

CHAPTER

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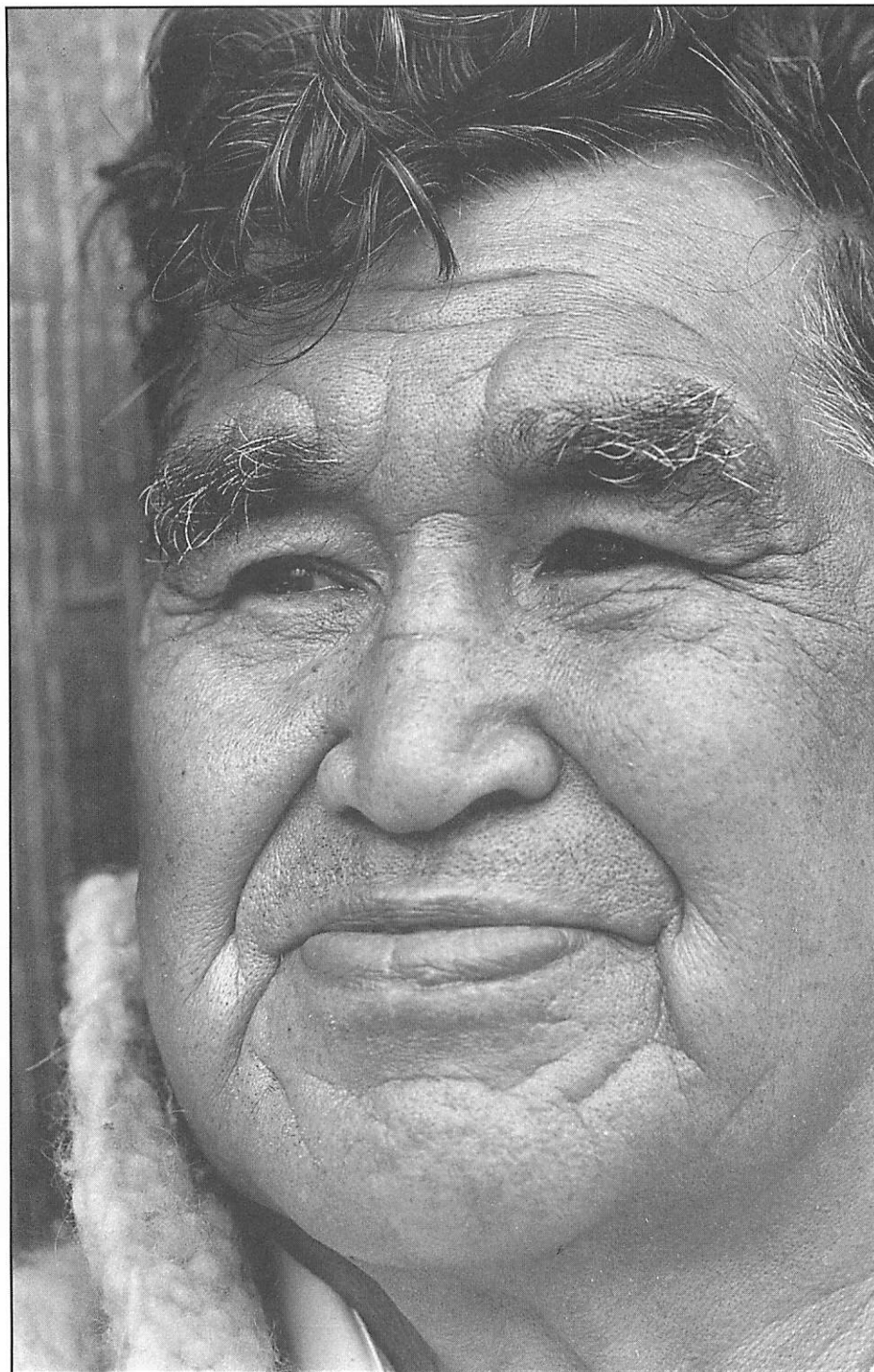


NATIVE  
AMERICANS

SECTION 1

WHEN  
INDIANS PLIED  
ITS WATERS

*By Gene Yochum*



*Skokomish elder  
Joseph Andrews Sr.*

**H**ood Canal offered bountiful fishing amid cool waters and a picturesque aquatic highway to the three major Indian tribes living there in the decades prior to the 20th Century. The history of the canal was shaped by the Twana, Chemakum and S'Klallam tribes, but only remnants remain today: the Skokomish, the Suquamish and the S'Klallams.

Elders from the three tribes describe

the canal as a much simpler, more pristine place in their youth, when it was a base for their subsistence.

Joseph A. Andrews Sr., 76, recalled the years just prior to 1920 as a time when he rarely wore clothes and when Hood Canal was a "beautiful place" to be while growing up. Early in the morning, he'd watch deer along the shores of the canal lick salt off rocks at low tide.

Andrews' eyes glistened as he talked

about how the autumn sky “just turned dark” as huge flocks of migrating geese flew overhead, issuing sounds “that were like a lullaby to my ears.”

He remembered sitting in the bow of his grandfather’s 24-foot shovel-nose canoe as a preschooler, “eating salmonberries that hung out over the canal. I wasn’t a very good picker, but I could eat them pretty good.

“When I was a young boy, before I went to school, the Indians traveled the canal by canoes and rowboats equipped with sails,” said Andrews, an elder among the Skokomish, whose reservation sits at the Great Bend of Hood Canal in Mason County.

“We had camps on both sides of the canal,” he said. “There were plenty of fish and clams. There were trees along both sides; the logging camps were just getting started.”

