Landmarks Preservation Commission

Planning & Development Services Department

May 12, 2021

PUBLIC HEARING: RESCISSION OF LANDMARK STATUS

Summary of Request: Rescission of Tacoma Register of Historic Places Landmark Status: Totem Pole located in Fireman's Park, 801 A. Street

BACKGROUND

On March 8, 2021, the Tacoma Arts Commission unanimously moved to remove the Tacoma Totem Pole from the Municipal Art Collection based on a recommendation made by the Deaccession panel that convened on February 25, 2021.

The panel found that the pole met the de-accession criteria as "Inauthentic," meaning that the work is discovered to be inauthentic, fraudulent, or stolen, and lacking "Aesthetic Value," in that the work has not withstood the test of time. In addition to its recommendation to remove the pole from the municipal art collection, the panel further recommended that the Totem Pole be removed from Fireman's Park and/or be removed from the Tacoma Register of Historic Places due to its misrepresentation of Native American history and culture.

The Totem Pole was commissioned by Tacoma businesspersons Charles Thorne and William Sheard, and reportedly carved in 1903 by unknown persons. Although it was claimed to have been carved by Alaskan or British Columbian tribal members, more recent analysis by art historians and members of Tlingit and Haida tribal representatives casts doubt on this claim. The pole was created as a juxtaposition to the totem pole in Pioneer Square with civic boosterism and economic competition as underlying motives. The pole is in its third location; previously it was located south of the Tacoma Hotel on A Street, and further north of its current location. The pole was added to the Tacoma Register of Historic Places in 1975.

On March 24, 2021, the Landmarks Preservation Commission voted to schedule the rescission request for a public hearing on May 12, 2021.

PREVIOUS ACTIONS

In 2013, the Totem Pole was declared in imminent danger of collapse. At the time, there was discussion about the appropriateness of the pole's location, and whether the pole should be stabilized or removed, given its problematic origin and misrepresentation of Native American culture. Ultimately a stabilization plan was presented to and approved by the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

PROCESS AND STANDARDS FOR REVIEW

The process for removal of a property or item from the Tacoma Register of Historic Places is outlined in TMC 13.07.055 under Rescission of Landmarks Designation. The code provides two provisions for the Landmarks Commission to initiate a rescission consideration, as follows:

1. The historic property no longer exists
2. The Commission finds that retaining the property on the Historic Register does not further the goals and objectives of this Chapter and the Preservation Plan.

If the Commission finds that the historic status of the property is not consistent with the goals and policies of the historic preservation code and plan, the Commission shall schedule a public hearing within 60 days to receive comment. Following the close of the comment period, the Commission may vote to recommend removal to the City Council.

City of Tacoma
Arts Commission

March 17, 2021

To: Kevin Bartoy, Chair, Landmarks Preservation Commission

From: Amy McBride, Tacoma Arts Administrator, Office of Arts & Cultural Vitality

Re: Tacoma Totem Pole de-accession and request to consider rescission of Totem Pole as a City Landmark at March 24, 2021 meeting

On March 8, 2021 the Tacoma Arts Commission unanimously moved to remove the Tacoma Totem Pole from the Municipal Art Collection based on a recommendation made by the Deaccession panel that convened on February 25, 2021.

The panel recommended de-accession based on the following categories in the deaccession policy:

“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.

The de-accession panel further recommended that the Totem Pole be removed from Fireman’s Park and recommends that the Landmarks Preservation Commission consider rescission of the Totem Pole from the Register of Historic Places.

The de-accession panel consisted of the following members:

Andrew Strobel (Haida, Puyallup Tribe Planning Director), Catherine Edwards (Central Council Tlingit and Haida Tribal Councilmember), Clinton McCloud (Puyallup), Kevin Bartoy (Landmarks Preservation Commission), Jeanette Sanchez (Arts Commission)

The De-accession panel was assembled with the intention of centering Indigenous voice and perspective to bring information and concerns to the forefront that have not been shared in an official public forum to date.

