

**Kennewick Man**  
Cultural Affiliation Report

**Chapter 3**  
Section 1

# Review of Traditional Historical and Ethnographic Information

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## Introduction

In July of 1996 the remains of an approximately 45-50-year-old male were discovered near Columbia Park, Kennewick, Washington. Preliminary analyses suggested that the remains were between 7,000 and 9,000 years old. In addition to the considerable antiquity of the remains, the initial confusion over the supposed race of the individual caused considerable controversy. The Army Corps of Engineers, the agency responsible for managing the lands where the remains were recovered, delegated responsibility for the disposition of the remains to the Department of the Interior, National Park Service in March 1998. The interagency agreement called for the Department of the Interior to resolve two basic issues. First, whether or not the remains meet the legal definition of "Native American" according to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (NAGPRA). Second, if the remains are Native American, the Department of the Interior must make a determination of the disposition of the remains under the requirements of NAGPRA (McManamon 1999:3). It was determined on 11 January 2000 that the remains are Native American.

Initially, investigations were conducted on the physical characteristics of the remains, the sediments associated with the remains, and the stone point imbedded in the pelvis. It was then decided to proceed with investigations on the archaeology, geography, ethnography, biology, and traditional and documented history of the region around the confluence of the Columbia and Snake Rivers and modern day Indian tribes that have historically been associated with the area. The focus of this report is on the traditional historical and ethnographic data. It is one of four reports conducted concurrently in order to assist the Department of the Interior in its determination of the cultural affiliation of the remains. This contract began on 9 December 1999, with the first draft of the report due on 15 January 2000 and the final report on 15 February 2000. Given the extremely limited time allocated to this project this report attempts to be as comprehensive as possible.

## Statement of Purpose

This report has been prepared under contract with the National Park Service for the purpose of investigating the ethnographic and historical data concerning the cultural affiliation of the Kennewick human remains. Specifically I was asked to review published and archival materials related to the traditional ethnography, including traditional histories, kinship and patterns of residence, trade and social networks, artifact types and dwellings, community and settlement patterns, and economic and subsistence patterns. The documented historic database was also to be reviewed but was considered secondary. The specifications of this contract were to focus on the period prior to the written historical record, 1805, and extending back to the approximate date of the Kennewick human remains, circa 9,500 BP. The determinations of the Indian Claims Commission were to be consulted for the approximate boundaries of tribal territories and based on these determinations and stated interest the following recognized and non-recognized tribes were to be considered in this report: the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Indian Nation; the Nez Perce Tribe; the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation; the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Indian Reservation; and the Wanapum Band of Indians, a non-federally recognized tribe.

This report is submitted with the understanding that this research is an independent endeavor on the part of the contractor. The facts reported upon herein are presented in as objective a manner as possible without regard to the help or harm it may bring to any party's interest in the final determination concerning the disposition of the Kennewick human remains. I would like to acknowledge Stacy Rasmus, research assistant for this project, who was integral to the section on Native Histories.

### **Research Methods**

In order to comply with the stated objectives a four-step research strategy was followed. This strategy was designed to provide as comprehensive an analysis as possible within the limited time frame.

1. A search of the published ethnographic and historic data;
2. A search of archival and other primary data;
3. Consultation with appropriate tribal representatives and other experts;
4. An evaluation and assessment of the ethnographic and historic database.

A search of the published data included the compilation and evaluation of several types of information, most notably the ethnographic sources, archaeological reports, published versions of oral traditions and local histories. The ethnographic information was gleaned for specific reference to the cultural patterns identified in the statement of purpose and these were compared with the reconstruction of Plateau prehistory in the archaeological record. Local histories were utilized in the traditional ethnohistorical manner of providing material to supplement the ethnographic data and to briefly summarize the period from 1805 to 1855. In the absence of written records for the period prior to 1805, oral traditions were reviewed to create an historical context. Following the current theoretical understanding in the field of ethnohistory it is assumed that oral traditions should not be considered inferior to written records. While the same type of analytical approach cannot necessarily be employed, the histories contained in oral traditions are not any less valid.

A search for primary materials contained in archival holdings was focussed on holdings known to contain materials relevant to the area and peoples under consideration here. Due to the time limitations this was limited to records of the Indian Claims Commission, which often were replications of published ethnographic data; materials contained in the Washington State Archives, Northwest Region; Special Collections of the Suzzallo Library, University of Washington; and Wilson Library, Western Washington University.

Consultation with appropriate tribal representatives and other experts was limited to telephone conversations. These conversations were intended to insure that there were no obvious omissions of available materials. Time limitations precluded in-depth consultation with tribal experts or the collection of additional oral histories.

Once the research phase was completed the materials were evaluated and organized according to categories outlined in the contract. This analysis forms the basis of the following narrative report which is provided to assist the Department of the Interior in making its determination.

This work conforms with contemporary standards for the disciplines of anthropology and ethnohistory. Terms which have specific meaning in these disciplines are defined in the text at the time of their introduction. The ethnographic research component commenced with a review of published materials. Ethnographies do not exist for all of the tribes under consideration here. *The Handbook of North American Indians, Vol. 12, Plateau* was consulted for ethnographic sources and the general ethnogeography. From the ethnographic sources a general cultural trait overview was created and then a process ethnohistorians call "upstreaming" was followed. Upstreaming refers to the technique of beginning the research at a specific point in time and then tracing historic data on a group back to the first known written records. The first direct contact between Plateau peoples and European-Americans on the Plateau is well documented. Therefore we can identify September 1805 as the beginning of the written historic record. A certain amount of extrapolation back from the earliest written records is possible but limited. This research technique depends upon written historic data and therefore the analysis of narrative tradition is necessary to flesh out this history beyond the limitations of the written record. The oral histories are discussed at some length below.

### **Scope of Work**

As specified in the contract, the scope of work is to identify, describe and summarize the traditional historical and ethnographic information related to the possible cultural affiliation of the Kennewick human remains with present-day Indian tribes. This requires a review and synthesis of relevant published, non-published and archival traditional information related to traditional historical and ethnographic reports, books, articles and other sources to identify the indigenous peoples who occupied or utilized the Mid-Columbia region from 9,500 BP to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. This information was reviewed for the purpose of identifying continuities, discontinuities and gaps in the traditional ethnographic and historical database. Additionally, where appropriate, tribal officials and other tribal experts who might aid the specific purpose of this study were consulted. Upon completion of the review of the database the following report was produced summarizing the collected data and

presenting an analysis of the information.

## Data Analysis

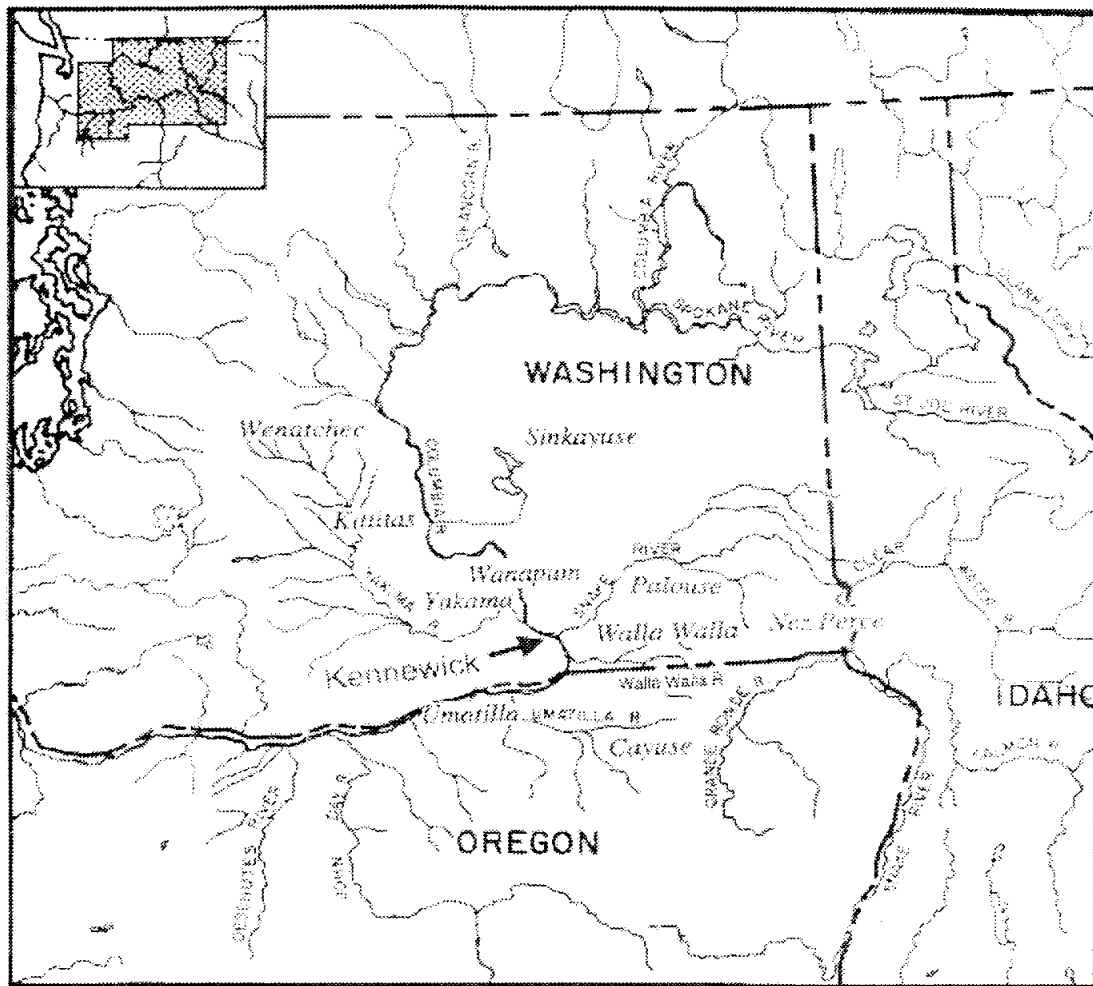
### Traditional Ethnography

The southern Plateau has been described as an "intergroup culture" by some researchers (Ray 1939; Anastasio 1975). Walker (1998:3) outlines the distinctive features of Plateau culture as:

- Riverine settlement patterns;
- Reliance on a diverse subsistence base, including fish, game and plant foods;
- A complex fishing technology;
- Mutual cross-utilization of subsistence resources;
- Extensive kin ties and intermarriage;
- Extensive trade links;
- Limited political integration until after the introduction of the horse;
- Relatively uniform mythology, art styles and religion.

The following ethnographic overview will focus on traditional histories, kinship and patterns of residence, trade and social networks, artifact types and dwellings, community and settlement patterns, and economic and subsistence patterns. First, however, an overview of the various groups which utilized the territory in the vicinity of the confluence of the Columbia and Snake Rivers is presented.

