

## ▶ PEOPLE TO KNOW

James Chatters  
Kennewick Man  
David Thompson

## ▶ PLACES TO LOCATE

Asia  
Siberia  
Bering Strait  
Pacific Coast  
Columbia Plateau  
Cascade Mountains  
Great Plains  
Olympic Peninsula  
Puget Sound  
Vancouver Island  
Cape Flattery  
Ozette (Cape Alava)  
Columbia River  
Pend Oreille River  
The Dalles (Celilo Falls)  
Kettle Falls  
Sequim  
Clovis, New Mexico

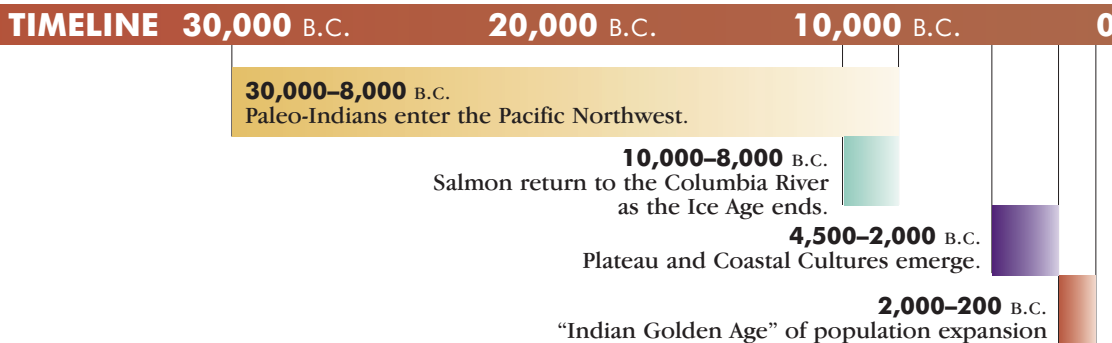
## ▶ WORDS TO UNDERSTAND

animism  
cache  
Caucasian (Caucasoid)  
coroner  
decimate  
dentalium shells  
desecrate  
forensic anthropologist  
immortality  
materialism  
Paleo-Indian  
potlatch  
protohistoric  
relief (art)  
repatriate  
resurrect  
spawn  
spoils  
tule  
weir

