

Introduction

In 1980 the Suquamish Indian Tribe brought suit to settle a long-standing dispute about the boundary of its reservation, which is visible from the city of Seattle, across Puget Sound. I took responsibility for the case two years later when I became the tribe's staff attorney. Since the claim derived from a 125-year-old treaty, it presented historical questions as well as legal ones. By arousing in me a desire to address some of the historical questions more fully than court proceedings allowed, the litigation tempted me into writing this book and ultimately into a new vocation.¹

Our opponents in the suit—the State of Washington and several hundred holders of state deeds—responded in part by challenging our account of the tribe's history. The modern Suquamish Tribe, they argued, is not the entity that concluded the treaty but a recent creation of the federal government; the original Suquamish Tribe ceased to exist a few decades after Chief Seattle signed the treaty on its behalf. To prove this, they planned to call as witnesses a historian and an anthropologist.

If the judge had allowed the witnesses to testify as proposed, they would have stressed that most Suquamish Indians did not honor their promise to move onto the reservation but stayed in their scattered villages or hung around American towns. Thirty years after the treaty, when the government assigned tracts of reservation land to individuals, there were only fifty-one takers; and they were descendants not only of Suquamish but also of Snohomish, Skagit, Canadian, and other Indians, of white and black Americans, and of Chileans. Our adversaries planned to show further that no one formed a Suquamish tribal government until federal funding made it worthwhile in the 1960s. By that time tribe members not only lived among non-Indians, who far outnumbered them on the reservation, but also looked, spoke, and earned their livings like non-Indians.

How could such people claim historical continuity with the Indians who signed the treaty?

Answering this question to the satisfaction of a judge and jury would probably have entailed getting them to set aside stereotypes for more nuanced images of Indians. Afraid that such reeducation was not possible in a brief federal trial, we asked the judge to decide the issue as a matter of law, without testimony. He obliged, declaring himself bound by another court's ruling that the Suquamish Tribe in the lawsuit was the legal and political successor to the treaty party of the same name.²

I knew that the Suquamish boundary litigation was not the first test of a Washington Indian tribe's historical authenticity; nor would it be the last. A year before my clients filed suit, a different judge refused to recognize five groups as the modern incarnations of aboriginal tribes from the Puget Sound region. All five subsequently petitioned the Bureau of Indian Affairs for such recognition.³ Their quest was an outgrowth of the same history that prompted our opponents to dispute the present Suquamish Tribe's pedigree. Around Puget Sound for almost two centuries, native people and their progeny have had extensive and intimate relations with immigrants and their offspring, who now constitute the vast majority of the population. As a result, relatively little remains of the characteristics that distinguished indigenous people from Europeans when they first met. Descendants of Indians are inextricably tangled in the cultural, economic, and racial threads of a social fabric designed by non-Indians.

When those descendants nonetheless claim a distinct, enduring Indian identity, they raise intriguing historical questions. If they group and identify themselves in ways that neither their native ancestors nor their non-Indian neighbors would recognize as indigenous, why do they think of themselves as members of historic Indian tribes? By changing their habits and the nature of the groups they affiliate with, have they lost their Indian identity or reinforced it? Have they claimed and maintained an Indian identity in spite of extensive relations with non-Indians or because of those relations? Are non-Indians responsible for destroying Indian communities or for creating and perpetuating them?

As much as I wanted to deflect these questions in litigation, I wanted to address them in another forum. I yearned to tell the story the judge had suppressed. It was my good fortune to begin indulging my desire, as a graduate student of history, at a propitious time. Scholars in several disciplines, I discovered, were confirming that racial and ethnic categories are mutable social constructions and therefore proper subjects of historical inquiry. This discovery bolstered the courage of my growing conviction: a

history of Indians like the Suquamish could and should be a chronicle of change over time in Indianness itself.

