

Tacoma Totem Pole Deaccession Review Panel

City of Tacoma, Office of Arts and Cultural Vitality
February 25, 2021
Zoom Virtual Meeting

Dear panelists:

On September 14, 2020, the Tacoma Arts Commission unanimously voted to assemble a Deaccession panel to consider the removal of the Tacoma Totem Pole from the City of Tacoma's Municipal Art Collection and begin discussions to determine its future. The Totem Pole is also a registered Landmark with the City of Tacoma, so there are several stages to go through on this journey, and several possible outcomes. Your panel will meet on the 25th of February and make recommendations that will go to the Tacoma Arts Commission on March 8th for review and an official vote on whether or not to Deaccession the Totem Pole from the Municipal Art Collection. If the recommendation is for Deaccessioning and the Tacoma Arts Commission approves it, the process to request the pole's removal from the City of Tacoma's Register of Historic Places will begin and a request will be made to the City's Landmarks Preservation Commission and will follow the processes required by their protocol. An important part of the larger discussion is determining what happens to the Totem Pole if it is removed from both the Municipal Art Collection and the Register of Historic Places. We are researching the options for removal so we are prepared for this eventuality and will discuss this during the meeting as well.

Thank you for lending your wisdom and knowledge to this important issue. To date, the narrative has been centered from the white colonizer perspective. This panel centers Indigenous voice and will illuminate the parts of the story that have been ignored, overlooked, or misunderstood. It is our hope that the truth of the full impact of the

Tacoma Totem Pole as a publicly sited object can be brought to the fore of the discussion.

As a panelist, you are asked to formally review the Tacoma Totem Pole for consideration of removing the object from the Municipal Art Collection (Deaccession). As long as an artwork is in the Municipal Art Collection, the City is responsible for the upkeep and stewardship of the piece. The Deaccession policy defines the categories in which a work can currently be considered for removal. In this case, you will be considering the Tacoma Totem Pole for Deaccession under the categories of “Inauthentic” and “Aesthetic Value”. This packet provides background information that will be covered in more detail at the meeting on February 25th to inform your decision making.

Again, thank you for your time, wisdom, and consideration.

Amy McBride
Arts Administrator
Office of Arts & Cultural Vitality
City of Tacoma

In this packet you will find:

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TACOMA ARTS COMMISSION Municipal Art Collection

DEACCESSION POLICY

PURPOSE

TO ESTABLISH A PROCESS FOR THE REMOVAL, SALE, RELOCATION, AND/OR DISPOSAL OF PUBLIC WORKS OF ART IN THE MUNICIPAL ART COLLECTION.

DEFINITION

DEACCESSION IS TO REMOVE AN OBJECT OF ART FROM THE MUNICIPAL ART COLLECTION INCLUDING REMOVAL OF THE ARTWORK FROM ITS PUBLIC SITE, THE MAINTENANCE CYCLE, AND TRANSFERRING RECORDS, BOTH HARD COPY AND ELECTRONIC, INTO A DEACCESSION COLLECTION FILE.