### Figure1.



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As the accompanying map illustrates (see Fig. 1) the area about the present city of Kennewick was located near the confluence of several rivers. Each of these river systems was considered the "homeland" of certain tribes; however, in referring to tribal territories on the Plateau generally what is resorted to is the location of semisedentary villages. Any of these communities might contain members from a number of different tribes. The Indian Claims Commission established the geographic presence of tribal territories as outlined in Fig. 1. What this demonstrates is that the territories of several groups converge around the mouth of the Snake River, in the proximity of Kennewick. The mouth of the Snake River was an important fishing location and would attract people from throughout the southern Plateau to participate in the mutual co-utilization of the resource (Anastasio 1975:123). The fact that this area was an important meeting place and "crossroads" was what encouraged the fur trade companies to establish a trading post nearby in 1818 (Stern 1993). The modern day descendants of the tribes identified in this area in the ethnographic and historic record are located on several reservations and in off-reservation communities. These include, but are not limited to, the Yakama, Palouse, Wanapum, Walla Walla, Cayuse, Umatilla and Nez Perce. The following ethnographic tribes are commonly associated with the following reservations.

**Table 1.**

<b>Reservation</b>	<b>Tribes</b>
Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Indian Nation (Yakama Treaty of 1855)	Yakama, Palouse, Pisuouse, Wenatshapam, Klikatat, Klinquit, Kow-was-say-ee, Li-ay-was, Skin-pah, Wish-ham, Shyiks, Oche-chotes, Kah-milt-pah, Se-ap-cat
Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (Walla Walla Treaty of 1855)	Walla-Wallas, Cayuses, Umatilla
Nez Perce Tribe (Nez Perce Treaty of 1855)	Nez Perce
Confederated Tribes of the Colville Indian Reservation (Executive Order of 1872)	Colville, Chelan, Entiat, Methow, Okanogan, Lake, San Poil, Nespelem, Moses, Nez Perce, Palouse, Sinkayuse, Wenatchee
Wanapum Band*	Wanapum

\*Non-Federally Recognized Tribe

Researchers have long considered the cultures of the southern Plateau as a set of interconnected and culturally similar groups (Ray 1939; Anastasio 1975; Walker 1967; 1997). Nevertheless, as Walker points out (1997:71), there has been a tendency to focus on individual culture groups and ignore or overlook these interconnections. Much of the ethnographic reporting on the Plateau groups was conducted in the tradition of late nineteenth and early twentieth century anthropology. Chronologically, I identify three types of ethnographic description for the Plateau. These consist of early ethnography to the early 1950s, the Indian Claims Commission research, and the more recent subject-specific research. Each of these will be briefly discussed for the purpose of establishing an ethnographic overview. Then a critical evaluation will be offered.

The earliest ethnographic description of southern Plateau groups begins with the first professional ethnography in North America. James Mooney, working for the Bureau of American Ethnology, collected information on the Wanapum prophet Smohalla (1896). James Teit collected ethnographic data on Interior Salish groups and some Sahaptin folk tales (1928; 1930; Boas, et al. 1917). Herbert Spinden produced the only attempt at a total ethnography of a southern Plateau group during this era, *The Nez Perce Indians* (1908), and Curtis (1911) and Lewis (1906) offered brief ethnographic descriptions of several groups. Early analyses also included transcriptions of the Sahaptin language (Jacobs 1930; 1937) and of oral traditions (Phinney 1934). Several amateur ethnographers in the early 1900s have written on specific aspects of Plateau culture, especially McWhorter (1913; 1940; 1952).

Generally these latter works tend to focus on the conflict of the mid-1800s more than an attempt to reconstruct traditional culture.

The style of this generation of ethnographic reporting has been termed "historical particularism," by this is meant the attempt to describe cultures in detail without attempting to interpret or theorize about causation. For many of the early ethnographers each culture was a unique product of its own history, and little attention was given to intercultural influences. The goal was to try and recapture what Indian cultures were like before European contact. This sometimes meant selectively choosing data that was not a result of contact and ignoring information that was more indicative of the present time. Therefore, even though this approach was "historical" it was not history as is generally meant. Rather, it is a type of natural history of the tribes that focused on information gathered from them and often presented verbatim but with some information filtered out and usually a clear bias towards material culture.

As early as the 1930s dissatisfaction with the particularist approach was becoming apparent. This was first evident in the "Culture Element Distribution" studies emanating from the University of California. These studies were designed to gather specific culture traits in list form for easy cross-cultural comparison (coefficients of similarity). Culture element lists were completed on the Plateau by Ray (1942). While the culture element distribution lists are useful for comparing specific traits, their overall utility is limited because they fail to describe cultural patterns. Nevertheless, analyses of culture elements led researchers to suggest that there was basic cultural unity. These studies were commonly used to examine the diffusion of certain culture traits, such as religious beliefs (DuBois 1938; Spier 1935) and the spread of the horse (Haines 1938).

The second era of ethnographic description was ushered in with the passage of the Indian Claims Commission Act of 1946. This act established a court of claims to enable Indian tribes to bring grievances before the court concerning unfulfilled treaty promises, inadequate compensation for lost land and resources, and other specific claims. In order to provide the evidence necessary to adjudicate Indian claims both the tribes and the federal government employed anthropologists to provide expert testimony concerning traditional culture, land and resource use, cultural distribution and historic changes. Reports were prepared by three different ethnologists, Verne Ray on the Colville Tribes, Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla, and Palus; Stuart Chalfant on the Palus and Columbia Salish; and Robert Suphan on the Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla. In general these reports have two limitations. First, they tend to reiterate the published ethnographic information and offer little new data. Second, they tend to focus on the historic period, after contact. The information contained in these reports is discussed further below.

Recent ethnography on the Plateau has focussed on specific subject matter. Following Ray (1939), Anastasio (1975; originally 1955) argued for consideration of a Plateau-wide culture. Based on his analysis of secondary sources, and focussed on intergroup relations, Anastasio relies on the construct of "task groups" to understand this network of interrelations centered around marriage, trade and resource procurement. Similarly, other works using the historical record have identified this pattern of intergroup relations. The spread of the horse in the early

eighteenth century (Haines 1938), the fur trade era of the early nineteenth century (Stern 1993; 1998), warfare of the mid-eighteenth century (Josephy 1965), religious change (Miller 1985) and contemporary reservation life (Gidley 1985; Walker 1968; Brunton 1968; Schuster 1975; Leibhardt 1992) have been discussed in this context. After the 1950s a series of works on oral traditions appeared (Clark 1953; Ramsey 1977; Aoki 1979; Aoki and Walker 1989; Walker and Matthews 1994). Historical overviews have been offered for some tribes, e.g., the Cayuse (Ruby and Brown 1972) and the Palouse (Trafzer and Scheuerman 1986), once again, focussing on the era of conflict.

More recent works (e.g., Hunn 1990) have dealt with contemporary issues, especially resource use and control and other issues centering around legal issues and reservation development.

The following ethnographic overview is a synthesis of the "traditional ethnography" of the southern Plateau, or what can be gleaned from the three types of ethnographic reporting described above in relation to the attempt to reconstruct what the cultures were like prior to European contact.

### **Traditional Histories**

The peoples of the southern Plateau have a rich oral tradition. Virtually every detail of the landscape is linked to events related in oral traditions. Oral traditions have both moral and explanatory elements (Frey and Hymes 1998:597). The mythology is relatively uniform throughout the southern Plateau, commonly related in the Coyote cycles. In the oral traditions Coyote travels up the Columbia River and its tributaries, he gives names to landforms, causes transformation of humans, animals and plants, and he molds the landscape creating a place for the people. In Plateau traditions the stories are "seen" in the landscape and various formations are reminders of the deeds and misdeeds of Coyote. For example, imprints of salmon and roots are seen on Sacred Rock Island in the Priest Rapids area and the two Cannibal Sisters were transformed into rock columns near Wallula.

Typically the oral traditions tell of a distant past. This past cannot necessarily be identified with a specific date in prehistory, but it is a past that was a time when the landscape was being transformed, when there were glaciers, when river channels were being cut, when salmon were populating the Columbia River and its tributaries, when buffalo were found on the Plateau, and when the myth people were preparing the way for the coming of the people.

From the perspective of Plateau peoples the histories are "written in the rocks and earth. This knowledge comes from thousands of years of occupation within the same territory. All stories and legends contain history, resource utilization and religious lessons at one and the same time" (Statement of the Colville Tribe, 4 February 2000).

Coyote's adventures are both benevolent and capricious. He interacts with the myth people who are identified as animals but act like humans, the humans had not yet become the people. The myth people live in villages, have families, hunt, fish and gather. Their way of life set the pattern for the people whom Coyote caused to be scattered across the Plateau by slaying the Monster and distributing its parts which



became the people. For the Native people of the Plateau oral traditions are true histories. They link their existence to the beginning of the appearance of human beings on the Plateau and they relate their continued existence on the Plateau to that distant past. Unlike many Native peoples in North America the Plateau people do not have origin myths that explain their placement by migrations to the area or by creation. Instead the Plateau became populated by people who were already there. They became the people during an event imbedded in an ongoing historical period. Oral traditions can relate the historical times both before and after that event.

The oral traditions speak of a way of life not unlike that described in the ethnographies of the Plateau. From this perspective we might see the oral traditions as a form of historical documentation that can be used to supplement the descriptive ethnographic accounts. Plateau oral traditions recognize three main historical periods (Jacobs 1929:244; Ramsey 1977:xxiv). The first period was when all animals were people, not only previous forms of animals that still exist but also monsters and other creatures that have since disappeared. The second period was the time of transformation, when some transformer, usually Coyote, made changes in preparation for the people. The final period is the period of the people which links the previous periods with the present time. The Plateau people distinguish between oral histories that speak of the earlier periods, the myth time, and stories that speak of events that occurred in the time more customarily referred to as the "historical period."

### **Kinship and Patterns of Residence**

In anthropological parlance the southern Plateau peoples practiced a bilateral kinship system with Hawaiian cousin and bifurcate collateral terminology (Ackerman 1998:518). What this means is that kinship is reckoned through both the male and female lines and there is an emphasis on generation. No terminological distinction is made between maternal or paternal grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, grandchildren or nieces and nephews. Since marriage was discouraged with any known relative, the extensive ties of kinship meant that marriage was widely dispersed. Any individual would therefore have relatives amongst many different groups (Anastasio 1975:146-148; Walker 1972:236-238).

The basic kinship unit was the extended family which would generally consist of several nuclear families bonded together through ties of kin. Often grandparents would form the nucleus around which the extended family was organized. The extended family shared residence and economic resources and formed the basis of economic activity. Ambilocality, that is a couple had the choice of joining her family or his, appeared to be the norm, although there may have been a patrilocal emphasis in some areas (Ackerman 1998:516).

Several extended families would compose a village, which might consist of 20-500 people. Most villages were located along rivers. Villages may have exercised some political autonomy but several might unite for various purposes. After the introduction of the horse, about 1730, composite band organization developed, uniting groups together for purposes of defense, raiding and trade. This did not necessarily eliminate village autonomy but rather overlaid a new level of political organization.

A typical village would consist of mat-covered longhouses, each of which might be home to an extended family of 50 people. Adjacent to the longhouse were semisubterranean pithouses, a circular structure which appears to have been the main dwelling in prehistoric times. In more modern times these dwellings were used for storehouses, to sequester young women or to instruct young boys (Stern 1993:51). When families moved out to hunting, fishing or gathering locations they resided in individual family units, typically mat or skin covered tipis. These dwellings were highly mobile and were the principle dwelling during the major food-gathering season. At both the winter villages and at resource procurement locations members of many different tribes might be present.

