

Discover Cathlapotle

Partnerships for the Past and Present

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The Cathlapotle Archaeological Project is not your typical Section 106 project. It was not conceived, as excavation projects often are, to mitigate the impacts of a Section 106-mandated undertaking. Nor was it a site in imminent danger of being destroyed by natural forces. The project was conceived precisely because Cathlapotle was one of the few archeological resources left on the Columbia River which had *not already* succumbed to development, looting, or flooding. It was designed as a pro-active research and educational outreach effort to share a disappearing aspect of the Columbia River legacy with its inheritors. In short, it was a unique opportunity that we in the compliance business rarely get to experience.

Now, after four years, the Cathlapotle Archaeological Project can serve as a model illustrating the benefits to be reaped from a relatively small-scale cultural resource management project when partnerships are nourished and community outreach is made an integral part of the long-term management plan.

Cathlapotle is situated beside the Columbia River on Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge in Washington. Its name refers to the Cathlapotle People who lived there, one of the many tribes of Chinook Indians occupying the Columbia River

from its mouth to Celilo Falls (now known as the Dalles).

First documented in 1805 by Lewis and Clark, who observed 14 cedar plank houses and estimated as many as 900 inhabitants, the village was one of the largest and most important Chinook settlements on the river. Historical records indicate that it was occupied until the first European settlers arrived in the area in the 1840s.

It might seem the remains of 14 houses would be easy to find, but efforts to locate the site's whereabouts were long confounded by changes in the physical landscape. The one-fourth-mile-long riverfront town that Lewis and Clark observed from the water is now some 80 meters inland, obscured by a dense understory of stinging nettles in a wooded riparian forest. In 1992, several subtle rectangular depressions averaging 20 to 25 meters in length were finally identified as cedar plankhouse foundations, and the Cathlapotle Archaeological Project was launched.

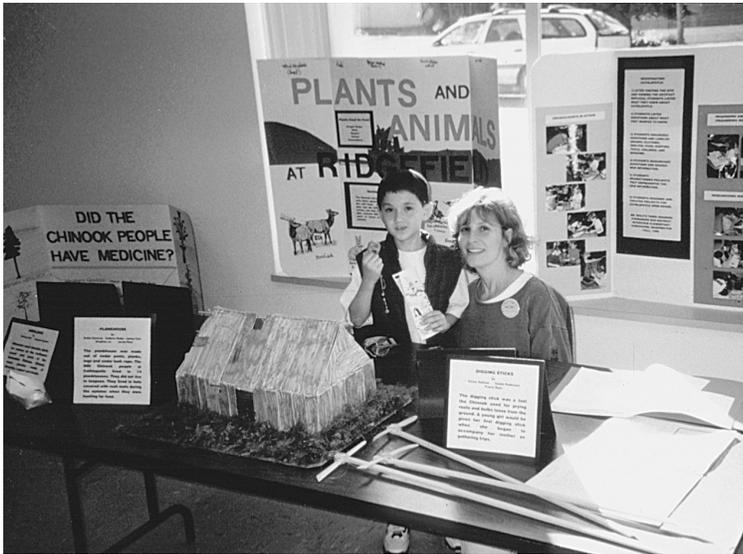
The site's significance stems not only from its association with the period of contact between native cultures and Euroamericans in the early 19th century, but also from its potential to provide important information about human history and prehistory in the Columbia River region. This discovery offered an excellent opportunity for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to develop a long-term management plan for a significant cultural resource without the constraints of impending impact.

Strong partnerships coupled with high-quality research, interpretation, and outreach were identified as key elements to be emphasized in the management plan. Research focused on gathering data about sedentary complex hunter-gatherer culture through archeological evidence of social stratification, complex technology, environmental manipulation, and intensive practices of food production. The site's well-defined stratigraphy established a 1,000-year chronology spanning the prehistoric, contact, and post-contact periods.

Partnerships have been central to the project's success. Supported by challenge grant funds, Portland State University undertook to study and

Dr. Ken Ames provides an overview of the Cathlapotle site to Chinook tribal members during a 1995 visit to the excavation.





Third grade teacher and student display exhibits created by the class for a community heritage festival focusing on the archeology of Cathlapotle.

report on the site. Dr. Kenneth Ames and crews of students conducted excavation field schools for three consecutive years. The resulting laboratory analysis continues into the present and the foreseeable future. Already, the project has generated practical training in archeological techniques for more than 100 students, in addition to numerous master's theses, Ph.D. dissertations, and professional publications. We have also been able to use data from the excavation to reconstruct the ancient environment, information which contributes to the Refuge's plans for managing the land. This partnership enabled us to conduct high-quality research for a relatively low cost.

The Chinook Tribe has also been an active and enthusiastic partner in the project. Today there are more than 1,200 tribal members living throughout the Northwest working hard to revive the culture of their ancestors. Despite concerted and ongoing efforts, the tribe is as yet unrecognized and lacks the financial resources to develop and maintain its own heritage education program. Consequently, they recognized the Cathlapotle Archaeological Project as an opportunity to share their cultural knowledge of Chinook Indian history with the people who now live in their traditional territory. They also welcomed the chance to delve deeper into their own heritage through the excavation. Working with the tribe has ensured that the information we disseminate is both accurate and appropriate.

