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ABORIGINAL ECONOMY AND POLITY OF THE LAKES (SENIJEXTEE) INDIANS

Verne F. Ray (1905–2003)

with an Explanatory Endnote by Madilane Perry¹

ABSTRACT

Verne F. Ray, University of Washington anthropologist, prepared a manuscript on the aboriginal economy and polity of the Lakes (Senijextee) Indians in 1947. For unknown reasons, the manuscript and companion culture element distribution list were never published. Communication that began in the late 1980s with Madilane Perry, an anthropology graduate student from the University of Idaho, eventually led to the sharing of the documents and permission to publish. The Lakes manuscript is published in its entirety as originally prepared. Details concerning the communications between Ray and Perry are provided in an endnote.

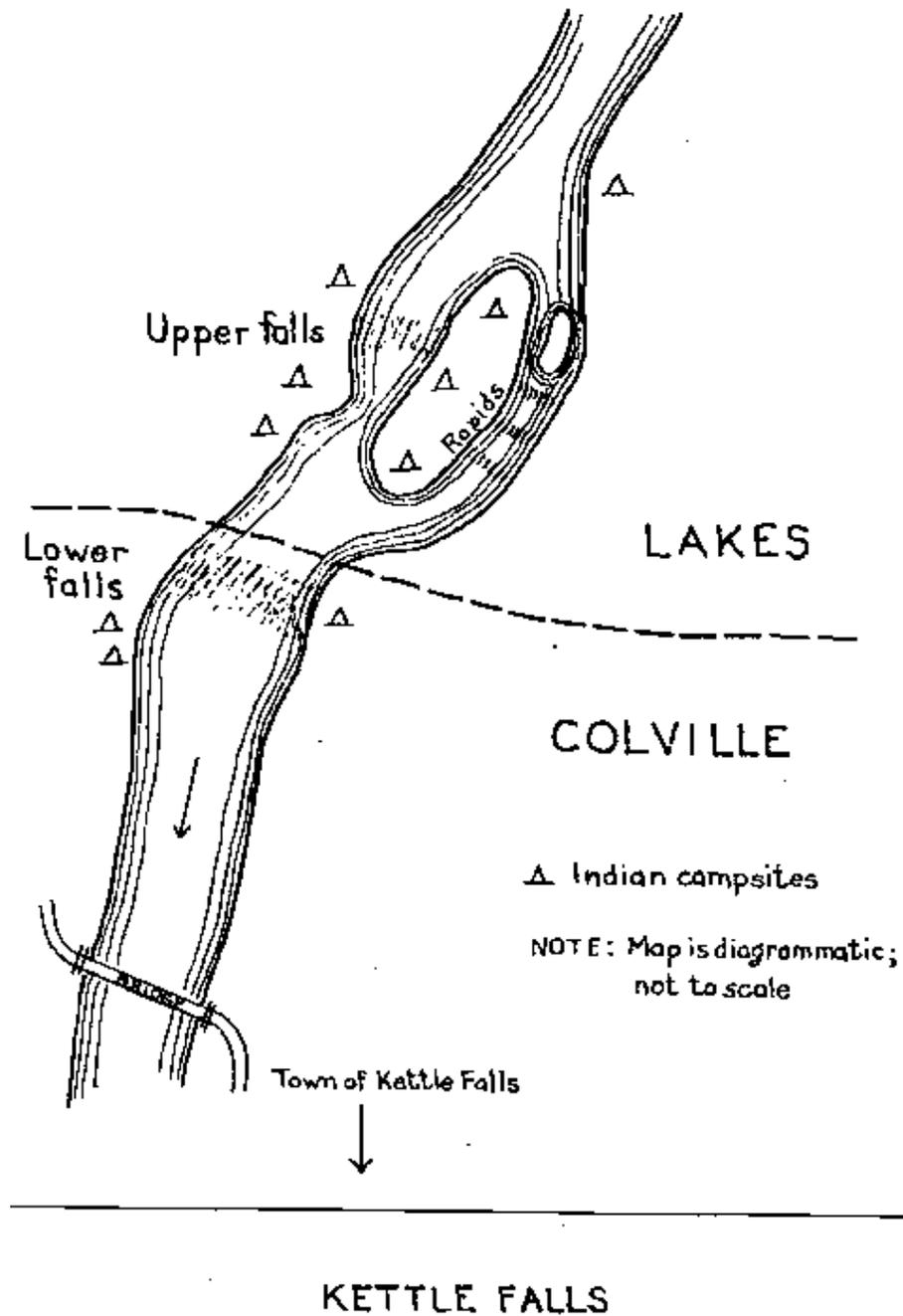
Note: this article is formatted as it was originally prepared in 1947.

ECONOMY

Territory. The dividing line between the Lakes Indians and the Colville Indians was very precisely drawn at the point where it crossed the Columbia River. Kettle Falls proper was in the territory of the Colville, but the large island to the north and the adjacent rapids belonged to the Lakes. The line of demarcation crossed the River just below the southern tip of the large island. This island was named kusu'nq'. The small island between the latter and the east bank of the River was named kpəluwi'xtən. Ordinarily islands of the small proportions of these two did not have distinctive names but were merely known as "small island" (tcsu'sunqun) or "island" (tcusu'nqun). It was the great importance of these islands in the large scale fishing activities which took place here which led to them being distinctively named. (See map.)

Fishing. Salmon was not only the most important fish obtained by the Lakes in their economic pursuits, but it was also the staple food. Of the various species the Chinook was most important; the Dog salmon was utilized to a limited degree. The Sockeye species was not found in this territory.

The physical character of Kettle Falls made it a fishing site of the first importance. No other fisheries north of The Dalles compared with it in terms of productivity and utilization. It was a formidable barrier to the salmon which were fighting in great numbers to get up stream and spawn. They collected below the Falls in great numbers as they jumped time and again in an effort to overcome the falls but failed. Large basket traps were manipulated by fishermen who perched on the rocky outcroppings adjacent to the rapids falls. Others used the smaller dip nets and still others employed the spear in adjacent backwaters, eddies and other areas of disturbed but relatively smooth water.



The few salmon that managed to get over the Falls generally spawned in the Slocan River. After the fishing season had terminated at Kettle Falls some persons went to the Slocan River to obtain the salmon that were to be found there. These were of very poor quality, however, since most of them were near death from the exhaustion of the up-river struggle and the spawning activity. However, this fishery did provide a small supply of relatively fresh salmon until late in the autumn season.

At various places in the Columbia River itself and in its tributaries, above the Falls, it was possible to obtain some salmon in rather better condition by spearing. These salmon spearing stations were fixed at known localities but no platforms were built for the purpose. The fishermen simply waded into the stream or wielded the spear from a canoe. No traps or weirs were used above Kettle Falls.

