

Since Time Immemorial: Pre-Contact Society

Friend and Foe “Since time immemorial,” the *Schitsu’umsh* had traveled in a particular landscape, reliant upon its material and spiritual gifts.¹ Bordering this landscape were specific neighbors, both friends and foes. The language spoken by the *Schitsu’umsh* is classified as part of the Interior Salish family. Other peoples throughout the Plateau region who spoke an Interior Salish language included the Colville, Okanagan, Sanpoil and Wenatchi.² The immediate Salish-speaking neighbors to the *Schitsu’umsh* were the Flathead to the east, the Pend Oreille to the northeast, the Kalispel in the north, and to the west, the Spokane. Further to the north were the Kootenai, who spoke a language unique to the region. To the southwest were the Palouse, and south of the *Schitsu’umsh* lived the Nez Perce, both peoples speaking Sahaptin languages. While classified as distinct Salish languages, Flathead, Kalispel, Pend Oreille, Spokane and *Schitsu’umsh* shared a level of linguistic affiliation to render them generally intelligible for speakers from each language. Certainly not fixed but oscillating with changing circumstances, the categories “friend” or “foe” are fundamentally extensions and realizations of the designations - kinship and an ethic of sharing, or non-kinship and an ethic of competition.

Among their Salish neighbors, especially the Spokane, the *Schitsu’umsh* entered into regular commodity exchanges and marriage partnerships. The *Schitsu’umsh* would travel to Spokane Falls to fish and trade with the Spokane. As deer was plentiful in *Schitsu’umsh* country, venison would be brought and given to the Spokane. Deer were relatively scarce in Spokane territory. In turn, desiring salmon, the Spokane would allow the *Schitsu’umsh* to fish the Spokane river below the falls, or enter into direct exchanges for “dried salmon.” Bitterroot was also sought from the Spokane, as it too was scarce in *Schitsu’umsh* country, but grew in abundance in the Spokane country. Given the proximity of some of the *Schitsu’umsh* families who lived around Liberty Lake and the mouth of the Spokane River on Coeur d’Alene Lake, they may have had relatively more interaction with various Spokane families than they did with some *Schitsu’umsh* families who lived up the St. Joe River. Extending beyond the Spokane, regular trade with tribes intermediary to the Pacific Coast peoples resulted, for example, in the acquisition of the dentalium and abalone shells used in making beads and other artistic ornaments.

If conflict arose, it would likely be with one of the non-Salish speaking tribes, though James Teit records a number of “occasional wars” with the Spokane, Flathead, and Kalispel

(1930:119-129). In the instance of the Nez Perce, tensions could erupt upon encountering each other while hunting or gathering, especially in the context of a past unresolved grievance. One area where such encounters likely occurred was the region south of the Palouse River extending to the Clearwater River. The *Schitsu'umsh* regularly hunted deer and gathered roots in this area, the name of the city of Moscow, in fact, "likely" derived from the *Schitsu'umsh* term, *S'maqw'l*, used to designate the location (Palmer, Nicodemus and Felsman 1987:39). This was an area frequented by Nez Perce hunters and gatherers as well. If tensions did erupt into hostilities, using sinew-backed, recurved wooden bows or bows made from a single "mountain ram's horn" and arrows, lances and clubs, *Schitsu'umsh* warriors were not hesitant in using their fighting skills to resolve a dispute. Before going into battle, a war dance would be held. The warriors would sing their *suumesh* songs, seeking the assistance of their guardian spirits, and in their dance movements, portray the war deeds they were about to accomplish against their foes. In the following vignette, another approach to conflict-resolution is illustrated.

Word Battle

There was a group of Kootenai warriors who came south into Coeur d'Alene territory. There they came upon a beautiful Coeur d'Alene woman, alone, without men to protect her. Against her will, they decided to take her back to their camp, and traveled north. They violated one of our rules. In those days, we fought the Kootenais like we did with the Nez Perce. If someone came into our territory, or we their's, we'd try to get him.

Upon hearing of the theft of the woman, the Coeur d'Alene war chief led a large group of warriors up to the Kootenai village to get her back. Five hundred Coeur d'Alene warriors headed north to Kootenai country. Word that the Coeur d'Alene were coming reached the Kootenais, and five hundred Kootenai warriors waited.

Not wanting a battle that would result in the death of many Kootenais and Coeur d'Alene, the Kootenai chief asked to first meet with the Coeur d'Alene war chief and discuss the matter. He said that the warriors from each tribe should face-off. A line would be drawn between the two groups of warriors. With each side ready for battle, they would shame, and taunt, and verbally ridicule each other. They would battle with words. And the first man to take the dare, brake down, and cross the line to the other side and strike an enemy, that side would lose.

So the warriors from the Kootenai and Coeur d'Alene faced off. There were five hundred Kootenais and five hundred Coeur d'Alene warriors facing each other ready for battle. Faces were painted and weapons readied. And they started. Words and insults were sent and the battle was on. Warriors said all kinds of things, challenging the others. They jumped in place, and yelled at each other. Some took out their knives and pretended to attack the other warriors, without touching them. Even though they spoke different languages, each knew what the other was saying. But no one crossed the line. All day, under the hot sun, the word battle went on. Not a breeze in the air. The sun was hot and the warriors sweated hard. The dust rose in the air, as they jumped and yelled at each other. But no one crossed over. The painted faces were replaced with mud covered bodies, as the sweat and dust mixed. But no one crossed. The day wore on. And when the sun set, the warriors dropped to the ground from exhaustion. But no one crossed the line.

So the Kootenai chief, recognizing the transgression his young men had made, had the Coeur d'Alene women given back. He also showed the Coeur d'Alene a trail through the mountains and Blackfoot country that would take them safely to the buffalo country to the east. The trail could be used

only by the Coeur d'Alene, as the Kootenai would keep it a secret from other tribes. The word battle occurred in the open fields, the flat, just north of the Kootenai River and east from the present village on the small Kootenai Reservation, near Bonners Ferry, Idaho. (Abbreviated as told by Lawrence Aripa on April 15, 1995.)

Seasonal Round While travel into Spokane or Kootenai country to trade or battle occurred on a more-or-less regular basis, travel within their own landscape was an essential prerequisite for successful *Schitsu'umsh* life. It was not only a landscape that sustained what was necessary for food, lodging, transportation, tools, and clothing, but it was a landscape *richly endowed* with roots, berries, fish, and game animals. And it was a landscape that offered spiritual guidance and healing powers. Addressing the earth as “mother” and the sun as “father,” it was a landscape that “watched over” and cared for the *Schitsu'umsh* people.