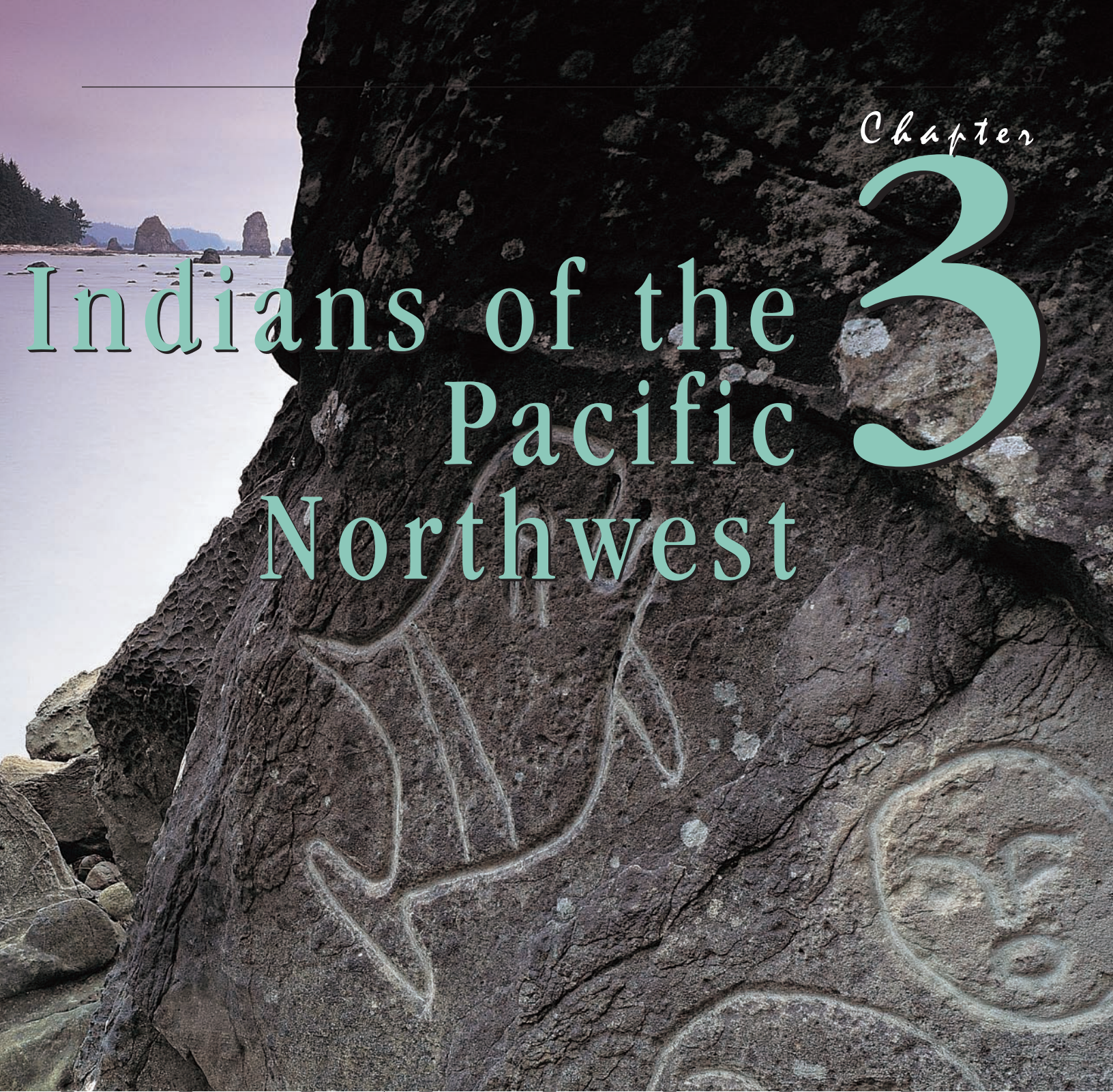
# American

**Makah petroglyphs are carved into the rock at Cape Alava, Ozette region, Olympic National Park.**

*Photo by Tom Till*



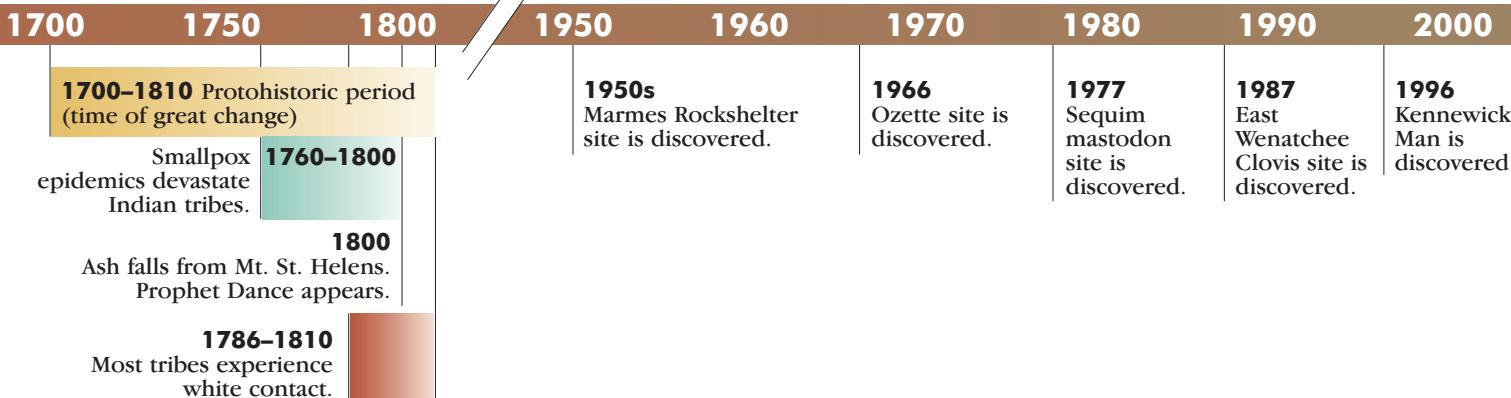




Chapter

# 3

# Indians of the Pacific Northwest





*An anthropologist studies the origin, distribution, physical features, and culture of human beings.*

## The First Americans

A recent discovery occupies a unique place in the story of when and how humans came to the New World. Discoveries in the last decade have given new possibilities to the question of how the first people came to the Americas. The long-held theory of one large migration of Asian people across a land bridge that linked Siberia with Alaska about 12,000 years ago is now being challenged.

### Kennewick Man

In July 1996, college students watching a hydroplane race on the Columbia River near Kennewick found a human skull in the river. Thinking it might be that of a murder victim, they called the police. The skull was

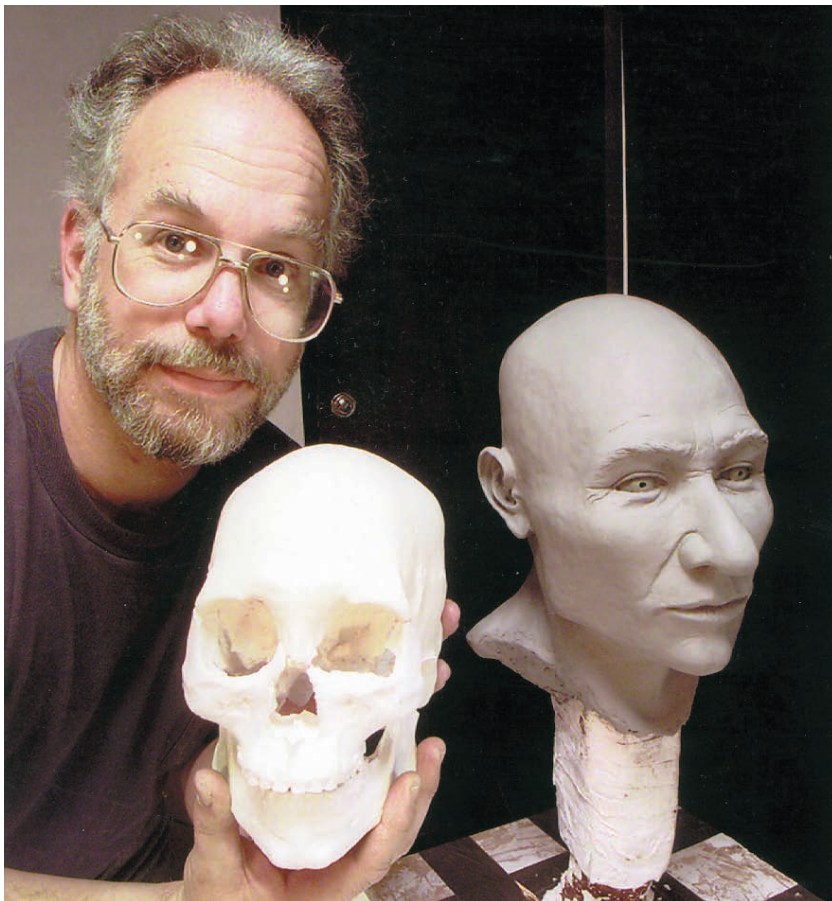
turned over to the local **coroner**, a man whose job was to look into any unnatural death. The coroner asked for the assistance of James Chatters, a **forensic anthropologist**. A forensic anthropologist determines the cause of death of ancient humans.

Returning to the river, Chatters found most of the skeleton. The remains were remarkably complete, with only a few bones missing. Apparently the bones had washed out of a bank during recent flooding.

Chatters' examination revealed "a very large number of **Caucasoid** features." Caucasoid features are non-Indian and non-Asian. He determined that the skeleton was male, between forty and forty-five years old at the time of his death. The man was tall—about five feet nine inches—much taller than prehistoric Indian people in the region. Chatters' first assumption was that the man had been an early pioneer or fur trapper.

While cleaning the pelvis, the anthropologist found a gray object imbedded in the bone, which had partly healed around it. It was part of a spear point that resembled those in use from 4,500 to 9,000 years ago.

Chatters sent a bone fragment to a radio-carbon laboratory. The results were startling. Kennewick Man, as Chatters called him, was between 9,300 and 9,500 years old, making him one of the oldest and most complete skeletons ever found in North America.



Tom McClelland of Richland shows the skull casting of Kennewick Man. McClelland and Jim Chatters used the casting to recreate the facial features of the 9,400-year-old discovery.

## Battle of the Bones

Indian tribes in the area soon claimed Kennewick Man's remains. Calling him the "Ancient One," they demanded that the skeleton be **repatriated** (returned to the place of origin) for immediate reburial in a secret place. Under provisions of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act passed in 1990, the federal government was required to rule on the origins of the remains. If they were found to be American Indian, they would be turned over to the appropriate tribe (if that could be determined).

