

## **The Confluence of Rivers: the Indigenous Tribes of Idaho**

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Like the confluence of great rivers, the histories of the indigenous Tribes of Idaho represent the culmination of the intermingling of the waters of distinct rivers. Among the many rivers, there are two pivotal rivers that must be considered in order to understand these rich histories. Flowing over the riverbed of one river are the waters of each Tribe's particular oral traditions, their indigenous culture. These are waters rich with languages, songs and aesthetics, with family, kinship and ecological orientations, and with stories of creation, such as those of Coyote, Grizzly Bear, and other Animal Peoples. This is a river expressive of the unique heritage and dreams of sovereign peoples. Flowing between the banks of another, altogether different river, are the waters of Euro-American contact-history.<sup>1</sup> These are waters expressive of the effects of the horse and smallpox, and of the encounters with Lewis and Clark, fur traders, missionaries, military generals, and treaty commissioners. This is the river of federal acts creating reservations and allotments, and of federal acts of reorganization, self-determination and gaming, of Euro-American influences continuing into the present. Found here are the waters that have fortuitously or, more often by intent, sought to re-define, modify, or deny the sovereignty of the Tribes.

To understand the history of any given Tribe an appreciation of the specific intermingling of both rivers, at the point of confluence, is essential. That confluence differs in specific character and content from locale to locale, contributing to the unique histories of each Tribe. Nevertheless, common to the confluences of all the Tribes are certain shared experiences relating to the quest to maintain Tribal sovereignty in the face of assimilation from Euro-American influences. As the histories of the Idaho Tribes are far too extensive to be adequately conveyed here, the intent in this essay is to highlight but a few representative currents from both rivers to provide an overview history of Idaho's indigenous peoples. In so doing, the authors are sensitive to an Indian perspective on their own histories and seek its integration into this essay.

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<sup>1</sup> "Contact-history" refers to the varied interactions between indigenous and Euro-American societies, from the moment of initial contact and continuing into the present.

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There are seven indigenous peoples of Idaho, each with their own distinctive ancestry linking them to the aboriginal landscape. Reflecting the influences of both the Animal Peoples and Euro-American rivers, each of these peoples is known by two sets of names – the name asserted by the people themselves and the name given to them by newcomers. In their aboriginal

homeland and extending far beyond the boundaries of what would become Idaho, from north to south, are the *Ktunaxa* – Kootenai, the *Qlispé* – Kalispel, the *Schitsu'umsh* – Coeur d'Alene, the *Nimípuu* – Nez Perce, the *Newe* – Shoshone, the *Bannaqwate* – the Bannock, and the *Numa* – the Northern Paiute. Today, these tribal groups reside on **six** reservation communities in Idaho, as well as in reservation communities in neighboring British Columbia, Alberta, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington.

The *Ktunaxa* (a term of self-designation, applied to all Kootenai bands, the meaning of which is unclear) or Kootenai (derivative of *Ktunaxa*) have traditionally resided in a large region that would become southern British Columbia and Alberta, and the northwest, northern and northeast areas of what would become Montana, Idaho and Washington respectively. This is the region of the Kootenay/Kootenai and Columbia rivers and the banks of the Arrow Lakes. Their language is an isolate, linguistically unrelated to any other tribal language in the region. In Idaho, one band of the *Ktunaxa*, the *?aq'anqmi* (“people of the island,” pronounced with an initial glottal stop; in reference to the location of this band on Kootenai River near Bonner’s Ferry), reside on the Kootenai Reservation of 19 acres near Bonners Ferry, with an enrolled tribal membership of over two hundred individuals.<sup>2</sup> Other *Ktunaxa* bands reside on the 1.3 million-acre Flathead Reservation of Montana, or on various reserves throughout southeastern British Columbia and southwestern Alberta, Canada.

The *Qlispé* (meaning unknown, though may refer to a place-name location) or Kalispel (from the Salishian term *qlispé*) were a river-oriented people, traditionally living along the Clark Fork River in Montana, the shores of Lake Pend Oreille, and continuing along the Pend Oreille River into Canada, over 3,000,000 acres of aboriginal territory. Linguistically affiliated with their neighbors, the Coeur d’Alene, Spokane and Flathead, the *Qlispé* speak a Salishian language. Today the descendents of the *Qlispé* live primarily on either the Flathead Reservation

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<sup>2</sup> References are made to term pronunciation to acknowledge the importance of the spoken word. The Tribes of Idaho are anchored in their oral traditions and the spoken word, and, as part of their renewed Tribal sovereignty, are seeking to rejuvenate their Tribal identities and spoken languages.

of Montana, numbering an estimated 500 descendents, or on the 4,600-acre Kalispel Reservation in Washington, with an enrollment of over 250 members.

The *Schitsu'umsh* ("the ones who were found here," referring to Lake Coeur d'Alene) or Coeur d'Alene (French for "heart of the awl," referring to the Tribe's skills in trading), have traditionally resided in what would become northern Idaho and eastern Washington, along the banks of the Coeur d'Alene, St. Joe and Spokane rivers, and shores of Lake Coeur d'Alene. The *Schitsu'umsh* speak a Salishian language. Their once 5 million-acre homeland was reduced to a reservation of some 345,000 acres, with an enrolled membership of some 2,000 individuals.

The *Nimípuu* ("the people") or Nez Perce (French for "pierced noses"), have resided in the country of Clearwater and Snake river drainage of what would become north-central Idaho, southeastern Washington and northeastern Oregon, including Wallowa Lake --- in all, over 13 million acres. Closely related linguistically to such Tribes as the Umatilla, Yakama and Warm Springs who live along the Columbia River, the *Nimípuu* are part of the Sahaptian language family. Most of *Nimípuu* reside on the 750,000-acre Nez Perce Reservation located in north-central Idaho, with an enrolled membership of over 3,300. The *Nimípuu* descendents of the Nez Perce War of 1877 live on the Colville Reservation of north-central Washington.

