

DUWAMISH RELIGION
(DUWABSH)

BY

IVY GUSS & BERTHA DAN

"The Religion of the Duwamish was similiar to all the Puget Sound Indian peoples' beliefs. The largest spiritual group was Ska-lah-lee-tuut which was practiced during the winter season. Ska-lah-lee-tuut represented the Red Face Society. Skee-ckee-dee-i was also a society that practiced the winter ceremonies, they were known as the Black Face Society. Kwah-nee-sah-nalthd was the Society of Red and Black. The Duwamish believed that everything had a spirit or a soul; rocks, trees, the ground, ect.. The Creator or Great Spirit was known as Auh-kwee-cha-chah-bud (Our Great Spirit). Medicine people, healers (Kwah-dub) could be men or women usually were trained by other Medicine people, usually Elders, Grandmothers and Grandfathers. Some people who didn't come from a family that had Medicine people usually were struck by the Spirit in a dream, vision or through fasting and praying and was ordered by the Elders that they must follow the Medicine Way or something drastic would happen like death or sickness. Music was very important part of the Duwamish Religion, there were songs for every spirit, ceremony, everything that you can think of concerning the traditional way of life. Winter Season was the most sacred season because it was believed that all the power spirits ere very strong at this time. Winter was a time to fast and pray all the time and to wake up early in the morning before 4'o' clock or long ago they would wake up before the sunrise to meet the energy of the sun to draw strength from the sun that the strength would guide and protect them (he or she) when they were seeking a spirit power or spirit song and dance. Whatever power the person would recieve, which there were many kinds of powers, the person would come back to the village from his/her vision quest and the people in the village would help that person sing their song and the person would display his/her spiritual dance and usually their face was painted according to what s/he saw in his/her vision. The person would usually

Duwamish Religion Continued

practice their dance every day or night then when winter was almost at the end of its season the family would have a potlatch or give away ceremony for the one who recieved his /her power. After the ceremony was over the person was kept isolated from the village for four days and nights because he/she was to start a new life all over again and all the old material possessions s/he owned had to be given away at another potlatch when the person returned to the village after four days and nights. During the four days and nights the person or new intiate had to learn a new give away song for the family so when they returned to the village they would bring out the new give away song representing that the they started their life all over again. The spiritual ceremony did not end here the new initiate would continue to pray and bathe in the streams or water early in the morning and again at night for one year and seek for new songs from the spirit that the person recieved."

April 25, 1985

Recorded and Translated by John Moses

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cc: file

Lynn Larson-Staff Anthropologist & Archeologist-U.W.,O.P.A.

Duwamish Class System
(High Class People)

By

Ray Paul

"The High Class (Siab) people were the rich and leaders, directors and ambassadors. There were that is why they had a counsel. There were so many band of Duwamish to decide on the future and destiny of the tribe, unfortunately the majority of the people didn't listen on the leaders or High Class peoples' decisions. The High Class people were also known as very good, respectable, and always helpful to others in need. Elders would always tell their grandchildren to brag about themselves or say that they were High Class and better than anybody because it would be a sign of shame and it would put them in a lower position than the slaves. Elders would say that if you are High Class your example of how you live your life would show the people you must come from good people that belong to the High Class Society."

April 15, 1985

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cc: file

Lynn Larson-Staff Anthropologist & Archeologist-U.W.

Spring Fish
(Kwā - āhli)

By

Ivy Guss

"There was a special kind of fish the people of Duwamish ate which was known as Kwā - āhli. All the people that live in the Renton and Kent areas ate this type of fish. It had a reddish brown color and was small, but was delicious. Many people would say this fish was very sacred because it was the children of our Creator."

(Preparing the Spring Fish)

"Long ago the people always prayed to the Creator before eating the Spring Fish. Then it would be cooked either boiled or wrapped in leaves and cooked in the sand with hot rocks, it would be baked and the leaves would give the fish a seasoned taste."

"Spring Fish - Kwā - āhli was to signify that it was the first fish of spring, because when the world was created this was the first fish created in the spring time so the people who lived nearest to the fish would eat this spring fish before eating any other fish, if it was during the springtime."

April 16, 1985

Translated & Recorded by John Moses

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Lynn Larson-Staff Anthropologist & Archeologist-U.W.

