

Tlehpik Hjalmer Wenstob was raised on Tzartus island in Barkley Sound, in Huu-ay-aht First Nation's territory, off the west coast of Vancouver Island. It was there that his understanding and desire to pursue both his traditional Nuu-chah-nulth and contemporary art practices began. Hjalmer Wenstob is an interdisciplinary artist who specializes in sculpture and carving. He is Nuu-chah-nulth from the Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations on his dad's side, and Norwegian and English on his mum's side.

Hjalmer speaks of three dialects of his work; contemporary, traditional, and community-based. His traditional dialect centers around the creation of traditional masks and ceremonial objects to be used by his community. This body of work is the least well known publicly – yet it is the most important in grounding his understanding of Nuu-chah-nulth culture and art.

His community-based art practice began while he was a provincial and national youth representative with the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) where he held carving events across the country with youth and communities, bringing people together through collaborative, hands-on carving and art. These community carving projects continue today. Through these projects, he has carved totem poles, log drums and large-scale sculptures with youth and communities, which are installed throughout Canada.

Through his contemporary dialect, Hjalmer completed both an undergraduate and master's degree at the University of Victoria, exploring the relationships between cultures and art, and the balance between traditional and contemporary. His work, at times highly political, uses humour and irony to pose difficult questions of respect, reconciliation and environmental issues. In 2017, Hjalmer and his family opened Cedar House Gallery in Ucluelet, B.C. where Hjalmer is exploring ways of weaving his contemporary/political work with more traditional materials and styles. In 2018, Hjalmer was awarded the national William and Meredith Saunderson Prize for Emerging Artists in Canada, from the Hnatyshyn Foundation in Ottawa, Ontario.