

The Canoe Journey



The Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe

Paddle to Cowichan

By Donna Schoolfield

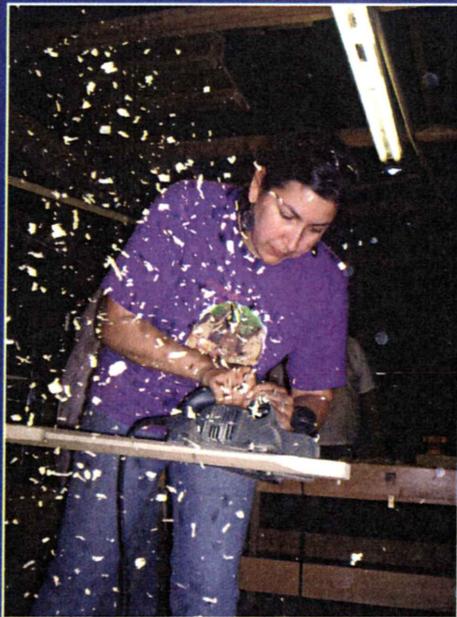
For many of us living on the North Olympic Peninsula, summer marks the time of the Tribal Canoe Journey, a traditional expression of indigenous coastal cultures, and a profound memorial of a time when all of life was connected to the water as a means for food, travel, commerce, social activities, potlatches, games and sporting events. In 1989 the Paddle to Seattle began the growing revival of the traditional Canoe Journey, and each year more Tribes participate, coming from various locations across North America. In the 2008 Paddle to Cowichan, up to 80 Tribal crews are expected to be participating, and if you can manage to be in the right place at the right time, you may have

an opportunity to see some of these beautifully crafted canoes traveling along the Strait of Juan de Fuca, or even coming ashore for the evening.

It was our extreme honor to be able to work with Marlin Holden, the canoe skipper of the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, in gathering information about the Tribal Canoe Journey and what it means to some of the indigenous people on the Peninsula. Not only were we gifted with verbal information, but were also taken out on the canoe to experience some of his words through all of our physical senses. With the assistance of Marlin and his crew we are now able to provide to our readers not merely a compilation of 'data', but rather the beginning of an educational

process based on the minds and hearts of people whose home this has been for thousands of years.

As Marlin is quick to point out, there is no such thing as one large homogenous group called 'native people' (as if all indigenous Tribes and nations are essentially the same). Every Tribe, including those who live along the North Olympic Peninsula, is distinct from one another even while many traditions are commonly shared. The thoughts expressed to us by Marlin Holden and his crew members uniquely pertain to the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe. In this way, we are able to learn about one tribal experience of the Canoe Journey, and may find that in the process of looking deeper, we can



Photos above: Josh Holden and Heather Johnson-Jock make their own paddles for the Canoe Journey. The paddles used by the Jamestown S'Klallam tribe are crafted from cedar.

Photo right: The Jamestown S'Klallam canoe is also made of cedar. Please treat all Tribal canoes on shore with respect, and ask permission before touching.

learn many things about everyone, including ourselves.

Preparation for the Journey

"We usually start talking and planning in January," Marlin said. "By the end of May or into June we start to do practices."