### **Trade and Social Networks**

Plateau systems of trade and social networks have been summarized by Ray (1939), Anastasio (1975), Walker (1967, 1997) and Stern (1993, 1998). These works are generally in accordance concerning the need to consider the southern Plateau as a network of intergroup relations where resources and access to trade goods were co-utilized through a mechanism of intermarriage, mutual co-utilization of resources and intergroup cooperation.

Numerous sites throughout the Plateau were the locations of intergroup activities. Often centered around resource procurement these locations would bring together people from many different groups. Locations consisted of plant gathering areas, such as root-digging grounds, fishing locations, such as the mouth of the Snake River, and centers for trade and ceremonial interaction. Ethnographers argue that these mechanisms of intergroup interaction have considerable antiquity on the Plateau (see, e.g., Hunn 1990:19; Walker 1997:71-72). The introduction of the horse in the early 1700s likely enhanced rather than instigated these networks of intergroup trade and resource co-utilization.

The river systems of the Plateau were major routes of access to the gathering sites. Additionally there are numerous overland trade routes that linked the various groups of the Plateau together. The area about the mouth of the Snake River is located near an important crossroads. Just up the Columbia River from the mouth of the Snake River the Yakima River flows in from the west. Just downriver from the mouth of the Snake the Walla Walla River flows in from the east and a bit further downstream the Umatilla River flows in from the south. These river valleys were all important routes of access across this geographical area (see [Fig 1](#)).

Group interactions were tied to the subsistence cycle. Because of the localized nature of certain resources, such as salmon, and roots and other plant foods, and because of the specialized nature of hunting expeditions to the Plains and horse expeditions to the south, certain groups would host activities they specialized in. The Nez Perce, for example, were known as mobile traders, ranging from The Dalles to the Plains. The Wishram-Wasco, who were more settled, had groups coming to them to participate in The Dalles-Celilo Falls fishery. Most groups of the southern Plateau traveled widely and frequently across the Plateau and beyond. The Nez Perce, Palouse, Walla Walla, Cayuse, Umatilla and Yakama were especially noted as horse pastoralists that traveled frequently to trade, hunt, gather and fish (Anastasio 1975:141). An 1814 gathering at Walula, near the mouth of the Walla Walla River, consisted of an encampment of over 3000 people extending

over six miles (Ross 1924:5-16; also see Parker 1844:279; Splawn 1944:26; Teit 1930:159, 191; and Spinden 1908:261-262).

Winter was a more sedentary time of year when residence was in permanent villages and subsistence was based on stored foods. Winter was the major ceremonial season, a time when winter dances and other ceremonial activity took place. Although tribal groups were generally clustered in their home territory, it was not unusual for some groups to winter over in areas outside their "territory," including the bison hunting grounds on the Plains. Stern notes Nez Perce, Walla Walla and Cayuse wintering in the area of The Dalles (Stern 1998a:397).

With the arrival of the salmon and the first harvest of roots in the spring intensive intergroup contact intensified. A number of fishing and gathering locations were visited and there was considerable moving about with groups converging at certain locations. The spring, summer and fall were times of intense interaction which included trading, councils, ceremonies, gambling and horse racing in addition to the subsistence activities. In fall berry picking and other plant gathering continued to bring groups together until it was time to break up again and return to the winter villages. Co-utilization of resources was the rule, not the exception.

Co-utilization was mediated between different families, villages, bands, and other groups through trade relationships, kinship ties, and social relationships that linked the peoples of the southern Plateau into a single economic system (Walker 1997:83).

### **Artifact Types and Dwellings**

At the time of first European contact on the Plateau in 1805, European manufactured items had already been acquired. The horse had been acquired nearly a century earlier. The introduction of the horse and the acquisition of European trade goods appear to have enhanced rather than changed the patterns of subsistence, trade and social interaction on the Plateau.

Household tools, clothing, weapons, and similar items were the personal property of individuals, but the larger fish weirs were communal property (Walker 1998:6). Plateau technology was designed to carry out a mixed subsistence economy of hunting, fishing and plant gathering. Bows and arrows were the primary hunting tool and have been evident on the Plateau for at least two thousand years. Stone pestles for grinding plant foods and fishing implements, such as net weights, were common. Plateau basketry, well known for its beauty and utility, came in many different types made for food gathering, processing and storage.

In the ethnographic period tailored skin clothing, feathered headdresses, and buffalo robes, reminiscent of Plains attire, were common on the Plateau. It is generally believed by ethnographers that these were adaptations that diffused onto the Plateau after the introduction of the horse.

Dwellings were of three main types. Winter dwellings included the semisubterranean pithouse and the mat-covered longhouse. The longhouse is believed to be more recent and likely developed from the pithouse which was more common in the prehistoric past. Summer dwellings were mat-covered tipis, which

were highly mobile. In the protohistoric and historic period skin tipis were replacing the mat-covered tipis (Rice 1985).

The winter village, usually situated along major streams, especially at confluences, would consist of anywhere from 5 to 50 longhouses. The longhouse was A-frame, constructed of cross-laid poles and covered with tule mats. Often the ground inside would be excavated two to three feet to provide better insulation. These longhouses were quite large, some 25 by 50 feet, and capable of housing fifty people. The longhouse replaced the pithouse beginning about 500 years ago although the pithouse continued into historic times as storage units or for specialized dwellings (Stern 1998a:396). Pithouses were circular, built over a pit six to eight feet in depth. Poles were leaned across the top and covered with mats and earth.

In the summer months the winter villages would disperse to resource gathering locations. At this time the primary dwelling was the tipi, a conical structure built of mats laid over poles. Tule mat-covered tipis were most common in the early historic period and appear to have been in the process of being replaced by buffalo-hide tipis. Other structures in a village might include fish-drying racks, menstrual huts, sweathouses and food-storage pits.

### **Community and Settlement Patterns**

Winter villages were semi-permanent habitations situated along river systems, especially near confluences. Several villages may be located in proximity to one another. Ray notes dozens of traditional village sites identified in the 1920s and 1930s (Ray 1936). Lewis and Clark recorded a number of villages in the area around the mouth of the Snake River in 1805 (see [Fig. 2](#)). A winter village could contain as many as 500 people residing in upwards of twenty longhouses. Winter villages were under the influence of a "chief" or headman whose powers of political control were limited. Leadership on the southern Plateau was task oriented, usually consisting of war chiefs, peace chiefs, religious leaders, salmon chiefs at important fishing sites, and other task specific positions of leadership.

A typical winter village would consist of a number of longhouses composed of related families. Because of the nature of intermarriage villages would have representation from a number of different tribes. Stern found that some villages were composite, with especially the Nez Perce wintering in villages beyond their tribal "territory," ranging from The Dalles to the buffalo grounds in Montana (Stern 1993:55, 1998a:397). Stern also notes that Cayuse might winter with Nez Perce, Umatilla with Yakama, Cayuse and Nez Perce in the Umatilla valley, and Cayuse, Walla Walla and Nez Perce at The Dalles (1993:50; 1998a:396-397). Winter villages near the mouth of the Snake River likely consisted of multi-tribal inhabitants as well. The fur trader Alexander Ross recorded an encampment at Wallula near the mouth of the Walla Walla River in August 1811 that contained Nez Perce, Cayuse and Walla Walla numbering upwards of 1500 people (Ross 1904:137).

In the spring groups would move off to resource gathering locations, to gather roots, such as *Lomatium* spp. and fish for early runs of salmon. As summer advanced more serious fishing might take place, or some groups may decide to "go to buffalo," that is, travel east of the continental divide to hunt buffalo. Ross noted that the second most important fishing location on the Columbia River, after The Dalles, was at Wallula (Ross 1904:140). Inter-tribal gatherings were common in the summer at places to fish and dig roots. While not as important as Wallula, the Yakima River valley and the Walla Walla River valley also attracted intergroup gatherings (Stern 1993:9). Summer villages consisted of individual family units living in mat-covered tipis and later, hide tipis. Family groups had a great deal of autonomy and could decide to resort to different locations in different years. Wealthy or influential individuals might persuade a following, especially if decisions were made to go to buffalo or on trading or raiding expeditions south into California or west across the Cascade Mountains.



Fig 2. Lewis and Clark's Map of Villages in Proximity of the Confluence of the Snake and Columbia Rivers (Moulton 1983:75). Reproduced courtesy of the Oregon State University Press. *Click map for larger view.*

In the fall, major food-gathering activities took place once again, such as root digging or berry picking and hunting. Finally, when winter approached the groups would make their way back to the winter village locations.

The nature of intergroup interaction on the Plateau makes it difficult to delineate tribal "territories." Nevertheless, certain areas are usually associated with certain tribes. The Yakama with the Yakima River valley, The Walla Walla with the Walla Walla River valley, The Umatilla with the Umatilla River valley, the Wanapum with the area around Priest Rapids on the Columbia River, the Palouse along the lower Palouse and adjacent Snake Rivers, and the Nez Perce along the Snake and Clearwater Rivers. These areas are indicative of winter village locations, but as is evident different times of the year might find members of these tribes in areas beyond their "territory." Even the winter villages would contain individuals and family groups from different tribes.

### **Economic and Subsistence Patterns**

The subsistence base of the Plateau peoples has been described as dependent upon hunting, fishing and gathering in roughly equal amounts (Anastasio 1975). However, recent reassessments have suggested that for many groups plant foods

likely played a much more important role, perhaps contributing as much as 50-60 percent of the total caloric intake (Hunn 1990). Intertribally as well as intratribally there could be a great deal of variation. Some groups, such as many Nez Perce, would go to buffalo every year, whereas others, such as Yakama, might only go every few years (Anastasio 1975). Stern notes that even some Nez Perce family groups might not go to buffalo at all (1993:55-56). Therefore the generalizations we make about the subsistence and other economic patterns of the southern Plateau peoples may not consistently apply to any individual group.

The Columbia-Snake River systems formed the focal point of many of the subsistence activities. Enormous runs of anadromous fish, especially salmon, provided an abundant and reliable resource base. From spring to fall succeeding runs of salmon were taken at locations that were shared by many different tribes. In order of importance, The Dalles-Celilo Falls area, at the western edge of the Plateau culture area, the mouth of the Snake River, and Kettle Falls, on the Columbia River near the Canadian border, were the major locations where not only salmon fishing would take place but also intertribal gatherings which provided the opportunity for trade and other forms of interaction, both economic and social.

Interspersed throughout the spring, summer and fall months would be movements to major plant gathering locations. Some of these locations, such as Weippe Prairie in Nez Perce territory, would attract hundreds of people. Plant foods such as *Lomatium* spp., camas, bitterroot, wild carrot, wild onion, and berries, provided an abundance of resources that could be stored for the winter months. Anastasio has suggested that resources in the Plateau, while abundant, were sporadic. The nature of mutual co-utilization enabled groups to access resources that might not be available in sufficient amounts within their home "territory." Therefore, a Yakama group might dig camas at Weippe Prairie in Nez Perce country, a Nez Perce may fish for salmon in Walla Walla country, a Cayuse might join a Nez Perce group to go to buffalo or a Cayuse might travel west of the Cascade Mountains to trade.

Trade was also an important part of the economic life of southern Plateau peoples. Major trade centers brought groups and products together from all over western North America. The Columbia-Snake River system was not only an avenue of communication but it was also the focal point of an economic system that tied Plateau groups to networks of exchange far beyond the Plateau itself.

