

New Totem Pole placed in Stanley Park

By AMY PORTER
Correspondent

WESTFIELD – A small group of people gathered at Stanley Park Tuesday to witness a rebirth of the past, a new totem pole, 100 feet from the original one that was erected in 1951.

Chainsaw artist Ken Packie of Otis drove his pickup carrying the 16 foot, 1200 pound totem pole he's been carving for several months to the new site in full view of the new pavilion. Packie, a former "burned-out" computer network developer in New York City and Washington D.C., said he started his new career eleven years ago after going to a home show and watching a chainsaw carver. For the past two years, he's been creating art full time in his studio in Lee, and has competed in shows across the country and in Europe.

Packie said this carving was different than ones he's done before. He has carved some contemporary totems with mixed wildlife, but stayed away from traditional Native American ones, because those totems must be in a certain symbolic order. He said he didn't want to feel like a "poser." However, there were pictures of the original totem pole at Stanley Park which he could base his on, and he did a lot of research and reached out to First Nation people in Canada.



Chainsaw artist Ken Packie of Otis. (Photo by Lynn Boscher)



Artist and carver Ken Packie (left) discusses the totem pole during its creation with Jack Jeneral, donor of the totem pole. (WNG file photo)



JACK JENERAL AND KEN PACKIE



A plaque reading "A gift from Jack Jeneral 2017" is affixed to the totem pole by the giver himself. (Photo by Lynn Boscher)



The totem arrives by trailer. (Photo by Lynn Boscher)

Packie's studio where he carved the totem pole is at Meadow Farm Equipment in South Lee. His wife Ilona Packie helped him with the research at libraries and online, and by painting the totems. "It's incredible to see it come to fruition," Ilona Packie said.

The order of the totem pole, which was made from two eastern white pine trees from Stanley Park, is top to bottom a Thunderbird, Bear, Beaver and Mask, which he said is the most important, and usually representative of the head of household or the head of a tribe. The mask was missing from the old one, having badly deteriorated due to water that pooled at its base. Packie added some contemporary symbols, a turtle to represent focus and a turkey for generosity, and dedicated the mask to Jack Jeneral, "who made it all possible."

Jeneral, who lives in Southwick now after living in Westfield most of his life, has been coming to Stanley Park all of his life. He called the park the "real jewel of Westfield, a very peaceful place to come." He even has a photo of himself as a young boy with his mother, sitting at a fountain in the

park.

Two years ago, he started researching the totem pole, and what it would take to replace it. The old one was taken down sometime in the 1960's and put aside, until it was found again and brought to Camp Togowauk on Route 20, where it now stands.

Jeneral decided he would volunteer to have one made, and to pay for it himself. "I've been here all my life. It's nice to give back to the community," he said.

He said when he was first talking about the project to Stanley Park Director Bob McKean, someone overheard them talking and told him about Packie. He went to Otis to see his work, and asked him to carve it.

When Packie drove in with the totem pole on Tuesday, Jeneral was very excited. "It's like having a baby. I've been working on this for so long," he said. Pointing to the new base where the totem pole would sit, he said they poured 4000 pounds of concrete, sunk a steel pole, and made a grate around it to give it air and avoid deterioration. A hole was drilled inside the totem pole to fit over the pole in the base.

"This is exciting," said McKean, who commented that he has wanted to replace the totem pole since he became director. "It's a great story, part of what's here. The way it's built it will last many, many years," McKean said.

Another person in the small crowd who was very excited was Westfield resident Donna Szuba, who walks by the pavilion and through the rose garden every day. Although she hadn't known about the new totem pole, she believed it was ordained that she happened on the group at its arrival. When McKean had asked the community for photos of the old totem pole

