

PORT HURON

Artist carves boulder to honor Native Americans

Bob Gross Times Herald

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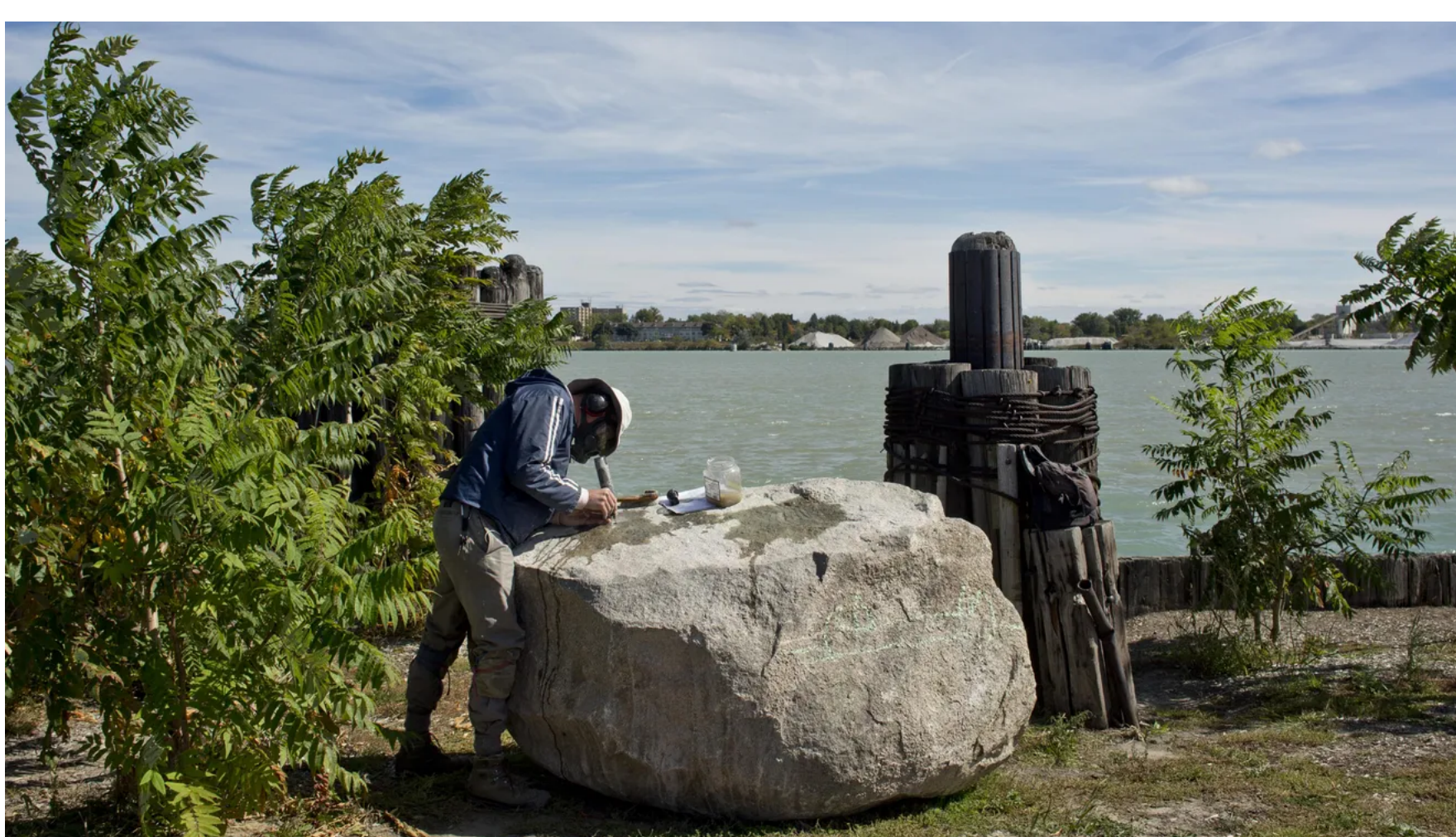
Artist Kevin Sudeith will be carving an eagle and a birchbark canoe into a large boulder along the Blue Water River Walk in Port Huron. *Bob Gross*

Artist Kevin Sudeith is very aware of the people being honored by the piece of art he's creating for the Blue Water River Walk.

"I really hope that the piece honors them, and that they feel it is respectful to their history and honors their traditions," he said.

Sudeith, who grew up in St. Paul, Minnesota, and works out of New York City, is carving a petroglyph of an eagle and a canoe into a large boulder along the river walk. He'll be working Monday through Friday starting about 10 a.m. at least until Oct. 21.

He was commissioned by the Community Foundation of St. Clair County to create a piece of art to honor the Native American peoples of the Blue Water Area.



Artist Kevin Sudeith, of Brooklyn, New York, uses a dremel tool as he works on carving a petroglyph of an eagle and a canoe into a large boulder Wednesday, September 30, 2015 at the Blue Water River Walk in Port Huron. The work is being created to honor the First Nations people of the Blue Water Area. *JEFFREY M. SMITH / TIMES HERALD*

Sudeith said he spent about two weeks in the area doing research and meeting with Indians on Walpole Island and in the Aamjiwnaang reserve in Sarnia, as well as with the Saginaw Chippewa. He said he also studied the Sanilac petroglyphs but did not feel it would be respectful to "appropriate another culture's images to honor that culture."

He said he felt it was important to be respectful.

"I had a lot of questions about what to do that would be respectful of the aesthetics and traditions of the community it's meant to honor," Sudeith said.

He said he worked closely with Aamjiwnaang Chief Chris Plain.

"He had the really keen observation ... he portrayed the canoe as a vessel that goes back and forth across the border," Sudeith said.

The canoe, he said, becomes a symbol of a bridge between First Nation and European communities and the international connection between the U.S. and Canada.

Sudeith said he has been making rock art since 2003. He uses a cordless Dremel tool to carve his designs into the rock.

"These are shallow relief carvings," he said. "My preferred medium are immovable rocks."

He calls his art part performance and part conceptual. After the carving is done, he will paint the relief, then seal it with an all-weather varnish.

"My goal is twofold: Describe a place and a moment in time," Sudeith said.

"The thing that motivates me to be an artist, when I'm old enough to know better, is the opportunity to make a very durable document, in this case of the traditional people of the area.

"I hope they will like the piece," he said. "I want to honor them and their traditions."

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Performing Art

Kevin Sudeith

- Artist Kevin Sudeith will be carving a petroglyph of a large eagle and a birchbark canoe into a boulder along the Blue Water River Walk.
- Sudeith will be at work from about 10 a.m. to about 6 p.m. Monday through Friday.
- He will be at work until Oct. 21.
- The bolder, which was donated by Rock 'N' Wood Supply Yard, is south of the river walk ferry dock.