Attachments Index:
A. De-accession Recommendation Report including images
B. Tacoma Arts Commission De-accession Policy
C. 1975 Nomination to the Historic Register
D. Qwalsius/Shaun Peterson report 2013
E. March 8, 2021 Tacoma Arts Commission Minutes

City of Tacoma
Arts Commission

747 Market Street, Room 900 ⌘ Tacoma, Washington 98402-3793 ⌘ (253) 591-5364
http://www.cityoftacoma.org

ATTACHMENT 'A'

TACOMA ARTS COMMISSION
Municipal Art Collection

DE-ACCESSION RECOMMENDATION REPORT

GENERAL INFORMATION

ARTIST Two unnamed carvers (origins of carvers speculative)
Last First Middle

TITLE OF ARTWORK Tacoma Totem Pole TAMAC# 19820058

MEDIUM RED CEDAR DIMENSIONS 80' TALL X 32" WIDE X 32" DEPTH

ACQUISITION DATE: 1903 PURCHASE PRICE: $3,000 LAST APPRAISAL N/A

DATE OF DE-ACCESSION PANEL: FEBRUARY 25, 2021

Deaccession Panel Voting Members:
Andrew Strobel (Haida, Puyallup Tribe Planning Director), Catherine Edwards (Central Council Tlingit and Haida Tribal Councilmember), Clinton McCloud (Puyallup), Kevin Bartoy (Landmarks Preservation Commission), Jeanette Sanchez (Arts Commission)

OTHERS PRESENT: Representatives from the City of Tacoma Office of Arts & Cultural Vitality: Meeting facilitation: Amy McBride, Tacoma Arts Administrator; Asia Tail, Consultant; Chevi Chung, Community Programs Specialist. Additionally: Jennifer Hines, Assistant Division Manager, Public Works and Tammi Bryant, Marketing Director, Tacoma Venues and Events

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 and does not align with the City's commitment as anti-racist. It is believed to be fraudulent in origin, misrepresents Haida/Tlingit peoples and artforms, and the faux Northern carving style is not reflective of the Coast Salish peoples of this region. Its continued presence in Tacoma is harmful.

WHAT ARE THE CONDITIONS THAT MERIT DE-ACCESSION CONSIDERATION?

☐ SECURITY	☐ LOSS OF SITE	☐ EXCESSIVE REPRESENTATION
☐ THEFT	☐ SITE ALTERATION	☒ AESTHETIC VALUE
☒ INAUTHENTIC	☐ TEMPORARY ACQUISITION	☒ PLEASE NOTE ANY OTHER CONCERNS -Equity and social justice concerns -Tribal request
☐ DAMAGE BEYOND REPAIR	☐ SAFETY	

ATTACHMENT 'A'

RECOMMENDATION: REMOVE THE TACOMA TOTEM POLE FROM THE MUNICIPAL ART COLLECTION BASED ON THE CATEGORIES INDICATED ABOVE. CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING INPUT FROM THE DEACCESSION PANEL:

The Tacoma Totem Pole is believed to be fraudulent in origin and misrepresents Native American peoples and artforms. The original artists are unknown. While some historical records claim they were Tlingit, 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.

The style, method of carving, and secrecy surrounding the creation of the pole indicate it is just as likely by non-Natives poorly appropriating a Native aesthetic. This theory has been backed up by tribal consultants as well as the deaccession panelists.

The faux Northern style of the carving also contributes to misinformation about the art forms of the Coast Salish peoples of this region.

The pole's continued presence in Tacoma is harmful and the panel recommends removal of the pole from the park. It also recommends rescission as an historic landmark.

Follow-up:

Request rescission of the Tacoma Totem Pole from the Registry of Historic Places.

Research options for removal and retirement of the Totem Pole from Fireman's Park.

