

Jacilee Wray

Tribes Write Book About the Indigenous Peoples of the Olympic Peninsula

In June 1992, representatives from nine tribes of the Olympic Peninsula region formed the Olympic Peninsula Intertribal Cultural Advisory Committee. The tribes are the Elwha Klallam, Jamestown S’Klallam, Port Gamble S’Klallam, Skokomish, Squaxin Island, Quinault, Hoh, Quileute, and Makah. Committee members, delegated by each tribe, meet at different reservations on alternate months, to fulfill their mission and their commitment to enhance the understanding, preservation, and continuation of cultural knowledge.

A major need the committee intends to fill is the creation of a better understanding of their ways of life for those who do not have a clear perspective of the peninsula tribes. “A tribe consists not only of individuals in traditional roles; a storyteller, basketweaver, or fisherman may also be a mill worker, lawyer, teacher, or government representative. Tribes include people living on and off the reservation, who help their kids with homework and teach traditional knowledge, who pull canoes and handle motorized boats, and who speak English, yet strive to preserve their native language.”*

In 1996, the Olympic Peninsula Intertribal Cultural Advisory Committee and the park cultural anthropologist at Olympic National Park, in Washington State, assumed the task of writing a book that would give readers a foundation for learning about the people who form an integral part of the history and community of the Olympic Peninsula today. Such a book would serve Olympic National Park visitors because no existing publication discusses the sev-

eral tribes who have occupied this region for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. The great need for such a book is also evident in the local public and private education system and in the community as a whole.

The Intertribal Committee applied for, and received, a grant to support this project from the non-profit organization, the National Park Foundation. The committee also competed successfully for a National Park Service Challenge Cost Share grant, which they matched by contributing their services on the book as payment in kind. Testimony to their fund-raising skills, the committee had previously received a grant from the National Park Service Historic Preservation Fund to support travel to meetings and training in historic preservation. Together, these funding sources were paramount in facilitating the intertribal work group meetings, editing, obtaining photographs, and defraying travel costs.

Each of the committee representatives took the lead in writing particular chapters, which include an overview of tribal history, highlights of contemporary issues, and descriptions of current heritage preservation programs. The reader can anticipate gaining a better understanding of the reservation community and the, until now, little-known opportunities to visit each of them. In addition to the main authors, other tribal cultural specialists assisted with writing, locating photographs, and conducting research. The park anthropologist served as the volume editor. She worked closely with the committee members to make their chapters consistent, while maintaining their individual characters. Many people came together to bring this book to fruition because of their extraordinary commitment to enlighten generations to come, American Indian and others.

Notes

* Olympic Peninsula Intertribal Cultural Advisory Committee, Jacilee Wray, editor. Forthcoming Publication. University of Oklahoma Press. (Title to be determined.)

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Cultural Committee. From front left, Georgianne Charles, Elwha Klallam; Vi Riebie, Hoh; Marie Hebert, Port Gamble S’Klallam; back left, Kathy Duncan, Jamestown S’Klallam; Justine James, Quinault; Chris Morganroth 3rd, Quileute. Photo by the author.