The aboriginal lands of southern Idaho were the homes to numerous bands of Shoshone and Paiute people. Today, the descendents of these bands reside on three federally-recognized communities, the Fort Hall and Duck Valley Reservation, and Northwestern Band of Shoshone Nation.<sup>3</sup>

The people of the Fort Hall Reservation, just north of Pocatello, are made up of the *Newe* ("the people," with stress on the first syllable) or Northern Shoshone (the derivation of "shoshone" is from the word Shoshoni word, *sosoni*, plural of *sonipe*, likely meaning "grass people," in reference to their grass lodges), and the *Bannaqwate* ("from across the water," in

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<sup>3</sup> We are indebted to Chris Loether, Professor of Anthropology, Idaho State University, to Josie Shottanana, Director of Cultural Resources for the Kootenai Tribe, and to Francis Cullooyah, Director of Cultural Resources for the Kalispel Tribe, for helping clarify the linguistic terms used by the Shoshone and Bannock, the Kootenai, and the Kalispel peoples respectively.

reference to the Hells Canyon and Snake River area where they were from) or Bannock (the term “bannock” is a Scots English term, meaning “flat cake made of oatmeal,” and may have been used by whites to call these people, as it sounded similar to the name for themselves).

The Fort Hall Reservation is also the home of the descendents of *Newe* who had once lived on the 64,000-acre Lemhi Reservation. They called themselves the *Agai-deka*’ (“salmon-eaters,” also spelled *Akaitteka*’) or Lemhi Shoshone (derived from the Mormon name given to the area of the *Agai-deka*), and the *Duku-deka*’ (“sheep-eaters” also spelled *Tukkutteka*’). But in 1907, after their reservation had been terminated, they re-settled at Fort Hall. Today, while these terms are still in use, they are also collectively called the *Yahan-deka*’ (“groundhog-eaters”), as well as *Newe*.

Many of the Great Basin cultures of southern Idaho, and adjacent eastern Wyoming, northern Utah, Nevada and Oregon, were gathering-hunting bands of the larger linguistic groups of Shoshone and Paiute, with each band referred to by their seasonal resource or location. The name *Agai-deka*’ means “Salmon-eaters.” It was a term used to describe Shoshones when they fished salmon on the Snake River. The name *Kamme-deka*’, “Jackrabbit-eaters,” was given to those Shoshones who were gathering and hunting from Snake River further south. The *Yahan-deka*’, “Groundhog-eaters,” were the Shoshones of the lower Boise and Weiser basin. The *Duku-deka*’, “Sheep-eaters,” was used in reference to the Shoshones residing in Sawtooth Range during part of the year. The fluidity of the names matched the season movement of these band societies and has led to some confusion by outsiders who tend to apply the seasonal resource name in use at the time of Euro-American contact. Collectively, all these Shoshone bands also refer to themselves as *Newe*.

The aboriginal territory of the *Newe* and *Bannaqwate* included all of the Snake as well as upper Salmon river drainages, encompassing much of the central and all of the eastern area of what would become the state of Idaho south of the Salmon River, over 30 million acres in all. While the *Newe* were originally made up of distinct Shoshone bands and the *Bannaqwate* were a distinct Paiute band, all groups speak a variation of the Numic branch of the Uto-Aztecan

language family. Today, the vast majority of these descendents, numbering over 5,800 people, reside on or near the 544,000-acre Fort Hall Reservation.

The people of the Duck Valley Reservation, which straddles the Idaho/Nevada border south of Mountain Home, are made up of bands of *Newe* (“the people”) or Northern Shoshone, along with bands of the *Numa* (“the people”) or Northern Paiute (the derivation of “Paiute” is uncertain). They had inhabited the aboriginal lands associated with the Boise, Bruneau, Owyhee, Payette and Weiser rivers, as well as lower regions of the Snake and Salmon rivers. This is the area of what would become southeastern Oregon, northern Nevada, and western Idaho, an area of over 20 million acres. Both the *Newe* and *Numa* speak variations of the Numic branch of the Uto-Aztecan language family, and reside in the Duck Valley Indian Reservation which Idaho. Today the reservation covers some 293,000 acres and is home to approximately 1,500 people.

The people of the Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation are decedents of the *Newe*, residing on scattered locations over south-eastern Idaho and north-eastern Utah, including one tract of 184 acres, with tribal offices in Pocatello, Idaho and Brigham City, Utah. This band numbers over 600 enrolled members today.

### **The River of the Animal Peoples**

To begin our appreciation of the confluences, we must in fact briefly travel the landscape prior to the confluence, prior to the channeling of the Euro-American riverbed into the landscape. Running through this aboriginal landscape is the river of tribal oral traditions, itself the culmination of its own tributaries. These are the waters of stories told and songs sung, of family and community practices and rituals, of dance and the regalia worn, and of languages spoken. These are the waters of the Animal Peoples and their creation. These are the waters of independent, sovereign peoples. Though certainly defined in distinct ways by each Tribe, sovereignty was and continues to be understood as the ability of a people to make decisions for themselves, affecting all realms of life, unimpeded by outside influences. Sovereignty is

established and asserted by the will of a people. It is not ultimately contingent upon some other nation granting it to them, as for example, the United States. The Tribes were sovereign nations long before Lewis and Clark gave “peace medals” to many of them --- long before Columbus set foot on the shores of his new world. These are waters that would continue to flow, intermingling with the waters of another river newly forged through the landscape.

To begin an appreciation of the waters of the Animal Peoples, let us travel down river with Rabbit and Jack Rabbit. Their story is but one small example from one tribe, the *Schitsu'umsh*, of a vast body of oral traditions from the Idaho Tribes.<sup>4</sup>

Rabbit and Jack Rabbit are cousins and friends. Rabbit lives in the mountains around DeSmet, near Moses Mountain here. Jack Rabbit lives on the prairie of the Big Bend country, from Rosalia out towards the Davenport area there. The winter is hard.

When it clears after a big snow Jack Rabbit looks toward the mountains here. The trees are heavy with snow; the branches interlock. Jack Rabbit says, “I wonder what he eats? I think Rabbit must be dead.” Then Jack Rabbit says, “I think I’ll take my cousin some bitterroot, camas, dried salmon eggs.” He puts them in a bundle and packs it on his back. Then he starts off to Rabbit’s home.

