



Longhouse Publishing  
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RE: 2010 PUBLISHING OF *SEPASS POEMS ~ Ancient Songs of Y-Ail-Mihth*  
and Its Accompanying Artwork

The Sepass family and Longhouse Publishing (LHP) are seeking Sponsors to assist with the publication of the Sepass Poems ~ Ancient Songs of Y-Ail-Mihth. A Special 'Commemorative' edition was published December 2009, with a 'Trade' edition to follow 2010.

ABOUT THE POEMS

The Sepass Poems are **ancient** and date to a time, long before Europeans arrived in North America. The poems were **translated** from the Halq'eméylem language into English over a 4-year period, between 1911 and 1915 and represent the **only work of 'classic' Halq'eméylem** literature-in-translation.

The poems are the **original translation** as told by Chief William K'HHalserten Sepass (b. circa 1841, d.1943), and contains a glossary of over 100 Halq'eméylem words with the contemporary orthography provided by Elizabeth Phillips of Chehalis.

The poems tell the story of the **Beginning of the World**, the Legends of Xá:ls—the Great Transformer who walked this earth in the distant past to put things right. The poems are timeless and fundamental to **aboriginal spiritual philosophy** and traditional teachings. They have been called the “first songs of this land”.

IMPORTANT NOTES

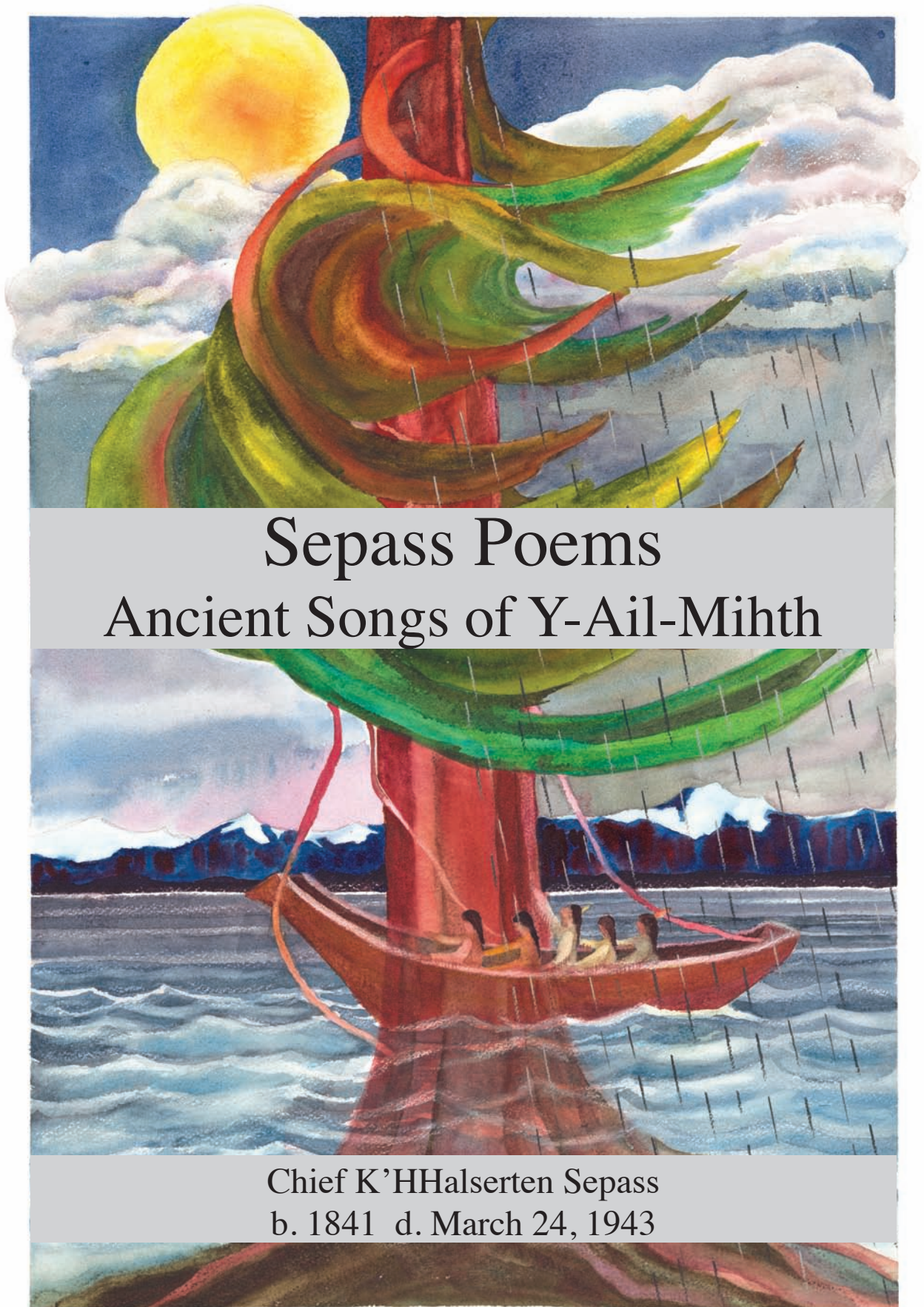
This is to be the **first time** the Poems will be published under the Copyright of a Sepass family member, Gerald Sepass of Skowkale, Chief Sepass' grandson. **Grand Chief Steven Point**, Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, himself an accomplished and very spiritual person, and also a past Chief of Skowkale, is providing his words for the **Foreword**.