An Abundance Of Game

Is there an abundance of game in the Coeur d'Alene country? Perhaps nowhere does so small an area contain such a variety. Next to the roe deer [whitetail deer], these are the most common: the deer [mule deer], the elk, the mountain lion, the carcajou [wolverine], the white sheep, the bighorn, the goat, the wolf, the fox, the wildcat [bobcat or lynx], the polecat [likely skunk], the hare, the otter, the weasel, the badger, the mink, the marten, the fisher, the beaver, the muskrat, a large variety of mouse-colored rats, squirrels, field mice, not to mention four or five varieties of bear. Of the birds, there are the calumet bird [osprey], (which has the same importance as the eagle), the swan, the crane, the pelican, the bittern [or heron], the bustard, the snipe, the thrush, the duck, the teal, the magpie, the crow, the swallow, the green woodpecker, the hawk, the turtledove, the fishing bird, many varieties of aquatic birds and other unknown in Europe.

Fish are abundant in lakes, rivers, and small streams. I will not speak here of the mosquito or of the insects harmful to man. One is devoured by them during certain seasons. Nor will I speak of the serpents which are present in large numbers. In a single day I chased two out of my bed. Fortunately, rattlesnakes are rare there.

What a vast collection of animals! And, sad to say, probably not one of them has not at some time received homage from the Coeur d'Alenes. The most celebrated ones in the history of their medicine are the bear, the deer, and the calumet bird. The most curious of all is perhaps the wolverine. This animal, which is only as large as an ordinary sheep, has many features in common with the bear. Like the bear, it climbs to the tops of the tallest trees, such prodigious strength that it has been seen to carry off whole deer and to climb, bearing animals larger than itself. Next to the roe deer, the animals most hunted by the Coeur d'Alene are deer and bear.

Bear hunting is seldom undertaken on a large scale because this animal is rarely found in large numbers. It is naturally ferocious and very dangerous, but a good hunter does not fear it. I call a hunter good who combines strength and courage with skill. I saw a Coeur d'Alene who possessed all these qualifications to such degree that before he had researched the age of forty he had killed more than one hundred bears. A goodly number of these had been of the most ferocious variety. (From Father Nicolas Point's 1842-43 observations, 1967:180-81.)

But to access and benefit from what was provided, *Schitsu'umsh* families had to be able to freely travel this landscape. In addition to an extensive network of walking trails, with the use of curved-up and “sturgeon-nosed” pine and cedar bark canoes, ease of movement was provided

over the navigable lakes and rivers which connected the heartland of this area. And to access and benefit from what was provided also meant possessing an immense and sophisticated knowledge-base of the landscape in interaction with the seasons. Family members had to be able to interpret the seasonal cycles as well as idiosyncratic climatic changes and know precisely when and where to move about as particular roots or game animals would become available for digging or hunting during the year. In the instance of berry gathering, Felix Aripa remembered how young boys would often go to anticipated berrying areas, and noting the be ready for picking, and thus judge when the family should begin their movement to the approximate elevation on the mountain slope, bring back a branch from a berry bush. Upon inspecting the branch and its place of origin, a grandmother could tell with certainty when the berries would berry patches.

Traveling

Before the advent of the horse, the Coeur d'Alene spent a good deal of time traveling, fishing, and hunting along the rivers and lakes of their country, although parties also went on distant hunting trips in the mountains during the fair season. At certain seasons considerable numbers of people congregated at the famous camas and other root-digging grounds. They also went to the Spokane for salmon fishing, trading, and sports. (From Teit 1930:155).

With the ease of movement provided by the vast network of trails and navigable waterways, and equipped with their extensive knowledge of the landscape, *Schitsu'umsh* families practiced a very successful seasonal transhumance pattern. During each of the five generally recognized seasons (Teit 1930:95), “*se'tqaps*” (spring), “*yalstk*” (summer), “*stsaq*” (early fall), “*stcè'ed*” (late fall), and “*sitsîtk*” (winter), *Schitsu'umsh* families would, with deliberation, travel to the appropriate berrying, fishing, hunting, and root digging regions. Each family's particular pattern of movement and associated subsistence activity would, in turn, reflect a routinized, though consciously adjusted, pattern of year-to-year travel throughout the *Schitsu'umsh* landscape. It was anything but a random, nomadic existence, where chance encounters determined the success of a deer hunt or camas digging. Provided below is an outline of the seasonal cycle reflective of a traditional, pre-Euro-American contact transhumance pattern. Variations due to changes in the weather and the annual snow and rainfall, and the composition of the family groupings could, of course, alter this pattern from season to season.

When the *smukwe'shn* (sunflower) blooms in the spring, the “fast was over” and root season would begin. This would signal the time to break the winter villages and camps along the

shores of Coeur d'Alene and Hayden Lakes, and travel to the root areas. Some of the best root areas were found in the prairie country and the rolling hills west and south of Hangman Creek and Tekoa Mountain. Upon arriving, the *Schitsu'umsh* might be joined by families of Spokanes, Kalispels or even Nez Perce, who all engaged in digging, along with more competitive and recreational-oriented activities, such as stick games and foot racing. Sixteen types of roots were dug, with camas, cous, and bitterroot among the most important. A curved digging stick, some three to four feet in length, called a *pitse'*, was used in gathering the roots. The *pitse'* was often made from the wood of the serviceberry bush, the tip charred to harden it and the handle made for an elk antler.

They Peeled It Off

There's a cedar basket that they made, it's about this time of year or a little earlier when the sap just begins to come up. They'll select a cedar and if they want to make a basket, they'll cut a strip about . . . , it all depends, after it's folded. They cut a certain section out of that tree. They'll peel it off. It's very easy to peel off that time of year and they can form it, the cedar basket. . . . They'll peel that off while it's all soft, . . . they'll put a ribbon around one inside. When it dries it keeps that shape. There are different shapes for different purposes. Some of them are made kind of long and narrow, because when you have a horse . . . , it gives you more room to get in between the trees. You still have the volume. But in some of the open countries they'll make it rounder.

I've seen my grandmother make some out of roots. She was getting blind but she was able to still, . . . by feeling, . . . it's almost a perfect specimen after she got it made and she's halfway blind. [Laugh] (From an interview conducted on May 20, 1996.)

The roots were often gathered in cedar-bark baskets. These temporary, easily-made baskets were made from a single piece of bark folded and sewn up each side with a carrying strap attached. The camas would then be simply dried or baked in pit ovens, along with black moss, and formed into cakes. To store these roots and later the berries that would be picked, well-made birch-bark baskets, twined round and flat bags made from knee-spun Indian hemp, or tightly woven, coiled baskets made of split red cedar roots would be assembled. Using course grasses and porcupine quills dyed in yellows, greens and reds, a technique of "false embroidery" was used to decorate geometric designs of blues and reds onto the bags and baskets. The flexible twined bags were ideal for holding roots, while the rigidity of the coiled baskets protected the berries from being crushed. Both the coiled baskets and twined bags kept their contents relatively secure from the elements through the coming seasons. In fact, the coiled baskets could be made water-tight, and, for example, used for boiling foods by adding heated rocks to the water

contained within them. The manufacture of the various bags and baskets, as well as the digging, storing, and preparation of the various roots were typically the activity of the women, both married and unmarried, within the families.