Kennewick Man's discovery stirred scientists across the country. They were concerned because in recent years **Paleo-Indian** skeletons found elsewhere in the West had been returned to Indian tribes for reburial before detailed studies could be done. In fact, the remains of one young woman reburied by Indian people in Idaho were determined to be 12,800 years old! She and other Paleo-Indian skeletons shared Kennewick Man's non-Indian Caucasoid features. A group of scientists sued for the right to study Kennewick man's remains, and won. "It's a victory for science," said one anthropologist

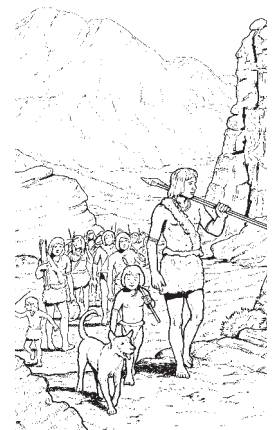


Christopher Francisco, a member of the Navajo tribe, flies an American flag upside down outside of the U.S. Courthouse in Portland during the Kennewick Man hearing. He was protesting the indecision over whether to turn over the skeleton to Indian tribes for burial. *Associated Press*

## Mystery of the Bones

Many scholars believe that the earliest migrations to the New World started in Asia, then traveled across Siberia to the Americas over the Bering Land Bridge. They also believe there was a series of migrations over many thousands of years.

There is also growing evidence that people may have traveled down the Pacific Coast using boats or walked along the coastal plain. Over hundreds of years groups reached the tip of South America. Other scholars argue that some groups of people came directly from Europe, Asia, and some Pacific Islands in boats.

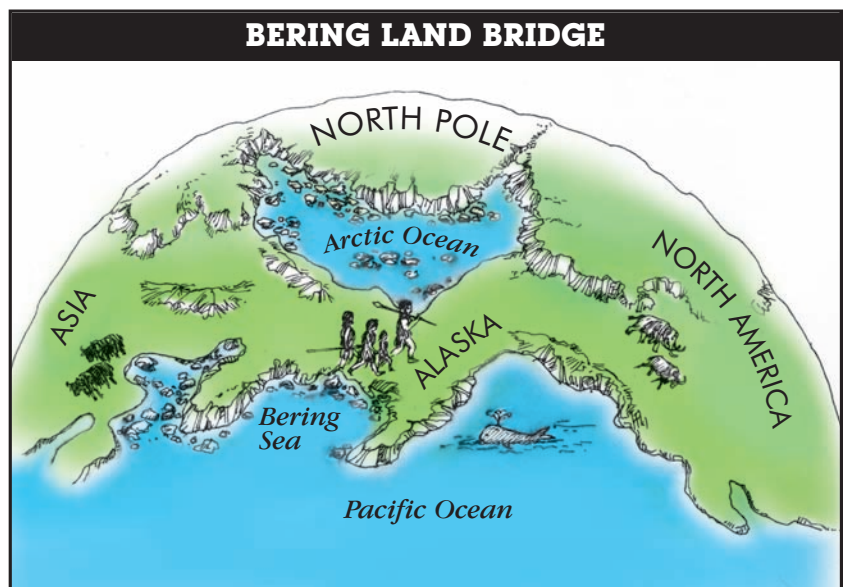


## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

**Kennewick Man publicized a long-standing conflict between Indians and scientists over control of human remains. Indian people believe that digging bones up from the earth and studying them is a desecration of their ancestors.**

**On the other hand, anthropologists and archaeologists insist the remains hold the key to explaining the origin of human beings in the Americas.**

**What do you think should be done with ancient skeletons?**





## Paleo-Indians

Native peoples entered the Pacific Northwest sometime before the end of the last Ice Age—about 10,000 to 12,000 years ago. We call these people Paleo because they were here first. Paleo means ancient. The people were hunting the large animals that ranged through the region. In 1987, a *cache* of “Clovis” spear points was found in an apple orchard in East Wenatchee. The Wenatchee Clovis site has been dated to about 11,000 years ago.

This discovery links our area to the Clovis, New Mexico site. There, in 1937, the Clovis-style spear point was found along with mammoth bones. The Clovis people were

big game hunters who moved across North America hunting Ice Age animals such as mammoths, giant bison, and giant sloths.

In 1977, a 12,000-year-old mastodon skeleton was found near Sequim. It had a spear point embedded in a rib.

### Adaptation and Survival

After the Paleo-Indians, groups called Archaic Indians lived here. They had developed better tools, including a spear thrower called an *atlatl*. The large mastodons were gone by then, and the *atlatl* helped the hunters kill the smaller, faster deer for food. There may have been several groups of Paleo and Archaic in the Northwest. Based on limited archaeological evidence, their populations were sparse and widely scattered.

Kennewick Man and his people were probably part of a small population, perhaps numbering only in the hundreds to a few thousand, who roamed in small bands across the Columbia Plateau.

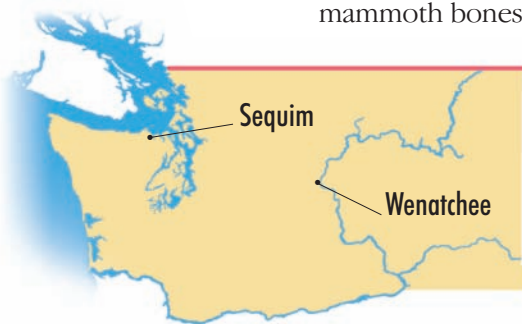
Life for these people was harsh. They struggled constantly with the forces of nature—climate, volcanic eruptions, and

catastrophic floods. About 4,500 years ago, the climate grew milder. Indian populations increased.

By about 2,000 years ago, two clearly defined culture groups—Coastal and Plateau peoples—had emerged. Like today, the people were divided by the high Cascade Mountains. They adapted to life on different land and in varying climates.



This flint projectile point came from the Wenatchee Clovis site. It is about 11,000 years old.



## Marmes Man

Dr. Richard Daugherty, a geologist from Washington State University, led a group of students to the Marmes Rockshelter on the Palouse River. As the group explored the area, they found human bones. The bones were determined to be those of people who had lived in the region during the final stages of the Ice Age. After many years of excavation, the Marmes Rockshelter was flooded by the reservoir waters of a dam on the Snake River.



