

Canada's First Aboriginal Arts & Culture Hotel Opens

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VANCOUVER, BC—Canada's first Aboriginal arts hotel, Skwachâys Lodge, has opened in this city's historic downtown area. Owned and operated by the Vancouver Native Housing Society, the property is an innovative approach to sustainable housing that combines cultural authenticity, business excellence and community economic development, according to the company.

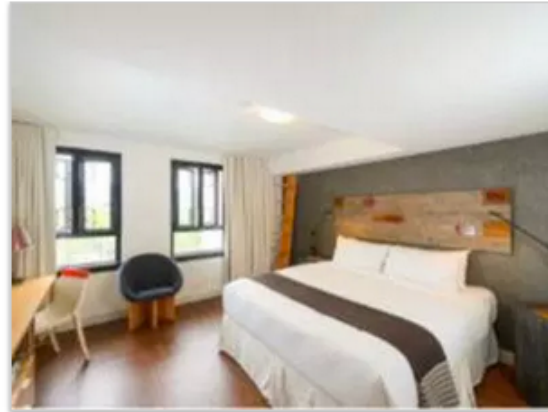
Located at the crossroads of Vancouver's Gastown and Chinatown neighborhoods, the hotel's architect preserved the century-old brick facade and designed a traditional northern longhouse to sit atop the heritage building. The rooftop longhouse features a 40.5-foot story pole—the Dreamweaver—reaching into the Vancouver skyline.

Six Vancouver-based interior designers collaborated with six Aboriginal artists to create 18 distinctly themed rooms featuring original carvings, paintings, fabric, art, custom furniture and decor. The artist and designer teams include: Corrine Hunt and BBA Design Consultants; Clifton Fred and B+H CHIL Design; Lou-Anne Neel and Inside Design Studio; Sabina Hill and Mark Preston with MCM Interiors; Richard Shorty and Porada Design Group; and Jerry Whitehead with Portico Design Group.

Guests can admire and purchase original art in the hotel's Urban Aboriginal Fair Trade Gallery or attend a workshop with one of the artists who envisioned their hotel room. They can also partake in traditional Aboriginal cultural experiences including a sweat lodge and smudge room, or observe artists at work in the artist workshop.

Skwachâys Lodge is a new, sustainable model for supportive housing, and a for-profit hospitality business wholly owned and operated by the Vancouver Native Housing Society, a registered charitable organization. All of the profits from the hotel operation and the fair-trade gallery subsidize the 24 Aboriginal artist live/work studios housed at Skwachâys and further the VNHS mandate to improve the well being of Vancouver's urban Aboriginal people.

"The rebranding and conversion of the lodge now completes our vision," says Dave Eddy, CEO of the Vancouver Native Housing Society. "The success of the hotel and gallery will enable us to provide an authentic cultural tourism experience and create revenue necessary to subsidize rent and enhance the lives of the Aboriginal artists living in the residence. This is a truly dynamic and sustainable solution for housing that provides a positive social impact for some of the most marginalized members of Vancouver's population."



A Skwachâys Lodge guestroom