POLICY

1. AN ARTWORK MAY BE CONSIDERED FOR DEACCESSION UNDER THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS ONLY:

- A. SECURITY - THE CONDITION OR SECURITY OF THE ARTWORK CAN NOT BE REASONABLY GUARANTEED.
- B. THEFT - ALL STOLEN ARTWORKS WILL BE DOCUMENTED THROUGH AN OFFICIAL POLICE REPORT AND A REPORT PREPARED BY THE AGENCY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SITE OF LOSS.
- C. INAUTHENTIC - THE WORK IS DISCOVERED TO BE INAUTHENTIC, FRAUDULENT, OR STOLEN.
- D. DAMAGE BEYOND REPAIR - THE WORK HAS BEEN DAMAGED BEYOND REPAIR, DAMAGED TO THE EXTENT THAT IT NO LONGER REPRESENTS THE ARTIST'S INTENT, OR DAMAGED TO THE EXTENT THAT THE EXPENSES OF RESTORATION AND REPAIR IS FOUND TO EXCEED CURRENT MARKET VALUE OF THE ARTWORK. IN THE EVENT THE ARTWORK IS DAMAGED, STAFF WILL PREPARE A REPORT THAT DOCUMENTS THE ORIGINAL COST OF THE ARTWORK, ESTIMATED MARKET VALUE, AND THE ESTIMATED COST OF REPAIR.
- E. LOSS OF SITE - THE TACOMA ARTS COMMISSION WILL MAKE EVERY ATTEMPT TO FIND A SUITABLE LOCATION FOR EVERY ARTWORK IN THE MUNICIPAL ART COLLECTION; HOWEVER, LACK OF SITING OR PROPER STORAGE COULD MERIT DEACCESSIONING.
- F. SITE ALTERATION - FOR SITE-INTEGRATED ARTWORK, IF THE SITE FOR WHICH A PIECE OF ARTWORK WAS SPECIFICALLY CREATED IS STRUCTURALLY DAMAGED OR OTHERWISE ALTERED SO THAT IT CAN NO LONGER ACCOMMODATE THE WORK, OR IF THE PIECE IS MADE PUBLICLY INACCESSIBLE BY A CHANGE IN ITS SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT SUCH AS NEW CONSTRUCTION OR DEMOLITION, THAT ARTWORK MAY BE CONSIDERED FOR DEACCESSION.
- G. TEMPORARY ACQUISITION - THE ARTWORK WAS PURCHASED AS A SEMI-PERMANENT ACQUISITION AND THE CITY'S OBLIGATION IS TERMINATED.
- H. SAFETY - THE ARTWORK ENDANGERS PUBLIC SAFETY.
- I. EXCESSIVE REPRESENTATION - THE WORK IS DUPLICATIVE, OR EXCESSIVE IN A LARGE HOLDING OF WORK OF THAT TYPE OR OF THAT ARTIST.
- J. AESTHETIC VALUE - THE WORK HAS NOT WITHSTOOD THE TEST OF TIME. IT HAS BEEN PROFESSIONALLY DETERMINED TO LACK AESTHETIC OR ARTISTIC VALUE TO JUSTIFY ITS CONTINUED UPKEEP AND STORAGE WITHIN THE MUNICIPAL ART COLLECTION.

- K. CONTENT - ONCE THE ARTWORK HAS BEEN ACCESSIONED INTO THE MUNICIPAL ART COLLECTION, IT MAY NOT BE DEACCESSIONED ON THE BASIS OF CONTENT.
2. AT THE CONCLUSION OF EACH BIENNIAL CYCLICAL MAINTENANCE SURVEY, IN THE EVENT THAT WORKS OF ART ARE THREATENED BY ANY OF THE ABOVE CRITERIA, STAFF WILL PREPARE A RECOMMENDATION FOR DEACCESSION OF ARTWORK FROM THE MUNICIPAL ART COLLECTION FOR REVIEW, EVALUATION, AND ACTION BY THE TACOMA ARTS COMMISSION.
 3. IT IS THE OBLIGATION OF THE TACOMA ARTS COMMISSION TO ENSURE THAT ALL DISPOSALS WITH REGARD TO THE MUNICIPAL ART COLLECTION BE FORMALLY AND PUBLICLY CONDUCTED AND ADEQUATELY DOCUMENTED.
 4. ARTISTS WHOSE WORK IS BEING CONSIDERED FOR DEACCESSION SHALL BE FORMALLY NOTIFIED BY MAIL USING THE CURRENT ADDRESS OF RECORD ORIGINALLY PROVIDED BY THE ARTIST.
 5. ALL ARTWORK UNDER CONSIDERATION FOR DEACCESSION WILL BE ACCOMPANIED BY A STAFF REPORT THAT INCLUDES:
 - A. REASONS FOR THE SUGGESTED DEACCESSION.
 - B. ACCESSION METHOD, COST, AND CURRENT MARKET VALUE.
 - C. DOCUMENTATION OF CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE ARTIST.
 - D. PHOTO DOCUMENTATION OF SITE CONDITIONS (IF APPLICABLE).
 - E. OFFICIAL POLICE REPORT (IF APPLICABLE).
 6. A PERMANENT RECORD OF THE ARTWORK'S INCLUSION IN MUNICIPAL ART COLLECTION, AND REASONS FOR ITS REMOVAL, SHALL BE MAINTAINED IN A DEACCESSIONED COLLECTION FILE, AND WILL BE KEPT AS A SEPARATE SECTION OF THE MUNICIPAL ART COLLECTION RECORDS.
 7. THE ARTWORK, OR ITS REMAINS, SHALL BE DISPOSED OF BY THE COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT STAFF OR ITS AGENTS UPON DEACCESSION ACTION. THE ARTIST WILL BE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO PURCHASE THE ARTWORK, OR ITS PARTS, BEFORE DISPOSAL BY SALE, DONATION, TRADE, OR DESTRUCTION.
 8. THE CITY COUNCIL WILL DEACCESSION ARTWORK FROM THE MUNICIPAL ART COLLECTION BY ADOPTION OF A RESOLUTION; HOWEVER, THE CITY MANAGER IS AUTHORIZED TO REMOVE ARTWORK FROM THE COLLECTION IF THE VALUE OF THE ART IS EQUAL TO OR LESS THAN HIS PURCHASING AUTHORITY.
 9. THE TACOMA ARTS COMMISSION'S ACTION REGARDING DEACCESSIONED ARTWORK WILL BE TRANSMITTED TO THE ASSET MANAGEMENT DIVISION OF THE GENERAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT.
 10. DISTRIBUTION OF SALES FUNDS - IN THE EVENT THAT THE REMOVED ARTWORK IS SOLD, PURSUANT TO THE SUBSECTIONS ABOVE, THE PROCEEDS OF SUCH SALE SHALL BE DEPOSITED INTO THE MUNICIPAL ART FUND OF THE CITY OF TACOMA.
 11. NO CURRENT MEMBER OF THE TACOMA ARTS COMMISSION OR STAFF TO THE COMMISSION OR ANY MEMBER OR STAFF WHO HAS SERVED ON OR FOR THE COMMISSION WITHIN THE MOST RECENT TWO YEARS FROM THE DATE OF CONSIDERATION OF DEACCESSION SHALL BE ALLOWED TO BID AND/OR PURCHASE A DEACCESSIONED ARTWORK.