*From 2,000 years ago until the coming of the white people, the American Indians enjoyed a “Golden Age” of progress and population growth.*



## Digging for Artifacts

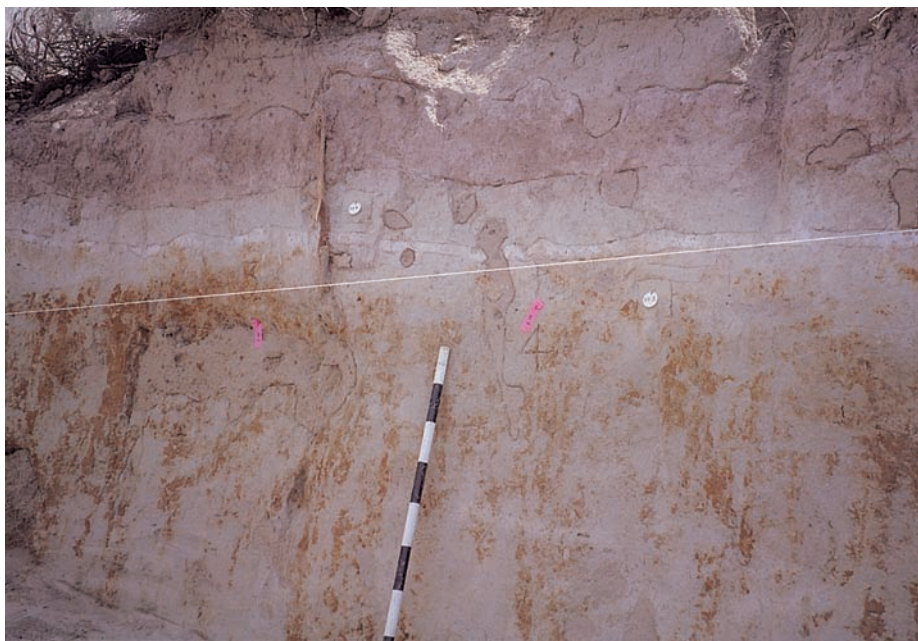
Archaeologists are scientists who study artifacts to learn about people who lived long ago. In 1999 and 2000, archaeologists excavated a site below Vantage Bridge on the Columbia River. Sentinel Gap, as the site is called, is thought to be about 10,200 years old. That is one thousand years older than Kennewick Man, whose remains were found less than 100 miles downstream.



The staff of Eastern Washington University's Archaeological and Historical Service Department work under a hot June sun. They eventually unearthed more than 283,000 items—stone tools and stone flakes from tool-making.

*Photo by Mike Green*

A staff member photographs the artifacts. *Photo by Mike Green*



Scientists use ancient volcanic ash falls to date sites. This exposed surface shows the Glacier Peak ash fall from an eruption 11,200 years ago. On the extreme left is the Mount St. Helen's Ash Fall of 13,000 years ago. *Photo by Mike Green*



## Historic American Indians

**H**istoric peoples are those about whom we have writings, paintings, or photographs produced at the time the Indians were living. For example, Lewis and Clark wrote many accounts in their diaries about the native peoples they met. Many other explorers and trappers also wrote about native peoples. And, of course, archaeologists continually study the lifestyle of the people who lived many years after the Paleo-Indians.

When white settlers came to the Pacific Northwest, there were many groups of Indian peoples living all over the land. Their lifestyles were alike in many ways, but different in other ways. Some spoke related languages, and some spoke entirely different languages.

Groups were divided by geographic landforms such as mountains and large rivers. This effected native culture.

## The Coastal People

**D**uring the 2,000 years before contact with white explorers, Indians of the Northwest Coast—an area extending from northern California to southwestern Alaska—created a remarkably unique and rich culture. The Pacific Ocean nurtured this culture. Its waters teemed with fish, shellfish, and sea mammals. Its moisture-laden winds fostered an abundance of plant life, including the giant red cedar—the Indians' source of shelter, clothing and transportation. The mild marine climate made life easier than life in other places. Large semi-permanent villages were found at the mouths of virtually every river.

Most of all, the ocean's resources gave the Coastal Indians the extraordinary gift of leisure time in the winter months. The winter months could be spent on recreation and on artistic projects. Winter was also the time for elaborate ceremonies, a basic feature of coastal social life.

### Salish

The largest group of Indians on the coast was the Salish-speaking people. The mild climate and plentiful food from the sea made life easy. The coastal Salish thrived living next to the ocean. They occupied all of Puget Sound, much of the Olympic Peninsula, and most of western Washington.

### Chinook

Along the Columbia River upstream to The Dalles lived various divisions of the Chinook. They spoke Penutian, an ancient language. The Chinooks were the great middlemen in a vast network of Indian trade. They traded slaves from California to Vancouver Island for canoes and prized *dentalium shells*. The shells were long and narrow and were strung on long rope necklaces that were





worn by both men and women. They were used in trade as we use money.

To facilitate their wide-ranging commerce, the Chinook developed a trade language known as “Chinook Jargon.” This was a simple spoken language understood by dozens of tribes over a vast stretch of western North America.

## Makah

On the very northwest corner of the Olympic Peninsula at Cape Flattery lived the Makah. They were a division of the Nootka, a tribe that occupied much of the west coast of Vancouver Island.

The Makah, Nootka, and a few neighboring tribes were the only coastal peoples to pursue the largest of all sea mammals—the gray whales that regularly migrated along the coast. They hunted the whales in large cedar canoes so well built and decorated that they became prized trade items.

## The Ozette Dig

In 1966, at a place called Ozette, archaeologists uncovered a Makah village that had been engulfed by a huge mudslide 500 years ago. Thousands of artifacts documented an indisputable fact—the Makah were once a proud and prosperous people completely dedicated to whaling. In one large cedar house were found containers of whale oil, harpoons, and numerous examples of artwork celebrating the whale hunt.



The photo of a Makah mask was taken on the Makah Reservation. The mask was made by Frank Smith. *Photo by Tom Till*

## A Marine Economy

Fishing was the foundation of the coastal economy. Five species of salmon ascended the rivers to **spawn**. The people caught them as they swam upriver. Men also trolled for salmon in the ocean, using baited hooks on kelp lines. Halibut and cod were also caught on baited hooks. The Chinook used similar techniques to catch large sturgeon from the lower Columbia River.

After a hard day fishing, the people preserved the catch for later use by smoking and air-drying it. Then they placed the fish in baskets lined with fish skins.

The ocean also provided edible shellfish. Many kinds of clams, mussels, oysters, and crabs were harvested. Old village sites along the coast are still marked by large mounds of discarded shells.

Seals, sea lions, and porpoises were also hunted by nearly all coastal tribes. Whaling, however, was the most spectacular form of sea hunting. This was a dangerous activity. The equipment—from the canoe to the harpoon, lines, and inflated sealskin floats used to keep the animal from sinking—was always in perfect readiness. The harpooner and his crew practiced constantly and carried out ceremonial rituals to prepare for the hunt.



**T**he salmon were speared, caught in nets or weirs, or scooped up in large baskets beneath waterfalls. Weirs were fences put across streams to stop fish from getting away.



## Salmon Life Cycle

**Y**ear after year, in the spring or fall, salmon leave the ocean to start their difficult journey up a stream to the exact same place where they hatched from salmon eggs three to five years earlier. Covering over ten miles a day, they fight their way upstream against the current. They brave swift rapids and rushing falls, jumping as much as ten feet up the falls, facing the danger of fishermen, birds, and modern dams.