Goods from the sea coast, such as dried clams and precious shells, could be exchanged for goods from the Great Basin, such as slaves or obsidian. Jade from British Columbia, buffalo products from the Plains, after 1700 horses from California, all passed through the Plateau en route to areas beyond. This network of exchange was centered at certain locations, especially important fishing sites, where large groups would congregate. The mouth of the Snake River was one such location (Stern 1998b:642).

Undoubtedly the introduction of the horse in the early 1700s facilitated this network of trade but there is considerable evidence that these patterns of interaction have been in existence for 10,000 years (Ames, et al. 1998:118-119).

## Overview of Prehistory

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The southern Plateau has been occupied for at least 11,000 years. Following Chatters and Pokotylo (1998) and Ames, et al. (1998) this discussion will briefly survey the chronology of southern Plateau prehistory with a focus on those elements of traditional Plateau culture outlined above. The prehistory of the southern Plateau is discussed in other reports prepared for the Department of the Interior in relation to the Kennewick human remains, therefore this section will only briefly touch on the cultural sequence in order to illustrate a continuum of traditions from the prehistoric past into historic times.

The culture history reconstructed by archaeological research divides prehistory into three main periods. Period I, from 11,500 years BP to 5000-4400 BC; Period II, from 5000-4400 BC to 1900 BC; and Period III from 1900 BC to 1720 AD. Ethnographers argue that archaeological evidence is suggestive of a cultural continuity extending back 10,000 years (Hunn 1990; Walker 1997). As Walker (1997:76) argues, the demonstrable changes that did occur can be traced to either climatic changes or to innovation in techniques.

Throughout the prehistory of the southern Plateau there is evidence of a mixed economy based on utilization of animal, plant and fish resources, not unlike that which is described in the ethnographic data base. Early in Period I the Plateau area had just recently emerged from the effects of glacial ice (Chatters and Pokotylo 1998:73). Salmon had colonized the Columbia River system and human use of the environment appears to have been characterized by a "broad spectrum hunter-gatherer subsistence economy" (Ames, et al. 1998:103). Projectile points from this period are predominantly Cascade points, which were probably attached to darts thrown from an atlatl or throwing board.

According to Kirk and Daugherty (1978:68, in Walker 1997:76) projectile points from this early period, if compared with points from subsequent periods to historic times, "show a progression in form and manufacturing technique... a definite and ordered change." Points were reflective of the "change in weaponry from spears that were thrust to those thrown with atlatls, and finally to bows and arrows."

Ames, et al. (1998:108) argue that the assemblages from this period bear similarity spatially as well as temporally and appear to represent facets of a broadly oriented economy dependent upon hunting large game, fishing, and gathering of plant foods. Projectile points, net weights, milling stones, tipi-like dwellings, and evidence of trade from the sea coast as long ago as 9000 BC impress one as strikingly similar to the cultural traditions described in the ethnographic database.

In many ways Period II is a continuation of Period I patterns. Around 4000 BC semisubterranean pithouses are evident (Ames, et al. 1998:109). The well-insulated pithouses may have been an adaptation to a general cooling trend during this time. Pithouses were 20 to 25 feet across and one to two feet in depth. Often the pithouses contain mortar bases and milling stones, used to grind plant foods. Faunal remains include large mammals, freshwater mussels, salmon and other fishes. Some have argued that this period is indicative of a shift towards increased sedentism (Chatters and Pokotylo 1998:75) perhaps due to increasing dependence on riverine resources, particularly salmon. Trade for materials originating outside the Plateau is evident in the form of exotic stone and marine shells.

The final prehistoric period from 1900 BC to 1720 AD shows increasing development of the cultural traits that culminated in the ethnographic cultures of the region (Chatters and Pokotylo 1998:76). Pithouses become predominant and there is continued evidence of reliance on salmon fishing, plant gathering and hunting of large game. Pithouses become larger and concentration of pithouses in villages becomes evident. The best known site from this period is the Miller site on Strawberry Island near the mouth of the Snake River (Ames, et al. 1998:111). Evidence of fishing technology includes the ubiquitous net weights, harpoons and barbed bone points. Storage facilities suggest that large-scale storage of fish, plant foods and other resources were taking place. Increasing frequency of smaller projectile points suggests that bow and arrow technology appeared about 1 AD. Continued evidence of trade emanating from outside the Plateau includes marine shells, stone, and pipes.

There appears to have been a transition from pithouses to longhouses beginning around 500 AD. Longhouses were sometimes erected over a pit as much as three feet deep. Throughout this period longhouses become larger and more common but the pithouses never totally disappear.

By this time there was an established pattern on the Plateau of winter villages in the river valleys where pithouses, and latterly longhouses, were the main type of residence. These villages were constructed near major fishing locations, usually at the confluence of rivers. In the spring and summer upland camps would be inhabited, where a mixed economy of hunting and gathering would be carried out. In the uplands families would dwell in mat-covered tipis. Ames, et al. (1998:113) suggest that the population of the Plateau reached its peak during this period, by about 1000 AD.

The end of the archaeological period is marked by the appearance of European introduced items, particularly the horse which was acquired by Plateau peoples by at least 1730 AD. This transitional period brought changes to the Plateau yet again, nevertheless the changes can be seen as transitions and modifications of cultural development.

### **Protohistory**

The protohistoric period, that is the period from the first influence from outside Native North America to the first written records, brought significant change to the Plateau. In addition to European-manufactured items, three highly significant influences included the introduction of European diseases, the introduction of the horse, and the appearance of the Plateau prophet ideology.

Items of European manufacture had already reached the Plateau in advance of direct contact in 1805. Lewis and Clark noted brass, copper, coins, beads and other items probably traded in from the coast. They also noted individuals who had been to the Spanish missions in California and to the British trading posts in Canada (see Moulton 1988; 1991). Some of the Nez Perce horses had Spanish brands and it was made known to Lewis and Clark that the Nez Perce and other southern Plateau peoples traveled far to the south to trade and raid. Obviously these influences had reached the Plateau both by intertribal trade routes and by direct access outside the



Plateau by Plateau peoples. The trickle of European goods into the Plateau undoubtedly had some impact but the introduction of disease and the horse were profound.

There is some disagreement as to when European-introduced diseases first had an impact on Plateau populations. The first population estimates from Lewis and Clark in 1805 are estimates of a population that had already been ravaged by disease. European introduced diseases, for which Native American populations had no acquired resistance, are known to have depleted populations across the continent by upward of 90 percent or more. Dobyns (1966) and Crosby (1986) postulate a hemispheric-wide pandemic emanating from the first recorded North American smallpox epidemic in the Caribbean in 1519. Campbell (1989) suggests that this pandemic reached the Plateau in the early 1500s, as evidenced by a decline in number and size of archaeological components during this time. It is possible that this initial epidemic reduced the populations of North America so severely that subsequent epidemics were much more localized. Therefore it is suggested that the Plateau was not struck again until late in the 1700s when historically recorded epidemics reached the Plateau.

Boyd (1998:472) does not accept the hypothesis of an early epidemic and suggests that the first epidemic reached the Plateau shortly after Europeans reached the sea coast in 1774. This epidemic was devastating, probably reducing the population of the southern Plateau by 40 percent, possibly much higher. Subsequent epidemics hit with striking regularity as new generations of non-immune populations and other diseases emerged. As a result the population of the southern Plateau continued to decline throughout the 1800s. The Plateau was a population in flux during the protohistoric period. These changes, however, were incorporated into a cultural tradition that remained distinctly Plateau.

The horse probably reached the southern Plateau by 1730 (Haines 1938; Boxberger 1984). Stevens, writing in the 1850s, noted old men at The Dalles who related that the horse was first obtained in their grandfather's grandfather's time (Stevens 1860:139). The area of the Columbia plateau proved extremely hospitable to this animal and the herds prospered. The area to the west of the Columbia River near the mouth of the Snake River is known as Horse Heaven Hills because of the lush grass there that supported immense herds of animals. Part of the reason for establishing Fort Walla Walla nearby in 1818 was to access horses for fur trade company purposes.

The horse brought change to the southern Plateau, but it was change of degree rather than of kind. Ray (1939) and Anastasio (1975) describe the emergence of composite bands after the introduction of the horse. Previously autonomous villages began to cooperate together in order to provide protection from raiding enemies and to organize hunting expeditions to the Plains. By the time of Lewis and Clark the horse had become a dominant part of southern Plateau culture. Some individual families were said to own upwards of 1000 head and horses had become a source of wealth in their own right as well as a tool to access wealth through trading and hunting expeditions. The adoption of the horse accelerated and enhanced the yearly round of activities that previously characterized the Plateau. Expeditions to hunt buffalo became more common and movements to trade and exploit resources

across a broader area were facilitated.

The incorporation of Plains traits, such as the feathered war bonnet, pipestone, buffalo robes and the buffalo skin tipi replaced or were used alongside Plateau items. The mat-covered tipi, for example, was still in use in the southern Plateau throughout the 1800s but the buffalo skin tipi became more common until replaced in the late 1800s by the canvas tipi.

Religious movements on the southern Plateau in the 1800s were characterized by the appearance of prophets whose messages predicted the future and prescribed certain behavioral changes. Of the more famous of these prophets were the Wanapum Smohalla and the Palouse Kamiakin. They told of destructive forces that were coming and encouraged their followers to adhere to a traditional way of life. Natural disasters, such as volcanic eruptions or floods, are taken as signs of pending change. These phenomena also figure prominently in the oral traditions which tell of a time predating the prophetic movements of the 1800s. The Washat, or Seven Drum Religion, is the modern-day descendent of these prophetic movements. The Plateau prophecies, as a religious orientation, predates direct contact with Europeans but there is some disagreement as to whether it is representative of a traditional form of religious orientation or whether it is a form of Nativistic movement inspired by protohistoric influences from the outside (see Spier 1935; Strong 1945; Suttles 1957; Aberle 1959; Walker 1969; Miller 1985; Ruby and Brown 1989). Regardless of the academic arguments, it is clear that the Plateau Prophet movement is tied to traditional forms of religious orientation on the Plateau. Like other aspects of Plateau culture that shows adaptive change in the protohistoric period, the Plateau Prophet movement changed to accommodate changing circumstances.

