

# Chinook Indian Tribe

The Lower Chinook Indians for a long time remained unchallenged masters of a private land of plenty in Southwest Washington, where even transportation was no problem. They could travel from the Columbia River to Willapa Bay without taking the roundabout ocean route. They used their own inland waterways, portaging at marshes, which were remnants of the ancient river channel.

These Chinook Indians were a Salishan tribe occupying all of present Pacific County, except the Upper Willapa Valley. Their canoe voyages to Vancouver Island, Cape Flattery, and up the Columbia River resulted in the spread of a trade language, which became known as the Chinook Jargon. The Indians borrowed and assimilated foreign words into this jargon when contacts were later made with explorers and white traders. Though it was more like the Nootka tongue, and not the Chinook's old tribal language, the fact that it bore their name is proof of their prominence as middlemen in primitive commerce.

Chinook villages were always near the water. Fishing, hunting, processing salmon, elk, berries, and wapato were the most important occupations of the villagers. When salmon were not running in the streams, there were abundant clams, crabs, oysters, and mussels to be found on the nearby beaches.

By aboriginal standards, the Lower Chinooks lived well, but legends tell how they had to be on alert and fight to preserve the exclusive right to their rich clam and oyster beaches. On one occasion, so the story goes, two hundred canoes bearing tribal enemies came down the Columbia prepared to carry away tons of food stuffs. Sentinels posted on Scarborough Head (present Fort Columbia State Park) saw the tribesman land on the western side of the Chinook River. That evening, the Chinooks, clad in thick elkskin armour, emerged from the woods and with bows and arrows and double-bladed wooden clubs, fought a decisive battle, driving out the raiders and reasserting ownership of the land and its products.

The Chinooks carried on trade in dried salmon, sturgeon, smelt and seal meat taken from their own waters; dentalium shells from the Straight of Juan de Fuca; dried shellfish, strung on sticks, from the Willapa Bay; and furs and dried meat, packed in woven marsh-grass bags, from the Upper Willapa Bay and Chehalis River watersheds. The men carved the cedar-log canoes and the women dried berries and blubber. To this day Pacific County is noted for some of these products- salmon, oysters, cranberries, and "Chinook" is a well-known word to western fishermen.

Relatives of the Chinooks lived along the Columbia as far as Wishram, and along the Willamette up to Oregon City, but the Lower Chinook lands reached no farther than Grays River in Wahkiakum County. Their principle village at old Chinookville was on the north side of the Columbia, less than eleven miles from the ocean, and about a half mile below the present bridge between Astoria, Oregon and Megler, Washington. Erosion has now washed the entire original site into the river.

More than forty Chinook settlements existed in Pacific County in Southwest Washington at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but, like the original site, most of them have been destroyed by some outside force such as highways, railroads, and fort construction- or by changes in the rivers. Some were at the mouths of streams such as the Wallacut, the Nemah, the Naselle, the Willapa, and the Bone. Naselle, Goose Point, Bruceport, Tokeland, and Grayland- the farthest northern limit of the Chinooks. The town of Ilwaco bears the name of the last Chinook chief living there, though the spelling appears variously as Iluwaku, Ilawaku, and Elwah-ko Jim. Other settlements included an area on mile east of Ilwaco, another between South Bend and Raymond, and the grounds of the lifesaving station at Fort Canby. The Shoalwater Indian Reservation on North Cove on Willapa Bay was also a village site.

The Chinooks lived in sturdy communal longhouses built of cedar planks, some as large as 40 feet wide by 120 feet long. "Well formed, looking old and durable", said one of the first whites who saw them. The dwellings had a single door and no windows or chimney. An opening was left along the ridgepole to permit smoke to escape. A sunken area for a fireplace was provided to each family, and this was rimmed by an earth platform where all domestic activities were carried on. Foods in the process of being cured hung from the rafters, to be dried in the smoke of the family fires. A low shelf along either wall of the building was spread with mats and furs for sleeping.

