

## ORIGIN OF NATIVE AMERICAN PEOPLES REMAINS SHROUDED IN MYSTERY

Original homeland of the Native Americans is lost in the distant past

there is even a question of whether or not all of these people came from the same original location

In an attempt to fill in the unknown past, Indians developed myths and legends

which they passed through succeeding generations

these stories provided an early foundation

to explain the development of significant characteristics of groups of people

they established a collective identity and related the group's hierarchy and status

in relation to other people and fundamental resources in their environment

## AN OKANOGAN NATIVE LEGEND ADDRESSES THE BEGINNINGS OF PEOPLE

Long ago when the sea was young white giants lived on the land far across the sea

their lives were happy until war came and the giants fought among themselves

Their chief, a woman named Scomalt, drove the fighters to the edge of the land

she broke off the piece where they were standing and pushed it out to sea

this broken piece of island was swept by storms and scorched by the sun

many died until eventually only one man and woman remained alive

Their island began to sink so they built a canoe and paddled onward

after paddling for many days they came to some islands

by this time the couple had lost their whiteness as the sun had burned them red

their descendants became the Okanogan Indians

## EVEN IN ANCIENT TIMES VARIETIES OF PEOPLE EXISTED ON NORTH AMERICA

First people to settle in what is today North America

collectively are referred to as Native Americans or Indians

To speak of all Indians as all the same defies reality

Indian groups vary as much as nationalities of other Americans do today

a large variety of native thought and action were the rule rather than the exception

only a few statements can be applied universally to all Indian people

While their origins remain steeped in mystery there are at least seven different types of Indian people:

- *Woods Indians* live between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mississippi River

this region had plentiful rainfall that fed many lakes and streams

forests spread over mountains and valleys

Woods Indians depended on the trees and animals that lived in the forests

in addition to fishing, hunting and gathering they relied on freshwater and saltwater fish

and shellfish

these natives developed a permanently settled farming culture

as native women planted corn, squash, beans, tobacco and gourds

- *Plains Indians* live on the vast rolling plain between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains

there was enough rain for a thick carpet of grass but not enough to grow many trees

Plains Indians were nomads and hunters who followed huge herds of grazing elk, deer and antelope that fed on the grass

most important of these animals was the bison known locally as buffalo

these animals provided the Indians almost everything they needed

meat supplied food, skins provided for tepees, boats, utensils, baggage and clothing

seasonal changes required mobility to follow the migrating animals

- *Pueblo Indians* of the Southwest live on the high, dry plain crossed by mountains and canyons

what little rain that fell came in the summer and encouraged plants to grow

they build large permanent house-like buildings of adobe (sun-dried clay)

snow fell in the mountains in winter and supplied streams, springs and water holes

some Iroquois Indians who lived in this region took up irrigation

- *Seed Gatherers of the Desert* live in an even drier land in the parched basins and plateaus

between the Rockies and the Sierra Nevada Mountains in Southern California

animals were scarce and hunting could not provide an adequate amount of food

families roamed the desert as women gathered berries, nuts, seeds and roots

shelters were simply windbreakers or flimsy huts of rushes or bunch grass

these native women excelled at weaving beautiful water-tight baskets

- *Northern Hunters* live in the Mackenzie-Yukon Valley of Alaska and Canada

they depended on caribou and other northern game for food, shelter and clothing

in winter hunters tracked this game on snowshoes

as their dogs pulled sledges (sleds) carrying their belongings

Inuit Natives still live along the cold northern fringes of North America

from Alaska to Labrador, Canada as well as in Greenland and Siberia

they depended on Arctic birds, seals, whale, walrus, caribou, polar bear and other animals

to provide food and animal skins for warm clothing

they turned the fur toward their skin to hold in the body heat

- *Coastal Indians* live between the Cascade Mountains and the Pacific Ocean

in a region known for heavy rainfall

rivers, streams, lakes and the ocean all were rich in fish, shellfish and mammals

hunters added wild game to the fish supply for variety

native women gathered bulbs, berries, roots and seeds to enhance their diet

dense forests of tall trees grew in abundance -- giant red cedar trees were the most significant

Coastal Indian men were skillful wood-carvers

straight-grained cedar wood could be split even with crude tools

skillful Indians built large houses by tying big slabs of cedar to wooden frames

large cedar dugout canoes were constructed for river, lake and even ocean travel

Coastal Indians wore little clothing

women wore fringe skirts and raincoats made from the inner bark of cedar trees

which provided protection against the rain

as the weather turned cold layers of animal fur were added

- *Plateau Indians* live between the Rocky Mountains and the Cascade Mountains
  - these natives were taller and leaner than the coastal people
  - Plateau Indians were cousins of the Plains people
  - they, like their cousins, were nomads and hunters and they also were expert at fishing

#### NATIVE AMERICAN PHYSICAL FEATURES MAY WELL HAVE CHANGED OVER TIME

Indians were affected physically by influences such as climate, food and modes of living  
 thus today Indians do not appear identical to Asian peoples  
 Race is an attempt to categorize a broad spectrum of skin coloring and superficial physical features  
 in the mind of archaeologists race does not exist -- tragically in our society today, racism does

#### THEORIES OF THE ORIGINS OF NATIVE AMERICANS EXPLAIN VARIOUS CHARACTERISTICS

One theory, the “Mass Migration Theory” focuses on physical characteristics  
 shared by Asiatic peoples and Native Americans  
 similar genetic markers of Eskimos, Aleuts, and some Coastal Indians  
 have convinced some scientists that most American Natives  
 descended from a single small band of Mongoloid people  
 physical features such as medium coarse straight black hair on the head  
 that when cut in cross sections is cylindrical also indicate an Asian-Indian relationship  
 both groups of people also have a scant amount of body hair  
 brown or black eyes, broad forehead and rectangular, moderately flat faces  
 and straight narrow noses with a high bridge are common to both groups  
 both peoples are of short stature -- they averaged 5’6” for adult males and 5’1” for females  
 both display a stocky body build -- adults were thick set and powerful in appearance  
 distinctive concave shape of their incisor teeth (shovel incisors)  
 and the lower first molars that has three roots rather than two  
 link these people genetically

Another set of theories attempts to explain the cultural similarities found among isolated people  
 Native American, Mediterranean, Eastern European, Pacific Island and North African people  
 share different aspects of similarities such as language patterns, similar tools and utensils  
 raft construction and pyramid construction (in Egypt and Central America)

#### “MASS MIGRATION THEORY” (OR LAND BRIDGE THEORY) IS THE MOST POPULAR

It is thought that during the last Ice Age Central Asian or Mongoloid people  
 migrated eastward from Siberia across the Bearing Strait to Alaska in different groups  
 no earlier than 16,000 to 14,000 years ago  
 perhaps they were following the big game animals they depended on for food  
 even then the Arctic Steppe (known as the taiga in Siberia and tundra in North America)  
 was a grassy, treeless habitat that stretched from Siberia to Alaska  
 it was home to a surprising number of animals -- many now extinct

such as mammoths, mastodons, camels, small horses, bears, bison, musk oxen,  
giant beavers the size of bears, ground sloths the size of elephants, antelopes,  
and saber-tooth cats

they might have migrated from island to island across the Aleutian Islands chain  
or crossed a temporary land bridge or ice bridge that spanned the Bering Strait  
they may have come in successive waves over thousands of years

in their travels they must have left a trail of litter, bones, broken tools and discarded clothing  
but today the trail is very cold -- only occasional bones and stone remnants are found intact

One theory of human migration southward involves the existence of a narrow 700-mile-long  
ice-free corridor inland between the Continental ice sheets and Puget Sound ice sheets  
just east of the Rocky Mountains that might have opened about 13,000 years ago  
first Americans could have followed this passage to migrate south from the Arctic region  
and then followed the Columbia River through the Cascade Mountains to the Pacific coast  
archaeologists have found a great deal of evidence to support this theory  
remains of horses, elephants, and other large animals have been discovered  
in both Asia and North America which supports the existence of such a land link

Second theory of migration south suggests pockets of ice-free areas were located on the Pacific coast  
rather than striking out overland in the migration south

early people could have dwelt along the saltwater where food was more easily obtained  
these gatherer-hunters could have existed quite comfortably  
artifacts show humans and other mammals lived along the Alaska coast during the last Ice Age  
following the coastline would be a logical route on the journey south for boat-using people

#### IN SOME WAYS NOMADIC MIGRATION APPEARS TO BE COUNTER-INTUITIVE

Theories of a people wandering to North America and south seem to go against common sense  
at the height of the last Ice Age Asian people of Siberia would have moved further north  
toward a darker, colder country of the Arctic Steppe

It this is true a natural "cold filter" allowed only the fittest people to be admitted to North America  
they must have known how to make sewn jackets, trousers and foot gear from animal skins  
they probably burned animal fat for heat, cooking, melting snow and light

Big game hunters were thought to be the very first settlers of the Pacific Northwest  
they were descendants of Asians who were the most skilled hunters and survivalists  
the world has ever known

they had to possess tools, knowledge, skill and courage to kill huge animals  
hunting spears probably were very heavy -- used more for jabbing than for throwing  
in the treeless environment, spears were probably made from long bones  
micro-blade spearheads or arrowheads were found in Russia (August 1996)  
similar in design to those found in North America

they used small flakes of stone fastened to bone handles for cutting

Arrival of humans coincided with a series of animal extinctions in North America

two-thirds of the large animals disappeared within 2,000 years of human arrival  
but these losses could have been caused by changes in climate at the end of the Ice Age

## VARIOUS OTHER THEORIES AND BELIEFS TRY TO EXPLAIN CULTURAL SIMILARITIES

*Theory of Atlantis* is found in the writings of the Greek philosopher Plato

over 2,300 years ago he wrote the dialogues *Timaeus* and *Critias*

which was an account of the ancient thriving, wealthy, peaceful island city of Atlantis  
Atlantis' unknown location has been speculated to have been in many places  
from Greece and Spain to the Strait of Gibraltar in Europe, to the Middle East,  
to the Atlantic's Azores Islands, to Great Britain and Ireland, Scandinavia,  
and both North and South America

Atlantis was said to have disappeared into the Atlantic Ocean

after a day and night of fierce earthquakes and floods

most people consider Plato's account as a story written to express his hatred of war and corruption

people of Atlantis were said to possess advanced skills and knowledge in engineering

if Plato's descriptions of sophisticated irrigation systems and canals can be believed

and we find the same plants and animals on continents that are thousands of miles apart

whatever its actual location (if it existed) Atlantis may have served as a land bridge

also, can it be mere coincidence that several ancient cultures seem to have spontaneously

acquired knowledge and skills that were seemingly beyond their level of development

such as the ability to build a perfect pyramid and construct oceangoing reed rafts?

*Continental Drift Theory* notes the outlines of Western Africa and South America

appear to fit together like a jig-saw puzzle

some believe at one time North and South America, Europe, Asia and Australia were all joined

evidence for the movement of continents on moving "tectonic plates" is now extensive

geologists using modern scientific instruments and techniques have shown:

- North and South America are slowly drifting westward away from Europe and Africa;
- glacial sediments in South America, Africa, Madagascar, Arabia, India, Antarctica and Australia also offer evidence of continental drift;
- satellite photographs and measurements of magnetism of rocks support this theory

similar plant and animal fossils are found along different continent shores

suggesting that they were once joined

small freshwater crocodile-like reptile fossils are found both in Brazil and South Africa

land reptile fossils in rock of the same age are found in South America, Africa and Antarctica

identical earthworm families are still found in South America and Africa

*Kon-Tiki Theory* was proposed by Norwegian scientist Thor Heyerdahl

he believed that people from South America could have settled the Pacific Polynesian islands

such as Samoa, Tonga and the Cook Islands

Heyerdahl organized a 1947 expedition using only the materials and technologies

that were available to ancient people

Heyerdahl and a small team traveled to Peru where they constructed a raft, the *Kon-Tiki*, using balsa logs and native materials in ways illustrated by Spanish conquistadores  
Heyerdahl and five companions sailed the raft for 101 days over 4,300 miles across the Pacific before smashing into a reef in the Tuamotu Islands  
they made landfall and all returned safely  
if Heyerdahl's theory is correct South American natives could be linked to people who inhabit the Pacific islands today

*Lost Tribes of Israel* is the belief that Indians are one of ten lost tribes  
according to Hebrew Old Testament Scriptures the profit Jacob had twelve sons  
these sons fathered the twelve tribes of Israel (of Jewish belief)  
ten of the original twelve tribes of ancient Israel were driven from the Kingdom of Israel after their conquest by the Assyrians -- 722 BCE (before the Common Era)  
several groups of people have been thought to be descendants of these "lost" tribes  
British preacher Thomas Thorowgood published a book in 1650  
in attempting to convert the Indians to Christianity he suspected they might be Jews  
he argued they were descendants of one of the Ten Lost Tribes  
*Book of Mormon* states that a small band of Israelites under Lehi migrated from Jerusalem to the Western Hemisphere about 600 BCE  
during the thousand-year history revealed in the Book of Mormon  
descendants of Lehi's oldest son, Laman, developed darker skins  
but after their conversion to Christianity their skin color  
ceased to be a distinguishing characteristic  
a terrible war occurred about 231CE (Common Era)  
Lamanites remained to inhabit North America  
present-day Native Americans are believed to be their descendants

*Indigenous Theory* is the least imaginative theory of all  
this theory simply contends Indians are a separate people who always existed on North America  
they did not migrate from anywhere  
thus there is no relationship that exists between North America Indians and other cultures

#### FOSSIL REMAINS PROVIDE INSIGHT INTO THE LIVES OF ANCIENT NATIVE AMERICANS

Manis mastodon site was unearthed on the Olympic Peninsula near today's Sequim -- 1977  
land owner Emanuel Manis dug up part of a mastodon tusk while excavating for a swimming pool  
Washington State University scientist Carl Gustafson discovered bones  
which rested on a raw glacial deposit  
this animal died so soon after the last Ice Age had retreated that soil had not yet formed  
the animal, estimated to be forty-five years old, had died of natural causes  
it laid on its left side when it died in a pond which dried up over thousands of years  
this carcass had been covered with sediment  
this fossil has provided the only archaeological evidence of human hunters

putting a spear into a primitive elephant as a portion of a rib bone

with a piece of bone broken off had a spear point embedded into it

about three-quarters of an inch

this wound did not kill the mastodon as the rib showed evidence of several months of healing after it died the beast's massive skull had been wrenched loose from the carcass and rotated 180°

bones had scratches on them and the beast was believed to have been cut up by humans

some bones were broken with a spiral fracture which happens only when a fresh bone is broken datings of twigs and other vegetation at the site indicated they are approximately 13,800 years old

indicating North America's earliest known inhabitants may have attacked the ancient elephant however, there remained some doubt that human hunters inflicted the damage

as the tapered bone fragment could be tusk point which had been inflicted in battle

later re-examination (in 2011) using new technology concluded that Gustafson had been right

## CLOVIS CULTURE IS DISCOVERED IN NEW MEXICO

Whatever their route of travel these to North America ancient people appear to be relatively peaceful when compared to the later-developing farming cultures

Arrowheads and bone fragments were discovered by Richey Clovis near Clovis, New Mexico -- 1932 gracefully tapered quartz micro-blade spear points with a flat base and sharp edges

had been flaked to make a tapered point

this was thought to have been invented by ancient Clovis people some 12,000 years ago

Clovis people may have migrated from Asia across the Bering Strait in different groups

some may have followed the Pacific coastline as far as South America

ancient cave dwelling sites of Clovis people have been found near the Pacific coast

as far south as Chile in South America

## PUGET SOUND REGION APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN ACCESSIBLE BY BOAT

Warming of the climate would have allowed boat-using people to reach Puget Sound

conventional thought is that hunting parties arrived by canoe from the north

following the Pacific coastline approximately 12,000 years ago

It is possible that ancient Indians traveling south along an inland ice-free corridor

next followed the Columbia River through the Cascade Mountains to the coast

it is known the middle and lower reaches of the Columbia were ice-free very early

new evidence suggests the northern end of the ice-free corridor remained frozen between ice sheets

this would suggest it was not possible to cross into the interior until 11,000 years ago

or even more recently

Further archeological effort may provide better evidence of the origins of Native Americans

## CLOVIS CULTURE WAS ACTIVE IN WASHINGTON STATE

Clovis people were located in the Wenatchee Valley near the Columbia River 11,200 years ago

Moises Aguirre and Mark Mickles uncovered the largest cache of Clovis artifacts yet found

these objects were unearthed while excavating an irrigation ditch for an apple orchard -- 1987  
Scientists frequently visited the site and discovered many objects  
such as flaked stone micro blades, bone fragments and tools for hunting and killing  
these bone and stone artifacts include several milky gray translucent points of chalcedony quartz  
several of these are among the most beautiful examples of Clovis points yet discovered

#### MARMES MAN ROCK SHELTER HOUSES ANCIENT NATIVE PEOPLE

“Marmes Rock Shelter” is the oldest well-documented archeological site in the Northwest  
this site had been inhabited between 11,000 and 8,000 years ago

Marmes Rock Shelter is the location of cremated human remains -- discovered in 1968  
when the bones of eight people ranging in age from eight to twenty-five were found  
these were modern looking people -- virtually indistinguishable from people today  
they had a fairly short life expectancy -- forty years old would be considered old  
also discovered was a slender stone needle that indicates people living in the rock shelter  
could have made fitted clothing

Although the archeological site was so remarkable the site was listed as a National Historic Landmark  
(along with Chinook Point and American and English Camps on San Juan Island)

yet, congress failed to pass funding to preserve the site

although construction of Lower Monumental Dam on the Snake River  
would inevitably flood the site

President Lyndon Johnson issued an Executive Order that allowed the Army Corps of Engineers  
to build a levee around the site

when the dam was closed Marmes Rock Shelter was covered with water within three days  
due to the seepage of thick layers of gravel that had not been taken into consideration

#### OLDEST CLOVIS-AGE SKELETON IN THE NORTHWEST IS DISCOVERED

An almost complete skeleton belonging to what became known as “Buhl Woman”  
was excavated from a gravel pit near Buhl, Idaho -- 1992

“Buhla” as she was named, was approximately seventeen to twenty-one years old  
she was five foot two inches tall and in generally good health -- how she died is unknown  
Buhla ate primarily bison and elk and occasionally salmon and other fish  
Buhla’s right cheek lay atop a pressure-flaked, pointed obsidian tool that showed no wear  
its position seems to indicate it may have been a grave offering  
also found were fragments of what could be an awl or pin and a broken bone needle  
along with a cut or engraved badger bone

Radio-carbon dating identified her as approximately 10,700 years old

this is one of the oldest sets of human remains found in the Americas

Buhla’s remains were returned to the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes at Fort Hall -- 1992

she was reburied by the tribe -- 1993

Other Clovis artifacts such as tools and knives also were identified in caves in Idaho

as were fossils of blood from bison, deer, rabbits and humans  
how this culture eventually was destroyed remains a mystery

## BRITISH COLUMBIA WAS THE CROSSROADS OF SEVERAL ANCIENT CULTURES

Climate heating and cooling led to sea level fluctuations as the coastline moved in and out  
ancient native campsites may now be found below sea level or high into the mountains  
No evidence has been found to indicate the earliest people on the coast had boats  
but the Queen Charlotte Islands were inhabited more than 10,000 years ago  
also, fossils indicate people lived along the mainland fishing and killing seals by that time  
Studying modern cultures living in similar circumstances provides us with insight into these people  
ancient people probably framed winter homes with reindeer antlers, mammoth bones  
and tusks covered with animal skins  
they may have erected these shelters over shallow pits  
with earth heaped up around the outside for insulation  
summer habitat was more portable to enhance the following of migrating game  
there is no known evidence of large permanent houses  
probably due to rising sea levels along this unstable shore line  
Today's Namu on the British Columbia mainland in the vicinity of the Queen Charlotte Islands  
is one of the oldest archeological sites on the British Columbia coast  
marine hunters lived here from 10,000 years ago to about the year 580 CE  
these early people left a trail of cutting and piercing tools, micro-blades and polished stones  
made of materials found in the region such as antlers, bone and rocks  
the large variety of these tools indicated different tool-making cultures met in this area  
no micro-blades have been found immediately south of Namu, British Columbia

## PETROGLYPHS AND PICTOGRAPHS GIVE GLIMPSES INTO THE DISTANT PAST

Native Americans had no written language, but Indians nonetheless left records of their lives  
symbols have been found at ancient sites in Washington State  
although the significance of the artwork remains unknown  
these may express religious ideas or record legends for following generations  
Petroglyphs are carvings of designs and figures scratched on stone cliffs  
in (today's Washington) most are found in the smooth cliffs overlooking the Columbia River  
common designs include: owl, lizard, four-pointed star, coyote, mountain sheep and elk  
other important animals are also often pictured  
most spectacular petroglyph is "She-Who-Watches" located near Wishram, Washington  
in the vicinity of the historic location of Celilo Falls which is now covered  
by the lake behind The Dalles Dam on the Columbia River  
meanings of some of the petroglyph symbols have been explained to some extent:

- Coyote Face* -- found where the river is very dangerous;
- Eagle or Spear Fish Bird* -- carry prayers to the Creator;

- Elk* -- assures increased power for a successful hunt;
- Four-pointed Star* -- common symbol referring to astronomy;
- Goats* -- most common of the animals -- symbolize power to ensure a good hunt;
- Medicine Man* -- Shaman figure shows control of the Spirit World;
- Owl* -- symbolizes use of the surrounding property but not ownership;
- Owl with power rays* -- spiritual power which conveys prayers;
- Two people together* -- chief and common people share the river;
- Tsagagalalal (or She-Who-Watches)* -- chief who was changed into a rock but saw everything
- Water Devils* -- mark where river is dangerous and provide protection

Pictographs are ancient Indians drawings placed on rock faces

many drawings of the sun, moon, stars and figures resembling peace signs can be seen  
sadly, a large number of historically significant pictograph sites

have been covered by landfills and garbage dumps

nine Indian villages and their accompanying drawings

were buried at the mouth of the Washougal River to meet the demands of modern life

Why cliff carvings and drawings found in Eastern Siberia and South Pacific Islands

are remarkably similar to drawings found along the Columbia River remains unknown

unfortunately, hundreds of petroglyphs and pictographs that could help answer riddle

were covered by water locked behind The Dalles, John Day and Bonneville dams

and have been destroyed

Modern technology can provide a means for archaeologists to glimpse into the ancient past

but technology is a dual-edged sword when it comes to understanding ancient cultures

it also has slowed our comprehension of the ancient world by destroying ancient sites

#### OTHER PARTIAL HUMAN REMAINS HAVE BEEN DISCOVERED IN THE NORTHWEST

Three vertebrae, a jawbone, and a pelvic bone that had been gnawed by a carnivore

were found on Prince of Wales Island, Southern Alaska -- July 4, 1996

they were dated at about 9,730 years ago -- not as old as the Clovis culture

Today about 2,000 human remains are being held in museums

they can be useful in analyzing diet, famine, diseases, physical activities

and can reveal genetic relationships

More and more scientific evidence shows that earlier Native American populations

appeared to share some features with Caucasians

Indians could perhaps be as closely related to Europeans as they are to Asians

#### SALMON PROVIDED AN ABUNDANCE OF FOOD FOR THE EARLY PEOPLE

Salmon five to six pounds each, probably sockeye, was abundant, reliable as a food source

and could be cured and stored for use in the winter

Good fishing places became centers of trade

salmon bones have been found with human tools at Kettle Falls -- 9,600 to 8,900 years old

salmon bones were found at the mouth of the Fraser River -- 8,000 years old  
ancient salmon bones also have been located in Stevens County, Washington  
and at The Dalles, Oregon

#### KENNEWICK MAN SKELETON IS DISCOVERED BY ACCIDENT

“Kennewick Man” is the name for one of the oldest and most complete ancient skeletons ever found  
bone tests have shown the remains to be more than 8,400-year-old  
Will Thomas and Dave Deacy from nearby West Richland were attending the annual hydroplane races  
while wading at the edge of the Columbia River at Columbia Park they stumbled across the skull  
they picked up the skull and hid it in some bushes until after the race -- July 28, 1996  
when they notified the Benton County sheriff’s office who informed the Kennewick police  
police inspected the scene and noticed more bones in the shallow water  
leaving the bones where they were, the police contacted the county coroner’s office  
who asked forensic anthropologist and archaeologist Dr. James Chatters to investigate  
after ten visits to the sight Chatters managed to collect 350 bones and pieces of bone  
producing the skull and an almost complete skeleton  
many of his bones were broken into several pieces  
Kennewick Man was determined to be five feet seven to five feet nine inches tall  
between forty and fifty-five years old and slender  
he had a long narrow skull, a projecting nose, receding cheekbones and a high chin  
a stone projectile was found lodged in the man’s hip bone which had healed over  
Kennewick Man became the subject of an eight-year-long lawsuit beginning in 1996  
between the federal government along with several Native American tribes and a group of scholars  
although the court case was resolved in 2004, the debate continues today  
as of April 19, 2004, the 9<sup>th</sup> U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld an earlier decision  
by U.S. District Court Judge Jelderks that the remains could not be defined  
as “Native American” under federal law  
Kennewick Man remains are still under the control of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
and scientific study of the remains was allowed to take place  
remains of Kennewick Man are now at the Burke Museum at the University of Washington

#### TWO STREAMS OF NATIVE CULTURE WERE DIVIDED BY THE CASCADE MOUNTAINS

Cascade Mountains were active volcanoes -- several mountains continue to emit steam to this day  
Mount Saint Helens violently erupted May 18, 1980  
Mount Rainier and other high Cascade Mountains had glaciers and snowfields  
these, along with the rain forests, ensured Western Washington was interlaced  
with rivers, streams and creeks of all sizes, fed in the in the summer by melting snows  
and, in the fall and winter, by the incessant rains from the Pacific Ocean  
Cascades also separated Eastern Washington from the rain-carrying winds of the Pacific Ocean  
which resulted in an arid climate that was hot in summer and cold in winter

with a far shorter growing season than along the Pacific coast  
Cascades separated Washington's Native Americans into "Coastal" and "Plateau" people  
both Coastal and Plateau cultures existed along the water's edge where food was abundant  
natives avoided the mountains, Western Washington's deep rain forests  
and Eastern Washington's desert land which served as barriers  
"Coastal (canoe) Indians" resided in Western Washington on the west side of the Cascades  
areas of habitation occupied by coast natives included a narrow strip of land  
running north and south from the southern tip of Alaska to southern border of Oregon  
a distance of about 1,500 miles  
Pacific Ocean formed the western boundary of the region  
and the Cascade Mountains formed the Eastern edge  
this area was not more than one hundred miles wide and much narrower in some places  
seldom did the coastal people wander inland more than five miles from their villages  
due to the warm flow of ocean air associated with the Japanese Current  
this land is blessed with a moderately warm though rainy climate  
which experiences only modest seasonal variation  
some coastal rain forests receive as much as 160 inches of moisture per year  
(more than thirteen feet of rain annually)  
though some areas such as the Olympic Rain shadow (near today's Sequim, Washington)  
received less than twenty inches per year  
Coastal native culture centered on fish and water  
living near the Pacific Ocean, Puget Sound and along rivers  
fishing and gathering were the basis of life for these people  
"Plateau (horse) Indians" resided east of the Cascade Mountains in Eastern Washington  
in the area between the Cascades and the Rocky Mountains  
the region is often referred to as the "Inland Empire" or "Columbia Plateau"  
this region rises from one- to five-thousand feet above sea level  
and is marked by mountains, hills, plateaus and basins  
at various geologic times the region was subjected to enormous lava flows  
which today form the basis of surface soil along with sediments and volcanic ash  
climate is dry and sunny and extremes of hot and cold are more pronounced  
snow is frequent in winter and conifer trees blanket most mountain areas  
Columbia River drains a vast region before emptying into the Pacific Ocean  
Plateau Indians lived a more nomadic life in the interior of today's Northwest states  
they usually traveled from place to place on foot  
(and on horseback after these animals were introduced)  
large dogs served some tribes as pack animals  
they carried goods in small rawhide-covered panniers slung over their backs  
in addition to walking rivers and lakes could often provide transportation links  
in winter, walking on snowshoes was an important mode of transportation

as on the west side of the Cascade Mountains, Plateau Indians avoided the woods  
because they were filled with unknown spirits  
Plateau native culture depended on meat and fish for food  
these people fished, hunted large and small game and gathered available foods

