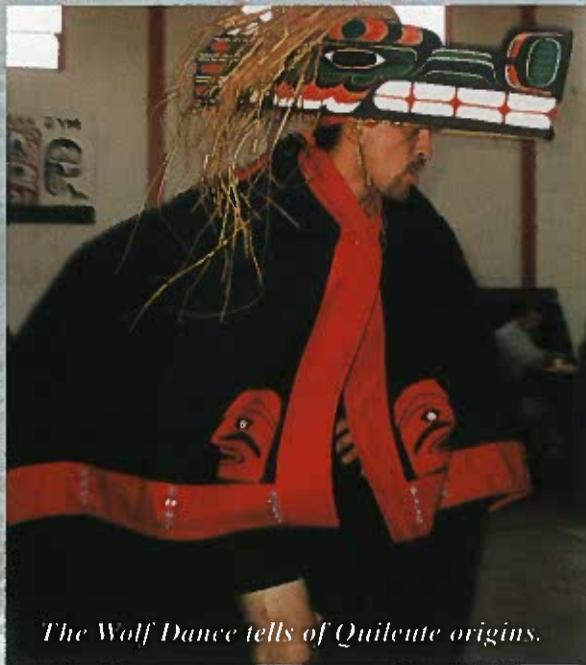


James Island — A-ka-lat, “Top of the Rock”

Thousands of winters before the arrival of the White Drifting-House people (*ho-qwats*), the Quileute Indians and the ghosts of their ancestors lived and hunted here. For as long as the ageless memory of legend recalls, the Quileutes flourished in the territory which originally stretched from their isle-strewn Pacific beaches along the rain forest rivers to the glaciers of Mt. Olympus. Today, Quileutes need only lift their eyes to see the burial place of chiefs atop James Island, or *A-Ka-Lat* — translated as “Top of the Rock”. This sense of cultural continuity is their birthright and heritage. Though much has changed, Quileute elders remember “back in the days” when the “old people” dared challenge *kwalla*, the mighty whale, and who recounted the exploits of wily raven or *bayak*, who placed the sun in the sky.

According to their ancient creation story, the Quileutes were changed from wolves by a wandering Transformer. By legend, their only kindred, the Chimakum Tribe, were washed away by flood and deposited near present-day Port Townsend (where they



The Wolf Dance tells of Quileute origins.

lived until Chief Seattle’s Suquamish Tribe wiped them out in the 1860s), leaving the Quileutes with no known relatives on earth. Quileutes were thus surrounded by unrelated tribes, the Makah (Nuh-Chul-Nuth who migrated down from the west coast of Vancouver Island; S’Klallam to the northeast along the Strait of Juan de Fuca; and Quinault, south at Taholah, both descended from the Salishan). Relations with these groups allowed trade, intermarriage of nobility, and the ostentatious ceremony — the potlatch — an honoring giveaway celebration and redistribution of wealth. Occasionally, however, controversy over trespassing caused outbursts of warfare or slave raiding.



A tribal canoe outside James Island.

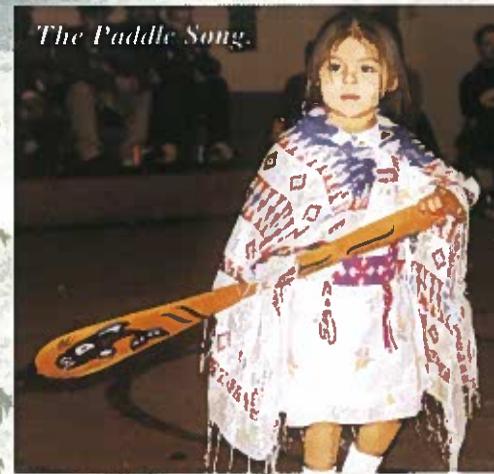
Traditional Quileute life was representative of the complex cultural pattern that was common to indigenous people of the Northwest Coast region. Oriented to the ocean, they fished and hunted sea mammals, and were reputedly recognized as the best sealers on the coast. Their red cedar canoes were engineering masterworks ranging in size from two-person sport models to 58-foot ocean going freight canoes capable of hauling three tons. The graceful bow and flowing shear-lines of the hull were reportedly copied in the hull design of the American clipper ship — which became the fastest in the world for its time. In the early 1900s, a canoe similar to those used by the Quileutes was outfitted with a mast and sailed around the world. Quileute whaling canoes traveled as far north as Southeast Alaska and as far south as California.