The principle domestic implements included chisels, knives, awls, adzes, drills, and hammers. There were wedges made of elk antlers for splitting wood and chopping stones. They steamed shellfish by throwing heated rocks in tightly covered baskets or wooden containers holding water. They broiled fish in front of an open fire or buried them on a bed of hot coals. They also boiled or roasted roots of wapato, lupin, and bracken fern. They sewed with needles made of wood or bird bones. For fishing, the Chinooks made sinkers and anchors of crudely worked stones. Their seines were woven of spruce root, cedar bark fiber, and strong grass. Their wooden fish spears had sharp stone points. The men carried bows, arrows, and clubs for weapons. When not in stiff elk hide dress, they wore little clothing. For winter, they had fur robes, scanty skin garments, rain cloaks of rushes, woven hats, and perhaps a

blanket. The women wore capes and short shredded cedar bark wrapped around skirts or aprons.

The heads of Chinook infants were flattened in padded cradleboards, according to tribal custom, a disfigurement which distinguished them all of their lives. A sea captain in 1795 described Chinook faces as having “the appearance of being carved from a flat plank, their thickness of head seeming to be not more than half the width of the face”.

The tribe, numbering several thousand members, was greatly reduced by smallpox and malaria epidemics soon after the white man appeared on the scene. Chinooks and whites intermarried so early that the tribe had a loose identity. We must not forget the people for whom a wind, a jargon, and a giant salmon are named.

# Chinook Indian Legends

## As told by Lucy Agnes Ducheney Elliott

### Legend of Pillar Rock

An Indian Chief's son fell in love with a chief's daughter on the opposite shore. In his canoe he went to see the girl without bearing any gifts. This so angered the great Spirit, Tamamous, that he seized the canoe and jammed it down into the bed of the river where you now see the end of it protruding from the water and on it is implanted the boy's face. Pillar Rock is gradually growing smaller each year as weathering takes place and the profile of the face is not as clear or distinct as it was in the past.

### Legend of Raven Rock

The raven had a cave where he hid. He would fly out and eat people when they passed. He tried this once when Tamamous was going by and Tamamous turned him into stone.

### Legend of the Rocks

There was an Indian hanging up the river. Tamamous was shocked and disgusted because everyone wanted to go and see it, so he turned them all into stone.

### Legend of Stony Point

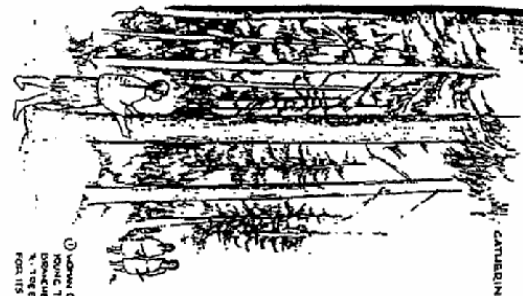
This is an outcropping of Basaltic rocks, the only ones of their kind on the Bay, which appear to have been subjected to fire. This is the basis of an Indian legend.

Ages ago a celebrated medicine man came on a visit to the bay with his brother. While wading for crabs, the brother fell into a deep channel and was swallowed by a great sea monster. When the medicine man learned by his magic where his brother had disappeared, he felled huge trees and built an immense fire. On this were heated large stones collected for the medicine man by the giants inhabiting the forests. When these stones were red hot, they were cast into the bay causing it to boil dry and expose the monster. The doctor then cut open the monster's belly, releasing his brother.

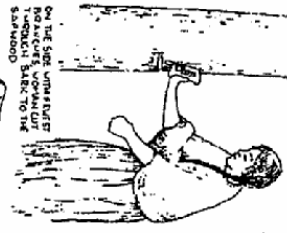
### The Balance Rock

At the top of the hill beyond the bare spot on Scarborough Hill, was a large balance rock. The legend was that as long as the rock balanced on top of Scarborough Head the Chinook nation would be powerful. The rock was there when the first white men came. One day a group of Tillamook Indians sneaked up the hill and pushed the rock into the gully behind Scarborough Head, much to the dismay of the Chinooks. It was an omen, which weighed heavily on their hearts. Now the Chinook are scattered. Perhaps the old legend had some truth in it.

CUTTING BARK ON TREE



① When Good a straight  
round tree with few  
branches, make a groove  
in the bark with a  
flat ended tool, making  
for its bark.



