

Alex Decoteau Park Dedication Ceremony

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On 16 September 2017, the Alex Decoteau Park was officially opened and dedicated to his memory. It is Downtown's first new park in over 30 years and features a community garden, ground-level water sprays, a fenced off-leash dog park and "Esprit" - a 16-foot sculpture by Canadian Artist, Pierre Poussin, honouring and celebrating the spirit and legacy of Alex Decoteau. The park is located at 105 Street and 102 Avenue and was very well attended with numerous dignitaries and family from far and wide.



Mr. Chris Buyze, President Downtown Edmonton Community League – the Master of Ceremony welcomes Edmonton's citizens and visitors, alike as the event commences. To his right is The Loyal Edmonton Regiment's Warrant Officer Warren Rubin who would later sing our national Anthem. Behind him from left to right is a mounted Strathcona, retired Airborne soldier and Elder – Mr. Clifford Pompana who would later offer the blessing, Ms Janice Smith - Director Exhibits & Programming Canada's Sports Hall of Fame, CO L EDMN R - LCol Jon McCully, Edmonton Police Service Police Chief - Rod Knecht, Mayor Don Iveson, representing the Decoteau Family – Ms Izola Mottershead – great niece to Alex and "Esprit" artist - Pierre Poussin.

Alex Decoteau, an inspirational figure was born in Saskatchewan in 1887. He was an excellent student, attending the Battleford Industrial School, where he became active in many sports, exhibiting a natural talent for running. Between the years 1909 and 1916 he entered every important race in Alberta, winning the majority.

He became the first Indigenous police officer in Canada when he joined the Edmonton Police Department, in 1911 and was soon promoted to sergeant – in charge of the then-No. 4 Police Station at 121 Street and 102 Avenue. He was also one of the department’s first motorcycle officers – then on duty as escort to dignitaries for the opening of the High Level Bridge, in 1913.

At the Olympic Games in Stockholm, Sweden, 1912, Alex was the only Alberta representative on the Canadian Team. While placing 3rd in the preliminary heats of the 5000 metres event, he developed leg cramps in the final and finished sixth.

In April 1916, Alex joined the 202nd Battalion, during the First World War. He continued with competitive running, while serving in the army – his athletic prowess was epic. At one point, he entered a competition foot race later to find out that it was in fact a bicycle race. He promptly borrowed a bike and of course – won it. In the presence of King George V, he won a five-mile race during a military sports day in England. When the proper trophy was unavailable for presentation, in lieu of, the King presented Alex with his personal gold pocket watch.

On May 1917 Alex transferred to the 49th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force (now known as The Loyal Edmonton Regiment), to serve on the front lines. He was employed as a runner, delivering vital messages on the battlefield, between commanders and headquarters’ staff – an extremely hazardous job as depicted in the movie featuring Mel Gibson, “Gallipoli”.

He was killed at the Battle of Passchendaele on October 30, 1917 – just a few weeks short of his 30th birthday. Passchendaele in percentage terms was the costliest battle the 49th Battalion ever fought. The Battalion lost three quarters of its strength in a few hours on that morning. By the time the Battalion was pulled out that evening, only 145 of the nearly 600 soldiers that had started the day remained standing. It was here that Private Cecil J. Kinross was awarded his Victoria Cross. Alex is buried in the Passchendaele New British Cemetery amongst the 2,100 soldiers – many of the dead are unidentified.



From the stage's perspective at the park's dedication service, a Drum Ceremony is conducted by the Yellow Ribbon Dancers, in traditional dress. To the right is the red monument, "Esprit". Within the vicinity is the historical placard highlighting Alex's legacy.

Alex Decoteau has been inducted into the Edmonton Sports Hall of Fame, Alberta Sports Hall of Fame, Saskatchewan Sports Hall of Fame, Saskatchewan First Nations Sports Hall of Fame, and Canada's Sports Hall of Fame. In addition to having a street named after himself, he has been named as one of Edmonton's 100 Citizens of the Century. The Edmonton Police Service honour his past service and commitment to community and country by hosting the Alex Decoteau Run. This past June it was supported by Honourary Colonel John Stanton (L EDMN R) - CEO & Founder, Running Room. To learn more about Alex Decoteau, please visit The Loyal Edmonton Regiment Museum (at the Prince of Wales Armoury).