Salmon first appear at Kettle Falls in June (this description relates to pre-1941, before Coulee Dam was completed). At first they are only to be seen jumping the Falls; then, about a week later, they are visible from the bank. The first species to appear is the Chinook (ntiti' x); second, the Silver salmon (?); and finally the Humpback or dog salmon (xoni'na').

The first of the large basket traps was installed at Kettle Falls about the middle of July. The fishermen and their families remained here for at least a month; some stayed until the end of September. The basket trap could be used with some success until this late date. Even later than this it was possible to spear salmon from platforms which were erected in the rocks that confined the Falls.

The favorite camping place during the fishing season was the large island. Most of the Lakes Indians camped here. Visitors erected their shelters on the shore or banks of the River. The island was an attractive site from all points of view. The large basket traps were immediately adjacent; platforms for spearing were built with ease at various points on the banks of the island; there were points at which simple pole bridges could be built to the mainland. The latter were used for reaching the mainland and also as spearing stations.

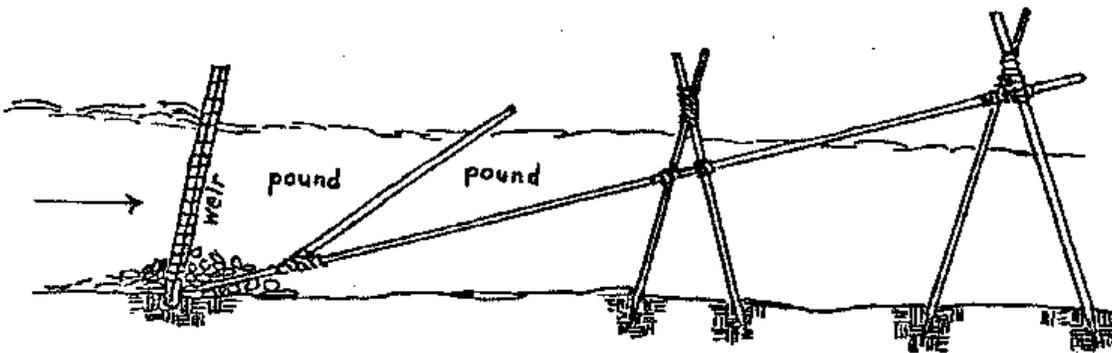
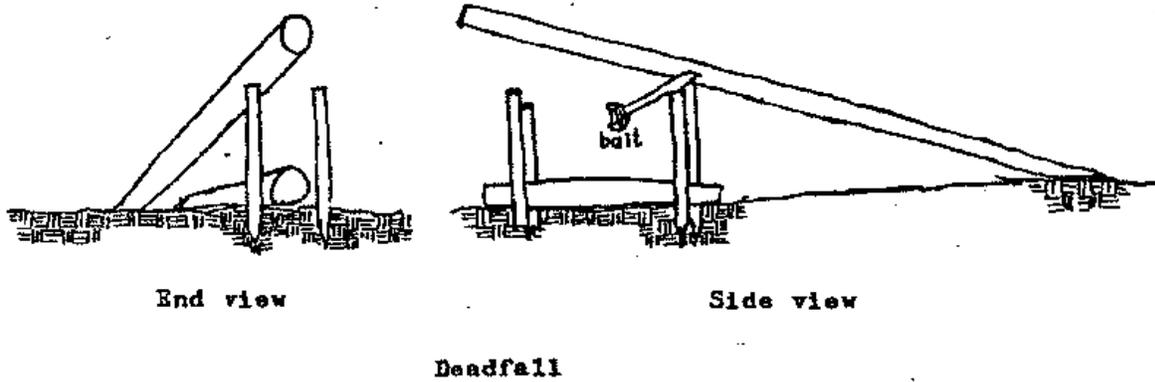
The huge basket trap used between the large island and the bank was recognized by all as belonging to the Lakes Indians. In the use of the trap, however, people of other tribes, particularly the Colville and Spokane, assisted in its handling and manipulation. They also participated in the distribution of the fish which were taken in this manner. The visitors were permitted to assist in the handling of the trap only if they were very expert fishermen. The hazards of this type of fishing were very great and novices were not permitted to endanger their lives. On the other hand, it was considered a very great privilege to take part in the manipulation of the trap. It was a recognition by the community of the ability of the fisherman, it was an honor, and it was considered a very keen sport. The distribution of fish to the visitors was in no sense a payment for their services at the trap. They would have received a part of any large catch regardless of whether they participated or not. The system of distribution of the catch from the large trap was similar to that of the distribution by the Sanpoil of fish obtained in the communal weirs.

At the same time that the center of activity was the large basket trap, many fishermen were engaged in spear fishing in the vicinity. Line fishing was also employed at this time. Salmon caught by line or spear were the personal property of the individual fisherman. However, a man who had reasonable success always distributed a portion of his catch to other persons. An interesting phrasing was given by an informant: "A good honest man would distribute to everybody, and sometimes not keep any for himself."

Before describing the ritual practices and religious beliefs associated with salmon fishing at Kettle Falls, it may be well to give attention to the magnitude of the catch as recorded by early observers and fisheries scientists.

In 1814, fur trader Ross Cox visited the Kettle Falls area and spoke of the friendly manner in which he was received and the "abundance of roast and boiled salmon" that the people gave his party to eat. He commented on the "vast quantities" of salmon taken and explained that the catch was partly eaten fresh but mostly dried for use during the winter and spring months.

In 1853, Dr. George Suckley, of the staff of Governor Isaac I. Stevens, visited Kettle Falls and declared that the Indians "kill hundreds of thousands of these fish by spearing them." Presumably, Suckley was referring to the catch of each season. He observed that "The myriads of salmon that ascend the rivers of the Pacific Coast are almost incredible. In many places the water appears alive with them . . ."



Lieutenant Johnson, of Captain Wilkes' staff of the United States Exploring Expedition, spent three days in the vicinity of Kettle Falls in 1841. In describing the taking of salmon by the Indians, he wrote that hauls were made three times a day and "each haul, not infrequently, contains three hundred fine fish." In a Bureau of Fisheries report by ichthyologists Joseph A. Craig and Robert L. Hacker reference is made to Johnson's observations and his figure of 900 fish each day. They then comment that "The run at Kettle Falls extends over a period of at least 60 days, so if 500 fish per day was their average catch, the Indians would have been taking some 600,000 pounds of fish annually in that location" inasmuch as the "salmon taken at Kettle Falls average some 20 pounds in weight."

In the book issued in 1947 by the Bureau of Reclamation and titled The Columbia River, it is estimated that the annual catch at all of the great fishing sites of the Indians of the Northwest was as great as 18,000,000 pounds. In these terms, the catch at Kettle Falls was about one-thirtieth of the total.

It is interesting to note that Craig and Hacker emphasized the fact that the aboriginal harvest by the Indians "did not represent as great a proportional strain on the spawning population as its relationship to the present catch would indicate because under present conditions many miles of spawning streams have been cut off by dams so that they are no longer available to the migratory fish."