Bags and baskets of dried berries, roots, fish and meat would, in turn, be placed in earthen pit caches or occasionally on tree branches for later retrieval. The circular pit caches were located in dry, well-drained locations. Anticipating the future needs of the family, the use of these caches helped assure a diverse and balanced diet throughout the year, as well as a cushion against a lean year.

Bury Their Baskets

A lot of times they bury their baskets. Mostly they were made out of cedar. They get overloaded, or they kept too much to carry, or they have a lot of camas and they had extra baskets or something that they don't carry back. They dig it in the ground and bury it and they'd know where it's at. Next year when they come back, they dig it out. Of course, it would stay that way.

As a matter of fact, over here on the Moctelme Valley there's a farmer plowing up. There was an old Indian house or homestead; they knocked it all down and burned up the old lumber and they plowed it up. They uncovered one of those baskets. That's probably what they uncovered, some of those Indian women buried it. It was in pretty good shape. It must have been years. (From an interview conducted on May 20, 1996.)

Through the spring and into the early summer, some families would have also traveled to the lakes to fish lake trout and whitefish. The spring fish runs were at their height in April. Fishing was accomplished using a variety of techniques, including wooden or bone hooks and lines of Indian hemp, and a three-pronged spear. In addition, dip nets of Indian hemp twine, and willow constructed traps and weirs were extensively used. Indian hemp grew in abundance and was gathered along the St. Joe and Coeur d'Alene Rivers. Night fishing from canoes and with torches was also practiced. Although there were no anadromous fish in either Coeur d'Alene or Hayden Lakes, a limited amount of salmon came up Hangman Creek into *Schitsu'umsh* country (as the creek drains into to the Spokane River just below the falls). Some families would gather along this creek during the salmon runs. To fish the salmon, weirs and spears of either a detachable, elk-bone harpoon or three-pronged type, were employed. The construction of the fish weirs was, in fact, under the direction of a shaman. In turn, the shaman would use prayer and ritual smoking to entice the fish into the weirs. Perhaps because of the year-round cycle of trout and whitefish fishing, in conjunction with general lack of local access to seasonal salmon runs, the *Schitsu'umsh* did not practice the complex fishing ceremonials so characteristic of most other

Plateau peoples. As with hunting, fishing was primarily, though not solely, the activity of the men within the families.

Birch Canoes

Another thing that was really important was the canoe. My dad said they had big birch right around the rivers. They had selected certain birch where they make their canoes. He said they had made certain types of canoes for different purposes; hauling cargo or they can haul deer. They used the canoe to sneak around the lake to get the deer when they came down to get water. They knew the trails where the deer would come down. But the canoe was their main transportation. (From an interview conducted on May 20, 1996.)

The *Schitsu'umsh* utilized a variety of canoe types to navigate the lakes and rivers of their territory. In addition to cedar and birch, the *Schitsu'umsh* were unique in their use of white pine bark for their canoes. To fashion a canoe, long pieces of bark, sometimes a few feet wide and the length of the canoe, would be peeled from the trees. In the instance of cedar bark, "it was easy peeling by mid-May when the sap comes up." The bark would then be stretched out onto a framework, brought up and sewed together at its ends. The seams would be sealed with pitch. Besides the more common prow and stern curved-up style canoe, the *Schitsu'umsh* used the Kootenai style, "sturgeon nose" canoe, with its prow and stern pointed down, under the water. In addition to bark-covered canoes, dugouts were also fashioned. A pine or cedar would be cut down and hallowed out by repeated burning and chiseling. Rafts made of tule reeds were also noted. For all types, canoes could be rather easily made and the materials to do so readily available.

While the canoes facilitated fishing, hunting and travel, they also brought the *Schitsu'umsh* into contact with the "Water Mysteries" (Teit 1930:181-182). Appearing as half fish and half human, or, as in two particular instances, a "huge buffalo" or "huge fish," the Water Mysteries lived in the lakes and rivers, and traveled by underground, connected passages to "holes in the tops of mountains" or other bodies of water. One such well-known passage way linked Hayden Lake with Post Falls. In one incident, sisters were attacked and drowned by a Water Mystery as they gathered serviceberries along the St. Joe River. Shortly after, some hair from the sisters was discovered on the shores of a high mountain lake, the lake thus connected to the river. Lake Coeur d'Alene itself was inhabited by a "water buffalo." Once a man was canoeing along the lake's shore after night fall. At one particular place, his paddling had no

effect on his movement over the water, as he and his canoe were lifted out of the water. On each side of his canoe he felt the horns of some great animal holding his craft in place. The man immediately began to pray, beseeching the Water Mystery to set him free. Upon offering a gift, the Mystery allowed him to continue on his journey. From that time on, canoers would leave a gift under a particular bush located on the shore near the stop of this attack.

Puberty Ritual

It used to be part of becoming a man. There was a puberty ritual that went along with it. When you were thirteen or fourteen, you had to go up there and do that before you could ride with the men and sweat with the men and smoke the peace pipe with the men. You had to go up and do that. And up there they received their spirit helper, their song, their vision, I guess, their medicine that they would have in their life to take care of and depend on.

And you know, they believe that the Creator never promised anybody a tomorrow. But there was a day reserved for everybody, when it would be their day. Until then, they had to be brave, they had to be strong. They had to be good horsemen. They couldn't be afraid of breaking horses or hunting buffalo. They might have to be a warrior and face the enemy. And they were supposed to be brave about it, not think, well, I need to get out of this because I might get hurt or I might get killed. They had to think, that's not going to happen until the Creator said, "this is your day." This is the day you're going to be called back. When that day comes, it doesn't matter. So they tried to live it.

And they began that by fasting in the hilltops. And there are some places between Cataldo and St. Joe, there's some hills up there, . . . , up north of Coeur d'Alene. . . , where our people did that traditionally. They didn't take weapons up there. They didn't hunt up there. That's all that they used those areas for.

And those places were the home for the Thunder and the Lightning. That's where they dwell, that's where they'd hang around. Even in the good whether they'd be up there living or whatever. So those places were deeply spiritual. . . . And there are rock formations up there when the old people over the years, they would build a pile of rocks and where they put down each rock, they would pray about what they did up there, what they saw, how they felt, what they're going to do. And there are hundreds, literally hundreds, on any hilltop of those formations from thousands of years of our people going up there and doing that. They're still there. . . They're there from our people doing that.

And they would pray and then every morning at dawn, they'd go down to the water. And they'd pray there to the Creator. And they'd talk to the Water Spirits and they would ask the Great Spirit Creator through that water. They would absolve them, they would cleanse them again. They'd make them more ready, they'd give them life. But they couldn't drink it because they're fasting. But they would put themselves into the water to bathe themselves. That water would help them anyway, to let their life go on, to replenish them and to give them strength, cleanse their mind and their spirit and then they'd sing songs. And they'd leave some kind of an offering.

Then they'd come out of the water, go back up the hill and they would stay up there all day and all night. And the following morning at dawn, before that sun came up, they'd go back down there to the water. So they did those things. . . . It's still deeply religious to our people. Big part of our life. (From an interview conducted on June 12, 1996.)

