

Suquamish memorial honors centuries of service



Suquamish Tribe Executive Director Wayne George surveys the newly finished Veterans Memorial Tuesday.
Brad Camp/For the Herald

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SUQUAMISH —Alan Deam’s name is engraved on the face of a marble canoe on a hillside overlooking downtown Suquamish.

It’s a place of honor the 41-year-old Suquamish man earned in a 20-year career in the U.S. Marine Corps that spanned the Gulf War, Somalia, Kosovo and Iraq. When Deam joined the Marines out of North Kitsap High School in 1988, he was just looking to break away.

“I didn’t know what I was going to do with my life and suddenly I was fixing helicopters,” said Deam, now retired from the corps. “I knew I’d never find another place where I could do the things I wanted to do, so I did it for as long as I could.”

With the unveiling of a new Veterans Memorial Saturday, the Suquamish tribe is recognizing the service of veterans across centuries — from pre-contact warriors to modern military members like Deam. Marble canoes at the back of the memorial carry the names of both tribal and non-tribal veterans from the community.

The idea for the memorial was developed by the veterans group Suquamish Warriors and paid for by the tribe. Tim Ryan Construction of Poulsbo built the structure at cost while Sound Stoneworks of Kingston provided two marble canoes.

Renowned Squaxin Island Tribe artist Andrea Wilbur-Sigo created cedar carvings and house posts for the memorial, and will add two more carvings next summer. Work was completed in October.

“It’s beautiful really,” said Rich Demain, Suquamish Warriors member and U.S. Army veteran who served in Korea. “I’m really excited about what it represents. It represents our people, but not just our people.”

Suquamish Tribe Executive Director Wayne George said a memorial had been planned for the former Tribal Center, but never came to fruition.

The Suquamish Warriors reignited interest in the project and planning was carried out over a series of public meetings.

“It’s been a long time coming,” George said.

The site of the new memorial faces east toward the Suquamish waterfront and the House of Awakened Culture. Sigo’s carvings of Chief Kitsap and Chief Seattle stand sentry at front of the Memorial, a reminder of the tribe’s military heritage.

Deam said he sometimes wonders what his ancestors would think of his service in the U.S. Marine Corps.

“There are times when I think it’s ironic to fight for the same military that conquered this continent, but it all comes in stride,” Deam said. “I think they would be proud.”