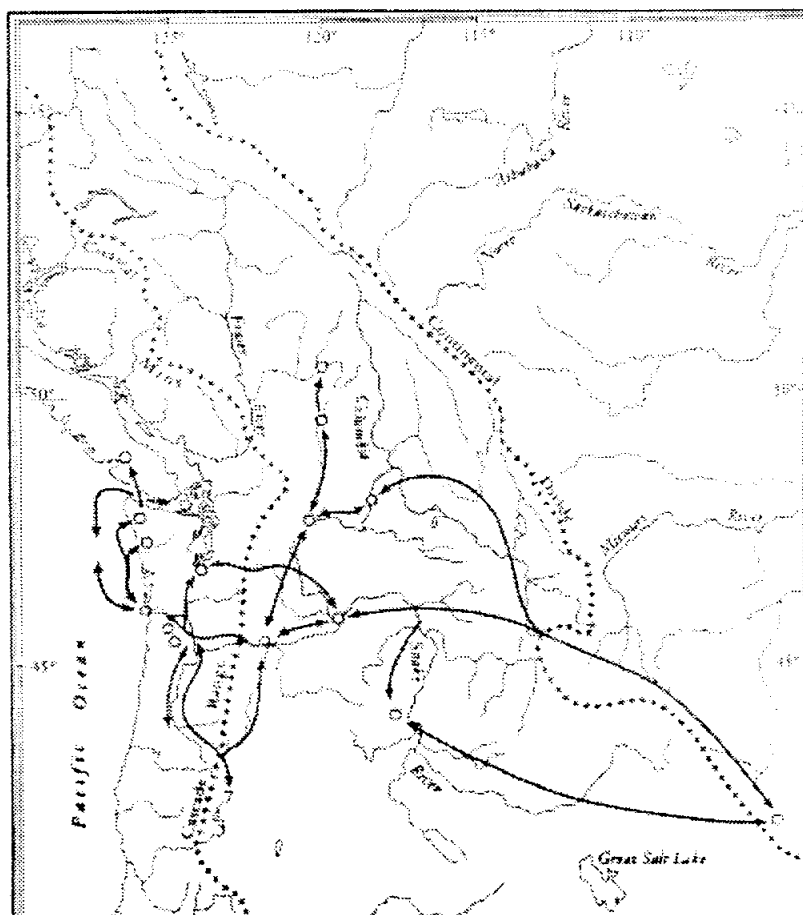
By the time of direct contact in 1805 the peoples of the southern Plateau were not only aware of the existence of Europeans but had acquired items of European manufacture and had encountered Europeans outside of the Plateau. They were a culture in the process of change and adaptation, just as they had been in the prehistoric period.

### **Ethnohistory**

Written records appear with the first contact between Plateau peoples and European-Americans on the Plateau proper. In September of 1805 the Lewis and Clark expedition descended the west flanks of the Rocky Mountains and encountered hundreds of southern Plateau peoples encamped on Weippe Prairie where they were gathering camas roots. Descending the Clearwater River to the Snake, the expedition traveled through Nez Perce and Palouse country to the mouth of the Snake River. Here the expedition camped for two and one-half days, from 16 to 18 October 1805. While preparing to descend the Columbia River to its mouth the explorers repaired their canoes and Captain Clark ascended the Columbia a short distance to the mouth of the Yakima River which he explored for a short distance. The observations made during this sojourn and during the time spent with the groups of the southern Plateau, especially the Nez Perce, on their return journey in April to June 1806, confirms much of what we know about pre-contact southern Plateau culture. Their descriptions of longhouses, subsistence activities and intergroup relations do not reveal anything surprising.

The next encounter was with David Thompson of the Northwest Fur Company and Robert Stuart and William Price Hunt of the American Fur Company, both in 1811 (Thompson 1916; Stuart and Hunt 1935). The American Fur Company, taken over by the Northwest Company in 1812, which in turn was absorbed by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1821, established the first trading posts along the Columbia River. Alexander Ross, chief clerk at Fort Okanogan, at the mouth of the Okanogan River, records making forays to the lower Yakima River valley to purchase horses. Present at these gatherings were not just Yakama but also Cayuse, Walla Walla, and Nez Perce (Ross 1956:137-138).

The importance of the area around the mouth of the Snake River was not lost on the fur traders, consequently it was decided to establish a trading post in the vicinity. As Stern (1993:9) points out, here was access to the villages of the lower Yakima River, trails that crossed here connected with the Nez Perce, Umatilla and Cayuse. The "buffalo road" led to the east over the Continental Divide and another trade route led to the west over the Cascade Mountains. Trails to the northward crossed here as well. Because of the importance of this area in the Native systems of trade the fur traders chose a site at Wallula, near the mouth of the Walla Walla River, about ten miles below the mouth of the Snake River. In 1818 Fort Nez Percés, later referred to as Fort Walla Walla, was established. From 1818 to 1855 the post carried on trade with Native peoples from throughout the southern Plateau, tapping into the network of intergroup relations that characterized the pre-contact Plateau culture (see Fig. 3).



**Fig. 3. Trade Networks of the Southern Plateau**  
(adapted from Stern 1993:23).

Through the 1820s and 1830s the primary interaction between the southern Plateau peoples and outsiders was carried out within the context of the fur trade. Native peoples had access to European manufactured items and the trade posts were provided with furs and other products from the countryside, such as horses and food.

Subsequent explorations include the United States Exploring Expedition of 1838 to 1842, under the command of Captain Charles Wilkes. A member of this expedition, Horatio Hale, was the first ethnographer to mention Plateau peoples (Hale 1846). Hale offered little new information to our understanding of Plateau peoples, merely confirming observations made by others.

Missionaries first worked among Plateau peoples in the 1830s although instruction in Christianity had taken place before through interaction with fur traders. The first permanent missions established in the southern Plateau were the Protestant missions near Walla Walla in 1836 and near Lapwai, Idaho in 1838. These efforts came to a temporary end in 1847 when the Cayuse blamed the Whitman mission for epidemic diseases which were devastating their people. The resulting Whitman massacre was just the beginning of a long period of discontent on the southern Plateau which included the Indian wars of 1855-56 and subsequent hostilities.

In 1843 the migration of immigrants destined for the Willamette Valley in Oregon began, mostly passing through the area of the southern Plateau. The "Oregon Trail," passed through the territory of the Nez Perce, Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla, although all groups of the southern Plateau felt the impact. By 1850 over 11,500 immigrants had passed over the trail, some beginning to take up residence on the Plateau. The pressures brought about by this migration culminated in the Treaty of Oregon in 1846 establishing that area south of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel as United States Territory. In 1853 the Oregon Territory was divided into Washington and Oregon Territories and the federal government set about to establish jurisdiction in the area through the establishment of military posts and the negotiation of treaties with the Native tribes.

Under the direction of Isaac Stevens, territorial governor of Washington and Joel Palmer, territorial governor of Oregon, the federal negotiators and the tribes of the southern Plateau met along the Walla Walla River in June of 1855 to negotiate and sign three treaties: the Walla Walla Treaty of 8 June 1855 with the Walla Walla, Cayuse and Umatilla; the Yakima Treaty of 9 June 1855 with the Yakama, Palouse, and twelve other bands; and the Nez Perce Treaty of 11 June 1855 with various

bands of the Nez Perce. These treaties established the lands ceded by the tribes to the federal government, over which the tribes retained certain rights, and established reservations which were to become the permanent homes of the tribes although provisions were established to allow the tribes to continue to travel off-reservation for resource gathering and other activities.

Immediate discontent with the treaties led to the wars of 1855-1856. During these wars the fur trade post at Fort Walla Walla was sacked and subsequently abandoned. The eventual defeat of the tribes and their subjugation led to the reservations becoming the dominant feature in their lives. Later land claims, which attempted to establish tribal boundaries, would depend very heavily on the negotiated cession of land identified in the three treaties signed at Walla Walla in 1855.

### **Indian Claims Commission**

The Indian Claims Commission was established in 1946 to settle any outstanding claims any Native American tribe might have against the federal government. Claims for unfulfilled treaty promises, inadequate compensation for lost land and resources, and other specific claims. The evidence presented to the court of claims was primarily ethnographic and historical. It was designed to focus on tribal distribution, village locations, resource use and changes brought about through the treaty era. Some of the reports were prepared by Verne Ray and are primarily replications of earlier work that he had done (especially Ray 1936; 1939). The other reports, prepared by Robert Suphan and Stuart Chalfant, also repeat information contained in the traditional ethnographies. Therefore this discussion will focus just on the tribal distributions discussed in the reports.

The Indian Claims Commission reports were prepared on behalf of a client. The tribes and the federal government employed anthropologists and while the research aims for objectivity there is always the understanding that client needs are incorporated into the interpretations. Ray's earlier contention that co-utilization of territories was the rule rather than the exception on the Plateau is apparent in the reports. Since Chalfant and Suphan depend heavily on Ray's work they tend to reiterate the same point of view.

The following reports were consulted for this report: *Ethnological study of the aboriginal territory of the Nez Perce in Idaho, Oregon and Washington, 1805-1855*, by Stuart Chalfant (Docket 175); *Ethnological report on the Umatilla, Walla Walla and Cayuse relative to socio-political organization and land use in Oregon and Washington, 1818-1855*, by Robert Chalfant (Docket 264); *Ethnohistoric report on aboriginal land occupancy and utilization by Palus*, by Stuart Chalfant (Docket 161); *Ethnology of Palus Tribe and Columbia Chelan, Entiat, Wenatchee of Washington*, by Verne Ray (Docket 161); and *Anthropology, Columbia Salish aboriginal lands use and occupancy in Washington to 1855* by Stuart Chalfant (Docket 224).

For the Umatilla, Walla Walla and Cayuse, Suphan argues, following Ray, for visualizing "territory" as composed of land around villages that were composed of members of several groups. Fishing sites close to the village belonged to that village, however, others may use it. All other subsistence areas were unclaimed, trespass and the concept of boundaries were unknown and so these peripheral

areas would be shared by a number of different groups.

Although Ray delineates boundaries on his maps of the Plateau he nevertheless argues that the greater the distance from the village locations the more vague the lines of demarcation, thus away from the rivers where the villages were located a sense of boundary faded out. Suphan argues that even a sense of boundary was non-existent in proximity to the villages and based on historical sources creates a picture of mixed groups of people occupying villages and using the lands nearby. This was especially true of areas around the junction of the Yakima and Snake Rivers with the Columbia River.

Each of the treaties negotiated at Walla Walla in 1855 described tribal boundaries for the purpose of ceding those lands to the federal government. Suphan believes that these should not be considered to reflect existing boundaries or to imply their existence at all.

In conclusion, Suphan presents evidence relating specifically to the area around the lower Yakima River and the Columbia River near the mouth of the Yakima River. This area was used by the Yakama, Wanapum, Palouse, Cayuse, Umatilla, Walla Walla and Nez Perce, both for the fishing sites located there as well as for trade and other purposes.

By contrast, Chalfant argues that the Nez Perce had a definite sense of territory but use of their territory was granted to the Cayuse, Umatilla, Palouse and Yakama, especially at camas grounds. Chalfant claims that while the Nez Perce made use of fishing areas along the lower Snake River and on the Columbia at The Dalles, they did not consider this as part of their "territory." Chalfant bases these conclusions primarily on linguistic similarity of the Nez Perce pointing out that the territory designated on the maps submitted in evidence to the Indian Claims Commission are not meant to imply political boundaries. Political boundaries became a necessity through the treaty and it was not until that time that lands were defined by definite boundaries.

The Palouse claim illustrates the shift in political realities. The Palouse presented a separate claim before the Indian Claims Commission, identifying their territory as extending from the entire course of the Palouse River to the Washington-Idaho border, and along the Snake River to Khatloutus and all the land between. In Ray's report he ascribed the land along the lower Snake River to its mouth to the Wanapum. The court of claims determined that descendants of the Palouse resided on both the Colville and Yakama Reservations and that the Palouse should not have a separate claim. Therefore the determination of claims for the Palouse territories was split between the Colvilles and Yakamas.

