



**WRANGELL COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION  
Shakes Island Renovation Project**

P.O. Box 2021 • Wrangell, Alaska 99929

Telephone: (907) 874-4304

Fax: (907) 874-4305

Email: [wcatrib@gmail.com](mailto:wcatrib@gmail.com)

Website: [www.shakesisland.com](http://www.shakesisland.com)

## **Wrangell Cooperative Association Covers Shakes Island Totem Poles for Winter**

---

### *Totems to be repaired, repainted and put back up next summer*

**Wrangell, Alaska – 10/03/2011** Over the last ten days, master carver Wayne Price and members of his adzing team worked through and around hard rain, gale force winds, and ankle deep mud on the behalf of the Wrangell Cooperative Association (WCA) to position and then cover all of the downed totem poles on Shakes Island. The totem were taken down for refurbishing earlier in the month and placed on the lawn behind the Chief Shakes tribal house.

The activities began with hauling heavy timbers across the bridge by wheeled dolly and then hand carrying the timbers to a staging area behind the Chief Shakes tribal house. The totems were then jacked up with a 2 ¼ ton floor jack and the timbers inserted underneath to raise the totems further up off the grass. Then the hard work began.

The large Chief Kadashan Crane totem needed to be moved about 10 feet closer to the Chief Kadashan Red Snapper totem to make it easier to cover them with the same set of tarps. The first step was to insert a large timber under both totems so that they would share the same support and could be slid closer together. All of which needed to be done by hand because it was more feasible than bringing in heavy equipment, which can only arrive by barge at high tide. So, the crew primarily used the floor jack and a lever consisting of a long 4x4 post with a small log as a fulcrum. Once the large timber was in place under both totems, they next used a logging technique, learned by Wayne Price in 1978 when he worked setting chokers, to move the Crane totem. They moved the lever and fulcrum to the end of the Crane totem and used it to “walk” the Crane totem closer to the Red Snapper totem. Eventually, the team inserted the wheeled dolly under the Crane totem and pushed the totem by hand the remaining 4 feet.

The next day, the team moved the Undersea Bear totem over beside the Eagle, a distance of about 35 feet. Then, the team began the work of scrubbing the moss and lichen off the underside of the totems now that they were up high enough to reach under. Or, as in the case of adzer

# WRANGELL COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION Shakes Island Renovation Project

Linda Churchill, who quipped “It’s a little tight under here all right,” before sliding carefully under the Eagle totem on her back and scrubbing with a small wire brush.

Finally, volunteer adzer Josh Lesage, adzer Tammi Meissner, adzer Susie Kasinger and adzer Linda Churchill built tarp frames, covered the frames with the tarps and weighted them down. The totems can now rest for the winter and dry out a little before being repaired and painted to be put back up again next summer.



Adzers Susie Kasinger, Linda Churchill, Tammi Meissner, and Josh Lesage lift heavy timbers to carry them behind the tribal house to use as supports under totem poles.



Adzers Josh Lesage, Tammi Meissner, Susie Kasinger, and Linda Churchill and master carver Wayne Price throw their weight on the lever under the end of the Chief Kadashan Crane totem to move it closer to the Chief Kadashan Red Snapper totem.



Adzers Tammi Meissner, Susie Kasinger, Linda Churchill and Josh Lesage and master carver Wayne Price push against the Chief Kadashan Crane totem closer to the Chief Kadashan Red Snapper totem.



Adzer Linda Churchill works to clean the underside of the Eagle totem.



Adzer Tammi Meissner brings a sense of humor to her work with adzers Josh Lesage and Linda Churchill to cover the Eagle and Undersea Bear totems.



The cleaned totems rest on supports behind the Chief Shakes tribal house covered by tarps to wait out the winter.

**Additional photos available upon request.**

## ***About Shakes Island***

Shakes Island is located in the harbor at Wrangell, Alaska and contains the Chief Shakes Historic Site, a National Register site that receives over 10,000+ visitors a year. The island stands as one of the few lasting reminders of Southeast Alaska Natives and their unique totemic art. The site’s main feature is a replica of a 19th century Tlingit tribal house which is set on the

## **WRANGELL COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION**

### **Shakes Island Renovation Project**

authentic location historically occupied by Chief Shake's lineage. Not only is the site important to the national chronology of Native-white contact, it is still used today for Tlingit ceremonies and contains the prized clan artwork – at.óow – of the Stikine Tlingits. Shakes Island is owned and operated by the WCA.

#### ***About the Shakes Island Renovation Project***

The Shakes Island tribal house was completed in 1940 built by collaboration between the CCC, the Forest Service and the local Tlingit tribe. Except for minor repairs, no major reconstruction has taken place to the structure. Because the tribal house is listed on the National Historic register, the replacement timbers must be hand adzed. Master carvers from other communities are overseeing and training locals to complete the adzing. The old structure needs to be dismantled and then a new structure erected in its place with the hand-adzed timbers, new electrical and a new roof of split cedar shakes. The totem poles on the island also need to be refurbished. When the project is complete, a celebration of project completion will be held. Learn more or make a donation to the project at [www.ShakesIsland.com](http://www.ShakesIsland.com).

#### ***About the Wrangell Cooperative Association***

Wrangell Cooperative Association (WCA) is the federally recognized tribe of the Stikine River region. WCA's charter was approved by the Department of the Interior in 1942. The tribe's mission is to support the cultural, ceremonial and subsistence lifestyle for all Alaskans and to promote the safe use and availability of a healthy environment for present and future generations. WCA provides social services, employment and educational opportunities to both the tribe and the Wrangell community. Of the 2,000 residents of Wrangell, approximately 800 are tribal members.