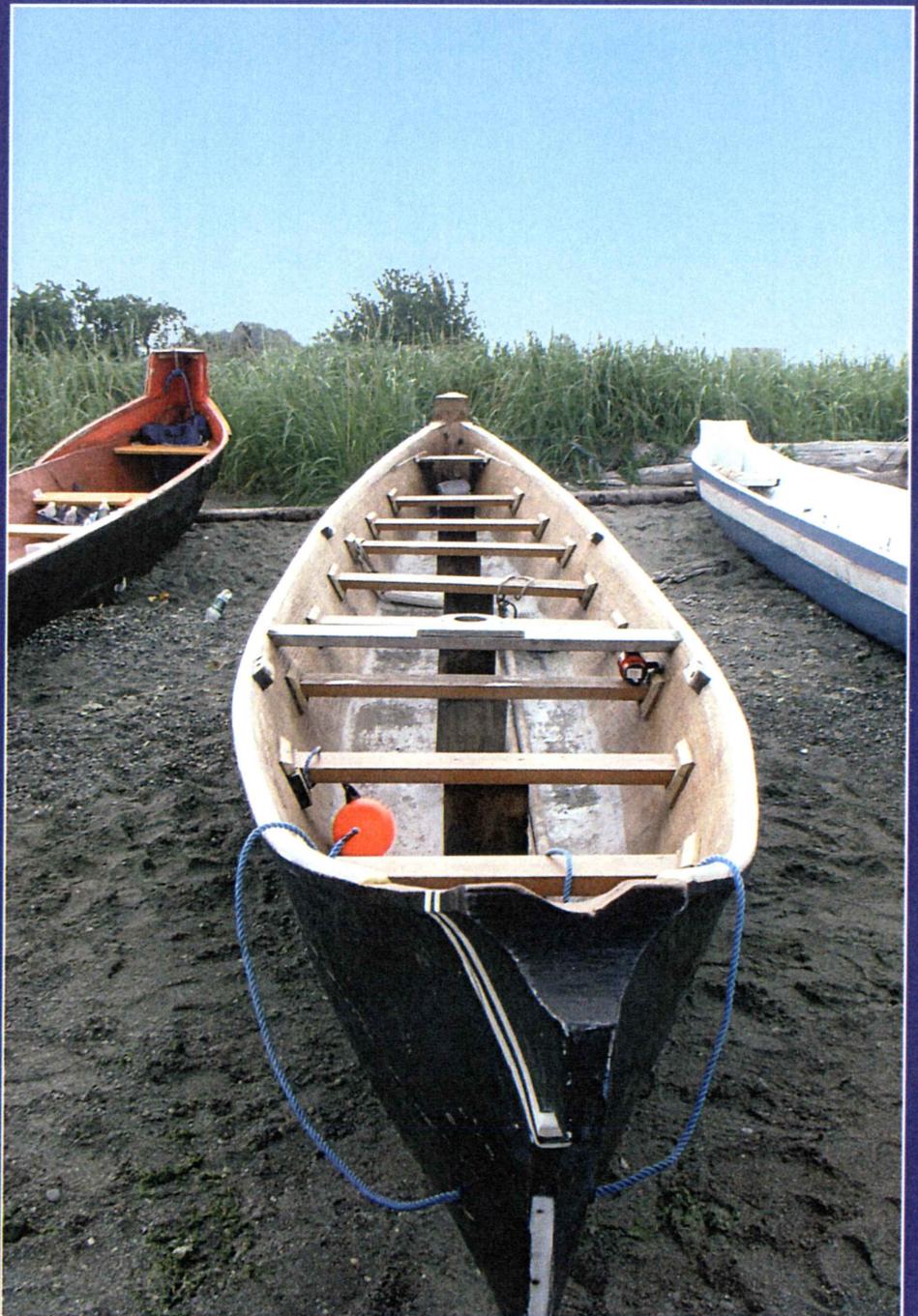
'Practice' means going out on the water with his crew, all of whom are called pullers. The crew consists of up to 10 pullers, plus Marlin who guides them as their skipper. Most of the pullers have been on several Canoe

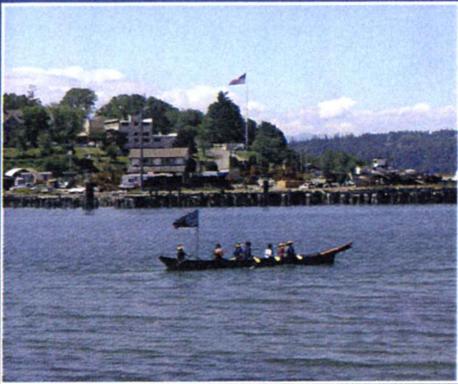
Journeys already and are not in need of practice per se; rather it is a focusing of mind, body, spirit and teamwork in preparation for the long days ahead of strenuous paddling in the cold and often-times turbulent waters of the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

Pete Holden and Josh Holden are returning pullers this year, as is Andrea Champagne and Paul Bolwby. We met up with Marlin and some of his crew on a chilly Saturday afternoon at the John Wayne Marina in Sequim as they were preparing to go out on the water. At this time we were able to get a close-

up view of the canoe which is made of cedar and painted in the traditional colors of the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, black and red. The name on the canoe is pronounced 'Lah-Ka-Nim'. The masthead is carved as the head of a wolf, representing the grey wolf that once roamed our area and which is of great historical and ancestral importance to the Tribe.

