

NAVY HONoured WITH *Salish Sea* CANOE

Lieutenant-Governor Steven Point presents red cedar canoe to navy

Penny Rogers
Staff writer

The ancestral lands of the Songhees were a place of celebration July 15 when hundreds of people gathered to witness the presentation of a red cedar canoe to the Canadian Navy by B.C.'s Lieutenant-Governor, Steven Point.

"As you know the navy has sailed the sea for a hundred years, but Coast Salish peoples have sailed it for thousands of years. So we're giving the canoe to them to recognize their recent admission to the club," said LGov Point, bringing a gale of laughter and cheers from the crowd.

The 4.7-metre canoe was carved three years ago by the Lieutenant-Governor's brother, Mark Point, for their father's memorial ceremony. It was then moved to Victoria and transformed into an ocean-going canoe by LGov Point and his nephew, Keith. That process took close to two months to complete.

Once the canoe had been re-shaped, master-carver and KwaGulth Hereditary Chief, Tony Hunt, took over.

"Tony did the beautiful painting that you see. This is an original Tony Hunt, three-dimensional, limited-edition print. There's only one," said LGov Point.

At a ceremony earlier in the day the canoe was renamed Salish Sea.

In his address to the crowd, LGov Point said the presentation was also in honour of Rear-Admiral Tyrone Pile, who is retiring this fall. Currently in the mid-Pacific on the Rim of the Pacific exercise, the Admiral could not be present to

accept the gift, so accepting on his behalf was Chief of Staff, Capt(N) Alex Rueben.

"For 100 years our sailors have shared this harbour with the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations. Throughout this time we have been neighbours, friends, and in some cases, family," said Capt(N) Rueben. "This canoe will be kept in a place of honour and will serve as an enduring legacy to commemorate our past, celebrate today and remind us of our commitment to the future of these waters and our nation. On behalf of all the men and women of the navy, I thank you for this honour."

With that, a group of Canadian Forces Aboriginal men and women picked up the canoe and followed Coast Salish drummers and dancers as they led the way to the beach so the canoe could be launched for the first time.

Following a cedar blessing on the shoreline, OS Trudee Lynn-Paul and MS Vern Point (the cousin of LGov Point) climbed into the canoe and pushed off into the calm waters for a short inaugural journey in front of the gathered crowd.

"It was really special because Trudee is North Island and I am Coast Salish, so it felt really good to be there as the first paddlers on the Salish Sea in the Lieutenant-Governor's canoe," said MS Point.

According to Capt(N) Rueben, the navy is still searching for that perfect location to display the canoe. "My thought is that we certainly don't want it tucked away somewhere; we want it in a very visible spot where everybody coming in each and every day can see it."



Top: MS Vern Point and OS Trudee Lynn-Paul were the first to test the canoe.

Right: Coast Salish drummers lead the ceremony to the Songhees waterfront to launch the canoe.

Bottom right: The canoe receives a cedar blessing before being launched.

Bottom left: Lieutenant-Governor Steven Point gave an heartfelt speech welcoming the Canadian Navy to Coast Salish waters.



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