

W. T. a.

## ODOT contributes to a "powerful place"

### Voices from a distant past: ODOT contributes to a "powerful place"

Eleven stones, engraved with words from the Kalapuya language, lie along paths in the Willamut Natural Area of Alton Baker Park, a greenway on the north bank of the Willamette River in Eugene and Springfield. Quarried from a basalt deposit in historic Kalapuya territory, the "talking stones," installed in 2002, serve as educational and cultural reference points as well as beautiful art objects.

As part of its restoration work for the soon-to-be-rebuilt Interstate 5 Willamette River Bridge, ODOT has contributed four more stones to the park. The Eastgate Woodlands in Alton Baker Park, a setting of peaceful, natural beauty, are now commemorated as *Duucu - Ba*, the native Kalapuya tribe's word meaning "powerful place."

"ODOT wanted to be involved with the community in preservation of native culture in a meaningful way," said Russ Swearingen, senior contract specialist in ODOT's Major Projects Unit. "The stones continue an important tradition of commemorating those who have gone before us and preserving their language."



ODOT's team installed new talking stones in Alton Baker Park

The original stones were the result of discussions between Kalapuya Elder Esther Stutzman of the Kommema Cultural Protection Association and members of the Citizen Planning Committee for the Willamut Natural Area of Alton Baker Park.

Kalapuya people say, "We have always been here." Prior to the arrival of Euro-Americans, Kalapuyans were the largest Native American group in what is now western Oregon. As many as 15,000 Kalapuya lived in their traditional territory, which extended from near Roseburg to Oregon City. In 2003, an estimated 300 to 400 Kalapuyans remained. For thousands of years, every object in the local landscape had a Kalapuya name. Today, only 140 words remain.

The stones were carved by sculptor Mark Andrew. An accomplished artist in bronze and stone, Andrew was happy to take over this commission from Lisa Ponder, who had carved the original stones. He hadn't used sand-blasting as a technique before, so he researched it and then purchased the mobile sand-blasting equipment he would need to carve the stones. Each boulder took an entire day of work as he positioned the calligraphy away from major cracks in the basalt, blasted through the rubber mat that served as a stencil outlining the letters, and then sprayed four coats of lithographer's ink into the recessed letters.

"This was a satisfying project because I got to sculpt in a new way, and there were no second chances," Andrew said. "I'm also honored to contribute sculptures to the park that will last a long time."

Andrew finished carving the four new Kalapuya talking stones—*Camafeema* (ferns on the ground), *Duucu - Ba* (powerful place), *Hal - Ba* (downstream) and *Gudu-Kut* (frog)—in September 2009, and Kalapuya Elder Esther Stutzman and the CPC accepted them.

In October, employees from a Willamette River Bridge subcontractor, Dirt and Aggregate Interchange, moved three of the talking stones from the Eugene Parks and Open Space maintenance yard to their permanent locations in the Willamut Natural Area of Alton Baker Park. At the installation, Andrew told stories about the process and presented Stutzman with a miniature version of *Gudu-Kut*. The larger frog stone will stay in EPOS' maintenance yard until the frog pond by the Knickerbocker bike and pedestrian bridge is completed.

"The success of the project in honoring the Kalapuya culture of this scenic area is due to the collaborative and creative team effort by Esther, Mark, and representatives from the Citizen Planning Committee, Springfield Willamalane Park and Recreation District and Eugene Parks and Open Space Division," Swearingen said. "When people walk or bike through the park, the stones will remind them that many others have enjoyed it too, for thousands of years."

To see a map of the original stones' locations and hear Esther pronounce the Kalapuya words and their translations, visit <http://emc.rio.com/KalapuyaMap.html>.

Whilamut Passage Bridge name is endorsed by:

Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde;

Willamalane Park and Recreation District board of directors;

Eugene City Council;

Springfield City Council;

CAC of the MPO/Metropolitan Policy COmmittee (MPC);

U.S. Representative Peter DeFazio;

all local Oregon Senate and House members.

After the Whilamut Passage Bridge name is acted upon by Lane COunty, the next step would be to seek endorsement from MPC, followed by the Oregon State Geographic Names Board. Should this happen, ODOT's Jane Lee has said that the agency will recommend approval to the Oregon Transportation Commission.

ODOT's cooperation in promoting and enhancing Kalapuya naming is evident in the following article:

[http://egov.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/OTIA/WRB\\_TalkingStones.shtml](http://egov.oregon.gov/ODOT/HWY/OTIA/WRB_TalkingStones.shtml) (article attached)