

## Amos Wallace, 1967

### Harnessing of the Atom

Western Red Cedar, 84.18.001

This kootéeyaa (totem pole) tells the story of the harnessing of the atom. The pole was carved in 1967 by Tlingit carver Amos Wallace of Juneau. His Tlingit name was Jeet Yaaw Dustaa of the T'akdeintaan Clan of the X'áakw Hít Tlingit (Freshwater-marked Coho House). Wallace, an artist who worked in many different media was renowned for his carving and engraving. He died in 2004.

In 1976, the pole was installed here at what is now the Juneau-Douglas City Museum. The traditional method of mounting a kootéeyaa involves digging a hole for the lower end of the pole to rest in. Rocks line the hole to provide drainage and stability. By 2003, the kootéeyaa had developed a distinct lean and was in danger of severe damage. It was removed from its original, traditional mount. A new aluminum support post was mounted in a concrete base to provide better stability and prevent further damage. Traditionally, a leaning pole might sometimes be propped up, but once fallen, it is generally left to return to the earth.

Harnessing of the Atom is 15 feet tall and carved of western red cedar. Cedar is the most commonly used tree for carving kootéeyaa because it withstands the elements so well. Decay is natural in kootéeyaa exposed to the effects of wind, weather, insects and a hard life outside in the Southeast Alaska weather. Due to the organic material, cracks are natural and should not be seen as a flaw in the carving.



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# Harnessing of the Atom

TLINGIT  
KOOTÉEYAA



# Harnessing of the Atom

**Amos L. Wallace, Western Red Cedar, 1967**

Through a visual language typical of kootéeyaa (totem poles), this fifteen foot carving reveals aspects of Alaska's American and Russian history, humankind's efforts to control energy, and Tlingit spirituality. It suggests an interesting parallel between the Tlingit story of how light was bestowed to the world of humans, and the development of nuclear energy by 20th century physicists.

At the top of the pole is the bald eagle, representative of the United States. Next is a Russian Orthodox priest, illustrating the influence of Russia and Christianity on Alaska. Below is a human being holding the sun, which has been released by Raven, the final figure shown.

Amos Wallace played an important role in drawing national attention to the arts of Tlingit people, and his work can be found in numerous collections throughout the United States.