#### LANGUAGES DEVELOPED ON BOTH SIDES OF THE CASCADE MOUNTAINS

Washington State natives represented at least thirty principal language groupings  
most belonging to one of two principal “root languages:” “Sallyshan” and “Shakaption”  
Sallyshan is further sub-divided into “Coastal Salish” and “Interior Salish”

Coastal Salish is the basis of language and dialects of Western Washington  
spoken between Puget Sound and Cascade Mountains

including Lummi, Nooksack, Samish, Snohomish, Puyallup, Nisqually and others

Interior Salish is the principal language stock of the Plateau Indians of Eastern Washington  
spoken in Northeast quarter of Washington

and beyond between the Cascades and the Rocky Mountains

by such people as Okanogans, San Poils, Spokanes, Colvilles, Pend O’reilles,

Flatheads and Coeur d’Alene Indians of Northern Idaho and Western Montana  
many dialects were developed among Plateau people

but probably a lesser number of languages than on the coast

Shakaption was spoken by people who lived south of the Interior Salish speaking people  
they ranged through Southeast Washington from the Cascades to the Rocky Mountains  
this root language was spoken by natives such as Yakimas, Umatilla, Walla Walla,  
Palouse and Nez Perce

Villages and tribes within a language group spoke a common tongue which unified them  
although there were wide variations because communication from village to village  
seldom was necessary outside of social events

each society spoke a dialect of their own making communications very difficult  
quite often villages which communicated to some degree also intermarried  
and usually shared the same territory

Several villages spoke a unique language of their own independent from the root languages

Chimakuan was spoken on the Northern Olympic Peninsula

these people included Makah, Chimakum, Quinault and Queets natives

Waiilatupan spoken only by Cayuse Indians in sections around present-day Walla Walla

Chinook was spoken along North bank of Columbia River

from the mouth of the river thorough the Cascade Mountains

An exception to this village language isolation took place along the Columbia River

where many villages gathered to fish salmon for their winter food supply

hundreds of Indians used to gather at Wishram on the Columbia River to fish for salmon

some trade took place there during these expeditions

prehistoric natives traded skins for meat, roots, roots for fish, arrowheads for canoes,

stone implements for baskets and slaves for shell money  
acting as middlemen in the trade between Coastal and Plateau people  
Chinook Indians became rich and powerful  
Indians needed a common language to conduct trade and ceremonies  
“Chinook Jargon,” a combination of tribal dialects built chiefly from the languages  
of the Chinook, Nootka, and Salish people, developed as a trade language  
for people on both sides of the Cascade Mountains  
later regular Pow-Wows (gatherings) were held in the Yakima Valley and at Kettle Falls  
where Indians traded horses, danced and gambled  
As should be anticipated, languages reflected the natives’ thought processes  
for example, the native concept of “time” was divided into large units of measurement  
a month “moon” and a day “sun”  
hours, minutes, seconds, etc. had no meaning to the Native Americans  
also the large variety of names for fish and fishing methods  
reflected the importance of this food for the natives  
Native Americans named significant locations and geographic features  
Chemeketa (today’s Salem, Oregon) meant “Here we Rest” or “Place of Peace”  
as it was a council ground of the Willamette Valley Indians  
Multnomah (Portland, Oregon) identified “Down the River”  
Umatilla, Oregon commemorated “The Wind-blown Sand”  
Chelan, Washington identified “Beautiful Water”  
Walla Walla, Washington indicated “Where the Waters Meet”  
Spokane, Washington designated “The People of the Sun”  
Snoqualmie, Washington recognized “The Falls of the Moon God”

#### INDIANS BELIEVED IN THE SPIRIT WORLD

Native Americans believed they were surrounded by supernatural beings or “spirits” at all times  
they practiced simple forms of nature worship today called “Animism”  
they believed that things in nature, e.g. trees, mountains, and the sky, have spirits or consciousness  
and that a supernatural animate (living) force organizes the universe  
animals and plants each have a spirit as do inanimate objects or phenomena  
rocks, the weather, or the sky also were living beings with their own spirits  
everything has a spirit  
they also believed people have a personal spirit -- or, in modern terms, a soul  
that can and did exist separately from the body  
Spirits have the ability to interfere with the natural world  
this conviction was so fundamental to Indians that they did not have a word for their belief

#### NATIVE AMERICAN’S GOD WAS FEMININE

Native Americans thought of themselves as coming out of the earth, that is, the mother

Indians' God was a shadowy external power that pervaded the world

She was known by various names: "The Changer," "The Great Spirit" and "Earth Mother"

She might be revealed in a robin's song, a flash of lightening, a beautiful scene, or a revelation

She was neither all-knowing nor all-good -- sometimes The Changer was foolish and selfish

but She was always all powerful

Although ancestors and future descendants had access to the land and its many resources

The Changer was the real owner -- She allowed people to use the land

nothing must be done to hurt the earth or anger the spirits

#### NATIVE AMERICAN LEGENDS EXPLAINED THE EXISTANCE OF THE SPIRIT WORLD

"In the early time" the world was filled with great monsters which had magical powers

these monsters moved about and talked much as animals do today

these magical monsters possessed a personal spirit which controlled their destiny

"The Changer" transformed the ancient magical monsters into the animals, trees, rocks, lakes

and all of the other forms seen today

however, the ancient monsters kept their personal spirit

all things in nature were the embodiment of spirits -- "everything has a spirit"

these new creatures from The Changer were to be used by people for food and shelter

Indians believed all animals had agreed to die and to be eaten

they thought of people as cannibals

living on the bodies of their brothers and sisters: the fish and the game

humans had only to respect the spirits of the creatures

and return their own bodies at death to the Mother Earth to complete the cycle of life

Coastal and Plateau people believed spirits could both help and hurt humans

spirits could be good or evil depending on the person's attitude toward the spirit

if the spirit was treated correctly and with proper respect it would be beneficial to that person

if the spirit felt abused or slighted it would become an evil spirit for that person

#### RITUALS WERE EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO NATIVE AMERICANS

Ancient Indians had a time-honored moral code recorded in their myths and legends

it has been said that Chief Seattle (1786-1866) was one of the last spokesmen

for this Paleolithic moral order

Modern society provides no rituals for young people today

so young people are forced to make up their own rituals -- often in gangs and initiation rites

some believe all children need the structure of ritual to function rationally in the world

rather than being forced to establish their own morality

perhaps there may be so much violence in American society today

because there are no myths to help young men and women relate to the world

or to understand the world beyond that which is seen <sup>1</sup>  
Rituals to honor the Spirit World were very specific and definite  
as the natives had no written language these were passed orally from generation to generation  
Northwest Indians shared their spiritual beliefs and customs through stories, songs and dances  
to not follow the procedure properly was unthinkable as the salmon and animals  
could choose not to return and the people would starve

#### ABOVE EVERYTHING ELSE THE SPIRIT OF THE SALMON WAS MOST IMPORTANT

Salmon was not the only food of the people although it certainly was the majority item on the menu  
Salmon, like all living creatures, had agreed to die and be eaten -- they became the food staple  
however, the spirit of the salmon must be respected to continue to receive this benefit  
at any time, salmon (or anything else) could decide humans were not worthy  
rites were necessary to avoid offending to the Salmon Spirit

Chief among native rituals was the "Salmon Ceremony" whose religious nature was well defined  
to assure the salmon would not become insulted and refuse to return to the villagers

First fish of the salmon run to be caught carried the Salmon Spirit  
it became the center of the salmon Ceremony which varied only slightly from village to village  
when caught this salmon was gently but firmly held by the tail by the fisherman  
before being gently put back into the river and held facing upstream  
sometimes the fisherman's thumb and forefinger were placed in the fish's gills  
this fish was to convey to the others of its species who followed  
that this was the place where the Salmon Spirit was honored

Fisherman who caught the first salmon invited the entire village to a feast  
only fern leaves were used to clean the first salmon -- water was unacceptable to the spirit  
this fish was cut lengthwise, not crosswise, using a stone or mussel knife  
while the usual method of preparing salmon was by poaching in a wooden cedar box,  
or smoked, that was unacceptable to the spirit of the first salmon  
this fish was barbecued on a stake beside the fire to allow the spirit of the salmon  
to rise with the smoke to a height where the spirit could observe the thankfulness of the people  
spirit salmon was broken into tiny pieces by hand which were given to all members of the village  
this salmon had to be completely eaten before sunset so the Salmon Spirit could return home  
but the host did not eat any of the first catch

Properly disposing of the salmon's carcass and entrails ensured the natives did not offend the spirit  
heart of the fish had to be burned in the campfire -- all of the bones and innards were saved intact  
in a torchlight procession accompanied by dancing, chanting and singing  
natives proceeded to the river where they placed the remains of the spirit salmon  
into the stream with his head pointing upstream, symbolizing a spawning salmon  
so the run of salmon would return a thousand fold

This covenant also existed between the human world and the animal world

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<sup>1</sup> Betty Sue Flowers (editor), *Joseph Campbell The Power of Myth with Bill Moyers*, P. 8.

an animal chose to give its life willingly with the understanding that its spirit would be respected  
similar, if less significant ceremonies, were carried out for the first deer, first bird, first berries, etc.  
unused portions of the body must be returned to the soil or to the ocean  
as a “return to Mother Earth”

Even when white traders and trappers came into the region  
Indians refused to sell the “Spirit Salmon” to them  
for fear they would unknowingly clean the fish by cutting crosswise  
or would boil the fish rather than barbeque it and displease the spirit of the salmon

#### EACH INDIAN WAS BORN WITH A PERSONAL SPIRIT (SOUL)

Every Indian had a Personal Spirit (or soul) which existed in the person’s head  
Personal Spirits could and did leave the body and travel around the world exploring  
these spirits could choose to seek new discoveries and insights  
at other times the Personal Spirit could be stolen by an enemy  
when this occurred, the native lost the zest for life -- they became apathetic and listless  
lost souls became ghosts which could become evil spirits

#### EACH NATIVE SEARCHED FOR HIS OR HER GUARDIAN SPIRIT OR SPIRITS

In addition to the Personal Spirit two kinds of spirits existed for people to acquire:

- the “Guardian Spirit” protected the individual from harm  
it also provided a person with some basic skill such as basket-weaving, fishing, hunting,  
berry-picking, carving, house construction or canoe building, gambling, etc.  
and brought good luck in the acquisition of wealth and thus higher social rank
- the “Shaman’s Spirit” brought power over the Spirit World and the ability to cure illness  
Shamans could be either men or women who possessed supernatural powers  
however, they were most often men

During childhood old people told youngsters about various guardian spirits  
so the child would recognize them when they were encountered  
during the early teen years both boys and girls could engage in a “Spirit Quest”  
even slaves were sent out to find their Guardian Spirit

Powerful spirits came only to people of high rank or to those who could endure the trials necessary  
those who were strong enough and could fast (not eat) long enough and endure many hardships  
might acquire a strong Guardian Spirit and be elevated to high social rank  
even if they had been born into a lower rank

On the Pacific coast, any spirit was acceptable to serve as Guardian Spirit  
young person may receive the spirit of the eagle, or salmon, or cedar, or a rock, or a lake, etc.  
everything has a spirit and may provide protection and good luck

For the Plateau Indians only animal spirits were acceptable as Guardian Spirits

#### IT WAS DIFFICULT TO ACQUIRE THE SHAMAN’S SPIRIT

It was possible to acquire both a Guardian Spirit and a Shaman's Spirit at the same time but normally the Shaman's Spirit was found later in life -- or never unlike the Guardian Spirit, the Shaman's Spirit did not leave the individual for extended periods Office of Shaman was often hereditary but that alone was insufficient to justify the position people quested after the Shaman's Spirit just as they searched for Guardian Spirits an ambitious man or woman from a poor family might try to acquire the power of a Shaman but a special sign was necessary during the Spirit Quest or during a quest later in life that demonstrated a special favor of nature had been extended to that individual Shaman's Spirit conferred special authority on the recipient Occasionally the spirit that was anticipated would not be found for instance, an initiate seeking Shaman's Spirit might bring back a layman's spirit or he or she might bring home a Shaman's Spirit even if their family members had been warriors of a lower class rather than Shamans or no spirit at all might be found during the quest the "seeker" could perhaps acquire a Shaman's Spirit after acquiring several Guardian Spirits It was dangerous to acquire the Shaman's Spirit and the trials varied for example, to obtain a great spirit a seeker might dive into deep water perhaps the seeker would float down river on two logs while carrying a heavy stone he or she would dive into deep water carrying the great weight sometimes the seeker passed into unconsciousness and floated to the surface he or she would awaken on the bank of the river or the shore of Puget Sound having made contact with the Spirit World and acquired a strong Shaman's Spirit Indians who recently acquired the Shaman's Spirit did not immediately attempt to use their powers rather they would test their newly acquired spirit by assisting a practicing Shaman only rarely would a seeker immediately reveal he or she believed they were prepared to begin a practice as a Shaman many years of training were needed to gain the necessary skills to be successful it was not usual for an Indian to wait until after six or more spirits had been acquired after years of practice in curing as an assistant to another Shaman he or she would be recognized as a Shaman and move above their present lot in life Shaman's Spirit was so powerful that the seeker could never tell anyone all that had happened when the spirit was acquired during the spirit quest not even parents or friends were informed of the complete experience if the entire experience was revealed, another Shaman might poison the seeker Shaman could never become a village head chief, but he or she could present an opinion at meetings normally the Shaman exerted a more powerful influence than even the head chief

#### A CEREMONY ANNOUNCED THE ACQUISITION OF THE SHAMAN'S SPIRIT

After years of learning the skills required of a Shaman an Indian at age forty or fifty might arranged a ceremonial feast where as many guests as could be afforded were invited

to announced he or she had achieved the status of Shaman  
Many natives contented themselves with the ceremony alone  
they never actually practiced as a Shaman  
Each Coastal village usually had as many as three practicing Shamans  
Plateau Shamans were fewer in number and were not thought to be especially powerful

#### SHAMANS COULD INFLUENCE THE SPIRIT WORLD

Human connection with the Spirit World was maintained by Shamans  
shamanism required specialised knowledge or abilities rather than information known to everyone  
Shamans acquired their supernatural powers from significant dreams, trances and visions  
especially following fasting and meditation  
however, Shamans were not religious leaders or the clergy  
members of the clergy are church officials who have studied to serve the community  
rather, a Shaman is more like a guide who has a personal experience with the Spirit World  
someone who has been somewhere I have not and explains it to me  
Shamans were the most powerful people in the village  
because of their training and personality Shamans could make contact with the Spirit World  
Shamans could show their power by making a stone or a belt or other inanimate object  
turn into a snake which moved about  
Shamans used a variety of techniques to enter into trance states  
while in a trance his or her spirit could travel into the sky, under the earth or into the sea  
during their trance Shamans were often assisted by the spirit of an animal guide  
while in a trance Shaman are able to contact The Changer, Guardian Spirits or world of the dead  
and use their ability to influence the spirit world  
Shamans maintain a special relationship with the worlds and beings they visited  
but when in a trance state facilitating communication between the worlds  
they could become possessed by supernatural beings

#### SHAMANS HAD THE POWER TO CURE MENTAL ILLNESSES

Shamans are healers, storytellers, counselors and religious practitioners  
they restored the patient to complete health through communication with the Spirit World  
unless the spiritual ailment was cured the physical disease would never truly be healed  
Shamans believed there were two common causes of illness:  
•intervention by the Spirit World;  
•loss of the person's personal spirit (soul)  
Shamans used rattles to summons up powers from the Spirit World  
then they went into a trance to communicate directly with the spirits  
when the Shaman awoke, the patient's family was told what had been learned  
so the family could assist the patient to remain in a healthy state  
Indians believed an enemy could entice evil spirits from the Spirit World to harm or kill a person

by inserting psychic darts and chords into the victim's Personal Spirit (soul)

this would result in pain where no wound existed

Indians also believed part or all of a person's soul could be lost through emotional or physical trauma caused by accidents, surgery, childhood abuse, war, being in a natural disaster, divorce, or the death of a loved one

soul-loss could result in severe and chronic illness, abusive behavior, mental illness, depression, addictions, grief, coma, or a series of misfortunes

soul-loss also could prevent the sufferer from forming healthy relationships, or develop a sense that something was missing from the victim's life

loss of the soul also diminished a person's physical power

Shamans had a variety of treatments they could administer to their patients:

- "Dream interpretation" was used to gain insight into the nature of the patient's illness

Shamans listened to the client's dreams -- sometimes for several days

when the dreams were fully understood the Shaman would have the same dreams and resolve the conflict to the benefit of the dreamer

this was difficult and required rigorous training on the part of the Shaman

- "Soul extraction" could be performed by a Shaman with the help of friendly spirit guides to remove the darts and chords and the poison inflicted on the patient's spirit

using a hollow bird bone the Shaman would suck or pull the poison out of the patient's body perhaps knives, a red-hot iron, or a bow and arrow would be used to scare the evil spirit or the reflected light of a mirror could blind the malicious spirit

Shaman might temporarily absorb the evil spirit into his or her own body to keep it from jumping into another person

- "Soul retrieval" could be performed by the Shaman with the help of friendly spirit guides an effort was made to retrieve pieces of the patient's lost soul or, if needed, the complete soul this required a journey to the Spirit World to request the support of spirits, ancestors and guides who would assist the Shaman

Soul retrieval was the most dangerous work of Shamans because they have to travel for long distances outside of their bodies and they were vulnerable to attack by evil spirits and the loss of their own soul

some healings actually involved spiritual warfare as the Shaman struggled violently to subdue or drive away the evil spirit -- occasionally even weapons were necessary these cases were so difficult the Shaman would have to be aided by a series of helpful spirits, ancestors and guides

## SHAMANS TREATED DIFFICULT CASES OF PHYSICAL ILLNESS

Shamans are not doctors

doctors practice medicine -- the treatment of the symptoms of sickness and disease

Shamans spent their entire careers discovering and recording the curative powers of plants they learned about the healing powers of herbs by watching sick animals

Treatments of sickness were within the powers granted to Shaman  
each Shaman possessed a "Medicine Bundle" containing tools made of things from nature  
including furs, skins, bone, crystals, shells, roots and feathers -- these tools were sacred  
feathers carried messages to The Changer -- eagle feathers were especially powerful  
herbal remedies were gathered from the local environment  
and sometimes were traded over long distances  
cedar berries and leaves were boiled and then drunk for coughs  
cedar was burned and inhaled to treat head colds

Shaman were successful in their treatments of physical illnesses and mental illnesses  
as they played an important but risky part in healing others

In addition to curing the sick, the Shaman's role was:

- to bless the harvests of fish, animals, fruits, roots and berries, etc.
- to protect against hazardous enterprises such as hunting expeditions or a long journey,
- to find lost objects, attack enemies, influence the weather, and so forth

#### SHAMANS ALSO HELPED THE DECEASED TO REACH THE LAND OF THE DEAD

Shamans also could help complete unresolved business between the living and the dead  
and help to give peace or healing to suffering ancestors in the land of the dead  
Shamans could bar a ghost from a new dwelling by blowing smoke from his pipe to chase it away  
Occasionally, the dead could have a difficult time crossing over  
to the comfortable and peaceful land of the dead  
especially from places where accidents or disasters occurred

#### SHAMANS SPECIALIZED IN THEIR TREATMENTS

Not every Coastal Shaman was a healer of the spirit and of the body  
some were communicators with the Spirit World and soul retrievers, or soul extractors,  
some were dream interpreters and others were herbal healers  
however, the method of the healer was less important than the service that was performed  
Plateau Shamans usually specialized in treating the physically sick  
although some faith healing was done

#### EVIL SHAMAN COULD INFLICT AN EVIL SPIRIT ON THEIR VICTIM

Shamans were generally thought of as healers, and yet they also could be feared or mistrusted  
even by their own villagers because of their supernatural capabilities  
it was thought Shaman sometimes attempted to create business  
by injecting an evil spirit into people  
if many patients died the Shaman would be killed as a sorcerer  
as an evil Shaman was far too dangerous to be allowed to live in the village  
Shaman themselves could become ill only through the influences of another Shaman  
this could lead to an ongoing war between the local clan's Shaman and the enemy clan's Shaman

spiritual battles may last for days or months and could result in death for the weaker Shaman Shamans who routinely aggressively attack other people could lose their ability to heal and even their status within the community -- sometimes they were even killed

#### SHAMAN COULD REFUSE TO PROVIDE TREATMENT

Shaman usually announced the price for their services before beginning treatment and payment was made before treatment was begun this payment was required to be returned if the procedure was unsuccessful

It was possible a Shaman would refuse treatment if the cure was in doubt or if a Shaman felt he or she did not have enough spiritual power to successfully cure the patient the family would be told to contact another, more powerful, Shaman on those occasions when the treatment was not successful the Shaman came under suspicion family members of the sick person or even the patient might invite several Shamans sometimes a well-known Shaman from another village would be contacted

Discretion led the Shaman, when there was no hope, to hastily retire if the patient died during treatment, family members were allowed to take revenge on the Shaman Shamans sometimes went into hiding until the relatives recovered from their grief however, the fact that Shaman often became very rich speaks to their success

#### WOMEN SHAMANS HELD THE SAME AUTHORITY AS MEN SHAMANS

Ronald L. Olson spent time studying the Quinault people he told the story of a young woman who had decided to become a medicine woman

**“She went into the mountains alone and fasted for ten days. Every day she worked at gathering tree limbs and branches until she had collected a huge pile of wood. On the tenth night she set fire to the wood and sat down to wait. As the leaping flames began to engulf more and more of the logs and give off intense heat, the young woman heard a mournful howl which came from a nearby mountain. When she looked toward the peak it seemed to sway. The cry came closer and the fire grew hotter. When she moved away from the burning wood a huge animal something like a wildcat appeared to her. The animal had a sharp nose, and its face was so long that it dragged on the ground. Approaching the fire, the animal raised its head and howled. The young woman was afraid and told the animal, ‘I don’t want that kind (of power). I don’t want you for a guardian spirit.’ The strange animal retreated, but soon the water of the nearby lake began hissing and boiling up, and many kinds of animals came swimming toward her. She was so frightened that she lost consciousness and had a vision in which the animals brought her five kinds of spirits to choose from. She grabbed at the spirit which could bring back lost souls.**

**Curing illness by means of recapture of the soul was a common and spectacular treatment among the Quinault. When a person’s illness was not a simple pain or an obvious physical injury, it was believed that the patient was suffering from loss of his or her soul. Souls reportedly traveled along the road to the dead at different speeds, those of severely ill persons traveling faster than**

those of people who were less sick. To find and bring back a soul on the road to the land of the dead, a medicine woman had to have a spirit who was familiar with the road.

When a medicine woman was attempting to cure she lay down on a mat spread on the floor and sang a sound she had learned in her vision until the spirit entered her body and she went into a trance. The young woman in the story above had been given some crystals in her vision, so whenever she entered a trance she clutched a crystal in each hand. When she spoke it was the spirit speaking through her. As she and the spirit progressed along the road toward the land of the dead, searching for the lost soul, the spirit voice described the various places they were passing including any evidence of the soul's having passed that way. Sometimes a search might last two days and two nights, depending on how far the soul had gone.

If the soul had gone beyond the reach of the medicine woman and her guide, she reported failure, but if she managed to overtake the lost soul, she captured it in her cupped hands. When she had made the return journey and recovered sufficiently from her trance, she poured the soul back into the patient through the top of the head. The pouring motions were repeated several times and were sometimes accompanied by gentle massage.”<sup>2</sup>

Among the services performed by Shamans for the public good was control of the weather

this story is told about a Salish woman Shaman, “One winter the weather was so severe that all the livestock were dying of the cold. The snow was so deep that they could not find any grass to eat. So the people sought the aid of an old woman who had power over the weather. She sang her power song and then asked her petitioners to cut a gash in her head. As soon as her blood had fallen on the snow, a south wind began to gather force and soon blew in rain clouds. Rain soon fell and washed away the snow. All the people who owned livestock were grateful to the Shaman for saving their stock, and they all contributed to pay her fee.”<sup>3</sup>

## COASTAL PEOPLE DEVELOPED UNIQUE CULTURES THAT REFLECTED THEIR GEOGRAPHY

Natural ruggedness of the coastal terrain promoted the development of several unique societies

Canada's Tlingit Indians formed the northernmost group of Coastal natives

Coastal people inhabited the area of Washington State south of the Tlingit people

Cape Flattery was home to the Makah Indians

while south of them living along various rivers

were the Hoh, Quileute, Queets and Quinault natives

in between the Tlingit and Coastal natives between lived groups of people

such as Canada's Tsimshian, Haida, Bella Coola, Kwokiutl, and Nuu-chah-nulth (Nootka)

Puget Sound area before the arrival of Europeans and Americans

was one of the most heavily populated areas north of Mexico City

Mount Baker and its large snowfield in the northern portion of the Cascade Range

is within sight of the Lummi, Nooksack, Samish and Semiahmoo people

living in the vicinity of Bellingham, Washington

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<sup>2</sup> Carolyn Niethammer, *Daughters of the Earth*, P. 150-151.

to the south lived the Skagit, Swinomish and Snohomish people

along the Skagit River and Snohomish River floodplains and near today's Whidbey Island natives further south settled a number of small villages and fished the Green, White, Puyallup and Nisqually rivers

Duwamish people lived along the Duwamish River in the vicinity of today's Seattle

Upper and Lower Puyallup natives inhabited the Puyallup River region

Nisqually Indians populated the Nisqually River near today's Olympia

Squaxin and Suquamish people settled the western shore of today's Puget Sound

Each of these groups was further sub-divided again and again

to the level of village groups which composed their basic social unit

Puget Sound natives had no formal tribal organization among the different groups rather, the people lived in very small groups

People generally took their name from their winter home<sup>4</sup>

typical village consisted of one and perhaps as many as three "longhouses"

which comfortably contained four to six families

villages were usually constructed at river junctions or along favorite fishing sites

such as waterfalls or cascades where salmon rested before continuing upriver to spawn

most Puget Sound natives had both summer houses comparable to modern summer cabins

#### MOST OF THE INDIANS OF THE COAST AND PLATEAU WERE COMMONERS

Coastal Indians seem to have a fully developed concept of a middle class of Commoners who formed the largest segment of the population

vast majority of Native Americas, both along the coast and in the interior fit into this category commoners could become rich by trade or gambling or even conquest

they might hold a celebration to display their ability to destroy or give away wealth

but they could not become members of the aristocracy

Plateau people paid little attention to class distinctions when compared to the Coastal natives

#### COASTAL INDIANS DEVELOPED A RIGID CASTE SYSTEM

Coastal people were surrounded by abundance, luxury and wealth

yet they developed the most rigid cast system in the Americas

great emphasis was placed on the accumulation of private property

displays of wealth demonstrated the differences between classes of people

men were provided higher status than women

but both genders were grouped into four categories:

aristocrats, chiefs, commoners and slaves

on the coast, it was difficult to move from a lower class to a higher class

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<sup>3</sup> Carolyn Niethammer, *Daughters of the Earth*, P. 156-157.