To be determined:

- Complete destruction of the Totem Pole
- Removal of the Totem Pole from public view and placement in storage
- Preservation of a portion of the pole in an historical archive (in talks with Tacoma Historical Society)as an historical artifact. *Any possible display would be accompanied by a narrative that includes the full story of the pole to educate and inform current and future generations of the full context surrounding the creation of the pole that acknowledges the harm caused to indigenous peoples and misinformation perpetuated over the years. A covenant would need to accompany the artifact to preclude any future display outside a museum setting and the requirement that the artifact be accompanied by the full narrative.*

-

ACTION BY THE TACOMA ARTS COMMISSION:

X ACCEPT RECOMMENDATION	☐ REJECT RECOMMENDATION	DATE: MARCH 8, 2021

TACOMA ARTS COMMISSION VOTING MEMBERS:

Ayes: Chair Ayala, Vice-chair Maestas, Commissioners: Brown, Conklin, Fernandez-Llamazares, Kula, Pew, Sanchez, Scott, Villeda, Woodson

Nays: 0

Absent: Commissioners Allison, Holcomb, Stowe, Stump,

ATTACHMENT 'A'

Panel comments and input beyond de-accessioning for consideration:

While the future of the object will be determined through separate processes, panelists recommended that the pole be destroyed or otherwise permanently removed from public view.

- In the panel discussion, the pole was described as an "inauthentic trinket" that represents colonialism, whiteness, and patriarchy.
- Continuing to romanticize the object by allowing it to move into a historical collection prevents real social progress and movement forward.
- Panelists also noted that Chester Thorne, one of the businessmen who originally commissioned the pole, started the Port of Tacoma and stole land from the Puyallup people.
- The pole was created in an attempt to compete with Seattle during the boosterism era, exploiting Native culture to serve capitalist and colonial motives
- The panel expressed concern that the pole not be displayed in any way that continues to perpetuate the harm.
- The panel also expressed a desire to see more Puyallup and Coast Salish art in Tacoma, as well as more public art in general, including replacing the Tacoma Totem Pole with something "proper and honorable".

Follow-up:

Request rescission of the Tacoma Totem Pole from the Registry of Historic Places.

Research options for removal and retirement of the Totem Pole from Fireman's Park.

To be determined:

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- Removal of the Totem Pole from public view and placement in storage
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Artist Contact

GENERAL INFORMATION

ARTIST Unknown – Deceased
Last First Middle

TITLE OF ARTWORK Tacoma Totem Pole TAMAC# 19820058

MEDIUM DIMENSIONS 7' X 8'6" X 12"

Tacoma Totem Pole

...

Images to accompany deaccession report

PHOTO BY FRANK H. NOWELL.

136. THE TACOMA HOTEL AND TOTEM POLE, TACOMA, WASHINGTON.

Totem Pole, Tacoma, U. S. A.

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 & CHESTER THORNE
1903

Tacoma's Clean-Up
CAMPAIGN
MAY 9-14 1949

Richards Studio, Tacoma

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.

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	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
☐ District ☐ Building ☐ Site ☐ Structure ☒ Object	☒ Public ☐ Private ☐ Both	Public Acquisition: ☐ In Process ☐ Being Considered	☐ Occupied ☐ Unoccupied ☒ Preservation work in progress	Yes: ☐ Restricted ☐ Unrestricted ☒ No (1975)

DESCRIPTION

CONDITION (Check One): ☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☒ Deteriorated ☐ Ruins ☐ Unexposed

(Check One): ☒ Altered ☐ Unaltered

(Check One): ☒ Moved ☐ 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)

☐ Pre-Columbian ☐ 16th Century ☐ 18th Century ☒ EARLY 20th Century
☐ 15th Century ☐ 17th Century ☐ 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Aboriginal	☐ Education	☐ Political	☐ Urban Planning
☐ Prehistoric	☐ Engineering	☒ Religion/Philosophy	☐ Other (Specify)
☒ Historic	☐ Industry	☐ Science	
☐ Agriculture	☐ Invention	☒ Sculpture	
☐ Architecture	☐ Landscape Architecture	☐ Social/Humanitarian	
☒ Art	☐ Literature	☐ Theater	
☐ Commerce	☐ Military	☐ Transportation	
☐ Communications	☐ Music		
☐ Conservation			