"When the Wolf is carved into our canoe, or painted," said Marlin, "it represents the Sea Wolf."





Up to 80 Tribal canoes will be participating in the 2008 Paddle to Cowichan, traveling from as far north as Alaska and the Queen Charlotte Islands, and as far south as Oregon State. The largest number of canoes will be originating from Native Nations and Tribes of Washington State, USA, and British Columbia, Canada.

The red stylized image stretching along both sides of the black canoe is the Sea Wolf. A wreath of cedar hangs over the canoe as well, and when I asked about its meaning, Marlin told me it represents the Circle of Life. "At one time cedar was used by my people for everything in daily life," he said. "It was used for baskets, for clothing, for ceremonies and almost every aspect of traditional living." The hat he was wearing was woven of cedar too, he pointed out.

Although some commercial paddles were used on the practice run, the paddles used on the actual Canoe Journey are usually crafted by hand. On this practice run Josh Holden and Andrea Champagne had their carved paddles. "This is one I made," Josh told me, showing me a paddle with smooth curves and light-colored unpainted wood. "It's made of cedar."

Somehow it looked stronger compared to the commercial paddle, and more elegant.

The canoe itself is more than a mere 'vehicle' to the Tribe, although traditionally it was used not only as a mode of transportation, but as a way to haul just about every type of cargo up and down the waterways.

"Our people once used canoes the way modern people use pickup trucks," Marlin said. "They were used for everything imaginable."

Yet the canoe is also an extension of the S'Klallam tribal beliefs and customs, and is at all times treated with great respect. Before launching out on the water, even on a practice run, the skipper and crew form a circle around the canoe. The strong pullers stand and give prayer while gently holding on to the sides of the vessel. Their hopes for the canoe and its occupants - a safe and successful voyage - are stated in a solemn voice.

Now I Know...

We didn't go out in the canoe the first we time visited with the crew, but instead watched from various points

along the shore, and later from the observation deck at the marina. Having never been in a canoe, I mentioned to David that it must certainly be laborious to paddle continuously as they were doing, and to remain in such perfect synchronization. But from our place on land, it appeared effortless and graceful. It wasn't until the following Saturday when we were invited to go out with Marlin and the crew that I realized just how grueling it could be. For a couple hours on the water I used muscles I didn't know I had. In fact, it has now been two days since going out with the pullers, and it's quite an accomplishment that I can





Top Left Photo: On the 2007 Paddle to Lummi, the Jamestown S'Klallam crew consisted of skipper Marlin Holden (at the rear), Pete Holden, Khia Grinnel (both seen in front), Andrea Champagne, Jessica Johnson, Heather Johnson-Jock, Josh Holden, Paul Bowlby and Annan Bowlby.

even lift my arms to type these words; I am simply that sore! Yet these men and women whose ages span at least two generations will be out on the water at least seven hours a day for several days on end during the actual Tribal Canoe Journey. They will work as a team, all their paddles will move as if by one will, one spirit, and no matter how tired one feels or how much like giving up... they will each go on.

While David and I were in the canoe, Pete Holden began to lead a chant. By this time my arm was about to fall off (or at least it felt that way), but somehow the rhythm of chanting made it easier to stay in motion. I started to think about doing this for seven hours a day on the Canoe Journey... wondering how it would be possible without chanting... or how long it would take a very skinny arm to work its way out of its socket... and that's when someone decided to do a 'power pull' which consisted of around 30 long synchronized pulls through the water. I thought I was going to die. My shoulder

was numb. A big charlie-horse was approaching from somewhere in my lower back. And at that point we'd only been on the water for about an hour! I'm pretty sure the only reason I was able to keep paddling on the return trip is because I'd switched sides and had suddenly learned to 'listen' to the sound of the paddles swooshing through water in order to stay in synch with the crew members. I thought my heightened sense of hearing might be a newly acquired 'survival' skill, but for some reason it fled the moment I stepped out of the canoe. Once we were out of the canoe, Pete asked if I'd hold the rope for a minute, and since it only involved standing perfectly still in one place, I might actually have held on to it a little longer than necessary.