Although no totems survive, elegantly carved house posts decorated their immense cedar “big houses” (a 600-foot potlatch house has been documented on the Olympic Peninsula). The Quileutes bred special woolly-haired dogs and spun their hair into yarn for highly prized blankets. Rain proof skirts and capes, woven from the soft inner bark of the cedar, and conical rainhats provided protection from the 115 inches of

rainfall that annually drenches Quileute country. The Quileutes also wove numerous types of baskets, some so fine and watertight that they served as kettles for boiling water or stew. Clothing, weaponry, paints and dyes, and tools and utensils were all made from natural materials found near at hand, or traded from neighboring tribes. Surface copper made it way south from British Columbia over these trade routes and iron was not unknown, possibly carried by the Japanese Current from Asia to Quileute beaches in derelict junks or other ships.

Quileute society generated from “house groups”, made up of all those who occupied during winter months one of the big houses at the mouths of the Quillayute or Hoh rivers, or Goodman Creek. Each house had a chief, those in line of chieftom (nobility) and commoners. Thus kinship and blood relationships determined much of the early structure of tribal government. The house group may also have included a number of slaves, either captured or traded from neighboring tribes. During the summer months, these large units would fragment into families, some of whom moved upriver to hunting camps.

From cradle-board to burial canoe, Quileutes relied upon the help and inspiration of supernatural powers. Youths sought their own *taxilit* (personal guardian power) on solitary spirit quests. Rituals such as the first salmon ceremony guaranteed the good will of the salmon spirits — each family taking the first salmon caught in the spring divided up the flesh and returned the head and bones to the river — assuring that the great fish would continue to fill the rivers each year and allow themselves to be caught. A terrifying array of monsters, such as *duskiya*, the kelp-haired child snatcher, were also abroad in the area.



The Paddle Song.

Quileute life also included time for relaxation and play. Winter evenings were spent in dramatic recounting of mythic ancestor stories of the days when the animals were still people. Gambling tournaments like stick games (*slahal*) and contests of strength (lifting greased beach boulders) and skill were common. Potlatches honoring extraordinary whale hunting, naming or special achievements involved the pageantry of masked dances, drumming and songs that were private property and are still passed down by Quileutes as a family inheritance. These great feasts validated family status, continued all hours for days, and “back in the days” sometimes for weeks long.

The defining element of this culture, the Quileute language, is still spoken by elders at LaPush and taught in a rudimentary way at the Quileute Tribal School. It is a complex tongue typified by clicked sounds, epiglottal stops and tongue twisting strings of consonants with words that would run off the page, for example: *kitlayakwokwilkwolasstaxasalas* which means “those are the people who think that I am the one who is going to Forks”. Quileute is not, as some outsiders believe, composed of Chinook jargon or devoid of all abstract ideas. It has the distinction of being one of only five languages in the world that have no nasal sounds (no m or n). Quileute is also one of the few languages not known to be related to any other tongue. Quileute elders have supervised the compilation of a dictionary and instructional texts that are taught in the school.



James Island — sentinel to sun and sky.

Although European traders had previously made contact with Quileutes as early as the 1700s, the first official contacts were made in 1855 when the Quileutes signed a treaty with staff members of Washington Territory governor, Isaac Stevens. A year later, a Quileute delegation traveled to Olympia to sign a treaty with the United States. According to that treaty, the

Quileutes were to give up their lands and move to a reservation at Taholah. However, so remote was Quileute territory that there was little pressure to settle their lands. Finally in 1889, the same year Washington joined the Union as a state, an Executive Order by President Benjamin Harrison set up a one-square mile reservation at LaPush with 252 inhabitants. Four years later the 71 members of the Hoh River band of Quileutes were provided with a separate reservation. In the treaties the Quileutes reserved their hunting, fishing and gathering rights in their "usual and accustomed places" and were promised health, education and job training in exchange for over 800,000 acres of ancient virgin timber teeming with fish and wildlife in the Quillayute River basin.

LaPush received its name from traders using Chinook jargon for river mouth (*la bouche*, French). In 1882, "civilization" reached the village in the form of schoolteacher A.W. Smith and his school. He set about renaming Quileutes from the Bible (Esau, Sarah, Christian), and American history (William Penn, Henry Hudson, Andrew Jackson, etc.) as well as Anglicizing Quileute names (Buckety Mason, California Hobucket). In 1889 all 26 houses at LaPush were burned to the ground by a settler claiming the land. The fire devastated the last carved masks, baskets, hunting equipment and sacred regalia from pre-contact days.

The Constitution and By-Laws of the Quileute Tribe (1936) and their Corporate Charter issued by the Secretary of the Interior in 1937, recognized and estab-

lished the sovereignty of the Quileute people as a self governing political unit within the United States. The Tribal Council consists of five members, elected to staggered three-year terms and constitute the governing body of the Tribe.