Andrews said he “didn’t wear clothes until he was 8 years old. There was no need to because there was lots of privacy out there.”

When he was about 13 years old, Andrews had an encounter with a couple of whales that he’s not forgotten.

“About halfway across the canal, these two whales buzzed me,” Andrews recalled. “They bumped the boat and made waves that bumped me, and the dogs barked, but they didn’t tip me over.”

When he told about being accosted by the whales, Andrews said his mother explained the huge beasts may have been trying to get to the dog and her puppies, noting that whales eat seals and other small animals.

Andrews’ tribe shared use of the canal with two others, the Suquamish and the Port Gamble S’Klallams.

The Skokomish elder said his people had friends among the Suquamish Indians, although “they had a hostility among them. It seemed like they always had to have someone’s permission to be in the area. We never worried about it, but they did.”

Both sides of Hood Canal originally were inhabited by the Twana Indians, divided into three bands, the Du-hlelips, Skokomish and Kolsids, the Rev. Myron Eells wrote in *The Twana, Chemakum and Klallam Indians of Washington Territory*, published in 1887.

He said the word “Twana” was believed to mean a portage, coming “from

the portage between Hood’s Canal and the main waters of the Sound, where the Indian, by carrying his canoe three miles, avoids rowing around a peninsula 50 miles long.”

Skokomish means “River People,” derived from their settlement at the mouth of the large freshwater river that empties into the canal.

The Chemakums are believed to have originated from the Kwilleuts, who lived south of Cape Flattery on the Pacific Coast. Eells wrote that a portion of the Kwilleut tribe, according to the Kwilleut tradition, came inland from the coast following a very high and sudden tide long ago and settled near Port Townsend, calling themselves “Chemakums.”

By 1887, Eells said the Chemakums were “virtually extinct,” there being only 10 left who had not married whites or members of other tribes. Only one four-member family was included in the total. At one time, the Chemakums occupied lands from the mouth of Hood Canal to Port Discovery Bay.

The S’Klallam tribe derived their name from “Nuskclaim,” a word in their language which meant “strong people.”

The S’Klallams had claimed territory from Port Discovery Bay to the Hoko River on the northern coast of Washington.

Shortly before the turn of the 20th Century, Eells noted many S’Klallams had moved to Little Boston, opposite Port Gamble; to Jamestown north of Sequim; and Port Townsend and Port Discovery Bay, where most were employed at sawmills.

Another band of S’Klallams made their home in Elwah, about eight miles west of Port Angeles, living largely on fish. (Although the Port Gamble clan changed the spelling of the tribal name to S’Klallam, the closest reflection to the correct pronunciation, the Jamestown and Lower Elwah clans still use Klallam in their names.)

The Suquamish and the Skokomish were the main users of Hood Canal during the latter years of the 19th Century, according to Lawrence Webster of Indianola.

At 91, Webster is the eldest of the Suquamish tribe, centered on the Port Madison Indian Reservation in North Kitsap.

“They used the west side, we used the east side” of the canal, he said. The Klallam Tribe, particularly those from Port Gamble, didn’t begin to make substantial use of Hood

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*The Northwest Coast tribes lost most of their creative traditions within a few decades of the treaties they signed with whites in the mid-19th Century. Indian culture was banished during the school year at boarding schools the children were sent to.*

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**The S'Klallam Tribe derived its name from "Nu-sklaim," a word in their language that meant "strong people."**

Canal until after Pope & Talbot built its lumber mill at Port Gamble in 1854, Webster added.

He recalled taking a cedar dugout canoe on a month-long fishing trip on the canal when he was about 4 years old.

"It was a family canoe, seven of us," he said. It was large enough for four adults, three children and the group's camping equipment.

They paddled the canoe northward from Miller Bay around the Kitsap Peninsula, into the mouth of Hood Canal and all the way to the south end of the saltwater channel.

The group had timed the journey to the canal to take advantage of the tides because without help from tidal currents, their canoe trip would have been much longer. Even with tides working in their favor, the trip required the better part of a day.

They spent the next month living in canvas tents pitched along the banks of the canal, sleeping on cattail mats, fishing each day and drying their catch over campfires to keep it through the winter.

After they'd caught and dried what they could take back in their canoe, they returned home. The trip back, however, took a full day's paddling and part of another, Webster recalled, because they had miscalculated the tides needed to make their journey easier.

When he was growing up, Webster said Anderson Hill Road in Central Kitsap and the Port Gamble-Suquamish Road in North Kitsap were not roads, but mere paths — routes used frequently by his people to get to and from Hood Canal. He said tribal members who were in fishing camps on the canal for extended periods often used the trails to tend to matters back home. The nine-mile trek could be made within a few hours.

Webster recalled the Suquamish didn't go over to the canal as much starting in about 1910. Older tribal members were less inclined to make the trip because of the effort

it required. Younger Indians "began to get busy with other things."

Irene Purser, 90, an elder member of the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe at Little Boston, also remembers the canal as a major thoroughfare for early settlers.

She and two other S'Klallam tribal elders — her half-sister, Mildred Decoteau, 64, and Catherine Moran, 81 — recalled how game, fish and other forms of life were found alongside the canal. Then commercial ventures and increasing numbers of residences began to change the life they'd grown to enjoy.

"In those days, you could go where you wanted to dig clams or go fishing," Decoteau said. "It was an important part of daily life."

Purser said she could remember when there was "only one store on the canal — at Lofall. People went there to buy hardtack, flour and sugar."