Turning, now, to the religious sphere, we find many ritual practices associated with the taking of salmon by the Lakes Indians. These were generally consistent with the cultural patterns regionally. A "salmon chief" was in charge of the large communal traps. He presided over the distribution of the fish which, at Kettle Falls, occurred twice a day, at noon and at sunset. This double daily distribution was not, however, a ritual feature but was due to the fact that in hot weather fish would not keep fresh throughout the whole day. The salmon were laid out on fir boughs and distributed usually to the men. Women were permitted to be present but not to touch the fish until they had been removed from the place of distribution. It was also tabu for women to go near the platforms or traps where fish were being taken. They were required to get water below the site of such activities; indeed, this restriction applied to men also. A violation would result in a falling off of the fish run. The more rigid restrictions applicable to women was not due to their sex per se but rather to the fact that they might be menstruating at the time. The general tabu insured against any menstruating women being present.

If a salmon run dropped off unexpectedly or inexplicably it was interpreted as due to the breaking of a salmon tabu. At such a time the old men would congregate and select one of their number whose guardian spirit was salmon or some other fish or river power to counteract the ill-effects of the breach. Such an individual proceeded much as did the "salmon chief" of the Sanpoil under similar circumstances. If his efforts met with no success he would report failure and request that someone else be chosen for the task. His procedure was to sit some distance from the trap, alone, smoking and singing. The songs that he sang were "like the sound of the rapids. If his efforts are successful, the salmon will start jumping up the falls even while he is singing. Then he returns to the people and says 'now perhaps we shall be more lucky.' He causes a few salmon, just one or two, to appear on the first day and then gradually he wills it that more and more shall come. The people know that if one or two appear on the first day all will be well."

In 1930 a man was selected to officiate in this manner but failed. James Bernard stated that the fish run had become smaller and smaller from 1890 to 1927 due to the activities of white fishermen in the lower reaches of the river. But that from 1927 to 1930 the quantity had increased somewhat.

The salmon chief was generally chosen from one of the visiting tribes, probably because they were considered to have more "power" than the local men.

A ceremony was held at the appearance of the first salmon in the spring. This First-Salmon ceremony was a modification of that practised by surrounding tribes. The appearance of the first salmon or the first few fish was a signal for the ritual. The rite was held for the first fish only, not for each subsequently appearing species. The regular trap was used for purposes of obtaining the first fish, not a specially built one. The trap was not decorated or in any way distinguished for this purpose. The ceremony, while for the advantage of the group as a whole, was performed by the salmon chief individually. He sat on the bank of the stream watching, singing and praying for the coming of the salmon in great numbers. There was no dancing or other type of social recognition either at the site of the trap or elsewhere. The first salmon taken in the trap were prepared by the women, sometimes the younger women, and served to all persons present at the trap location at that time. Simple procedures marked the preparation of the fish. The stomach was removed and discarded, the head, tail and backbone were separated. The fish was then cut lengthwise and boiled or roasted for serving. A soup was prepared of the usual parts used for that purpose. The bones of the fish were ceremonially thrown into the river. Sometimes special songs were sung at the time of the eating of the fish.

The generosity in the distribution of fish to visitors from outside tribes, mentioned earlier, was not due to the abundance of salmon available in Lakes territory. It was rather a feature of the general social and economic pattern of the area and was shared by such tribes as the Colville and the Sanpoil.

The equality of distribution was not carried to the same extreme as among Sanpoil, however. Fish were never cut up for distribution but were given out just as they came from the trap or the spear. The productivity of the fishery at the falls during the height of the season is indicated by the fact that some of the fish taken rotted before it was possible to preserve them.

The aspect of private property characterized the catch obtained from a funnel trap somewhat more than the return from other methods of fishing. Perhaps this was due to the fact that a privately owned funnel trap indicated that the fisherman had extended a great deal of effort in the construction of the fish-catching device. If a man found only a relatively few fish in such a trap he might keep all of them for himself. Otherwise there would be the usual type of distribution.

Box-type traps varied in size. Small ones were owned by a single individual; larger ones were usually the property of two or more fishermen.

Fishing stages for spearing purposes were individually built and owned. However, when such a staging was not in use it was the privilege of anyone else to take advantage of it. The rights to such stations were not held from year to year. The person who first built a staging at a particular site in the spring of the year was the one who held the rights for that season.

Hunting. As usual in this general area the most important game animal was the deer. Of secondary importance, but extensively utilized, were the caribou, elk, moose and the brown bear. Grizzly bears were also frequently taken as game animals. The antelope was not found in this region. Both mountain goat and mountain sheep were numerous in the mountainous northern regions and were taken in considerable numbers for food purposes and for their hides and horns. Beaver were plentiful in the numerous streams and were taken in considerable numbers. Rabbits were also of economic importance. The bison was not found here nor were distant areas visited for

the purpose of hunting bison frequently enough to be of economic significance. Geese and ducks were extensively utilized but swans were only infrequently hunted. The principal areas for deer hunting were the hilly regions between the Columbia River and the Pend Oreille River in the southern part of Lakes territory, and the extensive and more mountainous areas of the headwaters of the Kettle River. Elk were quite scarce but sometimes wandered into Lakes territory from the more frequented areas of northern Idaho and northwestern Montana. Bears, black and brown, were found sporadically distributed throughout the territory but were hunted particularly in the regions of lakes and in the mountain meadows where food was to be found, particularly berries. The grizzly bear was found in the mountainous regions above the lakes; caribou in the plains around the lakes. Mountain sheep and mountain goat frequented all of the craggy areas of the mountains.

Deer hunting. (ski' xⁿ). Hill deer were not easy to kill with the bow and arrow. Therefore, highly developed special techniques of hunting were generally utilized, especially variations of the surrounding technique. Having selected a particular area for the hunting activities, one man was sent ahead to take up a post at a predetermined spot. The remaining hunters distributed themselves so as to cover a rather wide area with a general fan-shaped formation. Each man moved at a practiced pace toward the selected destination. As deer were encountered the first attempt was to dispatch them with arrows immediately but, failing that, they were driven toward the destination. The hunter who had been stationed at that point attempted to kill the deer as they approached but before long he was simply one of a number of hunters forming a surround, all attempting to shoot their arrows effectively before the frightened deer managed to escape between their ranks.

Another technique, used exclusively in the autumn, required the selection of a cliff at the edge of a plateau as the destination. Leading toward this bluff a rude runway was constructed. On one side a sort of fence was built up of stakes, saplings which were bent over, and the like. Its chief virtue in directing the deer was not its impassibility but rather the scent which had been left on the stakes and trees by the hunters, a most effective deterrent to moving beyond the line. A line of hunters was placed on the opposite side of the narrow valley. The remaining men moved slowly down this runway driving the deer toward the bluff. When near the destination, all the hunters would close in and drive the deer over the edge.

