

# New life breathed into Surrey park with dark history

## Murdered teens parents worked to bring safety and beauty to Frank Hurt Park

BY MATTHEW ROBINSON, VANCOUVER SUN SEPTEMBER 15, 2014



Cynthia Allaire-Bell and Wayne Bell in front of memorial for their son Devon who was stabbed to death near this site in 2011. Memorial is a sculpture by Robert Davidson. Photo taken at Frank Hurt Park in Surrey on September 11, 2014.

**Photograph by:** Steve Bosch, PNG

METRO VANCOUVER -- Wayne Bell and Cynthia Allaire-Bell squinted in the early evening sun as they admired a bold and towering new piece of Haida art at Frank Hurt Park in Surrey's Newton area.

The sculpture, named Eagle Calling, is of particular significance to the married couple. It was created by renowned Haida artist Robert Davidson, a man who adopted their two sons Brandon and Devon Allaire-Bell into the Eagle Clan and had given the pair Haida names.

That was about six years before Devon was repeatedly and fatally stabbed near the park at the age of 19 in a 2011 homicide that remains unsolved.

Sara Nielsen, the sister of Devon's best friend Jack — who received life-threatening wounds in the same attack but survived — stood alongside Bell and Allaire-Bell as the three quietly regarded Frank Hurt Park, a space that they and others across the Lower Mainland transformed in Devon's honour, and that is now slated for grand opening on Sept. 20.

“We never dared to hope we would be standing among something like this,” said Bell, looking around. He held his face still as tears welled in his eyes. “Maybe this is a start. I hope. I really do.”

Devon and Jack had been kicking around a soccer ball at nearby Frank Hurt secondary on April 24, 2011, when they were approached by a group of men who had emerged from the park where Bell was now standing. At the time, the then-unnamed and decrepit park was overgrown and strewn with needles, condoms, blankets and discarded clothing.

After the confrontation, the attackers fled back into the densely wooded park, leaving Devon and Jack suffering from their wounds. Devon later died in hospital.

Allaire-Bell stood in a wide clearing and stepped off a newly paved pathway to let a cyclist pass.

“Something good had to come from something so bad,” she said.

In the days after Devon’s murder, his mother started cleaning up the space, now named Frank Hurt Park. She was soon joined by others — family, friends, colleagues, and city workers. Together, the community that formed around the park channelled its sorrow and grief into an effort to recreate the space.

She pointed to some of the changes. There are wider walkways through the trees, a new children’s playground, better lighting and a community plaza that is still being worked on. A parkour course is planned for next spring, something Allaire-Bell said Devon and Jack would have loved.

“I don’t see it as an end,” she said, speaking of the park’s grand opening. “It will always need to be cleaned up, there will always need to be planting ... it will never really end. At least not for me, until I can no longer do it and then hopefully someone will take over from there.”

Based on the brief history of the new park, there could be many willing to help. People from across the Lower Mainland came to work alongside Allaire-Bell, her husband said.

“I will spend the rest of my life thanking every one of them,” he said. “No words can express enough my gratitude to those people. They credit us, my wife and I, for doing this. I keep telling people, it wasn’t us. It wasn’t just her and I, it was everybody.”

The Integrated Homicide Investigation Team is still searching for people of interest in the murder. They are described as five South Asian men in their late teens or 20s. Video footage and a map of the route the suspects took as they approached the school were released after the murder in hopes the public would help identify them. IHIT continues to investigate the file, Jennifer Pound, a spokeswoman for the RCMP’s Integrated Homicide Investigation Team, said in a statement earlier this week.

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