She recalled her grandparents taking her to Puyallup with them to pick hops and going to Brinnon to catch and dry fish for the

winter. She also remembered family members baking bread by burying loaves in hot sand and "eating fish on a stick every day and never getting tired of it."

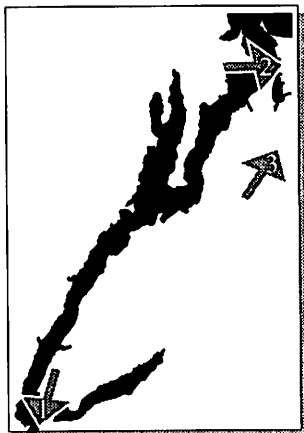
Moran said her people would dig clams each winter and sell them for 50 cents a bushel.

Purser's family had a large canoe, large enough for a bed in the middle for the children in her family to sleep, with room on each end for adults to sit and paddle the craft.

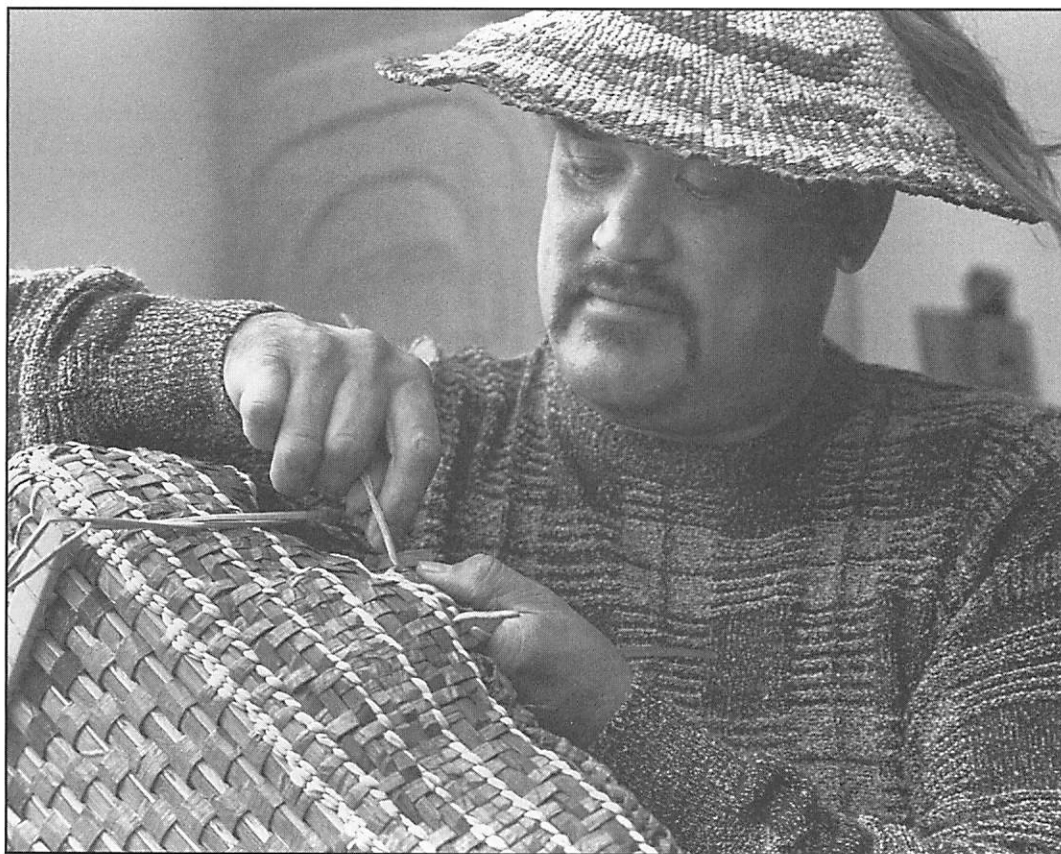
In addition to paddling and using tidal currents to their advantage, the Indians also relied on the winds to power their canoes and flat-bottomed boats, Moran said. She recalled how sails were created by sewing flour sacks together.

"The canoe was how they got around," she said.

## Hood Canal tribes



*The Skokomish (1), the Port Gamble S'Klallam (2) and the Suquamish (3) all found sustenance in the bounty of the Hood Canal watershed.*



SECTION 2

TRIBES  
SEEK THEIR  
SPIRIT SONG

By Julie  
McCormick

*Skokomish spiritual leader Bruce Miller brought the old cleansing ritual back to his tribe.*

**I**t is mid-winter and pre-white man. The last of the yabu, the dog salmon people from the Skokomish and other rivers, have been hauled in and smoked. Food the Tuwa'duxq have gathered should last the season.

Now it's time for the 1,000 or more people of various bands scattered around the curled leg of water they call tuwa'duxqsi'dakw — the Twana's saltwater — to congregate in their plank houses and devote their time to more spiritual matters.

Nine communities surround the Twana's saltwater, occupied by three or five bands, depending upon whose account constitutes history.

Edward S. Curtis, who photographed tribes throughout the West at the turn of the century, located the Duhle'lips at Union Creek, the S'kokomish at their river, the Soatlkobsh along both sides from what is now Hoodspout to the Dosewallips at what is now Brinnon.

Members of the S'Klallam tribe apparently camped at Brinnon, but farther to the northeast there were more Twanas — the Kolsids at what is now Quilcene, another version of their name, and the Slchoksbish on both sides beyond.

Farther were more S'Klallams at Little Boston and Port Gamble, Port Ludlow, Hadlock and Port Townsend.