Also during the summer, while some families might be frequenting the rivers and lakes to fish, and others were continuing to gather roots on the prairies, the younger members of those same families might have traveled to the surrounding mountains to seek a *suumesh*. Both men and women could quest for a vision. In spiritual preparation, a sweat bath would be taken prior

to heading for the mountains. Constructed of willows and covered with mats, bark or earth, the doomed-shaped lodge could, depending on size, accommodate from two to six adult individuals. Typically sought in isolation from others, during the vision quest an individual would go without food and water for a prescribed number of days or until a guardian spirit came to him. In the vision, a particular animal spirit, such as the Elk or Wolf, or bird spirit, such as the Eagle or Hawk, would appear and bestow the *suumesh*. Depending on the particular character of the guardian spirit, its power and benefits would be applied by the beneficiary to such specific endeavors, such as in hunting, gathering, or healing, as well as generally to guide the life of the young man or woman. Prayer and song would typically accompany any request for and application of a *suumesh*. It was also common for the recipient of the *suumesh* to take on a “dream name,” reflective of a characteristic or actual name of his or her associated animal spirit.

Make Friends With Some Spirit

“Do you believe in a supreme being?” “Our people believed in spirits a good deal, and thought they dwelt in everything, trees, stones, mountains and animals. When anyone went hunting, he would embrace whatever he met in his way, praying to the spirit and saying, ‘let me find game.’ Also each one tried to make friends with some spirit.” “How could you do that, if you did not see, or hear them?” said I. “We would do it in this way. A girl, when she reached the age of about twelve years, would leave her home and go into the woods; boys would do the same at about fourteen years of age; they would walk on in search of the spirit and not drink water, nor taste fruit and roots until they found him. After a day or two they would fall asleep and then they would see the spirit who taught them a song and gave them something to keep sacred; then they would come home persuaded that they had found a friend who would always protect them during life.” (From a conversation in 1876 between Father Diomed and his *Schitsu'umsh* guide, Felician. Diomed 1978:76-77.)

In addition to *Amotqn* and the animal spirits, as well as the huckleberries and deer, the mountains were inhabited by a host of other “beings” (Teit 1930:180-181). Among them were the “Dwarfs,” who lived in the trees and along the cliffs and rocky places in the mountains. In all appearances, they looked like humans, though much smaller, and were either colored red or dressed in squirrel skins. They carried their babies upside down in cradle boards. Known not to have harmed anyone, the Dwarfs loved to play tricks on travelers, taking their food stuffs and hiding them or calling out and confusing a hunter. There were also the “Giants,” who lived in mountain caves. As tall as a lodge, the Giants are said to be able to come up to a tule-mat lodge and look down its smoke hole. They had a strong odor, that of burning horn, were painted black,

and had a great appetite for fish. The Giants often stole the catch from weirs and traps. And like the Dwarfs, the Giants were not a serious menace to the *Schitsu'umsh*

Not unlike the “Water Mysteries, there were certain “Land Mysteries” who were to be feared. Appearing as half-human and half-animal, these beings lived in high trees or atop mountain peaks. At the summits of mountain trails, travelers often left special stones to placate these beings, the piles of such stones marking the abodes of the Land Mysteries. If a person failed to leave a stone, he or she would likely have “bad luck,” and if one of these beings were seen, death to the beholder typically followed a short time later.

By mid-summer and into the early fall, the last of the camas would be dug, and the berry picking would begin. This was the time when families moved into the higher hills and along the mountain creeks to the berry patches. Twenty-two types of berries were gathered, including huckleberries, serviceberries, and chokecherries. “When the ‘thimbleberries’ ripen the huckleberries would soon be ready.” Huckleberries were plentiful along the creeks of the upper reaches of the St. Joe River, and on St. Joe Baldy Mountain and on Mica Peak, for instance. While in these berry camps and along the mountain creeks, medicines, such as *qhasqhs*, would also be collected.

At the moment when the first important berries, such as serviceberries, were gathered, but before any berries were actually consumed, an essential harvest ceremony would take place. Among the families who had assembled for the gathering, a chief or headman of the group would come forward and offer a long prayer to *Amotqn*, thanking him for the berries. Facing the direction of the highest mountain in view, the chief would then hold out a basket of the berries as an offering to *Amotqn*. Song and dance would generally follow, concluding with a feast of the berries. A very similar prayer and dance would also accompany the digging of the first camas and bitterroot during the summer.

Throughout the summer and into the early fall, some family members would travel to Spokane Falls or, even further, up the Columbia River to Kettle Falls. There the *Schitsu'umsh* would be joined not only by the Spokane, but also by the Colville, Kalispel and Palouse to fish for salmon during their spawning runs, as well as trade and recreate with one another. The Spokane area remains an important social meeting place, as a large intertribal Pow Wow continues to be held along the banks of the Spokane River toward the end of August each year.

While some families traveled far, others remained closer to home to fish. As with the spring spawning runs, whitefish would be trapped in fish weirs along the St. Joe River and at the mouth of the Spokane River, as it leaves Lake Coeur d'Alene.

Amo'tqEn and the Bear Song

It seems that the chief deity prayed to was *Amo'tqEn* [*Amotqn*], who is said to live on the highest mountains, whence he looked out over all the earth. He could see all lands, and understand what was required for the benefit of the Indians. He was supplicated to pity the people and to attend to their necessities. He was asked particularly for plenty of game, berries and roots.

Before hunting, hunters often fasted and sweat-bathed; and in the sweat house they prayed to the animal they were to hunt and to other powers, such as the spirit of the sweathouse, that they might be successful in procuring game. When animals were killed they were often thanked.

Much respect was paid to bear and beaver, as these animals were thought to know, see and hear everything. They knew what people said and thought about them. If a man intended to hunt them they knew it. They allowed themselves to be killed only out of pity for the people. Skulls of bear and beaver were therefore always elevated on poles or put on trees. When a man killed a bear he blackened his face and sang the "Bear song," which had an air of its own and resembled a mourning song. He praised the bear in the song for giving himself up, and at the same time bewailed his death. (From Teit 1930:184).

With the coming of the late fall, a season of intense hunting the deer, elk, and bear began. One common method of deer hunting entailed the use of dogs or designated men, who acted as "drivers," herding the deer into a water crossing or a lake, where other men waited. The prayers of a shaman would accompany the hunt, invoking his *suumesh* to help insure success. From the shore or from canoes, the hunters would spear, club, drown, or shoot arrows into the oncoming animals. In addition to this collective form of hunting, individuals would pursue the deer and elk by use of blinds and individual tracking. During the summer and under the moonlight, hunters would conceal themselves behind small screens of brush or behind trees, located near salt licks or watering places. When a deer came to drink or eat grass, it could be easily taken. In addition to deer, elk and bear, moose and, as late as 1820s, antelope were hunted by the *Schitsu'umsh*. Like fish, large quantities of meat would be dried for later use. Dried fish and smoked venison was often stored in the earthen caches. And like fish, fresh meat would be roasted and usually boiled if dried.