David, meanwhile, was walking around the launch pad like it was no problem.

And yet... standing there, all I could think was, "Wow." What an incredible and wonderful experience, and above

all, what an amazing honor it was to have paddled in the Jamestown S'Klallam tribal canoe with this truly warm and friendly crew.

Four Aspects of the Journey

Marlin emphasizes that each person who goes on the Journey will learn things along the way that are uniquely meaningful, but that for his crew of pullers in general there are four educational aspects of the Journey: Spirituality; Heritage; Ancestral History; Self Education.

Every morning of the Journey there is prayer, smudging and asking the Creator for the ability to better one's self. The spiritual aspect of the Journey is both traditional and intensely personal.

"It changes you," said Andrea.

Marlin expressed the same sentiment. "No one is ever the same by the end of the Journey."

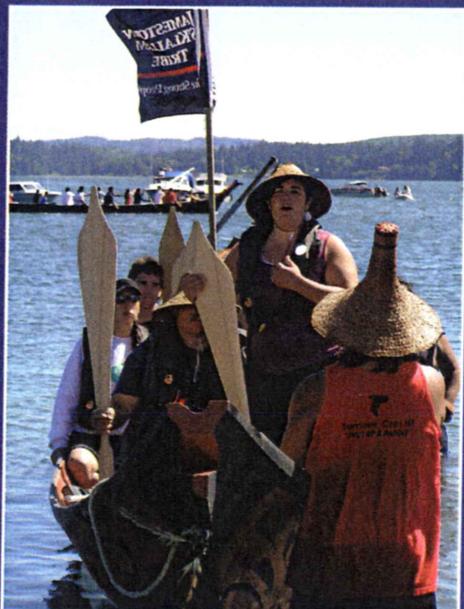
Although the skipper and crew might not be seen wearing the traditional

clothing of their people, they are traveling the same waterways and landing on the same beaches their ancestors once frequented. The Canoe Journey is not only about knowing, but about actually experiencing the ancestral life. "However, we are also looking at other passages, and at the beginnings of new traditions for our generations to come," Marlin added. "Everything we do will be carried on by the next generation, and that is how continual progress is made in our Tribe."

According to Marlin and the crew, one of the things most pullers become aware of during the Journey is the importance of inter-dependency, coordination and teamwork. "We all have to work together in order to make this happen, as if we are one arm, one paddle," said Marlin. "No one can do it alone; it takes the effort of each and every person in the canoe." On this, all the crew members agree strongly. All of them gave voice at various times to the fact that working together as a team, and as a people, is

Photo Right: Canoes line up for Protocol.

Photo Below: Khia Grinnel stands in the Jamestown S'Klallam canoe to recite her Tribal history in both her native language and in English.



one of the most valuable lessons of the Tribal Canoe Journey which is, for each puller, also a journey of self-discovery.

Protocol

Before being able to land at Cowichan, each visiting tribal crew must perform Protocol which involves reciting ancestral lineages and/or stories and asking permission from the host Tribes to come ashore. The recitations of Protocol are often performed in the native language of the Tribe, and followed by the English language. Last year after arriving at the Lummi destination Khia Grinnel stood in the Jamestown S'Klallam canoe and performed Protocol in her people's language followed by the English translation, introducing the Tribe as being descended from The House of the Seven Brothers.

Potlatch

Last year the Lummi Tribe hosted the Potlatch involving food, festivities, dancing, singing and story-telling among the dozens of Tribes who had gathered there. It was the first Potlatch the Lummi Tribe had hosted in 60 years. This year the Cowichan Tribes will be hosting the events.

Pullers on the Canoe Journey come ashore every night to make camp and engage in festivities, but the final

destination is where all participating Tribes come together to share their songs, dances, food and stories in an environment filled with both jubilation and tears. During this time, the Tribes will sing their own songs, as each song is sacred, belonging either to the Tribe or to a specific individual or family. When a song is shared, or when someone is invited to sing another Tribe's song, it is considered an honor, and not to be taken lightly. No one sings another Tribe's or family's song without permission. It is here, at the destination of the hosting Tribe, where the youth can express unrestrained pride in who they are, where tribal relationships are renewed and made stronger, where elders can talk of things long past, and where all may look to the future with hope.