### **Native Histories**

A discussion of the oral traditions found on the Columbia Plateau, and shared by the Native peoples of the region follows. Due to time and accessibility constraints, this discussion has been limited to the published material, and of the published material to those sources drawn from the wells of tradition directly. A considerable corpus of oral traditions exist (see Hines 1976). Therefore, works of questionable utility were left out (Clark 1963; Judson 1910; Corneilson 1911; Kuykendall 1889). The

materials were excluded either because they were obviously transformed significantly, such as editing out references to bodily functions or sexuality, or the narratives are available in more complete form in other works. The works were selected based on the editors or collectors identification of informants, presence of Native terms and language, and the expressed methodology of the editor in collecting and presenting the narratives for publication. The database available and meeting the above criteria finds an overrepresentation of Nez Perce traditions (Aoki and Walker 1989, Spinden 1917, Farrand 1917, Phinney 1934, Ramsey 1977, Walker 1980, Walker and Matthews 1994, Trafzer, 1998). Nevertheless there exists a sufficient amount of material from the other key groups, the Yakama, Umatilla, Cayuse, Wanapum and the Confederated Tribes of the Colville, to make possible the presentation of some overall generalities found in the oral literature, and common to the larger Columbia Plateau culture area. A brief overview of some of the more specific features found in the narratives, with an emphasis on settlement patterns and the identification and explanation of topographical and geological features, will illustrate that there are features common among the groups on the Plateau.

A few general comments on the oral traditions of the southern Plateau people are necessary before a presentation of the common themes can be discussed. First, oral traditions are not merely stories, legends or fables. Rather they describe the original history of the Native peoples, which on the Columbia Plateau took place in a time before humans occupied the land (Mourning Dove 1933). This time is characterized by Trafzer (1998:1) as the time of the Animal People, or the "first creation." This is the time of Coyote, Grizzly Bear, Chickadee, Buffalo, Meadow Lark and all the other Animal People represented in the oral tradition. It is important to note that during this period in the earth's history these beings possessed many forms, which were interchanged according to need or desire. They were not absolutely human, animal or deity (Walker and Matthews 1994:4). Thus, their behaviors do not present a one-to-one correlation to the behavior of the group affiliated with the modern teller. These narratives conform to the traditional definition of oral history, and describe the origin of certain events which have occurred in both prehistoric and historic periods (McWhorter 1952, Ramsey 1977, Trafzer 1998, Ray 1933, Hines 1991).

It was during the time of the "second creation" (Trafzer 1998), marked by the time when humans inhabited the Columbia Plateau, that the Animal Peoples of the first period were confined to the form we see today. The loss of physical fluidity in the time of the second creation marked also the loss of aural-oral fluidity or the ability for all forms of natural life to communicate (Trafzer 1998:2-3, Mourning Dove 1933).

Narratives set in the time of the first creation present creative models that can be artificially delimited into categories for efficacy. For our purposes two major categories can be identified, they are not mutually exclusive, they are often found together, and they often serve different purposes even within the same tradition. The division can be expressed as that between traditions that explain a presence or an absence of a geological trait, topographical feature or biological life form, and traditions that establish a moral, political or economic law for the Indian people of the second creation to follow (Trafzer 1998:2-5).

Scholars working with oral traditions that describe the time of the Animal People have attempted to create categories as an organizational or analytical device to varying degrees of success or usefulness (Walker 1980, Trafzer 1998). Walker and Matthews (1994) attempt to categorize Coyote myths by Coyote's interaction with other beings, like Monsters, Grizzly Bears or Women and Children. This delimitation is exclusive to Coyote narratives and focused singularly on what oral traditions can tell us about social relationships. The focus here requires more than an understanding of the development or regulation of the social sphere of activity. Therefore another category for oral traditions that recognizes the utility of oral narratives for spatial orientation to the local environment and its ecological particulars is essential.

Trafzer (1998) analyzes all traditions as serving to establish some sort of social law, but in the process neglects other parts of the oral traditions which may seem secondary or peripheral due to their imbedded placement within the story. One prominent Nez Perce narrative known as "Coyote and Elbow-child" (Phinney 1934, Walker 1980), or just "Elbow-child" (Walker and Matthews 1994) illustrates this point. In this tradition Coyote has five daughters and lives with his comrade/cousin/brother Fox. One day Coyote gets a son from a lump/boil on his elbow. Highly prized by Coyote, this son dies at the hands of Coyote's daughters, who tickle him to a laughing death. Coyote in turn kills all his daughters save one, whom Fox helps escape. The details vary with the different versions, but in all tellings, the escaped daughter brings a retribution down on her father by returning in a "mass of fire," that will "roll over the land" (Walker 1980:141-143) destroying all but Fox. This tradition does more than lay down a moral law. In the available versions the details surrounding the core event, the coming of the fire-daughter, vary considerably. Thus, there may be two things occurring, one is the reinforcement of a moral edit, but this in turn may be accomplished by relating recriminations to natural geological or ecological events like an eruption, a forest fire, or an epidemic. Other, more commonly expressed narratives will further illustrate this point.

Traditional histories found among the Native peoples on the southern Plateau do not begin with a creation event, nor are there any narratives that make reference to a migration from other regions (Ray 1933:130, McWhorter 1952:4). Rather the oral traditions begin at the end of the first historical period with the commonly shared tradition among the Sahaptin speakers of "Coyote and the Monster," and move back in history, or prehistory, from there (Farrand 1917:148-149, Walker and Matthews 1994: 9-12, Phinney 1934:18, Cornelison 1911:13-15, Trafzer 1998:146-148). Coyote and the Monster is a traditional narrative that explains the distribution of the different Native groups from one ecologically interred source [the Monster]. The beginning of the narrative always places Coyote on the banks of the Columbia, particularly at Celilo Falls. Coyote is then alerted to the presence of the swallowing/inhaling Monster who resides in the east. Coyote leaves by way of Salmon River and meets the Monster who resides near present-day Kamiah, Idaho. Coyote tricks the Monster into inhaling him, and upon being swept into the Monster's mouth distributed such roots as camas onto the surrounding hills. Once inside the Monster, Coyote travels to its heart and begins to cut it away. The Monster is killed and its parts are distributed throughout the Plateau and Plains becoming the different Native groups. This distribution of parts and concurrent



naming of tribal groups is highly variable. What is most notable about these accounts is that the origin of modern Indian peoples on the Plateau is geologically linked, as the heart of the Monster remains in stone in the Kamiah Valley in Idaho, and the groups on the Plateau today have a monumental source that is part of all things within and on the Columbia Plateau. The swallowing Monster, by having taken into itself all natural or biological things found in the region, allowed for the creation of the modern Indian humans by Coyote from this very substance which is at once part of the land, animal and supernatural domains.

This event marked the end of the first period, of which the rest of this discussion is concerned. Before Coyote distributed the different groups, he and others made the region habitable for modern human life. Most groups have an oral tradition describing a shift or adjustment in the climate on the Plateau personified through a battle between "Warmweather and Coldweather," or between Coyote and the Coldweathers. (Ray 1933:163, Teit 1917:74, Trafzer 1998:62, Walker and Matthews 1994:157). All of the versions make reference to a time when Cold was so powerful as to kill many people, and freeze the river. In most versions Coyote decrees upon the vanquishing of the Coldweathers that no more will cold be strong enough to kill many people, as when the new people come they will need to be plenty in number. The details of this story vary geographically. The Yakama, Wanapum and the Nez Perce have the battle between the Coldweathers [Cold Wind] and the Warmweathers [Chinook Wind] take place at the Dalles. Physical evidence of this battle can still be seen by the scar made upon the earth as Chinook Wind [Warmweather] dragged a sturgeon to his lodge just above the Yakima River, and its tail left a vertical imprint in the land (Trafzer 1998:62-66). The common presence of this story in the traditional history of most groups on the Plateau, may indicate a time depth into a previous time when temperatures were much lower. For example in a Wasco/Wishram version after Cold Wind has been thrown by Chinook Wind, the narrator attests that:

The ice at that moment melted in the nChe-wana [Columbia River], ran down to the ocean. There is now only a little ice in the winter, a little ice during a few moons only. This was many thousand snows ago. There is no record, but there is the talk (Trafzer 1998:77-87).

The most prevalent tradition in the literature and found in virtually every published collection from the Plateau involves Coyote tricking the five sisters and breaking the dam at The Dalles-Celilo Falls to free the salmon. The circumstances setting up the event and occurring after the dam is torn down vary. For example, the Salishan literature has Coyote returning promptly to the Kettle Falls area after breaking the dam at Celilo, and creating a falls there (Ray 1933:173, Gould 1917:103), or focusing his attentions on the tributaries in Nespelem, Sanpoil or Okanagon country such as the Similkameen River, Okanagon River, Nespelem Creek and Spokane River and making the various Falls there (Teit 1917:68-70, Gould 1917:102-103). The Nez Perce literature has Coyote at the Snake River to begin, and through varied circumstances comes upon the five sisters at Celilo Falls who guard the fish dam there. Most versions do not continue with Coyote distributing the salmon, but instead shift into a description of the presence of a moral law (Walker and Matthews 1994:43, Phinney 1934:380, Farrand 1917:144, Aoki 1979:493). A Yakama version has Coyote living in the east and happening upon the Dalles where he meets the

five sisters and eventually frees the salmon by breaking the fish dam. The Yakama version has Coyote distributing the salmon as he travels up the Columbia River. Coyote stops first at Yakima River and Satus where he is treated well and thus supplies these waterways with salmon runs. He goes on to Toppenish but is spurned and thus leaves nothing in the creek (Trafzer 1998:110-114).

Common in the oral literature is an accounting for the absence of buffalo on the Columbia Plateau. There are two prevalent renditions, yet in both Coyote is traveling to the east, into buffalo country, and aspires from there to bring the animals back west onto the Plateau. Both accounts describe an absence of a biological resource, but the first account ties this to the presence of a geological feature, while the second introduces a moral law. In the former account Coyote travels to the east and herds a group of buffalo to just above Celilo Falls. Here Coyote rests and realizes that there is nothing for the buffalo to eat. Thus, he turns the group of buffalo to rock where they can still be seen today (Walker and Matthews 1994:69-71, Aoki and Walker 1989:396). The more common version has Coyote traveling east and coming upon a buffalo skull. Coyote disrespects the remains in various ways, thus angering the buffalo bull back to life. Coyote remonstrates by making the buffalo new horns with which to reclaim his lost herd. The buffalo, now pleased with Coyote, gives him a buffalo cow to take back west to the Plateau. Coyote must travel five days without touching her. On the fifth night Coyote touches her and she returns immediately to the east. Coyote is not given another chance, and there has not been buffalo on the Columbia Plateau since (Mourning Dove 1934:63, Farrand 1917:190, Teit 1917:77, Aoki and Walker 1989:483, Spinden 1917:190-191). Phinney (1934:75-77) records yet another version. Two brothers marry into an eastern group, but the younger of the brothers pines to return to the western country. He is packed onto a buffalo and instructed not to look at the herd of moose, wild sheep and buffaloes he sees until he arrives home. He fails to comply and the herd of animals returns to the east. Thus morality is used to explain the absence of an important resource.

There is some evidence in the traditional oral history that buffalo was once part of the ancient fauna familiar to peoples on the Columbia Plateau. For example, one narrative in Trafzer's (1998:38-43) collection describing the origin of fire has a meeting of the Animal Council where

Different Animal People showed their minds, their plans for stealing the fire. Buffalo, the largest of all, talked to go. But Buffalo brought no good power to cheat the Fire People. Elk was the same way. Cougar, Fox, Martin, Lynx, Porcupine, Squirrel, Weasel, Whistler, Raccoon and Muskrat.