The view that “primordial” sentiments determine ethnic identity has lost favor among anthropologists and sociologists. Drawing on historical data, they have shown that ethnic groups are born, change, and dissipate as the contexts of human relations change. Among other things, their studies confirm that changes in culture and membership do not necessarily destroy ethnic categories themselves. Concluding that we should conceive of ethnic and racial distinctions as a process rather than an essence, such scholars have concentrated on elucidating the dynamics of group differentiation (Fredrik Barth calls it “boundary maintenance”).⁴

American historians have awakened recently to the possibility and potential rewards of taking racial and ethnic categories as their subjects. More often now, they are asking how such classifications have developed and endured. Aware that a sense of group affiliation depends on relations and comparisons with outsiders, historians are especially interested in encounters between formerly separate populations. And those who study the American West, where such encounters have been numerous, are staking a claim to a significant share of this new intellectual territory.⁵

On the other hand, scholars have barely begun to explore the implications of these insights for the history of North American Indians.⁶ Too often Indians’ history is written as if protagonists, authors, and readers have no reason to wonder who is Indian (or Sioux, Cheyenne, or Cherokee). Since questions about the origins, continuity, distinctiveness, and membership of Indian groups have not been unique to western Washington, this pattern is surprising and disappointing. Arguably more than any other group, Indians depend on representations of history for their identification as Indians; and people who profess to be Indians have had to defend their claims with a frequency and rigor seldom demanded of people in other ethnic or racial classes.⁷ Yet scholars of Native America have rarely acknowledged that the definitions of Indian and Indian tribe have histories themselves.

Pioneering studies by James Merrell, J. Leitch Wright, and Richard White point the way that few others have taken. They show that indigenous nations or tribes—shredded by disease and thrown into a bubbling stew of European traders and colonists, African slaves, and displaced aborigines—often disintegrated and fused and dissolved again. But Merrell, Wright, and White recount events that took place east of the Mississippi River before whites subordinated Indians across the continent. Few histories ask how events have affected the salience, content, and expression of

Indian identity elsewhere and more recently, particularly in the twentieth century.⁸

This book does ask that question. Relying on data from the Pacific Northwest, it answers that the marks and meanings of Indian identity have evolved through decades of negotiation between supposed races. Indians and non-Indians share responsibility for creating and repeatedly reformulating a special social category. In 1986 Richard White called for historical studies of the daily relations and symbolic activities that have produced and preserved the many racial and ethnic groups in the West.⁹ This is such a study. By focusing on a region where daily relations between Indians and non-Indians have been especially abundant, it allows us to see people continually defining and redefining themselves in contradistinction to each other.

A history of Indians in the Puget Sound region is a history of racial and tribal categories because it is a litany of attempts to draw boundaries, social as well as geographic, around Indians. Occasionally the lines of demarcation have been literal. English explorer George Vancouver described how his men separated themselves from natives who approached them on a beach near Puget Sound in 1792: "On a line being drawn with a stick on the sand between the two parties, they immediately sat down, and no one attempted to pass it, without previously making signs, requesting permission for so doing." A fortnight later, Vancouver's lieutenant sorted out the people at another rest stop by also drawing a line "to divide the two Parties, the Intent of which the Indians perfectly understood."¹⁰

Locating and marking boundaries between Indians and others has rarely since been so easy, but it has often been that explicit. Even when no one recorded the process as candidly as Vancouver did, we can find evidence of people's sense that they belonged in distinct groups. As anthropologists point out, people develop and express ethnic affiliations not only by names, language, folklore, dress, manners, and social and economic roles but also by actions that are the stuff of historical narratives. For example, Barbara Myerhoff observed Jews at a California senior center who convinced themselves and others that they had a common ethnic heritage, despite their diverse nationalities, by jointly staging historical skits and a political protest.¹¹ Puget Sound's aboriginal groups defined themselves in analogous conspicuous acts and rituals that dramatized their conceptions of themselves, their histories, and their relations with others.

Fortunately for historians, ethnicity has a strategic function that fosters public dialogues. Distinctions between Indians and non-Indians or between different kinds of Indians have been integral to some people's

strategies for survival, economic gain, or self-respect; and groups do not formulate strategy without debate.¹² The emblems of Indian identity have never enjoyed unanimous endorsement. When debating strategy or emblems for Indians in western Washington, many people have put their conceptions of Indianness on record.