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, in Quartermaster Harbor, (ERROR OR TACOMA) (OR ALASKA?)
from a cedar pole selected or prepared by the St. Paul and 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 Indians whose identity was kept secret for in making the poles 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 in 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 re-located 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 [redacted] 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 inducate 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 majic 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 building (Arvin NY) 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 assesed 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 - geneaology; and the belief that man originated from man-like beasts, forerunners of todays 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)

Fireman's park 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

Members
Rosie Ayala, Chair
Benjamin Maestas III, Vice Chair
John Hines, City Council Liaison
Keith Blocker, City Council Liaison Alternate
Olivia Allison
Jasmine Brown
Heather Conklin
Heide Fernandez-Llamazares
Anna Holcomb
Michael Kula
Elizabeth Pew
Jeanette Sanchez
Jamika Scott
James Stowe
MaryMikel Stump
Alejandra Villeda
Sarah Woodson

Staff
Amy McBride, Tacoma Arts Administrator
Chevi Chung, Community Programs Specialist
Rebecca Solverson, Public Art Specialist
Naomi Strom-Avila, Funding & Cultural Programs Manager

Summary Minutes

Tacoma Arts Commission

Office of Arts & Cultural Vitality
Tacoma Venues and Events Department

Date: March 8, 2021
Time: 5:00 pm
Location: Virtual

These minutes accompany the recorded meeting of the Tacoma Arts Commission, which is available at www.cityoftacoma.org/tacagendaminutes.

Commission Members in Attendance:
Rosie Ayala, Chair
Benjamin Maestas III, Vice Chair
Jasmine Brown
Heather Conklin
Heide Fernandez-Llamazares
Michael Kula
Elizabeth Pew
Jeanette Sanchez
Jamika Scott
Alejandra Villeda
Sarah Woodson

Commission Members Excused Absence:
Olivia Allison
Anna Holcomb
MaryMikel Stump
James Stowe

City Staff Present:
Amy McBride
Chevi Chung
Naomi Strom-Avila
Lisa Jaret
Kim Bedier
Hillary Brenner
Tammi Bryant

1. Call to Order **5:06 pm (00:11)**

Chair Ayala called the meeting to order. Chair Ayala recognized that the meeting was held on Indigenous land: the traditional homelands of the Puyallup people.

ʔuk'ʷədiitəb ʔuhigʷətəb čəɬ txʷəl tiiɬ ʔa čəɬ ʔal tə swatxʷixʷtxʷəd ʔə tiiɬ puyaləpabš dxʷəsɬaɬlils gʷəl ʔutxʷəlšucidəbs həlgʷəʔ.

"We gratefully acknowledge that we rest on the traditional lands of the Puyallup People where they make their home and speak the Lushootseed language."

2. **Consent Agenda** **(00:51)**

There were four excused absences: Commissioners Holcomb, Allison, Stump, and Stowe.

Vice Chair Maestas asked for a motion to approve the March agenda as well as the minutes from the February 8 meeting.

There was a motion: "I so move."
Motion: Commissioner Woodson
Seconded: Commissioner Conklin
Motion: Carried

3. **Chair's Report/Housekeeping** **(02:05)**

Chair Ayala had no items. Staff reminded the Commission about cards for fellow Commission members that are available for signing.

4. **Public Comment on Agenda Items** **(02:56)**

Andrew Strobel, Haida Tribe and Puyallup Tribe Planning Director, provided public comments on the Tacoma Totem Pole Deaccession Recommendation agenda item.

Don Lacky, community member, provided public comments on the Tacoma Totem Pole Deaccession Recommendation agenda item.