Bruised and starved, survivors reach the still freshwaters of the spawning ground. A female fish lays as many as 10,000 eggs about the size of peas in the stream beds. After the male covers the eggs

with a milky substance, both adult fish float tail first downstream. In a few days they are dead, and unfit for human food.

After several months, the eggs hatch and tiny fish start to grow. Within a year, they, too, start downstream on their journey to the salty sea. Only a small percentage ever make their destination—the others are caught and eaten by wild animals, birds, or larger fish.

The damming of many streams in the Pacific Northwest has seriously affected the salmon runs. "Fish ladders"—artificial sloping waterfalls—have been made so the salmon can continue their journey.

Salmon were caught in nets or speared.



This community home of the Nooksack had been much larger at one time. Families had separate apartments, or sections, of the large house.

## Homes of Cedar

The Coastal Indians used wood as their basic building material. Red cedar was the most important wood. Red cedar was easily split into wide straight planks for building houses and ceremonial lodges.

Longhouses were built by overlapping cedar planks to make exterior walls. Cedar shavings or planks covered the dirt floors. Several related families lived together in one longhouse that faced the sea.

## Family Groups

The basic social unit was the extended family—a local group of relatives. These groups united for defense or for ceremonial purposes. There were no true tribal divisions among Coastal Indians.

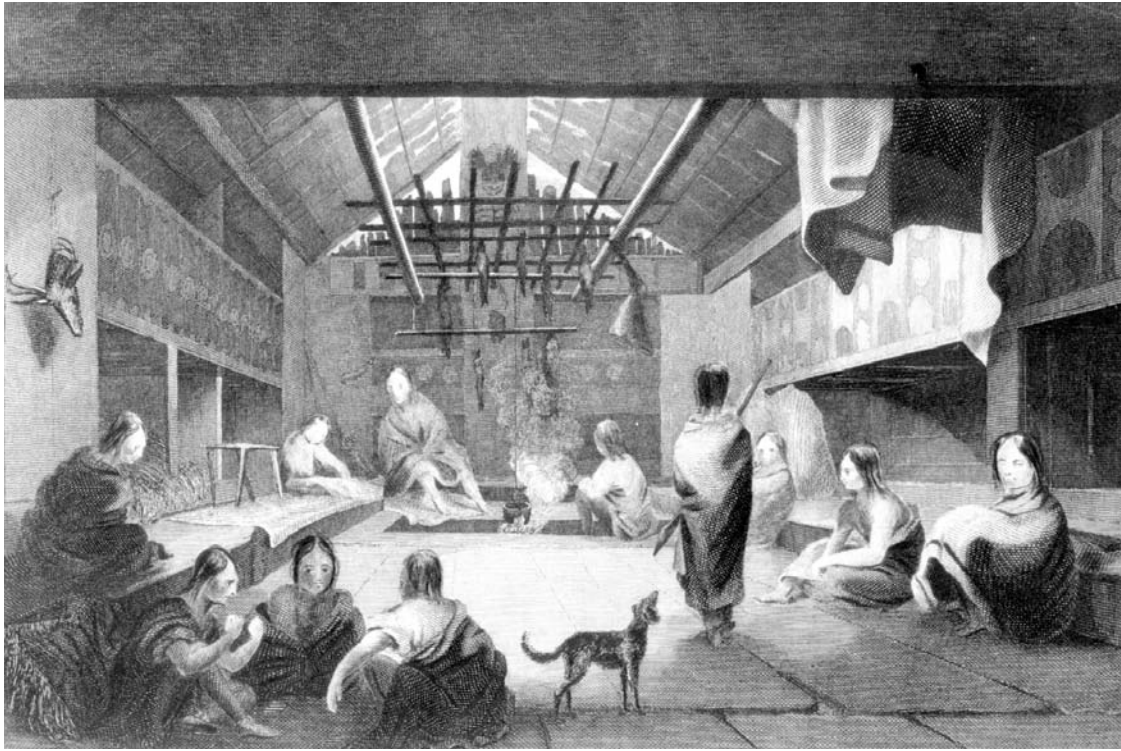
## Social Status

Wealth determined social status. A wealthy family might own more canoes, tools, weapons, animal skins, and dentalium and clam shell ropes. Wealthy people also had slaves. The leaders of a group were nearly always wealthy. As a person got more possessions, he moved up in social status.

No single chief ruled the group. Councils met and made decisions together. There were chiefs, nobles, commoners, and slaves in the communities.

Slaves were usually women and children who were stolen from other groups. Slaves lived in the house with the rest of the family and did the hardest work. Sometimes they were sold to other groups.





A Chinook longhouse was home to several related families. A fire in the center of the roof let out smoke from the cooking fire. The people made cattail and cedar mats that formed movable interior walls or separations.

## The Potlatch

Nothing showed the **materialism** of Coastal Culture more than the potlatch. A **potlatch** was a huge celebration hosted by a family for a special event. There were marriage, birth, and death potlatches. A large feast for the entire village and the presenting of gifts were basic features. The people of the highest social status received the most expensive gifts first. Those of the lowest social status got smaller gifts.

### LINKING THE PAST TO THE PRESENT

In what ways do people today use wealth as a way of measuring a person's worth? Do we look down on the poor? Do they have the same opportunities for a good education, a good job, and do they get the same respect as people with more money?



Wool blankets were given as gifts at a potlatch in the early 1900s.

## A Spiritual People

Spirituality was an important part of everyday life. Belief in a Supreme Being was common. Some groups believed in one god whose power was present in all things in nature. Other people believed in many gods.

**Animism** is a modern word for the belief that both living and non-living things in nature have spirits, either good or evil. American Indians lived close to nature. They

felt that they knew its secrets. The ground under their feet was more than just grass, rock, and dirt. The sun was more than a ball of fire. They believed that the sun, moon, stars, rain, wind, plants, rocks, and animals had spirits. The spirits could grant favors or punish. They must always be treated with reverence.

Shamans were men who were revered because of their special healing and spiritual gifts. They had special ceremonies and dances to heal the sick. A shaman could also use his power to harm an enemy, and so could be blamed for someone's death.

## Salmon-People

Beliefs relating to the **immortality** of salmon were widespread. The salmon appeared year after year, offering themselves to the Indians. The people believed that the salmon were a race of supernatural beings that lived in human form in a large house under the sea. Once a year the Salmon-People assumed their salmon form to sacrifice themselves to their brothers on land. After death, a fish's spirit returned to the house under the sea.