The Poems have been **illustrated for the first time** by BC artist **Lynne Grillmair** whose artistic interpretation of the stories into watercolours has been embraced by the Sepass family and others who have seen them.

We hope you will become part of this remarkable book and leave a lasting legacy in your name.  
In gratitude,

Ann Mohs  
Publisher/Owner

for Gerald Sepass, Grandson of Chief William K'HHalserten Sepass



Sepass Poems  
Ancient Songs of Y-Ail-Mihth

Chief K'HHalserten Sepass  
b. 1841 d. March 24, 1943

New Foreword by The Honourable Lieutenant-Governor Steven Point  
Illustrated by Lynne Grillmair

*These poems will be the Indian classic of the future.*

George Clutesi, 1949

# *Sponsor Recognition*

## *Copper*

~ great status & prestige ~

**Cloudworks Energy Inc.  
Lorraine & Ralph Berezan and Family**

## *Dentalia*

~ wealth & prosperity ~

**Chilliwack Foundation / Coqualeetza Cultural Education Centre Society  
University of the Fraser Valley  
Dr. Paul Aceman & Rahel in Memory of Shifra Sheila Aceman z"l *Her spirit soars with the eagles*  
Peter Grant & Barbara Cochran  
Earl Wilder & Nicole Wilder  
Gordon Mohs - *Sxwoxwiyam***

## *Obsidian*

~ great value ~

**BC Transmission Corporation / Chehalis Indian Band  
Chilliwack Rotary Club  
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Golder Associates Ltd.  
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Museum of Anthropology, The University of British Columbia  
Rosalynn, Aleeta & Jenna Sepass  
Norman Sepass & Alice Celestine Billy-Sepass  
Hugh Sepass, Aaron Commodore, Serena Commodore, Joseph Commodore  
Sto:lo Tribal Council  
Jayson Malloway-Sepass, Nicole Malloway-Sepass, Melvin Malloway III**

*Thank you to all our generous Sponsors. Our hands are raised to you.*

# Sponsor Receivables

## *Sepass Poems - Ancient Songs of Y-Ail-Mihth*

### \$25,000 or more (Jade)

- 25 copies of Commemorative Edition, signed by the grandson of Chief William Sepass, Gerald Sepass, hereditary guardian of the Poems.
- 25 copies of the Trade Edition.
- Your choice of framed *archival quality canvas* prints from the 16 original watercolours.
- Your name displayed prominently in both commemorative and trade editions of the book for as long as the book is under the Longhouse Publishing imprint.
- Your name displayed at the launches and respective readings including special book events for *Sepass Poems*.