Rabbit looks toward the prairie there. Then he says, “Poor Jack Rabbit! I wonder if he has a fire in this cold weather. I’ll go see.” He gathers pitch shavings, makes as large a pack as he can carry. Then he starts off with it toward Jack Rabbit’s home.

Rabbit comes up the north side of Tekoa Mountain. Then he sets down at the edge of the woods. He says, “I wonder where Jack Rabbit lives? I don’t know exactly.”

Jack Rabbit comes over the prairie, up the south side of the mountain. Then he sees Rabbit sitting. He says, “Why, here he is!” Rabbit stands up. He sees Jack Rabbit. Then they walk toward each other, shake hands.

“You’re still alive, my cousin!” says Rabbit. “And you’re still alive, my cousin,” says Jack Rabbit. “I was just coming to look for you. I was worried about you” says Rabbit. “Why, I was coming to look for you too. I was worried about you. I thought you might be hungry,” says Jack Rabbit.

“No, I’m not hungry. I found green grass under that tree. I ate it. It’s you I worry about. I thought you might get cold so I brought these pitch shavings for you to start a fire,” says Rabbit. “No, I’m not cold. You worry for no reason. When it snows and drifts, I find a dry spot under this sage brush. That’s where

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<sup>4</sup> Frey 2001:112, based upon the telling by the *Schitsu'umsh* elder, Dorothy Nicodemus, and recorded in Reichard 1947:192-93. (permission granted by publisher 9 Nov. 09, gratis)

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I stay. I thought you might need some food so I brought you some camas and bitterroot,” says Jack Rabbit. Then they both laughed.

“I’ll throw away the pitch.” Then Rabbit unties his pack, dumps it out. “I’ll dump what I brought to feed you.” Then Jack Rabbit unties his pack, dumps it out. Then Rabbit and Jack Rabbit go their separate ways.

The next spring the pitch grows into pitchy trees and the bitterroot and camas into rock roses. When you go to Tekoa Mountain, you will find pitch pine trees. You will find patches of bitterroot and camas.

Through the actions of the Animal Peoples the world is “prepared for the coming of Human Peoples,” as commonly expressed and understood by elders. Among the Animal Peoples are Coyote and Wolf, Grizzly Bear and Salmon, and Rabbit and Jack Rabbit, along with a host of others. While the physical characteristics of each of these beings typically lacks description, the Animal Peoples travel a primordial landscape, talking and relating to each other as humans, with motivations and personalities, and with the power to transform that landscape. Often understood as having been sent by the Creator, it is through the actions of the Animal Peoples that dangerous monsters are encountered and slain. The terrain of the landscape is given its characteristics and made habitable, placing within it certain quintessential “gifts” the Human Peoples will need. Such gifts include the creation of navigable rivers, and mountains and prairies endowed with an abundance of roots, animals and fish. Still another gift is spiritual power, as well as the rituals of healing and nurturing, to access and direct these powers for the benefit of humans. And there are the gifts of “teachings,” pragmatic as well as moral and ethical nature, which will be needed by the Human Peoples as they interact with one another and their world. These teachings are etched into the landscape by the Animal Peoples as rock outcroppings, river bends and hill tops, as “textbooks,” held sacred and to be “read.” In the example of Rabbit and Jack Rabbit, pitch, camas and bitterroot are left on a hillside for those who would be coming, as well as a certain teaching, an ethic of sharing? Finally, it is through the actions of Coyote or Wolf that the Human Peoples are brought forth, and given their particular characteristics and homelands. For the *Nimíipuu*, Coyote was able to trick the Swallowing Monster, killing it, freeing all the Animal Peoples it had gobbled up and throwing its cut up body parts to the many directions, creating the



Human Peoples. The Monster's heart is still visible, as a hill, along the Clearwater River near Kamiah.

Among the *Newe* and the *Numa*, Coyote also plays an important role as he offers valuable knowledge about the variable seasonal and regionally groupings of animals and plants found throughout the traditional homelands of these peoples. As he travels in the more arid southern regions, Coyote competes with Antelope, Deer and Beaver for pine nuts, while when he travels northern area in search of salmon he often competes with Mountain Sheep, Bear and Wolf for sustenance and protection. These regional varieties of flora and fauna reflect the ever so subtle shades of seasonal and environmental change, the knowledge of which, conveyed in Coyote's stories, was so crucial to the survival of these people. Similarly, the extensive narratives involving Water Babies, mysterious yet dangerous spirit beings that lived around pools or springs in the arid regions, reiterated the care and respect the people must maintain if they are to continue accessing and using this precious resource.

In the following *Numa* story we witness many of the specific themes of *Newe* and the *Numa* life: the vast distances between areas rich in food like the pine nut areas of central and southern Nevada; the Importance of hospitality when meeting others searching for food; the seasonal and climatic changes experienced by changes in elevation and season revealed in the ice barrier of the north; and the important role of trade between all of the Basin bands as seen in the obsidian traded throughout the west from quarries in Montana and Oregon.<sup>5</sup>

Coyote went out and happened to find some people eating pine nuts. As he came in the house, the head of the family said, "A stranger comes. Grind some pine nuts for him." They ground them and made soup. The man said, "Make it very thin. We don't know this man. You can't tell what he might do." They made it very thin and gave him some. He ate with his fingers. He thought, "I wish I could take some home. But it's too thin; it runs right between my fingers." He tried to hold some in his mouth, but it ran down his throat.

Then Coyote and his brother went to everyone's camp and told them to gather for a meeting. They all came. They said, "What shall we do to find pine nuts? We'll play the hand game with them." Then they were asking each other, "Who is going to look for the nuts while we play?" They chose Mouse.

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<sup>5</sup> (add source of Coyote oral narrative)

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Then they all went to the pine nut place. They started a hand game. Those people had hidden the nut in the middle of a bow. Toward daylight Mouse found the nut right there.

Then he went to Red Woodpecker and told him. Woodpecker went there and pecked a hole, and he took out that pine nut. When he took it out, it made a yellow flash, and everybody ran out. They knew someone had stolen their nut. They all chased that bird. Chicken Hawk is the one who took the nut from Woodpecker. He didn't want the others to know, so he put it in his leg which smelled as though it were rotten.

