

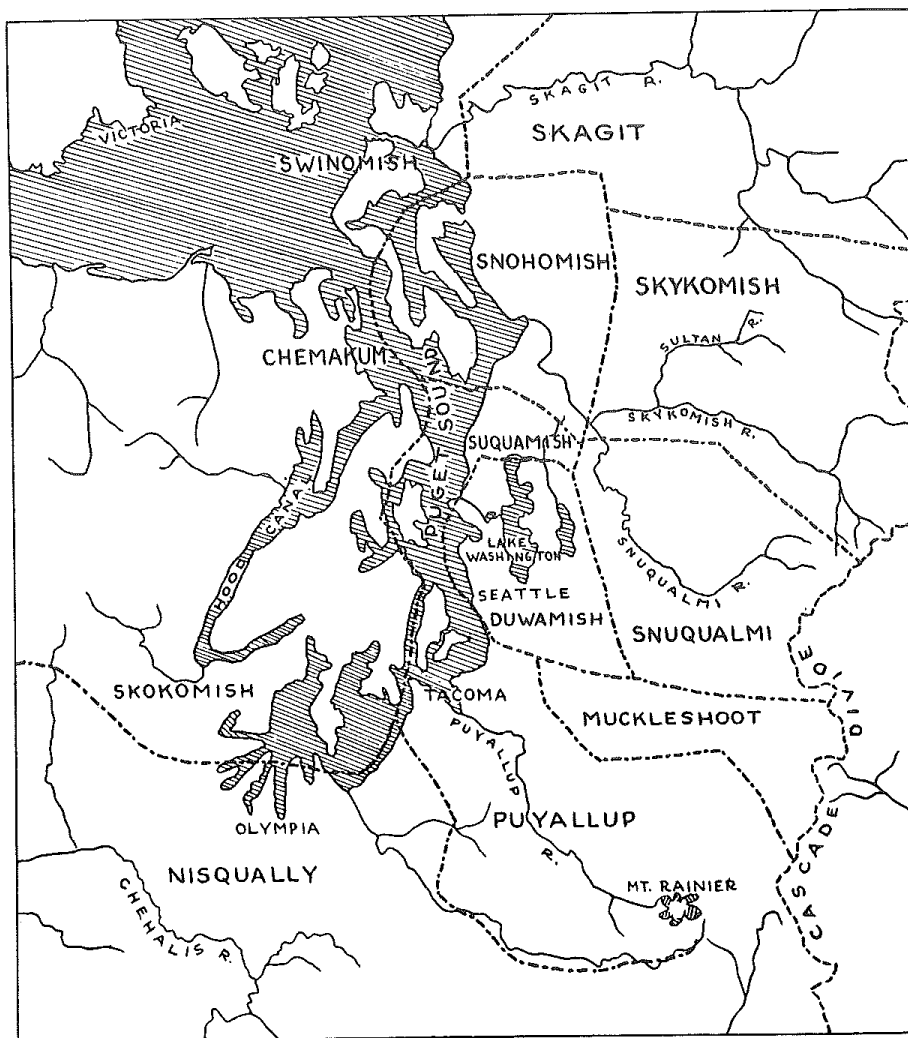
DENVER ART MUSEUM

DENVER, COLORADO

Department of Indian Art

FREDERIC H. DOUGLAS

Curator



UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

Leaflet No. 32 - September, 1931

Second Printing, October, 1946

THE PUGET SOUND INDIANS

NAMES, LOCATIONS AND
CULTURE

LINGUISTIC STOCKS. The Chemakum belong to the Chimakuan stock. All the other tribes mentioned are members of the Salishan stock.

CHEMAKUM. The 1910 census lists 3 members of this tribe, only 1 being full blood.

DUWAMISH or DWAMISH. Tulalip reservation. 20 members in 1910.

MUCKLESHOOT. Muckleshoot reservation. 1930 census lists 208 members.

NISQUALLI. Nisqualli reservation. 56 members in 1930.

PUYALLUP. Puyallup reservation. 296 members in 1930.

SKAGIT. Swinomish reservation. 200 members in 1930.

SKYKOMISH or SKIHWAMISH. Information as to the present location and numbers of this tribe cannot be found.

SKOKOMISH. Skokomish reservation. 170 members in 1930.

SNOHOMISH. Tulalip reservation. 555 members in 1930.

SNOQUALMI. Tulalip reservation. 11 members in 1930.

SUQUAMISH. Port Madison reservation. 175 members in 1930.

SWINOMISH. Tulalip reservation. 260 members in 1930.