On the other hand, people do not all or in every instance deliberately act as agents of an ethnic group. Rather than consciously choosing to be Indian or white, Suquamish or Snohomish, many individuals have simply responded to new and often difficult personal situations. Yet their myriad choices have added up to significant changes in the composition and cultures of their societies. It is the historian's task to suggest how such unself-conscious actions, too, have helped to define or redefine the boundaries and content of categories such as "Indian" or "Suquamish."¹³

To detect and explain evolving notions of Indianness in western Washington, I have searched the historical record for explicit dialogues about racial, cultural, and legal classifications, and I found many. But I have also scrutinized situations and actions that were likely to generate or symbolize a sense of difference. I have perused records of meetings at trading posts, workplaces, treaty conferences, battlefields, trials, and festivals for indications that the participants saw or wanted a distinction between peoples. At such meetings—whether ceremonial or informal, cordial or antagonistic—the affiliations and distinguishing characteristics of presumed Indians were often explicitly or implicitly at issue, and emblems of identity were invariably on display.

Of course, members of an ethnic group do not direct their manifestos of difference or displays of affinity solely at people outside the group. Ethnicity wears two masks, one donned for meetings with outsiders and another presented to insiders. To explain why a Comanche Indian community has persisted despite drastic disruption of the original basis for members' association, ethnohistorian Morris Foster focuses not on how Comanches have defined themselves in relation to outsiders but on their internal mechanisms for generating and preserving a common identity.¹⁴ When explaining the demarcation and evolution of Indian communities around Puget Sound, I have likewise noted internal definition processes. But my priority is to document Indians' relations with non-Indians, which have long been the inescapable context for all relations between Indians.

The most important relations have been economic and political. Ethnic divisions acquire salience especially from disparities in economic and political power. State power to set ethnic policies or allocate economic resources often determines whether particular groups emerge or persist. In

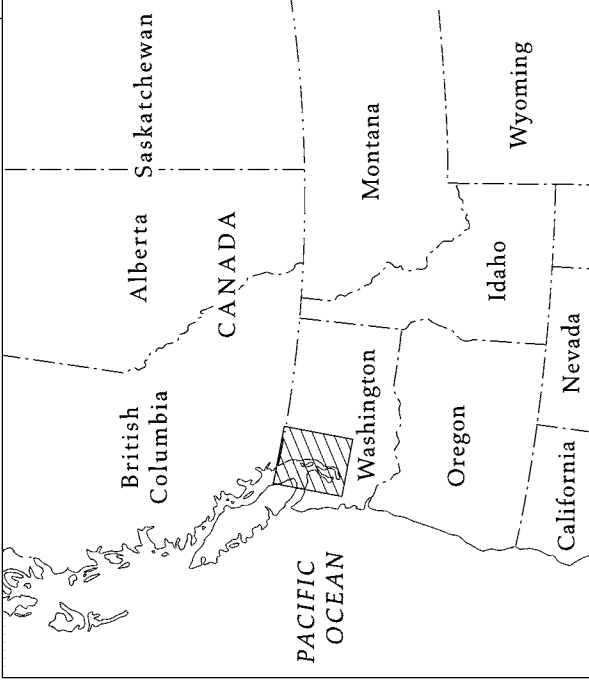
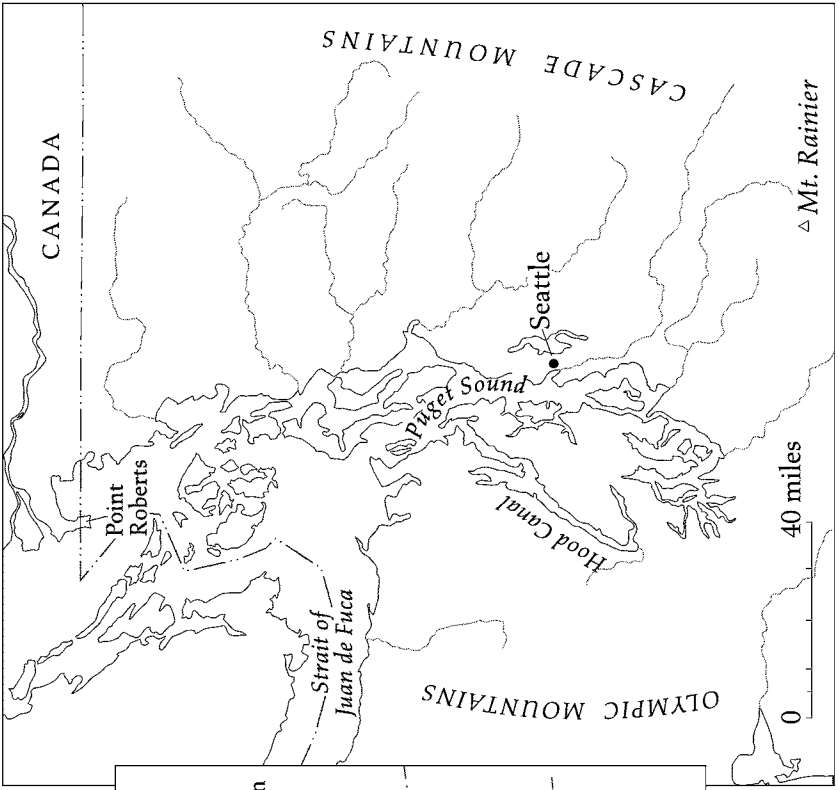
western Washington, power relations have been a critical determinant both of reasons and of ways to be identified as Indian. An essential factor in the power calculation has been the relative numbers of people regarded as Indians and non-Indians. Consequently, a distinctive set of demographic, political, and economic conditions frames each of this book's eight chapters. In each successive context, people pondered anew, debated, and revised Indians' relationships to non-Indians and to each other.