When they caught him, they said, "Well, he smells too badly. A thing good to eat could never be buried in him," and they tossed him away. They searched all the others. They made a big ice mountain in front of Coyote's people. They couldn't cross it anyway. Those people kept on searching, but they couldn't find their pine nut. So they turned back.

The others couldn't get over the ice. "How are we going to break this ice?" they said. Coyote told them, "Well, I'll try." He ran up and bumped against the ice. Every time he did that his nose bled. Many Black Crows were sitting to the north, way up high. Wolf said, "Why don't we have those people help us?" Coyote told him, "I'm a man, and I tried it. I don't think they would do any good." Then somebody yelled to them, "Hey, come and help us!" Those birds had black obsidian.

They built a fire and made their stones red hot. They had one stone apiece. Each carried it in his mouth. Then they flew up and swooped down. They cracked that ice. Coyote was the first to go through. Everybody ran through so fast that Coyote was knocked down. Every time he tried to get up somebody trampled on him.

They all went on home. When they reached home, they took out the pine nuts and made soup. Then Coyote and Wolf were going to plant pine nuts. Coyote took some in his mouth. They told him, "sprinkle it out of your mouth." But Coyote swallowed his all the time. That's why we have only juniper growing up this way. Coyote did that because he ate juniper berries. Then Wolf did the same. He sprinkled his pine nuts to the south, and down there all pine nuts grow.

Among some of the essential "teachings," shared by all of the Tribes of Idaho, are certain quintessential values. These include the understanding that the landscape is **spiritually** endowed, with its gifts of plants, animals or even rocks equally so endowed. Among the various Peoples -- be they human, animal, plant, or a mountain or river --- all share in a kinship with one another; all are "Peoples." The dynamic relationships between kinsmen are governed by respect toward each other and an ethic of sharing, giving unselfishly to those in need, as Rabbit and Jack Rabbit, and as Coyote, in his manner, so aptly demonstrated.

It is among these values that a people's sense of their identity, heritage and aspirations are based. These are the teachings that help define the nature of "family" and "Tribe," as well as the relationships with plants and animals, and between friend and foe. These are values that continue to influence how issues of health care, economic development, governance, and education are addressed. These are the values that re-affirm a will to be sovereign.

The particular and vital significance of the oral traditions is to be found not only in *what* they convey, the teachings, as critical as they are, but in *how* they are conveyed, in the telling, singing and doing of these oral traditions. It is in these acts of giving voice to the Animal Peoples that the teachings are brought forth, vitalized, and perpetuated in the world. We glimpse some of this vitalizing power when we consider the act of storytelling.

When an elder tells of one of the Animal People, his or her techniques include adept use of body language, hand gestures, and voice intonation, all intended to draw the listeners into the story as participants. There is extensive use of phrase and sequence repetition, as Coyote's particular action is highlighted by repeating key phrases. The participation of the listeners is actually monitored. In a traditional setting, as the story unfolds, the listeners acknowledge their participation by periodically responding by saying the linguistic equivalent of "yes." As long as the "yeses" are heard, the story continues. But should there be only silence, the story would cease, regardless of where we were in the story, for there are no longer any participants in the story.

The animation of the story is fully realized when the power of language is itself brought to bear. Words **spoken** in the Native languages are understood to have a "**transformative power**" to affect the world, and not simply describe it.<sup>6</sup> This notion is expressed, for example, when one receives his or her "Indian name." The ritually bestowed name, often descriptive of the actions of some animal, helps the child grow to become the words of that name – Running Deer or Soaring Eagle, for example. Similarly, to say "goodbye" is "too final," "you may never see them again." Instead, one says, "I'll see you later." One does not speak of a particular sickness out of

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<sup>6</sup> Frey 2001:197-98.

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fear of manifesting that affliction. When storytellers weave the fibers of the words into the tapestry of an oral tradition, the spoken words bring forth that which they portray. Phenomena are spoken into existence, the world is vitalized and perpetuated. When a *Schitsu'umsh* elder tells of Coyote tricking the Rock Monster, causing it to roll through a berry patch into the lake, the “blue” of Lake Coeur d’Alene is revitalized. The storytelling techniques of the elder and power of words all coalesce, allowing the listener to run with the Grizzly Bear or Coyote. You re-witness the transformation of the landscape of the creation time, as well as the revitalization of the landscape of your current time, they being one in the same landscapes. You return to the creation time, running with the Grizzly Bear or Coyote, as the events of time are themselves perennially re-engaged. In the waters of this river we witness the actions of the many Animal Peoples.

So why have the elders continued to give voice to the Animal Peoples? The oral traditions of story, song, dance and ritual at once reveal that which was established by the Animal Peoples, allowing discovery of what is most meaningful in the landscape, the teachings, providing an emotional tone to life and guidance over the difficult trails encountered by Idaho’s Tribes. And in the very act of telling, singing and dancing the stories of the Animal Peoples, their journeys are continued, bringing forth, forming, and manifesting in the experiential world the creation time. The world is made and rendered meaningful in the act of revealing Coyote’s story of it.

### **The Euro-American River**

With the arrival of Euro-Americans, a new riverbed was forged through the indigenous landscape. And with it came altogether new sorts of waters, intermingling at the confluence with the waters of the Animal Peoples.

As we begin our journey down this river, we witness the first of many newcomers to the landscape. It was the horse. Through trade and the northern migration of wild herds, the Spanish-derived horse was first encountered by the *Numa* and *Nimípuu* as early as the late

seventeenth century and fully adopted into their cultures by the 1730s. The horse increased mobility and enhanced intertribal trade, as greater distances could be traveled and larger cargos packed. The buffalo country of Montana and Wyoming and the salmon and trading country at Celilo Falls on the Columbia River became much more accessible. The *Nimípuu*, in fact, selectively bred the horse, making them more agile and responsive, with tremendous endurance. For all the Tribes, the horse became a source of pride and wealth, of pleasure and artistic expression, as well as of spiritual power. Some families had herds numbering over 1,000 head. This newcomer certainly contributed to the sovereignty of the people.