Life of the Duwamish Elders

By

George Harrison

"Our elders long ago were very special to us, respected, and highly taken care of or I should say they took very good care of us spiritually and watched every move we made. When I was little I loved hearing the Old people talk Indian I can understand Duwamish but only can speak a little of the language myself. Before the Old people would tell us a story they'd instruct us how we should carry ourselves; for example, my Auntie Annie would say, "'Oh, tud-di-tud-di,'" that means to take care, take care, always reminding us how our life should be. Yes!, the elders really influenced our life. If it weren't for the Old ones, especially my Auntie Annie I wouldn't be here today. Auntie Annie was my oldest aunt and she was 89 years old when she died, that was in the year 1916 on July 6th. Oh, how sad, seems like it was yesterday."

Q. "Was your Auntie Annie Duwamish?"

A. "Yes, half of her was, the other half was Sko-bah-bish, that's Muckleshoot near Auburn. The Old ladies them days seem like they carried a stick or cane with them all the time. So, we were scared we would get hit by their cane or stick. No wonder we learned our Indian Ways fast, we just had to look at that stick."

Q. "Do you think the elders had more power in leadership than the Chiefs or leaders?"

A. "Yes, Oh, yes!, matter a fact the Chiefs would ask advise from the elders in almost every subject."

Q. "So, it was very important that everyone conducted themselves in a respectful way around the elders?"

A. "Yes, if you did something bad they wouldn't spank or hit you hard, but they would call all the village people to your hose and they'd make you stand in front of the whole village and they would announce to the people what you did wrong. You'd feel really embarrassed and ashamed; like callin' your whole neighborhood to your house so you would never do that bad thing again ever. You don't want to be shamed off, Oh-cha-dah."

May 18, 1985

Translated and Recorded by John Moses

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cc: file and Lynn Larson-Staff Anthropologist & Archeologist-U.W., O.P.A.

DUWAMISH CEDAR CEREMONY

BY

LIZZIE SAMPSON

"Cedar was the most important to the Duwamish and other tribes of the Puget Sound. The Cedar Ceremony was held in the winter, some families would pick cedar in early spring or summer so by the time winter came it would be very dry. Cedar was used for everything, the Duwamish built their homes out of cedar, made their clothes out of shredded cedar bark. Some utensils were made out of cedar; spoons, ladels, bowls, knives, and mats to sit on, also wall coverings. Different types of cedar were used for medicine and was also burned as incense. Cedar was also offered to the ocean, rivers, and mountains representing that the people were giving thanks to the Creator. Cedar was also given away as gifts to relatives and friends to establish long friendship and long life."

April 8, 1985

Translated & Recorded by John Moses

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Lynn Larson-Staff Anthropologist & Archeologist-U.W.

Interview

with

Nellie Charles

Q. "Do you know of a naming ceremony that belonged to the Duwamish?"

A. "Yes, of course I do. Thats how I got my Indian name from the Duwamish River."

Q. "What is your Indian name?"

A. "My Indian name is Du ahsh-shud-i and the meaning has to do with the Duwamish River.

Now, I am gonna tell you a story since you asked me about my name. Long ago, "oh, hoh," there was this girl she run away from her mom and dad. She got to the North end of the Duwamish River and she got scared because she heard a noise in the bushes. The bushes begin to move and she got more scared and she cried. After she cried these two heads popped out of the bush and she really screamed. Oh, shah!, it was just her mom and dad. They were waiting for her at this bush all the time and thats what my Indian name means; this whole story tells the meaning of my name."

Q. "Where were you born?"

A. "From my mother. Oh, ha, ah!, just jokin'. I was in, lets see I was born in Lopez Island because my dad was fishin' with a friend and we were camped. So, I was born in a camp on Lopez Island.

Q. "Do you know how your parents made their living?"

A. "Yes, my mother sold baskets and Indian paintings, sometimes she did laundry for these white people. My dad was a fisherman and a logger.

Q. "Did they both go to school?"

A. "They stayed away from White man's school because my Grandpa said you might learn too many bad habits from the White (Pāhs-studs) people.

Q. "What do you know about your Duwamish grandparents?"

A. "Oh, quite a bit because I use to stay with my grandparents every summer and sometimes in spring time, so I was raised by them part time."

Nellie Charles Continued

Q. "Do you know any Indian words?"

A. "Yes, I do. That's all we spoke when we were little, until they forced us to go to a boarding school in Tulalip. In the Tulalip boarding school we were only allowed to speak English. I spent three years there and finally I got sick so, they sent me home to die but I am still here today."

May 21, 1985

Translated and Recorded by John Moses

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cc: file

Lynn Larson-Staff Anthropologist & Archeologist-U.W., O.P.A.

Stories of the Duwabsh

by

Lizzie Sampson

Story About Life

"All life is sacred. When we talk our words become 'Living'. When we get mad, angry, or jealous our words become death. My mom use to tell me never get mad at any one - real mad because that person might die and you may never see him/her again. You will feel very bad that you got mad. Remember words are power of life and death. Oh-ah-kwee-cah-cah-bud - Oh, Our Great Spirit."

