

St. Paul Icon 2016 ©
By the hand of Andre J Prevost
A collaborative project with St. Paul Roman Catholic Church,
Vancouver Downtown Eastside

St. Paul is portrayed and Teacher/Messenger, in the act of 'journeying'. This new icon depicts him as being Coast Salish, within a West Coast Salish setting, as having arrived by canoe. The canoe is positioned as ready to go back out on the water for St. Paul's further journeys. The background setting is representational of an inlet and a traditional structure. The painted frame around the image has the colours of the four directions. St. Paul is wearing a cedar hat and holding a talking stick in his right hand, and a cedar bough in his left. The Coast Salish and Indigenous Peoples can see themselves within the icon as bearers of the Good News and as having a shared experience of St. Paul within their church.

It was important for St. Paul to have a talking stick, in his role of inviting people to the Eucharist. In choosing which talking stick, in being all inclusive of all Coast Salish and Indigenous People of the West Coast, the depiction uses the one owned by Father Garry Laboucane OMI. It includes the Frog (top), Beaver (centre), and Eagle (bottom).

Cedar is central to the Nations of the West Coast, and cedar boughs are used in cleansing ceremonies. Connected to the cedar bough, and how cedar trees are deeply rooted within West Coast Culture, there is an added ribbon "*Follow Him and let your roots grow deep into him*" Col. 2: 6 & 7, continuing the theme of tree roots.

6 And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. 7 Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness.

In keeping the icon being all-inclusive Coast Salish and Indigenous Peoples, and sensitive to how customs, designs, and symbols vary from family to family and nation to nation, St. Paul's garments have been kept as a simple tunic and outer garment. The outer garment is a heavier blanket in a solid earthen colour, and his inner tunic is in a deep red to signify his martyrdom. In the same manner, no ornamentation has been added to the cedar hat to be inclusive of all.

This form of depiction is new for the West Coast, but it is based on the icons written by Father John Guliani in the United States, 'Painter of Native American Icons'. In Father Guliani's words "*My intent, therefore, in depicting Christian saints as Native Americans is to honor them and to acknowledge their original spiritual presence on this land. It is this original Native American spirituality that I attempt to celebrate in rendering the beauty and excellence of their craft as well as the dignity of their persons.*"

<http://indigenousjesus.blogspot.ca/2012/11/father-john-giuliani-painter-of-native.html>