Catherine Edwards, Central Council Tlingit and Haida Tribal Council Member, provided public comments on the Tacoma Totem Pole Deaccession Recommendation agenda item.

5. **Action Items**

   a. **2021-22 Tacoma Artists Initiative Program Funding Recommendations** **(13:30)**

   The 2021-2022 Tacoma Artists Initiative Program review panel's funding recommendations were presented to the Commission. The panel recommended the funding for the following 24 applicants at $3,000 each for a total of $72,000:

Artist Name
Curtis Ashby
Marit Berg
Katie Dean
Priscilla Dobler
Lance Griffith
Maria Jost
Kareem Kandi
Rian Kelly
Eugene (Gene) Kemper
Ricardo Lastrapes
David Long
Miriam McBride
Adrian Milanio
Mark Monlux
Gloria Muhammad
Tamiko Nimura

Chandler O'Leary
Gerardo Peña
Kellie Richardson
Mauricio Robalino
Suzanne Skaar
Cydney Stephens
Jacob Sunday
Charles (Chuck) Taylor

A total of 40 applications were received. Multiple disciplines and all 5 council districts are represented in the selections. Commissioners Maestas and Villeda spoke about their experience on the panel. Commissioners discussed and asked questions. Chair Ayala called for a motion to accept the funding recommendations as presented.

There was a motion: "I move that we approve the subcommittee's recommendations."
Motion: Commissioner Sanchez
Second: Commissioner Conklin
Motion: Carried

b. 2021-23 Tacoma Poet Laureate Recommendation (23:45)

The Tacoma Poet Laureate selection panel recommended Lydia Valentine as the 2021-2023 Tacoma Poet Laureate with Gloria Muhammad as the Alternate. The details of the ceremony celebrating the new Poet Laureate are in progress and will be held virtually in Zoom by the end of April 2021. Commissioners Scott and Sanchez spoke about their experience on the panel.

There was a motion: "I move to move forward the recommendation of our Poet Laureate selection and alternate as determined by the subcommittee."
Motion: Chair Ayala
Second: Commissioner Woodson
Motion: Carried

c. Tacoma Totem Pole Deaccession Recommendation (33:00)

Staff gave background and an update on the Tacoma Totem Pole Deaccession panel that convened on February 25, 2021. The panel centered Indigenous voices and included: Catherine Edwards, Clinton McCloud, Andrew Strobel, Jeanette Sanchez, and Kevin Bartoy. The categories in the Deaccession policy for which this item is being considered are: Inauthentic and Aesthetic Value. Staff would like to see a new category added to the Commission's Deaccession policy around misappropriation or cultural appropriation. Staff shared about research presented by deaccession panelists Andrew Strobel and Catherine Edwards who worked with tribal consultants and confirmed the style of the Tacoma Totem Pole is not authentic or of any clan origin. The Deaccession panel unanimously recommended deaccessioning the Totem Pole from the Municipal Art Collection. Staff reported that the Totem Pole is in the Municipal Art Collection and a designated landmark and if the Arts Commission votes to deaccession the Totem Pole the next steps are to submit a request to the Landmarks Preservation Commission to delist and/or demolish the Totem Pole. Staff is currently researching options for removal. Commissioner Sanchez gave remarks about the painful discussion during the Deaccession panel and how Native voices were mourning how their art form was appropriated and that there is a call to action for correction. Commissioner Sanchez shared about the possibility of commissioning future work by

Native artists. Commissioner Sanchez reminded the Commission there are still films and postcards about the Totem Pole and how the Totem Pole is causing pain to the community.

There was a motion: "I agreed with the panel then that we move forward with its deaccession and I would present that to the committee for consideration."
Motion: Commissioner Sanchez
Second: Commissioner Scott
Motion: Carried

d. Commission Retreat Design Subcommittee (43:55)

Chair Ayala proposed assembling a Commission Retreat Design subcommittee to come together to plan the Commission's annual retreat, which will be on Zoom.