This does not mean that everyone thought about those relationships the same way. Culture—the beliefs and associations that seemed right and natural to people—shaped their interpretations of economic and political relations. Western Washington's natives, I argue, interpreted their circumstances in light of beliefs about power that differed from their colonizers' (and from modern scholars') beliefs about the power invested in a coercive state.¹⁵ I therefore assess the shifting balance of power not only as non-Indians have but also as Indians likely have. The fact that these assessments did not always coincide has been as important to Indians' self-conceptions as demographics and policy.

In order to answer my original questions, I could not limit my inquiry to the metamorphosis of the Suquamish Tribe. I have had to analyze the course of human relations in an entire region—an area roughly encompassed by a line running from the Strait of Juan de Fuca at its midpoint along the mountains west of Hood Canal to the southern reaches of Puget Sound, then southeastward to the Cascade Mountains at Mount Rainier, then northward to the Canadian border, westward to Point Roberts, and southwestward to the starting point. Although the Puget Sound proper is only a portion of the sheltered salt water inside that line, I borrow its name, as geologists do, to designate a larger basin carved by the Vashon Glacier a dozen or two millennia ago.¹⁶ The line circumscribes localities united by climate, geology, and political and economic history. But these commonalities are secondary reasons to adopt a regional focus. The primary reason is a habit of the aboriginal peoples—their habit of creating and maintaining links between communities.

I do not mean that the original inhabitants of the Puget Sound basin were one people. On the contrary, they spoke several mutually unintelligible languages, and many were strangers and even enemies to each other. What they shared was a system of communicating and conducting relations with outsiders—a system that drew them all into a regionwide social network.

Early in the nineteenth century, an individual native typically identified his or her group affiliation with a word formed from the name



of a village and a suffix or prefix meaning "people of." Each of the hundreds of villages near Puget Sound was cohesive and autonomous, even though it was a winter residence only. In some places and periods, villagers also identified with a larger population that shared nearby territory, but the defining characteristics and significance of these larger "tribes" are the subject of vigorous debate among ethnologists. Underlying the controversy is the fact that individual natives had multiple associations, multiple loyalties, and multiple ways to identify themselves to others.¹⁷

The principal reason for individuals' ambiguous, multifaceted identity was a broad web of family ties. Most people, especially the well-to-do, aspired for economic and social reasons to marry outside their villages, even outside their language groups. Local communities therefore incorporated outsiders and dispersed some members to other communities, with the consequence that most settlements had culturally and linguistically diverse populations. Many people lived in more than one village during their lifetimes, and most people had close relatives residing in other places.

