Walter Harper Statue to be Placed at Doyon Headquarters

From left to right: Robert Tatum, Esaias George, Harry Karstens, John Fredson, and Walter Harper.

Fairbanks, AK – A few months ago, the Walter Harper Project group received news of the passage of Alaska State Senate Bill 144 declaring June 7th as Walter Harper Day. Additionally, the group is working to construct a statue of Walter Harper, who was the first documented person to summit Denali in 1913.

Doyon, Limited is pleased to announce that the statue, when finalized, will be housed outside of the Doyon Plaza in downtown Fairbanks. The location of the statue is fitting as Denali is the most prominent landmark in Alaska’s interior, the homeland of the Athabascan people, and will provide easy access to tourists and community members in Fairbanks. The statue, along with interpretive panels, will acknowledge the contributions of each of the expedition team members, while highlighting Walter Harper’s remarkable skill set and character traits that allowed him to play a pivotal role in the expedition’s success.

Harper, who was Koyukon Athabascan, lived much of his childhood in Tanana, AK and later lived in Fort Yukon, AK. He would have been a Doyon shareholder had he lived a longer life. Unfortunately, he and his wife, Frances Wells, died in 1918, along with 350 others in the sinking
of the Princess Sophia off the coast of Alaska. Harper was the first of the 1913 ascent team to reach Denali’s peak, followed by Harry Karstens, Robert Tatum, and finally the Episcopal Archdeacon Hudson Stuck, who, along with Karstens, co-led the team. Other expedition members were John Fredson, who was Gwich’in Athabascan, and Esaias George, who was Koyukon Athabascan, and participated fully in the team’s efforts at lower elevations. Fredson manned the basecamp for the ascent team for the month they were on the mountain. Their feat is even more extraordinary as the team dog mushed from Alaska’s Interior to Denali to make the climb.

The Walter Harper Project has partnered with Fairbanks Native Association for receiving donation funds for the project and will soon be issuing an RFP to solicit artists’ proposals for the work. For more information or to make a donation, please go to https://www.walterharper.org/.

Doyon is pleased to participate in the Walter Harper Project, “It is an honor to recognize the accomplishments of our ancestors and to share their legacy with our youth,” says Tanya Kaquatosh, senior VP of administration for Doyon, Limited and a member of the Walter Harper Project.

Headquartered in Fairbanks, Doyon, Limited has more than 20,100 shareholders and was established under the 1971 Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. Doyon has subsidiaries in oilfield services, government contracting, and tourism, is also the largest private landowner in Alaska and one of the largest in North America. Its mission is to continually enhance its position as a financially strong Native corporation in order to promote the economic and social well-being of its shareholders and future shareholders, to strengthen its Native way of life, and to protect and enhance its land and resources. For more information, visit www.doyon.com.

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