POPULATION CHANGES. Exact information as to the numbers of these tribes is very difficult to obtain. About 2500 are listed as living on the reservations, but there are a good many others scattered throughout the area. Three thousand is perhaps a reasonable estimate for the total number. Mooney estimated that in 1780 there were about 6000, and perhaps 2,000 in 1907. The United States Census of 1910 lists about 2,200.

CAUSES OF DECLINE. Diseases introduced by the whites are the principal cause of the reduction of these tribes. Smallpox in 1782-83, sexual diseases after 1788, fever in 1823, measles in 1847, smallpox in 1846 and 1852-53, all contributed greatly towards reducing the population. Liquor, and wars with the whites in the period 1840-55 were other potent destroyers.

HISTORY. While some of the early Spanish explorers may have reached the Puget Sound tribes, it is doubtful if they were affected by the whites before about 1790. Lewis and Clark in 1804-06 wrote the first descriptions of these people. Until 1846, when the Oregon question was decided and the gold rushes began, the Indians were only in contact with a relatively few traders and travelers. The onrush of whites after this date brought on a period of fighting which lasted about fifteen years. After this came the making of treaties and the setting aside of reservations, on which the Indians have lived ever since.

HABITAT. The home of these Indians is a heavily wooded, well watered, mountainous area through which run many rivers, and into which deep fiords penetrate from Puget Sound. Much game and fish were found in the forests and rivers and in the Sound.

CULTURE. All of these tribes had more or less the same material culture, social organization and religious systems. But there were many tribal variations in all the phases of their life as noted in the following paragraphs. For information about each tribe reference 1 should be consulted.

DWELLINGS. In winter permanent villages along the water were occupied, while in summer the people wandered through their territory seeking food and living in temporary shelters. The winter houses were

large community buildings, often over 100 feet long, with walls and roof of wide cedar planks supported by log columns. Sleeping benches lined the walls, and partitions often divided the space for the different families. In summer conical or square pole frames were covered with mats.

CLOTHING. In summer the men wore only the breech cloth and the women a short skirt. Bark or wool blankets gave extra warmth. In winter shirts, capes, skirts and leggings of tanned skin were worn. Hats of basketry or fur were used to some extent. Both sexes wore skin moccasins. Painting and tattooing were used. Ear and nose rings and shell necklaces and bracelets were worn.

FOOD. Fish, meat, berries and roots provided food. Fish, chiefly salmon, were caught during the summer with nets, traps, hook and line and spears and eaten fresh or dried and smoked for winter use. Much shell fish was eaten. The meat of most animals and birds was eaten when killed or after drying. Traps, bow and arrow, spears and clubs were used in hunting. Deer and elk meat were the favorites. Berries of many kinds were gathered in great quantities and made into cakes for winter use after mashing and drying. Acorns were a useful food, as were hazelnuts. Of the roots and bulbs that of the camas was the most important. Others used were cattail, arrowhead, brake and wood ferns and tiger lily.

Fire was made by friction produced with a hand drill, shredded cedar bark being the tinder. Food was cooked by boiling with hot stones in baskets, steaming in a pit and roasting. Two meals were served, at about nine in the morning and six at night.

WEAVING. Heavy blankets of mountain goat wool, dog hair, or feathers and fireweed were woven on a loom having two upright side pieces connected with rollers at top and bottom. The fabrics were woven in one piece around these rollers and opened up when finished.

BASKETRY. Coiled baskets were made of dried cedar roots, trimmed with imbrication in black, white, red and brown made from horsetail, bear grass, cedar root and wild cherry. Soft twined baskets were made of the same materials. Many mats were made from shredded cedar bark or from cattails.

WOODWORK. In addition to canoes (see below) boxes, buckets, dishes and spoons were made of wood. Totem poles were not used, though house poles were often crudely carved and painted. Huge trees were felled with antler or wood wedges after chipping with stone axes.

CANOES were made in many sizes from whole logs. There were five types, holding from one or two to sixty people. They were propelled by paddles and sails.

TOOLS. Before the coming of the whites all work was done with stone and antler tools. In later years iron was of course used.

SKINWORK. The hides of many animals were dressed in about the way described in Leaflet 2. Only deer skin was dressed on both sides. Clothing was the principal kind of thing made from skin, though the Nisqualli made parfleches.

INTERTRIBAL WAR AND TRADE, especially the latter, were common. The tribes on the coast and those nearer the Cascade mountains exchanged foods and there was much trading of baskets, boats, blankets and many other articles, since all the tribes did not make all the things they needed. Whole tribes moved to fight under a war chief or small independent parties went on raids. Bows and arrows, clubs and spears were the weapons used.