The courtesies of scattered kin enabled people to visit, move into, and use resources in communities where they otherwise would have been unwelcome strangers. On the invitation of relatives, the well-to-do also took part in other villages' ceremonial life, including ceremonies validating their extended families' achievements. Thus, through marriage and a well-ordered system of intervillage relations, the elite of aboriginal societies forged social bonds that transcended local loyalties. Since most familial ties were between communities in contiguous territories, relations with members of distant groups were rare. Yet a complete diagram of kinship links would show an unbroken tangle of lines extending from the southernmost reaches of Puget Sound to and beyond the present international boundary in the north. Almost any attempt to subdivide the linked peoples would fail to account for important social ties cutting across those subdivisions.

As people circulated, so did ideas, technology, and rituals. The resulting standardization justifies ethnographers' classification of the region as a single culture area. But one author who concurs in this classification also asserts that no population of American Indians included a more diverse assortment of peoples. Her explanation of this paradoxical statement has important implications for a history of the Indians in question. Exchanges between communities not only inspired imitation but also introduced variations and encouraged innovations. In addition, contacts between residents of different villages highlighted group differences and stimulated local pride, because they were occasions for self-representation and com-

parison. At ceremonial gatherings, for example, people from each group in turn performed their own songs and dances and displayed the fruits of their special relations with supernatural beings.¹⁸

As the following narrative shows, descendants of indigenous people have also cherished ties to outsiders. Their consequent mobility and numerous social options have worked at cross-purposes with U.S. government efforts to sort them into a manageable number of tribes, assign them to a few reservations, and administer their affairs on a tribe-by-tribe basis. If I had taken tribal subdivisions as givens when researching this history, I would have faced analogous frustrations.

A word about words is necessary, since this is in essence a history of the meanings of certain words. From the moment I sat down to write, I have been painfully aware of the limitations and hazards of the lexical tools at my disposal. George Vancouver had a ready-made label for everyone on the other side of the line his men drew. Yet "Indian" was a term unknown to the people he labeled. It does not even denote a category for which they had a word. Although they or their children eventually used the term to identify themselves, its meaning has not since been static or indisputable.¹⁹ That is the point of this book. And writing a story with such a point has sometimes seemed like drawing in beach sand. No sooner have I inscribed a term that delineates my subject than the tides of history have undermined the foundation and blurred the definition of that term. Because of the book's subject and regional focus, I need general ethnic or racial designations for people. But to use words such as "Indian," "tribe," or even "Suquamish" presupposes the existence of the very groups whose creation, transformation, dissolution, or redefinition I must document. Such labels have connotations of naturalness and permanence, and those are precisely the assumptions I want readers to set aside. Yet how can I unseat antiquated ideas about races and tribes without using antiquated language?²⁰

A few scholars, seeking to express a pluralist conception of history, have experimented with new terms. In a history of the Marquesas, Greg Denning declares independence from the European colonizers who claimed the power to name the inhabitants of the South Pacific; he substitutes the indigenous people's terms for natives and outsiders.²¹ If data for the Northwest permitted, I might emulate him. There is no evidence, however, that indigenous peoples around Puget Sound had a single name for themselves until they or their offspring accepted the name "Indian."

The names that natives pinned on immigrants illustrate the dilemma as well, confirming that any ethnic or racial label can obscure the diversity

of the people and the elasticity of the category it designates. By the 1840s indigenous people throughout the Northwest had grouped most colonists into two broad categories—"King George men" and "Bostons"—which historians have translated as "Englishmen" and "Americans," respectively. Among the former, however, were people from Hawaii, Iroquois country, and French Canada. The latter included emigrants from many European countries and eventually from Asia and Latin America.

