

Award-winning artists perform at native festival

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The Seven Generations Arts Festival is back for a second year at the Woodland Cultural Centre, showcasing native art, theatre, music, crafts and heritage.

The festival kicks off at 7 tonight with the opening of LauraLee Harris' exhibit, Spoken Trees.

The opening includes a gallery talk by the artist, who will share the inspirations behind her works.

Born in Toronto in 1956, Harris started drawing and painting as a young child.

Her parents had a nomadic lifestyle, and she moved more than 20 times before she reached her late teens.

She studied art at a number of different schools, where she was exposed to soapstone, sculpture, batik, and copper enameling, among others.

After meeting and marrying her husband, Harris went back to school in the 1980s. She studied at the Forest Hill Art School, the Art Gallery of Ontario, and the Ontario College of Art and Design.

In 1994, Harris met an uncle who had been adopted as a child. She learned that her "French" grandfather was also Sioux, Cree, Chippewyan, Ojibwe and Montagnais.

That sent Harris on a search for her roots and a study of native traditions.

The exhibit, Spoken Trees, includes 35 works of art that trace Harris' journey of discovery.

Harris paints on wood, working with the grain of the piece, and also writes poems that accompany each work.

A second exhibit, Emerging

SEVEN GENERATIONS

► **What:** Seven Generations Arts Festival, showcasing native art, music, dance, crafts and heritage

► **When:** tonight, 8 o'clock, Saturday, noon to 7 p.m., Sunday, noon to 5:30 p.m.

► **Where:** The Woodland Cultural Centre, 184 Mohawk Street

Elegance: Fashion Through Changes, also opens tonight.

The show documents changes in native dress from the time of first contact with Europeans to present day fashion designers.

The exhibit includes photos from the museum's archives and regalia from its collections, as well as corn husk dolls and a dress with West Coast native designs.

The festival includes a lineup of traditional and blues musicians, as well as a series of workshops.

One of the performers on Saturday is award-winning blues singer Jace Martin of Six Nations.

Martin began his musical career at age 13, when he joined his older brothers in the band Wolf Pack.

Now 28, Martin has come out with a self-titled solo album. He's up for seven awards at this year's Aboriginal People's Choice Awards, and will be featured in an upcoming issue of Redskin magazine.

Following Jace Martin is another blues act from Six Nations, the Blues Brigade.

The Blues Brigade combines blues, hard rock, funk, country and a dash of metal in a collision between old and new styles.

They're currently recording their debut album at Tyneside

Studios in Caledonia.

The Old Mush Singers will perform some of their best-known songs Saturday evening, including Old Moccasin Dance, Women's New Shuffle and Rabbit Dance.

On Saturday, Roy Henry leads a workshop on soap stone carving.

Both days include workshops on temporary face and body art, based on tradition tattooing.

On Sunday, Rebecca Hill conducts a leather pouch workshop, and percussion group Tribal Thunder leads a drumming workshop.

Back by popular demand, there will be a corn soup cook-off on Saturday

Judging begins at 5 p.m.; \$5 buys you a mug to sample some soup.

Closing out the festival on Sunday is hoop dancer Lisa Odjig.

Raised on the Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve, Odjig was trained in the art of hoop dancing by her uncle, Gordie Odjig.

She has performed across Canada and in Italy, France, Germany, Korea, Mexico, the United States and Netherlands.

She has twice won the world championship of hoop dancing in Phoenix, Ariz., the first woman to do so in a traditionally male-dominated sport.

A panel discussion, Julia Jamieson monologue, the Six Nations Youth Choir, the Old Grannies comedy act and craft vendors round out the festival lineup.

Admission to the festival and the museum is free for the weekend.

For more information, contact the Woodland Cultural Centre, 184 Mohawk St., at 519-759-2650.