MONEY was in the form of shells. There were two forms; single strings of white disks of clam shell, and double strings of tubular beads with a round bead between each pair. Single very large clam shells from the north also served as currency. Dentalium shells, so common farther south, were not used.

GAMES were mostly those involving the guessing of the location of some hidden article. Shinney, footracing, wrestling and other field sports were common. Gambling was very common and heavy.

RELIGION. There seems to have been no belief in a god or gods. There was a strong belief in spirits. These beings were believed to travel around the world anti-clockwise, taking a year for the trip. Youths at puberty were sent out to catch one by means of fasting, continence, dreams and the like. Once a spirit was obtained it belonged to its owner for life, though it continued its travels. Once a year it came back to him. Possession of a spirit gave the owner unusual power to do various things, such as being a very expert fisherman. The higher the social position of the owner the more powerful was the spirit. The giving of feasts and the performing of songs and ceremonies were the duties of spirit owners.

Medicine men or shamans carried on their occupation through the aid of powerful spirits. Their principal duty seems to have been to heal the sick. Shamans did not usually practise until they had acquired a number of spirits.

There was a firm belief in the after life of the soul and in ghosts.

SPIRIT CANOE CEREMONY. This is the great religious ceremony of these tribes. It consists of the pantomimic acting out by the shamans of their journey into Ghostland to bring back the soul of a living person stolen by the ghosts. It is held in the winter and lasts several days.

TRIBAL ORGANIZATION. Society was divided into two classes, slave and free. The slaves were usually war captives from other tribes. The free class had two groups, the chiefs and their families, and the middle class group. The classes rarely intermarried.

The tribes were governed by head chiefs, either elected or hereditary. There were sometimes sub-chiefs. Decisions on tribal policy were decided at general councils. The will of the majority ruled.

CUSTOMS. Children were born in special isolated lodges and kept through infancy on cradle boards. Marriage was supposed to be out of the tribe, especially for the ruling class. Marriages were arranged by contract between two families and accompanied by gift exchanging and visiting. The pair lived with the man's father. The dead were carefully dressed and wrapped in skins. According to individual tribal practise the body was put in a canoe set on a platform or in a tree, in a box on a raised platform, or buried in the ground. Sometimes the bones were reburied. Often much property was put with the body. There were a good many different mourning customs.

The potlatch gift-giving feast was held by all the tribes. It was not as highly formalized as among the northwest coast tribes. Potlaches were held in large houses specially built for them. Big potlaches were held on the following occasions; the giving of a new name; when the salmon began to run; at death; at the reburial and after a good hunt. This last type was usually a small affair. At the big potlaches whole tribes came to visit and to give and receive presents, with the host always outdoing his guests. Such feasts have been forbidden by law for many years because of the poverty they brought about. The sweat lodge was used medicinally.

PRESENT CONDITION. Very little of the life and practises mentioned in this paper now exist. To a very large extent these Indians live like their white neighbors. Fishing, berry picking, lumbering, and basket making take up most of their time. Christianity is quite widespread.

Compiled from the following sources by F. H. Douglas :

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON, SEATTLE

1. The Indians of Puget Sound—Haeberlin and Gunther. Publications in Anthropology vol. 4, no. 1. 1930.

AMERICAN ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

2. Tribes of the Columbia Valley and of the Coast of Washington and Oregon—Lewis. Memoirs vol. 1, part 2. 1906.

BUREAU OF AMERICAN ETHNOLOGY, WASHINGTON

3. Handbook of American Indians. Bulletin 30.
4. Coiled Basketry in British Columbia—Haeberlin, Teit and Roberts. 41st Annual Report, 1928.

MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN, HEYE FOUNDATION, NEW YORK

5. Types of Canoes on Puget Sound—Waterman and Coffin. Indian Notes and Monographs, Misc. No. 5, 1930.
6. Indian Houses of Puget Sound—Waterman and Greiner. Indian Notes and Monographs, Misc. No. 9, 1921.
7. Paraphernalia of the Duwamish "Spirit Canoe" Ceremony—Waterman. Indian Notes Vol. 7, nos. 2, 3 and 4.

UNITED STATES CENSUS

8. Indian Population of the United States and Alaska, 1910.

BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS, DEPT. OF THE INTERIOR

9. Annual Report of the Commissioner for 1930.

Population, 8, 9; details for all tribes, 1 to 3; details and pictures of basketry, 4; details and pictures of canoes, 5; details and pictures of houses, 6; information on religion, 1, 7.