

1966 PROJECT OF THE  
ABORIGINAL PEOPLES' PARTICIPATION  
WITH THE CENTENNIAL SUB-COMMITTEE  
TO COMMEMORATE THE CENTENARY OF THE UNION IN 1866  
OF THE COLONIES OF VANCOUVER ISLAND AND THE MAINLAND  
of British Columbia

## KWAGIUTLH BEAR POLE

CARVED BY  
JACK JAMES OF THE KWIKSUTAI NEUK TRIBE  
KWAKWAKA'WAKW NATION  
ORIGINAL LOG DONATED BY MACMILLAN BLOEDEL  
& POWELL RIVER LIMITED

RESTORATION LOG DONATED BY WEYERHAEUSER  
RESTORED IN 1991 AT VICTORIA PROVINCIAL MUSEUM  
AND AGAIN IN 2002 AT ALERT BAY BY  
SIMON DICK JAMES OF THE KWIKSUTAI NEUK TRIBE  
KWAKWAKA'WAKW NATION

## Jack James Thunderbird Totem

# Lifecycle Restoration Project



Master Carver  
**Ta'nis Simon Silas James**

Carver/Painter  
**Simon Daniel James**  
and **Quinn James**

**Restoration** Totem poles in their natural settings are not intended to be preserved for longevity. The Kwakwakawak people allowed the natural progression of decline and decay to take its course, reflecting the life processes around the pole. Over the years, paint fades and vanishes, and birds and insects make their homes in the temporary habitat, furthering its evolution back to the forest bed.

To recognize Canada's 150th Sesquicentennial in 2017, the City of Parksville commissioned Simon Silas James to restore salvageable sections and create a lifecycle pole. Simon was inspired to approach the pole's future in a unique way to honour both the lifecycle and the restoration process. He pondered the wealth of poles in major British Columbia museums and considered that in modern times, few people witness the evolution of a pole through its intended lifecycle. Authentic poles have been moved from their natural settings and relocated for preservation and display indoors. Poles have also been commissioned for museums or other public areas where they are maintained in a somewhat artificial state. Completed in 2018, the Jack James Thunderbird totem was restored to show the natural progression from a new pole and then as it returns to the earth. The left side of the pole has been intentionally aged to show what would be a natural evolution resulting from weather and decay.



LOCATED IN  
THE ATRIUM,  
PARKVILLE CIVIC  
AND TECHNOLOGY  
CENTRE.

In 1964, Jack James, originally from Wakeman Sound and Gilford Village was commissioned to create a centennial pole for Parksville. The pole was located in the Community Park until 2001 when it was restored by Simon Silas James, stepson of Jack James.

Following restoration, the pole was moved to its new home at the Parksville and District Chamber of Commerce where it continued to deteriorate as occurs in natural settings. In 2017, the pole had deteriorated once again; the interior was a habitat for insects and woodpeckers, the paint faded and chipped and sections of the figures were crumbling as the pole followed its natural lifecycle.

**The City of Parksville commissioned Simon Silas James to restore salvageable sections and create a new pole.**

*Details: see back >*



Location: **Parksville Civic and Technology Centre**  
100 Jensen Avenue East, Parksville, BC V9P 2H3





## Beings of the Thunderbird Pole

The pole is made up of figures representing beings of the natural and super natural world.

**TOP:** Thunderbird with the head and hands of a human figure on its chest. The human appears to be sitting on top of the Thunderbird's claws.

**MIDDLE:** Under each bear paw is the unusual placement of two smaller heads, representing children of the wild woman of the woods known as Dzonaqua.

**BOTTOM:** The claws of the bear's feet rest on the base.



Sections that could be salvaged were restored; many parts of the pole were beyond repair.



Aged and restored bear and human



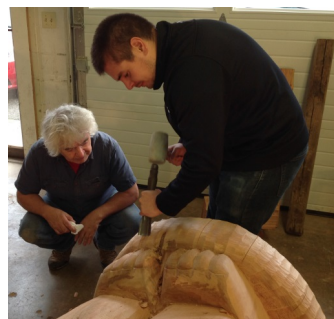
Aged and restored Thunderbird



Stages of bear head restoration



Right wing before/after restoration and left wing enhanced to simulate aging.



Simon teaching adage texturing technique to son, Quinn



Simon with son, Simon Daniel



Human face restoration

Restored Dzonaqua children and rebuilt bear legs from new wood. After shaping begins the tedious but important process of adage aging.