Story About Happiness

"We learn alot from our elders. We learn how to laugh when we are very young and when we get old, very old we never know when to quit laughing."

May 16, 1985

Translated and Recorded by John Moses

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cc: file

Lynn Larson-Staff Anthropologist & Archeologist-U.W., O.P.A.

Songs of the Duwamish River

By

Ray Paul

"The Duwamish people had songs for everything. The Duwamish River was considered a living being and was very sacred to the Duwamish at one time. The Spiritual Prayers were the Songs and these special Songs were said to be Spirits of Water. The Spirit would travel to the bottom of the River and tell the Medicine People who lived in a village at the bottom if the Duwamish people were or were not taking care of the river. After the Spirit gave the message to the Medicine People, the Spirit would travel back up to the river and accept the prayers of the Duwamish, usually Seven Prayer Songs were sung. The Duwamish sang Prayer Songs to the river because the river would supply the people with salmon and other kinds of fish, which was their livelihood. As long as the river supplied the people with food the people would supply the river with Prayer Songs and made sure the river was always clean. One of the Head Elders of the Duwamish said if these Prayer songs were not carried on or continued the people living around the Duwamish would live a miserable life because the Spirits would not be at rest."

April 8, 1985

Translated and Recorded by John Moses

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cc: file

Lynn Larson-Staff Anthropologist & Archeologist-U.W., O.P.A.

Duwamish Spring Ceremonies

By

Ray Paul

"Spring Ceremonies was the beginning of life, living in a sacred way. It was a reminder to the people how they should treat all living things with respect, the first ceremony was known as the beginning of the Spirit of Spring, the medicine people would conduct or lead the people in the ceremony and the medicine man or women was usually hired by the particular village they were from, those who were participating usually had to fast four days and nights. Duwamish people had many beautiful designs on the spring Ceremonial Boards that were painted with designs representing the sacredness of spring. The Ceremonial Boards also could represent people who had died during spring, and would be remembered in prayer, like a memorial of today's society. Four songs were sung representing the four directions, the Duwamish had songs for everything and everyone that you could imagine. People who had dreams and visions of nature or trees, flowers, plants would express themselves at the Spring Ceremonies and by releasing and informing the dream or vision it would be a healing for them. First Spring Song was to remember those who were deceased. Second Spring Song was to express your dreams and vision and pray for healing for yourself and loved ones. Third Spring song was praying to be thankful for all living things that the Great Spirit created. Fourth Spring Song was to remember the elders, Grandmothers and Grandfathers that teach us the sacred way of the Spring Ceremonial life. Spring Ceremonies was the school for the children. This is where the children would learn about all the plant life; vegetation, medicine plants and poisonous.

April 2, 1985

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cc: file

Lynn Larson-Staff Anthropologist & Archeologist-U.W.

SALMON CEREMONY
(YOUR-BUCK)

BY

HARRIOT DOVER

"The Salmon Ceremony was very important to the people of Duwamish traditional story-tellers shared the teachings of the Salmon Ceremony with all the people, beginning with the children teaching them through the stories, the Salmon Ceremony was similiar to the Salmon Ceremonies of Snohomish, Muckleshoots, and Puyallups. Many people believed that the Salmon were people at one time, before Duquebalth or the Changer came to the earth to change everything, all living things that didn't agree with the Changer was changed into something; rock, trees animals, and so on. Anyway back to the Salmon, the salmon was the leader of all Salmon people, the Salmon was also going to be life for the Indians. The people would depend on the Salmon to live. The first part of the Ceremony was to catch the first Salmon in the spring and then second the medicine man or woman would hire a cutter to clean the Salmon and third the cooks would cook the Salmon, each time the medicine people would belss the Salmon through each stage it goes through. After it was cooked they would divide the Salmon and make sure everyone who is present at the Ceremony would eat a piece of Salmon. The Water was a blessing. So everyone would drink Water before eating their piece of fish and after everyone had eaten their piece of fish they all would sing Fourth Salmon Song and that would end the Ceremony."

April 15, 1985

Recorded by John Moses

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cc: file

Lynn Larson-Staff Anthropologist & Archeologist-U.W., O.P.A.

Memo

To: Cecile
From: Rachel
Date: May 30, 1985
Re: John Moses

John is willing to give a presentation to the Duwamish Tribe about research conducted on tradition & culture of the Duwamish People.

His phone number is #486-9522.

rrp:RRP 5/28/85