



ESAC • ACÉE

Environmental Studies Association of Canada
l'Association canadienne d'études environnementales

May 31, 2017

2017 ECO-Award honours inspiring environmental artist Ken Hall

Toronto – The Environmental Studies Association of Canada (ESAC) is pleased to announce the 2017 winner of its annual Environmental Community Organizer (ECO) Award: Ken Hall, an environmental artist from Mulmur, Ontario. Hall was lauded for his acclaimed, touring installation, *Legacy*, described by his nominator, Canadian Whale Institute chair Sarah Haney, as “a life-sized, anatomically correct killer whale skeleton, hand-carved entirely from reclaimed cedar and inspired by the tragic tale of... a female killer whale found stranded on the North Olympic Peninsula in Washington State” with “the highest levels of PCBs and DDT ever found in an orca.” The orca left a young orphan who refused to leave her, leading local children to name her “Hope.”

“*Legacy* exemplifies the work recognized by this award and the importance of the arts in moving more people to awareness, thought and action on critical environmental issues of our day when appeals to science and logic have fallen short,” declared Geo Takach, chair of ESAC’s awards committee. The jury was impressed by the power and scope of Hall’s physical and virtual exhibition; its aims to engage and empower young people; its immense reach of over one million visitors to date; and its strong support from Hall’s partners from DAREarts, Dufferin County, the Ontario Science Centre, and TD Friends of the Environment Foundation.

Working from his credo of “naturally inspired,” Ken Hall is described by Haney as “Working at the intersection of art and science... [to] create large public artworks which bring people together, provoking collective thought and discussion, while examining our relationships to each other and the natural world around us.”

ESAC’s ECO-Award honours outstanding contributions of individuals or groups working together to build partnerships and networks within the field of environmental studies, who increase environmental awareness through education and outreach, and who promote the mobilization of knowledge and research into action and practice. Winners receive a cash award of \$1000, a one-year membership in ESAC and a subscription to *Alternatives Journal* (“Canada’s environmental voice”), and are invited to give a keynote address at ESAC’s next annual conference, to be held in Regina in 2018.

This year’s award is to be presented during ESAC’s annual conference, part of the [2017 Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences](#) held at Ryerson University in Toronto. An honourable mention goes to the [Wellington Water Watchers](#) of Wellington, Ontario.

For more information

Veronica Wahl, ESAC president (vwahl@douglascollege.ca)

Geo Takach, ESAC board member and ECO-Award committee chair (geo.takach@royalroads.ca)

www.esac.ca

*ESAC’s Awards Committee also included board members Fernanda Tomaselli and Veronica Wahl.
ESAC appreciates the media sponsorship for the ECO-Award kindly provided by Alternatives Journal.*

Backgrounder on *Legacy* exhibition

(courtesy of Sarah Haney and Ken Hall)

Through educational programming which accompanies the exhibition, *Legacy* reaches out to young people, empowering them to discuss the issues which affect them and encouraging them to take personal responsibility, fostering a sense of community pride and promoting environmental stewardship.

Legacy helps us explore orca biology and culture while examining the complexities of our fragile ecosystems. The project covers everything from global issues like climate change to specific issues such as local water quality and how our lifestyles can affect the environment in which we live.

Examining the link between clear-cut logging and declining orca populations, and inspired by traditional totem-carving, *Legacy's* life-sized, killer-whale skeleton is carved entirely from reclaimed cedar sourced from recycled siding and decking material. The skeleton is suspended beneath undulating red silk banners, depicting the damaged water systems with ghostly images of disappearing salmon. A sensation of watery movement and light filtering through from above is achieved through the use of projection lighting and sound, bringing the sculpture to life and creating an immersive and emotionally compelling visitor experience.

Accompanying the sculpture is an interest-guided, interactive website covering topics like the orca-salmon-forest ecosystem, natural resource management, climate change, and recycling. The presentation also discusses how we as individuals can help minimize our impact and find out about other organizations dedicated to protecting the environment. With a broad appeal to visitors of all ages, *Legacy* is helping to create a personal connection between the audience and the environment.

From the beginning, Ken Hall's vision was to have *Legacy* tour across Canada and the US, in order for her message to reach as broad an audience as possible. Articulating a complete whale skeleton for exhibition is a challenge in itself, but doing it in such a way that allows it to tour required a unique blend of creative and engineering skills. The exhibit was designed in a modular fashion, allowing it to be set up, taken down and shipped with relative ease.

Launched at the Dufferin County Museum & Archives in 2013, *Legacy* won the Town of Orangeville's Arts & Culture award for Best Creative Cultural Event, and helped the DCMA to win the Arts & Culture award for Community Impact by an Organization.

Inspiring a cultural shift toward greater awareness of our relationship to the natural world, *Legacy* helps bridge the gap between the environmental sciences and the public, forging an emotional connection with her audience and inciting personal actions which lead to positive change.

More information on *Legacy*: <http://kenhallart.com/legacy>



Photo courtesy of Ken Hall