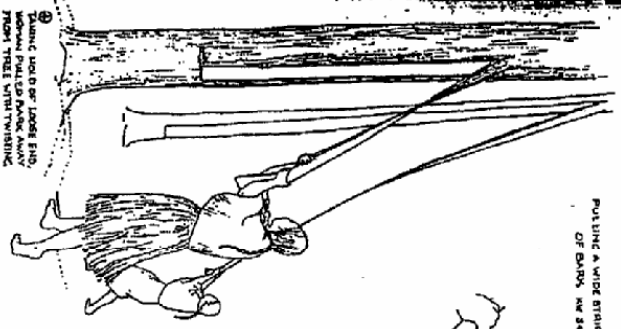
ON THE SIDE UNWEIGHTED  
TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE  
TOOL. MAKE TO THE  
SANDWOOD

MAKING THE CUT FROM THE  
SIDE OF THE TOOL



② AT THE MAKING OF  
CUTS, SIZE SHOULD  
BE MADE TO THE  
FLAT ENDED TOOL.

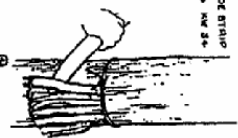
PUTTING A WIDE STRIP  
OF BARK ON ST



③ Make a hole in the bark  
with a pointed tool and  
pull the bark down with  
a hook.



④ STRIP OF BARK  
WIDE END, RING  
SIDE END.



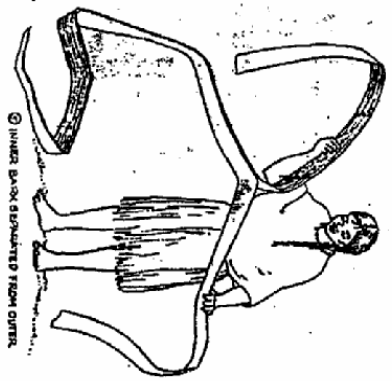
⑤ LIFT THE BARK FROM  
THE TREE AND  
PRESERVE TO BE  
MAKING STRIPS.



⑥ THE BARK SHOULD BE  
CUTTED UP FOR  
MAKING STRIPS.



⑦ BUNDLE TIED WITH TAPERING END OF BARK STRIP.

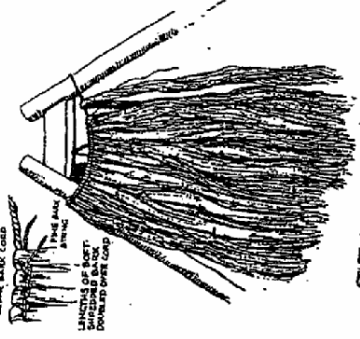


⑧ INNER BARK SEPARATED FROM OUTER

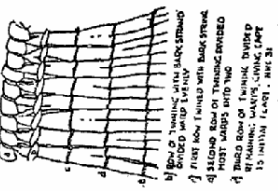


⑨ THE BARK SHOULD BE  
CUTTED UP FOR  
MAKING STRIPS.

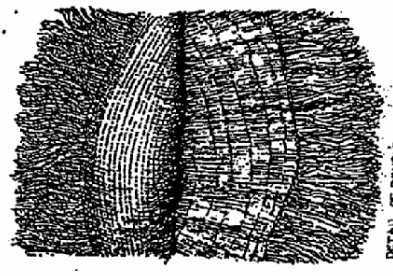
START OF CAPE IN NECKLINE  
LEAFY BARK, 45x15



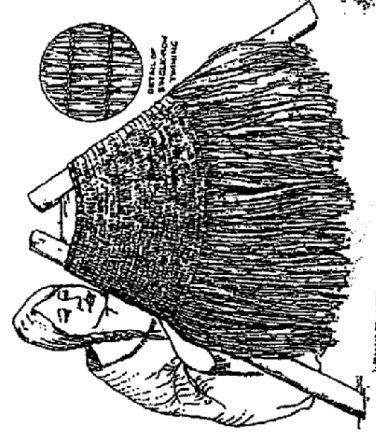
CONSTANT GIVE RATE  
OF WATER, FINISHED  
IN THE EARLY MORNING  
OF THE DAY



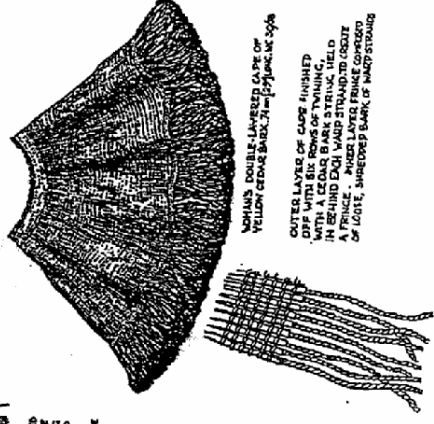
START OF MAKING WOMAN'S CAPE OF  
SOFT-SHREDDED CEDAR BARK. LENGTH  
ABOUT 81 on 135/155 CS 25