The bow used in the hunts was often made of dogwood or syringa, and was a rather short, sinewed-backed, recurved bow of amazing strength. Arrows were relatively long, up to three feet, and made of serviceberry wood. The arrow's fletching would comprise three hawk tail

feathers. As a short bow and not particularly accurate at long distances, the *Schitsu'umsh* bow was well-adopted for hunting in the confines of forested hills and mountains.

The *Schitsu'umsh* were known throughout the region for their success in hunting deer and elk, having an abundance of deer and elk hides to trade with other peoples. In the 1840s or 50s, Father Point observed a single communal hunt in which 600 deer were killed (1967:178). In the following vignette, Father Joset offers perhaps one of the earliest recorded accounts of a deer hunt, likely occurring prior to 1850.³

The Hunt

Round the lake each family had their own exclusive part of the shore, to hunt with dogs in the fall: this was the way it was done: one would wait in his canoe while the other would lead the dogs: when they got the scent they pursued the animal until to escape them [the hunters] or to refresh himself he jumped in the water: the dogs would watch on shore until the canoe man came and killed the deer with his paddle: poor deer he comes to its death in so many ways: even the paddle is the death of many.

In a summer day, when the Indians were gone, one of our boys brought in the leg of a deer: what! who killed the deer? [asked Joset] - My Father [the boy responded] - it seems impossible the old man was a cripple who could move about only with crutches. How could your Father do it? He paddled to the lake and waited near a deer trail, under the cover of brushes: when the deer jumped in the water droven by the heat or by muskets, he moved between the animal and the shore behind and killed it with his paddle. . . .

One chief was chose who was thought to possess mysterious power over the deer, whose it was to determine the place for each days work. Early in the morning he went out with a quantity of small rags which he tied them to bushes so as to form part of a line of a large circle. Then from the lodge, he started again to complete the circle with his fellows who were stationed at proper distance from one another. If a deer should pass the line of rags, as soon [as] it smelled them it would turn back and reenter the circle: so there was no escape.⁴ (From the letters of Father Joset 1838-77:JP 36 "The Coeur d'Alene").

The late fall also signaled the digging of the last of the roots to be gathered, the water potato. Water potatoes grew in the marshy areas along the shores of both Coeur d'Alene and Hayden Lakes, often where creeks and streams entered the lakes. The water potato was unique to the *Schitsu'umsh*, not utilized by any of their immediate neighbors. Soon after the water potato had been gathered the families would begin to travel to their winter villages and camps.

The winter traditionally saw the families congregate together in several large pre-established winter villages, as well as a series of smaller camps along the shores of Coeur d'Alene, Hayden and Liberty Lakes, and banks of the Spokane and Coeur d'Alene Rivers. These were the sites of the "long communal houses" and, in the larger villages, populations numbering up to 300 individuals.

The primary *Schitsu'umsh* lodge, for both summer and winter use, was a conical-shaped structure, constructed from pine poles and covered with tule-mats. Three poles would be tied to

form a tripod, providing the foundation for the remaining poles which rested on them. Growing in abundance and gathered along the lakes' shores and marshes, especially southern end of Lake Coeur d'Alene, the tule reeds were sewn together in long rectangular mats up to several feet in length. In addition to common tule, cattails were occasionally used in the construction of the mats. Beginning at the base, a series of overlapping tule mats would be wrapped around the pole foundation to form the conical lodge. Long poles were often laid over the mats to help secure them in place. The tule mats themselves were very adaptable to the changing weather. During the heat of a summer's day, not only could the poles of the lodge be easily adjusted to aid the circulation of air throughout the lodge, but the nature of the mats themselves provided a degree of ventilation as air could flow between the sewn reeds of the mats. But should the mats become wet from rain or snow, the tules would swell, resulting in a more-or-less water-tight covering. While a single layer of tule mats were used during the summer, the winter lodges generally employed several layers of matting. To add further protection from the winter's cold, cedar bark was used as an insulation between the layers of mats. The lodge was either pitched on level ground, or for more long-term camping as well as for the winter sites, erected over an excavated pit, as deep as a foot and a half. The removed earth was banked up around the base of the lodge to add further protection. The floor would be covered with mats and beds of soft skins. The conical-styled lodges ranged in size from 15 to 30 feet in diameter and could accommodate from one to three related families. Interestingly, there seems to be no evidence of use of semi-subterranean pit houses so characteristic other Plateau peoples. As the erecting of the conical, tule-mat lodges, as well as the assembling of all the materials necessary to construct them, was done by women, it was not surprising to realize that the lodges themselves were considered the property of the women of the family.

For more temporary hunting or gathering camps, oblong-shaped lodges and simple lean-to structures, overlaid with tule mats, long strips of cedar bark, or brush, were constructed. To accommodate large gatherings of individuals for ceremonial, council or recreational purposes, the lean-to lodges would be built larger. Utilizing either a conical or lean-to style lodge, the women's menstruation lodges would be located "at some distance" from the village.

The well-constructed, semi-permanent, “long communal houses,” were in fact constructed by aligning two large lean-to structures face-to-face with one another. They ranged in size from 15 to 24 feet wide and anywhere from 50 to as long as 90 feet in length. Before erecting the poles into place, the ground would be excavated to a depth of 12 to 30 inches. To allow smoke from the camp fires to easily escape, a narrow gap separated the ridge poles of the two unconnected lean-tos. After fully securing the lean-to poles with long horizontal poles, the ends of the lean-tos would be partially enclosed, leaving doorways at each end of the lodge. Layers of tule mats and cedar-bark insulation would then be put into place, and overlaid and secured by poles. If used for daily habitation, as many as “six fires” could be placed length-wise inside these lodges, each fire representing individual families. Sometimes mat partitions attached to vertical poles anchored in the ground would be erected to form separate “rooms” for the families within the lodge. Unlike the conical lodges, the long houses were the communal property of all those residing in a village, and were erected and maintained by common labor.

It was from inside the long houses that much of villagers’ winter life was conducted. Visitors were housed in them and young men gathered to receive instruction from elders. Stick games and other recreational activities, as well as the council meetings of elders and chiefs, and the Jump Dances all took place in these long houses.

The stick game, also known as the “hand game” (Teit 1930:131), was a spirited game of “guessing” involving two opposing teams. The membership of each team could be based on kinship ties, as rival families would challenge one another. But when members of a visiting tribe were among the *Schitsu'umsh*, tribal affiliation determined team composition and the competition was that much more intense. Each team would alternate between concealing in the palms of one of its member’s hands two small “bones,” one marked with sinew thread around its center, and attempting to guess which hand held the unmarked bone. To “guess” was, in fact, a misnomer as it took “tremendous concentration and remembrance” to correctly select the unmarked bone. During the guessing, special songs would be sung by the team hiding the bones, providing them with *suumesh* power. In an attempt to confuse the guesser, bodies would sway and arms wave to the rhythm of the song being beat with short sticks on a long pole in front of the players. To further conceal the bones, some players wore over their hands fringed “knuckle-covers” made of coyote, otter, or weasel skins. If successful in hiding the bones a counter “stick”

would be won from the guesser's team, but if unsuccessful, the bones would be forfeited to the guesser's team and they would commence hiding. The team which won all 22 counter sticks would win the game and any bets made. With the ebb and flow of success and failure in hiding the bones, a single game could last hours.