Returning salmon bones to the water was essential. If bones were discarded on land, the "Salmon-Person" might lack a leg or some other body part upon **resurrection**. This would make him angry and he and his people would not return to a river where they had been treated so rudely. All Coastal tribes had lengthy lists of prohibitions and rules for dealing with the Salmon-People so that good relations could be maintained.

## Art

Nothing distinguishes the Coastal Culture as impressively as its art. Wood carving in **relief** was highly developed and the result of centuries of skill. No metal tools were used before the arrival of Europeans. Using tools of shell, bone, and beaver teeth, artists interpreted the animal species with great skill and imagination.

The people were also excellent basket weavers. They wove beautiful baskets from grasses, reeds, cattails, and thin strips of cedar bark. Baskets were used for carrying and storing food and other items.



Young Doctor made elaborate wood carvings. Notice the carved people sitting in the canoe.



## The Plateau People

Large groups of people lived east of the Cascade Mountains long before white settlers arrived. The land and climate of the plateau shaped the lives of the people who lived there just as the marine environment influenced the lives of the Coastal Indians. The plateau's hot dry summers and cold snowy winters required seasonal moves and changes in clothing and shelter.

The plateau's most prominent feature, the Columbia River system, was a major transportation route and was also the Indians' most important source of food.

### Two groups

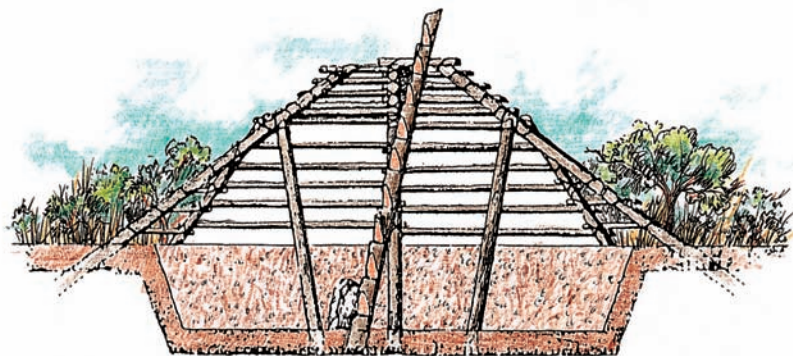
Plateau tribes were divided into two main language groups. The Salish-speaking tribes of the northern plateau included the Spokane, Kalispel, Coeur d' Alene, Colville, Okanagon, Columbia, and Wenatchee. Most of the tribes of the southern plateau spoke a different language. These groups included the Nez Perce, Yakama, Palouse, Klickitat, Kittitas, Umatilla, and Wanapum.

Because they lived between the Pacific Coast and the Great Plains, Plateau Peoples were influenced by the cultures of both. Many Plateau tribes adopted a limited version of the coastal potlatch, while contact with plains tribes brought widespread use of the tepee.

Coastal Indians lived in the same place all year, while the Plains Indians east of the Rocky Mountains were nomadic. The semi-nomadic Plateau Indians fit between these extremes. They lived in winter villages for years, but often spent months at a time on long food-gathering trips. At these times, they lived in tepees that could be taken apart and moved to a new place.

### Pit Houses

Permanent homes on the eastern edge of the Cascade Range were widely used until the early 1800s. They were called pit houses.



The person who wanted to build the house asked all his neighbors to help. Twenty or more came, so that the building was sometimes completed in a single day.

A bark rope twenty to forty feet long was laid on the ground. Another rope was laid across it to determine the center. Each end and the middle were marked with small stakes. A man marked a circle on the ground with a stick.

Then the women began to dig the soil with digging sticks or scrapers with sharp, flat blades. The loose earth was put into large baskets and carried from the widening hole.

Thick poles of green timber were measured with bark ropes. Trees were cut, barked, and hauled with stout bark rope. These poles would be the roof supports. Thin poles for the roof were also cut, tied into bundles, and carried to the site by men and women.

Upright braces were placed about two feet deep in the ground around the circle and formed the roof. An opening was left at the top. The structure was then covered with thinner poles or, in other places or later years, with woven grass mats. The slanted roof was covered with pine needles or dry grass, and then covered with earth.

A large notched log was placed down through a hole in the top of the house and was used as a ladder. Fires were built on stone slabs in the center of the house.

This drawing shows a side view of what pit houses were like inside.



Small baskets about eight inches high were attached to a woman's belt and used to gather camas bulbs.



**Tule** houses replaced pit houses after the early 1800s. Tall tule rushes were cut, dried, and laid flat side by side. The ends were tied to form mats. Tule mats were laced to a log framework, overlapped to provide more protection from wind and rain.

## The Seasonal Round

To get food, the people traveled between known sites on a yearly basis. The same family groups were found at their regular fields or fishing sites at the same time each year.

During the spring and summer, women and children dug for camas bulbs. Later in the summer, groups of people moved into the mountains to pick huckleberries, while others returned to the fishing sites to prepare for the salmon run.

Fishing was men's work. The most popular fishing sites, such as The Dalles or Kettle Falls, became large intertribal meeting places, where trading, socializing, and work intermingled. While the men fished, the women cleaned the salmon, then laid them out on wooden racks to dry.

Fall was the time for hunting. Hunting methods varied, but a favorite technique was the "surround." A large number of hunters formed a circle in the woods, leaving the prey no route to escape. Men hunted larger game, including elk and buffalo, and smaller animals such as rabbits, mountain goats, sheep, and birds.

Following the hunts, usually by late November, the tribes returned to their winter camps. This was a quiet time. Stories were told and retold. Ceremonies and dances were held. Men made weapons and

Camas lilies grew wild all over the dry plateau lands. The bulbs were an important food. A camas root looks like a small white onion. The camas was baked in large underground pits, formed into cakes, and then dried in the sun.

*Photo by Mike Green*





tools and, if the weather allowed, went hunting. Women made and repaired clothing. The supply of camas cakes, dried salmon, and venison would have to last until the start of the next seasonal round when the cycle could begin again.

## Gender Roles and Equality

Plateau Indian groups lived with a strict system of gender roles. Most tasks were either men's work or women's work. Women gathered the roots and berries, dried the meat and fish, prepared the animal skins, made the family's clothing, and cared for the young children. Men fished and hunted, made tools and weapons, built the houses, and, if necessary, went to war. Children and teenaged girls generally did the same work as the women, and teenaged boys learned skills by working with the men.

There was a great deal of equality between men and women. The first explorers were astonished at the high status of plateau women compared with the status of women in other parts of North America. This equality could be seen in marriage proposals where the woman was always free to reject a suitor. Among the Spokanes, in fact, the woman could propose marriage.

Within the family, women had greater authority than men. For example, once food entered the house, it became the wife's exclusive property. Even if he had first provided it, the husband needed permission to take even a small piece of dried meat.

