



## Centennial Celebration: July 24, 2010 (*tentative date*)



NPS Photo / Tom Gamble

### Commemorating the 100-Year Anniversary with a new totem pole

The Tlingit/Russian Battle of 1804. The Territorial Governor Brady Totem Pole Collection. The Russian Memorial. This trio of reasons set aside Sitka National Historical Park as unique, and are the reasons for its inclusion in the national parks system.

Celebrating the second of those three pillars of our enabling legislation, a new pole will be erected on July 24, 2010, to commemorate the 100-Year Anniversary of the Sitka National Historical Park.

The pole raising is at once a celebration of art, community and culture. Literally hundreds of people take part - "pulling the lines" to raise and set the pole, the atmosphere electric with anticipation as history is being made.

#### A Cultural Celebration

As Alaska's oldest national park, Sitka is world renowned for its totem pole collection. Totem poles are part of the dynamic Northwest Coast Native tradition. The park's collection began with a generous donation by Chief Saanaheit, one of Southeast Alaska's primary Native leaders in the early 1900s. Saanaheit's donation of several large carved items, including a 55-foot tall totem pole, came with the condition "that these are to be transported to the government park at Sitka and to be erected and remain there as memorials to my people."

Contemporary Master Carver Nathan Jackson has

said, "Raising a totem pole is putting something in place, it's leaving a mark. Just saying who we are, what we are, what we belong to, and what we've been born with." As part of the 100-Year Anniversary celebration, in July 2010 Sitka honors this Northwest Coast art tradition through the proposed carving and installation of a centennial anniversary totem "story pole." The pole will help the park to share its stories more effectively and provide education about this ancient and honorable art form to future generations. Figures on the pole will capture and illustrate significant historic events that were the basis for the designation.

#### Schedule of Events

July 24 - 2 pm  
Opening welcome by Mary A. Miller, Superintendent  
Introduction of Host clan  
(Host clan welcome)  
Speeches  
(Guest clan responses)  
Songs (ceremonial endorsement)  
Introduce artist(s)  
Releases pole  
NPS accepts pole  
Raising ceremony, led by carver

July 24 - 6 pm  
First meal - traditional Tlingit meal  
Group dancers - grand entrance  
"The White Sail" or similar performance  
Second meal - traditional Western meal  
Closing speeches

July 25 - 6 am  
Grand exit (by 6 am or sooner)

#### What is a Totem?

A totem is a visual tool for telling a story. Carvers utilize clan crests and emblems or a combination of symbolic figures to convey four general types of totems - crest poles about ancestry, history poles of a clan, legend poles for real-life experiences, or to commemorate a specific individual or event.

Totems were used for cultural identity to distinguish clans from one another in different regions of Southeastern Alaska. Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian are the three common tribes of Southeast Alaska that utilize this traditional art form.