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Yukon government awards commission for public artwork

WHITEHORSE—The Yukon government has awarded a \$90,000 commission for a major public artwork that will be the centerpiece of the new Haines Junction Visitor Information Centre (VIC). The VIC will be located in the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Dä Kų Cultural Centre and will share the west wing of the building with the Parks Canada Kluane National Park and Reserve Visitor Centre.

The successful proponent for the commissioned artwork is Teslin artist Doug Smarch Jr., recognized internationally for his contemporary interpretations of traditional First Nations themes.

"This commissioned artwork will be located in the heart of the Visitor Information Centre space, where visitors and Yukoners alike can enjoy it," Tourism and Culture Minister Elaine Taylor said. "We are pleased to be part of this unique partnership and we are thrilled that an artwork of this calibre has been selected."

Smarch's piece entitled *Ice and Flowers* consists of thermo-formed acrylic faces suspended from the building's ceiling, painted flower designs inspired by Southern Tutchone beadwork and a circular base with local river rocks.

"It is a big honour to be able to have my art in the Haines Junction and Kluane area," Smarch Jr. said. "I am impressed by not only the natural beauty, but by how well it has been preserved and protected. It truly is a wonderful place and I am grateful to be able to leave a gesture there."

"We live in a unique climate and culture in the Yukon, and we all endure the cycle of the seasons," Smarch Jr. added. "Our ancestors and those that came before us also had to endure the seasons and conditions. The piece is meant to show the connection and cycle that has always existed here, and how we prevail through both the tough times but also the nice times."

The commission was awarded through a two-stage public tender process. Proposals were reviewed by a seven-member art selection committee with representatives from the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, Kluane First Nation, Parks Canada, Yukon government, the Village of Haines Junction and Yukon's arts community.

The artwork is scheduled to be completed and installed in time for the grand opening of the Dä Kų Cultural Centre planned for June 21, 2012 and will be on permanent display.

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