### \$10,000 (Copper)

- 10 copies of Commemorative Edition, signed by the grandson of Chief William Sepass, Gerald Sepass, hereditary guardian of the Poems.
- 10 copies of the Trade Edition.
- Your choice of 5 framed *archival quality canvas* prints from the 16 original watercolours.
- Your name displayed prominently in both commemorative and trade editions of the book for as long as the book is under the Longhouse Publishing imprint.
- Your name displayed at the launches and respective readings including special book events for *Sepass Poems*.

### \$5,000 (Dentalia)

- 5 copies of Commemorative Edition, signed by the grandson of Chief William Sepass, Gerald Sepass, hereditary guardian of the Poems.
- 10 copies of the Trade Edition.
- Your choice of 1 framed *archival quality canvas* print from the 16 original watercolours.
- Your name displayed prominently in both commemorative and trade editions of the book for as long as the book is under the Longhouse Publishing imprint.
- Your name displayed at the launches and respective readings including special book events for *Sepass Poems*.

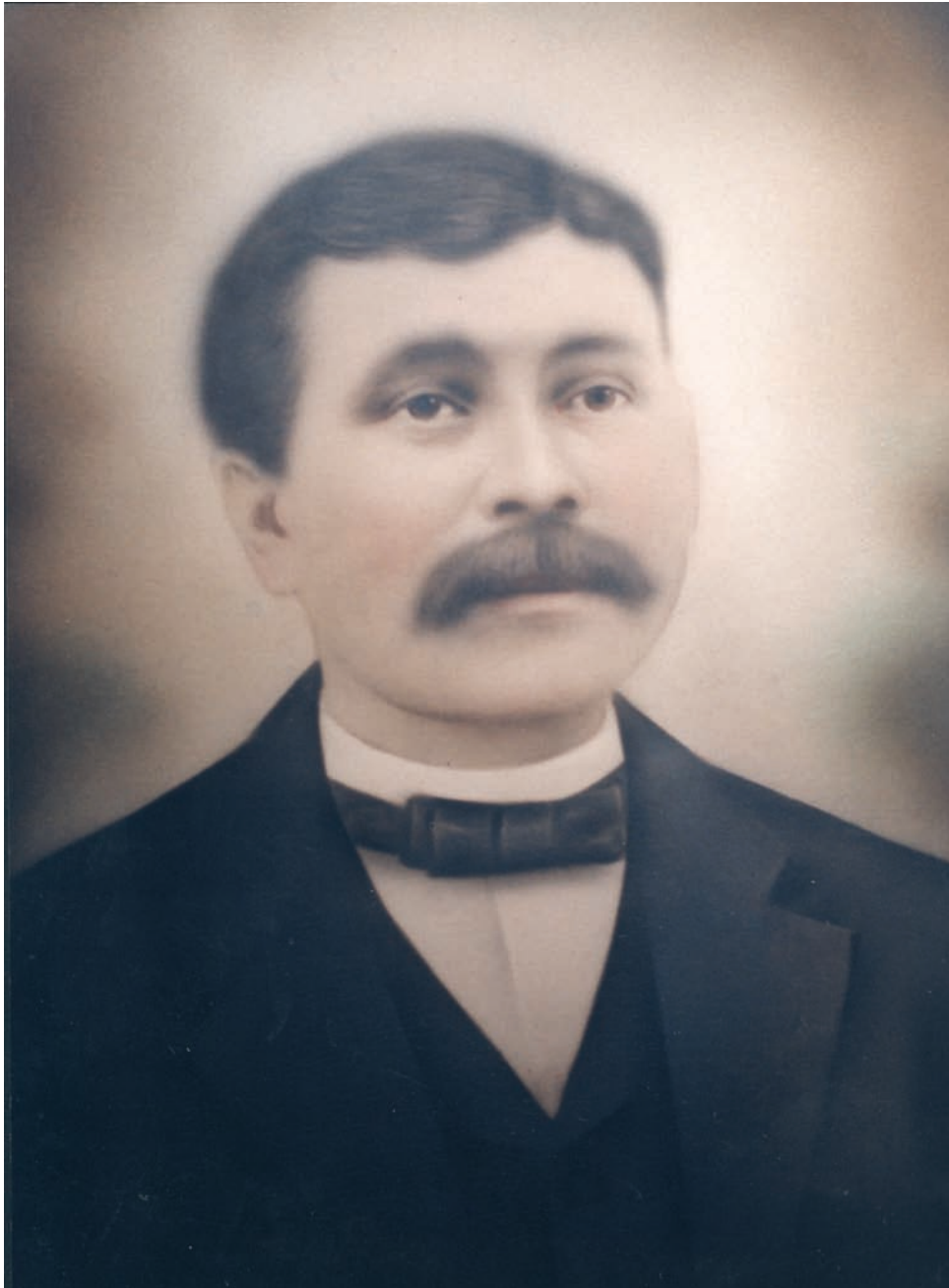
### \$1,000 (Obsidian)

