



The unveiling of the Camp Fircom

Welcome Pole

Saturday, September 22nd, 2018





Photo: Lindsay Elliott

A Message from the Executive Director *Margo Dunnet, Executive Director, Camp Fircom Society*

On behalf of Camp Fircom and the United Church of Canada, I would like to thank everyone who has helped this welcome pole come to fruition. Steven Foster and the David Suzuki Foundation for the idea and organizing the commissioning. Richie Baker and his team for the beautiful pole, which they pulled out all the stops to bring during the summer. The K'xwu7lh canoe family for coming to Camp Suzuki and sharing their culture, humor, and their knowledge with us – these experiences have led us to this moment. Lastly, but not least, the staff of Ayas Men Men of the Squamish Nation, particularly Jackie Gonzales dChatatolt and Stewart Gonzales Sempulyan, for their support and guidance in the protocols of raising a welcome pole.

This welcome pole comes during a new phase of relationship building between Camp Fircom and the Squamish Nation. Since it's beginning, Camp Fircom has hosted indigenous children and youth in its programs, but has not appropriately acknowledged the camp is on Squamish land. Camp Fircom and the United Church of Canada understand we are only at the beginning of our reconciliation work and that this pole is a step along that journey. This welcome pole will welcome visitors and serve as a visible acknowledgement that this land is Squamish land. It will also serve as a reminder of the potential beauty that can come from taking part in the reconciliation journey.

How the Pole Came to Be

Our History

Founded in 1923, Camp Fircom of the United Church of Canada is located on the unceded, ancestral and traditional territories of the Squamish First Nation. The United Church of Canada participated in the colonization of indigenous peoples through sending children to church-run residential schools. The church operated five residential schools in BC alone. The church also purchased the stolen land on which Camp Fircom now sits from a white settler farmer. We hear the call for reconciliation and are committed to the reconciliation journey and learning how to do better in the future.

New Partnerships and Emerging Ways Forward

For the past four years, Camp Fircom has hosted a summer camp program in partnership with the David Suzuki Foundation (DSF) and the Squamish Nation celebrating this sacred land and weaving together all these people who care for it. Each year, this camp program has expanded and deepened so more children, youth, and adults can learn about environmental activism in the Howe Sound, and the culture, spirituality and knowledge of the Squamish peoples.





Photo: Jennifer Deol

The Welcome Pole

In 2017, Steven Foster of the DSF had the inspired idea of a totem pole being a part of the partnership week program. Steven is friend to many in the Squamish Nation and has been a great connector across all these organizations. Through Steven, the BC Conference of the United Church of Canada commissioned a Welcome Pole to be carved by Richard (Richie) Baker, a member of the Squamish Nation. The campers learned about the pole, the carver, and also helped finish coating it in linseed oil when it arrived during the summer.

The welcome pole will now stand at the entrance to the camp and the island, welcoming visitors, and acting as an acknowledgment of the rich and complex history of the indigenous peoples on Gambier Island (Chá7elkwnech).

We are excited to share the unveiling of the Welcome Pole with all of those who will gather on September 22nd.



About the Carver

Richard E. Baker (Feb 12, 1962) is a member of the Squamish Nation in North Vancouver, BC, Capilano Indian Reserve.

Richard is an internationally known for his Northwest Coast Art, and he is also an entrepreneur in the construction and the timber industries. Richard's entire lineage has been native artists. He points to his maternal grandmother, Katherine Scow, of the KwaKawk'kwa Peoples in the Northwest Pacific Coast Region.

At the young age of 12 he watched his father and other carvers creating beautiful totem poles and masks out of cedar wood. He then picked up a carving knife and started to create his own pieces of work. His curiosity turned into his passion, a passion for learning and creating, which has led to a regular clientele base and an interest in his work from admirers around the world.

After many years of mastering the carving techniques on wood, Richie decided to take on metal. Learning the intricate details of engraving precious metals such as gold, platinum, silver and copper brought him another passion of creating North West designs that admirers near and far all appreciate.

Richie comes from a rich and living culture. He is proud of both his Kwak'waka'wakw and Squamish heritage. Richie is a community-based person and takes upon himself to help out other artists by supporting their work and their aspirations. Richie has three sons who also are gifted and talented artists in their own right.

Program of the Day

Saturday, September 22nd, 2018

Water taxi depart Horseshoe Bay 9:30 and 10:30 am

Squamish Welcome Ceremony

Feast

Unveiling of the Pole

Designated Speakers

Totem Song

Water taxi depart Camp Fircom 3:00 and 4:00 pm