The S'Klallams spread into the former Chemakum territory from their original camps along the Strait of Juan de Fuca as the Chemakums — depleted, it is said, by war and smallpox — declined first to a remnant of a people, then to a memory, then to a footnote.

By 1859, only a few years after the federal treaty had been signed with the three tribes, the S'Klallams were very much in evidence all along the passage to the canal.

Their chief, Chetzemoka, hosted a three-day ceremonial gathering of 400 S'Klallams in 1859 that a San Francisco newspaper correspondent described as an "invocation to their Tomanawos, or Great Spirit." Tomanawos was a Chinook word, the trading jargon spoken by Indian and white alike.

Once into the canal, the saltwater belonged to the Twanas. Before century's end, their five bands were all called Skokomish after the river where their 4,000-acre reservation was located, and where most of their depleted population eventually settled.

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*Unlike the northern tribes, many of whose similar ceremonies were attended, described in detail, explained and analyzed by white scholars, most of the Coast Salish were — and still are — secret. And the artifacts of their rituals gone.*

They had named 32 different places on the river, 146 on the canal, including some whirlpools and other special spots that were to be avoided lest the salmon people become offended and not return.

This intimate relationship with their natural surroundings, upon which they relied for their relatively abundant existence, was shared by all the Coast Salish and other tribes throughout the Northwest Pacific Coast.

Winter was the time when those relationships were most often displayed in song and dance. It is the time when tribal members may become "Indian sick," the term members of Xanxaniltl, the Skokomish tribe's secret society, have given to a state of mind that requires certain prescribed spiritual steps.

"Indian sick is when you go through a sudden or maybe a gradual character change in your life," says Bruce Miller, a Skokomish spiritual leader.

Miller brought the old practices back to the tribe after his initiation in a Lummi ceremony in 1977. Indian sick is like a flu for which there is no detectable cause.

"That means that your spirit song is trying to be born," Miller explains. "We live in a society in which the majority of people are without a song, and from my observation they wander lost. They leave their own culture to find a culture that will give them a song."

Song — harmonies of human sound that precede and underlie formal language — was given by the Great Spirit to express basic human emotion.

It's the same old song — and dance — Miller notes with a slight smile. Spirit dance accompanies song in the longhouse or smokehouse where rituals known only to members resemble those of ancestors like Frank Allen, one of the last dancers.

Allen's death in the 1950s, at the same time as that of Miller's grandmother, also a dancer, was the end of spirit dancing for the Skokomish until Miller reintroduced the practice.

Song is a cure for Indian sickness, an expression of the power of the spirit whose name you have taken in a naming ceremony. In the old days, says Miller, a person without a song wasn't really alive.

The ceremonies described by the San Francisco newspaper correspondent in 1859

were full of color — although he was not allowed to witness much — but not grounded in meaning.

Four people went into extended trances and were revived by mask-wearing dancers. Spirits were called by the beating of rattles upon the roof of the lodge house.

People danced masked as bears, lizards, cranes. People blackened their faces and filled their hair with white feathers. One man appeared to swallow an arrow.

None of that should have been recorded, remarks Miller. The correspondent notes that Chetzemoka was admonished for permitting whites at an evening performance, where they disgraced him with laughter.

Unlike the northern tribes, many of whose similar ceremonies were attended, described in detail, explained and analyzed by white scholars, most of the Coast Salish were — and still are — secret. And the artifacts of their rituals gone.

"You could pass along the right to have a mask, but not the mask itself," explains Miller. "To have an uninitiated person observe vilified the ceremony."

Until the 1978 Native American Freedom of Religion Act, ceremonies were also technically illegal. Tribal members were sometimes jailed for participation.

At the Skokomish Reservation, only the Treaty Days ceremonies the last Saturday in January are open to the public. They are called Treaty Days because celebration of the Point-No-Point Treaty was the only justification government agents would allow for the forbidden practices.