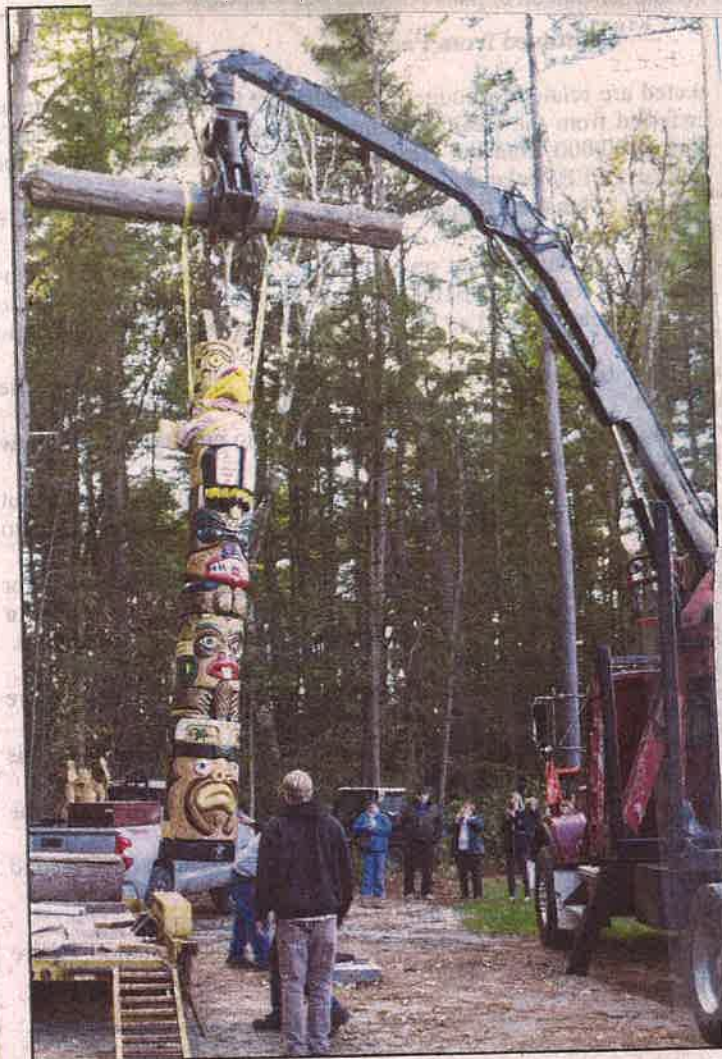
early in the project, Szuba was one of first to respond with a family photo of herself as a young girl and her siblings standing next to it. "You can't even imagine how exciting this is. I want my granddaughter and my son around the pole for my birthday," Szuba said.

Finally, the crane arrived to pick up the pole off Packie's truck and place it on the base. Jeneral was very nervous, pacing back and forth as the pole was lifted high up and put in position. His aunt, Maureen Oleksak, who had visited

Packie's shop in Lee with him while it was being carved, was there for support.

When the totem pole slid down into position, Jeneral became emotional. Later, he placed a plaque on it, which read: "A gift from Jack Jeneral 2017."

Asked whether he would carve another, Packie nodded his head. "I enjoyed it. You've got to keep pushing yourself, trying new things, learning," he said.



The 16 ft. 1200 lb. totem pole is lifted by crane onto the base.



JACK'S STORY

Once upon a time, a long time ago, a little boy named Jack, to Stanley Park with his teacher and classmates for a fun day of games and a picnic lunch. During the games, young Jack, being the adventuresome lad that he was, decided to leave his group and go exploring. Heading to the "deep dark woods", Jack soon realized he was alone and thought about what dangers could be waiting for him. He was far from his group and couldn't hear them playing anymore. "How will I find my way back" he thought. But he continued to explore the winding path he was on.

Suddenly, through the trees, Jack saw a huge figure. It looked like a giant bird, but as he approached, the figure had "heads" stacked up on each other. He had never seen anything like this before. It was much taller than he and even though he was a little scared, he looked up at the figure with awe and amazement. Actually, it was a Totem Pole that was recently carved and placed there by the owners of Stanley Park. What a wonderful thing... what excitement... or "What trouble am I going to be in if I don't get back to my friends". And there was my teacher... what was she going to say.

Shortly after, Jack heard the laughing and playing of his friends and followed the path back out of the "deep dark woods" to join them. He never told anyone about his adventure, especially his teacher, or his friends, but thought about the many great adventures that he might experience in the years to come... which he did, many, many more times in his life.

The original Totem Pole, long since deteriorated and removed, has been replicated and donated to Stanley Park by a once young boy who had dreams of adventure. His hopes are for you to enjoy his story and this Totem Pole for many years to come.