It is easy to see from this that the terms "King George men," "Bostons," and "whites" are inadequate labels for heterogeneous, changing populations.²² It takes more effort to keep in mind that terms such as "Indians" or even "Suquamish Indians" likewise refer to heterogeneous collections of people, some of whom have moved into or out of these groups at different times. To remind readers of the need for such effort, I sometimes write "so-called Indians," "people who identified themselves as Indians," or another qualifying phrase. But doing so repeatedly would encumber my prose without relieving me of the need to discuss inchoate, contested, evolving groups in a language that implies certainty and continuity.

Virtually every reference I make to a population's or a person's race or ethnicity has required that I choose from a limited assortment of unsatisfactory terms. For the earliest period of this history, "natives" and "indigenous peoples" are useful terms. After that, ethnic or racial labels are unavoidable. As I apply a label, I try to follow a simple principle: either the people labeled or the labelers I refer to were using the label by then, at least in interracial or intercultural relations. This rule explains why I repeat some epithets, such as "half-breed," that offend modern sensibilities. It also explains my choice of "Indian" over "Native Americans" or other terms fashionable since the 1970s. Most people who base their ethnic identification on descent from western Washington's original inhabitants now call themselves Indians. While bearing in mind the deceptive nature of any collective name, you should therefore construe each mention of Indians as carrying the implicit qualification "people they called Indians" or "people who thought of themselves as Indians." No doubt you will spot a poor choice of terms here or there. But at least you will be approaching this history with the consciousness that it hopes to promote.

This is the first extensive history of Indians in western Washington. The interpretation is necessarily preliminary and general. Although the activities that influence and reflect ethnic affiliations are innumerable, I selected a few subjects for investigation or emphasis. Arguably, I have neglected subjects of equal importance. Given the opportunity to expand this

analysis, I would examine four aspects of Indian experience that get short shrift here: family relations and gender roles,²³ aboriginal languages,²⁴ schooling, and relations with ethnographers.²⁵

First and foremost, this is a story of human relations and the effect of those relations on people's self-concepts and self-presentations. From government and commercial records, ethnographies, interviews, periodicals, photographs, diaries, and memoirs, I have spun a tale that begins in the 1820s with the appearance of land-based Hudson's Bay Company traders on the fringe of Puget Sound. The narrative ends in the 1970s with two federal court rulings that resolved some long-standing questions about Indian identity and its perquisites. At either extreme of this period, people known as Indians were likely to identify themselves to outsiders as members of groups that had particular resources, particular ancestors and histories, unique ways of doing things, and special partnerships with beings who had power to ensure their health and prosperity. But in 150 years the resources, histories, customs, and sustaining partnerships that demarcated Indian groups changed as much as the populations they encompassed. The story of those changes has several interwoven themes.

Many of the outsiders who came after Vancouver tried, as he did, to ensure orderly relations with Indians by drawing lines of demarcation. Yet time and again people ignored, moved, or effaced the lines as they approached each other in the hope of benefiting from a variety of relations. While their relations induced the formerly separate peoples to develop some common customs, relations also drew attention to the differences that remained and thus engendered new urges to separate the peoples, to define Indians, and to clarify Indians' status in regional society.

In the interest of orderly relations, people of different cultures often made sincere efforts to discern each other's thoughts. But in order to interpret each other, they could draw only on the concepts and values they regarded as common sense. Although there were congruities in the peoples' concepts and values, there were also important differences; and misunderstandings were predictable. But even misunderstandings fostered mutual activities.

Native villagers of the early nineteenth century believed that contact with beings from a different realm, while dangerous, could be a source of individual power and thus a means to establish an estimable persona. It appears that many of them saw relations with King George men and Bostons as a way to obtain or demonstrate personal power. Instead of treating the intruders as a threat to their existence as peoples, they acted as if they expected relations to validate that existence. Many non-Indians

likewise expected to realize power and peoplehood through relations with Indians, but most aimed to do so by breaking rather than tapping Indians' power.