- 1 copy of Commemorative Edition, signed by the grandson of Chief William Sepass, Gerald Sepass, hereditary guardian of the Poems.
- 5 copies of the Trade Edition.
- Your name displayed prominently in both commemorative and trade editions of the book for as long as the book is under the Longhouse Publishing imprint.
- Your name displayed at the launches and respective readings including special book events for *Sepass Poems*.

## Chief Sepass' Decree

In 1911, when he was nearly 70 years old, Chief Sepass approached a young, crippled white girl named Eloise Street at Cultus Lake. Sepass had known her mother for a very long time, and was lamenting the loss of his people's culture, language and traditions. He expressed to Eloise his desire to have his poems recorded, translated and published in book form, as a legacy for his people. The translator was Eloise's mother, a fluent Halq'emeylem speaker. As Eloise notes in her Introduction to the Poems in 1963:

*Chief Sepass saw in himself a symbol of the ending of a way of life. He had seen the White Man's books, and he wanted his songs in a book. He asked a promise, and the wording of it was a dedication: that the poems be put in a book so that Indians would remember their greatness for all time.*



Chief William K'HHalserten Sepass  
b. 1841 d. 1843

## Sample Poetry

### THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD

Long, long ago,  
Before anything was,  
Saving only the heavens,  
From the seat of his golden throne  
The Sun God looked out on the Moon Goddess  
And found her beautiful.

Hour after hour,  
With hopeless love,  
He watched the spot where, at evening,  
She would sometimes come out to wander  
Through her silver garden  
In the cool of the dusk.

Far he sent his gaze across the heavens  
Until the time came, one day,  
When she returned his look of love  
And she, too, sat lonely,  
Turning eyes of wistful longing  
Toward her distant lover.

Then their thoughts of love and longing,  
Seeking each other,  
Met halfway,  
Mingled,  
Hung suspended in space....  
Thus: the beginning of the world.

(This is the first stanza of a 4-page poem from the *Sepass Poems ~ Ancient Songs of Y-Ail-Mihth.*)

# Preview of Artwork

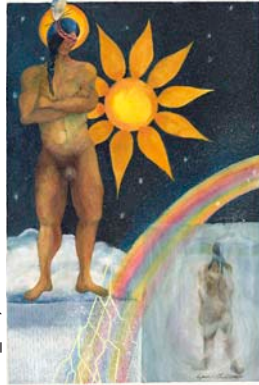
## Sepass Poems ~ Ancient Songs of Y-Ail-Mihth

ARTIST: Lynne Grillmair, East Kootenay artist has represented each of the 16 poems in stunning watercolour renditions, in a style that captures and enhances the mystery and imagery of these ancient aboriginal poems.

