



BACKGROUND

RED ROAD TO DC

Since April 2021, the House of Tears Carvers of the Lummi Nation has visited more than 100 communities nationwide with a totem pole to raise awareness of Indigenous sacred sites at risk from oil, gas, mining, and infrastructure projects.

After making stops throughout the Pacific Northwest, California, Florida, and numerous stops in between, on July 14, the House of Tears Carvers and a caravan of activists began the Red Road to DC, an eight-stop tour of some of the most well-known sacred sites across the country, before arriving in Washington, DC, where they have brought the totem pole as a gift to the Biden-Harris administration and to urge the immediate protection of Indigenous sacred sites.

Throughout the journey, the carvers and activists have garnered support from numerous tribes, Indigenous groups, and Native and environmental organizations, who value the protection of sacred sites and Indigenous rights. The journey was hosted by partners at: Native Organizers Alliance, IllumiNative, National Congress of American Indians, Se'Si'Le, and The Natural History Museum.

The totem pole will be displayed in front of the National Museum of the American Indian until July 31, where an exhibition of the House of Tears Carvers' totem pole journeys is on view until September 9. The totem pole will then be moved to a location to be announced.

SACRED SITE STOPS

- Snake River, ID
- Bears Ears, UT
- Chaco Canyon, NM
- Black Hills, SD
- Missouri River, SD
- Standing Rock, ND
- Line 3, MN
- Line 5, MI
- Badger-Two Medicine, MT (virtual)
- Grand Canyon, AZ
- Mother Kuskokwin River, AK (virtual)
- Tongass Forest, AK (virtual)
- Bristol Bay Watershed, AK (virtual)
- Thacker Pass, NV (virtual)
- Arctic Nat'l Wildlife Refuge (virtual)

TOTEM POLE FACTS

- **Head Carver:** Jewell James (Lummi), House of Tears Carvers
- **Carving Assistant:** Doug James (Lummi), House of Tears Carvers
- **Wood:** 400-year cedar tree
- **Height:** 24 feet 8 inches
- **Weight:** Approximately 5,000 lbs.

ABOUT THE TOTEM POLE (EXCERPT FROM JEWELL JAMES' STATEMENT)

On the top of the totem is the Full Moon and included into its design is the “Indian-in-the- Moon.” Also, there is the “Fire” carved before the praying/meditating male figure. The fire does not have “logs” in it but a circle that represents the “Giant Pearle” owned by the “Man that Married the Moon” (based on Pueblo mythology). Structurally we added wood to the pole on each side in order to make the round full moon.

Below this is the Diving Eagle, he is headed downward in a dive to the earth. We carved the eagle body into the original log but added the head to the body. The head is projecting outward and downward. On both Eagle Wings are “Salmon Head” designs.



Below the Eagle are two full bodied Chinook Salmon—one to the left of his head and one to the right. Below the chinook is a “Canadian Copper.”

To the right, along the side of the left side of the pole (when you are looking at it from the front) is a full body “Wolf.” Below the Copper is the “Praying Mother Kneeling with Rattle” (Mother Earth/Medicine Woman/Shamanist/Grandmother). On the lower left, behind the mother image is the “Daughter” of the mother. On the other side of the pole, opposite the wolf image, is a full body “Bear” image. Below the bear, and in front of the kneeling mother is a “Mexican Child in a Cage.” Located around the mother image are “Peyote Buttons.” The gouging marks around the mother, child, and caged infant represents the “Falling Rains.” Between the Child and the Mother are “Seven Tears of Trauma.” One of the tears is acting as the child’s rattle- symbolically of her generational trauma. Finally, at the bottom of the pole there is the “Flowing River Waters.”



For more information visit redroadtodc.org.