Non-Indian Americans finally acquired hegemony in the region at the end of the nineteenth century. They then had the means to erect important racial boundary markers and to dictate the terms of most relations across those boundaries. Meanwhile, the people who found themselves on the Indian side of the line were growing more diverse. As they tried to understand what the Bostons meant by "Indian," they also tried varied ways of giving that term a meaning more to their liking. Occasionally they were able to win general acceptance of their definitions by seizing and skillfully wielding the very tools—laws and courts, for example—with which America's ruling elite tried to push them into a more restrictive mold.

In 1973 a representative of the Lummi Tribe told a federal judge, "The U.S. has tried to build a glove to fit us into, and we haven't been able to fit because there is a cultural value difference."²⁶ I like the image of wriggling fingers the Lummi man evoked; for the people whom the United States has tried to stuff into stereotypical Indian garb are many, and they have moved independently of each other. Indeed, they have moved in divergent directions. Moreover, their different digits often touched not an American fist but the fingers of a segmented non-Indian population. When indicating the paths that Indians should take, non-Indian fingers have pointed in different directions. It is no wonder that there have been so many ways to be Indian.

This story of regional ethnic relations is a significant chapter of the American saga. It shows not only that Americans of all races have participated in the creation and preservation of a racial group but also that national and local forces have interacted dialectically to define the group. It reveals the influence of federal law and policy on the ways that descendants of Washington's indigenous people have presented themselves. At the same time, it should dispel any notion that law and policy merely stamped on those people the marks of a nationally standardized Indian identity. Indeed, aboriginal habits and peculiar regional circumstances repeatedly frustrated federal officials' efforts to package Puget Sound Indians in boxes designed with other Indians in mind. But the symbols of identity that Indians of the Puget Sound area preferred to adopt have in turn inspired Indians elsewhere in the United States. No doubt the regional legacy described here is one of many that history has bequeathed to modern American Indians.

1 Fur Traders and Natives

Empowering Encounters

In the 1940s an elderly man explained his identity to ethnographer William Elmendorf by telling a 150-year-old war story. He was a Twana Indian, Frank Allen said, but his mother was not. She was a Klallam Indian who in turn had Skagit Indian ancestry. Allen recounted for Elmendorf how he and his brother Henry came by Skagit ancestors.

The Dungeness Klallam get ready to go to Skagit. . . . They're going to Skagit now for war. Going for women and slaves now. They go and get to Skagit . . . at night, and they land away from the village and haul their canoes into the woods and hide.

Next morning they see two little girls playing on the beach. The Klallam catch them and ask them, "Who are your people?" One of the girls says, "My grandfather's name is k^w 'áŋqédáb." That is the chief of the Skagit people. . . . And one man, sx^wilácəm, says, "I'm going to take this girl home, this grandchild of k^w 'áŋqédáb and keep her for my wife. . . ."

And now after k^w 'áŋqédáb hears that the Klallam got his grandchild . . . , he gets ready now for the Klallam, he gets ten slaves ready, preparing for the Klallam when they come to buy his daughter. And . . . the Klallam are preparing, too. Gathering slaves and goods, getting ready to go and pay for that girl. My grandfather told me they took more than twenty slaves to buy ma'náyŋ.

Now they are landing, they sing as they show the mask: " . . . (I'm the great Klallam)." They are showing off now, showing off the mask, showing they are high-priced people now. . . . Now k^w 'áŋqédáb's interpreter hollers to all the Klallam to come to the chief's house and eat. So they all come. Now cooking, eating, good time. . . . And k^w 'áŋqédáb sings now, he is happy now, with those twenty slaves and that canoe. . . . Now he takes ma'náyŋ over to where sx^wilácəm is sitting and seats her beside him. That is marriage now.

And after a while the Skagit bring those ten slaves k^w 'áŋqédəb had raised from his people. That is all he had to give, those ten slaves; the Klallam beat him there, in giving. Now sx^wilácəm divides the ten slaves to his people, gives one to this man, one to that, gives them to his tribe. . . .