The Beginning of the World



Xá:ls, The Sun God



Syewá:l, Mankind



Méxtsél, The Painter



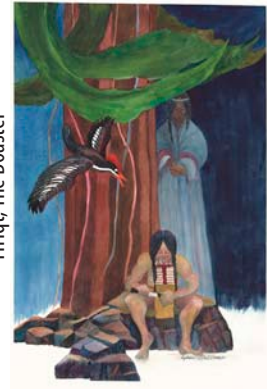
Xá:ls Awakens



Sqáyex, The Magician



Thírt, The Boaster



Thowziya, Cannibal Woman



Xpáy, Cedar & The Flood



Kw'ítsel Spááth, Grizzly Bear



Qw'á:tsaylém, Salmon Baby



Tí'xwaylhem the Q'amí, Croon Maiden



Stl'álegem, Lake Mystery



Syuwíl, The Sorcerer



Slek'iyap, Coyote's Son



O-ah-bitz, Child of the Sun



## Paul Kane Plates

### *Sepass Poems - Ancient Songs of Y-Ail-Mihth*

Two paintings by the famous Canadian historical artist Paul Kane (courtesy of the Royal Ontario Museum) are planned as plates for *Sepass Poems*. They date to the mid-1800s.

The paintings depict a scene of aboriginal people fishing at Kettle Falls where one branch of Chief William K'HHalserten Sepass' family lived, and a scene from inside a traditional longhouse in the Coast Salish region where Chief Sepass was raised.

These plates will enhance the presentation of the *Poems*, as they provide the reader with a sense of time and place in which these ancient songs of Y-Ail-Mihth were a part of the traditional way of life for Chief Sepass and his ancestors.



'Falls at Colville' from the Paul Kane Collection, ROM



'Clai-lum Women Weaving Blanket' from the Paul Kane Collection, ROM

# Introduction, Background and Educational Significance

## *Sepass Poems – Ancient Songs of Y-Ail-Mihth*

### **Introduction**

Longhouse Publishing and the Sepass family of Chilliwack (Skowkale Band) are proud to announce the forthcoming publication of the *Sepass Poems – Ancient Songs of Y-Ail-Mihth*, the legacy of hereditary Chief William K’HHalserten Sepass (1841–1943) of the Chilliwack Tribe. This is to be the first time Chief Sepass’ *Poems* are to be published under copyright of the Sepass family, and the first time illustrated.

### **Background History**

*Sepass Poems* is an epic collection of ancient aboriginal poems translated from the original Halq’eméylem (Coast Salish) language into English, between 1911 and 1915. The Poems tell the story of the beginning of the world and the legends of Xá:ls (K’HHals), the great Transformer who walked this earth in the distant past to put things right. Today, there are reminders of Xá:ls throughout Stó:lō territory, and throughout all the lands of the Salish people of British Columbia and Washington State (e.g., Xá:ytem, the Hatzic Rock Site, near Mission, B.C. and Siwash Rock in Stanley Park).

The poems are ancient. They date to a time, long before Europeans arrived in North America. Chief Sepass called them the songs of *Y-Ail-Mihth*, or *Uailmit* – “the ancient singer”. They were part of an epic cycle of songs, traditionally recited at special gatherings, and especially during the ancient ‘sun ceremonies’ that used to be held in Chilliwack every four years in pre-contact times. They were passed on to Chief Sepass by his ancestors, and to his ancestors by their ancestors before them. Significantly, the *Sepass Poems* represent the only work of ‘classic’ Halq’eméylem literature-in-translation.