<sup>4</sup> Vine Deloria, Jr., *Indians of the Pacific Northwest*, P. 6.

but if a person had a special talent or obtained wealth, they might rise in position

#### COASTAL ARISTOCRATIC CLASS WAS THE HIGHEST SOCIAL RANK

There appears to have been an identifiable elite class among the natives along the Pacific Coast  
each Coastal village had a few members who achieved the level of aristocracy  
this class of nobles claimed almost all of the village's property rights and personal prestige  
Social rank among the Coastal Indians was determined primarily by wealth  
members of the nobility were expected to be rich  
members of the nobility must also appear to care little for material goods  
inherited wealth and nobility were more significant on the coast than in the interior  
property rights included the use of family names and crests, ceremonial songs, origin myths  
and membership in religious societies

Coastal Indians were very aware of each person's position in society  
wealth was inherited or won by skill, craft, or luck in some combination  
personal prestige to a large extent was based on family status and the ability to control wealth  
honor and privileges in society were generally based on the ability to hold wealth  
or the willingness to give it all away or the readiness to destroy it  
to accumulate a vast quantity of goods which could be given away was prestigious  
to be so rich as to be able to make a display of destroying wealth was especially prestigious  
misers were almost always looked down upon

Wealthy natives were aided by a powerful personal spirit  
even the wealth itself was protected by a very strong spirit  
other people of a lower status did not try to impinge on the property of the aristocracy  
however, it was possible for a member of the aristocratic class to lose their exalted status  
this happened most often when the person wasted his wealth or lost it gambling

#### MEMBERS OF THE NOBILITY HAD UNIQUE PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Members of the aristocracy were physically taller, stronger and better looking than most natives  
their most apparent features were a narrow, long nose and a long forehead  
that sloped from the nose to a sharp angle at the back of the head  
this intentional head disfiguration was accomplished by "head flattening"  
deformed heads were regarded as a mark of distinction and nobility  
while natural round heads were considered disgraceful and permissible only for slaves  
Flathead deformation was achieved for both males and females  
by pressing the back of the baby's head against a padded cradleboard  
an oblong padding of shredded cedar bark was attached to a slanted board  
and pressed downward on the baby's forehead  
under side of the board was wrapped in buckskin  
and the slanted board was held down with buckskin straps  
baby's forehead was compressed for about a year to flatten the skull

this produced a head which was wedged shape and peaked at the back  
Chinook Indians and some of the other villages and tribes especially valued flattened heads  
slaves were not allowed to flatten the heads of their children  
except for favorite slaves who could flatten their first-born child's head  
Kwakiutl natives of Vancouver Island also deformed their children's heads  
babies' skulls were bound all around with small cushions or bandages  
to press the head into an elongated, bag-like shape  
Head flattening may not have been as widespread as stories seem to suggest

#### ORAL TRADITIONS WERE CONSIDERED TO BE PROPERTY BY COASTAL INDIANS

Specific oral traditions belonged to each wealthy family  
these accounts, which usually recounted legends of the family's origins,  
were told only by family members during special ceremonies  
as the story-teller presented hereditary family symbols  
and reaffirmed the family's histories and traditions  
Publicly owned traditions reflected more universal events  
such as how the earth was created, or why the tides change  
spirits such as Thunderbird, raven, eagle, wolf, bear, frog and whale were commonly depicted  
in carvings, basketry art and native dance to reflect their role in the saga  
Winter was a time for storytelling about the Spirit World beginnings of human life  
there were stories about the creation of each group of natives  
and the foolish deeds of the double-sided character, the hero-trickster coyote

#### POLITICAL LIFE WAS UNIQUE FOR COASTAL INDIANS

Coastal Indians lived in extended families  
social tie that held the native people together was a common culture -- not political organization  
No formal political organization existed beyond the village  
there was no concept of tribe among the Coastal people  
there was no sense of brotherhood between communities as each village governed itself  
An Indian's loyalty was to his or her independent village  
what might be thought of as Indian nations along the Pacific coast  
were really just villagers or groups of villages who spoke the same language  
whites later imposed the concept of "nation" to make treaty negotiations possible<sup>5</sup>

#### EACH COASTAL VILLAGE HAD A HEAD CHIEF

Every coastal village was presided over by a headman or head chief that came from the noble class  
headman or head chief was almost always the richest man in the village  
head chief and his children had greater wealth and more important names than "commoners"

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<sup>5</sup> Cecil Dryden, *Dryden's History of Washington*. P. 10.

personal achievements played a lesser role in the selection of the head chief  
Position of Head Chief was often inherited  
when a coastal village chose a new leader, the basis was wealth  
personal achievements played a lesser role in the selection of the head chief  
usually the position passed from father to son if the son had qualifications similar to his father  
chiefs and their children had greater wealth and more important names than commoners  
children of the chief usually belonged to the same class as their father  
but sometimes a chief would marry below his social status to a commoner or slave woman  
in which case the children were thought to be inferior to their father  
then a nephew or some close relative was selected to serve as head chief  
if at the death of his father should the head chief's son was too young to assume power  
the head chief's brother would rule as an advisor until the son was old enough  
Sometimes two men would claim the title of head chief for a village  
each candidate would attempt to give away more possessions  
and the man who gave greatest display was chosen

#### DUTIES OF THE HEAD CHIEF INCLUDED MAINTIANING ORDER IN THE VILLAGE

Primary function of the Head Chief was to settle disputes among members of the village  
head chief provided necessary law enforcement and order  
he listened to both sides and determine who was in the wrong  
he assessed fines and attempted to persuade the guilty party to pay  
if the injury was an accident, the head chief determined the amount of the damages to be paid

Coastal Indians' membership in the village was voluntary  
head chief could be ignored is his guidance was believed to be unsound  
those found guilty by the head chief of injuring someone could choose to not pay the fine  
in which case the chief would no longer provide his protection to that person  
the victim or the victim's family could take revenge on the accused

Another duty of the head chief was to preserve and distribute the surplus wealth of the village  
since the yield was divided according to rank, the head chief had an excess of everything  
this was used to guarantee an adequate diet for each villager regardless of social status  
head chief took care to see that the poor were well looked after  
head chief also must provide food for visitors and guests of the village  
and provide feasts for significant celebrations

Resolving disputes between Coastal villages was also a duty of the head chief  
each Coastal village was responsible for crimes committed within its territory  
even though members of another tribe or village may actually be the guilty parties  
war parties did not hesitate to do violence to strangers in an enemy's country  
because their enemy would be held responsible by those who had been attacked  
when necessary, the head chief attempted to make amends for hostile acts committed  
by members of his tribe or village -- for example murder, while rare, was not entirely unknown

this called for payment of blood money to the victim's family members or blood vengeance  
if payment was not made, the victim's family attempted to kill someone  
of the victim's rank and circumstance in the suspected murderer's village  
sometimes the head chief would offer himself as a sacrifice to the offended party  
the chief would be killed -- but war would be avoided

Head chief could lose his followers or be replaced

his tenure always was uncertain

if he did not maintain enough wealth, wisdom, courage, prestige, or power

if the head chief had only hereditary power and few other attributes

#### COASTAL SUB-CHIEFS WERE SELECTED FOR THEIR KNOWLEDGE RATHER THAN WEALTH

Most Coastal villages had more than one chief -- leadership was divided

in addition to the head chief there were generally four or five sub-chiefs

who were brothers or cousins of the head chief

Sub-chiefs served as activity leaders -- this was the person who was best at something

one sub-chief, the best hunter for instance, might assume leadership for hunting expeditions

for the Makah Indians, the Whaling Chief was an extremely important person

advice of the sub-chief was followed only if it was thought to be correct

Some types of sub-chiefs could be elected rather than assume hereditary succession

if the election result was close women and girls with a Guardian Spirit were called to vote

#### CONFLICTS DID OCCUR AMONG THE COASTAL PEOPLE

Battles were fairly common between coastal villages<sup>6</sup>

warfare among Coastal Indians was more a pastime than an effort to subdue their enemies

usually conflicts between villages and tribes concerned petty quarrels, minor skirmishes

and hostile acts of witchcraft

Puget Sound natives waged combat among themselves

a few villages that were peaceful in nature went to war only to defend their collective honor

even then war could be avoided if the offending party paid for damages to the offended village

they formed alliances and enemies among various neighboring villages

these political relations seemed to be more or less permanent

when one village raided by another old allies fell into line

#### A WAR CHIEF COULD BE SELECTED

If the regular head chief was not war-like, a war chief was chosen by the village in their time of need

war chief was usually known for his courage, wisdom and leadership

rather than his ability to lead the fighting during the war

indeed, he might have responsibility for protecting the camp rather than fighting

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<sup>6</sup> Cecil Dryden, *Dryden's History of Washington*. P. 14.

War chief had supreme responsibility -- but he was expected to seek advice and consent from the war council of leading warriors except in critical moments

War chief had no real military authority

he could only offer advice and carry out the war council's strategy

Strategy was planned by the war council -- no Indian had to follow the orders of the war chief but if a person resisted the will of the majority of the war council the war chief might punish him by giving him humiliating work to do, or make him fight in the front row or, worst of all, send him home to the women, children and old people

After the campaign, the war chief was expected to give his authority back to the head chief later this became a problem for whites -- after a defeat the war council disappeared new native leaders claimed to have been in favor of peace all along

#### WHENEVER POSSIBLE PREPARATIONS WERE MADE BEFORE GOING INTO BATTLE

A very strong spirit, the War Spirit, could appear to both male and female Shamans

this spirit gave assurance that entering into hostilities would achieve a successful result

Coastal Indians preparing for battle always asked the Shaman to determine the proper time to attack

Shaman announced the best day and time for an assault

but he or she could not intervene with the authority of the War Chief

Men held a ceremony and called upon their Guardian Spirits to assure success

they painted their faces black, sang their Spirit Songs and danced their Spirit Dances

if the Shaman predicted a man would die in battle, he did not go on the raid

the warrior was more important than the war

Shaman could go on a raid but they must fight as a regular warrior

Shamans never practiced medicine during fighting

someone wounded in battle could not be cured by the Shaman during the fighting

so the warrior had to depend on his own Guardian Spirit to heal his wounds

#### WARFARE WAS NOT USUALLY DEADLY

Attacks simply were raids of short duration and were nearly always local

raids were not necessarily deadly -- neither side expected total triumph

battles were fought more to save face rather than to achieve victories

Plunder and seeking prestige were among the most common reasons to attack another village

boxes, blankets, serving dishes, foodstuffs and ritual paraphernalia were all objects to be looted

if the owner of particular songs, crests, or rituals was killed,

ownership of the songs and ritual gear reverted to the attacker

these bloody acquisitions were one way that rituals and ceremonies

were diffused among the villages of the coastal region

Results of raids such as death in the village attacked, destruction of houses and material goods,

taking trade goods and foodstuffs, territorial expansion and retaliation for previous attacks

were other incentives to attack neighboring villages

Vengeance often was generalized rather than focused on a specific individual or local group  
if a community member was killed by someone from another village  
community members might seek revenge against the offender's villagers  
but rather than seek out an individual for retribution, the first person they encountered  
who was a member of the attackers' village might be killed  
satisfied, the revenge-seekers returned home

Revenge could be sought even if the death was apparently from natural causes  
it seemed the goal was to inflict death, any death, to balance the offended community's loss  
only very rarely did territorial expansion or invasions of another village's fishing grounds  
lead to combat

Indians did not like to fight at night because if someone was killed  
that individual's Personal Spirit could not follow the sun into the Spirit World  
battles usually were fought early in the morning  
travelling under cover of darkness most raiding and war parties  
preferred to attack just as the sun rose illuminating their way through a sleeping village  
to assure adequate opportunity to reach the land of the dead  
one common method of attack involved throwing burning bushes  
on the village longhouse roof to drive the villagers out to be captured or, sometimes, killed  
it was customary to call off hostilities after a few casualties had been suffered

#### HAND WEAPONS WERE USED BY COASTAL NATIVES

To inflict damage on the people being attacked, raiding party's unleashed darts or arrows  
or they hurled stones the size of small cannonballs with slings  
this assault could cut an enemy war canoe in half  
however most fighting occurred in melees which were noisy and confusing  
combatants closed in quickly and fought hand-to-hand

Warriors carried weapons as diverse as axes, spears, knives and special war clubs  
war clubs were the most common weapon  
stone head with a groove cut in the center and a point at one end  
was attached with rawhide to a hardwood handle about two feet long  
some war clubs were made by covering a round stick with rawhide  
this rawhide was extended at one end to form a bag which enclosed a rock  
these clubs were about a foot long and attached to the wrist with a thong  
war clubs often were enhanced with images of human faces, or bear or wolf spirits

Knife blades were of flint or obsidian stone attached to a wooden or bone handle

Bows were crafted by expert bow makers who spent hours walking in the forest  
looking for a tree with the proper bend in its grain to make a good bow  
usually yew wood or a green strip of pine, cedar, fir, ironwood, or vine maple  
was chosen because of its great flexibility and strength  
each bow was strengthened by curing, sharpened at both ends and painted

decorations were attached to the bow using glue made from dog salmon skin  
which made the bow not only a powerful weapon but also a work of art  
this glue was one of the greatest natural adhesives known

it could be used to mend split or broken weapons and even damaged canoes  
bows were short and were developed more for hunting than for fighting

they were used for small birds, small and large land game and, only occasionally, for raids  
during battle few injuries were inflicted as the bow and arrow was not an accurate weapon

bow string was made of sea lion intestine, deer sinew or hemp wound in glue

Along the coast, arrow shafts were slender -- these were made of wood similar to the bow  
bone, flint, or obsidian points were attached to the blunt wooden shaft

or a wooden shaft was whittled to a point with no arrowhead attached

feathers from cormorants, eagles, or loons were attached to the arrows

for water hunting, Coastal Indians used waterproof California shag feathers

these arrows were used for both hunting and for war

#### PROTECTIVE CLOTHING WAS WORN BY COASTAL WARRIORS

Combatants around Puget Sound wore heavy coats of armor called “clamors”

made of multiple layers of elk hide or some other heavy animal skin

knee-length clamors were worn like a tunic -- this armor worked like a modern bulletproof vest

it absorbed the force of spears or arrows or a projectile and diffused its energy

(these vests were nearly able to resist a pistol ball fired at close range

when researchers recently fired stone-tipped arrows into elk-hide armor

the arrowheads fell to pieces)<sup>7</sup>

Some Northern Coastal braves wore wooden helmets and armor made of moose hide and wooden slats

Chinook Indians along the Columbia River equipped themselves with arrow-proof vests

sometimes small hardwood sticks were bound together and worn like a vest

for heavy fighting natives wore a long, stiff cylinder of elk hide almost ½-inch thick

hardened by fire and water that featured holes for the arms

#### SOME COASTAL INDIANS WERE MORE WARLIKE

Some Northern villages of Washington and British Columbia were more warlike

fierce Haida sea pirates from Haida Gwaii (formerly the Queen Charlotte Islands)

often became violent when an important leader died

it was said they wanted to send someone with their chief

and wanted to make many other people mourn

it seemed to make little difference to them who their victims were

even members of their own village were sometime attacked and killed

Haida natives traveled south in large dugout war canoes that held up to sixty warriors

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<sup>7</sup> *Canadian Graphic Magazine*, December 2013.

these raiding parties frequently visited native villages of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, Puget Sound and along the Pacific coast as far south as California to gather slaves  
Chinook Indians of the Columbia River raided the Oregon Coast for the same purpose  
Makah and S'Klallam Indians sometimes fell upon unsuspecting villages of Puget Sound  
one famous fight concerned a whale which escaped from the Makahs  
with twelve harpoons sticking in it <sup>8</sup>

S'Klallams, on whose beach it landed, refused to surrender the present from The Changer  
or to even make the demanded payment  
this led to a surprise attack by the Makahs who burned several S'Klallam houses  
they made off with several enemy heads and a few captives

Modern societies are more warlike -- violence may increase with civilization<sup>9</sup>

#### TRIBAL ORGANIZATION WAS AN IMPORTANT PRECEPT AMONG PLATEAU PEOPLE

Because of the scarcity of food the concept of group unity was essential for survival  
while each Plateau village was independent, the idea of brotherhood or tribe did exist  
and linked groups of villages together into a larger political unit

Often no single headman led the tribe which was composed of several villages  
power and duties were entrusted to several men, rather than to one  
each leader seemed to naturally demonstrate expertise and talent in his area of concern

#### PLATEAU POLITICAL LIFE DIFFERED FROM THE COASTAL PEOPLE

In (today's Eastern Washington) leadership selection was generally based on ability and wisdom  
rather than heredity and wealth

although a type of aristocracy did exist for the Plateau people  
class structure was only weakly developed -- no rigid caste system was present  
however social status, such as it was, was based upon personal wealth

Plateau Indian political leaders played a diverse role that varied role from tribe to tribe

Interior head chief's duties were similar to those of the Coastal head chief

his major responsibility was to keep the peace and settle quarrels in the village and tribe

he had to decide who was guilty and met out proper punishment

he had to be sure each villager had enough to eat and receive visitors and guests

To accomplish these tasks he needed to maintain an influence over a wide variety of groups

but the Plateau head chief had less power to enforce his decisions than Coastal head chiefs

head chief of a Plateau tribe was accorded more respect than actual authority

in the Interior, the head chief always faced the prospect of being replaced

by a young brave with a following of his own who might call for an election at any time

#### SIMILAR WEAPONS WERE USED BY COASTAL AND PLATEAU INDIANS

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<sup>8</sup> Cecil Dryden, *Dryden's History of Washington*. P. 14.

<sup>9</sup> James Lowen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, P. 93-94.

Plateau Indian warriors' weapons included axes, spears, knives and special war clubs

Plateau Indians produced two kinds of arrows

hunting arrows were much like those of the Coastal natives

in addition, arrows made for the specific purpose of war were used

sometimes these were tipped with rattlesnake venom

In the Plateau region shields made of bison hide shrunk by steaming were worn

these skins were hardened with fire and pounded for several days

#### SLAVERY EXISTED AMONG THE NATIVE AMERICANS

Although motives for organizing and carrying out an attack on another village were varied

taking captives could be the by-product of any attack whatever the motive might be

Capturing slaves was a common outcome of successful attacks

acquiring young women or boys as slaves was a reason to raid near and distant villages

Even Indians residing within the same village did not have complete immunity from armed attack

village members of a different family group in the village

might take a rival family member as a slave

Indians seldom killed their captives

#### ANYONE COULD BECOME A SLAVE

Slaves originally were members of another village

slaves were ultimately the product of violence

they were the lowest rung of a class-conscious society

they were either captives or the children of captives

When a coastal village was attacked anyone living in the community was a potential slave

former rank in the community of the slave was usually meaningless

some of those taken would already be slaves who simply experienced an ownership change

Captured village members who held important titles were sometimes ransomed

his people might send a great orator, usually from a different village, to offer a ransom

most often the orator offered two or three slaves for the noble's release

but many former title-holders spent their lives in slavery and were treated like other slaves

When slaves were redeemed, however, a stigma of dishonor seemed to remain

rituals were performed to remove the stain of slavery,

but the humiliation of slavery, even for a short period of time, was so degrading

that the disgrace of social inferiority always remained

#### OWNING A SLAVE BROUGHT STATUS

Ownership of a slave was considered by the Coastal Indians to be a mark of distinction and wealth

percentage of natives held as slaves in the population of the Pacific Northwest

ran as high as one in four in some sections and perhaps even one in three

however, no one person owned a great many slaves

owners of ten slaves were considered very rich

Chinook Indians who lived near the mouth of the Columbia River held more slaves per capita than any of the surrounding people

an average upper-class family owned two or three slaves

Peaceful people who did not raid neighboring villages simply acquired slaves from warlike villages sometimes slaves were bartered or sold or they were won and lost in gambling occasionally they were given away during a great display of wealth

## SLAVES HAD NO RIGHTS OR PRIVILEGES

Slaves, much like servants, performed many duties to support the noble class that owned them:

- women slaves and children prepared and served food and performed laborious and menial household tasks that in other places were undertaken by free women;
  - slaves ran errands and carried messages;
  - slaves paddled canoes, fished, hunted and even in made war on neighboring villages;
  - slaves made or helped make canoes, cut wood, carried water, aided in building houses, etc.;
- slaves often lived in the same longhouse as their master and his family and shared their food

As a rule, slaves were well fed and treated in a manner that was usual for valuable property but punishment for shortcomings was sometimes severe

Slaves had no prospect of socially advancing they could not own property

and were subject to the whims of their owners who had power of life and death over them it was acceptable to destroy slaves on special occasions

Tlingit Indians customarily killed slaves to bury their bodies

beneath the corner-posts of the chiefs' house while it was being constructed Washington State Indian Agent James Swan stated that when a Makah chief died his favorite slaves were killed and buried with him<sup>10</sup>

if a slave had been purchased as a companion for a child the slave was almost certainly killed if the child died

A great distinction in status existed in all ceremonial practices as slaves were rigidly excluded generally a slave could not marry a free man or woman

although James Swan noted Makah men frequently married female slaves<sup>11</sup>

children of such marriages seem to occupy an unclear social position

Men who had lost everything through gambling or fate sometimes sold themselves into slavery debtors could offer themselves to an aristocrat as a slave to escape their debt

voluntary slave's children, however, maintained their own status within the village

When Coastal slaves grew too old and feeble or sick, they were often neglected or turned out to die they might starve to death in the wilderness

then their body was unceremoniously thrown in the hollow of a dead tree

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<sup>10</sup> James Gilchrist Swan, *The Indians of Cape Flattery, at the entrance to the Strait of Fuca, Washington Territory.*

<sup>11</sup> James Gilchrist Swan, *The Indians of Cape Flattery, at the entrance to the Strait of Fuca, Washington Territory.*

or some other out of sight place

## STATUS OF SLAVES WAS USUALLY HEREDITARY ALONG THE PACIFIC COAST

Children of slaves remained slaves

almost everywhere else in North, Central and South America the children of slaves were freed

Coastal Indians seldom freed their slaves or granted them equality

slaves could be sold at great markets like Celilo Falls and Kettle Falls on the Columbia River

on very rare occasions a slave could be freed or given away at a potlatch or other ceremony

to show that their owner was so wealthy that he could easily afford to part with them

also on very rare occasions a slave could become rich by gambling or developing a skill

but more ordinarily, if a slave boy found a powerful spirit

and became successful in fishing, hunting, or gambling

his owner claimed his catch, kill, or his winnings

## SLAVERY WAS LESS COMMON AMONG THE PLATEAU PEOPLE

There was little class distinction among the Inland natives of Eastern Washington

slavery was far less significant among Plateau natives as few slaves were kept

often slaves were freed and were granted equality by their owner

many even joined the tribe of their captors and were treated as equals

Several Plateau tribes gave up slavery before it was outlawed by the United States government

Flathead Indians of today's Idaho gave up slavery very early on

San Poil Indians of Washington State believed in the equality of all mankind<sup>12</sup>

every man, woman and child was a member of the tribal general assembly,

any man was eligible to be elected chief but the office gave him no higher social status,

meat brought back from hunting expeditions was distributed to all tribal members

as was fish taken at the community weirs

but private effort also was recognized

salmon speared by a man were his to keep

women had full rights to their individual efforts such as berries and roots they harvested

as were art objects a woman created

Okanogan natives of Washington and British Columbia and several other tribes

shared a strong belief in equality<sup>13</sup>

## NATIVE AMERICANS ACCEPTED NATURE AS A GIFT

Water highways provided a system of transportation and a source for food

Forests provided an abundance of food in great variety

and raw materials for a highly developed woodworking technology

natural bounty provided building materials and artistic supplies

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<sup>12</sup> Cecil Dryden, *Dryden's History of Washington*, P. 19.

and firewood for cooking and heating in all seasons of the year  
cedar provided the raw materials for housing, transportation, clothing and domestic utensils  
These natural resources were used to meet all of the needs of humans  
they resolutely practiced conservation as they used only as much as was necessary  
along the Pacific coast this was made very easy because of almost unlimited supplies

#### WESTERN RED CEDAR TREES PROVIDED A VALUABLE RESOURCE TO COASTAL NATIVES

Coastal people used the wood of several trees, but cedar was the most favored  
cedar trees first appeared along the Pacific coast in significant numbers about 6,600 years ago  
Western Red Cedar provides a unique type of wood that is soft and light weight  
it is easily worked using stone, bone and shell blades  
and can be bent and shaped using steam  
although easily split and shaped, cedar has great tensile strength  
Western Red Cedar was vital to the coastal people and was second only to salmon in importance  
indications of Coastal Indian woodworking even during the earliest times exist  
splitting wedges made of antler have been discovered in the earliest archeological sights  
early Northwest Indian woodworking skills and technology were well established  
between 3,500 and 3,000 years ago and remains unsurpassed in the world  
cedar chips have been discovered which date back 3,000 years

Cedar bark consists of two distinct layers:

- outer cedar bark, rough and dead was peeled off the tree in the spring and summer  
when tree sap (fluid) rises in the tree  
if the tree was not completely circled it would continue to grow  
decay-resistant, aromatic outer cedar bark was laid on the ground and dried  
it was used to line chests and boxes and as kindling for starting fires;
- inner bark is composed of red, stringy, soft, inner layers which were gathered by native women  
after soaking for about two weeks the inner bark was pounded into separate individual fibers  
women were skillful in twisting, spinning and weaving the material into long, thick cords  
this material could be used for a variety of ingenious domestic functions  
instead of cotton or wool to make dresses, cloaks and pillows  
for making baskets, ropes, place mats and burial mats  
fishing nets were woven of strands of inner cedar bark  
babies in cradleboards found the texture to be like talcum powder  
when the shredded inner cedar bark was packed around them in baby backpacks  
for added strength inner cedar bark was often combined with other cedar parts  
such as limbs, roots and boughs

#### FALLING GIANT RED CEDAR TREES REQUIRED SKILL AND PATIENCE

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<sup>13</sup> Cecil Dryden, *Dryden's History of Washington*, P. 19.