During the extended winter nights, storytelling augmented with song would also be heard coming from the long houses. The stories would recount how Coyote and the other First Peoples transformed the land, creating mountains and rivers, killing monsters of all types, providing salmon and camas, and instructing the Human Peoples how to use fire and fish the salmon. In addition to hearing of Coyote's adventures, accounts of particularly rewarding, as well as challenging deer hunts, berry gatherings, or fishing endeavors would be related in detail. In so doing, the vast and intricate knowledge associated with such activities and necessary to successfully travel and live off the land would be imparted. As one elder recalled, "we learned from those stories."

Upon stepping out from the long houses, the stories would continue. In addition to seeing of the results of the deeds of the First Peoples during the day-light hours, a mountain ridge or a herd of deer, for example, it was during the long and brisk winter nights that the stars were also most noticeable. "Most stars are considered to have been transformed people of the mythic period" (Teit 1930:178). The Big Dipper tells the story of three brothers and their brother-in-law, "Grizzly Bear," and of the treachery perpetrated by the two eldest brothers against their brother-in-law. Upon attempting to kill their rival, the Grizzly Bear was transformed into the four corner stars of the Dipper and the brothers into the three stars of the handle. Among the stars of the Pleiades is a small star, "Coyote's Child," and a red star, "Badger," who had attempted to abduct Coyote's favorite child and became this star as a result. Another cluster of stars refers to the story of a group of women baking camas and the attempts of "Skunk" to spoil their cooking. The women appear in the night sky circling and protecting their camas oven, while Skunk is a short distance away. Another cluster, "the canoe," tells the story of five men who were constructing a canoe, each forming part of the outline of their canoe.

During the winter, "ice fishing" on the frozen sections of the lakes, as well as hunting from snowshoes would occur. Laying on a tule mat near the hole cut in the ice, a fisherman would use a line and lure to entice fish within reach of his three-pronged spear. Communal deer

hunting would also continue, with January the most active time for such hunting. With the addition of the stored roots and berries, and dried fish and meat kept on the pit and platform caches, and within the warmth of the tule mate lodges, the winters were lived in relative comfort and health.

While an exact determination is difficult to delineate, the *Schitsu'umsh* landscape likely supported a population that numbered upwards toward 5,000 men, women and children.⁵ Approximately a third of the total *Schitsu'umsh* yearly diet was based upon the roots and berries, another third from fresh and dried deer and elk meat, and the other third upon the fish acquired from the local rivers and lakes, and from trade. But to provide for the needs of this population, its members needed to fully travel the landscape. In a year's time, members of a family might have dug camas near Santa, hunted deer in the Minaloosa valley, picked huckleberries on St. Joe Baldy, fished salmon at Spokane Falls, gathered water potato near Harrison, and finally wintered on the shores of Lake Coeur d'Alene near St. Maries. Using sturgeon-nosed, cedar-bark canoes on the lakes and rivers, and well-walked trails through the hills and over the mountains, members of a family could have established and used as many as six different camp sites. During a single year's seasonal round, a family could have potentially transversed up to an estimated 300 miles through the *Schitsu'umsh* landscape.

The Bands and Families The *Schitsu'umsh* were divided into three generally recognized groupings or "bands," each of which were associated with particular winter village regions. The first division, the Coeur d'Alene Lake band, comprised some sixteen villages made up of families located at sites on Hayden Lake, at the current cities of Coeur d'Alene and Post Falls, along the Spokane River near Green Acres, and on the shores of Liberty Lake. The second band, the Coeur d'Alene River families, comprised some eleven villages located along the Coeur d'Alene River, including sites situated near what would become the city of Harrison and the Cataldo Mission. The St. Joe River families made up the third band and were located in six villages along the lower St. Joe River and at the future site of St. Maries, with a single village located at the upper reaches of Hangman Creek. It may have been the case that there was an additional *Schitsu'umsh* band, with those families living around Liberty Lake and along the Spokane River comprising a fourth separate band, distinguished from those living at the north end of Lake Coeur d'Alene. In all instances, the larger of the winter villages often numbered

upwards to some 300 individuals. Each of the three bands were made up of interrelated families, who would typically winter in their band's established area, though individual families might not winter in the same village from year-to-year.

Given the seasonal fission and fusion, transhumance pattern, individual families congregated and cooperated together during certain times of the year, as in a communal deer hunt, while at other times of the year, they dispersed throughout the land into smaller groupings of related families, as when they are berrying in the mountains. As such, it was necessary for *Schitsu'umsh* social structure to remain flexible and provide for situational leadership. Reflective of these needs, *Schitsu'umsh* society was fundamentally egalitarian-based, without hereditary, unilineal descent clans, nor class structures. Although slaves acquired through capture from a hostile tribe or from purchase from another tribe were known, they were few in number and the *Schitsu'umsh* did not systematically practice institutional slavery.

Given the flexibility and situational realigning of family groupings throughout the year, it was little wonder that the *Schitsu'umsh* had a bilaterally-based kinship system. The composition of one's own family would be made up of members from both one's father's and one's mother's families. This emphasis on both the paternal and maternal sides of one's family is expressed in the classificatory merging of siblings and cousins. Distinguished only by gender, the equivalent terms of "brother" and "sister" would be used to address a cousin from either one's mother's family or one's father's family. Yet interestingly, there was a lack of such merging at the parental generation (Palmer 1998:321). It would be among these closely aligned kinsmen, one's "brothers" and "sisters," as well as "fathers" and "mothers," and "grandparents," that each individual would most rely upon for hunting, fishing and gathering endeavors, as well as the entire series of life-cycle rituals and activities. From vision questing and marriage, to child birthing and raising, and to one's own funeral and burial, the life-cycle support provided by one's family would allow him or her to mature successfully and become integrated into *Schitsu'umsh* life.⁶

Among the *Schitsu'umsh* there were no prescribed marriage patterns between designated families and kin groups. Marriage selection was largely by the mutual consent of the two individuals involved, though parents were not immune from attempts at "meddling." However, there was the phrase, "you are like a dog," which would be applied to anyone who married a

“close relative,” someone with whom paternal or maternal relations could be directly traced. Upon marriage, the bride typically moved in and traveled with the groom’s family. For the groom and among many families for the bride there was a strict taboo against speaking with one’s mother-in-law and father-in-law respectively. Polygyny was allowed, but practiced by only a few. Marriages could be easily dissolved, though without severing affectionate and supportive ties with children, and between ex-spouses and their once aligned families.⁷ Should a wife’s husband die, it would be the responsibility of the deceased husband’s brother to look after his brother’s wife and her children. The effect of the non-prescriptive marriages and relative ease of divorcing and re-marrying was to widely disperse the affiliations and alliances between and among varied families, further integrating *Schitsu'umsh* society.