### **Chief Sepass**

Chief William K’HHalserten Sepass was born in 1841 and died in 1943. He was Chief of the Skowkale Indian Band for most of his life and a hereditary chief of the Chilliwack Tribe. Sepass was a leader of his people, and a man of noble descent, not only through his Stó:lō bloodlines in the Fraser Valley, but also through his mother’s line (Lytton Nlaka’pamux), and his Sinixt ancestors at Kettle Falls. Sepass was a great orator and spokesman for his people, and much respected throughout the region in both the native and non-native communities.

In his lifetime, Chief Sepass witnessed the arrival of European settlers to the Fraser Valley, the 'Gold Rush' and 'Steamboat' eras, the arrival of the first Christian missionaries, the establishment of the Indian Residential Schools, the International Boundary Survey, the mapping of Indian reserve lands, the first automobiles, telephones, and two world wars. As a young man, he witnessed the devastation of his people—including many members of his own family, from smallpox, influenza, measles, tuberculosis, and a host of other introduced diseases. As an older man, he witnessed the demise of his people's language, culture and history.

It was during this time, when he was nearly 70 years old, that Chief Sepass met a young, crippled white girl named Eloise Street at Cultus Lake in 1911. Sepass was lamenting the loss of his people's culture, language and traditions, and expressed to Eloise his desire to have his poems recorded, translated and published in book form, as a legacy for his people. As Eloise notes in her Introduction to the Poems in 1963:

*Chief Sepass saw in himself a symbol of the ending of a way of life. He had seen the White Man's books, and he wanted his songs in a book. He asked a promise, and the wording of it was a dedication: that the poems be put in a book so that Indians would remember their greatness for all time.*

It took four years of meticulous translation, recitations, and recording (between 1911 and 1915) to transcribe Sepass' poems into the English language. Sophia Jane (White) Street, daughter of the Reverend Edward White (one of the first four missionaries sent out to the Pacific Coast by the Wesleyan Methodist Church) was responsible for the translation. Sophia was raised by Stó:lō nannies and was fluent in the Halq'eméylem language. Historian/anthropologist Oliver Wells offered the following comments on this matter:

*...in his search for a means to record for all time the songs of his people, Sepass went to the home of Reverend White's daughter, Mrs. C. L. Street, who could speak fluently his own language—the dialect of the Chilliwack Indians. Through her translation, which was recorded by Eloise, her daughter, the songs were set down in rhythmic form as the Chief directed. Some four years of patient translation were spent before the work was completed. The Chief's only request was in fact a decree: that the poems should be published as he had given them, so that his people would not forget their great past. Eloise Street agreed to this compact...*

George Clutesi of the Nuu-chah-nulth Nation, native artist, painter, actor and a friend of Chief Sepass, made the statement:

*These poems will be the Indian classic of the future. (1949)*

### **Educational Significance**

'Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreements' across the province of British Columbia stress the need for "relevant educational materials . . . to meet the educational needs of Aboriginal students" and ". . . stress the integral nature of Aboriginal traditional cultures and languages to Aboriginal student development and success." The *Sepass Poems* are relevant in this regard and to Aboriginal Education programs in general. For example, the BC First Nations Studies 12 Curriculum: *Cultural Expressions: Oral Traditions and Literature* places an emphasis on:

- the function and significance of the oral tradition
- the significance of First Nations creation, origin and trickster/transformer stories
- the interpretation of literature by Aboriginal authors
- the need to analyze stereotypical portrayals of First Nations people in various works, both historical and contemporary

The *Sepass Poems* are relevant to all of these prescribed learning outcomes. They also have relevance to other courses with a First Nation's focus, including: Civics 11, English (senior grades), History (senior grades), Humanities, and 'Board Authorised Authority' courses, including Aboriginal students graduating with a Dogwood Certificate.

*Thank you for taking the time to read this funding request. It is believed that Sepass Poems as classical Aboriginal mythology is extremely relevant today, and is one of the most important aboriginal publications of this century. Your contribution will help to create a very worthwhile and meaningful legacy. Please don't hesitate to ask us for a presentation or answer any questions you may have.*

*Respectfully,*

*Ann Mohs*

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