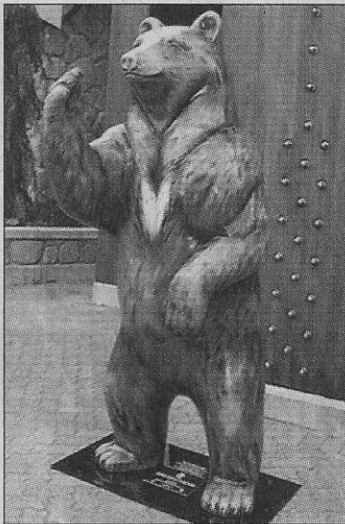


2006 NEWS UPDATE

Spirit Bear auction raises \$500,000 for BC Lions Society

VANCOUVER | More than \$500,000 was raised for the BC Lions Society Tuesday night as 30 painted Kermode Spirit Bear sculptures were auctioned off at the Westin Bayshore Hotel in Vancouver.

"We're absolutely thrilled with the results," said Stephen Miller, president of the BC Lions Society.



'Jeanie' sold for \$50,000

Almost 100 Spirit Bears have been decorating Vancouver streets since early May and another hundred have graced other B.C. cities such as Terrace and Prince Rupert.

The bears have featured a wide variety of artwork, including one painted like a Vancouver Canucks and another like Darth Vader.

Interestingly, the bear that sold for the most money — "Jeanie, Whistler Spirit Bear" painted by Gloria Masse — was also one of the most simple; just a bear with a thick brown coat. It sold for \$50,000.

The remaining bears will be sold in the coming days at auctions in other cities and online (spiritbearsinthecity.com).

Proceeds from the auctions will go to support the B.C. Easter Seals and Canucks for Kids charities.

Each bear sculpture was a collaboration between a B.C. artist, who used the bear as a canvas for unique artwork, and a private or corporate donor, who paid \$4,500 to cover costs such as manufacturing, transportation, installation and a \$500 honorarium to the artist.

The sculptures have been a big hit with tourists but have been criticized as tacky by some locals.

The bears follow a similar B.C. Lions Society project in 2004 that featured orca sculptures in Vancouver and Victoria, some of which fetched up to \$28,000 at auction.

Chad Skelton, Vancouver Sun