In 1974 under *US v. Washington* (Boldt Decision), the court affirmed the tribes' treaty fishing rights "in common" with the citizens of Washington state. The decision designated 50 percent of the fishery to the tribes and provided for co-management of fishing and eventually shellfish resources.



James Island, 1895.

James Island — *a natural coastal fortress*

James Island or *Akalat* (Top of the Rock) figures prominently in the history of the Quileute people — from documented oral accounts, ethnography, ethnohistory and archeology. The island was the location of a fortified village in 1788 when first described in Meares written accounts, and this defensive function was maintained into the second half of 1800s. Evidence of habitation in this area comparable to the Ozette site goes back 8-9,000

years, possibly longer. James Island is also known as a source of spirit power for the Quileute people and a place where high status individuals were placed in canoes in the trees after death. In the second half of the 1800s, the island was used as a garden where potatoes and possibly other root crops were grown and stored in cellars. The viewpoint provided by the 160-foot high rock was ideally suited for sighting whales. It was a natural lookout to defend the village against occasionally hostile neighbors. In view of all of these and other uses as well, it is not surprising that the cultural resources of James Island are profoundly significant in Quileute culture and group identity.

James Island and the village of LaPush also were important sites in World War II as part of the 13th Naval District's Coastal Lookout System. Both the LaPush Lifeboat Station and the LaPush Beach Patrol Station were located within the village adjacent to James Island. Because James Island obstructs a full view of the horizon from the village, a lookout tower next to the Lifeboat Station house was complemented by a second lookout structure on the island.

During 1997 archeological reconnaissance of the island, evidence of former structures was found, including foundations remnants; pieces of a cable car system with tracks, winch and cable car. These overlie archeological shell midden deposits, evidence of previous village habitation.

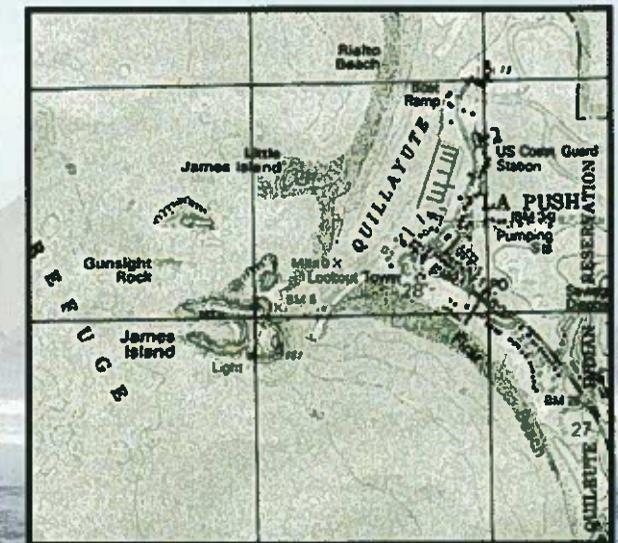
Today the US Coast Guard operates a foghorn warning system and a lighting system that provides guidance for boats entering the harbor during night-time inclement weather. A well maintained steel stairway exists for maintenance and the more adventurous hikers.

During the summer of 1997, James Island or Akalat was the site and symbol of the International Gathering at LaPush where 23 tribes from Washington and British Columbia paddled to celebrate the revival of the ocean-going canoe traditions of Northwest Indian coastal tribes.

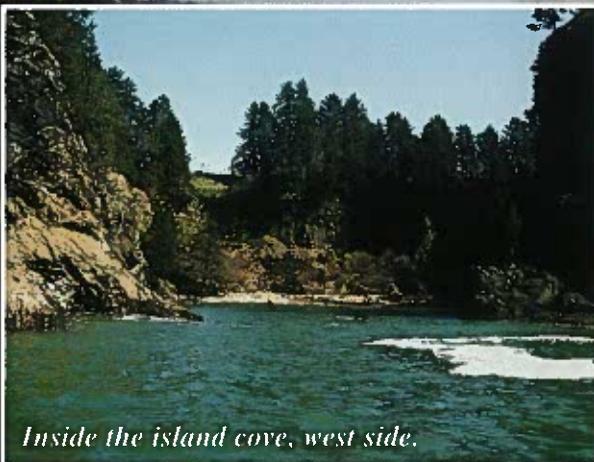
For many Washington residents, Indian and non-Indian alike, James Island stands as a preeminent reminder of the extraordinary breathtaking beauty of our Pacific beaches.



Quileute baskets echo the whaling heritage.



For more information, contact:
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Inside the island cove, west side.



The setting sun profiles Little James Island.