## Material Culture and Art

Because the Plateau Indians' time was spent mainly in obtaining food, there was little time for artistic pursuits. Most of the things they made were for practical purposes. Mats for lodge construction were woven from tule (rushes), or cattail. The skill that went into mat construction was even more evident in the elaborately woven and decorated baskets. Cradle boards were often decorated with beadwork.



A shy smile shows a mother's pride. This Spokane mother with her baby in a cradle board was taken in 1899. *Photo by Larry Allen*

By 1900, salmon runs were weakened. White commercial fisherman had taken too many salmon at a time. Indians continued to fish at Kettle Falls until the site was flooded by the reservoir created by Grand Coulee Dam in 1941.





Kalispel men fish in their unique bark-covered sturgeon nose canoe in 1908.

Ordinary clothing could become an object of art. Beautifully decorated deerskin shirts and dresses were sometimes decorated with elaborate porcupine quills and beadwork and worn only on ceremonial occasions.

Most Plateau Indians made very simple dugout canoes for river travel. But the Kalispels, who lived along the Pend Oreille River in northeast Washington, made a most unusual bark canoe. Constructed of white pine bark stretched over cedar ribs and sewn with black pine roots, these canoes were remarkably light and swift.

### Religion

Like the Coastal Indians, the Plateau Indians believed in a creator who was known as the “Old Chief,” the “Ancient One,” or “Father Mystery.”

Young people were expected to go on a “vision quest” to find their guardian spirits. In keeping with gender equality, girls as well

as boys were allowed to go on a vision quest.

The preparation for the vision quest began at an early age—between the ages of five and ten for boys, and seven and ten for girls. Elders supervised the quest, telling the children what to do and what they might expect. Children sought their guardian spirit by going off alone and fasting. They sang and prayed for a visitation. Their guardian spirit might appear as an animal such as Bear or Beaver. Sun, Moon, or Mountains could also appear as a spirit. A guardian spirit would help a person throughout his or her life.

Spirit power was the central religious belief. All significant or unusual events were explained in terms of this power. Indians with the greatest spirit power became shamans. Shamans had numerous powers, but their most important power was their ability to cure the sick. When their spirit powers failed to help them





cope with the dramatic changes in their lives—especially the measles and smallpox epidemics—some leaders turned to the white people for help. Indians thought that because the white men had a very rich material culture, perhaps they had the greater spirit power.

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## Trade Connections

**T**rade took place at the inter-tribal fishing sites at Kettle Falls and The Dalles, as well as at major camas gathering fields. Goods were exchanged as ritual gifts, bartered for other goods, and won or lost through gambling. Gambling was so widespread that some scholars believe it was the primary method of trade.

Coastal tribes carried on extensive trading activities, none more so than the Chinook. The potlatch system became

something like a series of elaborate and rotating yard sales. Up the Columbia River at The Dalles there was a thriving exchange between the Chinook and the various Plateau tribes. The Dalles became one of the most important inter-cultural trading sites in all of North America.

The Indians got horses from the Spanish in the 1700s. Horses allowed Indians to expand their trading opportunities. Plateau tribes traded as far south as California. Some tribes even attended the largest of native trade fairs—the Shoshoni rendezvous in Wyoming—where they could barter for goods from the Spanish settlements in New Mexico.

The lives of both the Coastal and Plateau Indians were enriched by this expansion of trade. But the result was more like the brighter flame of the candle just before it is blown out. As Indian trading networks expanded, they became routes for deadly germs. You will read more about disease at

The Dalles was an important fishing and trading center.

the end of the chapter.

## The Horse

Horses were brought to Mexico by Spanish explorers. By 1700, horses had been traded to the Shoshoni in Idaho. The Cayuse people brought the horse to the Columbia Plateau about 1710. By 1750, most Plateau tribes had at least a few horses.

The Nez Perce and Cayuse, whose territory contained extensive grazing lands, had large herds. "Cayuse" became a term generally used for the tough wiry ponies of the region. Coastal Indians had little use for the horse, however,

though there were some horses in the Puget Sound area.

David Thompson, a British explorer and trapper, wrote in his diary in 1810 this account of an Indian man's reaction to seeing horses for the first time:

*We were anxious to see a horse of which we had heard so much. At last we heard that one was killed by an arrow. . . . Numbers of us went to see him, and we all admired him. He put us in the mind of a Stag that had lost his horns and we did not know what name to give him. But as he was a slave to Man, like the dog which carried our things, he was named the Big Dog.*

Horses changed Indian life in many ways. Food gathering became more efficient. On horseback, it was possible to travel greater distances to get food and easier to bring food back to winter camps.

Many tribes traveled to the Great Plains to hunt buffalo. An 1824 hunt consisted of more than 800 Indians with 1,800 horses. Dried buffalo meat and buffalo robes became important trade items.

Unfortunately, the greed for horses greatly increased the scale of violence. Horses became new **spoils** of war, and stealing horses became an important test of bravery. The Shoshoni began regular raids for horses and slaves. The Oregon Klamath people became fierce slave and horse raiders. "We found that we could make money by



A woman and Looking Glass, a Nez Perce chief, posed for photographs in 1887.