Companies of hunters would also organize so as to drive deer through narrow passes where they could be more easily be shot, into the water, or onto thin ice. Dogs were never used in hunting deer except to drive them into lakes or rivers. Hunters would station themselves at a regular deer crossing. Usually one man occupied a canoe at a critical point. The remaining hunters, aided by their dogs, ferreted out the deer and drove them into the water. From there they were killed by the man in the canoe using his bow and arrows. Occasionally women were assigned the duty in the canoe. In this case the woman used a spear to dispatch the deer. Women never employed the bow and arrow.

Group hunting activities were always supervised by a leader selected from the group by common consent. It was he who selected the hunting area, the point at which to station the advance guard, and the portion of the area which would be assigned to the individual hunters. Such a man was naturally selected because of his ability in hunting and his knowledge of the habits of game. The initiation of a hunting party was, however, the privilege of any person. Women accompanied the hunters if they were to be absent for more than two or three days. A party of considerable size was required for hunting activities such as those described above. However, more modest hunting ventures, particularly those of the winter months, were carried out by parties of from three to six persons. Ordinarily hunting trips lasted for one or two weeks.

Preliminary preparation was quite complete, requiring three or four days of planning. Both during this preliminary period of preparation and during the course of the hunting activities, men slept apart from their wives. Violation of this tabu was felt to make a man vulnerable to attack by a grizzly bear with fatal results. Temporary sweat houses were constructed at each hunting camp and the hunters bathed here every day, rubbing themselves with plants selected to eliminate odors the game might detect. Their clothing was likewise rubbed with such herbs. Sometimes the clothing was washed in a decoction of these herbs; likewise the bows and arrows to be used in the hunt. A further alternative was the drinking of such a decoction.

Snares were used for deer during the autumn migration period at which time they moved from north to south over definite trails. On such trails the snare would be set so as to form a loop designed to engage the leg of the deer. The free end of the rope forming the snare was strung over a high limb and fastened to a heavy piece of timber which was delicately balanced so as to fall when the noose was closed by the deer's movements. The captive animal was therefore not only held by the snare and the heavy weight but was also hoisted up or at least held relatively immobile by the falling of the log. Slightly in advance of the position of the snare a small log was laid across the trail which would cause the deer to step rather high in getting over it and thus more likely step into the noose. The rope of the snare was constructed of Indian hemp.

Individual hunters sought the bear. Bear meat was prized above that of the deer and the hides were more highly valued, since they made excellent robes. In the spring, deadfalls were used for bear. Four large logs were set solidly in the ground in a rectangular pattern with one long and one narrow dimension. Lying on the ground between these posts was a large log which extended somewhat beyond each end as formed by the pairs of posts. Lodged at the top of the posts on one end was a long log which lay diagonally from the ground. A pivot stick was placed under this long log and to it the bait was attached. When the bear took the bait the long and heavy log would fall on the top of its neck pinning the lower part against the log on the ground.

Fish or venison was used as bait. Another type of deadfall which was constructed essentially the same used a vertical pivot stick between the ground log and the sloping raised timber. The bait was attached to this pivot stick in a position on the opposite side from that which would be approached by the game.

Informants stated that game were not taken in pitfalls, nor driven into nets or run down in the brush. They were, however, run down on the snow by hunters on snowshoes, and animals other than deer, for example the mountain sheep, were taken by being driven over a cliff. Animals of various kinds were frequently hunted by stalking with bows and arrows or with a spear but not with a club. Night stalking was practiced but infrequently. Torches were not used and game were not driven into the water at night. Hunters lay in wait at salt licks during the night and also during the daytime but not particularly at daybreak. Sometimes a post in a tree over a salt lick was selected. The game were shot from this position. Leaf whistles were used as deer calls. Deer taken by stalking in the snow were sometimes killed by breaking their necks. Hibernating bears were dragged out of their holes but they were never smoked out. A hunter would crawl in after the bear and retrieve it if unsuccessful in attempts to drive the animal out. A rope was fastened to the bear's head for retrieval; the technique of using a split stick twisted into the bear's hide was not known. Rabbits were also dragged out of their holes but this was an unimportant technique. Ground hogs were taken by drowning out.

The unimportant activity of bison hunting in foreign territory was always a group venture but never a tribal venture. The hunters traveled either on foot or on horseback under the

supervision of a selected leader. Meat and hides were evenly divided among participants in the hunt. Hides were tanned on the spot.

Beaver were snared or taken with a deadfall. They were not taken with club or spear, nor were their dams destroyed. Gaff hooks and nets were also unknown. The musk was utilized as a perfume.

The spring pole snare was used for various animals including the deer but for the latter was not as important as the log-weighted snare described above. Blinds were not used with snares but a kind of enclosure was sometimes built beyond the snare.

Rabbit snares were made of bark cord or sinew and were, possibly, surrounded by a fence built in an arc. Snares were also used for land fowl such as the grouse and prairie chicken; infrequently for eagles. The snare was constructed of sinew or apocynum on the trail where the fowl were known to gather to caper or prance, for example on a log or at the top of a knoll. A brush fencing was used in connection with the snare in some instances. The snare was anchored fast, never held in the hand. Sometimes the snare was set up on the snow.

Geese and swan were likewise taken with snares of the same type. Floating logs were not used.

The snare described for the deer was used also for caribou. Fencing was not employed in connection with snares or deer surrounds.

A tule shooting blind may have been used for waterfowl. A disguise made of tule was sometimes worn in hunting waterfowl but no other type of disguise for hunting was employed. Decoys and lures were unknown.

Elk and moose, not deer or rabbits, were called with a whistle of the tubular type made from the stem of the elderberry or rhubarb plant. The same animals were called by whistles made of a leaf.

Miscellaneous hunting devices included a figure four slat trap and the clubbing of waterfowl, sometimes at moulting time. Slingshots, multiple pointed spears and enclosures were not used for hunting fowl, except for the blind—not an enclosure—mentioned for waterfowl.

Hunters characteristically bathed before going after game of any kind but did not remove clothing to reduce the danger of detection from body odors.

POLITY

Chieftainship. The Lakes Indians recognized one chief as head of the tribe, with succession normally based on descent. However, upon the death or withdrawal of a ruling chief, the people were empowered to break the line and select any person of their choice. A meeting of all adult tribal members was always held on such an occasion and the first business of the assemblage was the discussion of the qualifications of the kin eligible for the office. Generally, the sons, if any, were the first to receive attention. Any one of them might be chosen. If none was considered worthy, other relatives were discussed, including daughters, brothers, sisters, and even more remote kin. This latitude was merely an aspect of the basic freedom of the people to choose anyone they wanted as leader.