As we continue our journey downriver, we witness a second newcomer to the indigenous landscape. But unlike the horse, it would threaten tribal sovereignty. A series of deadly smallpox, diphtheria, and other epidemics swept the landscape as early as the mid-eighteenth century. In the instance of the *Schitsu'umsh*, a series of smallpox and other epidemics hit the Tribe between 1770 and 1850. Without previous exposure or acquired immunity, the epidemics devastated the *Schitsu'umsh*, reducing their numbers from an estimated 5,000 to 500 in just eighty years. Among the *Nimípuu*, a similar ravaging occurred, numbering some 6,000 at the time of Lewis and Clark's arrival, but only an estimated 1,600 by the end of the nineteenth century. The impact of smallpox was particularly devastating for the Tribes as the most susceptible were the youth, who embodied the future hopes of the Tribes, and the elderly, who were the caretakers of their collective wisdom. With a pre-contact population of Idaho estimated to be around 20,000, by the mid-nineteenth century there were only some 4,000 indigenous people in the state.

Following Meriwether Lewis and William Clark's Corps of Discovery contacts with the *Nimípuu*, *Schitsu'umsh*, and *Newe* between 1805-06, the fur trappers and traders arrived. While only marginally influential to some Tribes, like the *Nimípuu*, for others, like the *Qlispé*, *Schitsu'umsh* and *Newe*, the fur trade greatly added to their technology that made life easier, at least while the trade continued. By the early 1820s the Hudson's Bay Company **was** actively involved with the *Qlispé*, *Schitsu'umsh* and *Ktunaxa* at Kullyspell House (at Lake Pend Oreille), Saleesh House (near Thompson Falls), and Spokane House (along the Spokane River). Among

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the *Newe*, the 1828 expedition of Peter Ogden presaged the “scorched earth policy” of white expansionism as Ogden and his trappers found many beavers along the Humboldt River and other tributaries, which they proceeded to trap out. Metal axes, knives and pots, woven blankets and clothe, and fire arms were among the items incorporated into the technology of the Tribes. Also introduced by the traders was alcohol, with its deleterious effects on the native population. After the world demand for fur hats died in the 1840s so too did the trade for beaver and hence the sources of these newly incorporated technologies. As metal tools wore out or broke and supplies of musket lead and gun powder diminished, many tribes struggled to compensate for these losses.

Continuing farther down river, we witness yet another threat to Tribal sovereignty. This came in the form military confrontations with the United States government. For the *Schitsu'umsh* war came in May of 1858 with an unprovoked “invasion” by some 150 federal soldiers and their 50 Nez Perce allies. Lieut. Col. Edward Steptoe and his troops met heavy resistance by the combined forces of *Schitsu'umsh*, Spokane, Palouse, Kalispel and Yakama near Rosalia, Washington, and soon fled. But to “avenge this humiliation,” in August of 1858 Col. George Wright, with a much larger, better-armed force, defeated the area Tribes in two decisive battles near Spokane, Washington, and, in the ensuing days, pursued a “scorched earth” policy, **taking Wright up to the** Cataldo Mission itself. Wright ordered the destruction of food stores intended for the coming winter, the killing hundreds of Indian horses, and, without trial, the hanging of many of the leaders. Both the families who had supported the resistance and those families who had stayed out of the fighting faced punishment.

On January 29, 1863, a group of some five hundred *Newe*, under the leadership of a local chief named Bear Hunter, was wintering in the Cache Valley near Franklin, just south of the Utah/Idaho border. Tensions were high between white settlers who were moving in increasing numbers and the desire of the *Newe* to protect their land and water. Colonel Patrick Connor and his California Volunteers initiated battle against *Newe* warriors. The *Newe* repelled the first attack and after that, outgunned and out of ammunition, the *Newe* camp was overrun by Connor’s troops. The soldiers proceeded to indiscriminately kill men, women and children,

committing all sorts of atrocities against the remaining *Newe*. Having occurred during the height of the Civil War and western expansionism, the Bear River Massacre has received little historical attention.

For the *Nimípuu*, war with the United States military came in 1877. While not party to the signing the Treaty of 1863, the Wallowa bands of *Nimípuu* in northeast Oregon found that their homelands were no longer part of the much reduced reservation. Their chiefs, among them Looking Glass, Joseph, and White Bird, nevertheless began the move to their new home. On their way tensions erupted when some *Nimípuu* warriors killed several settlers in retribution for *Nimípuu* killings. To “silence” a possible Indian uprising, Gen. Oliver Howard sent his troops against the Wallowa bands. A three-month and 1,600-mile struggle to reach Canada ensued. The *Nimípuu* numbered some 750, of which less than half were warriors. The *Nimípuu* effectively eluded a far superior military force, defeating or repelling them in several encounters at White Bird, along the Clearwater River, at Big Hole, and through the newly established Yellowstone National Park. But the toll on lives was heavy, as children, women, and the elderly were targeted alongside warriors by the government soldiers. Exhausted and short on supplies, some 400 *Nimípuu*, under the leadership of Joseph, surrendered to Col. Nelson Miles, just forty miles from Canada and safety. First sent to Oklahoma, many *Nimípuu* died along the way. Eventually, Joseph and the other non-Christian *Nimípuu*, numbering some 150, were exiled to the Coville Reservation in Washington, where their descendents continue to reside today, far from their homeland.

In 1878, having lost access to some of their traditional lands around the Camas Prairie area near Fairfield, a group of *Niwi* and *Newe* from the Fort Hall Reservation, joined by some Umatillas from Oregon, directed their frustration at nearby settlers. The fighting continued as the leader, Buffalo Horn, was joined by allies among Weiser Shoshones and Northern Paiutes under the leadership of Paddy Cap. However, defeat was imminent. When they were eventually captured by the U.S. Army, Paddy Cap and his followers were sent to the Yakama Indian Reservation in Washington. Eventually he and many of his followers were provided land on the northern part of the Duck Valley Indian Reservation, where they settled in 1885.