**TACOMA ARTS COMMISSION
Municipal Art Collection**

DE-ACCESSION CONSIDERATION

GENERAL INFORMATION

ARTIST Two unnamed carvers from Sitka Alaska
Last First Middle

TITLE OF ARTWORK Tacoma Totem Pole TAMAC# 19820058

MEDIUM RED CEDAR DIMENSIONS 72.5' tall (above grade) x 34" wide x 34" deep

ACQUISITION DATE: 1903 PURCHASE PRICE: \$3,000 LAST APPRAISAL _____

DATE OF DE-ACCESSION PANEL: February 25, 2021

VOTING PANEL MEMBERS: Andrew Strobel (Haida, Puyallup Tribe Planning Director), Catherine Edwards (Central Council Tingit and Haida Tribal Councilmember), Connie McCloud (Puyallup, Puyallup Tribe Cultural Director), Clinton McCloud (Puyallup), Kevin Bartoy (Landmarks Preservation Commission), Jeanette Sanchez (Arts Commission) OTHERS PRESENT _____

IMAGES

See attached

WHY IS THIS PIECE BEING CONSIDERED FOR DE-ACCESSION?

The Commission finds that retaining the object in the Municipal Art Collection does not further the goals and objectives of the Office of Arts & Cultural Vitality or the City. It is believed to be fraudulent in origin, and misrepresents Native American peoples and artforms. Its continued presence in Tacoma is harmful, and its removal has been requested by representatives of the Puyallup Tribe.

TACMAC De-accession Review Form

WHAT ARE THE CONDITIONS THAT MERIT DE-ACCESSION CONSIDERATION?

<input type="checkbox"/> SECURITY	<input type="checkbox"/> LOSS OF SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXCESSIVE REPRESENTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> THEFT	<input type="checkbox"/> SITE ALTERATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AESTHETIC VALUE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INAUTHENTIC	<input type="checkbox"/> TEMPORARY ACQUISITION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PLEASE NOTE ANY OTHER CONCERNS -Equity and social justice concerns -Tribal request
<input type="checkbox"/> DAMAGE BEYOND REPAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> SAFETY	

RECOMMENDATION:

Follow-up

Artist Contact

GENERAL INFORMATION

ARTIST Unknown – Deceased
Last First Middle

TITLE OF ARTWORK Tacoma Totem Pole TAMAC# 19820058

MEDIUM Red Cedar DIMENSIONS 72.5' tall (above grade) x 34" wide x 34" deep

Background

Artist: Unknown

Medium: Red cedar

Dimensions: 72.5'h (above grade) x 34"w x 34"d

Year Created: 1903

Location: Fireman's Park, 801 A St, Tacoma, WA 98402



Overview

- The Totem Pole was commissioned and carved locally in 1903, and is currently installed in Fireman's Park in downtown Tacoma.
- The pole was commissioned by Tacoma businessmen William Sheard and Chester Thorne in an effort to "one-up" Seattle at a time when the two cities were competing for national attention. At that time, the white men who commissioned the pole told press that it was carved on Vashon Island by two unnamed Alaskan Native carvers from this area, who were paid \$3,000 and whose identities were kept secret.
- The Totem Pole was initially sited in front of the Tacoma Hotel at S. 10th and A Street and was moved to Fireman's Park in 1974.
- The pole is carved from a single, solid cedar log. After being carved and finished with an adz, the pole was painted. Historic records indicate that the pole was repainted in 1928, 1935, 1948, 1959 and 1976.

- The pole is owned by the City of Tacoma and is part of the Municipal Art Collection and is designated as a historic landmark by the City.