As indicated, women were eligible for the chieftainship (and, of course, for the tribal assembly, as well). In the 1930's, the Lakes Indians were in general agreement that the greatest chief that could be remembered was a woman. Reputedly, she was born very early in the 1800's and presumably assumed the chieftainship early in the century. Her name was not remembered but she was the mother of Gregory, who succeeded her as chief. Gregory served for many years but there was no successor from his family. His sons had died before him, or were unwilling to take the office; recollections differ. A more distant relative, Orpahken (o'raxən) was given the position and gained a notable reputation as a leader able to maintain peace. He was characterized as a severe disciplinarian but one who used his power in the interests of the people. However, in later years he became inactive because of disinterest or senility. For years—some say few, some say many—the people were essentially without a chief. Bernard declared that Orpahken had "resigned." Then, by tribal action, in assembly, the people chose James Bernard as their chief.

This was assumed to be another break in the hereditary succession and the election of a new man. However, Bernard did have remote ties with Orpahken and Gregory, and so did his wife.

When this action was taken, Orpahken became angry and declared that he had never relinquished the position. Although Bernard emphatically disagreed, he called a meeting of the tribal members and announced that he wanted to avoid dissension and would therefore defer to the old chief by serving him merely as an aide while he lived. "He has been ineffective," Bernard told the people, "because he is old. He needs a helper—a younger man to do the traveling and carry out the chief's orders. I will do that." The people willingly agreed and Bernard filled that role for the ten years that the old chief lived. Thereafter, he served as the only chief for the tribe and in 1931 he had held the position for about twenty-five years.

Bernard's role as aide to the chief was not unusual. In earlier days it had been customary for the tribal leader to have one, two, or even three assistants—services that were not needed in Bernard's time with the United States having usurped so many of the earlier powers. These chiefly assistants were selected by the chief and themselves held no power. The most important aide was the one who served as spokesman for the chief at meetings and other gatherings. The power of the chief was said to be absolute but this was a concept, not a fact. At the assemblies, every adult man and woman was permitted to express his opinion on any subject and strongly to urge conformance. The apparent power of the chief was considerably the consequence of his listening and following the will of the majority. It is, nevertheless, true that the chief engendered a degree of fear on the part of his people, a result in part of the respect for the office and in part the unpleasantness that could come when the chief was not obeyed. This last derived largely from the fact that it was the duty of the chief, perhaps his most important duty beyond the keeping of intertribal peace, to supervise the punishment of those guilty of transgressions against other tribal members.

This punishment was usually in the form of lashing and sometimes it was severe. The blows were struck with anything from an ordinary stick to a thong of braided rawhide. The whip was wielded by one of the district headmen, presumably from the village of the miscreant. Such punishment was always administered publically, with the chief as overseer of the affair. At the same time, he admonished the wrongdoer and lectured the onlookers. It is said that grown men were whipped more severely than youths but also that there was no predetermined number of lashes—the whipping continued until the victim said he had "had enough."

In the days of the Hudson's Bay Company and the missions, the lashings were more severe. It is asserted that this greater severity was the consequence of demands by the Company officials

and the missionaries. A most formidable weapon was described to me as characterizing that period, and I was told that it was used by direction of, and with the approval of, the Company and the missionaries. A pole of small diameter and about four feet long was wrapped with green hide and the hide sewed on. When dry, the pole was removed and the cylindrical opening was filled with sand. To this a short handle was securely attached. I was told that another weapon of the period was made of rawhide with three or four strands.

Lashing was said to be the punishment for fighting, assault, and rape; also, stealing and lying. The latter two transgressions were so punished only after the coming of the fur traders and the missionaries, it seems certain.

The consequences of murder were quite different. Here the chief was first required to determine whether self-defense was involved and, if so, to counsel with the parties and attempt to avoid retaliation of like kind. Alternatives involved the payment of goods and the admission of guilt. Indeed, it is said that if the transgressor was sufficiently contrite he usually was forgiven; this seems questionable. In aggravated cases it is probable that the murderer nearly always fled to a distant settlement, even out of the tribal territory. Some may never have returned. For those who returned later, the consequences were less severe, it appears, the longer the absence had been.

Thus, the chief's responsibility for leadership was exactly tested when a murder had occurred and he was required to serve both as judge and executive, with no real power in either role. If he succeeded, the peace was kept but if he failed the result was usually another killing because punishment in such instances was at the hands of the injured family. The influence and authority of the chief were sufficient to control in lesser crimes but as an official he was almost helpless in homicides.

Indeed, the authority of the chief in any case was meager and the successful leader was usually one who lead mainly through the strength of his own personality. As one prominent tribal member expressed it: "The Lakes people recognized a chief of the tribe, and other leaders, all right, but it was the feeling of the people that determined the outcome of any affair."

We know but very vaguely how public opinion functioned in the affairs of the tribe, and now (1947) it is too late to find out. Certainly there was a great deal of talking done and then, as now, it was true that as long as people talked they did not fight. We also know that, despite his lack of real authority, the chief was usually a very effective official, and that he was a very hard working man. He had the prestige of being assisted by one or more aides, and most of the physical labor or running his household and providing for his family was done by others. Also, he usually had two wives—seldom more—whereas other men rarely had more than one, except for great hunters and talented gamblers.

The tribal assembly and the council. Reference has been made to the tribal assembly and its functioning. It was quite an informal mechanism but it provided all adult members of the tribe an equal voice in all consequential affairs of the political group. Discussions were carried on at great length and decisions were made, by acclamation, only when the question under discussion had been thoroughly examined. The frequency with which the assembly met was determined wholly by the business that needed to be transacted and when tribal affairs were running smoothly there were long periods without any meetings.

The membership of the assembly was automatically determined by the adult membership of the tribe. The council, on the other hand, was largely an instrumentality of the chieftainship and

its size and membership was determined by him. It was a small group of men, sometimes including women, moderately stable in membership, with the sole function of advising the chief. Before this body, he brought all routine and non-critical matters when he wanted to test the alignment of public opinion, or simply to get advice from others whose judgment he respected.

LAKES VILLAGES

1. npəpkolá't'skin ("place where many pəpkolıt's [a species of bull head, *Ameiurus* sp.?] are found").

This was the lowermost Lakes village on the Columbia river, located about two miles below the present town of Marcus. It was a relatively small settlement, usually numbering about seven to ten camps. Though more populous in winter than in summer it was well occupied until late in the spring. It was the site of the shinny grounds where games between the Colvilles and the Lakes were played, and was a popular meeting place for Colvilles, Lakes, and Kalispels. It served as a base for camas gathering in the nearby Selkirk mountains.

After the establishment of the Hudson's Bay post about three quarters of a mile upriver this village increased in size and became the center of considerable trading.

2. kɪxkɪ'us ("open place in a cottonwood grove").

This village was located about one mile below Marcus where the Dobson ferry formerly crossed. The site was below the high water line of the Columbia river and had to be evacuated before the rise of the water in the spring.

