



Naming Committee

Honouring People and Places in Our City

THE CITY OF
Edmonton

7th Floor, 10250 - 101 Street
Edmonton AB T5J 3P4
Phone: 780-496-6226 Fax: 780-496-6054

Alexander Decoteau

(1887-1917)

Alexander Decoteau was born on the Red Pheasant Reserve in Saskatchewan in 1887. Before moving to Alberta, he attended the reserve day-school, and then the Battleford Industrial School. He worked as a farm-hand before moving to Edmonton, Alberta, where he found employment as a blacksmith with his brother-in-law David Latta.

Decoteau joined the Edmonton Police Force in 1909 and became Canada's first Aboriginal-Canadian police officer. He was hired as a Constable and was promoted to Sergeant in 1914, heading the West End Police Office.

As a remarkable long-distance runner, Decoteau won most major races in western Canada between 1909 and 1916. In 1912, Decoteau earned a place on Canada's Olympic team. He went to the Stockholm games where he competed in a 5000-metre race, but suffered leg cramps which restricted his performance. He did not earn a medal, but this did not stop him from competing once he returned to Canada. In July of 1913, Decoteau won the mile race at the Orangemen's celebration in Edmonton. He broke the provincial record which he had previously set. He went on to represent the Edmonton City Police Amateur Athletic Association at the dominion track and field championships in Vancouver and won second place. His cousin, Gilbert Wuttunee, who Decoteau had trained, took third place in the same race.

Decoteau continued to win races so frequently that he was eventually given the trophies permanently. These included the Calgary Herald Christmas Day Road Race Cup, the Cross Cup, the Gorman, the Clancy and Grindley Cup, and the Wilds Trophy, among many other trophies, medals, and awards.

At the start of the First World War, Decoteau enlisted in the Canadian Army in 1916. He served with the 202nd Infantry Battalion and later with the 49th Battalion. He continued to run while serving in the military, winning the five-mile race during a military sports day in England. King George V was in attendance during this race and awarded him with his personal gold



Alexander Decoteau, 1912.

Photo: City of Edmonton Archives EA-10-2072



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pocket watch. After arriving in France, Decoteau was killed in the October 1917 Battle of Passchendaele. It is said that the German sniper who shot him took the pocket watch given to Decoteau by King George V, but Decoteau's comrades later killed the sniper and recovered the pocket watch, sending it home to his mother.

Decoteau was buried in Ypres, Belgium. Since a proper Cree burial did not occur, his relatives and friends performed a special ceremony in 1985 that would bring his spirit home to Edmonton.

Decoteau was inducted into the Edmonton Sports Hall of Fame in 1967. Many of his accomplishments are recorded here. He was also inducted into the Saskatchewan Sports Hall of Fame in 2000, and later to the Alberta Sports Hall of Fame in 2001. The Edmonton Police Museum and Archives holds a number of his personal and military trophies and awards, including a participant medal from the 1912 Olympics and the Calgary Herald trophy.

Decoteau had always been well liked by his peers, and he established a special relationship with children as a police officer and an athlete. Today, he continues to act as a role model to children and adults alike, and his achievements, service, and dedication to the community and athletics are remembered through the Alex Decoteau Educational Run which began in 2001 and involves Edmonton's Inner City Schools.

*Written by Danielle Ferchoff
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CITATION ON FILE

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NOTE:

This Map is Conceptual Only,
Not to Scale, and Subject
to Change



ALEX DECOTEAU PARK

Downtown Neighbourhood

September 23rd, 2014
Naming Committee