Tribal sovereignty was further eroded with the enactment of a series of treaties and executive orders during the middle and latter segments of the nineteenth century. With these “agreements” reservations were established, diminishing the land base of the Tribes. It should be noted that while the United States Congress ceased negotiating formal treaties with Indian nations after 1871, the federal government continued to establish nation-to-nation relations and negotiate exchanges of resources for land in the form of executive orders. Executive orders entail the same legal authority as treaties.

Ironically, while ultimately seeking to inhibit tribal sovereignty, treaties and executive orders helped establish a legal basis upon which United States federal interactions with the Tribes acknowledged a limited form of Tribal sovereignty. The Supreme Court of the United States had long recognized that Indian nations were “distinct political communities, having territorial boundaries, within which their authority is exclusive, and having a right to all the lands within those boundaries” (*Worcester v. Georgia*, 1832). Though the Indian Tribes were not to be considered foreign nations, they did constitute “distinct political” communities within the United States, known as “domestic, dependent nations” (*Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, 1831). This established notion helped establish the guardian-to-ward relationship between the federal government and the Tribes, giving birth to federal trusteeship of Indian affairs.

Nevertheless, as established in Article VI, Section 2 of the United States Constitution, treaties are the “supreme law of the land,” bilaterally-constructed, nation-to-nation agreements, intended to be legally binding for all time. Treaties acknowledged that Tribal property should not be taken without consent of the Indian Tribe in question. And further, that the ownership of land is to be held by the Tribe unless explicitly relinquished in the language of a treaty. For example, ownership of a lake, if not explicitly granted to the United States, would remain with the Tribe. As such, the agreements entered into were not grants of rights to Indians, but rather grants of rights from Tribes to the United States, known as the “reserved rights doctrine.” Courts also upheld that treaties are to be interpreted as their original signers had intended, known as the “cannons of construction.” And finally, in exchange for the cession of vast tracts of land and resources, i.e. “ceded territory,” the Tribe would receive educational, health benefits, and other



services. Such services and allocations are legally understood as akin to “purchased” and “contracted” services, and not “social entitlements” or “special rights.”

The effect of treaties and executive orders was to ultimately contribute to the assimilation of the Indian and the infringement on tribal sovereignty. Implicit in the treaty process was the assertion federal congressional plenary power – the ability of Congress to unilaterally abrogate any provision of a treaty. This power would be exemplified in the imposition of the Dawes Severalty Act of 1887, as well as in the Termination Policy of the 1950s.

For the *Schitsu'umsh*, between 1873 and 1889, a series of rather heavy-handed executive orders were negotiated with the Tribe, reducing their once 5 million-acre homeland to a reservation of 345,000 acres. Interestingly, their beloved Sacred Heart Mission at Cataldo was not included within the reservation boundaries. The dislocation from their traditional lands was further compounded after the implementation in 1909 of the Dawes Act. Each Tribal member was limited to “owning” 160 acres of land. “Surplus” lands, totaling over 300,000 acres, were opened up to non-Indian homesteading. Today, within a reservation boundary encompassing some 345,000 acres, only some 70,000 acres is actually owned by tribal members. Before allotment the *Schitsu'umsh* were some of the most successful farmers on the Palouse of north central Idaho. Families typically owning two homes, one on their 1,000 to 2,000 acre-farm, and the other in DeSmet, where families assembled on weekends to celebrate mass and socialize with one another. During this period, the *Schitsu'umsh* utilized the state-of-the-art farm implements and hired non-Indians as laborers, and produced, in 1894 for example, over 100,000 bushels of wheat. After allotment the *Schitsu'umsh* as with so many other Tribes lost their economic independence.

The *Newe* and *Numa* received federal recognition in the Treaty of Ruby Valley of 1863. The boundaries of their Duck Valley Indian Reservation straddle the states of Idaho and Nevada, and were established by executive order on April 16, 1877. Their once aboriginal lands of some 20 million acres were reduced to a 289,667-acre reservation, though in 1886 increased by some additional 4,000 acres when Paddy Cap's band of Northern Paiutes settled on the northern parts

of the reservation. As the Duck Valley Reservation was never designated by the federal government for the Allotment Act, all of its reservation lands are owned by the Tribes.

The 1868 Fort Bridger Treaty established the Fort Hall reservation for the *Newe* and *Bannaqwate*. The reservation initially covered some 1.6 million acres, but has been reduced by allotment, homesteading and other “agreement concessions” to 544,000 acres today. The Fort Hall Reservation has also become home to the *Agai-deka’* and *duku-deka’*, who had their own Lemhi Indian Reservation in north-central Idaho of some 64,000 acres established in 1873. However, the Agreement creating the Lemhi reservation was unilaterally dissolved by the United States Government in 1880, and over the objections of the *Agai-deka’* and *duku-deka’*, these Tribes were eventually moved to the Fort Hall in 1907. Their descendants continue to seek the re-establishment of the reservation.

In the instance of the Idaho *Qlispé*, they were party to two federal negotiations, both of which led to re-settlement out of the state of Idaho. In the Hellgate Treaty of 1855, several families of *Qlispé* agreed to join the much larger populations of Bitterroot Salish, Kootenai, and other *Qlispé* in resettling on the Flathead Reservation of some 1.3 million acres. Federal government pressure sought to re-locate the remaining *Qlispé* families from their Idaho homes onto either the Colville, Coeur d’Alene or Flathead Reservations, but the families staunchly resisted. Finally, an executive order in 1914 established a 6,400-acre Kalispel Reservation near Usk, Washington, where the remaining families settled. The effects of allotment on both reservations was devastating, with over half the Flathead Reservation lost to allotment. On the Kalispel Reservation, allotment was imposed in 1924, but unlike other reservation allotments of 160 acres, the parcels assigned to the *Qlispé* were limited to 40 acres each on lands that were typically not suited to farming.

The indigenous peoples of Idaho witnessed their aboriginal lands of over 60 million acres eventually being reduced to five Idaho reservations of some 3.2 million acres, and then experienced the further loss of those lands through allotment and other concessions. While the tribes retain jurisdiction over all the lands within their original reservation boundaries, the actual

land owned today by the individual tribal membership or collectively by the Tribes is a little over a million acres of their once expansive homeland.

