



**Cowichan
Tribes**



Salish Bear Totem by Stan Modeste Reinstalled at Malahat Summit

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Duncan, B.C.

On September 29, 2022, a private cultural ceremony was held to reinstall the Stan Modeste Totem, Salish Bear, to its rightful place at the Malahat Summit. Hosted by the Modeste family, representatives of the Cowichan Tribes, Malahat, Halalt, Lyackson, Stz'uminus, and Penelakut First Nations, City of Duncan, Municipality of North Cowichan, and the Cowichan Valley Regional District were invited to bear witness to this important milestone ahead of Orange Shirt Day and National Day of Truth and Reconciliation on September 30th.

“Historic injustices and ongoing racist attacks weigh heavily on our community,” stated Chief Lydia Hwitsum. “Quw’utsun people are taught by our Elders to help one another and work together for the good of all. It has been greatly appreciated to see and experience the support of the larger community for the repair and reinstallation of Stan Modeste’s Salish Bear Totem,” continued Chief Hwitsum.

The Salish Bear Totem was carved by renowned Cowichan carver Stan Modeste for the Route of Totems, created in 1966 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the joining of the Colony of Vancouver Island with the Colony of British Columbia. Mr. Modeste attended the Coqualeetza Industrial School in Chilliwack. He went on to serve as Chief of Cowichan Tribes for two terms and in the 1970’s was commissioned to carve a totem for a Canadian bank’s branch in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Stan Modeste passed away in 1981; he is remembered as a loving father and as a generous, fair, and knowledgeable leader.

The Modeste family stated: “Today’s ceremony was healing for our family members after last year’s hateful act directed at the iconic totem carved by our father, the late Stan Modeste. He used his talents to share with the world Quw’utsun culture and teachings around the sacredness of nature. We are pleased to see the Salish Bear restored to its intended beauty.”

In a vile act of retaliation following the toppling of a statue in Victoria, the totem was set ablaze in the early morning hours of July 2, 2021, with the message “One Totem – One Statue” left in graffiti at the scene. Fortunately, passing motorists stopped to try to extinguish the flames and local fire fighters and RCMP were called.

The Totem was removed in accordance with cultural protocols in a cleansing ceremony last summer and was refurbished by Cowichan carver Doug August. Mr. August has been commissioned to restore several prominent totems in recent years, including the Knowledge Totem located at the B.C. Legislature, created by his father, Master Carver Cicero August.

The Modeste Family and Cowichan Tribes recognize the City of Duncan for their partnership and support for the refurbishment of the Salish Bear Totem for the second time. The first restoration took place in 2015 due to aging caused by natural elements.

“When this pole was burned in a senseless act of racism, an elder shared with me the protocol process the carver, Stan Modeste, went through before he created the living, breathing representation of the culture that he was generous enough to share,” said City of Duncan Mayor, Michelle Staples . “This process of restoration has shown once again the generosity of the Quw’utsun people, and I am thankful for our work together to bring this pole back,” added Mayor Staples.

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