The Chiefs Reflective of the equalitarian and flexible qualities of the *Schitsu'umsh* band and family structures, leadership positions were typically achieved, and not ascribed or inherited roles. Each of the three bands had its own elected head chief, with sub-chiefs living in each of the other associated band villages. Any man was eligible to become a chief, though sons of former chiefs were often so elected. While no women could become a chief, speaking at social gatherings, many women were well respected for their wisdom and “chief-like qualities,” and exerted considerable influence over public opinion. It was often the case that the chief residing at “Head Waters” (or “Surface on the Head of the Water”), the large village located at the mouth of the Spokane River (at the future site of the city of Coeur d’Alene) was the “head chief” over all three bands. Whether a village, a band, or the head chief, their leadership position was signified by publically possessing of a “stone pipe.” The role of the chiefs was at all levels advisory. They led by their example and ruled by consensus. Chiefs, whether village or band, had no coercive or punitive powers. There was thus no necessity to have a “police society” to carry out and enforce the decisions of the chiefs.

The influence of the chiefs was often first articulated and then expressed through the actions of the village and band council meetings. Made up of the village elders, the chiefs would facilitate the ensuing discussion during the council meetings. But any decision arrived at was by the consensus of all the elders, based upon the welfare sought for the entire village or band. When the pipe was finally smoked at these councils, the decisions agreed to were binding by all families represented by the elders in attendance.

The influence of the chiefs was also expressed at the talks and storytelling sessions held during the winter ceremonies and social gatherings. The chiefs encouraged the people to conduct themselves properly and morally, and to be industrious. They would emphasize the importance of cooperation and generosity. "Don't put yourself above others." As Lawrence Aripa recalls his father saying, "if you look down your nose at someone else, all you'll see are your moccasins," followed by a big laugh. The chiefs would also publicly admonish those who were acting selfishly, quarrelsome, or cowardly, calling them "coyote." In fact, the most important social control of deviant behavior was in public joking and ridicule, and, if necessary, the threat of ostracism. A "thief" or "vain" person would be laughed at and socially isolated from his or her family. Lawrence Aripa and his uncle Felix, both tell of a man named, "Cosechin," who was "mean and no good" (Frey 1995:177-179). The only way to control his "cruel ways" was to "banish him" into the mountains. While a hospitable landscape for the *Schitsu'umsh* families, to attempt to live alone in this landscape was to assure one's own demise.

Additional responsibilities of the chiefs included helping in the regulation and distribution of the food stores. The chiefs' ultimate responsibility was always to attend to the welfare of all members of their respective villages or bands, seeing to it that no individuals or particular families went without proper provisions throughout the year. A chief would continue to provide leadership so long as his decisions were sound and his actions moral. He ruled by the consensus of those he represented.

In addition to the village or band chiefs, specific, ad hoc leaders, or "headmen," would also be selected for particular tasks. In the communal hunts, fishing camps, and in warfare, separate hunting and fishing headmen, and war chiefs would be elected, but serving in that capacity only for the duration of the activity at hand. Men so elected had distinguished themselves as great hunters, fishermen, or warriors, possessing expert knowledge and perhaps *suumesh* relating to their particular skills. And like the role of village chiefs, the hunting and fishing headmen would supervise the redistribution of the game meat and fish, assuring that those in need were cared for.

The social and political organization of the *Schitsu'umsh* was thus marked by its flexibility and transitory qualities, lacking the rigidity found in hereditary, unilineal descent-based groups and in ascribed, inherited leadership positions. Given the situational leadership

structure, when individual extended families undertook an activity that isolated them from their village or band leadership for a short period of time, the eldest male within the group could easily assume decision-making responsibilities. Each family could effectively function autonomous from the others, as well as integrate itself into a larger whole. In order to pursue more communal-oriented tasks, individual families could with relative ease align themselves with other paternally or maternally related families. At all levels of social alignment, be it a single family, a hunting or gathering group of several extended families, or an entire winter village, leadership roles were clearly delineated and their responsibilities carried out.

The Shamans While the chiefs and headmen helped coordinate social and economic activities, the shamans endeavored to facilitate the spiritual affairs among the people. In turn, when the spiritual endeavors were properly conducted, all aspects of *Schitsu'umsh* life potentially benefitted. While the power base for a chief was in his ability to lead by consensus, the position of the shaman was based upon his seeking and successful acquiring medicine or *suumesh* power from an animal guardian spirit. His power was ultimately derived by the consent of his *suumesh*.

As virtually all adults, men and women, had sought a vision and received a guardian spirit, what distinguished the shaman from others was the degree of his power and the number of guardian spirits he possessed. Both men and women could become a shaman, though there were more male shamans than female.

The roles of the shamans, in consort with the headmen or acting in that capacity, included conducting hunting rituals prior to a hunt and helping in the actual coordination of the hunting and gathering activities. In his songs and prayers, the shaman would seek to apply his *suumesh* to assure a successful outcome in the hunting and fishing endeavors. As he sang his *suumesh* song, a shaman could locate and draw in the game toward the hunters. In the following vignettes, "Somesh" and "A Medicine Lodge Ceremony Prior to the Hunt Medicine Lodge," we have eye-witness, albeit from a less than sympathetic Jesuit perspective, descriptions of the application of *suumesh* for hunting purposes. Through the shaman's coordination of the ritual activities following a hunt or berry gathering, the shaman would also see to an equitable distribution of the venison and berries among all the families.

In addition to specific hunting and fishing applications of his *suumesh*, the shamans would pray throughout the year for abundant rains and bountiful growth of camas and

huckleberries. Beside addressing *Amotqn* and his particular spirit guardians, the shaman might also beseech the aid of “Thunder Man,” “who lives on the high mountains” and would announce when the rains would fall, or “Sky Chief,” who brought the snow fall and summer rains needed to nurture the roots and berries, and fish and deer.

Somesh

Yes the savages believe in an invisible power superior to his: they call that power Somesh [*suumesh*]: but where it is . . . nobody could say: they would invoke: the bear, the deer, the wolf, every thing but God: I asked once a good old man whether and how he prayed before he knew almighty: “I was always a poor man, never had any Somesh medicine: going hunting I would embrace a tree and tell him: have pity on me, let me find a deer or bear. Another time I questioned one of our [most intelligent] Coeur d’Alene: whence did you get your Somesh. [In the original hand-written journal, “most intelligent” is crossed out with a line through it.] He told me: when I was about 12 one of our dogs died, my father told me, take that dog . . . and go look for Somesh. I went to the mountains, the evening of the 2nd day I came to an old sweat house: it spoke and said you will take fire in your mouth without burning yourself: the dead dog spoke . . . and said you will be a great deer killer. But it was a dream? [Asked Joset] By no means, I was well awake! [Answered the man] The man was serious. (From the letters of Father Joset 1838-77:JP 69 “A Quarter of a Century Among the Savages”).