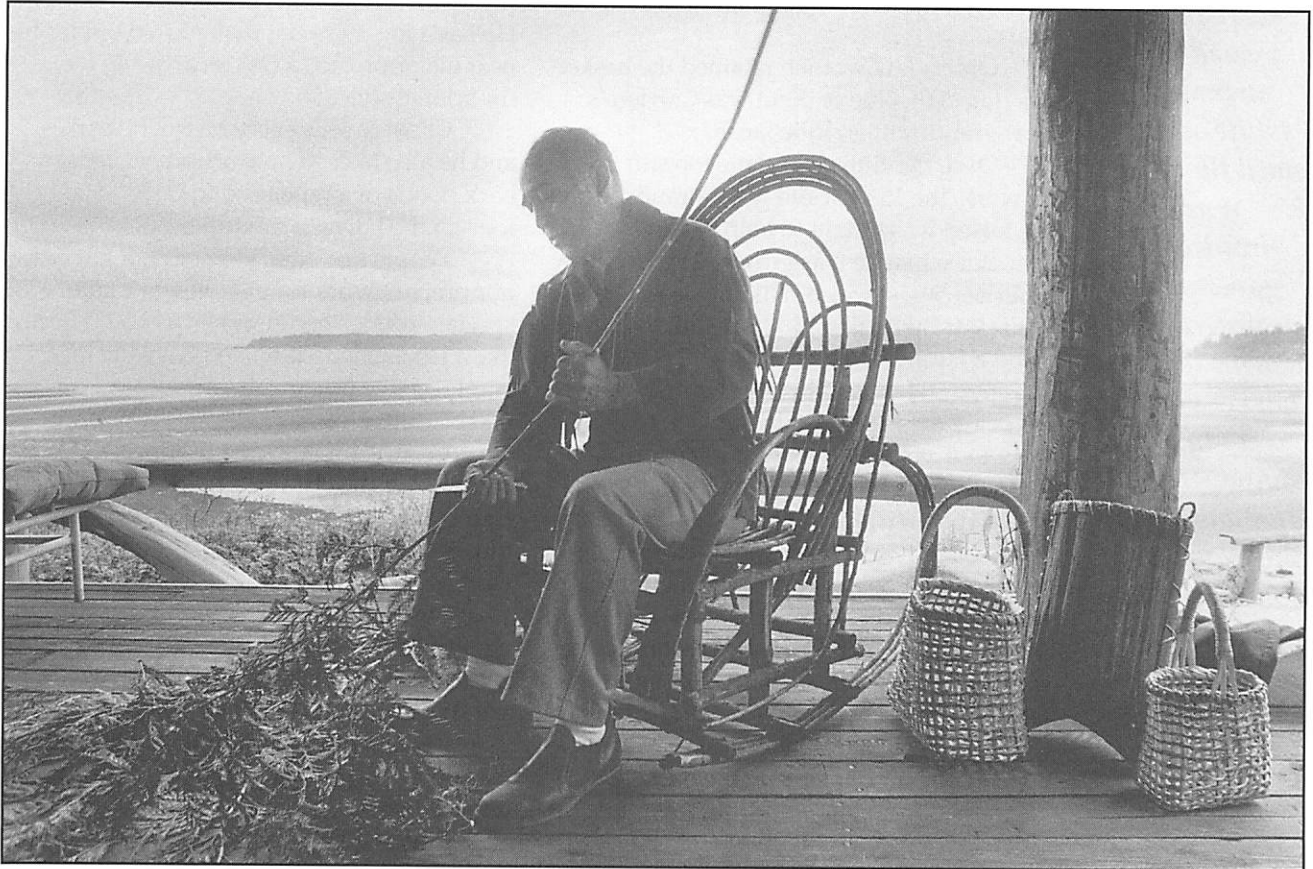
Xanxaniltl initiates must endure isolation and deprivation, based on the theory that it strengthens one for hardship that can come at any time. "That teaches kal, the utmost belief that the spirit will give you what you need to survive until you get better," says Miller.

The Salish and other Pacific coast people had wealth-based cultures. Status was achieved partly through the redistribution of wealth in the potlatch ceremony and the children of the wealthy particularly needed such training.

When an initiate ends his or her fast, each morsel must be shared, "because then you begin your new life by sharing ... in an atmosphere of thankfulness," says Miller. "They are forced to admire the beauty of the simplicity of their life."



Suquamish artisan Ed Carriere.



**E**d Carriere's eyes gaze down at thick fingers tangled in their deliberate work. Lost in it, his voice is barely audible as he tells about the conviction that drove him to re-learn this painstaking task after so many years.

"My desire is to make baskets that aren't being made anymore," says the Suquamish Indian, arching and weaving stiff cedar strips of limb and root into warp and weft.

"I feel like it's a link, a connection, and I'm doing it exactly the way it was done hundreds of years ago."

Carriere is starting clam basket bottoms for his class of novices. They often get stuck on this difficult initial part of the process, so he is sparing them that frustration in their early work.

Although there are many basket makers among the coastal tribes, only Carriere regularly attempts the traditional open-weave clam basket. They are sturdier and less showy than the more tightly woven grass and cedar bark baskets used for storage, carrying and cooking.

Clam basket makers did not adorn their creations with meticulous fancywork like that of the other types. They would last only a season or two before breaking down from heavy use and saltwater decay, while the others lasted generations.

The Northwest Coast tribes lost most of their creative traditions within a few decades of the treaties they signed with whites in the mid-19th Century.

They were quick to adapt to new ways. Manufactured goods replaced many of the materials they had collected for centuries to

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SECTION 3

HE WEAVES  
PAST AND  
PRESENT  
TOGETHER

By Julie  
McCormick

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*The art of basket making waned from arrival of white society until the 1930s, when, ironically, government programs sought to teach basket making to impoverished Indians during the Depression.*

carve, weave and decorate.

Denim and gingham replaced hide, beaten cedar and dog's wool clothing. Modern cooking in pots and pans replaced the tightly woven baskets used to make "stone soup," any water-based concoction into which hot rocks were dropped for heat.

People used pails to collect and wash clams. They lasted longer than the strong old baskets.

Only a few women retained the basket-weaving skill. One of them was Carriere's great-grandmother, Julie Jacob.

Once her fingers became too stiff for the work, the 15-year-old great-grandson she had raised was taught to help.

But when he was grown, Carriere, now in his late 50s, stopped making baskets, went to work at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard and raised a family.

"In '69 I started to work with it again and bring the art back," he said. "It took me about four years to make a fairly good, decent looking basket. I had to try to pull all that knowledge out and try to remember."

Carriere believes he owns close to every basket book ever written in English. Multiple examples from other basketry specialties have joined a broad assortment of Northwest native work on shelves in Carriere's living room.

For more than 20 years, his workbench has been the dining table in the house he built across from his great-grandmother's home. It is located on family land along the Indianola beachfront in North Kitsap.

But this year, Carriere is completing a

workshop addition to house not only basketry but carving materials and tools.

He's taken up carving under the tutelage of S'Klallam Jake Jones and Duane Pasco, a white carver who has gained a worldwide reputation for meticulous work in the Northwest Indian tradition.