The inclusion of buffalo in the faunal assembly is interesting because it is suggestive of its presence on the Plateau in previous times. There is a Nez Perce tradition recited in Phinney (1934:4) in which Coyote moving "upstream" comes upon a buffalo bull and beseeches him to be made into a buffalo also. The buffalo complies, and Coyote is made over. Coyote loses this countenance when trying to make another Coyote into a buffalo as he was made. While this tradition seems to fall into the class of describing the presence of a moral law, the presence of buffalo, in healthy and more prosperous condition than Coyote, is important as it counters

the notion that buffalo could not be sustained on the Plateau. The presence of buffalo on the Plateau is supported by archaeological evidence (Chatters, et al. 1995; Osborne 1953). Chatters, et al. describe a 2100 year old bison kill site near Kennewick. Osborne suggests that the elimination of buffalo on the Plateau may have been due to over hunting, brought about by the acquisition of the horse. This, then, lends credence to the moral argument of the oral tradition.

Oral traditions establish a moral, economic or political law and/or describe the presence or absence of a geological or biological phenomenon. The rest of this discussion will look specifically at the latter narratives with an emphasis on their placement and intimate situation within the environment. These are highly variable and they depend on the group and their shared knowledge of the landscape, which is experienced specifically. For example, Nez Perce traditions exhibit a very mobile, nomadic Coyote, who moves frequently up and down the river courses, and then to the east or Plains country, and then to the mountains, and back to the Snake River (Walker and Matthews 1994, Aoki and Walker 1989, Phinney 1934, Spinden 1917, Trafzer 1998). Walker and Matthews (1994:227) advance the notion of Coyote's movements being consistent with Nez Perce prehistory and traditional settlement patterns. An example of Nez Perce traditions illustrating the nomadic nature of Coyote, with geographic and ecological references, include "Coyote Visits White Mountain" (Walker and Matthews 1994:173). Here Coyote travels to the Mt. Adams area to visit a daughter, and subsequently distributes mountain goats throughout all the mountains. In "Coyote's Wars" (Farrand 1917:153) one version begins, "After Coyote has cut the channels in the falls (probably at The Dalles), he went east, and found that all the people had crossed the mountains into buffalo country. So he followed them." Some others include "Spalding Memorial Rock" (Trafzer 1998:203), where *Heyoomyummy*, "Woman Grizzly Bear," a Nez Perce, tells of the creation of the giant landmark that once stood on a bluff overlooking Lapwai, Idaho. It is told that once Coyote and an old man struggled for control, and both turned each other into rock. Coyote remains against a bluff on the side of the valley opposite where *Pe'li'yi'yi*, "the Old Man" once stood. Finally a very common tradition in the Nez Perce literature, and also found in Umatilla tradition, is "Coyote and his Daughter" (Aoki and Walker 1989:417, or see "Coyote the Interloper" in Phinney 1934:268, or see "How *Its-i-yi-i* Lost Immortality to the Tribes" in Trafzer 1998:260, or see "A Weyekin Love Story" in Cornelison 1911:18). The first part of the narrative has Coyote's daughter tending to him by gathering food. She comes upon the Otter brothers who gather salmon for her and ask to marry her. Coyote refuses to have his daughter marry a fisherman, and instead gives her to the Wolf brothers, as he claims to desire venison over steelhead or salmon. This narrative is important as it points out the dependence on both land mammals and fish through the movement of Coyote's daughter between the river and streams and the mountains, and Coyote's preference for deer meat, and the greater emphasis on the value of hunting skills over a fisherman's ability.

Traditions from other groups like the Yakama, Wanapum, Cayuse and Salishan groups like the Sanpoil and the Nespelem, also reflect patterns of traditional settlement and are tied to the Plateau area. A narrative in Ramsey's (1977:15) collection, "How the Cayuse got Fire" describes the dormant volcano of Mt. Hood and how "...at one time all the fire in the world was inside of Mt. Hood. From the top of the mountain fire and smoke used to come as if from a chimney, and all inside of

the mountain was a great lake of fire." This story is not linked to any specific eruption but Mt. Hood has erupted several times in the last 10,000 years; the most recent major eruptions were about 200 years ago. This same narrative explains the creation of the John Day River, why the trees are so thick on the mountainsides, and why willows grow along the banks of the Columbia River. In Ray's (1933:176) collection of Sanpoil and Nespelem narratives, "Unsuccessful Suitor" begins "In the old days the Columbia River flowed down the Grand Coulee instead of down its present channel." This statement immediately situates the narrative in space as well as in time. It tells the listener where and how long ago an event occurred. It connects it to an event that occurred over 10,000 years ago when geologists tell us the Columbia River did flow through Grand Coulee.

Trafzer's (1998) publication of oral traditions gathered by Lucullus McWhorter in the early 1900s contains narratives told by Native American informants who are identified with the Yakama, Wanapum, Nez Perce, Wasco and Wishram. This collection is unique in that the majority of the narratives make reference to specific geological features identified by the story tellers. A summary of the most striking and detailed of the narratives will illustrate.

"The *Qui-yiah*, Five-Brothers" told by Simon Goudy of Yakama and Klickitat ancestry begins:

It was the first morning that five brothers, the *Qui-yiah* [Spears from a deer horn], came along the Cascade Mountains bordering the Kittitas country where Ellensburg [Washington] now stands. They saw a big lake. The water covered all the valley, flooded all the level land.

The five brothers then schemed to break the dams holding the water in the valley. The youngest spears the beaver chief responsible for the flooded valley, and the beaver rushes to escape to the Columbia River:

He rushed across the big lake to break the *we-hon-me wah-chesh* [beaver dam], which he had built at the canyon of the Yakima River, covering all the Kittitas Valley with water. He broke the dam, swam on the roaring flood, to Selah Gap. There he had another *wah-chesh*. This he burst, running through it, letting all the water free. He now swam to *Pah-qy-ti-koot* [Union Gap, Washington] where he had his last *wah-chesh*. All the level land was under water, the Moxee and Ahtanum valleys. The flood backed up. Filled all the plain, all the desert to the hills above *Mool-mool* [Ft. Simcoe]. Filled the valley above *Pah-qy-ti-koot* [Union Gap]. It was such a force that it broke through to the *nChe-wana*, below *Top-tut* [near Prosser, Washington].

After all the land went dry, the beaver was skinned and its ribs were thrown to the different regions, creating the different groups, from the Puget Sound Indians, Wanapums, Toppenish, Wenatchee, Okanagon, Nespelems, Wasco, Nez Perce and Umatillas (Trafzer 1998:54-61). This narrative is suggestive of the period in geologic history when glaciers, in a state of advance, created large lakes. The retreat of the glaciers caused massive flooding in the area, as referenced in the tradition above, as the lakes drained down through the Columbia River course into

the ocean.

Another oral tradition, "*Sho-pow-tan and the Tah-tah Kleah*" told by *Tamwash*, a Yakama, takes place in the "days of the present Indians" and makes reference to the use of Eagle Rock, *Tic-teah*, that once stood in the current of the Naches River, but today stands on the south side of the river. It was the site where *Sho-pow-tan* [Small Owl] tricked and killed *Tah-tah Kleah*. This tradition is once again important in placing the events in time as well as in space (Trafzer 1998:117-118).

"How *Its-i-yi-i* Was Thwarted in Attempt to Change the Course of the *In-che-lim* River" told by *Hemene Moxmox*, Yellow Wolf, a Nez Perce man, begins with Coyote traveling up the Columbia River. He rests himself on a mountain near Moses Coulee, Washington, and from there studies the river and decides it should run another way. He cuts a channel, now known as Moses Coulee, but this is too short to divert the Columbia. Coyote is further distracted from his original plan and all the roots he brought to be floated down the new channel of the Columbia River were left growing at Moses Coulee. The roots are named and number some twenty or thirty. As noted above Nez Perce oral history places great emphasis on the utilization and integration of the mountains into their traditional economy, but commonly tie the events in the narrative to a river source at the same time (Trafzer 1998:160-164). Again, these stories do not specify a specific time, and that is not the nature of these traditions, but they are suggestive of events that occurred in the distant past according to Western science.

The Wasco narratives told mostly by *Ana-whoa*, "Black Bear," almost always situate main events at The Dalles, and stress sedentary living patterns (Trafzer 1998:62, 89, 121, 156). "Bridge of the Gods" (1998:197-202), situated downriver from The Dalles, is particularly descriptive. Here Coyote is determined to battle Thunder-bird the maker of thunder and lightening, and the keeper of the law of the five mountains. Coyote crosses the five mountains and meets Thunder-bird.

Coyote, above him and invisible, now brought a greater noise than ever, a crash like the bursting of this world. The five laws, the five mountains, crumbled and fell. The fragments, floating down the *nChe-wana*, created the many islands along its course. The giant body of *Noh-we-nah klah* [Thunder-bird] formed the great Bridge across the wana at the Cascades. This Bridge was of the first mountain and was mostly stone. It stood for many hundreds of snows, no one knows how long, and then it fell. The Indians said that in time it would fall and it did. Some of my ancestors, old people, saw and passed under that Bridge. I do not know the number of snows since that time, but there are many.

Black Bear, like other Native tellers, emphasizes time-depth, but de-emphasizes specificity. She legitimates the details of her narrative by including a mention of those that have seen the actual bridge over the Columbia River, but placing the narrative in a linear framework is not part of the telling.

"The Story of *Whe-amish* or *Chi-nach*" told by Mrs. Skouken John, a Yakama woman, tells of the formation of the Chi-nach or Whe-amish, the highest peak in the Toppenish Mountain Range. Chi-nach was a spiritual leader who the made the

mistake of taking a second wife.

The people on this Thappanish side of the valley were rather guilty, for they sided with him. They, as you see, retained their red color, but lost their white paint. Along the other side of the valley and across the Yakima River, the people retained their white paint but lost their red color.

At that time had the old man done right, the people would have been taught a written language.

*Pot-tee-mas* [carved or hammered marks] is a boulder which weighs several hundred pounds and has carved inscriptions on it. It is the story of *Chi-nach* and his wives written by themselves. No one now can read this history. The boulder was through some mysterious power transported a considerable distance up the mountain side west of *Mool-mool* [Ft. Simcoe]. It was moved after the wrecking of the great civilization, by *Chi-nach* taking a new wife.

This tradition ties a description of a geological feature, the Toppenish Mountain Range, to the existence of certain petroglyphs found in the region.

Finally, Relander's (1986) study of the Wanapum people yields some of the only published material on this group. Use of this resource is problematic; we listen to Relander's main informant, Wanapum Washat leader and nephew of Wanapum Prophet Smohalla, Puck Hyah Toot, speak through Relander, but a careful analysis does yield some valuable aspects of Wanapum traditional oral history. For example, Relander includes a telling of the history behind the law regulating the treatment of the Wanapum people's most precious resource, the salmon (Relander 1986:24-27). The history ties the foundation of a social and moral law to geological events in the region's prehistory, thus grounding or defining a social narrative in environmental terms. Here Nami Piap [or the Creator] warned three times in the days before *Speelyi* [Coyote] that the salmon should be treated a certain way, and should not be caught with a dip net in the fashion used by the groups lower on the Columbia River.