DETAIL OF DOUBLE-LAYERED CAPE.  
OUTER LAYER OF SOFT-SHREDDED AND  
CLOSELY TWINED CEDAR BARK, INNER  
SHREDDED CEDAR BARK, TWIGS, VERTICALLY SPACED.  
MC 89

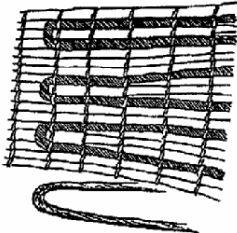


WOMAN TWINED CAPE OVER WOODEN FRAME LIFTING  
AND TURNING GARMENT AS NECESSARY, LEAVING  
TWIGS CONTINUOUS, ABOUT 2 on 11/135/155 CS 65



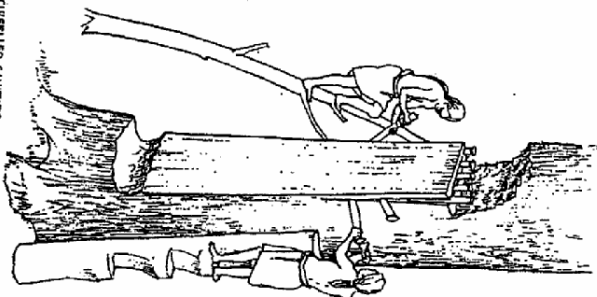
WOMAN'S DOUBLE-LAYERED CAPE OF  
YELLOW CEDAR BARK, 71 on 135/155 CS 65

OUTER LAYER OF CAPE FINISHED  
OFF WITH SIX ROWS OF TWILING  
IN EACH BARK STRIP, THE  
INNER LAYER FINISHED OFF  
A PRINCE. ANOTHER PRINCE COVERED  
OF LOGS, SHREDDED BARK OF TWIGS STANDING

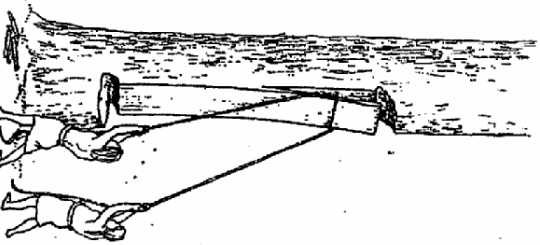


TO GIVE CAPE THE FLARE MAKE SEVERAL  
STRINGS OF SOFT-SHREDDED BARK BEING  
PROCESSED IN THE MANNER  
FOUR LINES, WAYS AS IN FIG. 1  
WHEN COMPLETED, CAPS MUST BE WEDGED  
OUT TO GIVE IT THE

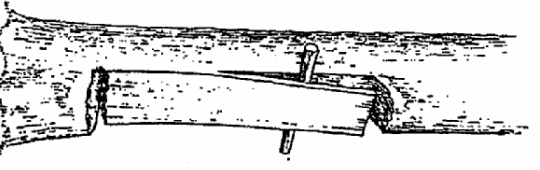
SPLITTING PLANKS FROM A STANDING TREE.



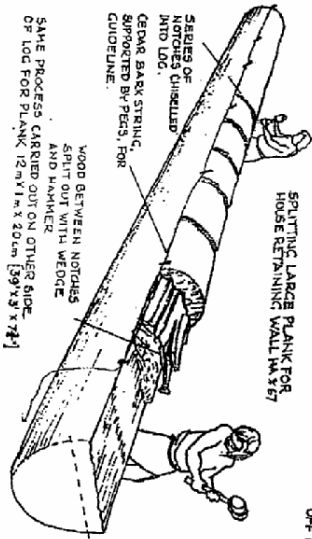
CHISELED CAVITIES IN TREE TRUNK ALLOWED FOR WEDGES TO BE DRIVEN IN AT TOP PLANK TO COME AWAY AT BASE. KWMS4



PULLING ON ROPE HELPED TO SPLIT PLANK AWAY FROM TRUNK. W.C.C. FEB. 1904. BON HAVEN, TEX.