"Every artist needs something else," he says with a conviction born of experience. He has a log on his land all picked out for his next major project, a canoe carved in the traditional style.

Carriere sells every basket he makes, and he also likes to produce a bent cedar bark pouch of a type used to carry whaling tools in the bows of canoes.

People find him. He does not advertise, nor prepare work for galleries, nor take special orders, "because then it would be just like a job. I just do it when I have the time and I feel like doing it, because then I can make a better basket."

Completing the first of a long series of bottoms for the class he's teaching at the Port Gamble S'Klallam Art Center, Carriere muses aloud about his students and his work.

He says it takes 12 hours to make a medium-sized clam basket, not including gathering and preparing materials, which are stored in a freezer.

"It looks so easy, and then, when I start teaching class, no one can do it." He smiles into his hands. "My fingers get really worn and smooth if I'm weaving every day ... All the little fingerprints get worn off."

*Duane Pasco, a non-Indian who is an expert in traditional Northwest Coast tribal carving, teaches a class in bentwood box making.*



*"... the construction of (these) boxes is somewhat peculiar. The sides and ends are made of one board; where the corner is to be, a small miter is cut, both on the inside and outside, partly through. Then the corners are steamed and bent at right angles, and the inside miter is cut so perfectly that it fits water-tight when the corners are bent." — Rev. Myron Eells, missionary and diarist, in *The Twana, Chemakum and Klallam Indians of Washington Territory*, 1887.*

**O**n the beach at Point Julia, Northwest carver Duane Pasco is tending a rock-filled fire and digging trenches in the sand. His students in the bent box class, several from the Port Gamble S'Klallam tribe, are putting finishing touches on their rectangular cedar boards, prepared at the reservation's new art building across from the tribal center.

The last bent boxes handed down within the tribe were reduced to ash several years ago in a fire that destroyed tribal chairman Jake Jones' home.

The tribe put up a building in 1989 to house a canoe carving project led by Pasco for the state's centennial. When that was done, the building became a classroom to help bring back the traditional arts.

Pasco, a non-Indian carver in the Northwest Coast tribal tradition, teaches design and box making to several older tribal members. They, in turn, will pass it on to the next generation, said Jones.

More modern steaming methods are available to soften the wood for bending, but the class also used the traditional method of burying it with hot rocks covered in sword ferns.

Bent box making methods were entirely lost, even among the more traditional northerly tribes, by the time Pasco first tried it 30 years ago. An account by pioneer anthropologist Franz Boas seemed complete until he tried it and failed, Pasco said.

The next step was to study examples collected in museums and — voila! — a key undercutting method could be discerned that allowed a scored piece of wood to fold

SECTION 4

TEACHING  
THE TRIBES'  
LOST ART

By Julie  
McCormick



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***The bent boxes — unique to the world of the Northwest tribes — were often used for storage, and sometimes bound by woven strands of cedar bark for carrying and to bind them together***

tightly in upon itself and form a watertight seal.

The bent boxes — unique to the world of the Northwest tribes — were often used for storage, and sometimes bound by woven strands of cedar bark for carrying and to bind them together inside canoes.

At the Skokomish Reservation, 40 miles south by canoe along Hood Canal, tribal member Bruce Miller has shared his basket making skills and experience with others, including children, since 1970.

Among the three Hood Canal area tribes, the Skokomish have been most successful at maintaining their traditional art.

“Actually, we have a budding community of artists,” said Miller, known primarily for his twined and coiled baskets, but also as a carver and beadwork artist. There are 14 Skokomish basketmakers, who generally market their work to a steady clientele of collectors and galleries.

The work of carver Andy Wilbur, silversmith Pete Peterson and basket maker Richard Cultee has gained international recognition for beauty, Miller said.

Miller, 46, credits two key elders, Louisa Pulsifer and Emily Miller, for passing along before their deaths the traditionally female art of basket making to his generation.

Miller learned from Emily Miller, whose granddaughter Mary Hernandez recently decided to continue the family tradition into the fourth generation.

Baskets of all sizes and for all purposes continued to be made privately by tribal members, Miller said, because it was an enjoyable occupation and because it, unlike other arts associated with forbidden religious practices, was never banned.

Miller once found some “Louisa baskets” in New York shops and learned that one of his had reached a collection at the Museum of Folk Art in Berlin.

But the art waned from arrival of white society until the 1930s, when government programs sought to teach basket making to impoverished Indians during the Depression.

“We thought it was hilarious,” said Miller. “It was like selling refrigerators to

Eskimos.”

The basket making is an integral part of the economic well being of the community because we’re a poor people, basically,” said Miller.

Miller and other basket makers in the tribe now often use modern dyes and materials, including raffia from Madagascar, rather than pursue the laborious process of gathering, treating and creating native dyes.

“The basket making itself comprises only about 5 percent of the whole process,” he said.

But some entirely traditional baskets with trademark Skokomish dog, stacked-box and other designs are still made from beargrass, cattail rushes, shredded cedar bark and “sweet grasses.”

Rit dye easily replaces and outlasts the “blue mud” of the marshes used to stain materials black, the roots of Oregon grape for yellow, the alder bark that once was chewed to a paste to obtain red. “Nowadays, we use a blender,” Miller said, “but it’s not the same red.”

While such methods may not seem entirely authentic, Skokomish artists are quick to point out that the elders themselves were fond of innovative techniques that could save them time and trouble.

Hernandez laughs at the memory of her grandmother, who decided the best way to remove unwanted mucus from grass materials was to place it between plywood sheets and drive back and forth over it with a car.