Large supply of Western Red Cedar trees was available

cedar contains chemicals which resist rot -- objects made from it lasted for years and even decades

Western Red Cedar trees and its bark, limbs and roots provided a major source of raw material

first a huge cedar tree had to be found that was the right size and possessed the right spirit

natives were very concerned about the spirit world

Felling the giant cedar using carefully controlled fires would take days

a notch was chipped into the tree with an adze (stone chipper)

or was dug into the tree bark using chisels

heated stones were placed into the notch -- charred wood was scrapped away with a chisel

additional heated stones were placed into the opening as the trunk was burned

wet seaweed or damp leaves were stuck above and below the burn

to control the direction of the fire

when burned nearly through, a niche was cut into the opposite side of the tree

in the direction the tree was to fall

once the cedar tree was felled, the tree trunk was converted into a log

limbs were chipped or burned away

top of the log was burned off to the right height for use as a house post, canoe, etc.

#### ADVANCED WOODWORKING TECHNOLOGY WAS DEVELOPED BY COASTAL NATIVES

Cedar provided the advantage to the builder of being easy to work with:

- strait-grained soft cedar logs were easily split into planks along the grain
  - by using stone hammers to drive wooden wedges or wedges of elk horn
  - which were driven into the end of the log
  - when the log began to split, other wedges were pounded into the crack along the log
  - to spread the split wide open
  - finally, a stick was pounded deeply into the splitting log to continue the split
  - this whole operation was repeated over and over to convert the log into flat planks;
- shaping and hollowing the cedar log into beautiful canoes or bowls was slower work
  - the woodcarver bored a hole at each end of the area to be hollowed out
  - then split and chipped away the wood in between the holes into the appropriate shape
  - serving dishes and bowls were intricately shaped into amazing animal and human shapes
- separate pieces of wood were joined together by sewing or pegging which substituted for nails
  - holes were drilled in each plank with bone awls and root strips or inner cedar bark twine
  - these sewing strips were continued from hole to hole
  - in countersunk grooves to protect strips from wear
  - seats in a canoe, bentwood box corners, wooden dance screen boards and other planks
  - were sewn together to make beautiful and functional objects;
- some wood pieces were pegged together with wooden pegs pounded into pre-drilled holes

#### COASTAL INDIANS LIVED IN CEDAR LONGHOUSES

Coastal natives need for shelter was met by an abundance of trees and ingenuity  
substantial wooden longhouses gave permanency to coastal villages  
Western Red Cedar longhouses have been constructed for at least 2,500 years  
the earliest evidence of cedar planks being split dates back equally as old  
Longhouses varied greatly in size, design, livability and beauty  
they ranged from forty to one hundred feet long and fourteen to twenty feet wide  
six to twelve families lived in each building

Chief Seattle's dwelling, "Old Man House,"

(known in Chinook Jargon as O-le-man or "strong man" house)

was located at today's Agate Pass near Squamish, Washington

reports of its size varied from 500 feet to 1000 feet in length,

it was about forty feet wide and nearly sixty feet in height

hundreds of artifacts from the site include harpoon points, gun flint stones, smoking pipes,  
adze blades, glass and a bone pendant

Old Man House was burned down by the U.S. government in 1870

following the death of Chief Seattle (sometimes known as Chief Sealth)

## CONSTRUCTING COASTAL HOUSING ALONG PUGET SOUND WAS AN ART

Longhouses were found nowhere else in America

longhouses and the great adobe pueblos of the Southwest

were the most outstanding native architectural feats constructed north of Mexico

it took months or even years of labor by tree-cutters and carpenters to construct a longhouse

master builders, believed to have special spirit powers, were aided by apprentices

Two varieties of longhouses were constructed along Washington's Pacific coast:

- shed-roof longhouses were long and narrow buildings

covered with a roof that sloped from front to back

narrow construction made the building easier to construct and heat

- gable-roof longhouses stood up to forty-five feet in width and 180 feet in length

these could accommodate six to twelve families

they were often described by the number of fire-pits inside rather than the number of rooms

House posts served as the corner post where two walls intersected

a number of additional house posts were placed between the corner posts

to support the long sections of logs that spanned the length of the building across the middle

these logs served as ridge poles to support the roof

house posts that supported the roof and walls were as much as six feet in diameter

when constructing a house post, the outer and inner layer of cedar bark were peeled off

leaving the log's wooden core for use as a house post

standing the house posts upright was cleverly accomplished

as the posts were laid beside a hole dug in the ground with one side dug at a 45° angle

while the opposite side was dug straight down

several men lifted the top end of the house post

while the base end of the post was put into the hole by sliding down the angled side  
until it reached the bottom

a short log was rolled down the sloping side of the hole

pushing the post into an upright position and holding it in place

dirt then was filled in to hold the post vertically upright

very large houses would have four house posts set in a line

with two logs placed end to end on the interior posts to make a very long ridge pole

Roof construction of both shed-roof and gable-roof longhouses required a great deal of skill

raising the ridge pole fifteen or twenty feet into the air was accomplished

by placing the ridge pole across a very large log like a teeter-totter

as one end of the ridge pole was lifted the cross-log was rolled toward the other end

when the ridge pole was elevated to the top of the house post it was lashed into place

other end of the ridge pole was raised by use of successively longer temporary posts

that were used to lift the ridge pole to the height of the house post

once the top of the house post had been reached, the ridge pole was tied into place

shorter posts, like rafters, were slanted downward from the ridge pole to the top of the walls

where the short posts were fitted into notches chiseled into the top of the house post

spruce root strips were tied around the joints of the rafters and posts

overlapping planks, like shingles, were fastened to the sloping rafter giving a sloping roof

these shingles were pegged at one end so the shingle could be lifted with a long pole

and swung open creating a vent in the roof for smoke to escape

Construction of the longhouse walls was equally clever

cedar logs were split into planks that formed the sides of the longhouse

after being split the planks were smoothed and finished

with an adze made from a shell or piece of flint

planks as much as eight inches thick ranged from three feet to five feet wide

and as long as twenty feet were lashed horizontally to house posts

in overlapping (ship-lap) fashion

these were tied to the vertical house posts using twisted cedar twine rope

or were pegged to the vertical house posts

Several doors were constructed in the longhouse regardless of type

each house might have three or four doors

openings were located on both the long and short sides of the longhouse

partitions often extended out from either side of the door

to protect the inhabitants from the outside draft

in winter, houses had doors of cedar that could be closed by swinging on an upright post

these could be barred on the inside by means of a horizontal log crossbar

in warmer weather mats served as doors or the openings were left uncovered

no windows were cut in the walls of the longhouse

interior light came from glowing fire pits lined with stones or gravel  
Longhouses could last for several generations and were passed by the owner from father to son  
an Indian who was about to die was taken outside of the house  
if the owner died inside the house it was either burned or given away  
when it was given away all people living in the house prior to the death had to move out  
if the person who died inside the house was not the owner, the house had to be vacated  
after a month or two the occupants could return

Chinook Indians living along the Columbia River

fashioned their longhouses in much the same manner as the Coastal Indians of Puget Sound  
with the exception that they used vertical cedar planks set firmly in the ground as their walls  
depending on the width of the longhouse construction could be a high gable roof  
or shed-type roof created with a pitch sloping toward the rear of the building  
with either type of construction the roof was held in place with a long ridgepole  
both types of houses were supported by house posts and crossbeams (rafters)  
covered with overlapping boards and cedar planks (shingles) up to eight feet wide  
that were laid over the ridge pole and could be pivoted to eliminate smoke

American explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark visited a Chinook Indian village  
that was located near the famous Celilo Falls at the Columbia River Gorge -- 1805-1806  
they noted the houses were built six feet into the ground and one and a half feet above the ground  
each house measured about twenty by thirty feet and had a gabled roof  
a door was located at one end  
back half of each house provided storage for dried fish, berries and other possessions  
front half of the house nearest the door was the living area  
each house was shared by three or four families

#### SEVERAL FAMILIES SHARED THE INSIDE OF THE LONGHOUSE

Storage containers were placed along a line separating neighbors from each other inside the longhouse  
wooden chests, boxes and baskets used for storing food, supplies and personal property  
were placed end to end  
cedar chests were constructed of a one single board which made all four sides  
cedar boxes were made of split cedar boards laced together used for storage  
baskets were made of grasses and reeds  
many containers were works of art with carvings or designs worked into the construction  
Interior of the longhouses along Puget Sound were often divided into rooms for privacy at night  
natives used a portable partition to provide a sight barrier from those sharing the house  
blankets were often hung between families  
sometimes mats made from cedar bark, grasses, reeds, or cattails were used  
Along the wall of their apartment each family had its sleeping area  
which consisted of wide shelves against the walls that served as beds at night  
these were constructed about two and one-half feet from the floor

in front of the sleeping shelf were other platforms about a foot high  
that were used as seats, settees or storage places during the day  
slaves usually slept on the lower platforms

sometimes planks on the floor covered with mats were used instead of lower platforms  
above the sleeping platforms were storage shelves -- usually slanted downward in toward the wall  
ladders were used to reach these storage areas  
dried provisions were stored in baskets there for the winter  
extra blankets were also stored there in the summer

Fire pits were dug in the floor and surrounded by stones for use as a fireplace and for cooking  
fires were arranged not in the middle of the interior space but rather nearer the walls  
there was no chimney as smoke followed the tapering roof line up toward a vent in the roof  
center area of the longhouse was usually reserved as a passageway  
used to get from one end of the dwelling to the other

Floors were packed dirt that was often covered with sand or cattail mats  
sometimes mats woven from the soft inner bark of cedar trees served as carpets

When a couple had enough children to crowd the family apartment  
the son, when old enough, was given a separate section of the house as his own  
if the family was wealthy enough they could build their own longhouse

Poor natives lived in a lien-to rather than in the longhouse

#### COASTAL VILLAGES ON PUGET SOUND ALL FOLLOWED A SIMILAR PATTERN

Much of the Pacific Northwest was uninhabited but not unclaimed or unexplored  
permanent villages were occupied during the winter  
one village could be composed of from three to five larger longhouses together

Usually the village was built on one street

each village, as far as possible, had a feast house five times the size of a normal longhouse  
this building, between one hundred to two hundred feet long, was able to shelter  
several hundred people for major social events such as celebrations and feasts  
some feast houses were also used as dwellings to house up to thirty families  
but this was thought to be a poor village

several kinds of smaller structures faced the water and generally were in a single row  
these were always built on the shore of the sound or along rivers and creeks  
small "lein-tos" housed the poor

canoe houses served as storage sites for boats and personal belongings  
and also provided posts for additional carving opportunities  
every family had a fish-drying rack suspended from a crossbeam

#### OZETTE VILLAGE PROVIDES INSIGHT INTO COASTAL NATIVE VILLAGE LIFE

Ozette Indian village was occupied by Makah people along the Pacific Ocean  
on the Olympic Peninsula near the town of Neah Bay, Washington

Ozette may date back farther than the Marmes Rock Shelter site  
which was occupied between 11,000 and 9,800 years ago  
according to radiocarbon dating part of Ozette was engulfed by a catastrophic mud slide  
some five hundred years ago -- around 1560

Washington State University archeologist Dr. Richard Daugherty learned of the site  
and led archeologists to dig test pits in 1966 and 1967  
high tides during the winter of 1970 washed even more artifacts from where they had lain

Dr. Daugherty and his team investigated several Makah houses caught under the mudslide  
Daugherty became director of the Ozette archeological site  
he pioneered wet site work -- 1970-1981

pressurized ocean water was used to slowly remove the mud from buried houses  
and the exterior midden (refuse materials) where household items had been discarded

Dr. Daugherty preserved Ozette's wooden artifacts by soaking them in huge vats of Carbowax  
some artifacts, especially those made of hard woods because of their small pores  
had to soak for years to preserve them

More than 55,000 artifacts from all aspects of ancient tribal life were excavated  
these were cleaned, identified with Makah names, cataloged, preserved and stored or displayed  
among these items are beautifully carved house boards,  
an elaborate whale saddle or dorsal fin inlaid with seven hundred sea otter teeth,  
numerous styles and sizes of baskets and boxes,  
clothing, cradle boards, mats, hats, looms and toys,  
fishing, sealing and whaling equipment, ceremonial gear and even metal tools

it is speculated that the metal came from shipwrecks or trade networks  
many of these artifacts can be seen today in the in the Makah Museum  
at the Makah Cultural and Research Center in Neah Bay  
ancestral remains were reinterred out of respect for these people  
and in keeping with cultural beliefs about death

Ozette village has been recognized as one of the richest archaeological resources in the world  
and has inspired a cultural renaissance for the Makah people

Other possible archeological sites have been identified on San Juan Island and at Enumclaw  
but funding is presently not available to investigate these locations

## PLATEAU NATIVE HOUSES OF EASTERN WASHINGTON SHOWED GREAT VARIATION

Lacking forests, at first the Plateau tribes lived and camped in caves and under rock shelters

later they dug permanent "Pit houses" in the ground which were used in winter

Pit Houses varied in style and design by the location of the tribe of builders

usually these circular in-ground winter houses were located in sheltered valleys

they varied in length from twenty feet to one hundred-fifty feet

interior was excavated to form a round pit five or six feet deep -- ten to fifteen feet wide

roof was placed above the ground on roof poles sloping from the ground up to a ridge pole

that supported a flat, pointed or conical shaped roof

roof poles were covered with planks if they were available

or, if necessary, they were covered with mats

the roof was blanketed with grass or dirt to provide insulation from the cold

a hole in the roof was left open for the smoke

entrance into the house was by way of the smoke-hole down a ladder or center-pole to the floor

fire pit provided warmth in winter and the dirt walls provided insulation to retain the heat

rooms were not partitioned by sight barriers

but each family had its space to keep its property and provisions

Later still, long open lodges which became popular with the Plateau people were developed

in winter the lodge could be covered with saplings, grass, tulle mats and earth

Also common also in the interior were conical tepees borrowed from the Plains Indians

these were quickly and easily set up and dismantled

Many Plateau tribes built a "Sweat Lodge" to be used for purification ceremonies and for healing

sweat lodges were about seven feet long, six feet wide and four feet high

an oval roof of willows was covered with grass and earth to keep the heat in

entrance to the sweat lodge was covered with blankets and mats

outside the door a fire was built to heat lava stones that were rolled into the sweat lodge

these stones were considered by the Plateau natives to be their oldest living relatives

heated stones were placed in a slight depression in the floor

and covered with water to create steam

usually only one person at a time occupied the lodge

bather shut himself or herself in the sweat lodge with a number of hot stones

steam heat removed toxins from the body, made the heart pump more blood

and caused the native to experience visions

sweat lodges were always built beside a creek or river

so bather, when perspiring freely, could immediately plunge into the cold water

Plateau people believed that sweat lodges brought balance and health to the spirit, mind and body

the lodge could bring clarity to a problem or reconnect the tribal member with the Spirit Word

sweat lodges held very strong spirits which could aid the worshipper

to contact his or her Guardian Spirit and to call upon helpful spirits

## PLATEAU INDIANS ALSO WERE MOBILE DURING THE WARMER MONTHS

Conditions were less agreeable than those that existed along the coast -- food was less plentiful meeting the challenges of everyday life was more difficult in the Interior  
this forced the Plateau people to be semi-nomadic to find and gather an adequate food supply they moved frequently in search of food and game during the warm season  
which prevented these tribes from living permanently in one house  
life was sparser for these people

Summer houses were portable mat-covered or rush-covered tents -- or single or double lean-tos  
Plateau people constructed a semi-permanent camp consisting of long and rectangular huts made of framing poles placed at the corners of the shelter  
walls were made of grass, mats, blanket or animal robe  
stretched across the rectangle of the building poles  
one corner was left untied to serve as the door  
gaps between the wall and corner posts allowed breezes to enter  
blankets or mats served for the roof as there is little rain in Eastern Washington in the summer

During the summer, some Interior tribes used teepees adopted from the Plains Indians  
frame of the teepee consisted of about ten long poles pointed at the lower end  
these were driven into the ground and lashed together with thongs near the top  
walls of the shelter were made of reed mats stitched together  
or dressed bison hides sewed together stretched over the frame  
this lodge could easily be set up by women in a few minutes  
some Indian women decorated their tepees with drawings of animals or symbols

When traveling travois (sleds pulled by animals) were used  
to carry their belongings and the harvest they collected  
these consisted of two long poles that were of unequal length  
to prevent both sides of the travois from bouncing along the ground at the same time  
woven mats were lashed between the poles to hold the cargo  
before the arrival of the horse in Eastern Washington, dogs were used to carry the possessions

## WATER UNIFIED THE COASTAL AND PLATEAU PEOPLE OF WASHINGTON

While the Pacific Ocean and Puget Sound provided both food and transportation for the Coastal people  
rivers and lakes provided food and transportation for people on both sides of the Cascades  
Indians, with the exception of people who lived far inland on the slopes of the mountains,  
remained by the water and used canoes to travel on the rivers, lakes and ocean to get around  
rivers were so important to travel that there were almost no trails through the dense forests  
Indians along the Pacific coast seldom traveled more than five miles inland from their village  
fear of unknown spirits living in the dense woods ruled out most overland travel  
however, some trails led to the beach or to berry picking patches  
other trails were developed by migrating animals

Because the rivers were so important it was natural that people kept track of each other

according to river systems or drainages they populated  
suffix “amish” found in many of the tribal names  
indicated they were the “people of” a specific river system  
(for example, Swinomish, Stilaguamish, Snohomish, Squamish and Duwamish)

#### INDIAN LEGEND OF CANOE OWNERSHIP

Selected Western Red Cedar logs were carved into beautiful and seaworthy dugout canoes  
large cedar trees grew in the deep forests many miles from the villages  
obviously no modern equipment such as saws or axes or any metal tools were available  
not even draft animals were available to move the logs  
nor were there roads over which a tree fifty feet log could be carried  
there remains the question of how these enormous logs were delivered to the village  
An Indian legend attempts to answer the question of how logs were transported  
in some coastal villages ownership of a canoe was a religious responsibility<sup>14</sup>  
to acquire a canoe, a young man had to fast and meditate in the wilderness for many days  
during this time he sang a song as he walked through the woods  
asking a tree to bless him with the ownership of a canoe  
if the young man’s prayers were answered a tree would choose him to be a canoe owner  
and would sing back to him  
when the young man heard the tree singing he made camp at the bottom of the tree  
there he stayed while he learned of all of the responsibilities of canoe ownership  
when the tree was satisfied that the young man was worthy of having a canoe  
it would teach him how to fell the tree and how to trim its branches  
next the tree would teach the young man a special song to sing as he returned to his village  
followed down the mountainside by the tree  
at the village the tree would be made into a canoe

#### ALL OF THE VILLAGERS WORKED TO CONSTRUCT A CANOE

Dugout canoe carving was a highly-developed community skill found nowhere else in North America  
carving a canoe from a single Western Red Cedar log was a community project  
it took months to form a canoe and the Coastal Indians excelled in canoe construction  
Using wooden wedges the top portion of the cedar log was split away  
once split the cedar log was hollowed out by burning  
small controlled fires were built in the log to burn away the inner wood  
natives patiently hacked and chipped out the charred wood inside of the canoe  
using a hand adze (similar to an ax) and other tools made of bone, horn, wood and stone  
as the canoe slowly took shape  
Indians shaped the outside of the canoe using wedges from elk horn  
sides of the canoe were sanded with dogfish skin or, if it was available, shark skin

a series of curved grooves were cut along the length of the outside of the canoe  
these were designed to turn aside waves that struck the canoe in a sequence  
they were considered an engineering triumph by everyone who saw them  
occasionally holes were drilled in the canoe bottom and sides with a sharp hand awl  
to measure the thickness using the knuckles of one or two fingers  
thickest part of the canoe was at the bottom  
these holes were later plugged and sealed with sawdust and pitch  
Cedar log was widened and stretched to a width of nearly six feet using steam  
inside of the log was filled with water and heated stones were added to generate steam  
sides of the log were steamed until the wood softened and became pliable  
wedged pieces of yew wood of appropriate lengths were placed between the gunwales (sides)  
at intervals across the canoe to spread and hold the top to make the canoe wider  
and give the proper shape  
the wide canoe that resulted provided better stability and room to hold more goods  
Both ends of the canoe were made from separate pieces of hard wood  
front of the canoe featured a prow raised above the water in the shape of a “wolf’s head”  
vertical stern of the canoe was tapered -- sometimes a canoe’s stern was raised above the water  
bow and stern were both attached to the canoe body with pegs  
craftsman spun a piece of bone or awl between the palms of his hands  
until it drilled a hole through the wood  
when holes in the canoe and ends were lined up, wooden pegs were driven through  
these holes were later sealed using sawdust and glue made from dogfish skin  
Finished canoes were beached stern first to keep the bow in the water  
canoes shipped very little water except in great storms  
and even then could be emptied with a bailer

## CANOES PROVIDED THE COASTAL PEOPLE WITH A MEANS TO TRAVEL LONG DISTANCES

Coastal villagers traveled along the coast of Washington and British Columbia with great skill  
a thousand miles and more were traveled by raiding parties to steal and capture slaves  
sails made of wooden slats or cedar bark mats occasionally were rigged for the largest canoes  
but most often the Indians propelled their canoes with paddles

Canoes varied greatly in length according to their function  
they ranged from five- or six-foot vessels used for ferrying across a river  
to great oceangoing canoes fifty and more feet in length:

- lightweight women’s and children’s crafts were maneuverable;
- one- and two-man canoes used in the shallow parts of lakes  
could be used to carry goods or for fishing;
- middle-sized cargo canoes were twenty-eight to forty feet long  
were somewhat shorter and much broader than oceangoing canoes

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<sup>14</sup> Vine Deloria, Jr., *Indians of the Pacific Northwest*, P. 20.

manned by an average crew of eight they were used for carrying freight on rivers  
a finished cargo canoe could carry a great deal of material  
wooden boxes for carrying goods were made with slanting sides  
to enable them to fit almost exactly into the canoe bottoms  
these Indian canoes were probably the first container ships in the world;  
•large canoes -- fifty feet long and longer were used for war and whaling  
sometimes canoes carried a crew of twenty-five or more braves  
whaling canoes were very sleek and designed for fast, silent travel over the waves

#### PLATEAU NATIVES OF EASTERN WASHINGTON USED CANOES AND RAFTS

Inland canoes were crudely constructed dugouts or bark vessels with a blunt nose  
that were used primarily on lakes  
canoes were poled in shallow water -- while in deeper water they were paddled  
when used on rivers or streams, the canoe was often left at the downriver destination  
little time or energy was dedicated to their construction  
these were not the works of art as were the canoes of the Coastal people  
Rafts of willows and rushes were used when crossing streams  
these were often unsafe but Indians were very good swimmers  
many Inland Empire tribes who live on fish had no canoes at all and traveled only by walking

#### COASTAL AND PLATEAU WOMEN WERE BUSY DURING THE SUMMER MONTHS

On both sides of the Cascade Mountains camas root, similar to a potato,  
was dug with a sharp stick in June and July  
Camas root was tasty and could be eaten raw immediately  
or boiled, steamed or baked to be stored for the winter  
twenty or thirty bushels of roots were peeled and heaped on the grass in a conical pile  
these were covered with grass and allowed to cure  
then a hole ten feet in diameter and about three feet deep was dug  
this was lined with dry wood on which heated small stones were laid  
earth and grass thrown over the stones  
camas root was placed into the hole and a fire was built on top of the mound of roots  
this was kept burning throughout the night  
as the roots turned black the cooked camas root imparted a sweet flavor  
sometimes after they were cooked, they were dried whole or ground into powder with stones  
ground root was made into dough that was rolled into loaves of eight to ten pounds  
these were put through a steaming process and made into cakes  
camas root cakes were smoked or dried in the sun  
camas root cakes could be eaten with seal oil or fish oil  
Pemmican, lean dried meat pounded into paste and mixed with animal fat, dried berries or fruit,  
was pounded into a long basket holding about eighty pounds to be prepared for use in the winter

pemmican provided a variation to the Coastal natives' usual winter diet of cured salmon jerky pemmican was an important food for Coastal and Plateau Native Americans alike

## FISHING WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT ACTIVITY OF THE COASTAL NATIVE

Salmon run was anxiously awaited and gravely celebrated

as fish was a staple of the Coastal Indian diet and salmon was the principal fish  
salmon season lasted from spring until November

Salmon, depending on the species, spent between three and seven years at sea  
before they returned to their spawning grounds along the gravel beds in freshwater streams  
five kinds of salmon were caught in the order of the seasonal runs:

- king salmon (also are known as Chinook and Tyee);
- humpback salmon (pink);
- silver salmon (Coho);
- sockeye salmon (blueback, red);
- dog salmon (chum, Keta);
- steelhead (actually a large trout)

each species of salmon returned to a specific river (and thus to an Indian village)  
at differing times of the year

Because of their importance to the diet of Native Americans

salmon to be caught and eaten, were always treated with the utmost reverence and respect

## COASTAL AND PLATEAU PEOPLE MOVED TO FISHING CAMPS IN THE SUMMER MONTHS

Coastal people, when the salmon run began in the summer, moved out of their permanent villages  
which they had occupied during winter and early spring  
they moved into summer villages large and small

located along the salt water beaches and along the rivers

outer planks of their permanent houses were removed, loaded into canoes,

and were taken to their summer settlements only to be brought back in the fall

Summertime for the coastal Indians resembled vacation time in the Pacific Northwest today

everyone tried to get away to a quiet place to relax and engage in frequent celebrations

there were many large gatherings of people from the various villages in the summertime

this was a time for large feasts and visiting

marriages were arranged and business transacted between families of different villages

fishing stations were, for the most part, hereditary

various people would share even the lengths of streams

Coastal men spent much of their time fishing at their summer fishing camp

Coastal women, between their efforts at summer's gathering,

brought their families to join the men in their temporary fishing camps

it was the duty of the women at all fisheries to clean and dry or smoke the catch

after a few hours in the sun, skins were easily removed from the fish

flesh separated from the bones was mashed as finely as possible  
this was spread out on frames covered with matting  
until it was dried by the sun and wind  
salmon also was smoked when smokehouses were constructed

#### COASTAL FISHING TECHNIQUES VARIED BY THE SIZE AND CONDITION OF THE WATER

At least five different fishing techniques were used depending on where the fish were harvested:

- freshwater lakes provided an opportunity to catch a variety of fish to use as food;
- rivers, streams and creeks that drained into the various inlets and bays of the “Salish Sea”  
(Strait of Georgia, the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and Puget Sound) were another source for food;
- waters of the shallow bays and estuaries, basically the tideland flats provided fish and shellfish;
- Salish Sea itself was composed of considerably deeper and broader bodies of water  
than the shallow bays and was still another source of food;
- Pacific Ocean, virtually boundless in length and depth, made available additional fishing grounds

Freshwater lakes offered the opportunity to catch a variety of lake fish residing there

but lake also provided access to catch salmon as they entered the lake on their way to spawn

