



# ARTS/ENTERTAINMENT

The Mississauga News, Wednesday, January 7, 2004

## Harris was waiting to be born



**SANDY  
MILLAR**

Recent spiritual awakenings have provided rare subject matter for Mississauga artist LauraLee K. Harris.

Until Feb. 7, her artwork will be on display with about 60 other entries at the Art Gallery of Mississauga. It's part of Visual Arts Mississauga's 26th annual Juried Show of Fine Art. Her entry is entitled *Waiting To Be Born*.

The gallery is located on the ground floor at City Hall. Admission is free. Call for holiday hours.

Unlike most media represented in the show, like oil-on-canvas and watercolour-on-paper, Harris opts for acrylic-on-wood.

"I use the wood grain as my subject matter," said Harris, who now finds herself drawn to nature in her art as she explores her aboriginal roots. "I see images and bring them out with acrylic paint. It's a progressive type of creativity. I seek out interesting pieces of wood...in this case fir...and sometimes spend an hour at Home Depot deciding which of the 4x5 foot cuttings is best. Sometimes I see so many images, I just have to stop everything and pick one."

Harris, an artist for the past 23 years, is new to Mississauga. She moved here this past summer with her husband Fred and two children. This is the first time she has entered a show here.

Just a few years ago, Harris, learned of her ancestry on her mother's side. It turns out her forefathers were Cree, Sioux, Ojibwa and Chippewa.

Family members kept her native ancestry a secret, and she knew nothing of the connection between native art and its spiritual meanings.

"I had always tried different types of media that I learned at the Ontario College of Art & Design," said Harris,



Staff photo by Fred Loel

Mississauga artist LauraLee K. Harris likes to explore her native roots in her work, which consists mainly of large pieces done on plywood. Harris uses acrylic paints and the natural grains in the wood to create her natural scenes.

"but I never felt comfortable with any of them except for my interest in working with the grain in wood. I learned about my ancestry about the same time I started working with wood grains.

"The bond between my art and my interest in spirituality was a curious

coincidence. I wanted more meaning to my work and this medium answered that need. In native philosophy, everything we do is related to spirituality."

Harris, who formerly lived in Toronto, has published an impressive book to go along with her unique style of art. The

book combines her love of spiritual poetry. It is entitled *Spoken Trees...Painting on Wood and Poetry*. Each piece of work is complemented by a lengthy free-style poem. The book, and her artwork, can be seen at [www.lauraleekharris.com](http://www.lauraleekharris.com). Call 905-823-3337 to purchase.