It was the largest winter village of the Lakes with an average population of about 200. As a trading center during the days of the Hudson's Bay post it was even more popular than npkəpkolá't'skin (1).

3. nt'sult'sli'tk^u ("trees in the water").

This settlement was at the present site of Marcus.

4. ätstlæktst'cɪn ("large grove of cottonwood [?] trees near the river").

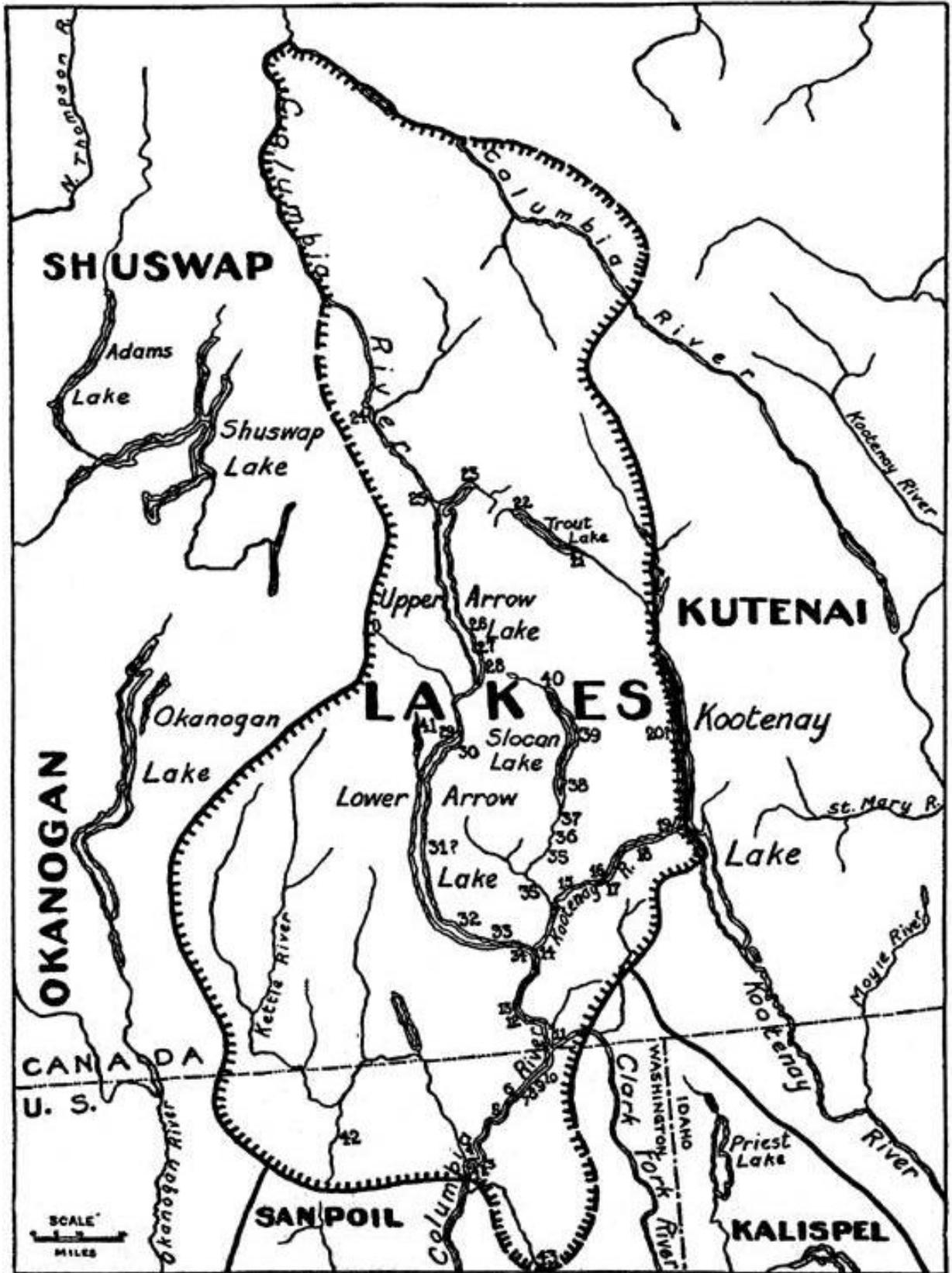
This village was located directly across the river from Marcus on the first bench above the river. Occupation here extended from December to February, with a population of about 150. Four or five families usually remained throughout the summer.

5. suntkɪlxuwe'ltən ("at the foot of the hill").

This was a hunting camp on the north side of the Columbia river directly opposite the present town of Bossburg. It was occupied as a base for deer hunting during February. From here a trail led into the hills to the north.

6. tɪtko's ("basin in the river bench").

This camp, located between Bossburg and Northport was occupied during March as a base for root digging.



7. stce'xələk^u.

On the Columbia below Northport.

8. ntsətsərri'sem.

At or very near Northport.

9. sinqi'lt ("above country," "on an elevation").

A settlement at the present site of Northport; formerly the home of the Lakes chief.

10. sn'əkewi'lten ("portage").

An encampment at Northport.

11. nquli'la'.

This village, located on the Columbia river about a mile above the present village of Waneta, numbered four or five families throughout the year. The berry fields and salmon grounds of Northport were conveniently near at hand.

12. tcəlxī·t'sā.

This camp was located on the west side of the Columbia river at the site of the present town of Trail. Hunters used the site for a few days at a time as a base for deer hunting.

13. snskəkəle'um.

At a creek on the west side of the Columbia river close to Trail.

14. kupi'tlks ("rubbing the chest").

This was a settlement at the confluence of the Kootenay and Columbia rivers, used as a temporary base for root digging. Travelers coming or going from the Kootenay or upper Columbia river valleys usually camped here for a week or two, visiting and gambling with friends and using the sweat houses. To a limited extent it also served as a hunting base.

15. ntkuli'tk^u ("much river food").

This encampment was on the north side of the Kootenay river about a mile above the mouth of the Slocan (slo'kən) river. Trout pools were numerous in the river at this point making it a popular fishing center. Women used the site as a base for berry picking while men found it convenient for hunting bear. Parties usually stayed here a week or two, most often during April just before the river began to rise. Later they moved to the north for caribou hunting, some travelling Slocan river route, some choosing the Kootenay river.

16. nxa·xa'tsən ("cave in the rocks").

This camp was the Kootenay river, opposite Nelson, at the edge of the caribou hunting area. Line fishing for trout was also profitable here.

17. k'iyá'mlup^u · (Kutenai word?).

A settlement at the site of the present town of Nelson.

18. yaksukukəni'' ("where many kukeni" [a small red fish] are found").

Located about six or seven miles above Nelson on the Kootenay river. Root gathering, bear and caribou hunting and trout fishing were all profitable.

19. ktca'ukuł ("spliced trousers").

This encampment was near the present town of Balfour (?) on Kootenay lake. It was used as a temporary base during May and June.