Deaccession Considerations

The Tacoma Totem Pole is being considered for Deaccession on the grounds of being Inauthentic and lacking Aesthetic Value.

“Inauthentic” is defined as: The work is discovered to be inauthentic, fraudulent, or stolen.

“Aesthetic Value” is defined as: The work has not withstood the test of time. It has been professionally determined to lack aesthetic or artistic value to justify its continued upkeep and storage within the Municipal Art Collection.

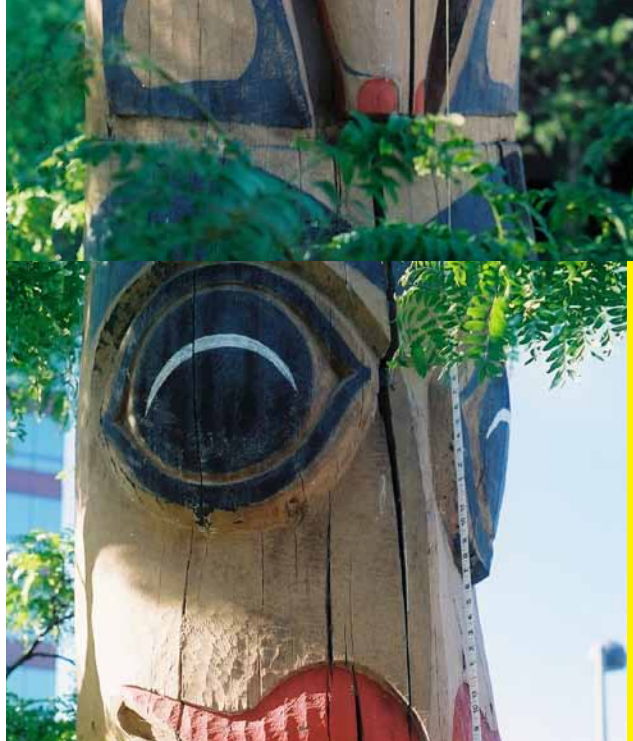
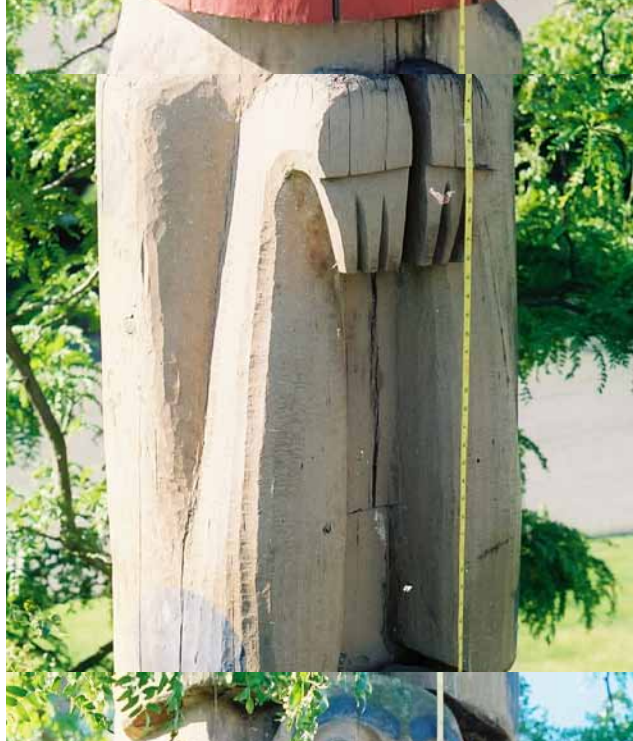
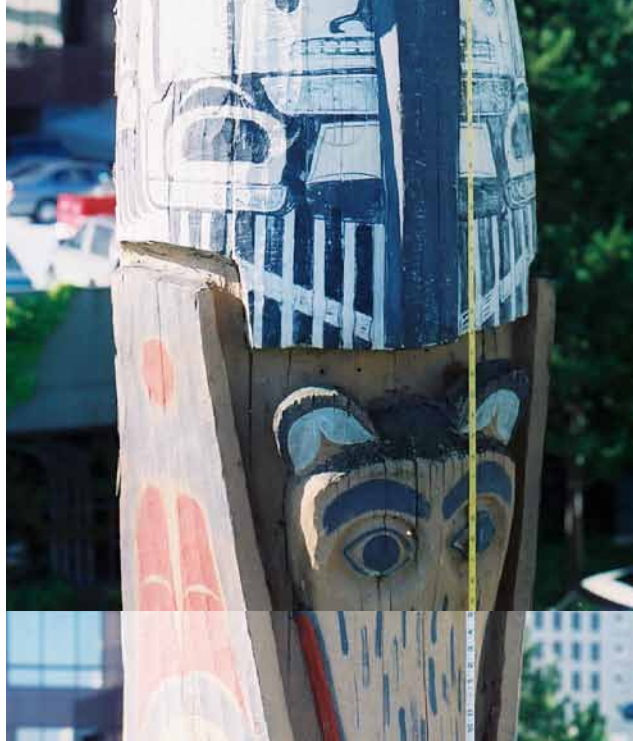
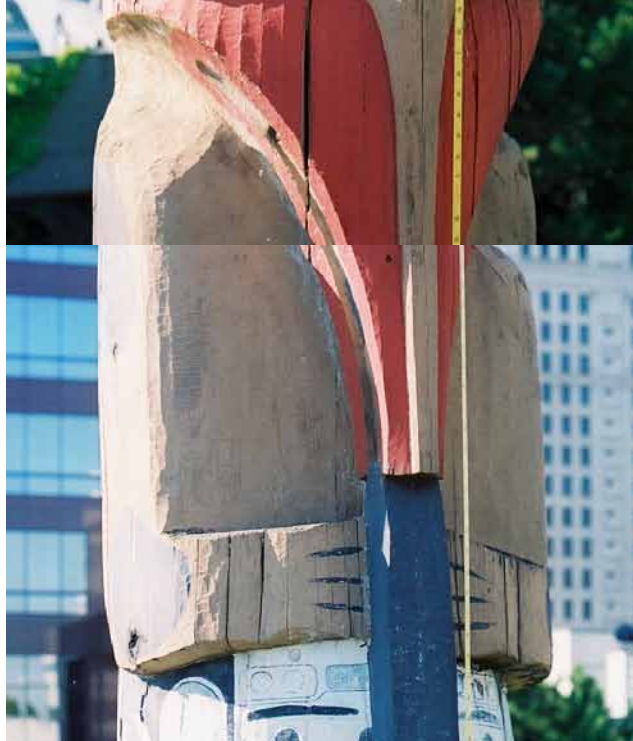
It is likely that the original artists were non-Native. The original artists are unknown. Some historical records claim the carvers were from British Columbia, others, Alaskan Natives (Tlingit specifically) but the style, method of carving, and secrecy surrounding the creation indicate it is just as likely by non-Natives poorly appropriating a Native aesthetic. This theory has been backed up by a Northwest Coast art expert from the Burke Museum (Dr. Robin K. Wright), and other tribal consultants.