He told how fire came once long ago to burn out the world. Another time, water overran the land; and a third time, the wind came with talons that tore the earth and crushed the forgetful ones... Nami Piap has told the people that there will be one more warning, and then the world will turn over... The last warning was so long ago that no one remembers when. (Relander 1986:24)

The narrative goes on to explain that two men, Sun Man and Abalone Man, lived on the Sacred Island, Chalwash Chilni, at P'na, a village in the Priest Rapids area.

Sun Man and Abalone Man were friends until they quarreled about the law that salmon could not be caught with a dip net... Abalone Man, being the stronger killed Sun Man and cut off his head. Sun Man's body was thrown into the river and there, with arms and legs outstretched and

head not far away, it remains to this day. Because Abalone Man killed Sun Man, Nami Piap was angry and sent darkness. He filled the air with fire and ashes. (Relander 1986:27)

After this transgression, Nami Piap set Sun Man to the sky and it was always summer. Once again the people forgot the right ways, and Nami Piap took the sun and made it cold and dark. When the sun was given back to the people, it was only given half of the time. Nami Piap then thought about his Indian people, and his thoughts became food resources whose imprints like those of the Chinook salmon and the *skolkol* root can be seen today on the Sacred Rock Island.

References to volcanic eruptions figure prominently in the oral traditions and histories describing the foundation of the Washat religion among the Wanapum peoples as illustrated in the narrative described above. Eruptions of different volcanoes in the area have occurred at various times in the past. Volcanic ash layers are often used by archaeologists in dating archaeological remains. However, in oral traditions a specific volcanic mountain may be named but as with the oral traditions in general time specificity is not important. A volcanic eruption figures in the creation story of the Palouse people, whose plight after European expansion influenced Smohalla's doctrines (Relander 1986:91-95). It is suggested (perhaps by Relander) that the killing and ill-treatment of the people of Palouse was retribution for their forgetting the ways of the older people who lived by the instruction of Nami Piap. Nami Piap then sent "nomadic people who came down the river and overran the Palouse country." Cougar told the old people that they must live a certain way or face extinction. The old people agreed, but once again one person, an old medicine woman, disobeyed.

The earth shook as the voice ceased. The world turned dark and ashes whirled in the sky. Lava, bubbling from the pinnacles, poured in a hot, consuming torrent down the mountainsides. The people fled along the Snake River and the invaders, higher up on the stream, were smothered in their stone-built houses beneath the molten rock.

In the heart of that reborn country where the rivers [Snake and Palouse] converge was the deceitful woman doctor. She had been turned to stone, a witness forever that Nami Piap will not tolerate deceitfulness and forgetfulness among his people. The Indians called her Standing Rock (Relander 1986:94-95).

Again, moral law is imbedded within the geology and the geography of the region. Volcanic eruptions have been linked to other prophecies on the Plateau, especially those occurring in the protohistoric period (Hunn 1990:247).

Wallula figures prominently in the Wanapum tellings, especially because it was the birthplace of the Prophet and spiritual leader, Smohalla. A narrative explaining the presence of the two massive boulders on the bluff at Wallula Gap tells that they were once two evil, cannibal women of the ancient days who were killed by a great bird and turned to stone by Nami Piap. Old time Wanapums say that the cannibal women are pictured on the cliffs at Vantage. Young people go to Wallula Gap and the Two Sisters still when seeking their guardian spirits (Relander 1986:46-47, pl.

8).

This is a sampling from the selection of published oral traditions of the Native peoples of the southern Plateau. From this selection one can readily distinguish certain features: the lack of a migration tradition; the environmentally imbedded nature of oral tradition; the time depth illustrated through the residual knowledge concerning events that occurred during the post-glacial period; and the universal dependence on the Columbia River and its tributaries, due to the importance of salmon as one of the primary staples of the traditional diet.

## Interpretation of Data

### Limitations of the Ethnographic Record

Much of the ethnographic record for the southern Plateau was produced in the early 1900s or in the tradition of North American anthropology of that era. The historical particularist approach dominated the first half of the 1900s. In this approach Native cultures were discussed as if they were extinct, or soon to become extinct, phenomena of the past. There was little attention to the dynamics of culture change and the remarkable tenacity with which Native cultures adapted to domination by the United States. The picture of Native cultures that emerges from this approach is one of an unchanging past. Cultures are frozen in time as if they did not change before European contact and all change after contact was in the direction of assimilation into the dominant culture. By today's standards these are unacceptable assumptions.

Two basic methodological problems become apparent if we accept the limitations of the early ethnographies. First, research that utilizes the ethnographic record to extrapolate back in time must do so with discretion. Cultural patterns described in the early 1900s were undergoing rapid change. Which traits are indicative of a distant past and which traits are introduced or adaptations must be considered with attention to their usefulness for comparison. The second problem is the assumption that the cultures described in the ethnographic literature are accurate depictions of how the Native people were actually living at the time immediately before contact. Teit, for example, discusses horses as if they were part of traditional Plateau culture but selectively culls out other observations, such as European-style clothing and other adaptations that existed at the time. This leads to the inevitable conclusion that the traditional ethnographies must be used with discretion and cross-checked with other sources in order to assess the validity of specific ethnographic statements.

Similarly the materials presented in the Indian Claims Commission reports were gathered by anthropologists with a specific objective. The materials were collected on behalf of a client. While the research strives for objectivity there is always the understanding that client needs are incorporated into the interpretations. Chalfant, for example, writing on behalf of the federal government, was more specific on tribal territories and down-played the nature of intergroup relations. Ray, writing on behalf of the tribes, made a case for consideration of as large an area as possible. None of the Indian Claims Commission reports are specific about boundaries but instead depend on lists of villages and fishing sites to suggest focal points of specific groups and assert that peripheral areas were common areas shared by neighboring



groups. This follows Ray's earlier work on intergroup relations on the Plateau.

More recent ethnographic work on the Plateau has focussed on specific topics. With the realization that total ethnography is impossible, research instead has covered such topics as kinship, trade, resource use and issues concerning cultural properties. Certainly these works rely heavily on the traditional ethnographies but do so with a critical approach. Incorporating ethnography with archaeology, historical documents and oral traditions presents a more complete picture of cultural phenomena and presents Plateau culture as a dynamic process rather than a static entity.

### **Limitations of Archaeological Evidence as Related to Ethnography and History**

In comparing the archaeological record with the ethnographic descriptions we can see that in consideration of tool types, resource utilization, and house types there is evidence of a process of change, of gradual adaptation and the transition of cultural traits. The archaeological record does not indicate change brought about through in-migration although there is evidence of long-term trading with groups outside the Plateau. The archaeological record is dependent upon the interpretation of material remains and as such it can inform us of changes in material culture. It cannot, in the absence of a continuous record of human remains, tell us if the same biological population was present throughout the entire prehistoric era.

### **Limitations of Ethnohistory**

In the past ethnohistorians relied primarily on documentary evidence to explicate cultural phenomenon. While this approach did get away from the synchronic nature of traditional ethnography it was also limited in its time depth. One technique that ethnohistorians developed is known as "upstreaming." Upstreaming is the technique principally employed by Haines (1938) and Stern (1993; 1996). It refers to a research process that begins with a specific period in time and works backwards in time to the earliest written records. Mining such sources as explorer's journals, diaries, trade post records, and government documents for bits of information enables the ethnohistorian to piece together an historical record.

Written records on the Plateau begin with the Lewis and Clark expedition in 1805. What we can glean from their journals supports much of the ethnographic record and using these materials in conjunction with one another increases the validity of ethnographic statements. The ethnohistoric record is inadequate in the attempt to extrapolate into the prehistoric past. We know that European-introduced influences, such as disease, religious ideology and the horse, reached the Plateau well in advance of direct contact with Europeans. It is also apparent that Plateau people had contacted Europeans outside the Plateau before 1805. What seems to be the case is that these changes were incorporated into Plateau society in ways that did not dramatically alter the general patterns of Plateau culture. In the absence of written records we can only approximate the time when these changes occurred and speculate on the cultural change that they induced. It is dangerous to assume that recorded changes evident in the historic documentation can be applied backwards in time into protohistoric or prehistoric times.

### **Limitations of Oral Traditions**

Oral traditions are a form of "emic history," statements about the past that have been passed on by word of mouth. Plateau cultures are rich in oral traditions that can be used in conjunction with the ethnography and history to create a more complete picture of Plateau history. Undoubtedly oral traditions change over time, nevertheless there was a capacity for remembering stories as they were told and while individual story tellers may change the telling according to their own particular style or to fit the particular audience, the basic elements of the traditions persist over time. Undoubtedly oral traditions refer to a distant past. Attempting to use them to create a time line or delineate a date, however, does not meet with much success. Oral traditions relate events like floods or volcanic eruptions that can be dated but which have occurred at different times in the distant past. Plateau peoples believe that they have been where they are now from the beginning of time. The period of transition in the Coyote cycles, when the humans become the people, is described as a period of cataclysmic change. The melting of ice, floods, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, are all events that occurred at the end of the Pleistocene. This is in accordance with the scientific traditions that argue humans first populated the Plateau over 10,000 years ago.

### **Conclusions**

The ethnographic and historic database for the southern Plateau suggests that the area where the Kennewick human remains were found is within the traditional use area of the five tribes who have claimed cultural affiliation with the remains. It is my opinion that the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Indian Nation; the Nez Perce Tribe; the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation; the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation; and the Wanapum Band are the heirs of succession to the area. The following ethnographic connections support my opinion. The Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation through the Yakama and Palouse; the Nez Perce Tribe through the Nez Perce; the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation through the Walla Walla, Umatilla and Cayuse; the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation through the Palouse and Nez Perce; and the Wanapum, a non-federally recognized tribe with historic presence in the area.

Used in conjunction, the protohistoric, ethnographic, oral traditions and historic database suggest a cultural continuity in the southern Plateau extending into the prehistoric past. Cultural change occurred, as it does in all cultures, but this change can be seen as transitional and continuous with new cultural forms emerging out of previous cultural forms. There is no evidence of in-migration causing cultural transformation. Rather, the adoption of cultural traits originating outside the Plateau, e.g., the Plains, Great Basin, Northwest Coast, were incorporated into existing Plateau traditions.

Plateau oral traditions place the historic tribes in their present location since the beginning of time. It is impossible, with any degree of certainty, to demonstrate a continuous line of biological descent using historical and cultural data alone. The oral traditions do however relate to geological events that occurred in the distant past. These events cannot be dated with precision but they are highly suggestive of long-term establishment of the present-day tribes.

The prevalence of inter-group relations on the southern Plateau demonstrates a

connectedness of the tribes through intermarriage, coutilization of resources, cohabitation of village sites, interdependence through trade, and a common ceremonial and religious life. It would be unreasonable to suggest that any one southern Plateau tribe has a singular line of descent extending into the prehistoric past. Rather we should view the southern Plateau as an intergroup culture. The area surrounding the location of the discovery of the Kennewick human remains is demonstrably an area of intergroup activity. The ethnographic and historic data specifically place the Yakama, Wanapum, Palouse, Walla Walla, Umatilla, Cayuse and Nez Perce in this area. The oral traditions place these tribes in this area since the beginning of time.

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**Kennewick Man**  
Cultural Affiliation Report**Chapter 3**  
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# Review of Traditional Historical and Ethnographic Information

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