

# Artist's Statement and Profile

WALTER HARRIS

WALTER HARRIS was born and raised in Kispiox village and is a member of the Gitksan nation in northern British Columbia. Walter has been successful in almost every venture he has undertaken. Before his career as an artist, Walter's energy, talents, and determination contributed to his success in various industries. In 1957 Walter was given his maternal uncle's hereditary name of "Geel." Receiving this name and its responsibilities established him as the recognized leader of Kispiox among the chiefs of the Gitksan nation.

While taking part in the construction of a replica of the Gitksan village now known as 'Ksan, Walter was intrigued by the forms and symbolisms of Northwest Coast Indian art. This awakened interest led him to want to learn more, so he enrolled in the newly formed 'Kitanmax School of Northwest Coast Indian Art in 1969. He studied and mastered jewellery under Jack Leyland, and wood carving under Duane Pasco and Doug Cranmer, and attended seminars on Northwest Coast graphic design given by Bill Holm. Walter eventually developed his talents to a point of being named senior instructor of wood sculpture at 'Ksan — a post which he proudly held for many years.

As Walter mastered his art, he created his own unique style which adheres closely to the Gitksan traditions. The public recognition and appreciation of his artistic talents and versatility have allowed him to continue pursuing his career in art. Throughout the years numerous select pieces of Mr. Harris have found their way into the public and private collections of well-known authorities and collectors in Northwest Coast Indian Art from many countries around the world. A highlight of his art career came in 1978 when he was appointed to the Fine Arts Committee of Canada, which selects significant artifacts to be purchased by the federal government.

In 1987, Walter's artistic endeavours and productivity came to an abrupt end as a result of a stroke. Through the encouragement and support of his family and his own persistence he was able slowly to begin a long journey toward recovery, only to receive a further setback in the form of major heart surgery in 1990. Today Walter, fully recovered, is in good health, and his artistic production has been re-established to its full form.

Walter's recent serigraph entitled "Celebration of Life," made during his trying times, captures his view of what life should be.