The *suumesh* songs of the shaman would also be heard sung in the Sweat House and the Winter Medicine Dances (Jump Dances), or at anytime during the year in a family’s tule-mat lodge, applying his medicine powers to those who might be ill.⁸ It was understood that when an individual member of a family was ill, the cooperative role he or she provided to the other members of the family would not be fulfilled, and consequently the entire family was ill and would suffer. The shaman thus played a vital healing role in *Schitsu'umsh* society. Incorporated into the shaman’s healing procedures were the singing of his *suumesh* songs, the ritual painting of the patient as prescribed by a shaman’s dream, and the application of a vast botanical pharmacology, administered as salves, drinks or incense. Among the techniques used by the shaman would be his adept use of a “sucking tube.” An illness might be diagnosed as the result of an “object” having been shot into a person from a malevolent spirit, jealous rival or the breaking of a taboo, and the treatment required that the shaman suck the object out of the patient with a hand-held sucking tube. Once removed and publically shown to the family gathered about the patient, the object, such as a small bone or tuft of hair, would then be “thrown away” and the patient allowed to recover. If “soul loss” was detected, however, it was typically fatal, unable to be treated by the shaman.

It would also be the shaman's responsibility to help facilitate the transformation and ultimately control the "Blue Jays" that would come out during the Medicine Dances. With blackened faces and bodies, individuals with Blue Jay power would "become" their patron spirit, "flying" to the rafters of lodge and then out into the night, only to be eventually "captured" and brought back by the shaman.

It might be one of the shamans who, in the winter communal house, would tell the stories of the First Peoples, of the adventures and misadventures of Coyote. The stories would teach and help vitalize the meaning of the landscape.

And it would be the shaman, "with his knowledge of the dead," who would preside over the rituals of burial. Placed in a flexed position on its side or as if sitting, the dead were wrapped in a robe, skins or tule mats, and buried in the earth or under rocks. Placement of the body was in a westerly orientation, as "the west is the end of the day and the end of life." Included in the grave and placed with the deceased could be such items as blankets, a canoe, and other personal property, and small quantities of roots and berries. For a period of time after the burial, the "ghost" of the deceased would often remain near the grave and occasionally attempt to "visit" its living relatives. These "visits" could bring illness if not repelled through the prayers and songs of a shaman.

If the role of the chiefs was ultimately that of helping regulate the social and economic relations between the people and the landscape (by influencing proper behavior of the people), the paramount role of the shaman was to help regulate the spiritual relations between the people and the same landscape. If properly traveled, it was a landscape that could provide for the material needs of a people, through food, shelter and transportation, as well as the spiritual needs, through *suumesh* songs. The camas and venison could nurture a body, while the *suumesh* could heal the body, as well as help assure the health of the roots and deer, and a successful gathering and hunting season.

A Medicine Lodge Ceremony Prior to the Hunt

To give credit to their sacrilegious practices, until recently supported by hard-felt want, all the medicine men, recalling the time of their supposed efficacy, were pleased to repeat, "One day, after having invoked our manitous [*suumesh*], we bagged one hundred eighty deer."

"And we," replied the true believers, "by the power of Him Who created and redeemed the world, have, almost without the aid of our bows or guns, in less than six hours bagged as many as three hundred."

The last medicine lodge kept by the Coeur d'Alenes may give some idea of what one is like. The grand officiating priest was the youngest of medicine men, but, since he was the richest and the most generous, the others were willing to cede him the honors. In order to live up to the exalted idea of his merit, he began by decorating, as well as he could, a lodge capable of holding all the believers of the tribe. At about the height of a man, there is a sort of grille on which he arranges the objects relating to his medicine. Then he asks the eight people having the most striking appearance to seat themselves at either extremity of the lodge, four men on one side and four women on the other. Their duty is to assist the grand priest in his functions. The simple attendants are placed in two lines running the length of the lodge. These arrangements having been made, the grand master, his head decorated with elegant feathers and his body streaked with various colors, opens the session with a mysterious chant. After this, at a signal from the master, several cry out, "Kill the fire! Kill the fire!" At these cries, an indescribable confusion ensues, which does not end until the master pronounces the sacramental words, "My medicine is hidden." Then the fire is rekindled and the search for the medicine begins. In the midst of the milling about, begin the fainting spells, delirium, visions, revelations. What has the great manitou revealed? It is very cold, but, regardless of this, it is necessary to swim across the river and return with a certain kind of wood. Or stones of a certain kind are to be heated to red heat in the fire, extracted with the bare hands, and held between the teeth while one walks around the lodge. All these things are done. Then a voice cries, "The hunt has opened." Everyone leaves the lodge and makes a common invocation. The voice cries again, "Before taking the first shot, turn the rifle toward the sun. If the first animal killed is a male, it should be brought into the lodge head first; if it is a female, the rump should be first." Thus prepared, it is said, the results of the hunt were abundant. (From Father Nicolas Point's winter 1842-43 observations, 1967:67-70.)

Endnotes:

1. To acquire a more complete view of *Schitsu'umsh* society during their pre-Euro-American contact period, refer to the important work by James Teit (1930). Gary Palmer (1998) offers a concise cultural and historical overview of *Schitsu'umsh* society. Jerome Peltier's *Schitsu'umsh* consultants provide interesting ethnographic points (1975). This particular chapter is based primarily on the works of Teit (1930) and Verne Ray (1942), supplemented by specific information referenced in this chapter and on the interviews I conducted.

The term "since time immemorial" is often used by elders to note that the *Schitsu'umsh* have occupied and traveled their landscape since the beginning of time.

2. The Plateau region extends from the Cascade Mountains in the west to the Rocky Mountains in the east, encompassing the Columbia River basin. The Fraser River valley marks the northern boundary, while the Klamath, Columbia and Salmon Rivers mark the southern reaches of the Plateau.

3. Joseph Joset, J.P., born in 1810, served as one of the Priests at the Sacred Heart Mission

(while located at Cataldo and later DeSmet) from 1844 until his death in 1900.

4. This method of hunting is also described in great detail in James Teit (1930:102).
5. This pre-Euro-American population estimation is based upon the research of James Teit (1930:39) and corroborated by Rick Sprague (1996:31).
6. Besides offering an excellent overview of Plateau social organization and kinship, Lillian Ackerman (1994) most convincingly argues for a “nonunilinear descent group” structure for the Plateau, inclusive of the *Schitsu'umsh* as well.
7. Teit reports the opposite situation, stating that “separation between husband and wife was uncommon” (1930:172).
8. For descriptions of the Sweat House and Jump Dance ceremonies, and many of the burial rituals, see the discussions in their respective sections in the chapter, “Sharing the Gifts.” The ritual procedures for both the Sweat House and Jump Dance ceremonies have remained relatively unchanged into the present. The Jump Dance is also referred to as the Winter Spirit Dances (Ray 1942:248-253) and the Medicine Dances (Teit 1930:186-187).