Frog are the same... the Eagle is [a Clan found] more in the Westcoast area. A lot of people see it as a big spiritual bird with lots of power. Also like the Wolf in my Clan, we were good providers and hunters so there's a lot that's connected to our Clans. We also lost a lot of different Clans... walking around the gravesite you can find Clans that were lost... but [the lost Clans] would be connected to any one of the Clans

[that are still here]. (Personal Communication, August 3, 2018)  
 A notable “crest” on the Talking Stick is that of the Human Face. Ron notes that “having the human face is kind of representing everything... the human face covered everybody... different Clans, different nationalities (Personal Communication, August 3, 2018)

Ron remarks how there is a particular etiquette that should be being considered by the individual holding the Talking Stick, including how many times the Stick may be “tapped” on the floor. Ron described that traditionally:

It depends on how many Chiefs are there. Different Clans. [When used in a traditional potlatch or feast] the Speaker should know how many Clans are there... if there’s only one, you only tap the floor once. If there’s two you hit twice and the same with 3, 4, or 5. You would tap the floor for how many [Clans]. That’s part of welcoming the [witnesses] there. (Personal Communication, August 3, 2018)

Ron noted the following when considering the creation of the Talking Stick:

I really thought about it, and I thought putting the Talking Stick together for UNBC was important. I had to make sure that I didn’t put any designs that would hurt any other House (kinship group). Like saying, “oh this my design.” I believe the artists, like years ago for instance, if you wanted to put up a Frog pole, they would hire a Wolf Carver or Killer whale, and get different Clans to do it. (Personal Communication, August 3, 2018)

Ensuring he was following traditional practice and protocol in the Talking Stick design was imperative. In determining what designs to include, Ron described:

The salmon was what I used for the base. I think I used salmon there because everybody eats salmon! It’s one of [First Nations’] sources of living. We gather salmon for the winter and preserve them, so I figured this was a good choice. I just about used the halibut but [halibut] are [more associated] with the Coast. Salmon could also represent a lot of [Nations with lakes] I wanted to include] the lake salmon and char. (Personal Communication, August 3, 2018)

Indeed, both the Ceremonial Chairs and Talking Stick bring a uniquely Indigenous experience to the Convocation experience of UNBC graduates.

### **Coat of Arms, Senate Chamber Doors, and other artistic expressions**

Ron has also gifted the UNBC with many other examples of his talent as an Indigenous artist. As described by UNBC, the university’s Coat of Arms contains characteristic features of the University includ-

ing:

The shield, in UNBC's colours of green and gold, contains the open book, a traditional symbol of learning; the raven, a hardy resident northern bird known for its intelligence; and a coniferous tree, the dominant flora and backbone of the northern economy. The wreath [the Crest] is created from symbols of Canada, British Columbia, and the north: maple leaf, dogwood, and snowflake. The crest is a salmon, which is the base of the UNBC mace/talking stick, used there as indicative of all peoples in the region... To the left is the kermodei bear, representative of the northwest, and to the right is the woodland caribou, representing the central interior and northeast. (n.d.-a)

In referencing the inclusion of the salmon for the Talking Stick, Ron explains that when contributing to the design of the Coat of Arms, "I did the Coat of Arms [with] Blackfish, also called the Killer whale of the coast, and the salmon. I kind of designed the salmon like a salmon and also like a char because of the lakes. That took some thought too" (Personal Communication, August 3, 2018). Again, Ron was always mindful to his own principles of diversity when he did his work for UNBC.

The Senate Chamber doors, also made from Yellow Cedar, are a centerpiece of cultural representation at UNBC and are no exception to Ron's representations of diversity. Ron began the work on the doors in the basement of his home when his children were young. He began by laminating the wood and did the work on the doors while they were lying flat. Eventually, Ron brought the doors to UNBC so they could be finished there. When it came to what designs were included, Ron explained:

The designs are slightly different than the Talking Stick. But I pretty well covered all the Clans. On the inside of the doors where I've got [the Clans] dancing, that was quite the project... I painted inside [of the doors], but I never carved [them]. Painting the design on the inside shows [the figures] dancing in [the Senate Chambers]. (Personal Communication, August 3, 2018)

Ron also donated several prints to the university. He explained:

I donated the prints. The Hailey's Comet represented the sky, and the Caribou represented the Earth... [I also did] the Octopus Dance, I did that design because we're always mocking different animals when we're dancing, so I have this Octopus putting on a mask. With the Hailey's Comet I had the four main Clans on there. (Personal Communication, August 3, 2018)

Finally, and complementary to a dugout canoe on display in the UNBC Robert Frederick Gallery, Ron donated a carved Raven to watch over the canoe and the story it represents. Ron's talents are everywhere you look at the at the university.