Through the outreach programs and products we developed, we have established an ongoing and positive partnership with the community as well. Plans are currently being developed to construct an interpretive center in Ridgefield highlighting the cultural and natural history of the area. The site has benefitted from this partnership

through increased awareness and a sense of stewardship generated among residents for the cultural heritage in their own backyard.

The goals of the public outreach program are to promote understanding of past and present Chinook Indian culture and the Chinook People's relationship to the natural world, foster a sense of stewardship for the conservation of both cultural and natural resources, and provide an understanding of the archeological process and how the science of archeology turns raw data into information about the past. Our public outreach efforts have taken the form of a wide variety of events and written materials. Their impact has been like throwing a stone into a still pond. The ripple of contact grows larger and larger.

During the summer we provided public tours of the excavation, followed up in the fall (during Archaeology Week) with a community archeology festival. Volunteers from FWS, PSU, and the Chinook Tribe facilitated slide talks, hands-on activities, exhibits, and demonstrations. Each year attendance at these festivals has steadily increased, with visitors coming not only from Ridgefield but from all over the Portland-Vancouver area and even from as far north as Seattle. The popularity of these events attests to the intense interest the public has in learning about the cultural history in their own community.

School students, a large and extremely important audience, missed out on the excitement of visiting the summer excavation. To address this outreach need, we developed the "Discover Cathlapotle!" environmental and heritage educational resource kit. Designed for grades 3-6, the kit uses curriculum-based materials emphasizing hands-on exploration, discovery learning, and critical-thinking skills in language arts, social studies, math, and science to meet both the program's and the school system's educational goals. A volunteer advisory panel of Vancouver-area teachers reviewed and field-tested materials to ensure the kit would be an effective teaching tool. Each year, teachers introduce more than 1,000 students to the rich cultural heritage of Cathlapotle and the Columbia River history during their two-week borrow period.

Despite the fact that the excavation phase of the project is over for now, efforts to bring the story of Cathlapotle to the public continue to be a central element of the site's long-term management. Our plans for the future include producing more copies of the kit to meet increasing demand, producing a booklet summarizing the prehistory and history of Cathlapotle in non-technical lan-

guage, and continuing our cooperation with the Chinook tribal heritage committee to present information about Cathlapotle at events such as pow wows and history festivals.

As a result of our outreach efforts over the years, we have reached thousands of children and adults who knew little, if anything, about the cultural history in their community. What we've done at Cathlapotle can and probably has been done to varying degrees at many other archeological sites. The outcomes this type of project produces benefit both the specific cultural resource management program and the science of archeology as a whole. They are also within easy grasp.

Archeology, when shared with the public, inspires excitement about the past and enthusiasm for protecting cultural resources. These lines, written by the late Chinook poet Ed Nielsen after visiting the excavation at Cathlapotle, illustrate the power of a positive experience.

...In the shadows of trees
students of Archaeology
bring to present light
the past people's living
These are My People's
Lives buried in this
Sacred Land, Sacred Soil!
This is the Chinookan History
coming to a very different
Time's sight
green tree limbed
shadow summered light
in the digs, ridges
of long extinct fires
soil shadows
layers of debris
we stand in this place
of past living
but life is here again
The Chinookan History is once again
given back to Us!...

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Janet R. Balsom

Staying Upright

Reflections on the Section 106 Process and the Glen Canyon Dam Cultural Program

Management of cultural resources along the Colorado River is complicated not only by the naturalized system, but by competing responsibilities and interests of federal and state agencies and Indian tribes. Utilizing the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) and the National Park Service (NPS) developed a management partnership with all of the entities retaining oversight and interest in the Section 106 process. This process, detailed in the programmatic agreement regarding Glen Canyon Dam Operations, marks a turning point in federal agency responsibilities related to Glen Canyon Dam under NHPA. Implementation of the program is the challenge discussed in this article.

Glen Canyon Dam was completed by Reclamation in 1963 as a feature of the Colorado River Storage Project (CRSP). The underlying project purposes are defined by Section 1 of the

Colorado River Storage Project Act of 1956 (43 U.S.C. 617), which authorized the Secretary to construct, operate, and maintain Glen Canyon Dam. The purposes include "regulating the flow of the Colorado River, storing water for beneficial consumptive use, making it possible for the states of the Upper Basin to utilize the apportionments made to and among them, respectively, providing for the reclamation of arid and semiarid land, for the control of floods, and for the generation of hydroelectric power, as an incident of the foregoing purposes"

Even though power generation was incidental to other purposes, Glen Canyon Dam has been operated primarily for power generation. Drastic fluctuations in river flow from the dam mirrored electrical power needs in the urban centers of the west. These fluctuating flows caused visible changes to the ecosystem of the river, eroding camping beaches and endangering native fish species. Because Glen Canyon Dam was com-