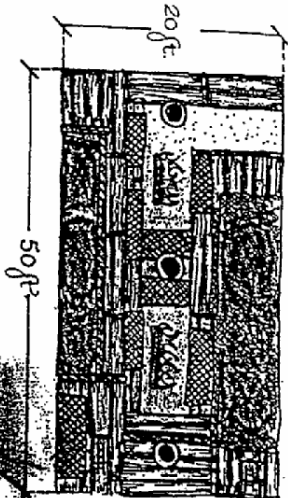


SLOW, BUT ENERGY-SAVING, METHOD OF SPLITTING PLANK. AFTER INITIAL WEDGING, CROSSPIECE WAS INSERTED AND LEFT. WIND AND WEATHER COMPLETED WORK OF SPLITTING OFF PLANK. W.C.C. 89



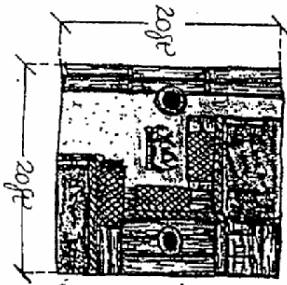
SPLITTING LARGE PLANK FOR HOUSE REMAINING WALL IN '87. SERIES OF NOTCHES CHISELED AND LID. CEDAR BARK STRUNG, SUPPORTED BY PEGS, FOR GUIDELINE. Voids BETWEEN NOTCHES SPUN OUT WITH WEDGE AND HAMMER. SAME PROCESS CARRIED OUT ON OTHER SIDE OF LOG FOR PLANK 12x11x130cm [39x33x74].

