

## THE COMMUNITY FOREST

In the fall of 2012 the Sunshine Coast found itself in a difficult struggle. Within the Sechelt Community Forest there was a small parcel of ancient and pristine growth that was destined to be cut down. A segment of the community was opposed to the initiative and as such they were making their thoughts and emotions known simply by being present at the site, a good old-fashioned protest. So too some elders of the Sechelt Nation felt the same angst. They too were making their presence known in what they deemed to be a sacred forest. Their stance regarding these matters in fact got several of them arrested.

I felt compassion for those fighting for the forest, as my wife Joy and I spend a lot of time in these forests of the Sunshine Coast. But it wasn't until I called Sunshine Coast artists together for a gathering that I truly became aware of this very special and unique forest. Not a protest, we simply gathered on Sunday and walked through the forest as a group of creative people looking for emotion and inspiration. As artists, musicians, writers, poets and the like, we'd make our statement through our artistic expression.

When I got home after my walk through this most diverse and emotionally soothing forest, I let the artistic process kindle within me. I'd taken a hundred photographs of the beauty and tranquility in that forest; surely my image was within those green, moody images.

I had no idea where it would take me, but as you can see my artist's brush took me in a completely different direction. For some, this is their vision. For some, this forest has a financial value that supersedes its historic and cultural beauty. If "beauty is in the eye of the beholder" then perhaps there are those that find my painting beautiful. For me as the artist, I find my painting of "The Community Forest" dark, foreboding and ominous. Art isn't always beautiful. Sometimes it has to speak about facts, and these facts aren't beautiful.

Ed Hill, artist