Representatives from the Tlingit and Haida Tribe do not believe the pole has any authentic ceremonial or clan origins, and thereby claim no association with it.

This case aligns with regional and national efforts to remove public artworks that misrepresent BIPOC communities and histories, or otherwise cause harm. For instance, the City of Seattle has begun advocating for the removal of stolen or fraudulent totem poles from our region with a renewed focus on commissioning Coast Salish art. Important ethical and legal precedents about proof of origin for Native artworks were also established in the 1990 Indian Arts and Crafts Act.

Please read this Grit City Magazine article for additional historical context:

<https://gritcitymag.com/2017/12/the-strange-history-of-the-tacoma-totem-pole/>



This document is submitted to the committee or designated officials only as a reference of information that may serve towards making a decision regarding the Tacoma totem pole located currently in Fireman's Park.

My name is Shaun Peterson. I am a member of the Puyallup tribe of Indians and have served as a consultant to the city regarding tribal matters where history and cultural knowledge has been needed. I learned a great deal from the late Judy Wright who directed me to research our tribal archives when I was carving my first Story Pole for Chief Leschi School in 1995. Equally important was my work with curator emeritus of the Seattle Art Museum Native collection, Steve Brown. I worked with Steve for several years and met a number of Alaska Native carvers whom I'd worked with learning not only carving technique but cultural protocol that is involved with the creative process.

From my first experience as a Native artist carving a story pole, I learned about totem poles and welcome figures. It was made clear to me not only by art historians and practicing artists but elders who expressed discomfort when talking about raising totem poles in Coast Salish territory. The most vocal of these elders included Jack Moses who expressed the opinion that if Coast Salish people were to raise totems in our village areas we express to the world we are a conquered people. That memory stayed with me over the years and it carries a great deal of truth.

It is well known that the totem pole in Fireman's park was commissioned by businessmen in competitive efforts with the city of Seattle at the turn of the century. It marks a time when Coast Salish people had little say in what was shortly before their territory. It along with the pole of Pioneer square mark a time of taking art and culture from one place and appropriating it for the sake of tourism. At the time of many of these pole installations, the Tacoma pole in question included, there seems to be no mark of ceremony or cultural relevance but only the boasting of it's size. These poles serve as iconography that have long mislead the public including tribal communities to some degree that these objects are in association with Coast Salish tribes when in fact they herald from the very groups they once warred with.