There was a motion: "I move that the Commission institutes a short term Retreat Design Subcommittee to help us meet the needs of the Tacoma Arts Commission retreat."
Motion: Chair Ayala
Second: Commissioner Conklin
Motion: Carried

Commissioners Woodson, Conklin, Pew, and Fernandez-Llamazares volunteered for the subcommittee.

6. Discussion/Updates

a. Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Subcommittee (49:55)

Staff gave an update about the February 19 subcommittee meeting and how there was discussion around roles and how this subcommittee can provide support to the Commission. Vice Chair Maestas shared about reading the Cultural New Deal and Commissioner Sanchez shared thoughts about local organizations helping each other and the need to mentor artists. The next subcommittee meeting is on March 19.

7. Staff Check-In (55:00)

a. Staff Projects Overview and Updates

Staff gave an update about Community Arts Projects funding contracts and the Annual Report document for the Office of Arts and Cultural Vitality to prepare for the City Council Coffee meetings. The Annual Report document can be used during the Council Coffee meetings. Staff asked Commissioners to sign up for Council Coffee meetings. Staff gave an update about upcoming virtual professional development later this spring from Spaceworks and Rainbow Center. Staff gave an update about the Tacoma Arts Month's website, which will be upgraded this year.

b. Public Art Updates (54:40)

Staff gave an update about the video dedication being created for the artwork at The Rise at 19th. The video includes interviews with artist Diane Hansen, Michael Mirra of Tacoma Housing Authority, and Mayor Woodards. The City's streetlight shop is gradually replacing the Bridge of Glass lighting with LEDs. Staff shared about the E 64th streetscape and the installation of public art at Dickman Mill. Four traffic signal box wraps will be installed featuring the work of Anthony Duenas, Daniel Duenas, and Chris Duenas, who are artists from the Puyallup Tribe. Staff gave an update about yard signs in Lushootseed created in partnership with the Puyallup Language School with artists Shaun Peterson, Paige Pettibon and Anthony Duenas.

c. Tacoma Creates (01:11:20)

Staff shared that Tacoma Creates funding deadlines are approaching for Comprehensive Organizational Support on March 15 and for Impact Funding on March 29. Staff reminded the Commission that Tacoma Creates funding supports Arts, Culture, Heritage and Science organizations and encouraged Commissioners to get the word out about the applications. Application workshops were facilitated by staff members Lisa Jaret and Clarissa Gines to help guide organizations through the process of applying for funding; recordings are available on the Tacoma Creates website.

8. **Report Back**

   a. **Advocacy Reports** **(1:16:05)**
   There were no advocacy reports.

   b. **Funded Project Updates/Arts Events Attended** **(1:16:35)**
   Commissioner Kula attended The Book of Andy virtual theatre event co-produced by UW Tacoma Theatre, Dukesbay Productions, and Tacoma Arts Live. Commissioner Sanchez shared that Tacoma Little Theatre can be contacted for tours of their newly remodeled space. Commissioner Fernandez-Llamazares saw the Jacob Lawrence art show in Seattle. Commissioner Scott shared about Whipsmart and her interview with local artist Miriam McBride. Commissioner Brown shared about her work on the Billy Ray Memorial piece at the Eastside Community Center.

   c. **Future Agenda Items for Consideration** **(1:21:30)**
   Chair Ayala reminded staff about future updates to the Deaccession policy around misappropriation language.

9. **Adjourn** **6:29 (1:23:00)**

MEETING FREQUENCY
Meetings are held on the second Monday of every month at 5:00 pm, venue to be determined based on health regulations. All meetings of the Tacoma Arts Commission are open to the public.

To request this information in an alternative format or to request a reasonable accommodation, please contact Tacoma Arts Commission staff at (253) 591-5191. TTY or speech to speech users please dial (253) 581-5820 to connect with Washington Relay Services.