As we continue downriver, we witness another threat. With the activities of Christian missionaries and establishment of boarding schools came an assault on the cultural practices of the Idaho Indians. In the example of the *Schitsu'umsh*, the missionaries came wearing "Black Robes." The Jesuits made their first contact in 1842. The Mission of the Sacred Heart or "Old Mission" at Cataldo was completed in 1850. In an attempt to further control a nomadic people, the Jesuits implemented a "reduction system," moving and settling *Schitsu'umsh* families at DeSmet, between 1876-77. The trauma administered by the hands of Jesuit missionaries was most pronounced from the late 1890s through the early 1930s. There was the voiced *Schitsu'umsh* sentiment by one elder that "everything we do is considered a sin."<sup>7</sup> Sacred objects were confiscated and publically burned. All forms of spiritual and social dancing were prohibited. Indian names, both personal and geographic, were replaced by Christian names. Animal spirits were replaced by Christian saints and notions of "heaven," "hell," and "salvation." Children were rounded up and removed from their families, and forced to attend the Sister's of Charity Boarding School at DeSmet. Upon arrival and to begin the "civilizing" process, students' hair was cut short, uniforms worn, and native language prohibited from being spoken. Ironically, for the *Schitsu'umsh*, the cutting one's hair was done at the time of the passing of a relative, as a sign of respect to mourn the death. With the new Catholic education came an undermining of traditional Indian values and teachings, as new industrial skills were taught and new ways of viewing the world instilled. The focus was now on building a self-reliant individual, no longer on supporting the extended family, traveling a secular landscape, no longer accompanied by spirit Animal Peoples, moving along a chronological path in which time is measured lineally, no longer able to return with the Animal Peoples to the creation time, where the events of time are perennially reoccurring. And with the new Jesuit administration, virtually all forms of decision making, within the family, community and Tribe, were uprooted from the

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<sup>7</sup> Frey 2001:72.

hereditary headmen and elders of the families, and placed into the hands of the priests and their most devout Indian adherents, the Soldiers of the Sacred Heart.

By the middle of the nineteenth and well into the first half of the twentieth century, the Tribes of Idaho were thus anything but sovereign peoples. Healers and warriors could no longer offer protection against their enemies, and headmen could no longer negotiate with their enemies from a position of strength. Euro-American governmental and missionary institutions controlled virtually all educational, spiritual, economic, social, and political decision making of the Tribes. It was a period of dependency on these outside influences, as well as of spiritual, economic and psychological challenge, despair and trauma for the indigenous peoples of Idaho. Elders recall this period as the “dark age.” Even into the early 1950s there was the federal initiative, known as the Termination Policy, to abrogate federal relations and obligations with the Tribes. While aggressively and successfully fought by the Tribes of Idaho, this policy would have revoked all federal trust responsibilities with the Tribes, eliminating reservations, as well as the health care, educational, economic and administrative infrastructures supporting those communities.

It was during this “dark age” that many Tribal families sought to maintain their tribal heritage and identity by “going underground.” While not always able to challenge the authority of missionaries or government agents, many families continued practicing their traditional activities, such as powwow dancing and singing, stick game, sweat bathing, and ceremonial dancing, doing so in private, out of the gaze of authorities. Such continued practices sowed the seeds for the cultural revival and renewed sovereignty seen today.

As we continue farther downriver toward a confluence, we notice the waters slowing and warming. Under the guidance of John Collier, Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (1933-45), federal assimilation policies were redirected beginning in the 1930s. In these initiatives, prime among them the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, Collier sought self-determination for the Tribes, establishing their own governance and constitutions, educational opportunities, economic development endeavors, religious freedoms, while terminating the Dawes Act. In the instance of the *Schitsu’umsh*, they established their first Tribal Council in 1936 and Tribal Constitution in 1947. Coinciding with federal policy changes, by the 1930s

many missionary activities had shifted from repressing indigenous religious expression to encouraging a re-birth in native arts and cultural expression. In 1975, the federal government enacted the Self-Determination Act, followed in 1995 by the Self-Governance Act. In these measures Tribes could assume control of their education, health care, natural resource management, and law enforcement. Tribes also sought out regional and national alliances through such organizations as the National Congress of American Indians (founded in 1944) and the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (founded in 1953), both dedicated to protecting Indian rights. Idaho Tribes were beginning to re-assert a rejuvenated sovereignty.

Gaming, as expressed in stick game or horse racing completion and betting, has always been an important social activity among the Tribes of Idaho. During the 1980s some of the Idaho Tribes began envisioning economic development and employment opportunities through the initiation of “casino-style entertainment” projects. Seeking to establish a regulatory framework to govern the Tribes’ gaming endeavors while still encouraging economic development, the United States established the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988. The Act specifies that each Tribe must establish a gaming compact with its appropriate state government, and granting the Tribe the authority to pursue gaming only at the level permitted by that state. In Idaho, games commonly played at Las Vegas-style casinos, such as blackjack or roulette (Class III), are not allowed, and hence not permitted by the Idaho Tribes. Nevertheless, the gaming and entertainment operations on the Coeur d’Alene, Fort Hall, Kootenai, and Nez Perce reservations have proven to be very successful. In the instance of the Coeur d’Alene Casino Resort Hotel, in 2008 it has approximately 500 employees and generated over 20 million dollars in profits. Its success had been illustrated in the millions of dollars it has donated to local school districts, on and off the reservation. In conjunction with other Tribal initiatives, unemployment on the Coeur d’Alene Reservation was reduced from 70 percent in the 1970s to single digits today.

While most thought the last Indian war had ended in the nineteenth century, for the *Ktunaxa* of north Idaho, they had different plans. As another illustration of the newly invigorated Tribal sovereignty, in September of 1975 a small band of *Ktunaxa* near Bonners

### *The Confluence of Rivers*

Ferry “declared war on the United States.” Having not been part of the treaty process and thus not federally recognized, the band was without an assigned reservation and basic services for its population. The *Ktunaxa* established tolls, manned by armed guards, on roads running through traditional Tribal lands. With the funds collected support went to housing and health care for tribal elders. In a concession, the federal government granted this *Ktunaxa* band, the *Paq’anqmi*, tribal recognition and a small reservation of 12.5 acres, which was subsequently enlarged to almost 20 acres.

