

# RECONCILIATION POLE

Honouring a Time Before, During and After Canada's Indian Residential Schools

2015-17, RED AND YELLOW CEDAR, OIL PAINT, COPPER, ABALONE

## About Reconciliation Pole

*Reconciliation Pole* is situated on the unceded ancestral and traditional territory of the hən̓d̓əmíŋəm speaking Musqueam people. Musqueam Indian Band has given permission to James Hart to locate *Reconciliation Pole* at The University of British Columbia, in their traditional territory.

The pole was designed and carved under the direction of master carver and hereditary chief, 7idansuu (Edenshaw), James Hart, Haida of Haida Gwaii, assisted by community members Gwaliga Hart, John Brent Bennett, Jaalen Edenshaw, Derek White, Leon Ridley, Brandon Brown, and late son Carl Hart. Fellow artists from across Canada carved/painted the children— Zacharias Kunuk (Inuit), Shane Perley-Dutcher (Maliseet), Greg Hill (Mohawk), Phil Gray (Cree), Susan Point (Musqueam), Kevin Cranmer (Kwakwaka'wakw), Christian White, Reg Davidson and Corey Bulpitt (Haida), Sven Haakanson (Aleut). Many volunteers young and old nailed in all the copper nails. The pole, carved from an 800-year-old red cedar log, was installed on April 1, 2017.

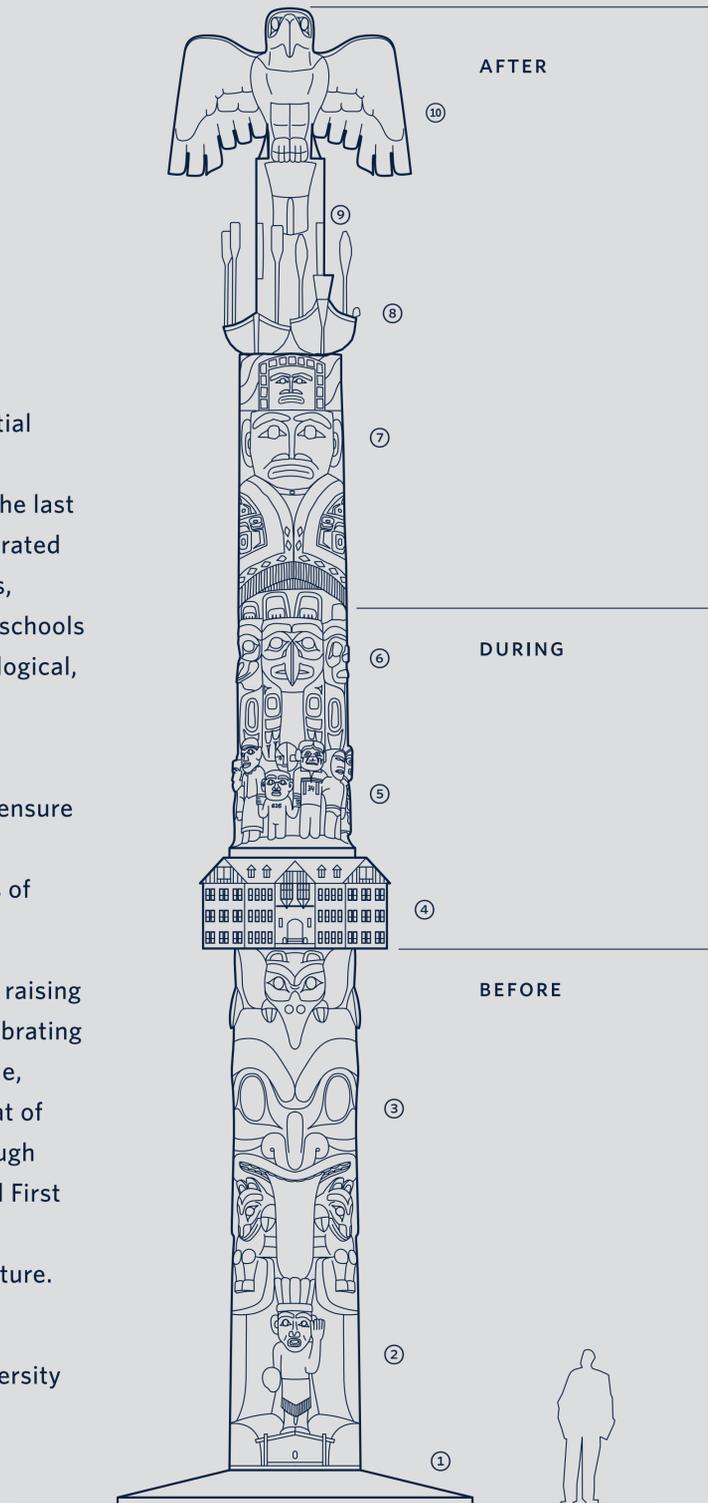
*Reconciliation Pole* recognizes a complex history, which includes the history of the Indian Residential Schools. The schools, instituted by the federal government, operated for more than 100 years, the last school closing in 1996. The schools forcibly separated an estimated 150,000 children from their parents, families, and culture. Many students died in the schools and many more suffered severe forms of psychological, physical, and sexual abuse.