I understand this is a complex matter. My intention was to give some perspective but I see it would be in best interest that I recuse myself from the voting process. I can offer up answers to questions should they arise and have provided the committee with a brief background from consulting community members of the Haida and Tlingit that I know. Today I have brought professor Robin K. Wright as well which was a request from the city council from my understanding at one point to share her knowledge as curator of Northwest Coast Native American art at the Burke Museum.

Qwalsius - Shaun Peterson
June 4, 2013

From: [McBride, Amy](#)
To: [Andrew Strobel](#)
Cc: [Amber Hayward](#); [Asia Tail](#); [Catherine Edwards](#); [Solverson, Rebecca](#)
Subject: Re: Fireman's Park Totem Pole - Tacoma, WA.
Date: Thursday, November 5, 2020 10:27:36 AM

Thank you Andrew!

Amy McBride

This message is sent from my phone, please excuse brevity and/or typos.

Be well!

On Nov 4, 2020, at 5:34 PM, Andrew Strobel <Andrew.Strobel@puyalluptribe-nsn.gov> wrote:

Hi Amy, I am forwarding some commentary from the Central Council Tlingit and Haida Tribe Cultural Resources Specialist Harold Jacobs. I spoke with 1st Vice President Catherine Edwards and she helped facilitate an internal conversation on the object so it could be properly inspected and verified for its authenticity. I am forwarding this conversation by Harold Jacobs that I think crystalizes how the Tribe looks at the object. This object having no cultural affinity either in ceremonial or clan connection, albeit supporting fraudulent carving patterns, really places the responsibility of the object on the City of Tacoma. It is being recommended that the Tribe have no connection to the object. I believe Mr. Jacobs also consulted with some local carvers in Alaska on this. I have also cced VP Catherine Edwards for any questions or clarifications.

Regards,

Andrew Strobel
Director of Planning and Land Use
Puyallup Tribe of Indians
3700 Pacific Hwy E #407, Fife, WA 98424
253-573-7879

From: Andrew Strobel <strobelski@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, November 04, 2020 4:58 PM
To: Andrew Strobel
Subject: Fwd: Fireman's Park Totem Pole - Tacoma, WA.

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Catherine Edwards** <cedwards@ccthita-nsn.gov>

Date: Tue, Nov 3, 2020 at 12:55 PM

Subject: Fwd: Fireman's Park Totem Pole - Tacoma, WA.

To: Andrew Strobel <strobelski@gmail.com>

Catherine N. Edwards (Kashkaani)
Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska
9097 Glacier Highway
Juneau AK 99801
(360)259-5057
cedwards@ccthita-nsn.gov

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Heather Gatti <hgatti@ccthita-nsn.gov>
Date: November 3, 2020 at 12:18:54 PM PST
To: Richard Peterson <rpeterson@ccthita-nsn.gov>, Catherine Edwards <cedwards@ccthita-nsn.gov>
Subject: FW: Fireman's Park Totem Pole - Tacoma, WA.

Please see email below with Harold's response to the Fireman's park totem pole in Tacoma

Gunalchéesh/ Háw'aa,

Heather Gatti

Special Assistant to the President • Office of the President

Central Council Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska

Edward K. Thomas Building

9097 Glacier Highway • Juneau AK 99801

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From: Harold Jacobs <[hjacob@ccthita-nsn.gov](mailto:hjacobs@ccthita-nsn.gov)>
Sent: Monday, November 2, 2020 3:21 PM
To: Heather Gatti <hgatti@ccthita-nsn.gov>; Desiree Duncan <dduncan@ccthita-nsn.gov>
Subject: RE: Fireman's Park Totem Pole - Tacoma, WA.

Good afternoon—

I contacted an expert on Northwest Coast Art to get his views on this totem pole.

This is what he said:

“What I’ve heard and understood about this pole is reflected in the information included with it. The letter from Shaun Peterson says a lot about how it has never really fit in area and what was the original motivation for commissioning the pole.

The last repainting, done in 1976 was by a couple of guys I know, which is why it includes some by the book northern style wing and body paintings, which surely didn’t look like those to begin with.”

If Tacoma wants to dispose of it (burn it up?) maybe that's the best thing. It evidently has never had a genuine Native context from day one in 1903."

These were also my thoughts on this pole, especially after I saw the photo.

Since it's not associated with any clan or traditional events my recommendation is that Tlingit & Haida stay clear of it.