Indians would gather where a river or stream entered a lake to either spear or gaff the salmon  
(a gaff is about six feet long with a hook at the end)

salmon were hauled in with one swift, continuous motion by the fisherman

there was little effort to use baited hooks as salmon on their way to spawn do not eat

sometimes when the salmon arrived at a lake in large quantities during the spawning season

some natives used nets to herd large numbers of fish toward the shore

where they could be easily be taken by a variety of techniques

Tideland areas of salt water were generally fished by impounding the salmon

during high tide salmon would come into the narrow and secluded parts of bays

Indians would build large pens using nets while the water was still high

when the tide went out the salmon would be trapped inside the pens

For small, narrow creeks and streams the Coastal people used ingenious funnel-shaped traps

that had been wedged between two logs with the large opening facing downstream

funnel traps were woven of spruce root fibers and flax

that had been secured from Interior natives through barter

a salmon swam into the wide end of the funnel but could not escape out of the narrow end

when attempting to withdraw from the trap by swimming backwards

the fish's gills were caught on the narrow edge of the funnel

fisherman later revisited the trap and removed the fish pulling it out by its tail

nets were also used, but had to be tended more often

as frequently too many fish were caught or the net would be torn by the fish

Larger creeks and streams and small rivers saw Indians use gill nets

these were long nets designed to catch fish of a specific size which was determined

by the openings of the mesh in the net -- smaller fish were allowed to pass through

but the net would snare the gills of larger fish when they tried to force their way past  
gill nets were set in a river for hours at a time and then pulled to shore when filled with fish  
generally, these nets were not placed across the entire river

but rather on alternating sides of a river every several hundred yards apart

so that some fish would pass around the nets and continue up the river to spawn

Even larger streams and rivers were fished using the native's most famous technique -- weirs  
weirs were usually community property

large weirs were built across the river to stop the returning salmon from continuing upriver

weirs varied with the width of the stream but generally consisted of three tripods

made of vertical alder and willow planks about eight feet long and one to two inches thick

these were cut and sharpened to a point at one end and embedded in the stream bed  
tripods were held together with a long pole toward the top of the planks

pickets lashed with cord to the long pole made a fence across the river between tripods

these held up the salmon as they swam upstream

each tripod had a platform above the water which was usually owned by a village family

permission had to be given by the owner for anyone else to use the fishing platform  
once the salmon were trapped behind the weir, natives stood on the platform

and used four-foot to five-foot long dip-net

the fisherman dipped into the school of fish held by the fence

he lifted the fish from the water and clubbed it to death

weirs also provided a way to keep salmon nearby and alive before they were harvested

Very large rivers were frequently fished at waterfalls and rapids where salmon would rest

before leaping forward to continue the journey toward their spawning beds

fisherman stood on a rock above the turbulent water holding a dip net

which was used because the salmon could not be seen

sometimes the fisherman stood on a scaffold built over the rapids

fisherman might remain motionless with spear poised above his head

for half an hour waiting for an opportunity to strike

in calmer water where the salmon could be seen the fisherman might stand on a rock

holding a twelve-foot-long spear pole cut with a wooden fork attached to the end

between the tines was attached a barbed shell or iron point

in very calm water a harpoon could be used

each harpoon had two heads of elk horn pointed at one end and notched at the other

this elk horn tip was attached to the spear shaft and tied firmly

a long rope was also attached to the spearhead

so if it came out of the fish the spearhead would not be lost

Fishing very large calm rivers was accomplished using nets strung between two canoes

when a large number of salmon had been harvested

natives would paddle the two canoes together closing the net

sometimes the fishermen harpooned fish from the canoes

Indians always provided a means for salmon to escape the net  
by swimming under or around it -- even when multiple nets were used

## LUMMI INDIANS DEVELOPED A UNIQUE METHOD OF FISHING FOR SOCKEYE SALMON

Lummi Indians living near the northern part of the inland waters of the Strait of Georgia developed a unique kind of fishing aptly called “reef-netting” using two canoes  
a small net was attached by a cord to tall upright poles attached to the stern of both canoes  
the other end of the net sloped downward under the two canoes  
and was attached to a cord held by fishermen toward the front of the canoes  
thus a sort of scoop was formed under the two canoes  
as salmon swam into the net they believed the floor of the bay was rising  
role of the fishing chief was vitally important in this type of fishing  
because split-second timing was necessary the head fisherman had to have  
an incredible sense of timing and an intimate knowledge  
of all of the factors that affected fish life  
he needed an almost mystical sense about the salmon, the water, the nets,  
the current of the water and his men’s ability to raise the net quickly  
he stood on a tower in the bow of one of the canoes  
he had to tell from the movement of the water how far into the net the fish had come  
if the net was raised too soon the salmon would be frightened and swim away  
if it was raised too late, the salmon would be able to swim over the net  
or they would be able to detect the net in front of them and rapidly swim around it  
at a certain point the head fisherman would shout  
this was a signal to his fishing companions at the front of the canoe  
to raise the net from the floor of the bay thus trapping the fish  
fishing chiefs who enjoyed continued success as a reef netter were considered  
to be possessed of a supernatural ability and religious powers over the salmon<sup>15</sup>  
once the wild salmon were caught, they were gently spilled into a netted “live well”  
to relax after their brief struggle and to allow the built up bitter lactic acid to dissipate  
resulting in a sweeter-tasting flavor  
unwanted species that may have been caught were harmlessly placed back into the water  
remaining salmon were bled by cutting a gill before being placed in another live well  
to swim until they bled out  
Reef-netting sites were the most prized inland fishing grounds because the catch,  
generally sockeye salmon, was considered a delicacy by all the tribes of the region  
catching sockeye meant that the Lummis could trade extensively with other tribes  
for desirable goods -- especially for the whale and seal oil  
and meats killed and preserved by other coastal villages  
(reef net ownership has proved to be a great aid in scholarly interpretations of the Indians treaties

by comparing the ownership of reef-netting locations with signatures on treaties  
it was determined that no Lummi Indian would sign a document  
that took away his reef-netting site -- thus when reef-net sight owners signed a treaty  
this was an indication that native fishing rights remained in place)<sup>16</sup>

#### OTHER FISHERIES ALSO WERE AVAILABLE TO THE NATIVES OF THE PACIFIC COAST

Great varieties of fish other than salmon also were available to the Coastal natives  
small fish like smelt, herring, or candlefish were valued for their oil  
they were caught in abundance using scoop nets  
smelt were harvested where rivers met the salt water  
using a long stick with a cross-piece with sharp bones attached  
that was lashed to the handle like a rake  
herring were taken in bays or inlets with the same rakes  
sometimes natives caught olachen or candlefish, an eight or nine-inch extremely oily fish,  
that is so rich in oil it could be used like butter or lighted to serve as a candle  
lake trout were readily available to be taken with a hook and line  
by trolling (moving the fishing location by paddling the canoe)  
and jigging (wiggling the fishing lure)  
flounder fishing employed one of the most exciting techniques used by the Indians of the region  
flounders are a flat fish that tend to rest on the bottom of mudflats along Puget Sound  
Indian fisherman would simply wade into the mudflats until they stepped on a flounder  
they would stand on the fish long enough to spear it with a sharp stick  
while this method sounds simple, the spectacle of a hundred Indians  
all wading in the muddiest water in the region with sharp sticks  
continuously stabbing at their feet was a frightening scene to those who watched  
as difficult as it is to believe Indians, even with all this frenzied activity,  
rarely speared their own feet  
Large fish such as true cod, rock cod, ling cod, skate, halibut and sturgeon were harvested  
Makahs, Quileutes, and Quinalts used special hooks and long lines  
they dared the open sea to catch deep-water halibut and cod  
halibut, cod and skate fishing made use of a hook made of hemlock  
a bone point was lashed with root and bark to the hook  
natives fished for halibut twenty miles and more off Tatoosh Island  
sturgeon fishing was done with harpoons which were thrown from canoes  
fisherman also carried bird spears for small useful game

#### COASTAL INDIANS HAD AN ABUNDANCE OF FOOD

Early Coastal Indians were very fortunate as food was there for the taking

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<sup>15</sup> Vine Deloria, Jr., *Indians of the Pacific Northwest*, P. 14.

<sup>16</sup> Vine Deloria, Jr., *Indians of the Pacific Northwest*, P. 14-15.

they successfully lived off the resources of the sea and land  
no other area of equal size in the world enjoyed as much material prosperity  
their diet was much richer in fats, proteins and minerals than in most other places  
but they could become somewhat deficient in starch and other carbohydrates occasionally  
even without the constant availability of salmon the coastal people inhabited a land of plenty  
mammals and sea-life from the ocean provided year-round food  
as well as household items and commodities to trade  
hunting seals, sea otters, sea lions and the like in the ocean and the large straits  
took both great skill and technique as nets were of no use  
Coastal natives enjoyed an abundance of easily acquired sea life -- meat was needed only for variety  
while the sea provided a dependable harvest of fish, shellfish and marine animals  
most of the fish that was eaten came from streams -- not the ocean  
Both Coastal women and men left the winter village during the month of May  
to gather clams and other shell fish  
when a large supply was obtained, women dried them and took the catch back to the village  
Native women and girls of the coast gathered shellfish such as fresh oysters, barnacles, mussels, crab,  
abalone, sea urchin and lampreys almost year around in the shallow bays and on the beaches  
while some of these were dried for winter use,  
most of the harvest was eaten during gigantic feasts  
crabs were usually plentiful in the spring along the northern end for the Olympic Peninsula  
During the spring of the year Coastal women gathered eelgrass and seaweed to vary their family's diet  
both fish eggs and bird eggs were gathered, eaten and used in cooking  
pheasant, lark, duck and goose eggs were most commonly used  
meat of birds and small animals added variety to the Coastal diet  
a large variety of vegetables were gathered and prepared by women in the spring  
such as common and woolly burdock, and the stems, leaves and flowers of various bedstraw  
Coastal men west of the Cascade Mountains, fished the Columbia River and its tributaries  
which ran thick with salmon in the spring, summer and fall  
Chinook Indians lived in well-established villages along the Columbia  
other Indians established semi-permanent camps when the fish were running to spawn  
Coastal climate was less harsh than in Eastern Washington's desert-like area  
no attempt was made at agriculture and none was needed

#### VARIETIES OF FOOD LED TO TRADE AMONG THE COASTAL INDIANS

Because food and other trade items were so plentiful along the Pacific coast  
Coastal people had to become specialists in order to produce unique goods for trade  
simply smoking salmon was not enough because everyone did  
rather, different villages had to develop specialty items that would be coveted by others  
in order to participate in the trade  
no one grew extremely rich and no one was very poor

it was a system that worked out well for everyone  
Some villages specialized in catching and preparing a certain species of salmon  
while other villages concentrated their efforts on another species  
so sophisticated was their taste that many natives said they could tell from one bite of the food  
exactly what stream a fish had come from and which Indians had prepared it  
Makah Indians did not have sufficient cedar of suitable quantity for houses or very large canoes  
however, the Nootkas (Nuu-chah-nulth on Vancouver Island) had a plentiful supply  
Makahs traded for cedar canoes and planks with the Nootkas  
offering in exchange whale oil and seal oil, dried herring roe which formed a type of caviar  
and other products that could be obtained only in the Pacific Ocean  
Makahs also traded whale meat for red ochre used for paint and cosmetics  
found only in Quileute territory  
When the complex number of trades among natives in the days before the white man is considered  
it is possible to understand how the Indians of the area welcomed the fur traders,  
the first non-Indians to come among them

#### PLATEAU INDIAN MEN FISHED A VARIETY OF RIVERS DURING THE SUMMER MONTHS

Plateau Indians of Eastern Washington needed salmon even more than the coastal people  
Inland natives were dependent on fish as a primary food source  
but fish was not as abundant as in Western Washington  
Plateau Indians left their permanent villages and camped beside the rivers they fished  
such as Celilo Falls and Kettle Falls on the Columbia River  
where salmon were forced to leap over waterfalls  
fishing camps presented a holiday aspect from June to October  
at some fishing places a principal leader was chose  
his authority was final in determining the daily division of the fish catch  
Depending on their surroundings Plateau Indians used different methods to catch fish  
Indians stood on shaky wooden platforms that extended over the waterfalls and rapids  
with a rope tied around their waste in case they fell  
they speared and dip netted salmon as they jumped out of the water  
some tributaries of the Columbia, like the Spokane, Salmon and Clearwater rivers,  
supported large annual salmon runs that provided an important food source for inland tribes  
some of the largest salmon ever caught in the Columbia River Basin  
were fall-run Chinook Salmon taken from the Spokane River -- a tributary of the Columbia  
these giant fish, some weighing more than 100 pounds and close to five feet long  
(pioneers, after their arrival, called these giant fish "June hogs")  
sometimes fish traps were constructed in smaller streams and rivers  
occasionally nets made of vines and plant stems were used to catch trout and salmon

#### COLUMBIA RIVER PROVIDED A UNIQUE FISHERY

Columbia River provided a link through the Cascades and was a very significant source of salmon  
Indians from many tribes and villages, both Coastal and Plateau peoples,  
gathered along the Columbia River at Celilo Falls

which was a major center of native commerce during the salmon run

Chinook Indians who lived along the Columbia River had a unique manner of catching fish  
they would construct a net some five hundred feet long and nearly fifteen feet in depth  
that would be placed in the river going nearly completely across in some places  
when the salmon run began, they would gradually pull one end of the net toward shore  
fishermen would wade into the river with mallets and clubs to kill the fish  
and throw them up on the bank  
this technique required many men and was useful only when there was a large run of salmon  
but the salmon runs on the Columbia River in the old days were incredibly large

#### PLATEAU NATIVE HAD FEWER RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO THEM

Plateau Indians lived east of the Cascade Mountains in the interior of the Pacific Northwest  
in the area between the Cascade Mountains and the Rocky Mountains  
Inland people faced a harsher climate and more difficult terrain than Indians along the Pacific coast  
Plateau natives were more mobile than those living along the coast  
food was not nearly so easily acquired as along the Pacific Coast and was in shorter supply  
hunting and gathering, basis of life, took more time  
natives lived their lives as nomads forced to move in search of food  
from fishing sites in rivers, lakes and streams to hunting grounds, to fields of root  
to berry patches  
Plateau people made extensive use of salmon, deer, roots and berries  
their diet included more starch and berry sugars than the Coastal Indians  
because they were very mobile materialism was far less significant than it was along the coast  
as personal belongings and heirlooms could not be easily carried from place to place

#### COLUMBIA RIVER LINKED THE INDIANS TOGETHER

An extensive system of trade extended across the Cascade Mountains to Eastern Washington  
Puget Sound people, who had more salmon than they knew what to do with,  
often traveled across the snowy Cascades to trade for salmon that had come up the Columbia  
to the famous Celilo Falls of the Yakima Indians  
most Indians considered the absolutely best salmon was that of the Yakima Indians  
who lived along the Columbia River  
(Celilo Falls, unfortunately, is no more)  
Coastal Natives traveled up the Columbia River to fish at the waterfalls  
they brought with them to sell to the people of the mountains and the interior  
five species of salmon, dried clams, camas root, sea otter fur, haikwa (a precious seashell),  
seals, whale bone, oil from whales, and dogfish and a variety of other fish and foods

they also sold slaves they had captured  
Indians who lived along the Columbia River in the mountains exchanged dried or smoked salmon  
for buffalo, antelope and other meat delicacies  
mountain goat meat was considered a treat among many of the Coastal natives  
and they were happy to trade their fish for it  
for instance, people who lived on the western slopes of the Cascades  
brought goat meat to the Makah Indians and traded for whale meat and oil  
Plateau Natives such as Cayuse, Palouse, Umatilla and Nez Perce Indians  
traveled down the Columbia River on fishing expeditions to the waterfalls  
they brought antelope skins, bison robes, flints, dyes and beaver pelts  
they exchanged mountain sheep wool, porcupine quills, hand-made embroidery  
and a kind of grass from which Coastal women made delicate threads for sewing  
Chinook Indians living along the Columbia River  
became rich and powerful as middlemen in the trade  
Chinook Jargon composed of a variety of languages became the trading language for all natives  
Wishram natives living near The Dalles, (Oregon) grew rich trading without leaving home  
they caught fish for barter in exchange for roots, fur robes and later horses  
trade between the coast and the interior had to go through them  
they took a toll from all travelers by robbing them  
Trading for various commodities became quite complicated  
gatherings at the Columbia River fishing camps resembled a combination fair and carnival  
athletic contests, gambling, dancing, and later, horse racing  
provided welcome relief from fishing

#### COASTAL AND PLATEAU WOMEN WERE ESPECIALLY BUSY IN THE AUTUMN

Both Coastal and Plateau women often worked apart from the men during autumn  
as the women and children traveled to the mountains to gather roots and berries  
they also were busily occupied with preserving the bountiful yield  
much of the work of harvesting and preserving was done in groups  
seeds were gathered and stored for use throughout the year  
sunflower seeds were pounded into meal used for cooking meats  
pine seeds were roasted or boiled  
crab apples and nuts such as acorns and hazelnuts were gathered around the fringe of the forests  
tubers were used in great quantities by both the Coastal and Plateau people  
wapato (wild potato) grows in shallow lakes to about the size of an egg  
these have a white meat and are very sweet and nutritious  
wapato was eaten fresh or dried for use later  
berries in a seemingly infinite variety grew in season  
Oregon grape, gooseberry, salmon berry, raspberry, salal berry, wild strawberry  
these usually were sun dried or spread on cedar bark and dried over a fire for winter use

occasionally they were preserved by mashing them in a large basket  
then molding them into pemmican cakes  
elderberry and blackcaps (blackberries) were dried  
Indians burned away the underbrush so huckleberries would grow better  
trees were not damaged because lack of vegetation kept the fire from getting too hot  
both huckleberries and choke cherries sometimes were boiled  
tea was made from huckleberry leaves  
serviceberries and hawthorn berries were dried, pulverized, moistened,  
these were made into small pemmican cakes and dried again  
Plateau women also harvested roots, berries, nuts, seeds and gathered fruits in season  
roots of bracken fern and wood fern were gathered in the fall and winter  
kouse (an edible plant), bitterroot, wild onion and other roots  
were important food sources that grew on most prairies  
these formed a greater part of the Plateau diet than was necessary along the coast  
supplementary foods were also gathered by Plateau women  
tribes along the Snake River set grass fires to gather scorched grasshoppers  
dried grasshoppers were pulverized with a pestle in a mortar  
and beaten into a pemmican- like mass  
Okanogan natives made bread from tree moss that was dried  
to reduce the moss to a pasty condition which was then molded it into cakes  
dried the inner bark of pine trees were eaten  
dogs and horses (after they were introduced) were eaten in times of extreme want

#### AUTUMN WAS THE TIME WHEN COASTAL AND PLATEAU INDIAN MEN HUNTED

Both Coastal villagers and Plateau tribesmen were interested in hunting  
hunting dogs were bred for chasing game

Coastal and Plateau men used pit traps with sharp pointed stakes driven into the bottom  
bear traps consisted of a four foot to five-foot hole covered with brush dug under a horizontal pole  
two poles about ten feet high were erected near black bear tracks  
a heavy horizontal log (dead fall) was placed on top of the poles  
dead fall was attached to a rope that was tied to the brush which covered pit trap  
when the bear stepped onto the brush and crashed into the pit  
the horizontal pole crashed down on the animal  
the drop of the heavy log would (hopefully) kill the bear

Snare traps also were used on both sides of the Cascade Mountains for lesser land game animals  
deer, elk, caribou, mountain goat, wildcat, cougar  
as well as squirrels, rabbits, groundhogs and other small animals were killed for food  
all of the necessary materials for a snare trap were natural and readily available  
strong, young trees were used for the springs of the trap  
a release stick and a trigger stick were easily found and rawhide rope was available

Sometimes when deer or elk came close enough to the village to be considered game these large animals were run down and killed when they became exhausted or they were chased into the water where they were defenseless as they swam and were killed with arrows or clubs however, fear of the forests ruled our chasing game too far from the village and weapons were usually useless against large beasts

Also adding variety to the winter diet was beaver which were killed with spears when the hunters in canoes broke open the beaver's dam the beaver appeared to repair the break and would be killed

Birds were hunted by Coastal and Plateau Indians with success from early autumn into the winter in autumn duck, geese and other waterfowl were caught in large nets stretched between two tall poles placed upwind from a pond where ducks spent the night at a given signal natives carrying lighted torches would come out of the darkness yelling birds, frightened by the noise and lights, flew off head first into the net and would fall to the ground where the Indians would gather them as they lay stunned bird's neck would be broken by holding the duck's head and bill in one hand and swinging the bird's body in a circular motion

small parties of Coastal and Plateau men would hunt for several varieties of birds that provided variety in their diet

snipe, pheasant and grouse, smaller sized doves, and larger sized pigeons were hunted and eaten -- natives never ate gulls, eagles, or hawks

birds were hunted with a sling about three feet long made of willow bark string that had loops at the end for the fingers

pocket of the sling made of small piece of animal skin attached to the string held the missile

On the Pacific coast game meat and birds provided variety in the Indian diet

deer and elk provided venison that was dried with special care as the meat was cut into pieces and placed on a wooden frame to dry

fires were built on three sides and the meat was thoroughly roasted before it was hung higher above the fire and slowly dried

meat was kept in trees or covered with cedar bark to keep it out of the rain

if the coastal hunter was particularly successful everyone from the village gathered for a meal after the feast, the hunter gave presents to his friends

Some Plateau natives invaded the land of the Plains Indians during seasonal migrations

Flathead Indians of Western Montana joined with friendly Nez Perce natives of Idaho in the pursuit of buffalo beyond the Rocky Mountains

small in number, these wandering bands from the Columbia Basin were always wary as they knew they were trespassing in a foreign land

bison hunters used a sportsman-like chase to kill their prey

hunters removed all of their clothing

approaching their prey down-wind and from behind, the herd was stalked on foot

sometimes the hunter selected an animal and separated it from the herd  
by dashing between the animal and the other animals  
hunters would attempt to kill the bison with bow and arrow  
sometimes the herd was driven over a cliff over a “buffalo jump”  
herd members would follow the lead animal over the cliff  
native men and women waited below the jump  
wounded animals were killed with spears and clubs  
animals would be butchered where they lay  
(later acquisition of the horse made buffalo hunting easier)

#### COASTAL MEN HUNTED FOR A VARIETY OF SEA ANIMALS IN WINTER

Small parties of hunters along the Pacific Ocean set out in quest of porpoise, seal, sea lion and otter  
seals were especially valuable both for their meat and for their oil  
seal hunting was carried out from canoes using harpoons  
after the kill, the seal carcass was brought to the beach  
before butchering the seal, it was slowly rolled over in a fire to singe off the hair  
then its skin was scrapped off  
seal was cut open and the fat was removed  
seal grease was eaten with dried salmon and clams  
seal oil, stored in seal and fish bladders, was used by the villagers of Puget Sound  
sometimes oil was poured on a fire to make it burn better

#### PLATEAU NATIVE MEN HUNTED FOR A VARIETY OF MEAT IN WINTER

Plateau Indians lived their lives similar to the way Plains Indians lived  
they depended on deer, elk, bear and other game for food and clothing  
and to supplement their diet because salmon was less plentiful than along the coast  
these animals tended to live on the many small prairies and foothills of the Cascade Mountains  
After fall fishing season was over, hunting parties were organized  
all native people hunted large game at night -- particularly in the wintertime  
torches of pine heavily covered with pitch were carried  
coming upon a deer or elk the sudden light of the torch would startle the animal  
which would freeze long enough for the hunters to get a clear shot with bow and arrow  
sometimes an ambush was laid at the narrow end of a valley into which game was driven  
other times wooden traps and dead falls were used where trees were available

#### IN WINTER WHALES WERE AVAILABLE TO SOME OF THE COASTAL PEOPLE

Hoh, Quileute and Quinault Indians living on the Olympic Peninsula beside the Pacific Ocean  
simply searched for whale carcasses that washed up on the beach  
California Gray whales, about forty feet long, were frequent visitors to the coastal waters  
these were butchered and divided among the members of the village

each village member's status determined the allotment received  
S'Kallam Indians used "whale fencing" in their hunt for whales along the Strait of Juan de Fuca  
when a whale swam too close to shore and became stranded by the receding tide  
S'Kallams took to their canoes and drove long poles into the rocky beach  
thus they constructed a fence between the whale and open water  
as the whale attempted to swim away from the fence -- that is, closer toward the shore  
when the tide went out the whale became beached  
eventually the whale was high enough on the sand to allow for killing and butchering

#### MAKAH INDIANS CONDUCTED WHALE HUNTS IN WINTER

Makah Indians of Cape Flattery caught a few salmon and many halibut in their coastal waters  
but they were primarily renowned as the whalers of the Northwest  
cooler months were spent preparing and practicing with canoes, harpoons, floats and ropes  
whale hunts took place in November, December and January  
when whales migrated through the area

after appropriate ceremonies were held to honor the spirit of the whales  
natives usually ventured in groups of four canoes -- 100 or more men to a hunting party  
Makah natives were skilled hunters who were both strong and agile  
they were so respected by the other Indian people for their ability and daring  
they were considered to be the aristocrats among all of the Coastal Indian people  
they were always seated at the places of honor during native feasts and ceremonies

Nuu-chah-nult (formerly Nootka) Indians of Vancouver Island  
also hunted whales off the island's Pacific coast  
they also were held in very high esteem by other coastal natives

Today's Eskimos provide insight into the methods of ancient Northwest Indian whaling  
when Eskimos hunted whales along the Northwest Alaska coast  
they used open, ocean-going dugout canoes forty feet long and six feet wide  
each whaling crew member occupied the same place in the canoes  
and performed the same tasks as did whale hunters in Washington

equipment was much the same as that used by Makah hunters  
In the ancient whaling village of Ozette on the Olympic Peninsula's Makah Reservation  
artifacts of tools that indicate whale hunting activity dating back 2,000 years have been found

#### MAKAH INDIAN FAMILIES CONTROLLED DESIGNATED WHALE HUNTING GROUNDS

Makah Indians portioned off areas of the ocean into exclusive family allotments  
these areas were owned like property and were handed down from father to son  
various landmarks on the shore were used to establish where lines would intersect  
as if they had been drawn on a map -- a concept unknown to native people  
a Makah could take his canoe almost out of sight of land and still identify his family's area  
by sighting noted land features such as points of land, high mountains or river mouths

compasses and nautical tools were unnecessary  
because from the time each boy was old enough to ride in a canoes  
he was taught where the fishing and whaling areas were and who owned them

#### WHALING REMAINED UNCHANGED FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS

Big whaling canoes up to fifty- or sixty-feet long and over six feet wide  
held as many as twenty-five to thirty men and traveled as much as twenty miles into the Pacific  
whaling canoes, although very large, were tiny beside the gigantic whales

Makah whalers wore a poncho of seal skin to stay dry  
spruce root hats covered their heads and shaded their eyes  
bearskin robes were used for warmth

To propel the whaling canoe a thin and flat paddle blade and handle  
was carved out of one piece of maple or yew wood and tapered to a point at the bottom  
whaling paddles sanded smooth with shark skin or dogfish skin were indented much like a teaspoon  
for speed the spoon-shaped surface was used to propel the canoe  
quiet and caution were necessary to approach the whale

at a signal the paddles were turned sideways to silently slice through the water

Harpoons were constructed of yew wood shafts with a cedar bark rope attached to the harpoon  
it was necessary to come very close to the whale as the harpoon was thrust rather than thrown  
tip of the harpoon was made of flexible shell or elk horn (and later copper) tied to the shaft  
when the harpoon was thrust into the whale, the tip flattened against the shaft  
as the harpooner pulled back on the harpoon the tip sprung open and remained in the animal  
one end of a long rope was attached to the harpoon  
and the other end of the rope was attached to the canoe