At UBC, both *Reconciliation Pole* and the Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre ensure this important history will not be forgotten, and knowledge of it will provide more informed ways of working towards a better future.

For the Haida people today, carving and publicly raising new poles is a way of honouring history and celebrating the ongoing vitality of cultural practices. The pole, carved in the Haida tradition, is distinct from that of Musqueam and other coastal communities. Though culturally distinct, *Reconciliation Pole* honours all First Nations who have persisted through the dark experience of the schools and look to a better future.

*Reconciliation Pole* was commissioned by the Audain Foundation in partnership with The University of British Columbia.

[www.belkin.ubc.ca/ReconciliationPole](http://www.belkin.ubc.ca/ReconciliationPole)



## What Story Does Reconciliation Pole Tell?

Haida poles are read from bottom to top.

- 1 Surrounding the base of the pole are salmon symbolizing life and its cycles.
- 2 Between the legs of Bear Mother is sGaaga (Shaman), who stands on top of the Salmon House and enacts a ritual to ensure their return.
- 3 Bear Mother holds her twin cubs, Raven looks out from between Bear Mother's Ears.
- 4 A Canadian Indian Residential School house, a government-instituted system designed to assimilate and destroy all Indigenous cultures across Canada.
- 5 The children holding and supporting one another are wearing their school uniforms and numbers by which each child was identified. Their feet are not depicted, as they were not grounded during those times.
- 6 Four Spirit Figures: killer whale (water), bear (land), eagle (air), and Thunderbird (the supernatural). They symbolize the ancestries, environment, worldly realms, and the cultures that each child came from.
- 7 The mother, father, and their children symbolize the family unit and are dressed in traditional high-ranking attire symbolizing revitalization and strength of today.
- 8 Above the family is the canoe and longboat shown travelling forward—side by side. The canoe represents the First Nations and governances across Canada. The longboat represents Canada's governances and Canadian people. This symbolism respectfully honours differences, but most importantly displays us travelling forward together side by side.
- 9 Four Coppers, coloured to represent the peoples of the world, symbolize and celebrate cultural diversity.
- 10 Eagle represents power, togetherness, determination, and speaks to a sustainable direction forward.

The 68,000+ copper nails covering areas of the pole are in remembrance of the many children who died at Canada's Indian Residential Schools—each nail commemorates one child.

## About the Artist

Born in 1952 at Masset, BC, Haida Gwaii, master carver 7idansuu (Edenshaw), James Hart, has been carving his whole life. He is also a skilled jeweler and print maker and is considered a pioneer among Northwest Coast artists in the use of bronze casting.

Hart has replicated traditional Haida totem poles and designed new poles and sculptures found across the globe. Between 2009 and 2013 Hart created, designed, and carved *The Dance Screen (The Scream Too)*, a monumental sculpture now residing at the Audain Art Museum in Whistler. James Hart was awarded the Order of British Columbia (2003), and honorary doctorates in Fine Arts from Emily Carr University of Art + Design (2004) and Simon Fraser University (2017). In 2016, he was elected a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts.



THE AUDAIN FOUNDATION