That is where we are from. . . . So we are related to the Skagit people from that time.¹

According to Elmendorf's calculations, the Allens' forebears converted war into marriage around the turn of the eighteenth century. By then Europeans and their American descendants had probably sailed the waters between Dungeness and Skagit, although none yet resided in the area. From the Europeans or Americans, directly or indirectly, Klallams and Skagits had acquired desirable new objects but also unwelcome new microbes. A smallpox epidemic had killed hundreds of people, gutting local social structures. Nevertheless, at the time of sx^wilácəm's wedding, the re-grouped survivors were still living in an environment and a fashion that had sustained many generations of their ancestors. It was the new couple's descendants who would see the aboriginal world transformed—capsized, Henry Allen said—when many pale foreigners came to stay in the Puget Sound region.²

The first pale foreigners who stayed—British employees of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC)—did not make dangerous waves; but sharing local waters with them was tricky because they were strikingly different from other people the Klallams and Skagits knew. To most Klallams, even the Skagits were strange: their language was unintelligible, and they had distinctive songs and dances, names, and food specialties. Still, Klallams and Skagits observed the same protocol of relations between communities. Neither would be surprised at a proposal to link warring peoples by marriage. Both knew how to conduct themselves at a wedding and would properly reciprocate a gift of slaves. In contrast, Klallams and Skagits could only guess what the Britons expected and would do when approached.

People with gumption like sx^wilácəm's approached the newcomers nonetheless, pursuing the same ends that inspired them to seek out indigenous strangers—hoping to prove their mettle, acquire wealth, or forge new kinship links. Many of the daring people succeeded in these quests. In order to do so, however, they had to discern and indulge some of the newcomers' expectations; and in the process, they gradually modified the pattern and protocol of their relations with outsiders.

From the 1820s to the 1860s, Hudson's Bay conducted modest, land-based commercial trade in the Puget Sound basin. Traders and natives soon

developed ways of dealing with each other that usually worked to all parties' perceived advantage. The process of arriving at a common protocol did not require natives to discard the assumptions guiding their conduct. They could reasonably infer that they had incorporated the newcomers into the existing regional network of intercommunity relations. For this reason, it is unlikely that trade with Hudson's Bay Company substantially changed the ways indigenous people conceived of themselves in relation to others, although it probably made many of them more conscious of their own distinguishing characteristics.

Foreigners joined the region's resident population in 1827. That summer eighteen HBC men under Archibald McDonald's command left Fort Vancouver, on the Columbia River, with instructions to erect a post near the mouth of the Fraser River, approximately 250 miles to the north. From the new establishment, to be named Fort Langley, they would promptly begin commerce with inhabitants of the surrounding region, offering British merchandise for furs.

McDonald's itinerary included several days canoeing the deep, sheltered, saltwater inlet he knew as Puget Sound. At a few of the Sound's populated coves and estuaries, his party stopped. Residents of villages that McDonald identified as "Soquams," "Sinahomis," and "Scaadget" greeted the travelers civilly and agreed to exchange deer and salmon for beads, tobacco, mirrors, and knives.³

The people McDonald called on already knew something about their visitors. Many had seen a larger contingent of HBC men who made the round trip between the Columbia and Fraser Rivers in 1824. Indeed, McDonald probably chose to stop at villages that had hosted the earlier expedition. Natives around the north Sound had also welcomed trading ships for years, and a few northern villagers had made the long journey to the foreigners' forts on the Columbia. By 1827 native people had sorted the foreigners into two categories—King George men and Bostons—in the apparent belief that those names indicated where the crews of British and American ships were from. Even natives who had not seen the strangers or their vessels were aware of their presence in the region, for exotic objects obtained from them were circulating among the well-to-do in all villages.⁴

To indigenous people, the King George men and Bostons were in many respects repulsive. Some were unnaturally pale; some had hairy faces; none had heads flattened by cradleboards, as befitted freeborn persons. They spoke languages as incomprehensible as birds' chirping. Nonetheless, the villagers respected the newcomers' manifest ability to acquire extraordinary riches and approved their interest in trading.⁵