

## Ask The Boatman

*In May 1998, I got on a water taxi on Stuart Island with my late husband, Stephen Foster. We asked the skipper to take us one last time through the Arran Rapids. We rocketed along on a flood tide of the icy green waters in the narrow channel. On shore I saw a candelabra of dozens and dozens of white-headed bald eagles sitting in the dark green trees.*

*I'd come to Stuart Island two years before. Stephen and I had landed the job of caretaking Arran Point Lodge, owned by Montana billionaire Dennis Washington. We were flown in to be interviewed by Mr. and Mrs. Washington on August 20<sup>th</sup>, 1996 which happened to be my 43<sup>rd</sup> birthday. The manager, Bruce Milligan, took us in a golf cart to tour the estate. As we were driving along, I saw an eagle flying overhead. A feather dropped onto the road. Bruce stopped the cart. Stephen got out and picked up a white tail feather. He handed it to me, saying, "Happy Birthday!"*

*One year later, on August 19, 1997, Dennis took Stephen out by the Arran Rapids to show him a cougar's den. At the mouth of the den there was a white eagle feather. Stephen picked it up and brought it back to me, saying, "Happy Birthday!"*

*Along with the feathers we got this song. For me they symbolize the experience of being in that incredible, wild place with its Orcas, eagles, giant spring salmon, reversing rapids and howling outflow winds in the winter. It is one of the natural wonders of the world. My feathers remind me that wild life and wild places everywhere are being impacted so heavily by us humans. They remind me to bear witness to the changes happening, and to sing out for the Earth and all life.*



Here are my two feathers, alongside a carving by Xótxwes Jonny Williams.