20. na-xspoá'lk'en ("rocky bank made by spoá'k'en [mythological character]").

On the west shore of upper Kootenay lake, exact location uncertain. Temporary camp.

21. sia'uks qa·li'su ("where the water flows outward" probably referring to the drainage of Troutlake into Kootenay lake).

This was a caribou hunting and fishing camp located at the lower end of Trout lake at the site of the present town of Gerrard. Drying racks for fish were erected here and travellers sometimes remained for several weeks.

22. sunpətl'rme'p ("upper end of lake").

This encampment at the upper end of Trout lake was at the site of the present Trout Lake City. From here a portage usually was made to the end of Upper Arrow lake.

23. nk'umá'puluks ("end of the water").

This important camp was situated at the uppermost end of Upper Arrow lake near the site of the present town Compalix. It was a popular meeting place and a productive fishing, hunting, and berrying center. The camp was most populous in May and June.

24. skəxikəntən.

A settlement opposite Revelstoke.

25. kospi'tsa ("buffalo robe").

At the site of the present town of Arrowhead. (T no. 3)

26. ku'sxəna'ks.

On Upper Arrow lake. Now called Kooskanax. (T no. 4)

27. neqo'sp ("having buffalo").

Now called Nakusp.

28. tci'uken.

A little below Nakusp.

29. snexai'tsətsəm.

Near the upper end of Lower Arrow lake, opposite Burton City.

30. xaie'kən.

At a creek below Burton City.

31. məmatsi'ntın ("log leaning outside a cave").

A village on Lower Arrow lake, exact location uncertain. It was a center for hunting mountain goat in March and April.

32. plu'me'.

This was a temporary camp on the east side of Lower Arrow lake near the site of the present Deer Park. It marked the lower end of the hunting and fishing territory.

33. sm'a'ip' ("large log leaning against a tree").

A temporary camping place at the foot of Lower Arrow lake.

34. A settlement at the site of the present town of Castlegar, near the fork of the Kootenay river and Lower Arrow lake, was important for both spear and line fishing. There was a rapids here, which aided the fisherman.

35. sketu'kəlôx.

On lower Slocan river.

36. nkweio'xtən.

On Slocan river above no. 35.

37. ka'ntca'k.

On Slocan river below the lake.

38. sihwi'ləx.

On the lower part of Slocan lake.

39. takələxaitcəkst ("trout ascend").

On Slocan lake, below no. 40.

40. snkəmi'p ("base, root, or bottom").

At upper end of Slocan lake.

41. nəmi'məltəm.

On Caribou lake, to the west of the narrows between the Arrow lakes.

42. stuxtlu'stən ("first in line," "leader").

This was a small settlement at the present town of Malo, Washington, about four miles northeast of Curlew lake. It was a permanent camp where trapping, hunting, and trap fishing were possible.

43. skwá'rəxən ("crane").

This was reputedly a Lakes settlement at the present site of Addy Washington.

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¹ENDNOTE

Madilane Perry
Curlew Lake

The ethnography presented above was completed by Dr. Verne F. Ray in 1947. The ethnography focuses on the Lakes (Senijextee) Indians of northeastern Washington State. When material by a major regional ethnographer appears in print 69 years after its creation (and 13 years following his passing)—and submitted for publication by a non-ethnographer—some explanation is in order.

My introduction to Dr. Verne Frederick Ray was similar to that of most Anthropology undergraduates in the Northwest in the 1960s. I knew him as the author of at least two items of required reading for anyone interested in Plateau ethnography or archaeology (Ray 1936, 1939) and the compiler of the culture element list for the Plateau (Ray 1942). As one of the graduate students that Dr. Alfred Kroeber sent out in the 1930s to do the "salvage ethnography" that produced the culture element lists, Ray is regarded as a pioneer in the area.

I was particularly interested in his *The Sanpoil and Nespelem: Salishan Peoples of Northeast Washington* (Ray 1933) and *Native Villages and Groupings of the Columbia Basin* (Ray 1936) because the family-owned fishing and hunting resort where I spent my childhood is located on a lake near the headwaters of the Sanpoil River. I was disappointed, however, to find that, in Ray's work, my home fell in the ethnographically blank space between the northernmost settlement of the Sanpoil and the southernmost Lakes settlement.

Following graduation from Washington State University (WSU) with a bachelor's degree in 1969, I spent a number of years as an archaeological "dig bum" and sometime Registered Nurse before returning to graduate school at the University of Idaho for a Master's in Anthropology. My

thesis, *An Archaeological Assessment of Curlew Lake* (Perry 1989), focused on the "blank spot" between the territories of the San Poil and Lakes peoples.

In researching the ethnographic background for my thesis area, I cited Dr. Ray's work, but was frustrated by my inability to find much data on the Lakes people. Hoping to find more information, I wrote to Dr. Ray in 1987 on the possibility that he might have additional, unpublished material. Soon thereafter, Dr. Ray sent some related material to a mutual friend to forward to me. I received a photocopy of a letter from Dr. Ray to photographer Mary Randlett; and a note from Randlett, accompanied by three pages of ethnographic material and excerpts from the *Indian Claims Commission Docket No. 181-C* (Ray 1954b) and a similar paper, "*Fisheries of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation*" dated 1972. The three-page enclosure was titled "The Nez Perce Tribe A Preliminary Report on Columbia River Salmon Fishing" (1954a). Unfortunately, none of it was directly applicable to my thesis work.

In 1990, I found myself attending a Forest Service training session at Ft. Worden in Port Townsend, Washington. Knowing that Dr. Ray also lived there, and thinking that I might have the opportunity to meet him, I called him.

His wife, Dorothy Jean, answered the telephone and informed me that Dr. Ray was too ill to come to the phone, but would be interested in seeing a copy of my thesis when he was feeling better. Once home, I packed up a copy of the thesis and sent it to him.

Sometime later, I was surprised to receive a letter from Dr. Ray. He commended me on my thesis, written on an area "full of voids and ambiguities" (Ray 1993a). I had noted in the thesis that "Information on the Lakes people ... is more scattered" (Perry 1989:24). He added that I might as well have said "nonexistent" (Ray 1993a) and explained why the Lakes were left out of his work. I think it's worthwhile to quote his explanation in full:

Now I want to refer to the massive ethnographic salvage project conceived by A. L. Kroeber and carried out under his sponsorship. You are acquainted, of course, with the many volumes printed by the University of California under the heading Culture Element Distributions, including the several lists included in my volume (No. xxii) of that series. I covered fifteen Plateau tribes (including the Sanpoil) [Ray 1942]. Why not the Lakes? Simple answer: I did cover the Lakes but not until the very end of the project and the money ran out before publication. (Ray 1993a)

His concluding paragraph surprised me, and began the long process that has resulted in the present publication:

I wonder if you would be interested in seeing the Lakes list? I would be happy to send it to you for perusal. And for transformation into a compact textual ethnography—it would be simple to do—if you would care to do so. (I wonder why you didn't not include data from the comprehensive volume in your thesis.) I'll await your response. But be assured that I am not urging you. A long letter, after all! But you have waited a long time for it. (Ray 1993a)

Unfortunately, I no longer have copies of letters that I wrote to Dr. Ray, but I must have expressed interest. The next two letters from Ray discussed various aspects of preparing his material for publication. I ventured the opinion that the culture element list for the Lakes should be published by itself and that I could probably find a publisher. Dr. Ray expressed skepticism that anyone would be interested in publication at this late date and that it would be "a lot of copying."

