

September, 2018

For Immediate Release



Image: Debbie Tuepah, P7310130 (Detail)

## *Salish Sea, J35 less 1*

# Debbie Westergaard Tuepah

SEPTEMBER 26 – DECEMBER 10, 2018

CITY ATRIUM GALLERY

North Vancouver City Hall, 141 West 14<sup>th</sup> Street, North Vancouver

Monday – Friday, 8:30am – 5pm

Debbie Westergaard Tuepah is a Surrey-based visual artist who uses primarily yarn, paint, found, and readymade objects to consider the conceptual and embodied experience of information in relation to contemporary issues and events.

Tuepah's 3-dimensional works comprise of networks of material representing systems, modes of measurement and visceral realities. Tuepah's interest in information and data began in her previous marketing career, where she researched and analyzed millions of data elements to understand, predict and influence human behaviour.

“Salish Sea, J35 less 1 situates us in a time where the eco-system of the Salish Sea is being threatened by a variety of factors, one of which is the highly debated Trans Mountain pipeline project. If executed, this project would create an increase in capacity from 300,000 barrels a day to 890,000, and would result in a seven-fold increase in the number of oil tankers moving through the Salish Sea – home to the 76 remaining endangered Southern Resident Killer Whales.

While the negative contributors to the health of the Salish Sea and this population of whales is multi-factorial, at its most basic level, biologist Misty MacDuffee reports that noise disturbance disrupts orca feeding and with increased pipeline traffic these whales would be in the presence of vessels up to 100% of the time. Additionally, the City of Vancouver, in its submission to the National Energy Board, states the risk of a marine oil spill in the 50-year life of the Trans Mountain project is between 16-67%.

In this midst of this environmental, socio-political, and economic debate the female Southern Resident Orca Tahlequah or J35, gave birth to the first, albeit short-lived, surviving calf that her population has had in three years. In an act of what scientists call “a tour of grief” J35 carried her dead calf for 17 days for a distance of more than 1,600 km.

Simultaneously 3 year old Southern Resident Orca Scarlet or J50, was identified as being emaciated and ailing, which prompted a large scale effort by the national Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to work with partner agencies such as the Vancouver Aquarium, to attempt treatment in the wild in the hopes of improving her condition.

Through wide spread media reporting the plight of J35 and J50 inadvertently captured the hearts of millions, perhaps raising awareness and highlighting the larger threat being experienced by their species, and the Salish Sea as a whole.”

Debbie Westergaard Tuepah

Debbie Westergaard Tuepah has exhibited her sculpture, installation, painting and community engagement works both nationally and in the US.

After a lengthy business career Tuepah returned to university where she received a BFA from Emily Carr University of Art + Design in 2011. Tuepah received the ECU Chancellor’s Award for Excellence, she has been nominated and shortlisted for a number of awards and public art competitions, and she was profiled in “Studio Magazine’s Under the Radar”.

Debbie served as VP + Treasurer on the Emily Carr University Alumni Board, is a founding member of the curatorial collective AgentC Projects, and is a member of CAM, a group working to develop a board-directed contemporary art gallery and arts centre in South Surrey.

**For more information about the exhibition please contact:**  
northvanarts.ca | t: 604.988.6844 | e: george@northvanarts.ca

**About Art in the Community:**

The Art in the Community programme has a mandate to celebrate and enable emerging and professional artists through a professional exhibition in a public space, which serves to promote artists, to increase public awareness of art and to make original art by local artists accessible to the general public.

**About the North Vancouver Community Arts Council:**

The North Vancouver Community Arts Council, founded in 1969, is a grassroots, social-profit, charitable cultural organization dedicated to maximizing the intrinsic value of the arts in all media. The NVCAC curates exhibitions at locations in the City of North Vancouver and the District of North Vancouver including CityScape Community Art Space, City Atrium Gallery, District Foyer Gallery and

the District Library Gallery. The NVCAC also offers education programmes year round, presents annual cultural events, special projects, and an annual film series, and manages a popular Art Rental programme.

Join the Conversation:



@NORTHVANARTS

-30-

**Media Contact:**

George Harwood Smith, Exhibitions Manager (North Vancouver Community Arts Council)  
604.988.6844 | [george@northvanarts.ca](mailto:george@northvanarts.ca)

CityScape Community Art Space, 335 Lonsdale Avenue, North Vancouver, BC V7M 2G3  
[www.northvanarts.ca](http://www.northvanarts.ca)