The Strong People

If you see the Jamestown S'Klallam tribal canoe at Hollywood Beach or one of the other landing or launching sites, you might also see their flag raised high at the rear of the canoe. It provides the meaning of the name S'Klallam, a familial people who live as three distinct Tribes on the Peninsula, namely: Jamestown, Lower Elwah and Port Gamble.



"The story of how we became known as The Strong People goes back to a time long ago when men from several Tribes had gathered to build a longhouse," Marlin related. "Near the end of construction, before putting the roof up, the center pole had to be placed. The center pole is always very big, but this one was really huge. Each Tribe had a turn to put up the pole, but was unsuccessful. Finally the men from the S'Klallam Tribe stepped up with an idea for putting the center pole up. They rolled the enormous pole far enough into the water that they could swim out and get their shoulders beneath it, and then they walked up to

the shore and were able to put up the center pole in the longhouse. Since then, our people have been called The Strong People." Marlin paused for a second, and grinned, adding, "Strong in body, and strong in mind."

The Welcoming Crowds

The Jamestown S'Klallam canoe will be landing in Jamestown on July 22nd and will be meeting up with many Tribes from the south Puget Sound with whom they will travel for the remainder of the Canoe Journey. They will be coming into Hollywood Beach at Port Angeles on July 23rd to meet the west coast Tribes, and will be leaving Hollywood Beach for southeast

Vancouver Island on July 25th.

Please be mindful and courteous if you're on the water when the canoes are coming in. Boats and other watercraft that come too close to the canoes, or that create powerful wakes from traveling at high speeds, can create dangerous conditions for the pullers.

When I asked Marlin how he would like to see people respond when the canoes come through or when they land at places along the way, he told me it could all come down to one simple statement which is what he often tells those who truly want to know:

"Respect our people. Respect our land."

It really is that simple.

House of the Seven Brothers

Some of you might be wondering why the Jamestown Tribe would present themselves at Protocol as being from The House of the Seven Brothers. When Marlin Holden spoke to me of the S'Klallam Tribe he presented me with an account of Seven Generations in his tribal lineage, beginning with Chief Ste-tee-thlum and his son who fathered seven sons with his kidnapped Nanaimo wife in the 18th century... and ending with the son of the Prince of Wales, David Prince, who was the last traditional chief of the S'Klallams.

There is a belief among the S'Klallam Tribes that one's actions should extend into the following generations so that each generation may carry forward the progress of those who came before, and that one's actions have the power to affect seven future generations. Nearly all important tribal decisions are made with this awareness being an instinctive underlying factor. In reading the story of these seven earlier generations of the S'Klallam people, it is possible to see a profoundly meaningful thread running through them all, illustrating how one generation actually does have the power to shape and affect the next.





The Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe's flag which reads 'The Strong People' can be seen raised at the rear of the canoe.

Although we don't have space to elaborate on the fascinating story of the House of the Seven Brothers in this writing, there is something to be learned from the account. In the interest of all our future generations, it is our sincere hope that we will be able to learn and share more about the history and culture of our indigenous friends and neighbors in future issues of our publication.

2008 PADDLE TO COWICHAN

The Cowichan Tribes will host the end of Paddle to Cowichan Native Canoe Journey events July 28th through August 1. Cowichan is in BC, Canada, located near Duncan, on Vancouver Island.

According to the Cowichan website "...about 80 traditional ocean-going canoes, from many canoe cultures and nations will make the journey to Cowichan, traveling from as far north as Alaska and the Queen Charlotte Islands, and as far south as Oregon State, with the largest number of canoes originating from Native Nations and Tribes of Washington State, USA, and British Columbia, Canada."

Canoe Protocol will continue to August 1.

The 2008 Paddle to Cowichan will be followed by the North American Indigenous Games events continuing from Aug. 2 to Aug. 10

For more information about the 2008 Paddle to Cowichan www.tribaljournneys.com

For information about the North American Indigenous Games, please visit: www.cowichan2008.com

If you would like to learn more about the history of the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, and about current tribal projects, please begin here: www.jamestownTribe.org

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