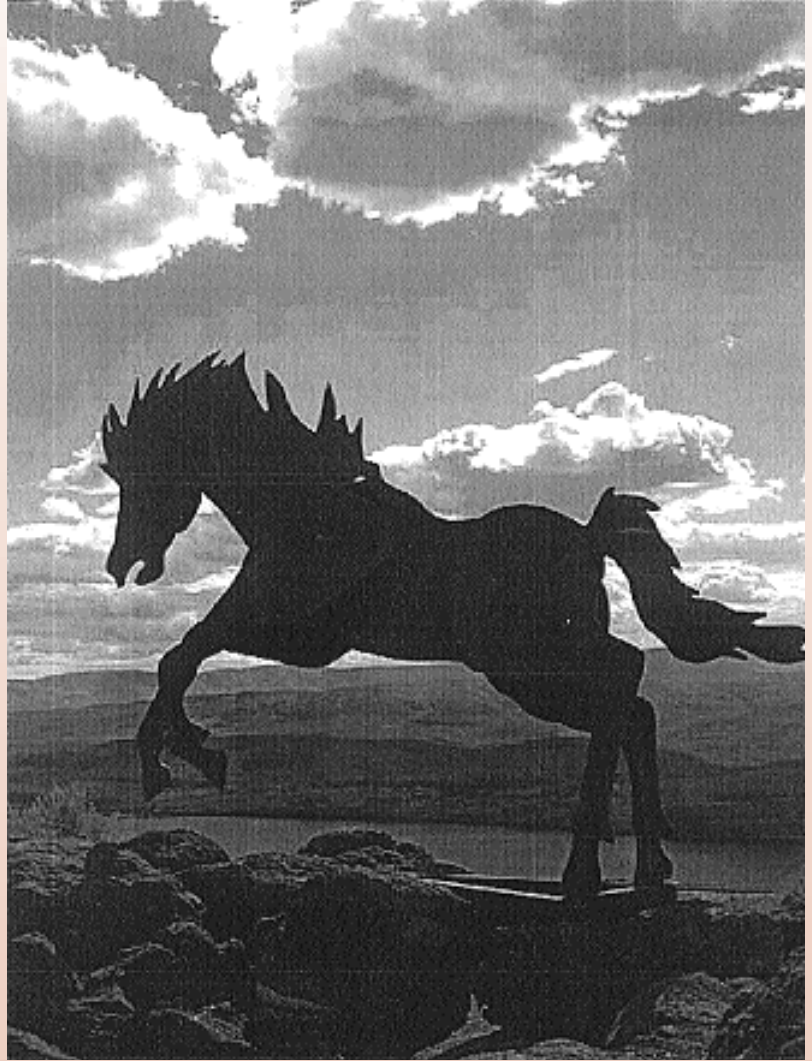
# GRANDFATHER CUTS LOOSE THE PONIES

war,” as one warrior put it, noting that “we rather got to like it anyhow.”

**S**outhern Columbia Basin tribes tell a colorful legend that explains how they got horses. Like all oral Indian history, this legend was passed down from generation to generation by what the native people called “Grandfather Tales.”

*Speelyi, the Coyote Spirit who created the Indian world, decided one day that his people in this part of the country had walked long enough. Summoning one of his favorite shamans to a cave, he gave the medicine man a basketful of ponies and told him to turn them loose as a gift to his people. The shaman tipped the basket on a high bluff, where they spread to all the inland tribes as Speelyi’s special gift.*

In modern times, artist David Govedare created fourteen life-sized ponies of steel. The ponies are placed in dramatic silhouette against a wide expanse of sky on a high ridge. You can see the ponies running across the ridge by taking the footpath off the eastbound lane of I-90, a few miles east of the town of Vantage.



*Grandfather Cuts Loose the Ponies*, a sculpture by David Govedare, is a stirring illustration of an old Indian legend. Photo by Larry Conboy

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

**What were the positive and negative aspects of the Indian people’s acquisition of horses? Think of a modern item that affects people’s lives today in both positive and negative ways. Would you give up**



using the item because of the negative impact?

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## Disease Frontiers

After devastating Indian populations in New England and the Great Lakes region, infectious diseases came to the Pacific Northwest. Native peoples had no immunity to such illnesses as smallpox, measles, malaria, typhoid, and diphtheria. Smallpox was the first to strike. Coming in waves, smallpox hit the eastern edge of the plateau in the 1760s and the entire northwest again ten years later. It reappeared in 1800. Malaria and measles followed smallpox.

The results were catastrophic for some tribes. By the 1830s, the Chinook had lost ninety percent of their population to smallpox and malaria. Overall, the smallpox epidemics reduced Indian populations by about one-third.

David Thompson recorded the life story of Saukamappee, who had raided deep into Shoshoni country when he and his group found a village **decimated** by smallpox:

*We entered for the fight; but our war whoop instantly stopped, our eyes were appalled with terror; there was no one to fight with but the dead and the dying. . . . This dreadful disease broke out in our camp and spread from one tent to another as if the Bad Spirit carried it. We had no belief that one Man could give it to another, any more than a wounded Man could give his wound to another. About one-third of us died. We believed the Good Spirit had forsaken us and allowed the Bad Spirit to become our Master.*

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## Protohistoric Change

At least one hundred years before the actual arrival of the whites, Indians in the Pacific Northwest experienced wrenching changes in their lives as a result of indirect contact with the European explorers. Scholars now recognize the importance of this period and they have given it a name: **protohistoric**. In the Pacific Northwest, this period runs from about 1700 to 1810.

Change came in the form of the horse, new trade goods, epidemic disease, and a steady flow of information. When Lewis and Clark met Indian peoples, for instance, the Indians had never met a white person, but they owned horses and guns. Some had smallpox scars.

The Lewis and Clark journals contain numerous examples. The Shoshoni described to Lewis and Clark the route to the Spanish settlements in New Mexico. The Chinooks astounded the captains with their detailed knowledge of the route over the Columbia Plateau and across the Great Divide. It was obvious that Indian traders traveled widely.

The explorer's trade goods such as cloth, blue and white glass beads, copper pots, and metal guns provoked questions among Indian peoples. Who made these goods? What are the people like? What is the source of their spirit power? Stories of the white man and his world were traded along with his trade goods.

In the summer of 1800, the sky went dark as a huge eruption from Mt. St. Helens blanketed the region with several inches of ash. This, together with a third smallpox epidemic, seems to have triggered a religious response.

The Prophet Dance, an unusual round of summer dances, swept across the Columbia Plateau. Accompanying the dances were prophecies describing the coming of the white men. The purpose of the Prophet Dance seems to have been a means of bringing together tradition and change and to prepare for what was expected to be a major disruption in Indian life.





### CHAPTER 3 REVIEW

1. What new information did archaeologists learn after the discovery of Kennewick Man?
2. Why did Native Americans object to the scientific study of Kennewick Man?
3. What evidence has been found that Paleo-Indians once lived in present-day Washington?
4. What were the two main groups of American Indians in the Pacific Northwest? What natural landform divided them?
5. How did living near the Pacific Ocean influence the lifestyle of the Coastal Indians?
6. Which group was famous for hunting whales?
7. What wood was important to the Coastal Indians?
8. What determined the social status of the Coastal people?
9. What was a potlatch? What was its purpose?
10. Who had special abilities to heal the sick and give spiritual guidance?
11. What part of the salmon life cycle made the Indians believe salmon were immortal?
12. What kinds of art did the people produce?
13. What river system was the most important to the lifestyle of the Plateau Indians?
14. What did the Plateau Indians do every season to provide food?
15. What were some of the jobs of the women? Of the men?
16. What was unique about the treatment of women in Plateau tribes?
17. What were some of the items Indians traded?
18. List three ways horses changed the lifestyle of the Indian people.
19. What does the term “protohistoric change” mean?
20. What were three ways the lifestyle of the Indian people changed even before they met the white people?

### GEOGRAPHY TIE-IN

1. Which dams on the Columbia River were responsible for the destruction of traditional Indian fishing sites?
2. Compare the ways the Native American people lived off the land with our use of natural resources today. How are they alike? How are they different? Which lifestyle appeals most to you?