When Ron visited Prince George during UNBC's 25th Anniver-

sary Celebration, it was a momentous time for him. Ron was UNBC's special guest, and he showed the crowd the Talking Stick and sat in the Ceremonial Chairs. Ron said:

When recalling the 25th Anniversary Celebration, I could still feel the warmth of them. The warmth of the [Talking Stick] and also for the Chairs. As an artist, [I could feel the warmth when] I was carving the Chairs. Then when I got to sit in them in Prince George, that's when I could really feel the power of the designs... There's always something telling you that you did the right thing. (Personal Communication, August 3, 2018)

Ron continued:

A lot of people don't really know me as an artist, or a wood-carver, or a jeweler. But I did a lot of work all over the world! The university is really special and special to watch, especially our Native Peoples at graduation. (Personal Communication, August 3, 2018)

Ron ended our time together during the interview with a few parting thoughts. He said:

I believe [UNBC] should have some writeups about the Chairs and the Talking Stick and the designs in the hallways and give people more information so they can understand our culture a lot more. There's quite a bit, when I really think about it, and there's a lot of [information related to the] Clans and the [Senate Chamber] doors and [Ceremonial] Chairs and prints that really represents [Indigenous Peoples] ... and have [them] more visible. I see some of the students that went [to UNBC and know I did the artwork], you can see in their eyes that they're really proud and so proud that they went to UNBC. (Personal Communication, August 3, 2018)

Ron acknowledges that "it was quite the project that I'll never forget, and it had a lot of meaning in my life, especially with my children growing up and watching me do [that artwork]" (Personal Communication, August 3, 2018). Undeniably, [the Ceremonial Chairs, Talking Stick, and Senate Chamber doors, as well as the other art Ron has offered UNBC is a valued and cherished part of the university culture and something for UNBC to be proud of. At this time, UNBC is in process of moving the Ceremonial Chairs to a more visible place on campus and include information about the details of the Ceremonial Chairs, in honour of Ron's wishes.

Ron leaves our time together wondering, "what would UNBC have come up with if they had picked another artist? What [UNBC has] could be totally different. Totally different" (Personal Communication, August 3, 2018). Every design and detail came from Ron as an artist and as I integrate my own thoughts and reflections, when contemplating the significance of Ron A. Sebastian's work to UNBC and its Indigenization

efforts, I realize the impact of his work is infinite and provides a foundation for transformative, meaningful, and enduring Indigenous perspectives at UNBC that go beyond the physical presence of his art. At this time, UNBC is in process of moving the Ceremonial Chairs to a more visible place on campus, in honour of Ron's wishes. The preservation of Indigenous knowledge and practice as an integral part of traditional university protocol leaves an influence beyond measure.

### **Bibliography:**

Anderson, M. & Nyce, D. (1999). Nisga'a studies and the Americanist tradition: Bringing First Nations research and teaching into the academy. In L. P. Valentine & R. Darnell (Eds.), *Theorizing the Americanist tradition*. pp. 282-298. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Evans, M., McDonald, J., Nyce, D. (1999). Acting across boundaries in Aboriginal curriculum development: Examples from Northern British Columbia, *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, 23(2) 190-205.

Jago, C. (2004). Breaking with tradition: UNBC pioneers a radically different partnership for research and teaching with the First Nations. University Affairs. Retrieved April 8, 2012, <http://www.universityaffairs.ca/breaking-with-tradition.aspx>

Mills, A. C. (1994). *Eagle down is our law: Witsuwit'en law, feasts, and land claims*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

Provincial Advisory Committee on Post-Secondary Education for Native Learners. (1990). Report of the provincial advisory committee on post-secondary education for Native learners. (Copy in possession of author).

At this time, UNBC is in process of moving the Ceremonial Chairs to a more visible place on campus, in honour of Ron's wishes.

Shearer, Cindy. (2000). *Understanding Northwest Coast art: A guide to crests, beings, and symbols*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre.

Stewart, H. & N. Tait. (1993). *Looking at totem poles*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre.

Thornton, R. (1998). Institutional and intellectual histories of Native American studies. In R. Thornton (Ed.), *Studying native America: Problems and prospects* (pp. 79-105). Madison, WS: University of Wisconsin Press.

University of British Columbia. (n.d.-a). University mace. Retrieved November 24, 2021, <https://graduation.ubc.ca/event/about/university-mace/>

University of Northern British Columbia. (n.d.). Coat of Arms. Retrieved November 20, 2021, <https://www2.unbc.ca/about-unbc/coat-arms>

University of Northern British Columbia. (2016-a). Aboriginal services plan. Retrieved November 20, 2021, <https://www2.unbc.ca/sites/default/files/sections/first-nations-centre/unbcasp2016-2017.pdf>

University of Northern British Columbia. (n.d.-b). UNBC History, 1987-1994, Retrieved April 9, 2012, <http://www.unbc.ca/unbchistory/index.html>.

University of Northern British Columbia. (1997). Planning for growth: Final report of the university planning committee, January 3, 1997. (Copy in possession of author).

University of Northern British Columbia. (2016). Education key to reconciliation, says Truth and Reconciliation Commission researcher. Retrieved November 10, 2021, <https://www2.unbc.ca/newsroom/unbc-stories/education-key-reconciliation-says-truth-and-reconciliation-commission-researcher>

van Andrichem, R. (2008). Knowledge appurtenancy: universities, regional development, and the knowledge-based economy. Unpublished Master of Arts thesis: University of Northern British Columbia.

Wade, E. L. (1995). *The arts of the North American Indian: Native traditions in evolution*. New York: Hudson Hills.