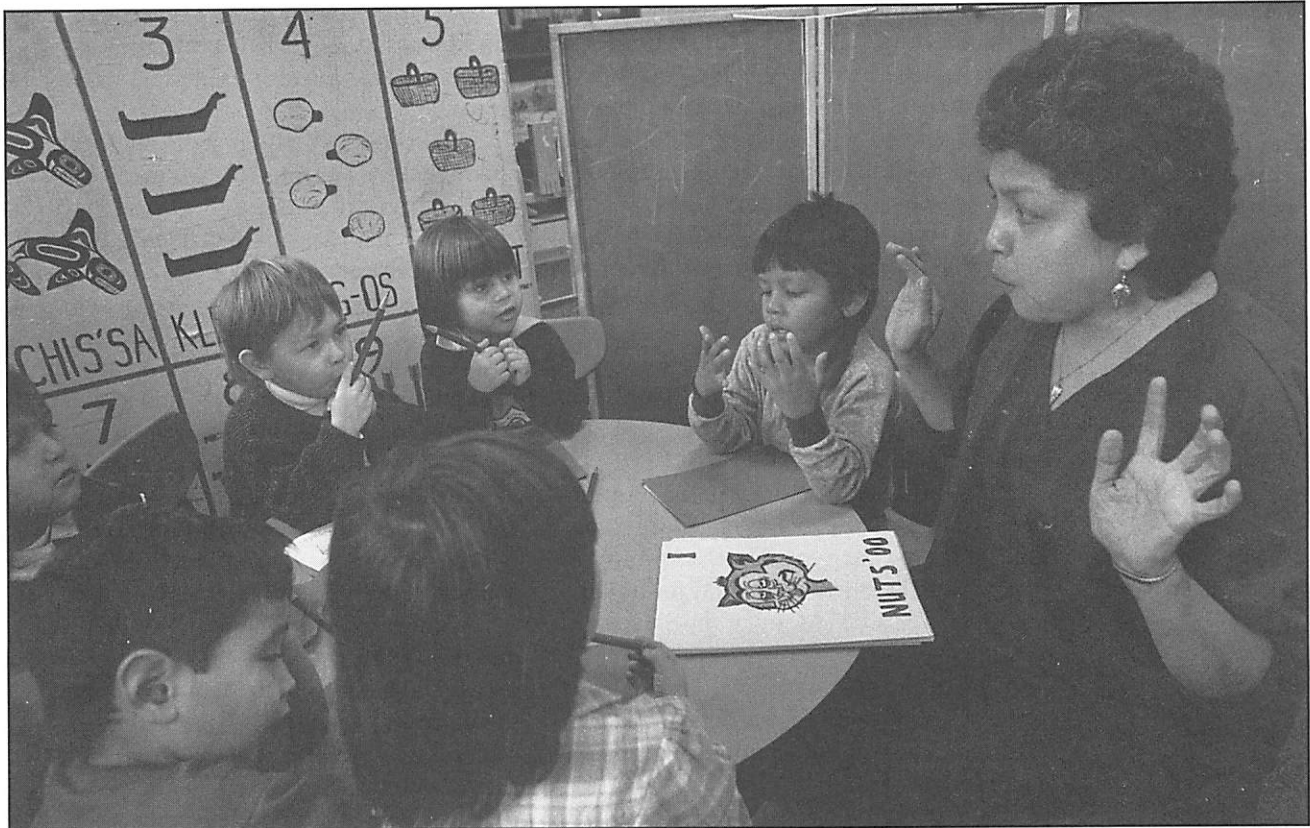
“My grandmother didn’t even know how to drive,” she laughed, but it beat scraping off the stuff with dull knives.

It’s not only troublesome, it’s often hopeless to try to do things the old way.

Rediscovering the old methods is another matter. Miller said he learned most of what he knows about tribal traditions “by keeping my ears open. Some of this I’ve never seen, but was described time after time by my elders.”

For several decades, renewed interest in the Northwest native arts has opened new markets and created a revival of interest among tribal members themselves, who can point to the work of their elders and ancestors with pride and appreciation.

*Head Start students at the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribal Center are introduced to the language of their ancestors.*



### A Cultural Appreciation

**M**any of their grandparents went to boarding schools, where much of the Indian culture was banished during the school year.

Today, the grandchildren attend Hood Canal School, where educators try to rekindle interest in Indian traditions.

Almost 100 Indian students attend the school, located at the Skokomish Reservation on the Great Bend of the canal. They represent about 40 percent of the K-7 student population.

Inside the school, students get reminders of the culture that existed long before white man's schools first came to the Skokomish in the 1870s. Interest in Indian heritage seems to rise during the fall when the curriculum includes a three-week session

on Native American studies.

"Just that time of year everybody says 'I am part Indian,'" said Pat Hawk, director of Indian Education at the school. Hawk, an 18-year Hood Canal employee, directs the session, where students learn cultural comparisons among the American tribes.

"They didn't all live in tepees; they didn't all wear feathers."

The session also includes visits by people in the tribal community who share skills in storytelling, puppetry, dancing and fishing lore.

She also directs a year-long art class for the older students, who worked on painting an Indian mural in the hallway.

"We want to keep the traditional arts alive," Hawk said.

The school's funding for Indian education is limited, said Superintendent



### SECTION 5

### USING THE CLASSROOM TO REKINDLE TRADITION

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*Native  
 American  
 students learn  
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Robert Weir. State funds totaling \$5,200, and federal Title V funds totaling \$17,000 went to the school for Indian education in 1990.

"We have to squeeze salaries from that, as well as things for the kids," Weir said.