An organization like the Seattle Indian Health board might be able to place on their property, which of course isn't my call and even that would probably need involvement of the local land owners as to whether or not they even want it on their territory.

I hope this helps.

Gunalchéesh / Háw'aa

--Harold Jacobs

Goos' shú, Ghooch shaayi

Native Lands & Resources Department, Cultural Resources

Central Council of the Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska

9097 Glacier Hwy • Juneau, Alaska 99801

Toll Free: 800.344.1432/x7310 • W: 907.463.7310

E: [hjacobsc@ccthita.org](mailto:hjacobs@ccthita.org) <<mailto:hjacobs@ccthita.org>> • W: www.ccthita.org <<http://www.ccthita.org>> • FB: www.facebook.com/ccthita <<http://www.facebook.com/ccthita>>

OUR MISSION:

“Preserving our sovereignty, enhancing our economic and cultural resources, and promoting self sufficiency and self-governance for our citizens through collaboration, service, and advocacy.”

From: Heather Gatti <hgatti@ccthita-nsn.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, October 28, 2020 4:20 PM
To: Harold Jacobs <[hjacob@ccthita-nsn.gov](mailto:hjacobs@ccthita-nsn.gov)>; Desiree Duncan <dduncan@ccthita-nsn.gov>
Cc: Richard Peterson <rpeterson@ccthita-nsn.gov>; Catherine Edwards <cedwards@ccthita-nsn.gov>
Subject: Fireman's Park Totem Pole - Tacoma, WA.

Hi Harold & Desiree –

At our Executive Council meeting last week, Vice President Edwards brought forward that she’s been in touch with someone regarding a totem pole at Fireman’s Park in Tacoma.

My understanding is that they are trying to find the most culturally appropriate way to remove the totem pole.

Information from Vice President Edwards is attached. I’ve also included her on this email to provide more information as needed.

President Peterson asked me to bring this to your attention and see if you know any information about this pole and if there are recommendations on how and if the tribe should engage.

Gunalchéesh/ Háw’aa,

Heather Gatti

Special Assistant to the President • Office of the President

Central Council Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska

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LANDMARK PRESERVATION COMMISSION

INVENTORY FORM OF HISTORIC PLACES

ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

NAME				
COMMON: Tacoma Totem Pole				
AND/OR HISTORIC:				
LOCATION				
STREET AND NUMBER: Horizontal position, construction site, near 9th and A				
CITY OR TOWN: Tacoma			COUNTY: Pierce	
CLASSIFICATION				
CATEGORY (Check One)		OWNERSHIP		STATUS
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Object		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both		<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
		Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered		ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No (1975)
DESCRIPTION				
CONDITION	(Check One)			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Fair <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated		<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins <input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed	
	(Check One)		(Check One)	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered <input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Moved <input type="checkbox"/> Original Site	
DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE				
Describe briefly on the back; attach a small photo.				
SIGNIFICANCE				
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)				
<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century <input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EARLY 20th Century				
SPECIFIC DATES: (If Applicable and Known)				
AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)				
<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Historic <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Art <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce <input type="checkbox"/> Communications <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> Education <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering <input type="checkbox"/> Industry <input type="checkbox"/> Invention <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape <input type="checkbox"/> Literature <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Music		<input type="checkbox"/> Political <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy <input type="checkbox"/> Science <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sculpture <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian <input type="checkbox"/> Theater <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____ _____				
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE				
Briefly describe the significance on the back.				
FORM PREPARED BY				
NAME AND TITLE: Caroline Gallacci, Archivist				
ORGANIZATION: Washington State Historical Society				DATE: 1/21/75
STREET AND NUMBER: 315 North Stadium Way			CITY OR TOWN: Tacoma	

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE: The Tacoma Totem Pole was carved, ^{ERNEST} in Quartermaster Harbor, ^{OR UNKNOWN} from a cedar pole selected and prepared by the St. Paul Tacoma Lumber Company. A massive tree was chosen to permit deep carvings to assure adequate relief -- considered one of the pole's major assets. It was carved by two British Columbian ^(OR ALASKAN) Indians whose identity was kept secret for in making the pole for white civilization they violated the traditions of the tribe. Part of the Totem Pole's uniqueness stems from its height: (reported to be anywhere from 67 to 105 feet high), and the fact that it ~~was~~ originally carved for the city, and not acquired from another source. In comparing this pole to the one located in Seattle at the time of its raising in 1903 the factors most often emphasized were, its deep relief, that Tacoma acquired it honestly, and that Indians were actually commissioned to carve the pole.