#### WHALING CHIEF WAS DESIGNATED TO THRUST THE HARPOON

Whaling chief was a man of great religious powers who knew the whales and seals  
he was highly regarded and well rewarded for his exalted position as the harpooner  
these very exceptional leaders had been taught songs  
to encourage the animals to become food for the people  
these songs, passed down in families from generation to generation,  
were a family's most treasured heirloom  
there was no greater insult or theft than to steal a song from a family  
whenever someone tried to do so a great crisis was generated in the village  
In the canoe the harpooner was followed in importance by the steersman

#### WHALE HUNTING WAS EXCITING AND FUN FOR THE MAKAHS

When the harpooner located a whale, he raised his arm holding the harpoon into the air  
this was the signal for paddlers turned their paddles 90°  
and use the edge of the paddle to displace the water

almost silently, they approached the whale  
Harpooner attempted to drive the harpoon into the whale  
once the harpoon had been thrust into the whale, inflated seal bladders attached to the harpoon line  
were used as floats to slow the wounded animal and keep it from diving

Wounded whales could react in several ways:

- sounding -- diving toward the bottom of the ocean  
when this occurred that harpooner would use his thumb to feel the rope as it exited the canoe  
if the rope was exiting too fast or the end of the rope was approaching  
the harpooner simply cut the rope and let the whale go
- swimming away pulling the canoe after it at breakneck speed  
natives grabbed the gunwales of the canoe and held on  
hoping the whale would not turn and attack the canoe smashing it to pieces
- stopping in the water and flipping its tail thus smashing the canoe to pieces

Sometimes whales carried the hunters out to sea fifty or more miles

Makah natives always found their way home

even in high seas and in thick fog banks, their navigation was unerring

All of the canoes of the expedition would approach the injured whale to give assistance

they would attempt to sink additional harpoons into the whale

thus more and more seal bladders were attached

the great mammal became exhausted dragging so many floats

as the whale lost some of its agility and it became increasingly difficult to swim

Natives used the whale's great strength to deliver it to a more convenient place to be killed

Indians maneuvered their canoes to drive the harpooned whale toward the beach

When the whale was near death, native swimmers jumped into the water and dived under the whale

they placed a series of ropes attached to sets of two seal bladders (floats) at opposite ends

under the whale to form a sling to hold up the whale

seal bladders were then blown up to keep the whale afloat

canoes lined up and worked together as the whale was guided and towed to the beach

when the whalers finally arrived at the beach with their prize

natives could finish killing and butchering the animal

On the beach a celebration took place which usually lasted for days and ended with a feast

blubber (whale fat) was eaten and boiled to extract whale oil that was of great value to the village

harpooner was rewarded for his skill and daring as he was given the choicest portion -- the hump

he saw to the distribution of shares to the crew and other members of the village

Much of the wonder of this spiritual and economic activity was how successful the Makahs were

as they beached the gigantic animals with tools and canoes totally inadequate for the task

since they did not try to kill the whale immediately

it was a rare occasion when the Makahs lost a whale

## CEREMONIES MARKED IMPORTANT EVENTS IN THE LIVES OF NATIVE AMERICANS

Birth, entry into adulthood and death were each important ritually protected events  
most ceremonies included some time for smoking  
all men smoked pipes for pleasure and ceremony -- women were not allowed to take part  
pipe's bowl was made of stone and the stem was from a hollow bird bone or plant stem  
mixture of bark and tobacco known as kinnikinnick served as tobacco  
when pipes were smoked the breath, believed by Indians to be source of life, became visible  
exhaled smoke rose to The Changer carrying prayers  
when a pipe was shared it was believed the smokers shared the same breath

#### MOST COASTAL NATIVE CEREMONIES WERE HELD DURING THE WINTER

Because a great variety of food was available in such abundance along the coast  
Indians, therefore, were free to develop an impressive social life  
Coast culture was the most spectacular of all of the natives in the Pacific Northwest  
and, perhaps, in all of North America  
Dreary and very rainy winter along the coast was the time for the most important religious ceremonies  
with the one exception of the first-salmon ceremonies which were observed  
at the beginning of the salmon run in the spring  
when not involved in religious rituals, Indians spent their time making needed household goods  
and fishing steelhead trout which returned to the rivers in winter  
to provide fresh meat which was added to foods preserved during the previous summer

#### WINTER CEREMONY PROVIDES NATIVES AN OPPORTUNITY TO HONOR THEIR SPIRIT

According to legend, once a year the Guardian Spirit must leave the person  
and travel in a counter-clockwise direction around the earth  
during this journey the Guardian Spirit could be gone for up to a year  
Guardian Spirits gambled and traded as they traveled and the owner's luck varied  
according to the success of his or her spirit experienced during its travels  
Guardian Spirit came back to the owner in time for the Winter Ceremony  
which was held beginning sometime between mid-November and the beginning of January  
when the Guardian Spirit returned, the owner felt sick  
and he or she would hear their Spirit Song singing in their ears  
Eight to ten weeks were exclusively given over to spirit dances during the Winter Ceremony  
which featured individuals singing and dancing -- and perhaps a presentation of gifts  
impersonating a person's Guardian Spirit was part of the ceremony  
dancers wore spirit masks that were identified with their Guardian Spirit  
if no mask was worn the spirit has entered the performer's body and he or she was possessed  
those watching saw the participant not just as representatives of the spirit  
but as the spirit itself who had descended from the Spirit World to dance and sing  
therefore, the dancer must act out every detail of everything told in the spirit's legend  
and the performer was not responsible for what was done during the performance

friends were called upon to help the dancer sing the Spirit Song and dance the Spirit Dance  
if no one knew the song the friends followed along and learned it  
During the ceremony each individual was expected to give gifts to guests, family, and friends  
when the dancing and singing, which could last for several days, was over  
it was expected, if the performer was rich enough, a gift of many blankets  
would be given to the friends who had assisted  
if the performer was poor no gifts were expected  
Plateau native Colville Indians' Winter Dance featured a special "power" performance<sup>17</sup>  
known as "going behind the blanket"  
while blowing steadily on a whistle, the "powerseeker" stepped behind a mat or blanket  
hung between him and the audience  
he soon reappeared with his arms behind him, thumbs tied to his belt with rope  
before the eyes of the audience, the knots were untied and he disappeared behind the blanket  
the powerseeker repeated this activity seven times  
during the rest of the performance behind the blanket he was "cut in two" by a rope  
and reassembled by the spirits  
then he was carried away by the "Owl Spirit" and finally was restored to his normal self  
audience participated by lighting a smudge, passing the pipe and asking questions of the spirits  
no other group of Indians did the behind the blanket ceremony

#### INDIAN MEN WITH THE SAME GUARDIAN SPIRIT FORMED SECRET SOCIETIES

Every winter both Coastal and Plateau Indian children watched Secret Society members  
perform their spirit songs and dances which had been taught to them by their Guardian Spirits  
Society members shared prestige given to them because they possessed a particular Guardian Spirit  
to belong to any society a youth had to be from the higher classes  
in order to pay the dues and provide the required feast  
very elaborate displays of their status were made during the Winter Ceremony  
elaborately carved masks representing the spirit were worn  
these masks were carved only in secret, usually in the seclusion of the deep woods,  
so that no uninitiated person could discover and identify the maker  
secret society decrees governed how often and how long a mask could be used  
"Black Spirit Society" was one of the most prestigious among the Coastal people<sup>18</sup>  
this society's dominating spirit was a very frightening one  
probably a cannibal monster from past ages  
this spirit was greatly desired because of the power it gave to endure pain and heal the sick  
but the spirit could not be found by mere seeking  
when the requirements of the Black Society, including initiation, had been completed  
members could wear a hideous mask

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<sup>17</sup> Cecil Dryden, *Dryden's History of Washington*, P. 21.

<sup>18</sup> Cecil Dryden, *Dryden's History of Washington*, P. 22.

and join in the terrifying rituals of the society to show they felt no pain,  
Makahs slashed their arms and legs and danced with blood streaming  
although this society was disappearing by the time Europeans arrived  
it was still known to the Chinooks, Quileutes, Makahs, S'Klallams,  
and some of the Puget Sound villages  
No Secret Societies existed in the Interior tribes  
all of the men and some of the women of the village danced during the Winter Ceremony

#### INDIAN RECREATION CELEBRATED THE JOYS OF COMMUNAL LIVING

Native Americans held children's games were important whenever a group gathered  
shinny (a kind of hockey) where sticks were used to drive balls over a one-mile course  
wrestling and tug-of-war were played  
marksmanship games also honed skills and sportsmanship  
Adult athletic contest were displays of both skill and good fortune  
which proved their Guardian Spirit was active and helping in daily life  
gamboling was a favorite activity and was conducted almost constantly  
in addition to providing recreations gambling also was a method of redistributing wealth  
women watched men gamble and helped by singing -- but never participated with the men  
if a man lost everything he owned gambling, he might sell himself into slavery

#### THE BONE GAME WAS LONG AND COMPLEX

The Bone Game was played for thousands of years between rival teams within a village  
or between disputing tribes, and even nations in conflict  
since a higher value was placed on human life than was placed on material possessions  
each side was willing to set and lose significant stakes rather than go to war over the dispute  
Two teams of five players each were formed -- each player had a role in the game  
all decisions were made by consensus adding greatly to the time necessary to play the game  
first the five ritual roles had to be filled: the verbal negotiator, the silent negotiator,  
two hidiers and one pointer  
Selecting who played what role was time consuming  
first a "Power Object" had to be selected  
each player on a team offered a personal treasure to serve in that capacity  
only the person holding the Power Object could speak -- all others had to pay attention  
all of the proposed Power Objects were passed counter-clockwise one at a time  
around the circle of five players  
when the Power Object was received the owner explained why this was good choice  
in turn the other players explained why this would be a good or bad choice  
after all of the potential Power Objects had been considered a vote was taken  
one thumb up for YES; thumb down for NO; palm open face up for NEUTRAL  
next, using the same process, players were selected for each position

holding the Power Object each player explained why he or she was a good choice for a position  
after completing the circle a vote was taken for each of the five positions  
verbal negotiator was the only person who could speak to the other team  
and then only to that team's verbal negotiator  
silent negotiator reminded the verbal negotiator of his or her team's intent and wishes  
and could report on the other team's actions and intent to the verbal negotiator  
two people served as hiders who actually played the game trying to hid the bones  
pointer was to identify where the bones were hidden by the other team's hiders  
After making all of these decisions by consensus with each player fully speaking his or her mind  
a meeting was held by the two verbal negotiators assisted by the silent negotiators  
to decide where the game would be played  
after reporting back to their respective teams a decision regarding the location  
was reached by consensus using the usual process  
Next the stakes for the game had to identified -- this could a collection of individual wagers  
or a collective wager proposed by the whole team  
these stakes were real and the losing team must be willing to deliver what was bet  
one team might wager all of their winter wheat while the other team wagered eight slaves  
or, perhaps, a war was avoided  
again the verbal negotiators aided by the silent negotiator met to reach an agreement on the wager  
none of these processes could be rushed -- time is of no significance  
Now the game itself actually began as each team's two hiders sat across from each other  
four magic carved or painted bones small enough to fit in a person's closed hand were displayed  
two were worth one point each and two were worth no points  
one team's two hiders went away to decide who would hold which bones where and how  
each team member provided advice on how to best hide the bones to confuse the other team  
for example, one hider might hold a one-point bone in one hand and a no point bone  
in the other  
or both point bones might be held in one hand and the no point bones were held in the other  
while the other holder held nothing  
Before the game started the bones must the shown to the other team's pointer so there is no dispute  
team members silently stood behind their hiders who passed the bones back and forth  
and used slight of hand to confuse the other team's pointer  
finally they stopped and the pointer used his or her index fingers to point out  
where bones were being held  
this could take as long as the pointer wanted before the actual guess was made  
spiritual help in selecting the location of the point bones was acceptable  
when the bones were displayed the points, if any, were added  
this game was played to seven and could take several days to complete

## POTLATCH CEREMONIES REDISTRIBUTED THE WEALTH OF NATIVE AMERICANS

Huge feasts were the most important social event for the coastal native people  
custom of holding a “potlatch” centered on today’s Vancouver Island  
most of what we know about potlatches has been learned  
from the Kwailutl and Nuu-chah-nulth (Nootka) Indians  
although all Coastal Indians of today’s United States and Canada held potlatches  
potlatches, usually were held in winter and included a feast, singing and costumed dancers  
S’Kallams and Quinaults on the Pacific Coast infused potlatches into the Winter Ceremony  
Potlatches were conducted to celebrate some important event in the life of the host or his village  
such as a birth, or receiving a Guardian Spirit, a marriage, or to mark finishing a new longhouse  
this gesture also could be suggested by the host’s Guardian Spirit  
if a man had the “wealth” spirit, his “partner” might say to him: **“You had better throw away our  
money now. I (the spirit) would like to hear all the shamans sing their song.”**<sup>19</sup>  
occasionally, a “Dignity Potlatch” might be necessary to offset some humiliation  
in Northwest Coast native culture a person could not be laughed at or they lost all dignity  
if a chief had an embarrassing moment such as falling out of a canoe  
a smaller potlatch was held to reestablish his dignity  
Most importantly, potlatches became a way for families to display their wealth  
it was considered meritorious to give away everything and start over  
generosity made a man famous  
a wealthy man enjoyed distributing his wealth himself rather than after his death  
purpose of the potlatch was to humiliate the guests by out-giving each of them  
the host’s social position could be altered depending on the potlatch’s size and success  
Each person invited to a potlatch received gifts related to his social rank  
canoes, slaves, carved serving dishes, candlefish oil and other possessions were redistributed  
the more wealth given away, the more prestige was bestowed on the host and his family  
Potlatch feasts were held in the potlatch house if the village was wealthy enough to have one  
very wealthy, prominent hosts would have a longhouse specifically for potlatching  
and for housing guests  
some potlatches lasted as long as two to three weeks

#### EXTENSIVE PREPARATIONS WERE NECESSARY FOR A POTLATCH

Potlatches were hosted by a prominent aristocratic Indian for all of his extend family members  
this large family unit was thought to have descended from a mythical animal  
who descend to Earth and removed his animal mask thus becoming human  
the mask became a significant family heirloom passed from father to son  
along with the name of the ancestor  
each member of the family was an incarnation of the founder  
During the potlatch titles associated with masks and other objects were redistributed

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<sup>19</sup> Cecil Dryden, *Dryden’s History of Washington*, P. 21.

each family member held title to a rank which identified where he sat at the potlatch  
one person could hold several ranks and could be elevated or demoted  
depending on the number and significance of the gifts presented to him during the potlatch  
in effect, the host challenged each guest to exceed his "power" in giving away or destroying goods  
if the guest later did not return 100 percent on the gifts received and destroy even more wealth  
he and his people lost face and so his power was diminished

It could take years for a wealthy Indian to save up enough property to give a proper potlatch  
host must collect canoes, mats, blankets, jewelry, baskets, carved boxes,  
cooking, serving and eating dishes, and hundreds of other items which were needed  
valuables were taken from storage places to be given as gifts  
huge amounts of food must be prepared to feed guests  
slaves had to be purchased to provide service for the guests

#### POTLATCH CEREMONY WAS A GALA EVENT

Host sent out invitations to his family members in the village and in surrounding villages  
guests arrived wearing their best clothing  
each guest brought gifts of fish, deer, blankets, shell money and other valuables to the host  
in an attempt to bring more than was received back in gifts  
thus shaming the host with their generosity

An official orator greeted the guests as they arrived at the beach  
village orator gave long speeches telling the story of the host's family and the village history  
he sang and danced during the especially significant parts  
as the orator talked, presents were piled before the orator by the guests  
everyone was anxious to give something to a famous speaker

Strict rules of seating were observed  
the guest with the greatest wealth and highest social position  
was seated first at the right hand of the host  
next most honored guest was seated at the left hand of the host  
next most honored guest seated at the right hand of the most honored guest  
next most honored guest seated at the left hand of the second most honored guest  
the seating would continue down the length of the serving area  
commoners and slaves must be content with what was left

Each village performed their ceremonial dance during the potlatch  
while villagers danced, other village members gave presents to the spectators

Several rounds of gifts were given by the host throughout the potlatch  
each person receiving a gift was under an obligation to the host  
guests were disgraced if in the future they could not invite the host to a potlatch of their own  
and return gifts of even more value -- host anticipated getting back more than he had given

#### CONCLUSION OF THE POTLATCH

Each person, from the most exalted to the lowest, had received part of the natural wealth of the region  
this was a form of Indian communism  
but the resources were redistributed according to wealth rather than according to need  
this mutual sharing of the natural resources made it difficult in later times  
for United States government officials to impose a system of ownership on natives  
However, the host had kept his most important possessions for himself  
his family name and his valuable resource-producing assets  
such as the rights to his hunting and fishing grounds and berry-picking patch  
in the meantime, his personal status had been enhanced  
of course, he now anticipated attending other potlatches as an important guest  
who would receive much more material wealth in return

#### NORTHWEST NATIVES PRODUCED EXCELLENT ARTWORK

Coastal women produced beautifully woven artwork  
spinning thread was done with a spindle and whorl (flywheel or pulley)  
spindle was held under the spinner's right knee and was set in motion by twisting one end  
while the other end of the spindle was held up high  
by means of the thread held in her left hand  
spinner twisted wool on her right thigh to be added into the thread  
when part of the thread was twisted sufficiently, it was wound on the spindle near the whorl  
and was further twisted by the rotation of the spindle  
more wool to be added into the thread was then twisted on her thigh  
other materials such as inner cedar bark and nettle threads could be added  
and the mixture spun into the thread  
soft down of duck or goose feathers stripped of quills and pounded with a hard stick  
was mixed with the downy fiber of fireweed, milkweed and mountain goat fibers  
which had been pulled from bushes or removed from a goat that had been killed  
women beat white clay and vegetable fibers into the wool to whiten it  
Weaving the threads on a loom into material gave the artist an opportunity to develop her artistic skills  
and to dress her family well  
each loom was made of two straight posts set on the floor of the house and leaned against a wall  
cross pieces, one at the top and other at the bottom, ran through holes drilled in the uprights  
weft (horizontal) threads were stretch across the loom  
warp (vertical) threads were woven through the weft and attached to the cross pieces  
S'Kallam Indians of the Olympic Peninsula raised a special breed of dog with very woolly hair  
these were kept on several small, isolated islands in Puget Sound  
women took canoes to the islands each day to feed the dogs  
dogs, their forelegs were tied together, were shorn like sheep  
S'Kallam women used a stone knife or a mussel shell to chip off the dog's hair  
which was combed into strands with the fingers

these strands were made into threads by use of a wooden spindle  
dog wool was skillfully woven into robes that were sometimes called “Salish blankets”<sup>20</sup>  
that were used as bedding and, in winter, as robes

Dyes added color and interesting designs to clothing, baskets and mats

mud was used to make black while Oregon Grape root produced very pretty yellow  
cherry bark gave a bright red

wool sometimes was dyed pink with hemlock or alder bark

other plants and plant combinations also were used to provide an endless variety of colors

#### COASTAL WOMEN’S BASKETRY ART WAS HIGHLY DEVELOPED

Coastal Indian women gathered grasses in summer and soaked the fibers in water until winter arrived  
when they had time to patiently pull the fibers into threads

Village differences could be seen in the variety of baskets woven:

- some villages made coiled baskets with a foundation made of dried cedar root  
these were used for cooking purposes;
- softer twined baskets with borders of dog wool were made by S’Kallam villagers  
these were used to store possessions;
- loosely twined baskets with ribbed twill bottoms also were made  
these were used to store dried foods -- often they were lined with maple leaves

#### COASTAL NATIVE MEN ALSO WERE EXCELLENT ARTISTS

Coastal art found a highly developed expression in woodcarving and painting

distinctive style of artwork developed by Coastal men was unsurpassed for beauty and expression

Tools and techniques for carving, splitting, joining and steaming Western Red Cedar  
allowed Coastal people to augment their lives materially, artistically and spiritually  
wood carvers used two main tools:

- adze carving tools were used to rough out the shape and to carve fine details;
- hand hammers made of stone hammerheads fastened to wooden handles  
and bone and antler hammers were used for detail work

when sanding was necessary, a sandstone block or dogfish skin “sandpaper” was used

sometimes shark skin, when it was available, was used to polish the finish

cedar root was also used in the construction of beautiful and useful objects

Highly prized useful products were skillfully constructed by craftsmen

baby cradles were crafted from cedar posts

decorated wooden storage chests, dishes and bowls all were beautifully made and highly prized

beautifully carved fanciful wooden masks were worn during ceremonial dances

watertight bent wood cedar cooking boxes were used -- often these were works of art

one single split cedar board made all four sides of the box

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<sup>20</sup> Cecil Dryden, *Dryden’s History of Washington*. P. 12.

this long board was thinly notched across its width at three equally separated points  
steam was used to make the board pliable and soft enough to bend at the notches  
two ends of the board were joined to make the fourth corner  
which was fastened with wooden pegs or sewn together  
when the box was allowed to dry the wood contracted and closed the joint  
making the box entirely waterproof

#### COASTAL INDIANS WERE HIGHLY SKILLED WOODCARVERS

Carvings made in soft cedar wood recorded the events in the family's history  
tall posts on either side of the door, houses posts and beams were beautifully carved  
with small, delicate designs, characters and symbols shown in intricate detail  
sometimes part of the post was painted red  
this art reflected the life events and myths of previous generations of villagers  
Art objects such as house posts, grave posts and a myriad of other carvings  
demonstrated the craftsmanship prized among the Coastal natives  
Cedar withes (slender and flexible branches) were used to make a sturdy three-ply rope  
an example of which was found in a whaler's longhouse at the Ozette archeological sight  
as was a harpoon head made of mussel shell stored in an envelope of cedar bark  
Coastal natives lived inside a family history book  
figures such as the Guardian Spirits of the residents or legends of the family living in the house  
were often displayed as was the tribal mascot  
mascots were usually the figure of a bear, raven, eagle or another animal  
they represented supernatural powers that had helped the family's ancestors  
if a new owner took over a longhouse and no house posts remained available for carving  
he would add on and carve his Guardian Spirit and the life events of his family  
Totem poles were rarely made by most of the Indians of Washington State  
however, wonderful totem poles were carved by the Haida people  
who lived in British Columbia's Queen Charlotte Islands (now renamed Haida Gwaii)  
and the Tsimshian people of today's British Columbia and Alaska  
and Tlingit natives of Alaska  
totem pole carving skills eventually were carried down the coast to northern Washington

#### PLATEAU INDIANS ALSO WERE SKILLED ARTISTS

Plateau Indians were not as materialistic as the Coastal people because they had to move so often  
natives of the interior could not collect and carry as many things with them  
possessions were not as highly prized as they were on the Pacific Coast  
however, basket containers and receptacles, often acquired through trade, were widely used  
Decorative art was simple and inconspicuous compared to the coast  
woodworking was insignificant compared to the coast  
Plateau Indians could not spend the time making beautiful objects as food was not as available

frequent moves and lack of suitable materials discouraged Plateau artists  
from building and keeping large art objects

## JEWELRY WAS IMPORTANT TO THE PEOPLE OF THE PACIFIC COAST

All Indians enjoyed decorating themselves -- men also wore jewelry

Coastal Indians were strongly attracted to the colorful and ornamental  
no costume was complete without jewelry

Coastal people were especially fond of necklaces and bracelets

strings of shells were used as both necklaces for decoration and as money

shells made from animal teeth or tusks, bone, clams and stone were all used for necklaces

beaver teeth, bear claws, clam shells, string of shell fish, and most highly prized of all,  
slender, white tuck-shaped marine mollusks (dentalium), were often used

Natives Americans wore body piercings

nose jewelry was placed in the septum separating the nostrils -- this was used as shell money

lip jewelry, such as fragments of abalone shell and other beautiful shells were inserted

Northern Washington Coastal villagers usually pierced their children's noses at about age five

most native children had their ear lobes pierced at about age eight

this procedure took place in connection with receiving a second name

hole made with a bone awl by an old person who was paid for their service

sinew was kept in the hole to prevent it from closing

only wealthy Indian men and women pierced around the rim of the ear

Many Coastal natives adorned themselves with body paint

paint made from colored powders and deer tallow was used for these decorations

paints were used for both ornament and protection of the skin against bad weather

both men and women painted their faces red to prevent chapping

sometimes painting was done with designs related to the individual's Guardian Spirit

Tattooing the body was practiced only by Coastal women

girls at age ten or twelve were tattooed using a gooseberry thorn and charcoal

tattoos were usually placed on the lower arm or the leg just below the knee

these designs were purely decorative -- they had no connection with the spirit world

## NORTHWEST NATIVES ENJOYED A VARIETY OF FOOD AND CLOTHING

Native Americans usually wore very little if any clothing during the spring and summer

men below the upper class wore a breech clout or nothing in warm weather

men often went bareheaded

women of middle and poorer classes wore a sash of coiled nettle root tied around the waist

from which strands of twisted inner cedar bark fiber hung to form a knee-length fringed skirt

this gave women the appearance of waddling when they walked

in some villages women wore a six inch strip of deerskin four feet long as a breech clout

no covering was used for the upper part of the body

Clothing worn by the nobility and at ceremonies was very elaborate and beautiful  
upper class women wore a shirt that extended from the shoulders to below the knees  
long sleeve shirts worn by these women had strings of shells sewn to the underarms  
and often had shells or sea otter fur stitched around the neck  
short sleeve shirts worn by upper class women had sleeves to the elbow  
which were often trimmed with sea otter fur  
leggings that were tied at the knee with straps also were sometimes worn  
well-to-do Indian men wore a breech clout and buckskin leggings from the waist to the ankles  
leggings were not sewn together like trousers  
inner cedar bark was used to make a variety of durable and functional articles of clothing  
such as cedar bark tunics and rain hats suitable for the damp climate and water travel  
Indians along the west coast, both men and women, went barefoot

Coastal peoples wore two types of basketry hats as protection against the rain:

- large cone-shaped hats with a broad brim known a “cheapool” was made of woven spruce root which spread out over the shoulders was worn by most of the Coastal people;
- Chinook people and other tribes along the ocean wore conical shape and brimless hats made of tightly woven inner cedar bark or spruce fibers and grass fibers woven with designs of whales and animals -- sometimes with a knob on the top

As the rainy season set in along the Pacific coast  
Coastal people used oil from fish to protect their bodies against rain and dampness  
oil was rubbed onto the skin as a cosmetic and as a coating to repel rain  
women wore a twined fiber cape of cedar bark over a buckskin shirt  
which reached to the hip and tied together down the front with a buckskin thong  
this outer cover provided added protection from the rain

