

Raven's flight honors leaders

SCULPTURE: Artist's parents led fight against discrimination in state.

By MEGAN BAEZA
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An effort by the Anchorage Park Foundation to install a sculpture in Peratrovich Park is seeking contributions from local businesses and community members.

But it isn't just any sculpture by any artist waiting for installation. The work, "Flight of the Raven," was designed by Elizabeth and Roy Peratrovich's eldest son, Roy Peratrovich Jr., a noted engineer and artist. His work has been displayed at the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C., and State Capitol Hall in Juneau.

"I wanted to honor the work my parents have done against discrimination," Roy Jr. said from his home in Bainbridge Island, Wash. In doing so, he recalled the Tlingit legend of Raven, who stole the sun from an ancient chief and gave it to the people.

"Raven is respected for what he's done and is common to many Alaskan tribes," he said. "I wanted something that would be acceptable to our Native people in the north as well as the southeast."

In the legend, Raven escapes with the sun in his beak through a smoke hole, causing him to turn black. The sculpture will feature a 10-foot tall stainless-steel column of twisted and curved gray smoke. Atop the smoke trail will sit a bronze raven, finished with a highly polished black patina and a 4-foot wingspan. In its beak it will hold a 2-inch polished quartz with thin gold seams to represent the sun.

"The sun on the sculpture is small on purpose," Roy Jr. said. "When you look at the sky, the sun is small there too."

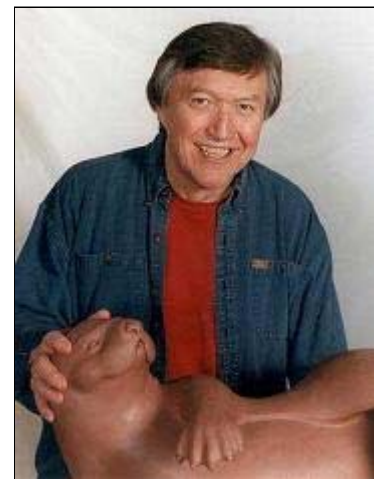
The sculpture will symbolize shedding the dark days of discrimination and the rising hopes and dreams of people once oppressed.

"It's fitting to use a raven because my mother was of the Raven clan and she brought light to the world through what she did," he said.

The Peratrovichs were leaders of the anti-discrimination movement in Alaska during the 1940s and leaders in the Alaska Native Brotherhood and Sisterhood organizations. They were instrumental in the passage of America's first anti-discrimination laws, enacted Feb. 16, 1945. Elizabeth Peratrovich Day is celebrated throughout Alaska by legislative decree on Feb. 16.



The "Flight of the Raven" sculpture would be placed in Peratrovich Park along with a plaque telling visitors about Elizabeth and Roy Peratrovich and their civil rights work in Alaska during the '40s and '50s. *(Photos courtesy of ROY PERATROVICH JR.)*



Roy Peratrovich Jr. designed "Flight of The Raven" to honor his parents' anti-discrimination work. *(Photos courtesy of ROY PERATROVICH JR.)*

Steve Beardsley, former municipal Parks and Recreation Department commissioner, has worked on the "Flight of the Raven" project since its beginning. The cost of building and installing it in the park at Fourth Avenue and E Street is estimated at \$80,000.

"We've applied for a matching grant of \$40,000 from the Anchorage Park Foundation," he said. Decisions for the grants could come as early as the next few weeks.

"We're waiting to see what's happening with the grant, but we'll go full force in May," he said.

There are no fundraising events planned at the moment, and the project will rely on donations from businesses and the community. Contributions to the Elizabeth and Roy Peratrovich Park Enhancement Project are tax-deductible, and contributors of \$2,000 or more will be recognized on an on-site plaque.

Another important aspect of the "Flight of the Raven" is a plaque that will tell the story of the Peratrovichs' achievements.

"When the park was dedicated, I remember walking by onlookers and heard people wonder who the Russians were that they named the park after," Roy Jr. said. "I want this to be something that raises awareness of the struggles of Alaska's Native people and something that everybody in Alaska can be proud of. We were the first in the nation to pass anti-discrimination laws and that's something everybody should know."

For more information about the project or to make a contribution, call 343-4492 or visit www.anchorageparkfoundation.org.

Daily News reporter Megan Baeza can be reached at mbaeza@adn.com.

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