When the pole was raised, 18 electric lights circled the head of the eagle on top and there were volunteers who offered to climb the pole barefooted to change any lights which burned out. The pole has been moved three times: when it was raised in 1903; upon construction of the 11th street off ramp to 10th, when it was moved from 10th and A to 9th and A, in 1954; and upon construction of the Tacoma Spur when it was placed in its present horizontal position, in 1974. It is currently located near the construction site at 9th and A, and after restoration will be relocated about 150 feet from its former location.

One of the most difficult parts of the Totem pole to reconstruct is the original colors. Early records indicate that natural colors were used, but the only actual one uncovered was a yellow which appeared gild through the sun shining on the deep relief. But between 1903 and 1969 many paintings and cleanings have been undertaken. In 1938, one individual indicated that such changes in the colors meant a change in the meaning of the symbols carved into the pole. The most recent re-paintings of the pole occurred in 1959 and 1969. The earlier was done after complaints over the pastel pinks and blues. At that time an Indian Totem pole expert from Alaska was consulted. In 1969 the pole was repainted through the assistance of a member of the Squamish tribe in British Columbia. Doubt still remains as to whether or not the current colors are the original. The 1959 re-painting changed pastel colors to russet, brown, green, black and white; no mention of the originally discussed yellow. Because ten years later another expert had to be called in to get the proper colors suggests a continual doubt. Since color is related to meaning, it seems important to find out what the original ones were.

The meaning of the symbols of the pole are outlined as follows:

- (1) Eagle at top - Skanskwin - clan crest of the Nexa'da people
- (2) Killer whale - Kit-wusu - shown by a dorsal fin; the round block is the whale's head; fins on the side; a round painted spot is the whale's blow hole
- (3) Composite figure representing the raven - fins on the ~~block~~ block above, if attached to the raven would make it a wolf, which could be explained by the tribes theory of dual personality on the part of both men and animals. The two small figures on the side are human and connect the crest with the legend of children who disobeyed their mothers and were turned into ravens.
- (4) Great raven woman - Its-tads-doh - mother of the Haida Indians
- (5) Symbol of a hat worn by a chief - Tadu-skillik - used to indicate relationship between Its-tads-doh, mother of Haida and her daughter, Hoh-hok, who is credited with creating the earth
- (6) Daughter of the great raven - hoh-hok (lok) - similar to the third symbol from the top; grasped in the hand is a cylinder-like object representing the container out of which she carried the magic which caused the land to rise out of the great expanse of water which is supposed to have covered the globe.
- (7) [next to bottom] grizzly bear - Horts - paws of a wolf; composite crest, boasting of the powers of the bear clan
- (8) [bottom] Qo-tc - wolf - family crest of the man for whom the pole was carved

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE: At the cost of \$3,000, William Sheard and Chester Thorne commissioned the ^{carving} building of a Totem Pole which would rival that of Seattle's. Sheard had become irritated by articles describing Seattle's Totem Pole, which he claimed had been stolen from Alaskan Indians. Sheard was an explorer, seller of furs, and later established an Alaska curio shop at 10th and A. Thorne was active in Tacoma banking and civic interests. The pole, immediately became one of the major tourist attractions to the city, and one wonders whether or not it was intentional that it should be raised the day before Theodore Roosevelt arrived in the city to assist in

the laying of the cornerstone for the Masonic Temple. In an early article on the pole, a reporter assessed the importance of the pole by saying that "it will probably never be again duplicated, but for hundreds of years give Tacoma the distinction of having seized on a dying custom from a race rapidly becoming extinct and perpetuating their unique workmanship and learning and art for the edification and gratification of unborn generations."

That which is represented in the Totem Pole is family history - genealogy; and the belief that man originated from man-like beasts, forerunners of today's animals. Indian totem poles are not part of the culture of Washington Indians, but rather those of British Columbia and Alaska, and is one of their sacred institutions. They will not willingly part with their family tree. It is their belief that each tribe is descended from some form of animal and the pole represents each successive marriage and intermarriage between the tribes, each being represented by the animal after which it is named. Some Indian families can trace their family history back 30 or 40 generations through the carvings on their tribal poles.

Owner: City of Tacoma

Marker inscription: Tacoma totem pole largest totem pole in the world. Made and carved by Alaska Indians. Presented to the City of Tacoma by W.F. Sheard and Chester Thorne. 1903.



TACOMA TOTEM POLE, 1903 (Firemen's Park)

Tacoma's Totem Pole was carved by Alaska Indians who were brought to Quartermaster Harbor, on Vashon Island, expressly for that purpose. The enterprise was funded by Chester Thorne and William F. Sheard. Its restored height of 82 feet, 6 inches makes it still one of the tallest in the country. The original Tacoma Totem Pole was dedicated in May of 1903. (Tacoma and State Registers)