There was some understandable vacillation between maintaining control of his material and turning it over to me completely. My suggestion that I might consult with present-day tribal members was not well received. At one point in 1994 he requested that the material be returned. That was resolved by my agreeing to restrict communication regarding the data.

In a letter from Dr. Ray dated August 24, 1993, he cites a letter from him dated August 10 in which he stated "This project, 'If and when you start work on it becomes solely your project; not mine, nor any other second party's ...' . And your write-up, after publication is yours and mine and not any second party's" (Ray 1993b).

In the same letter he indicated what he had in mind for the publication "...it consists mainly of the original wording plus 'ands' and therefore, "as with other tribes of the area," and so forth (But you must do it your way.)"

Dr. Ray wrote on September 3, 1993 forbidding

...any interference by any "editor" with any phrasing in the element list or in my textual copy (enclosed). And I emphasize that none of my phonetic transcriptions of native words—place names, etc.—may be changed or omitted. In the whole of my professional career not one word of my writing for publication has been changed, omitted, or in any other manner distributed by any "editor" and I won't accept any interference starting now. (With respect to your writing, of course, you must make your own decision even though the source data are mine.) (Ray 1993c)

Later that month I received the Lakes culture element list. The Lakes manuscript (published in its entirety above) and a copy of the map and place names from *Native Settlements* were enclosed. The list consisted of the published list for the Plateau with the Lakes data appearing as faint pencil marks to the right of the list and to the left of the column for the Lower Chinook data. The letter also contained a "Grant of Right" to "Copy, revise, and utilize the ethnological data for the Lakes (Senijextee) Indians entered in penciled form in the left hand columns of Culture Element Distributions: XXII Plateau".... "Permission is also given for the use of the contents of the unpublished paper Aboriginal Economy and Polity of the Lakes (Sinijextee) Indians ..." (Ray 1993c).

In order to produce the "compact textual ethnography" envisioned by Ray, it was my intention to transcribe the element list, note the items that could be used to enlarge the manuscript and annotate the manuscript indicating where items from the culture element list should be inserted and items in the text that could be added to the list. I also intended to take a trip through Lakes territory, visiting museums and talking to local people in order to fill in what appeared to me to be gaps or unlikely statements in the list. I began working on transcribing the list and noting items to be added to the manuscript and my correspondence with Dr. Ray continued.

Unfortunately, the project was larger than I originally envisioned, and progress slowed. Communications with the Rays however, continued, including short, hand written notes, holiday greetings, birthday cards and discussions of medical matters (mostly his) and frequent changes in employment (mine), the weather, recipes, and Dorothy Jean's garden. I visited the Rays in the fall of 1995 and soon began receiving the annual *Ray Review*, a holiday letter containing several pages of personal news and oddities from letters, the press, and friends, compiled by Dorothy Jean.

While intending to publish the augmented ethnography eventually, I chose to transcribe the cultural element list first because of its rather fragile form. It seemed to me that the faint marginal pencil marks that comprised the list were more likely to be lost prior to publication than the

manuscript which was essentially ready to be published. In transcribing the cultural element list, I became so involved in its rather confusing structure that progress was very slow. It slowed even more due to work and family demands on my time and eventually stopped for several years. The cultural element still remains to be completed and will be published separately.

In his letter of September 3, 1993, in answer to questions regarding the sources of his information, Ray wrote:

Concerning informants: the bulk of my information was supplied by James Bernard, chief from the early 1900s to the 1940s and beyond. I also worked with Joe Adolph, an intelligent and well informed man; my last contact was in July 1953. In that year Jerome Nichols also furnished information. Also, from the 1930s to 1953 various other Lakes men and women served briefly as informants. (Ray 1993c)

I assume that this referred to sources for the Lakes manuscript as well as the culture element list.

Given that Dr. Ray did not publish the material in forty years and that I have not managed to publish it with the desired additions in twenty, I concluded that getting the material into print, even in its present, unimproved form, was preferable to risking its being discarded or buried in an archive. The Lakes manuscript is published above. It is not the expanded version that Dr. Ray and I had envisioned. It is, instead, just what he wrote in 1947, with no additions from the associated cultural element list for the Lakes.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Verne Ray (1905–2003)

Verne Frederick Ray, '31, '33, a UW anthropology professor who helped dozens of Northwest tribes win tribal land-claim settlements, died Sept. 28. He was 98.

One of the first anthropologists at the UW, Ray served as head of the Department of Anthropology and as associate dean of the Graduate School from 1948 to 1954. He was director of the U.S. Interior Dept.'s Emergency Conservation Program on the Colville and the Spokane Indian reservations during the 1930s.

Ray helped pioneer ethnohistory, merging anthropology with history and historical documentation. When Congress passed the Indian Claims Commission Act in 1946, Ray's professional papers and books in the 1930s and 1940s became models of research for the numerous Indian land claims.

Originally interested in law before deciding on anthropology, Ray became immersed in years of legal proceedings following his retirement in 1966, serving as an expert witness and consultant for 53 Indian land-claim cases. Because of his long anthropological interest going back to the 1930s, Ray was hugely influential in those cases.

Through the early 1970s, he represented 44 tribes in 53 cases before the Claims Commission and other courts. By establishing the history and land of the tribes, Ray won them millions of dollars for the government's wrongful taking of their lands. The Cowlitz tribe, which gained federal recognition with Ray's help, voted Ray an honorary member in 2000.

Tribal members who did not personally know Ray remember his valuable works such as *Lower Chinook Ethnographic Notes* (1938) and *Handbook of Cowlitz Indians* (1974). "He recorded a lot of important information that the Cowlitz and the Chinook will be grateful to have recorded," Chinook Tribal Chairman Gary Johnson said.

Born in Illinois and raised in Washington, Ray earned his B.A. and M.A. in anthropology from the UW and his Ph.D. from Yale in 1937. His anthropological interests covered the Middle East and the Valley of Mexico in addition to the Indian tribes of the Pacific Northwest. Ray remained an active researcher until just a few years ago.

He is survived by his wife of 48 years, Dorothy Jean, his stepson, Eric S. Thompson, three grandsons, and two great grandsons.

-Lydia Ratna, 2004. *Columns, the University of Washington Alumni Magazine*.