As the weather became colder and wetter more clothes were added  
both men and women of all classes wore two kinds of shirts in cold weather  
sometimes they wore a shirt with long sleeves but usually the sleeves were short  
woven blankets or animal skin robes also were added in the winter  
hides used in producing these robes were either dressed on both sides  
or the animal hair was worn to the inside  
both genders wore rain capes made of shredded bark or mats, bear skin or seal skin  
that were thrown over the back, spread out over the shoulders and fastened across the chest  
usually with animal hair to the outside, but reversed in cold weather  
winter moccasins were sewn with the animal hair still attached and turned to the inside  
most people wore caps of beaver, elk, or deer skin  
poor people and slaves wore a plain blanket over the shoulders

Along the western slope of the Cascades where walking was more important and more difficult  
natives wore leggings and shirts of animal skin to protect them from the underbrush  
clothes of buckskin were suitable for mountain life as they were light weight and easy to move in

## CLOTHING OF THE PLATEAU PEOPLE WAS NOT AS VARIED

Both genders of the Plateau Indians wore buckskin smocks, leggings and deerskin moccasins made of one piece of hide with a seam up the toe  
a flap made of tanned animal skin was sewn around the top of the moccasin  
a separate piece, often decorated with beads, was sewn over the instep  
moccasins were tied with a strap around the ankle

heavy buffalo robes were highly coveted by both men and women

Plateau Indians added variety to their clothing by decorated their garments in many ways  
fringe could be added at the bottom of dresses and skirts  
ends of the sleeves were accented with the teeth and claws of wild animals, porcupine quills, feathers, fur, bone tubes from small animals and birds and scalps of foes killed in battle

## VARIETY OF COOKING METHODS MADE MEALS INTERESTING

Cooking fires were started in a fireplace hearth

very dry cottonwood root with a series of notches on one side held the tinder fire starter  
tinder was finely shredded cedar bark that was placed in the notches  
fire was usually ignited with a hand-drill of very dry cedar  
twirling the cedar drill in the cottonwood notch caused the shredded bark to ignite

Cooking methods varied by the meal being prepared and the pleasure of the cook

Coastal Indian women were able to devote some of their creative energy toward cooking  
typical native women could easily relate more than 200 recipes  
for preparing and combining food staples such as salmon, berries, camas root and vegetables  
without exhausting her mental cookbook  
men often helped with the cooking, serving and cleaning up -- especially on ceremonial occasions  
during the rainy season along the coast cooking was moved indoors  
as the fire was built in the fire pit in the longhouse floor -- one hearth per family;

Methods of preparing foods varied almost as much as the food supplies:

- poaching food in watertight baskets and boxes was popular with the Coastal Indians  
to cook in watertight baskets, fish or small pieces of meat, berries, roots, etc.  
were placed in a basket of water into which stones heated by the cooking fire  
were dropped to bring the water to a boil  
these stones were handled with wooden tongs  
after being boiled the fish was placed on a platter  
family members stood around the kettle  
seashells or spoons made from mountain sheep horn were used  
to scoop up the remaining food and broth from the cooking basket or box  
or the broth was ladled into serving dishes of bark or wood as the Indians sat on the ground;
- baking was done frequently along the Pacific coast  
a fire pit was dug in the ground and lined with stones

- a fire was built in the bottom of the pit and round stones were added to the fire to retain heat  
meat was placed atop the stones  
leaves were placed over the meat to keep it clean and the hole was filled with dirt  
meat was left to cook for the proper amount of time  
fish was covered with slabs of split driftwood on which round stones were laid  
and the same baking process was used  
this method was particularly successful for tough-fiber plants like camas root;
- steaming was accomplished using watertight baskets or boxes to hold the food being prepared  
a tight lid held the steam in the cooking basket or box  
smooth stones were heated around the fire and picked up with a forked stick  
these were placed in the basket or box which was partially filled with water  
during steaming other heated stones were add to keep the water boiling
  - barbequing (broiling) salmon was done on an upright wooden framework  
salmon was held to the vertical frame with wooden dowels woven around the upright stick  
to sear the salmon and retain the moisture the framework was placed close to the fire  
cooking commenced after searing when the fish was moved away from the fire  
it would be moved closer to or away from the fire as needed  
to maintain the proper cooking temperature;
  - drying in the sun and wind resulted in a verity of jerkies being preserved for later use  
meat, fish, game and roots were all prepared in this manner  
salmon eggs, considered a great winter delicacy, were dried and smoked  
sun-drying food along the coast was risky because of the inconsistent drying southerly wind  
and the usually high humidity;
  - smoking meat, fish and eggs required a smokehouse which cooked and preserved at the same time  
smoke houses for curing fish and the drying racks were privately owned  
(this distinction between community ownership of the means of catching fish  
and family ownership of the means of preserving fish was misunderstood for decades  
by lawyers involved in fishing rights cases who insisted that because Indians  
shared the fishing weirs they had no concept of individual property rights  
but if there was no way to preserve the fish once it was caught fishing was of little value  
this fact indicates the importance of personal property rights to the Indians)<sup>21</sup>

## COASTAL NATIVES GATHERED FOR MEALS

Only two meals were served a day -- about 9:00 a.m. and again at about 6:00 p.m.

before sitting down to a meal, mats were placed on the floor

to assure guests were completely satisfied men and guests ate first -- women and children ate after

Table manners centered on personal cleanliness necessary because of the use of common serving dishes

each villager washed his hands and dried them on towels made of inner cedar bark

each villager rinsed out his or her mouth with water -- they never drank liquids during the meal

solid food was picked up with the fingers  
at the end of each course, a bucket of water and towel was passed around for washing

#### SERVING PLATTERS OF THE COAST WERE AN ART FORM

No pottery dishes existed -- both serving platters and individual dishes were made of wood  
serving platters shaped like blunt nosed canoes were several feet long  
cooking containers such as boxes and baskets also were used at the "table"  
Serving dishes used for parties, feasts and ceremonies were elaborately carved and decorated  
these were much more beautiful than every day dishes -- they were works of art  
carved slate or wooden bowls were highly polished and inlaid with bits of shell  
some bowls were extremely large -- usually constructed in the shape of an animal  
and sometimes in the shape of humans  
wooden ladles and horn spoons were used for serving  
those too poor to own wooden ladles for eating could use clam shells

#### COASTAL AND PLATEAU NATIVE PEOPLE PRACTICED PERSONAL CLEANLINESS

Cleanliness was extremely important to Coastal Indians -- bathing was a daily ritual  
during the bath the body was rubbed with rotted twigs or yew leaves  
shredded inner cedar bark was used as a towel  
white stones found on river banks were used like soap  
Personal grooming care was consistent among all of the natives of the Pacific Northwest  
tweezers made from deer horn were used to remove men's facial hair  
combs were made of yew wood and measured about eight inches in length  
while the teeth were about three inches long  
very little girls wore their hair hanging loose  
young girls' hair was braided tightly to make it grow better  
before marriage, a girl's hair was combed and dressed by her mother or grandmother  
women parted their hair down the middle from the forehead to the nape of the neck  
their hair hung loose on both sides covering the ears from there it was braided on each side  
ends of the braids were wrapped with buckskin and tied  
men and boys parted their hair in the middle and it was tied in a knot with buckskin on the neck  
when men went to war, they braided their hair in one braid  
and tied the braid to the top of the head with buckskin  
when a man's hair grew too long it was cut off at the waist line  
rich men often braided otter skin into their hair for ceremonial occasions  
sometimes duck down was put into the hair and painted red

#### NATIVES AMERICANS ADVANCED THROUGH THE STAGES OF LIFE

Babies were appreciated and enjoyed by everyone -- especially the grandparents

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<sup>21</sup> Vine Deloria, Jr., *Indians of the Pacific Northwest*, P. 13.

Toddlers explored their world through play  
Children began to learn important life skills -- play is the work of children  
Quest for a Guardian Spirit provided entry into adulthood  
Marriage was arranged for both men and women  
Adult Native Americans provided the necessities of life and family stability, enjoyed recreation,  
recognized the Spirit World and appreciated the role of The Changer  
Old age was a happy time for Indians as their responsibilities diminished  
and there were grandchildren

#### BABIES WERE GREATLY APPRECIATED AND WELL PROVIDED WITH LOVE

New born babies were thought to have come from a land of babies where they lived happily  
while there, babies were free from all adult interference and happily enjoyed other babies

Indian babies usually received a series of names throughout their lifetime

almost all native people gave the child a nickname at birth

girls used this name to about age eight

boys used this name to about age ten or twelve

Infancy was a very uncertain time for parents as Indians suffered a high rate of infant mortality  
they believed that if not kept happy the baby would return to the land of babies

that special place where infants might live and play without adults making demands

babies were very well cared for so they would choose to remain with their parents

Cradleboard, with slight variations, was universally the same for all natives and for both boys and girls

cradleboard was home for the baby for at least the first year of life

cylinder to hold the baby was attached with strips of buckskin

laced through holes burned in a small flat cedar plank

naked infant was placed inside the cradleboard

shredded talcum powder-like inner cedar bark was used to fill the cradleboard

padded rolls of inner cedar bark were placed under the neck, arm pits and under the knees

sometimes padded rolls were used to flatten the baby's head

babies were cared for like a valuable treasure as he or she enjoyed complete security

baby was nearly always strapped to the mother's back

and viewed the world over mother's right shoulder

Mother and baby enjoyed a great deal of physical contact

every day Indian infants were taken out of the cradleboard and washed in lukewarm water

mothers massaged their babies daily to make them grow straight and strong

baby was fondled and caressed and wrapped in a fur for warmth

fresh shredded soft inner cedar bark was placed in the cradleboard

and the baby was returned to its familiar secure surroundings

#### TODDLERS WERE CAREFULLY GUIDED IN THE WAYS OF THE INDIANS

Instruction began early for Indian children on both sides of the Cascade Mountains

at an age when they were able to walk, all Indian toddlers were free to play  
games developed needed skills and coordination

Physical punishment was very rare

though they might be rebuked, it was unacceptable for a child to be whipped or spanked  
it was believed a child who was abused would likely grow up to abuse their own children

Indians also believed punishment did more harm than good

and the child might choose to return to the land of babies

rather parents used praise, ridicule and fear to influence their children's behavior

stories of evil spirits living nearby who would steal bad children were sometimes told

Quinault Indians regarded a child as being completely irresponsible up to age five

children younger than that were never punished

Toddlers stayed at home when their mothers had to work away from the village

grandparents provided attention and affection

Indian children became acquainted with their culture, morals, ideals and ethics

while the family was gathered together at night, often around a fire

Story tellers were usually grandfathers and old men but old women told good stories, too

toddlers heard long myths, legends and stories of their village to illustrate practical lessons

and point out what might happen if a child was disobedient

Indians had no written language

toddlers discovered how their ancestors had learned all they knew

many of the stories involved animals in the days when they could still talk

children learned early of the frightening creatures who lived in the dark forests

toddlers learned how people came to be on earth and the agreement with animals to become food

and learned of the traditions and ceremonies, songs, dances and rituals of the people

old people spoke to the child about the Personal Spirit (soul), Guardian Spirits, Spirit World,

and The Changer

## CHILDHOOD TRAINING ENCOURAGED PRACTICAL SKILLS

Instructions to children were really just advice given by older people

girls, even when young, had a few chores they were to do for their mothers

but most of their time was their own to build little salmon traps and playhouses

mothers made cedar bark dolls for their daughters

boys were instructed by their fathers regarding what was required to become a man

as soon as they were able boys learned about men's work

Coastal Indian fathers made model canoes for their sons to play with

to prepare the child for the responsibility of canoe ownership

boys were taught to exercise and ignore pain

games provided practice for needed life skills

watching skilled artisans and testing their own skills was part of an Indian boy's education

Children of the Plateau people received less attention from adults

as more of the family's time was taken up meeting the requirements of life  
children were expected to learn self-reliance at a very early age  
Learning quickly was encouraged -- discipline usually was an appeal to the child's pride  
few restrictions were placed on the socialization of children  
it was pointed out obedient children won the respect and approval of the rest of the villagers  
while naughty children risked condemnation and contempt  
flattery built pride in a job well done and Indian children, like most people,  
were eager for the approval

#### **BOTH GIRLS AND BOYS RECEIVE A SERIES OF NEW NAMES**

At about age eight girls received a new name to replace their nickname  
a celebration was provided by the parents in honor of the naming ceremony  
At about age ten or twelve boys also received a new name and ceremony  
When a Guardian Spirit had been received the event also resulted in a new name  
Later in life if an Indian became distinguished in some regard  
she or he would receive a new last name proclaiming the newly acquired prowess  
Some Native Americans earned several names for themselves

#### **PRACTICAL TRAINING FOR GIRLS BEGAN ABOUT AGE EIGHT**

Girls were taught by women all of the tasks necessary to provide for everyone in the village  
mothers taught girls to cook, clean, make beautiful baskets, blankets and clothes, do housework  
and all of the other skills necessary to sustain life  
girls were taught to be hospitable and to make good wives  
older women showed how to dig roots, gather grasses and cedar bark and dry fish  
attendance at "classes" was irregular  
depending on what work the girls were expected to accomplish at home  
but each girl attended lessons until she had learned at least the basic skills  
in some villages completed handicraft articles were hung on bushes along popular trails  
so they could be admired by the members of the village  
families held small ceremonies to celebrate the first roots and fruits gathered by their daughters  
women of the household provided a feast which included the foods the girls had gathered  
girls served the guests, primarily relatives, but she was not permitted to eat any food herself  
as a demonstration of her understanding that service is more important than self  
some of the older guests spoke to the girl emphasizing the virtues of hard work  
which leads to great success as an adult

#### **AT PUBERTY GIRLS WERE ISOLATED UNTIL THEY WERE MARRIED**

It was believed girls became possessed by a strong spirit that would harm the village  
usually girls age twelve or thirteen were secluded in a hut placed some distance away  
where they observed how to properly prepare food without offending the Spirit World

Coastal girls were to avoid all men with the exception of blood relatives until they were married  
in some villages girls were secluded in a small compartment in the longhouse  
where she was kept isolated -- sometimes for several years  
she was allowed to go outside only at night  
and then only in secrecy and accompanied by her mother or a slave  
she did nothing at all during the day  
her continued inactivity and seclusion made her weak and pale  
eventually she was unable to do any physical task  
these years of cramped-up sitting  
sometimes resulted in a partial crippling of the girl's legs  
upper-class women often had difficulty walking as adults  
these physical problems were valued as marks of the ultimate aristocrat  
this was just the kind of girl noble families sought for their sons  
these girls were so hidden away that an aura of mystery surrounded them  
which was an additional attraction for an eligible suitor

One Plateau Salish native group, the Sinkaietk of the upper Columbia River,  
established a house used only by the girls of the village which served two purposes:

- it kept young girls away from the boys;
  - it provided a place where girls could learn the skills useful for running a household
- girls went there during the day accompanied by older women  
old women taught them how to make bags, baskets, blankets, mats and twine  
and to do bead and embroidery work

## GUARDIAN SPIRIT QUEST MARKED THE COASTAL CHILD'S ENTRY INTO ADULTHOOD

Every Coastal child had an advisor or guardian

who determined when the child was ready to acquire his or her Guardian Spirit  
quest for a Guardian Spirit was usually undertaken in March or April

during stormy weather when the spirits surfaced and were easier to find and acquire  
it was impossible to receive a Guardian Spirit without doing something personally to acquire it  
women could receive a Guardian Spirit as well as men -- but these were less powerful spirits  
as women were not physically strong enough to acquire a big spirit

Coastal people could receive the spirit of anything: animals, plants, even inanimate objects  
both boys and girls at about age thirteen went on a "Spirit Quest" to find their Guardian Spirit  
the seeker journeyed into the forest at least five days journey from village  
to a remote spot described by the advisor

before the child went out, the advisor set out a marker and told the child where to find it  
and return with it to the village as proof the quest had been undertaken

Before setting out on the Spirit Quest the child must cleanse himself or herself outwardly  
by rubbing their body with bark and nettles until blood removed the smell of grease  
which was offensive to the spirits

it was also necessary for the seeker to cleanse himself or herself inwardly  
very little would be eaten for several days before the quest began  
and the seeker was given no provisions for use during the quest  
a cedar belt was tightly wound around the waist so hunger would not be felt so keenly  
While journeying on the Spirit Quest the seeker must remain awake as spirits may appear at any time  
to stay awake the child might dive into water, build piles of rocks, tend a fire at night  
and play games with the spirits  
camp was set up in the woods by the seeker at the location identified by the advisor  
here a fire had to be built and tended to make sure the fire did not burn out  
he or she had traveled several days without eating and was faint from hunger  
from this place, the youth went out in different directions searching for a Guardian Spirit  
far from friends and the village the seeker was filled with fear  
woods were filled with unknown spirits and monsters heard of since earliest childhood  
it was possible the young person might accidentally anger a spirit  
When the Guardian Spirit appeared, it took the form of a vision which sang and danced for the seeker  
this spirit must be correctly identified and the spirit song and spirit dance must be learned  
and the young person may be instructed only once  
When these tasks were accomplished, Coastal native seekers returned to their village  
but their Guardian Spirit would not remain permanently  
rather it would make its presence known randomly or on special occasions  
fear of committing an unspeakable and forbidden act that antagonized the Spirit World  
restrained the seeker from cheating regarding their vision  
Seeker began to test the Guardian Spirit to see if it had been correctly identified  
if the child developed gifts and talents along the lines of the suspected spirit  
the seeker became increasingly sure that that spirit's aid had been acquired

#### FOR COASTAL PEOPLE ACQUIRING A GUARDIAN SPIRIT WAS A KEY STEP IN MATURING

Coastal seekers did not speak of the experiences encountered during their spirit quest  
except to his or her mother or another trusted adult woman  
who began to prepare a ceremonial costume representing the Guardian Spirit's life form  
other women of the village collectively began to weave a long rope of inner cedar bark  
Seeker's Guardian Spirit Dance was the nearest thing to a religious ceremony the natives experienced  
on the selected day, the seeker's family invited other villagers to a feast  
to celebrate the young person's finding a Guardian Spirit  
child would enter the longhouse with his or her mother or other female relative  
long rope woven of inner cedar bark by the village women was tied to the seeker's waist  
older woman painted the seeker's face black with soot and charcoal  
to represent the child's death  
this child must die before the adult man or woman could exist  
next the child dressed in the new costume prepared by the seeker's mother or another woman

to represent the suspected Guardian Spirit

if the costume was correct, the seeker would become possessed by the Guardian Spirit

he or she would burst from the building and run wildly around the village

friends and other children took turns running along behind holding the long rope

to keep the child from harm by running into a tree or boulder or off a cliff

during the dance other members of the village feasted

men sang their Spirit Songs and danced their Spirit Dances

to help the young person remain in contact with their Guardian Spirit

child continued to run and dance wildly for several hours until collapsing in exhaustion

while the young person was unconscious, the men met to discuss the performance

if the performance had been successful, when the child awakened

his or her face had been cleaned of the soot and charcoal

this represented the birth of a new adult

the child had crossed into adulthood with all of its rights and privileges

A new adult name was acquired by abstaining from food for several days

until the Guardian Spirit appeared in the youth's dreams

as an animal, a bird, or some mysterious object

Sometimes two or more Spirit Quests were necessary to find the Guardian Spirit

on rare occurrences, the spirit was never found

in which case the seeker was always treated as an inferior in the village

#### COMING OF AGE FOR THE PLATEAU INDIANS WAS A KEY STEP IN MATURING

As on the Pacific coast, the Plateau Indians' quest for the Guardian Spirit

that would provide a powerful ally to help and guide the individual throughout life

was a rite of passage conducted at about the same age as among the Coastal people

and at about the same time of year

however, the quest for a Guardian Spirit among the Plateau people was limited to animal spirits

"Spirit Quest" to find a Guardian Spirit served as a method of leaving behind childhood

in the Interior spirit guidance was sought by all boys and perhaps one-third of the girls

Once a Plateau Indian received his or her Guardian Spirit the seeker returned to the village

and tried to forget the experience -- talking about the Spirit Quest was unacceptable

After several years, the Guardian Spirit might return and confirm its existence

when this occurred the Indian became ill

during the illness, a Shaman was called who would reveal the true cause of the illness

and the Shaman would help the patient remember the Spirit Song and Spirit Dance

after the spirit was correctly identified and the song remembered, a ceremony was held

to honor the acquiring of the Guardian Spirit

next Winter Ceremony would also see a performance of the song and dance

#### NEZ PERCE SPIRIT QUEST WAS UNDERTAKEN AT A YOUNG AGE

Every ten-year-old Nez Perce Indian was sent into the mountains to seek a Guardian Spirit  
this sacred ritual was considered the most important undertaking in the life of an individual  
To find the Guardian Spirit the child was instructed to climb one of the highest peaks  
once at the top the seeker was to build a pile of stones and sit down beside it  
all of seeker's attention was to be focused on the purpose of the vigil  
the seeker was not to eat or drink anything and was to try to stay awake as long as possible  
after three or four days alone in the wilderness the seeker usually fell into a fitful sleep  
during which an animal spirit appeared and gave the child a name  
this spirit taught the seeker a sacred song which must be learned  
from then on the Guardian Spirit would protect the child from danger  
and endow him or her with whatever skills or physical qualities  
were appropriate to that particular spirit

#### MARRIAGE WAS A SIGIFICANT LIFE STEP FOR COASTAL YOUNG WOMEN

Marriages between neighboring villages were frequent  
and was an extremely important event on the coast  
brides were married as arranged by their parents at about age fourteen or fifteen  
young women were taught to look on marriage with a rich man as their ultimate goal  
young men married at sixteen or seventeen  
among the slave-owning Salish natives of the Pacific coast marriages usually were arranged  
by the groom's parents -- but the groom usually had a voice their selection of his bride  
Marriage was a contract between two families which affected and involved far more than the couple  
both sets of parents checked the prospective in-law's character, social standing and wealth  
marriages were made to improve social and economic standing of the family  
parents wanted their children to marry into the same class or higher  
both families were extremely particular about the choice of partner for their daughter or son  
prestige was an important factor in the match  
among Chinook Indians marriage was especially seemly if both parties were flatheads  
by mingling the best blood of the tribes, an aristocratic class was created on the coast  
Young women were not always ostracized for becoming pregnant  
if an unmarried woman became pregnant she had to tell her family who the father was  
if girl's parents consented to the union, the son-in-law stayed with the bride's family  
thus demonstrating the acceptance of both families  
if the expectant father was of a lower class and the girl insisted on staying with him  
the bride's father was shamed and might send them both away to live  
if the girl's parents vehemently objected to the union  
the expectant father would have to pay a tribute to the girl's parents  
if he failed to pay the fine the expectant father might be killed by the girl's family

#### COASTAL WEDDINGS INVOLVED A GREAT DEAL OF GIFT GIVING

Coastal weddings, particularly among wealthy and aristocratic families,  
were always accompanied by many exchanges of reciprocal gifts  
parents of the groom usually took the initiative

    this giving of gifts was an exchange rather than a payment for the bride  
common people who could not afford gifts were married by mutual agreement  
    but with no wedding ceremony

Wedding ceremonies among Salish people of the coast and northern Washington were very specific<sup>22</sup>  
a young man's family sent out a discreet proposal of marriage to the family of a young lady  
    in hope of gaining a positive response

if this proposal was found to be acceptable by the parents of the prospective bride  
    the groom's father or some other close male relative made a formal marriage proposal  
if assurances of acceptance of the formal proposal were forthcoming the young man and his family  
    set out in canoes loaded with gifts and paddled to the young woman's village  
when they arrived the door to the bride's longhouse was always barred to them  
    then began a long and repetitious series of speeches praising both families  
        and stressing the desirability of the match

when the door was finally opened, negotiations immediately stalled  
    groom's relatives and speakers departed leaving the young fellow alone  
        sitting on a pile of blankets inside the door  
        he sometimes had to sit there several days, nearly motionless, eating nothing  
        his prospective bride was nowhere to be seen

when the groom's relatives returned there were more speeches  
    after each flattering speech the girl's family presented the speaker with a blanket  
        but made no other comment

it was a matter of prestige for the family of the bride to be able to later boast  
    how difficult they had made it for the young man's family  
finally, an agreement to marry was reached

#### COASTAL NEWLY MARRIED COUPLES ESTABLISHED A PERMANENT RESIDENCE

Coastal society was patriarchal -- bride and groom moved in with the groom's family  
    although there might be a short stay at the home of the bride first

After the marriage the groom's blankets and mats became common property of the husband and wife  
    however, his hunting and fishing gear remained the man's property  
    whatever handicraft a woman had made was kept as her own  
        she could sell or exchange her artistic works and keep the returns for herself

Coastal Indians had plural marriages

    if a man was rich enough having more than one wife was accepted among the Coastal Indians  
        but in practice only a Shaman could afford more than two wives  
additional wives were taken without ceremony

it was unnecessary for a man to desert his wife to secure another woman  
plural wives had a separate individual fire in the longhouse  
husbands usually preferred marrying the sisters of his first wife  
thus achieving greater harmony with his in-laws and more consideration for his children  
most business dealings were among family members  
it was an advantage to have as large a family as possible

#### PLATEAU MARRIAGE CEREMONIES WERE NOT AS INVOLVED AS ALONG THE COAST

Plateau natives not have the abundance of material wealth to show off or give away  
Inland tribes did not hold formal marriage ceremonies -- weddings were simple  
during a ceremonial dance men and women at a dance form two lines facing each other  
the man approached a woman he desired and placed a stick on her shoulder  
leaving his line he danced by her side  
if she refused him she threw the stick off and he had to fall back into the men's line  
if she allowed him to dance with the stick on her shoulder until the end of the dance  
she had accepted him and they were married  
elopements seldom occurred except during bison hunting season  
when everyone was busy with the hunt  
in this case the young man usually chose his bride and simply persuaded the girl  
to come to his father's camp and remain there -- they were then regarded as married  
sometimes the girl's parents would persuade a young man to stay in their camp  
with their daughter for a few days -- this also was considered a marriage  
if an unmarried young woman gave birth to a baby, it was a disgrace to her family  
if the father was known, she became his wife

#### COASTAL AND PLATEAU COUPLES OCCASIONALLY SUFFERED MARITAL STRIFE

Problems such as spouse abuse were resolved by the victim's family  
in the event of mistreatment of the bride her family would seek vengeance  
a wife, for instance, might inform her brother, father, or other trusted male relative  
of the conditions under which she suffered  
a visit to her husband would result in a stern warning to stop the abuse  
further hostile action by the groom could result in the Shaman of the wife's family  
declaring war on the husband and his family  
more usually the bride's family hired a Shaman to inflict an evil spirit on the abusive husband  
this evil spirit would not be removed until a promise to reform was delivered

#### DIVORCE OCCURRED ONLY RARELY IN COASTAL AND PLATEAU MARRIAGE

Husbands did not usually leave their wives -- plural marriages were acceptable

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<sup>22</sup> Carolyn Niethammer, *Daughters of the Earth*. P. 81-82.