# Floor Plan

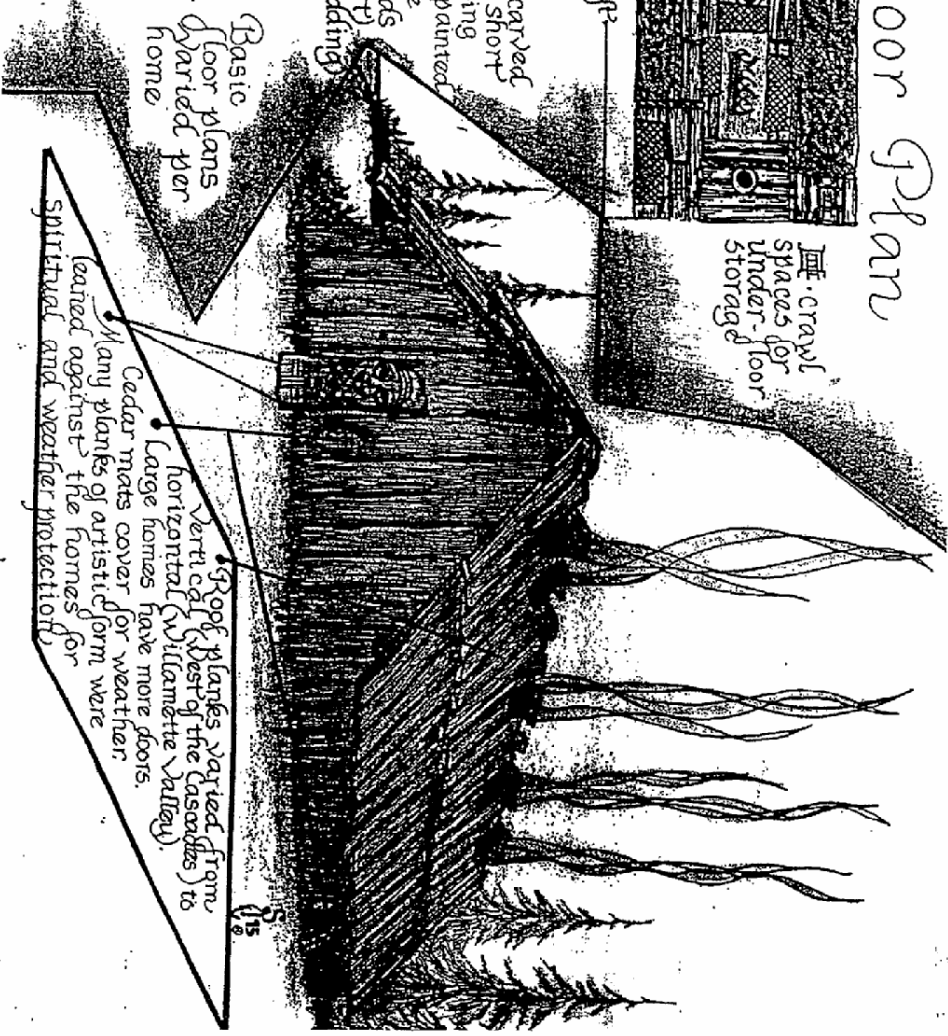


• crawl spaces for under-floor storage

- Ridge posts - some carved and painted or with short limbs left for climbing
- planks carved and painted for partitions, knee walls, or head boards
- cedar mats (comfort) furs for comfort (bedding)



Basic floor plans varied per home



• 90° planks varied from vertical (West of the Cascades) to horizontal (Willamette Valley). Large homes have more doors. Cedar mats cover for weather. Many planks of artistic form were leaned against the homes for spiritual and weather protection.

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**Members of the Chinook Indian Tribe/ Chinook Nation continue to reside in their traditional homelands at the mouth of the Columbia River. The natural wealth of this area allowed them to develop a sophisticated culture highlighted by their large plankhouse villages and oceangoing canoes. Salmon, sturgeon, shellfish, numerous plant foods as well as land and sea mammals sustained them. The Western Red Cedar was perhaps the most significant of plants utilized. It provided construction and even its bark was shredded for towels and babies' bedding and diapers. The ancestors of the Chinook Nation were essential to the survival of Lewis and Clark's Corps of Discovery during the winter of 1805-06.**

**The sovereign Chinook Nation is the heir of the five westernmost tribes of Chinookan people- the Lower Chinook, Clatsop, Willapa, Kathlamet, and Wahkiakum. These people originate in both SW Washington and NW Oregon, and were speakers of two distinct dialects of the Chinookan language which extends East on the Columbia River to the Dalles, OR.**

**The Tribe's offices are located in Chinook, Washington although the Tribe's membership is distributed throughout the region. The Tribe governs itself with an elected nine member tribal council. Today the Tribe is striving to regain Federal Acknowledgment and preserve its unique and proud heritage for generations to come.**

# Chinook Indian Nation -History

## 1792

Captain Robert Gray (American) entered the Columbia River and traded with the Chinook Tribe for fish and furs.

## 1805-06

Lewis and Clark Expedition spent the winter among the Chinook Indians and recorded data on traditional culture, villages, and population.

## 1811

John Jacob Astor's Pacific Fur Company established Astoria, a land-based outpost in Chinookan country; traders wrote a half dozen books about their adventures and dealings with the Chinook Tribe.

## 1851

Chinook Tribe entered into a treaty with Superintendent Anson Dart at Tansy Point; the treaty was not ratified.

## 1851-1930's

The Bureau of Indian Affairs monitored, discussed, counted, reported on and served the Chinook Tribe through the following BIA agencies (as confirmed in BIA files in National Archives):

- Clatsop Plains Agency, 1851-52
- Southern Indian District Agency, 1854-56
- Western (or Coast) District Agency, 1856-62
- Chehalis Locality Agency, 1862-85
- Nisqually-Puyallup Agency, 1874-88
- Puyallup (Consolidated) Agency, 1888-1916
- Taholah Agency, 1916-30's
- Western Washington Agency, ca. 1935-50
- Portland Area Office, 1950-55

## 1855

Chinook Tribe participated in the Chehalis River Treaty Council as invited by Governor Isaac I. Stevens; when the tribes did not accept Steven's removal plan, he walked out in anger leaving an unsigned treaty.

## 1890's

Chinook tribal members erected Shaker Church at Bay Center, Washington.

**1899**

Chinook Tribe secured introduction of S. 1941 to permit litigation in the U.S. Claims Court for taking of aboriginal lands; 37 tribal elders signed attorney contract for claims case, May 1, 1899.