Tied to the money is the requirement that Indian people in the community stay involved with the school. An Indian Parent Education Committee meets monthly to discuss curriculum and classroom problems.

"We are a liaison between parents and the teachers and staff," said Laurie Byrd, parent and Head Start teacher.

If parents raise concerns, committee members act on their behalf.

"A lot of the parents are uncomfortable with the teachers," Byrd said.

Only two of the school's 22 teachers are Indian. The underlying cultural differences may have something to do with parental discomfort. Whatever the reason for any discomfort, Byrd believes the solution is getting people together to talk.

"We need to keep communication open," she said.

The Indian Parent Education Committee was successful in arranging tutoring for Indian students last year. The Skokomish Tribal Council foots the bill, paid for out of the council's fish tax. Many of the Skokomish are fishers.

The tutoring sessions include not just emphasis on any skill the students need to practice, but also about 15 minutes a session on native arts or crafts.

"We want to ensure that there is a multi-cultural concept in all the curriculum," said Sally Brownsfield, a fifth-grade teacher at the school and a parent member of the Indian Parent Education Committee. She is a member of the Squaxin Island tribe.

Brownsfield contends that Indian students have different learning styles from their Anglo classmates.

"It's been shown that Native American students learn better by doing. They pick up more from discovery than from books," Brownsfield said. With that knowledge, she plans her classes so the students can be interactive.

"I let them do the experiment first, then the reading, then the experiment again," she said. "With other classes, I might give the reading and instruction first."

*By Jessie Milligan*

## Reviving the Language

Nuts'oo ... chasa ... lleewh."

The guileless pre-schoolers in the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe's Head Start class wrap their throats around the clustered syllables of their ancient language as if born to it.

"...ngoos ... lhq'achsh ... t'xung."

They hold up each little finger and repeat with teacher Myrna Milholland from the Lower Elwha Klallams, who holds flashcards with pictures of familiar traditional objects.

Nuts'oo kw'ayungsun — one eagle. Two whales — chasa ch'whe'yu. They run out of fingers at 'oopun.

Milholland is out of numbers after nineteen, she admits to her adult class later in the morning. She had only a few words of nuwhstla'yum ootsun — the S'Klallam language — until, as a young woman, she began helping her mother, Nellie Sullivan, with the sometimes unruly mixed summer classes of adults and children.

Milholland recalls that children in the tribe had begun to mimic the language when her mother used it, poke fun at the old sounds, until she stopped speaking it.

She loved working with her mother and tries to keep up the work despite occasional feelings of inadequacy. "Some of the words are so hard, I'd almost have my face in her mouth trying to pronounce them," she smiles.

When her mother died a few years ago, only six elders in the Elwha tribe retained any use of the spoken tongue.

Now Milholland must use a tape recorder to preserve what is left of the language among her elders and hopes to get access to the University of Washington language tapes made decades ago and stored somewhere. A book of the language created by University of Hawaii researchers is flawed, based upon only one source who spoke two tribal languages and mixed them up. Her mother told her to ignore it.

Milholland's mother needed her help because she was educated to teach children and she knew how to keep them busy and deal with their short attention spans. Today, as with every Wednesday language class, the children are learning something new and adding it to the small store of basics.

Out come the animal puppets. You

remember sta'ching, the wolf, says Milholland.

He played a key role in the story of pretty Nakeeta, heard last week and related again today. Straying from her mother during a berry picking expedition, she became lost and was eaten. Her mother's grief was so strong that she was given Lake Sutherland as consolation.

Tsyas, hand. They trace the outlines of their ten fingers onto their book of coloring pictures. Later, they will take these books home and maybe their parents will take an interest.

It is with the children that the future of the traditional culture rests, tribal leaders say.

Most adults share a legacy of generations of white control that included bans on the language and customs, distrust and contempt for the "savage" ways of a Pacific Northwest Coast culture rich in personal industry, art and religious ceremony.

"I think we were one of the first people to give them up," S'Klallam chairman Jake Jones says of the old ways, mostly because of early and persistent contact with whites, he surmises.

Separate S'Klallam bands once ranged from Neah Bay at the far western tip of the Olympic Peninsula to Discovery Bay near Port Townsend; from Lower Hadlock, where artifacts at a beach called Tsetsibus indicate a meeting ground centuries old; and later to

Port Gamble, where tribal sources say the camp was displaced by the white community's graveyard after the mill town was established in 1853.

The ancients were known as excellent traders and fierce warriors. But by the time Jones' generation was born, there were no more canoe makers, no more spirit quests, no more "nuts'oo ... chasa ... lleewh."

The Port Gamble S'Klallams recently put the traditional "s" prefix back before their name. Like many of the words, it works best if you suck in on the prefix, breathe out on the next syllables, much like playing harmonica.

The tribe hired Milholland to help regain their culture, which as any linguist or poet knows, is embedded in the words.

Jones' sisters, Ginger and Geneva Ives, signed up for the adult language class and added to Milholland's vocabulary with memories of sounds buried since the death of their grandmother 47 years ago.

All three agree on the variable meaning of umit, which can be sit down or get up, depending on what you do with your hands.

But nu can't be the only way to say "no," says Geneva. "She always said 'aunu'," she muses about the large old lady she waited upon in old age. Maybe she meant "no more."

Myrna Milholland writes that down. Maybe her elders will know.

*By Julie McCormick*

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***Most adult tribal members share a legacy of generations of white control that included distrust and contempt for a Pacific Northwest Coast culture rich in personal industry, art and religious ceremony.***