Another group of *Newe* families resisted federal government attempts at relocation to the Fort Hall and Duck Valley Reservation, remaining in scattered locations over south-eastern Idaho and north-eastern Utah. These individual families were federally recognized as the Northwestern Band of Shoshone Nation on April 29, 1987. With elected tribal officials and an enrollment of some 600, the tribe staffs offices in Pocatello, Idaho and Brigham City, Utah, serving tribal members. In 1989, the LDS church gave the Tribe 184 acres of land which today constitutes the Tribe's reservation. Additional privately owned Indian lands are held in trust by the Bureau of Indian Affairs in northern Utah and southern Idaho. The twenty-six acre Bear River Massacre site (near Preston, Idaho) was donated to the Tribe on March 24, 2003.

### **The Confluence**

In the intermingling of the waters of two distinct rivers are the histories of the indigenous peoples of Idaho. In one river are the experiences of Euro-American contact, a chronology of struggle, loss and trauma, but also of opportunity. In the other river Coyote and the Animal Peoples ran in a world perennially recreated, brought forth each time the stories were told, the dances danced, the songs sung, the languages spoken, and the landscapes traveled. One river sought to impose its will upon the Indian, seeking to modify, if not undermine, their sovereignty. While the other river sought to assert the will of the Indian, seeking sovereignty.

With the ebb and flow of the two rivers beginning in the late 1600s, we see an oscillation of one river circumventing the other only to be later dominated by the other. But in the

confluence of these waters during the last thirty years the predominance of one river over the other is clearing emerging. We witness the *Ktunaxa*, *Qlispé*, *Schitsu'umsh*, *Nimípuu*, *Bannaqwate*, *Newe*, and *Numa* applying the teachings of the Animal Peoples to mediate and render the lingering effects of contact history meaningful within the context of their cultural heritage. As they had done with the horse, we see the Tribes consciously embracing elements of Euro-American society, making them their own, to enhance the quality of life of their peoples.

Each time a high school gym is converted into a powwow dance floor, we witness the *Ktunaxa*, *Qlispé*, *Schitsu'umsh*, *Nimípuu*, *Bannaqwate*, *Newe*, and *Numa* re-asserting their Tribal identities and re-claiming their landscapes in the face of Euro-American assimilation. Beginning with the Grand Entry we see an unfolding transformation. The Eagle Feather Staff, “the Indian Flag,” leads the way, with “the Stars and Stripes” a step behind, both held high by veterans of the armed forces, followed by elders and youth, men and women, all in regalia of animal skin, bird feather, and bright clothe. In the drum beat, the honor song sung and the dance step the procession cleanses the ground, as if making its way to the ancestral mountain valley, prairie, or lakeshore. Handshakes and smiles of greetings are frequently exchanged, renewing bonds of family and friendship. As the dances continue into the evening, with the Traditional Men’s, Owl, or Women’s Fancy Shawl dance, the dancers themselves become “Butterfly,” “Wolf,” or “Soaring Eagle.” And the Animal People are viewed once again.

On the Duck Valley Reservation, federal government and church officials opposed the annual “fandangos” and traditional dances that marked the early summer season for the *Newe* and *Numa*. Round dances, stick games, courting rituals and family give-aways had characterized these meeting of the bands for millennia. Rather than simply give up these traditions, however, tribal leaders at Duck Valley, as well as at the Fort Hall Reservation, organized Fourth of July celebrations that allowed all of these events to continue within the “acceptable” context of a national holiday. The flag song sung in Paiute; the rodeo featuring Indian events like bronc roping and Indian relay racing; the night-long stick games and songs; and the mixing of traditional round dances with more pan-Indian powwow dances, all continued to provide tribal members with traditional resources within a national holiday. An interesting development within

these holiday events is the role of the veteran. Indian veterans are highly honored in all the reservation communities, and the dancing, singing and recognition of individual sacrifices to tribal and national goals is a central part of the event.

The trauma felt, the sacrifices made, and the courage shown during the Nez Perce War of 1877 is re-lived in the annual pilgrimages made by the *Nimípuu*. The battle sites of White Bird, Big Hole, and Bear Paw are as significant to the cultural landscape of the *Nimípuu* as is the Heart of the Monster, the birthplace of the people near Kamiah. Each year youth and adults re-trace the steps of their ancestors, not only participating in the victors and defeats, but in experiencing the meaning of despair, sacrifice and freedom, of what it means to be *Nimípuu*. We witness a chronologically-based historical event transformed into a perennially re-engaged *Nimípuu* oral tradition.

In the example of the *Schitsu'umsh* the voices of the Animal People are clearly heard through the operations of their medical center, tribal school, and casino. The very successful Coeur d'Alene Casino and Circling Raven Golf Course are run as a "family," with its "hunters bringing home jobs and hope." A significant portion of the annual profits are routinely distributed to area schools in need, many off the reservation, "without strings attached." Their state-of-the-art Tribal School and Benewah Medical and Wellness Center, funded through Tribal initiatives and resources, maintain an "open door policy." The educational and health care opportunities these facilities provide are offered to all in the community who are in need, Indian and non-Indian alike. As in the distribution of gaming revenues, the example of Rabbit and Jack Rabbit and their ethic of sharing orients how the *Schitsu'umsh* are constructing much of their contemporary landscape.

In these and many other examples that could be alluded to we witness the voices of the army generals, Christian missionaries and treaty commissioners being either silenced all together or rendered benign and culturally redefined by the voices of the Animal Peoples. We witness lineal time and the chronology of cultural assimilation being replaced by perennial time and the cultural rejuvenation of Tribe and landscape. We witness the Tribes successfully addressing issues relating to educational and employment opportunities, health care and social services,



economic development, law enforcement and jurisdictional claims, and Tribal administration. We witness the sovereignty of the *Ktunaxa*, *Qlispé*, *Schitsu'umsh*, *Nimípuu*, *Bannaqwate*, *Newe*, and *Numa* being reasserted.

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