



Continuum: from Seed to Shelter

Eric Robertson

July 2009

Green Timbers Greenway, adjacent to Fraser Highway, southeast of 96 Avenue

Eric Robertson's project, *Continuum: from Seed to Shelter*, consists of six large-scale, inter-related sculptures mounted atop 12-foot fluted cedar poles. Their installation follows the contour of the walking trail in the Green Timbers Greenway, adjacent to the Fraser Highway. The sculptures, which are cast in glass-fibre-reinforced concrete, range between two and four feet in height. The work honours the history and ecology of the Green Timbers Urban Forest and pays homage to the western cedar.

The location of the poles and the imagery of the sculptures make reference to First Nations cultures and the 19th-century influx of non-Natives along the historic Yale Wagon Road (now the Fraser Highway). The sculptural motifs evoke the life cycle and cultural uses of cedar trees. The new shoot, bud and open cone symbolize birth, growth and renewal. The split plank, the cedar-bark cape and cedar-shake roof refer to the cultural modification of living trees by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.

Continuum: from Seed to Shelter brings into sharp relief the more recent struggle to revitalize, maintain and preserve the Green Timbers Urban Forest after the area was clear-cut in the 1930s. The coppery-orange colour of the sculptures—the colour of the cedar in both life and death—stands out vividly against the massed dark green of the forest behind them, emphasizing the enduring natural and cultural importance of this iconic West Coast tree. The cycle of birth, death and renewal depicted in the work





reflects the local forest's potential for growth and regeneration, and stresses our responsibility towards it as stewards of the natural environment.

Continuum: from Seed to Shelter is one of six site-specific public art projects produced under Surrey's 2008 Cultural Capital of Canada initiative and supported by the Department of Canadian Heritage and the City of Surrey. The works explore Surrey's natural and built heritage, First Nations history, cultural diversity and community activity. They provide a lasting legacy for each of Surrey's six town centres.

About the Artist:

Eric Robertson's imagery draws on his mixed aboriginal and European heritage, as well as his background working in fisheries and forestry. Study of traditional Northwest Coast art informs his sense of design and materials, his understanding of the natural world and his interest in the interface between indigenous and colonial histories. An honours graduate of the Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design, with a masters degree from Concordia University, Robertson is the recipient of numerous honours and awards. Among his many acclaimed public art commissions are works for the Tillamook Forest Center in Oregon, the Vancouver International Airport and the Seattle City Hall.

