

**COMMUNITY MINDED—**

Bryce Williams holds the dance tunic on which he painted an octopus, one of his family crests, as part of a project with the Art Access Program in Massett. Williams is currently the youngest member of the Tsawwassen First Nation's executive council.

*Tyler Garnham
photo*

Bryce Williams

Artist, age 20

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REPORTER

A commitment to improving himself as an artist took Bryce Williams to Haida Gwaii to learn about his culture. And a commitment to his hometown brought him back to the Tsawwassen First Nation.

Williams, 20, grew up in the Tsawwassen First Nation community and says he has always been interested in creating art. Upon graduating from Delta Secondary School, Williams decided to move to Massett, B.C., in Haida Gwaii to mentor under master carver Christian White as well as attend the Art Access Program at the Northwest Community College there.

White also asked Williams to join his Tluu Xaada Naay traditional dance group. Having never sung or danced before, Williams started by watching and listening.

"It's good to be culturally involved with your art . . . Slowly I started learning the songs and joining the group, and then I started performing with them," says Williams, whose mother is Haida and father is Coast Salish. "It let's you understand stories behind your art and gives you that sense of pride and passion and feeling for your art and your culture, and where you're from and who you are."

Artistic talent runs in the family. Williams' maternal ancestors include Isabel and Charles Edenshaw, who is a well-known Haida artist, and his mother's cousin is renowned Haida artist, Robert Davidson.

One of his specialties is carving and painting detailed miniature paddles.

Williams says he learned much of his drawing and design skills from valuable workshops with Davidson.

While living in Haida Gwaii, the Tsawwassen First Nation treaty came into effect in April 2009. In the fall, Williams found out he was nominated for the band's executive council of the legislative assembly. Williams accepted his nomination and moved back to Tsawwassen where he became the youngest member elected.

Williams says he wasn't planning on entering politics. As a member of the executive council, he wants to be a positive role model and benefit his community the best he can.

One of his goals is to create more recreational opportunities for youth living on Tsawwassen First Nation land.

"I want to be there for the youth and help get a hockey/lacrosse box going here, and a baseball field or soccer field—things like that."

As an artist, Williams says it's a constant learning process, and he plans to learn more about the Coast Salish side of his family. He is also finishing up a project for Vancouver International Airport (YVR).

In 2009 he was awarded a YVR Art Foundation Scholarship through the Audain Foundation for the Visual Arts. He decided to create a miniature canoe with painted paddles, which will be displayed for one year at the airport along with art by other scholarship recipients.

He credits much of his success as an artist to his grandmother Primrose Adams, a Haida weaver, who opened her home to him while he trained as an artist in Massett.

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