

# Lummi Healing Pole Makes A Remarkable Journey Across The Country To New York

■ Master Carver Jewell "Praying Wolf" James stops in Portland on his way to honor victims of last year's September 11<sup>th</sup> tragedy and the children of the lost.

By Ron Karten

"What a beautiful job you did!"

Observer after observer said those exact words to Lummi Nation Master Carver Jewell James after the ceremony unveiling his Healing Pole August 23 in Portland's Holladay Park. Most also took the opportunity to be photographed in front of the pole, which remained horizontal on a flatbed trailer and many leaned over and touched the pole in prayer.

While James took the compliments in stride, like any artist, he acknowledged afterward that the Healing Pole could of course have been better, but its real value, he said, derived from the spirit of the carver at the time of the carving.

"It's not the object (ha-lee-ton) that helps cause healing," he said. "The spirit is what makes it work."

The pole was carved to honor



Photo by Ron Karten

**Symbol of Healing** — The Healing Pole made a stop in Portland on its way across the country to New York. Lummi Nation Master Carver Jewell James created the pole. Here, people lay hands on the pole to feel its spirit and to pray.

those who died September 11, 2001, and to help the healing process for those still living — particularly the children of the lost.

"It was hard not to think of our own children who were lost," he said. "I had to keep my mind clear. It is important that you are not grieving while you do it."

"This is the greatest act of generosity in hundreds of years," said Elizabeth Furse, former member of Congress and currently Director of the Institute for Tribal Government at Portland State University. "From a people that have seen so much grief...out of their generosity, they will heal us out of love."

With a crew of two, and sometimes, three other carvers, four "little girls" who helped paint, and one "little boy" for cleanup, James worked his considerable talents for a month on a 140-year-old cedar

log donated by Crown Pacific Limited Partnership of Portland.

When first approached to do a small pole, James agreed, without knowing what it might be used for. Since 1996, he estimates he has produced five-dozen poles, some as large as 30 feet. When he learned that it would be for the children of those lost on 9/11, he wanted to do

► GrandRonde Tribal Elder Kathryn Harrison and Tribal member Joe Brisbois attended the ceremony in Portland on behalf of the Grand Ronde people.



Photo by Ron Karten

something more generous — something as large as 24 feet — but logistics whittled him down to the 13-footer that was in Portland in August.

The finished healing pole contains a bald eagle, symbol of Native American spirituality; a mother bear on all fours, signifying our dependence on the earth; and a bear child, representing children. James used four colors instead of the two (black and red) traditionally used for Lummi poles, to represent the four races.

"It's a great feeling to stand by the pole," said Joe Brisbois, member of the Grand Ronde's Cultural Committee.

"You are bringing this forward at the right time, especially for the children," said Kathryn Harrison, Tribal Elder and former Tribal Council Chair.

"We pray for each one's journey," said Pat Allen, Chair of the Grand Ronde Cultural Committee.

The event featured a color guard of the Northwest Indian Veterans Association, speakers from Siletz, Grand Ronde and other Tribes, and others, like Hoodland Fire Department lieutenant Phil Burks, who told the story of a letter to New York City Firefighters that he read while in New York following the attack. It came from an 8-year-old boy who wrote, "He wished it didn't have to happen." And then added that his father had yellow stripes on his tennis shoes and "he hoped that would help them find him."

Ken and Jane Ames of Portland

were among a small crowd of about 100 who came to see the Healing Pole.

"I wanted to see the pole and honor those taking part," said Jane. "The first thing we think about with 9/11 is healing. And here are the first peoples leading the healing. It seems so appropriate."

With six similar stops across the country — going backward over the steps of Lewis and Clark — the healing pole was planted September 7<sup>th</sup> in Arrow Park in the Sterling Forest, an hour north of Manhattan and the former World Trade Center. Within the Sterling Forest is an 80-acre site dedicated to victims

of the terrorist attacks and their families. The Sterling Forest is also the sister forest of the Arlecho Creek Forest, an hour north of Seattle, at the Lummi Reservation. The Lummi Tribe has raised more than \$5 million to buy and preserve the Arlecho Creek Forest, a spiritual sanctuary for traditional cultural practices.

The pole now rests on a concrete base. According to the Lummi Tribe's webpage, a red powder symbolizing the contribution of Native American people to the vision of democracy was to be placed under the pole. Eagle feathers, also to be placed under the pole for all times, "proclaim the sacredness of the vision of government by and for the people."

James is a Northwest Coast Spirit Dancer, master carver, and president of the House of Tears Carvers. His voice was large for the unveiling of this pole. "The beginning of this journey is the fulfillment of a dream for those suffering, for those with grief in their hearts," he said. "We took it on because we've seen grief and we've felt grief. We know we shouldn't spend too much time there, but to move from grief to joy, that is what this is about."

"When the journey ends for the pole," said Harrison, "everyone should know, 'Who are the Lummis?' I thank God for the Lummis."

The value of the pole, said carver James "is how people relate to it. People really love this. They have it within them." ■



Photo by Willie Mercier



Photo by Ron Karten

Jewell "Praying Wolf" James



Photo by Ron Karten

Portland Police Chief Mark Kroeker



Photo by Willie Mercier

The Honorable Elizabeth Furse