

CORVALLIS PLAY AREA MEMORIALIZES YOUNG BOY, NATIVE PEOPLES

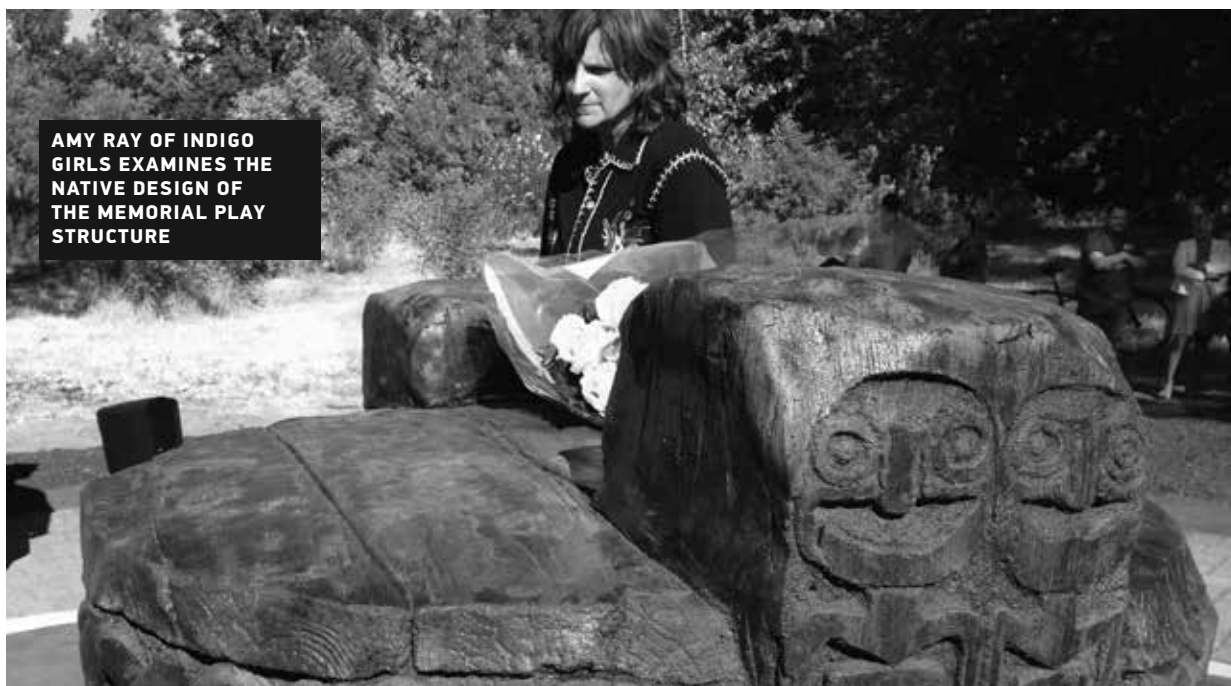
Shawala Point at Riverfront Commemorative Park in Corvallis has a new play structure, one that memorializes the life of a young boy and honors the traditions of local indigenous people.

The 50 or so people who came to the Aug. 4 dedication joined Nigel Rose Weber's parents to watch as a Grand Ronde canoe family paddled up to Shawala Point on the hot August afternoon. Grand Ronde tribal members later drummed and sang. Native American activist and writer Winona LaDuke participated in the dedication, as did singer-songwriter Amy Ray.

The structure is in memory of 7-year-old Nigel, who died unexpectedly April 4, 2014, after staying home from school for an illness.

Nigel's mother, Trish Weber, said the concrete sculpture is designed and painted to look like a traditional wood carved by the Kalapuya, and it is meant to be climbed on by children. The structure was planned in conjunction with the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde. Tribal members participated in the unveiling, as did Corvallis Mayor Biff Traber. Weber and her husband, Nigel's father Mark Rose, fundraised, spent \$30,000 and worked with the city of Corvallis to build the play area.

Weber is an activist who fights extreme energy projects, and she has forged alliances with native tribes in doing that work. She has joined with LaDuke in the battle to stop tar sands pipelines. LaDuke said the day after the dedication she would be taking Weber to ride horses along the proposed En-



AMY RAY OF INDIGO GIRLS EXAMINES THE NATIVE DESIGN OF THE MEMORIAL PLAY STRUCTURE

PHOTO CREDIT: CAMILLA MORTENSEN

bridge pipeline routes in the Midwest, because she said of the climate change-causing oil project, "It's hot enough here already."

LaDuke said of the efforts to save the Earth, and of Nigel and others that have passed, "When I see him and the others, I want to shake their hands and say, 'I did the best I could.'"

Weber spoke next of her son. She said, "We lost our son. He was there. And then he wasn't."

As kids played in the skate park behind her, she continued, "He was beautiful and funny and smart ... and he died and that's not right." Weber shared memories of Nigel from his love of cooking and video gaming to his skills on the water — part of the heartbreak of the last 16 months, she said, was not seeing him to grow up to be a "river rat."

Weber also spoke of a family camping trip under a full moon and said she takes a moment during the full moon each month to think of her son.

Weber's friend Amy Ray, who is known both for her solo career and for her work as a member of the folk duo Indigo Girls, then sang the Indigo Girls song "Share the Moon," starting off: "I can go one day without calling/ Two days without bawling/ Three days without missing/ But a lifetime of no kissing you/ Is something that I just can't do/ I wish I could be there to share the moon."

Weber's parting words to the small crowd were first to quote Hamlet, pointing out that Shakespeare too knew the grief of losing a young son, and then quoting Mickey Hart at the Grateful Dead's recent final concert, "I'll leave you with this: Please, be kind."

The play structure can be found at the south end of Riverfront Commemorative Park, near the Corvallis Skate Park.

LaDuke later fell with her horse, was hospitalized and could not finish the ride; however, Weber was able to continue her ride horseback along the pipeline route. — *Camilla Mortensen*

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