if a man thought his wife had been unfaithful<sup>23</sup>

he was allowed to clip off the tip of her nose and ears to make her forever unattractive  
in the case of adultery, the guilty man was most likely to be killed by the aggrieved husband  
although the adulterer often bought himself off with gifts to the husband  
when rape occurred, the punishment for the male was death or marriage to his victim  
Divorce was simple but uncommon because of the complications it created between the two families  
disagreements could sometimes be resolved peaceably  
however, if the husband abandoned his family or he sent his wife to her parent's home  
it created a vast number of complications for both the husband's and wife's families  
all of the bridal gifts had to be returned to the bride's father  
these gifts, of course, had been further distributed to friends and relatives  
and therefore were difficult to get back  
sometimes the wife would choose to return to her parent's home  
when a woman left her husband, the husband retained all of their property  
but a Shaman could be called upon to cast a spell on the husband

#### OLD AGE WAS A HAPPY TIME FOR NATIVE AMERICANS

Elderly people were revered for their knowledge and skills and their long service to the village  
older natives were free of the drudgery of daily tasks which were taken over by the next generation  
and, of course, there were the village children and their own grandchildren to care for  
looking after, educating and training these children provided meaning and purpose to life  
grandparents repeated the legends and stories of the village for the children  
to provide a link with the past, the children's role in the future and the Spirit World

#### AS DEATH NEARED PERSONAL ITEMS WERE GIVEN AWAY

Normally among the Indians, death was anticipated and prepared for  
when an Indian could no longer work personal property and slaves were given away  
a man's canoes and hunting dogs were given to his son or other relative  
a woman's blankets, baskets and other works of art were given to her children or grandchildren  
Occasionally, a person could die and come back to life again in a few days  
especially with the assistance of a very powerful Shaman

#### AT DEATH THE PERSONAL SPIRIT (SOUL) WENT TO THE LAND OF THE DEAD

Indians did not believe in heaven or hell -- no devils or angels existed for them  
human life was thought to follow much the same pattern as the lives of other animals  
each species had a land of its own where they would return at death  
Indians universally believed in the existence of a Personal Spirit or soul  
which at death became a ghost that followed the sun into the "Land of the Dead"

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<sup>23</sup> Cecil Dryden, *Dryden's History of Washington*, P. 16.

where there was comfort, friends, family and plenty to eat  
Ghosts traveled by one of two paths that led to the Land of the Dead  
a short path went to the left and the longer path went to the right  
left route was taken by those who died suddenly  
long path was followed by someone who had been sick for a long time  
two rivers had to be crossed on the way to the Land of the Dead  
first river, which was very swift, was bridged by a fallen tree  
second river was approached from the East where the ghost arrived at a very low bank  
Land of the Dead lay across the second river to the West beyond a high bank  
this river had to be crossed in a canoe

#### LAND OF THE DEAD WAS MUCH LIKE LIFE ON EARTH

Ghosts in the Land of the Dead lived the same kind of lives as people on Earth  
babies returned to a kind of "Land of Babies" where they were very happy  
houses in the Land of the Dead were the same as on Earth  
men people hunted and fished and women produced wonderful works of art  
dead of various tribes and villages had separate places in the Land of the Dead  
however, when it was low tide on earth it was high tide in the land of the ghosts  
It was a concern that the Personal Spirit (soul) could become lonely in the Land of the Dead  
ghosts could and did return to Earth to haunt the longhouses or village where they had lived  
and to complete unfinished business, or to visit friends and family  
or to retrieve some treasured possession of great significance that had been left behind  
if a ghost wanted something it could not take with them at death, it lingered around the longhouse  
but only came out at night -- and never when the moon was shining  
to discourage ghosts from returning a large fire was built  
and the person's remaining property was burned to allow the spirit of those possessions  
to travel to the Land of the Dead  
occasionally slaves might be sacrificed to prevent the possibility of loneliness  
if death had occurred in a longhouse, that house was destroyed or moved  
even if it was a large house occupied by many families  
Families did not invite ghosts to return because they were of no further use  
and the village was better left alone  
in contrast however, the spirits of babies, whales and salmon were welcome as guests  
every inducement was made to recall them back to the village and to please them

#### FUNERAL SERVICES WERE TO PROTECT THE PERSONAL SPIRIT OF THE DISEASED

Funeral services were dedicated to speed the Personal Spirit (soul) to the Land of the Dead  
and to provide the ghost a welcome there upon its arrival  
Funeral services also were to protect those who remained from ghosts with unfinished business  
and from spirits that had become evil because of some abuse or insult inflicted by the living

Funerals were conducted by an undertaker who was usually a Shaman  
who received a fee for attending to the burial  
Shamans eulogized the deceased and laid the ghost to rest  
Chief mourners, sometimes paid professionals, cut their hair short as a sign of mourning  
if the deceased was a person of great importance, the entire village cut their hair  
after the death services, the chief mourners had to be ceremonially cleansed  
to remove the influence of the deceased person's ghost

#### COASTAL NATIVE BURIAL CUSTOMS VARIED BY VILLAGE AND STATUS

Usually the body, dressed in formal clothing, was wrapped in skins, blankets and mats  
and was placed in its final resting place with the head toward the West  
strings of shell money were put on a wealthy person  
some of the most treasured possessions of the deceased  
were broken into small pieces, burned or destroyed and placed with the body  
to allow that object's spirit to accompany the deceased to the Land of the Dead  
Specific Coastal Natives burial customs took many forms which varied from village to village  
along Puget Sound, the Indians spent much of their lives in canoes  
"burial" usually was above ground when a canoe was used as a coffin  
both women and men were placed in their own canoe  
canoe and boxes of personal possessions were raised off the ground  
and lashed to branches high in a tree  
or placed on a scaffold on posts out of the reach of predatory animals  
bottom of the canoe was covered with cedar shakes  
holes were bored in the bottom to let rain water out  
after a year some villages re-buried the remains under the canoe or in a family cemetery  
some Coastal Indians placed the remains in a basket or cedar box rather than in a canoe  
One cemetery located on a high, isolated cliff on the Columbia River West of Longview, Washington  
was named Mount Coffin  
another, a rocky islet close to the Oregon shore, was known as Coffin Rock

#### BURIAL OF COASTAL LOWER CLASSES WAS DONE WITHOUT FORMAL PROCEEDURE

Slaves or persons without importance in the community were disposed of without ceremony  
sometimes the deceased was laid on a platform built in a tree as a canoe was too costly  
or the body was placed in crevices, rocks, or huts with gabled roofs  
Very poor slaves could be thrown in a hole and covered with Earth  
or sometimes they were simply placed or left in an unfrequented location in the woods

#### PLATEAU NATIVE BURIAL CUSTOMS VARIED GREATLY

Plateau Indians believed the dead went to a land in the sky  
but if the burial ceremony was not properly followed,

the Personal Spirit (soul) would roam the Earth as a ghost  
disposal of the dead was convenient for the inland natives  
often graves or mounds of rock were used to safeguard the remains from predatory animals  
Plateau natives took advantage of rock slides and gravel banks  
the body was placed in a basket or box and left at the base of a landslide  
rocks above were loosened which caused a landslide to cascade down on the remains  
sometimes their dead were buried in graves in a pit -- matting covered the floor  
vertical cedar planks were placed around the sides of the pit to hold back the earth  
deceased's body and personal possessions were placed in the grave  
these were covered with matting and the grave was filled with Earth  
stones were placed on top of the grave  
mourners burned the projecting pieces of vertical cedar planking off at ground level  
it did not take long for the desert wind and sand to conceal the grave completely  
some Interior Indians used a circular grave three to five feet deep  
which was covered by a layer of poles on which stones were heaped  
ornaments and other property were buried with the dead  
after they became available to the Plateau people, horses were often killed over the grave  
Columbia River Plateau Indians used low knolls deposited by the wind as burial places  
wind soon removed all scent and concealed the location of the grave from predators  
Lower Columbia Indians burial customs revolved around an island in the Columbia River  
called "memaloose" (Cayuse for death) or death island that served as a burial site  
today, the largest island below The Dalles, Oregon is still known as Memaloose Island  
Wishrams, a Chinook group living at The Dalles, were the only natives of the Plateau<sup>24</sup>  
to use low hut-like structures about ten feet wide and six feet high  
made of poles, slabs of wood and bark with a shed roof constructed over a shallow pit  
on islands in the Columbia River  
bodies piled to a height of three or four feet were laid with their heads toward the West  
carved wooden images were sometimes set up around the hut  
these structures and their contents were identified by Lewis and Clark (1805)  
these graveyards with their ghostly trophies were a grim sight for the first explorers  
on one island they counted thirteen burial huts and named it "Sepulcher Island"<sup>25</sup>  
other Chinook Indians had various methods of disposing of the body of the deceased  
usually the remains were wrapped in a blanket -- often in a sitting position  
some tribes used burial canoes raised on a scaffold atop cross pieces laid on four posts  
the canoe was roped into place on the scaffold or tied into a tree with hazel switches  
often the burial canoe was covered with another canoe  
other times the burial canoe was set under the trees in the forest  
and a shed built covering the canoe and its body

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<sup>24</sup> Cecil Dryden, *Dryden's History of Washington*, P. 20.

when a canoe was not used, the body was wrapped in a blanket  
and laid on a scaffold about three feet above the ground  
over the scaffold was constructed a wooden shed with pitch or gable roof  
no carvings or painting were placed on the grave shed  
instead, a ceremonial stick which had been used by the deceased in spirit dancing  
was often set beside the grave

#### AFTER DEATH NATIVE CUSTOM PROVIDED FOR THE SPOUSE OF THE DECEASED

Widows frequently married their former husband's brother or cousin  
if the widow did not marry one her husband's relatives  
she returned to her childhood home with her children  
after a few years she could marry into another family

Widowers allowed several years to elapse after the death of his wife before remarrying  
often widowers married his deceased wife's sister to assure his children would be well looked after

#### MENTION OF THE NAME OF THE DEAD WAS A SERIOUS CRIME

For a specific number of years after death the living disassociated themselves from the dead  
because just saying the name of the dead could beckon the ghost back to Earth  
deceased person was always referred to as the relative of a living person  
if the name of the dead was accidentally mentioned  
the offender had to pay the relatives of the deceased  
Indians never gave a dead person's name to the living until after several years had passed

#### PLATEAU INDIANS ACQUIRE THE HORSE IN THE EARLY 1700s

Horses were brought to North America by Christopher Columbus during his second expedition -- 1493  
later arriving Spanish conquistadors (soldiers) also brought horses with them  
when a Spanish conquistador died his horses were allowed to roam free  
over the following centuries wild herds of horses migrated north  
or were driven north by Indians who captured them for their use as pack animals  
Horses arrived in the Pacific Northwest in approximately 1710  
the first Plateau Indians to acquire the horse were reported to be the Shoshone (or Snake) Indians  
who lived along the Snake River and its tributaries  
Shoshone Indians became the distributor of horses to their neighboring tribes

#### CAYUSE INDIANS ACQUIRE THE HORSE

Cayuse Indians were the first of the Plateau people to own large numbers of horses  
according Indian oral tradition Cayuse scouts approached a group of Shoshone Indians  
on a tributary of the Snake River

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<sup>25</sup> Cecil Dryden, *Dryden's History of Washington*, P. 17.

these scouts were bewildered to see their enemies riding on large deer or elk  
even more confusing, the prints left by these animals were not split like deer or elk  
but rather were round and solid

Cayuse scouts arranged a truce to trade for some of these creatures

Cayuse natives returned to their village nearly naked but accompanied by a mare and a stallion  
Cayuse name remains permanently attached to these tough, little horses

## HORSES REVOLUTIONIZED THE LIVES OF CAYUSE INDIANS

Horses began to be used by Indians as pack animals

they became the most frequently used method of travel for these people and their possessions  
no longer restricted to what they could carry or what their dogs could pull,

Cayuse Indians moved into new areas to hunt, trade, fight and capture slaves

they traveled across the Rocky Mountains as far east as the Great Plains  
and south as far as California

Cayuse horse herds rapidly multiplied as a result of skillful breeding and raids on other tribes

Cayuse who owned fifteen to twenty horses was considered poor  
wealthy families controlled horse herds of 2,000 or more by the early 1800s

Cayuse natives began to take on the role of middlemen in the increasingly extensive trade

between the Indians of the Great Plains and those of the Pacific Coast

they adopted elements of Plains Indian culture into their own

acquiring the Plains natives' style of clothing and personal ornamentation,  
they learned new methods of hunting and new ways of packing and transporting goods

conical teepees covered with buffalo hides were added to their housing options

new concept of selecting a chief based on his skills as a warrior came from the Plains Indians

## NEZ PERCE INDIANS DEVELOP THEIR OWN BREED OF HORSES

Nez Perce Indians acquired horses from the Shoshone natives

Nez Perce land was better-suited to raising horses than that of the Shoshones

and was better protected from Indian raiding parties attempting to add to their own herds

Nez Perce tribesmen became especially sophisticated and excellent horsemen

many historians believe the Nez Perce were the first to selectively improve their horses

they introduced heavier animals brought from Mexican and Spanish ranches in California

they bred horses to develop specific traits such as intelligence, speed and courage

by keeping the best and trading away those that were less desirable

Nez Perce developed the spotted coats unique to their breed

their horses became lean, long-necked, clean-limbed animals

that featured narrower shoulders and hindquarters and a longer back

their horses were fast with a smooth running gait and remarkable endurance

they also were excellent jumpers

Nez Perce horses were developed for specific tasks such as tribal horses suitable for trade,

family horses, race horses, hunting and war horses  
Nez Perce horse herds multiplied into the thousands -- their prized stock was envied by other tribes  
these Indians counted their wealth in horses -- some chiefs owned 4,000 to 6,000  
these vast herds were protected by methods later adopted by stockmen  
large herds were divided and placed on several ranges with riders watching over them  
occasionally the herd was rounded up  
Nez Perce became known as a most affluent of the Plateau tribes

#### PLATEAU INDIANS DEVELOPED THEIR OWN RIDING EQUIPMENT

Plateau people used the materials readily available to control their horses while riding  
bridles were made by twisting horsehair into rope which was tied around horse's lower jaw  
saddles were made of a pad of buckskin stuffed with horsehair  
saddle cinch was placed under the horse's belly to hold the saddle on the horse  
cinch was made of horsehair and strips of rawhide  
stirrups were made of wood covered with elk or buckskin applied wet  
this was made durable and stretched tight by drying  
Women rode well and took part in horse races  
women's wooden riding saddles had a high pommel in the front and the back  
front pommel had a prong on which to hang the rider's possessions

#### PLATEAU INDIANS' NOMADIC LIFE COVERED A FAR-RANGING AREA

Horses gave the Interior natives the means to move quickly and easily  
this greater mobility made life a great deal easier -- Inland Indians became increasingly nomadic  
People ranged over a very large area as they followed their food supply in seasonal migrations  
spring and summer were spent along the rivers fishing and socializing  
and in the hills gathering roots, berries and plants  
trading among Plateau tribes and even with Coastal villagers became much more extensive  
native gatherings and trade fairs were more easily reached  
these became increasingly frequent and better attended  
fall and winter were spent in protected locations where game could be taken as food  
Some tribes joined the Plains Indians in buffalo hunts on the Great Plains  
Cayuse, Nez Perce, Spokanes and others conducted their own great buffalo hunts  
bison hunts usually involved collisions with the bloodthirsty Blackfoot Indians  
battles were usually preceded by a war dance to assure help from the Spirit World  
as a result of these contacts the culture of the Plains people was further adopted  
Plateau Indians began to live in lodges instead of huts

#### PLATEAU INDIANS BECAME EXPERT AT HUNTING WITH HORSES

Plateau people could hunt with bow and arrows by stalking or running game with horses  
they rode past the intended victim on the right side and directed an arrow into the animal's heart

although a lance was sometimes used  
when flint-lock muskets became available to Indians as a by-product of trade  
hunters acquired remarkable skill in reloading while riding at full speed  
hunters dropped a charge of powder from the powder horn into the palm of his hand  
then into the muzzle of the musket  
next a musket ball was taken from the supply carried in the hunter's mouth  
finally, the charge was tamped tightly with a ramrod

## WAR BECAME MORE COMMON AMONG THE PLATEAU PEOPLE THAN ALONG THE COAST

Wars were fought to seize hunting lands or root and berry fields controlled by other tribes  
and, of course, to steal horses

but major fishing grounds were neutral sites

fighting was not allowed while the fish were running

War dances were inter-tribal because of alliances of tribes against common enemies

after the arrival of the horse Plateau war rituals were borrowed from the Plains Indians<sup>26</sup>

several kinds of dances were associated with war:

- parade dance to gather recruits for battle;
- dance of the warriors to seek spirit protection;
- dance of the women during the absence of the war party;
- dance of the returning warriors;
- victory dance in their home camp

Like the Plains Indians, a Flathead and Nez Perce man's war record fixed his social position<sup>27</sup>

which was based on specific acts of bravery in the face of the enemy called "coups"

risk of injury or death was required to count as a coup

any blow struck against the enemy counted as a coup,

but the most prestigious acts included touching an enemy warrior

with the hand, bow, or with a coup stick -- then escaping unharmed

touching the first enemy to die in battle or touching the enemy's defensive works

also counted as coup

stealing an enemy's weapons or horses tied up to his lodge in camp counted

escaping unharmed while collecting coup was considered a higher honor

than being wounded in the attempt

if a warrior was wounded in the attempt, he was required to paint the coup feather red

as an indication of a lesser achievement

coups were indicated by notches on a coup stick only by the Flathead and Nez Perce Indians

on special occasions braves related their successes by "counting coups"

## ARRIVAL OF EUROPEANS CHANGED THE LIVES OF NORTH AMERICAN INDIANS

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<sup>26</sup> Cecil Dryden, *Dryden's History of Washington*, P. 20.

East coast Indians were responsible to some extent for many concepts of American freedom  
Indians highly valued **“all of those things which got attached to the Bill of Rights”**<sup>28</sup>  
they had already developed the traditions of public-meetings, free speech and democracy  
Native Americans also contributed food, vocabulary and place names to the white culture  
from earliest colonial times  
many white and black newcomers chose to live an Indian lifestyle  
frontiersmen were quite taken by the extent to which Indians enjoyed freedom as individuals<sup>29</sup>

#### WHITE TRADERS AND EXPLORERS VASTLY CHANGED THE INDIANS OF THE NORTHWEST

Arrival of early sea otter traders introduced new tools to the Indian culture  
metal tools made it easier to make objects from stone, wood and bone  
canoe making became easier with axes and hatchets although the old designs remained in use  
it took less time and effort to fall a tree and shape the cedar log  
because of this it became possible for more Indians to own canoes  
most of the art works displayed in museums today were made after the arrival of fur traders  
Later arriving beaver traders further changed the Indian way of life  
ironically, to Native American eyes whites were the nomads  
native economy changed from hunter-gatherers to suppliers of beaver and animal pelts  
Indians became increasingly dependent on the trade goods supplied to them

#### CHINOOK JARGON EXPANDED TO INCLUDE THE LANGUAGE OF EUROPEANS

Native trade language of “Chinook Jargon” was first reported by Captain George Vancouver  
when he visited Grays Harbor -- 1792  
Chinook and Salish languages were too difficult to pronounce for whites to use successfully  
with the coming of sea traders Spanish, English and Russian words  
were added to the native trade vocabulary  
later arrival of land traders added French vocabulary to the mix  
as European languages became enmeshed with Chinook and Nootka  
a new trade language that kept the name Chinook Jargon was the result  
Chinook Jargon made communication possible among Indian peoples and white traders alike  
however, Chinook Jargon eventually destroyed the use of many of the ancient native tongues

#### SOCIAL MORALITY FOR COASTAL AND PLATEAU INDIANS WAS ALTERED

Development of commercialized relations with white trappers and traders  
caused Coastal natives to relax their social restraints  
sea otter seeking mariners and later fur traders disrupted the moral convictions of the natives  
parents sometimes traded their daughters and husbands their wives for wealth

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<sup>27</sup> Cecil Dryden, *Dryden's History of Washington*, P. 19.

<sup>28</sup> James Lowen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, P. 103.

<sup>29</sup> James Lowen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me*, P. 101.

during the summer Indian women camped near trading posts and forts  
when fur trading brigades arrived at a locale, native women swarmed in  
boat-loads of women appeared and forced their intentions on the whites  
it became difficult to keep fur company employees from Indian huts  
in addition to airborne diseases such as measles and whooping cough  
venereal diseases spread unchecked among the natives who lacked any immunity  
adult and infant death rates increased at a terrible rate as epidemics ran rampant  
Chinook natives were reduced from 15,000 when maritime traders first arrived (1792)  
to about 300 in (1854)

#### LEWIS AND CLARK CROSS THE CONTINENT TO THE PACIFIC COAST

Lewis and Clark's "Core of Discovery" brought the Plateau Indians their first contact with whites  
this expedition camped with the Cayuse people

at the mouth of the Walla Walla River -- late October 1805

Core of Discovery members reached the Pacific coast later that same month

Lewis and Clark's expedition again visited with the Cayuse people -- June 6, 1806

as they returned overland to the east coast

Cayuse were curious about the explorers and were particularly interested in their weapons

there were practical reasons for being receptive to these powerful strangers

while their horse herds had multiplied, they themselves remained at about 500 people

access to new weapons could assure Cayuse dominance over other Plateau tribes

new trade goods also opened grand new opportunities for economic expansion

Plateau Indians were more fortunate than the Indians of the Pacific coast

after the arrival of Lewis and Clark's "Core of Discovery" the primary contact

with white strangers was with fur traders and half-breeds who took Indian wives

next major contact was with Christian missionaries

in the interior of the United States airborne and venereal diseases were not as rampant

as they were along the Pacific coast which was visited by sea traders

#### PLATEAU NATIVES SOUGHT ADVANCED TECHNOLOGIES OF THE NON-INDIAN WORLD

After contact with the white culture, Plateau Indians actively sought out missionaries

two native delegations, primarily Nez Perce, journeyed east to request missionaries

to instruct them in reading and writing

however, rather than the white man's religion they were interested in acquiring

"better medicine" to increase their personal power and tribal prestige

First attempt by whites to communicate with the Indians in their native language

was undertaken by Christian missionary Rev. Henry Spalding at Lapwai Mission -- 1837

## INDIANS AND WHITES HELD DIFFERING VIEWS REGARDING TRADE<sup>30</sup>

Hostility between the Indians and settlers who followed the traders and trappers arose  
pioneers were primarily farmers who did not enjoy trade fairs and endless dickering for bargains  
which among the native people bargaining was a basic part of conducting trade  
for Indians, trade in addition to being profitable was just plain fun  
it provided an exciting opportunity to visit with other people

## NATIVE AMERICANS ARE DEFEATED IN THE WAR FOR CULTURAL DOMINATION

Arrival of pioneers and soldiers destroyed the life known to the Coastal and Plateau Indians  
while traders and trappers valued the skills and expertise of the natives, later arrivals did not  
instead they brought new diseases, religions, mores and technologies  
to the people who stood in the way of their effort to develop farming as the new way of life

Indian villages and tribes were never able to organize close alliances  
to work together in opposition to the white invasion

even uncoordinated action by village and tribe members was seldom achieved

Treaties written of 1854 and 1855 forced Indians to change their way of life

to conform to the demands of the new cultures imposed upon them

to complicate the detailed and confusing legal precedents imposed by the treaties

Washington Territory Governor Isaac Stevens insisted they be written in Chinook Jargon

which had been developed as a trade language composed of Indian and European words

legal concepts were far beyond the vocabulary available in the trade language

this appears odd as almost all Pacific Northwest Indians spoke English at least adequately

Indians, struggled to keep their traditional way of life

for instance, after the arrival of the pioneer immigration,

Nez Perce bought foot-sore but well-bred horses that were used to further improve their herds

whites named the beautifully spotted horses “Appaloosa” in the 1870s

from three words: **“a Palouse horse”**<sup>31</sup>

Appaloosa horses were taken away from the Nez Perce Tribe in 1877

when the last of a band of Nez Perce fleeing from United States jurisdiction

were surrounded by the U.S. Cavalry along the Canadian border

and they were forced to surrender

remaining Nez Perce horses were spread across the West to Indians and whites alike

## NATIVE ART TODAY CONTINUES TO DISPLAY THE RICHNESS OF INDIAN CULTURE

Many Indian traditions and art forms still survive as tributes to native cleverness and skill

traditions and the art forms of the Northwest people are currently experiencing a positive revival

traditional items such as clothing, bags and baskets and other items are being made

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<sup>30</sup> Vine Deloria, Jr., *Indians of the Pacific Northwest*, P. 10.

<sup>31</sup> Cassandra Tate, *Cayuse Indians*, Essay 10365, HistoryLink.org, April 3. 2013.

woodworking continues to be an important cultural activity for Coastal people today although some knowledge of the traditional arts has been lost practicing those skills which remain continues to be an important part of Indian life mothers and grandmothers decorate their children's costumes for celebrations and dances beaded items, such as drums, woven bags and mats and other crafts are used in traditional celebrations and for special occasions such as the Spirit Dance native carvings continue to provide beautiful and fanciful art objects of great merit

## UNITED STATE GOVERNMENT SIGNS TREATIES WITH NATIVE AMERICANS

President George Washington's new nation was surrounded by enemies creation of the new nation had been ratified by a treaty with Great Britain Treaty of Paris was signed which ended the American Revolution -- September 3, 1783 but the boundaries of the United States remained in doubt by definition a treaty is an agreement under international law entered into by sovereign states and international organizations when the architects of the American government created the U.S. Constitution, they clearly recognized that treaties along with the Constitution itself are the supreme law of the land

Indian people and Indian country loomed as a large threat that challenged national growth President Washington's Administration negotiated its first Indian Treaty -- August 3, 1795 with seven northern tribes: Shawnee, Miami, Ottawa, Chippewa, Iroquois, Sauk and Fox following the natives' loss at the Battle of Fallen Timbers a year earlier Washington's government dealt with Indians as foreign nations like Great Britain and France rather than as domestic subjects primary goal of Washington's Indian policy was to acquire Indian lands -- in that he succeeded his second goal, of far less importance to Washington and his government, was to establish just policies for dealings with Indian people

Because treaties recognized Indians as living in independent nations each recognized Indian tribe has a government-to-government relationship with the United States this tribal sovereignty assures certain federal benefits, services and protections are maintained recognized tribes have the right to form their own government, exclude people from tribal land, make and enforce their own civil and criminal laws, determine tribal membership, tax, zone their land and license and regulate activities within their jurisdiction furthermore, federally recognized tribes possess both the right and the authority to regulate activities on their lands independently from state government control they can enact and enforce stricter or more lenient laws and regulations that differ from the laws of the state that surrounds their reservation states have no authority over tribal governments except when that control is expressly authorized by Congress

## CURRENT NATIVE AMERICAN POPULATION FACES DIFFICULT CHALLENGES

Approximately 124,000 Indians live in present-day Washington State

they are divided into five major language groups and twenty-nine federally recognized tribes  
recognition status is granted through treaties, acts of Congress, presidential executive orders,  
and other federal administrative actions, or federal court decisions  
each federally recognized tribe has its own reservation  
and each is eligible for funding and services from the Bureau of Indian Affairs

Recent laws have been enacted in the United States and Canada

which provide Coastal and Plateau Indians a voice in their own dealings

in addition to U.S. citizenship rights members of recognized tribes possess “special” rights  
these are based on treaties and other agreements between their tribes and the United States  
these additional rights are to compensate for their collective loss of land and resources  
these rights are protected by the United States and Canadian governments