**1902**

Five tribal leaders subjected to depositions in land claims case; testimony confirmed extensive knowledge about Chinook homeland, villages, and tribe (246 pages of transcript on file at Oregon Historical Society).

**1906**

Charles E. McChesney, BIA Supervisor of Schools, Pawhuska, Oklahoma, interviewed and secured affidavits to produced detailed enrollment of lineal descendants of Chinook Tribe who had ancestors living in 1851; affidavits and roll published as House Document No. 133, 59<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session.

**1910's**

Chinook Indian Tribe participated in forming and running the Northwestern Federation of American Indians, a regional pan-Indian organization.

**1914**

Secretary of Treasury certified the Chinook Annuity Payment Roll to distribute per capita payments for the tribe's land claims case.

**1916-19**

Charles Roblin, BIA Enrolling Officer, interviewed and secured affidavits to produce detailed enrollment of the Chinook Tribe. Roblin wrote in 1919 in his final report: "In Pacific, Wahkiakum, and Gray's Harbor Counties, -Washington, there are a number of small Indian settlements, comprising the remnants of the tribes originally inhabiting the country around the harbors and inlets of the Pacific Coast and Columbia River. Those have almost entirely lost their character as Indian settlements; and yet, so far as it has been possible, the Indians can be said to have kept up their tribal relations and communal life. They can hardly be said to have severed tribal relations as the fact is that the white civilization and communities have simply surrounded them and overwhelmed them, thus making tribal conditions impossible."

**1925**

Chinook Tribe adopted a written constitution and began election of officers.

**1925**

Congress passed jurisdictional act permitting Chinook, Duwamish, and other tribes to sue in U.S. Claims Court for taking of aboriginal lands.

**1928-31**

Chinook tribal members participated in *Halbert v. United States* (13 tribal witnesses) in successful case to secure allotments at Quinault Reservation. Ultimate decision came from the United States Supreme Court in 1931.

**1932**

Chinook tribal witnesses deposed in the land claims litigation authorized by the 1925 Jurisdictional Act of Congress, which was *Duwamish, et al. v. United States*.

**1931-34**

Pursuant to the decision in *Halbert v. United States*, Chinook tribal members secured hundreds of on-reservation allotments (as Chinooks) on the Quinault Reservation. On-reservation allotments were issued pursuant to Section 1 of the Allotment Act of 1887, which specifically provided that only members of [federally-recognized] tribes qualified for on-reservation allotments.

**1935**

BIA registered Chinook tribal members as “Chinook” to vote on Indian Reorganization Act and whether it should apply at the Quinault Reservation.

**1951**

Pursuant to the Indian Claims Commission Act of 1946, the Chinook Tribe filed suit under Docket 234 before the Indian Claims Commission.

**1952**

BIA certified Chinook identity for issue of state “blue cards” for Chinook fishing rights.

**1953**

Chinook Tribe sued Oral Evans, *et al.* for desecrating Chinook graves; BIA Agent Bitney reported 979 enrolled Chinooks and regular tribal meetings.

**1953-54**

Melvin E. Robertson, Superintendent of Western Washington Agency, wrote: “We are fully aware that the Chinooks are an Indian Tribe;” BIA invited Chinook leaders in writing to meetings on Public Law 280, proposed Termination, and other matters; BIA returned tribal enrollment records and Constitution (stamped “Portland Area Office, Swan Island, Portland, OR.”) to the tribe.

**1971**

Chinook Tribe secured skull of ancestral Chief Concomly displayed in a plastic box at the Clatsop County Historical Museum and buried it at Ilwaco, Washington.

**1979**

Chinook Tribe litigated to protect fishing interests in the Wahkiakum case; Chinook Tribe began research in Federal Acknowledgment Program.

**1987**

Chinook Tribe filed its Petition for Federal Acknowledgment; BIA responded with “letter of obvious deficiency review” in 1991.

**1994**

Chinook Tribe filed responses to petition with the Branch of Federal Acknowledgment of the BIA in Washington, D.C.

**2001**

Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Kevin Gover announced Chinook acknowledgment on January 3<sup>rd</sup>.

**2002**

Assistant Secretary Neal McCaleb rescinds former Assistant Secretary Gover’s final determination of recognition for the Chinook Tribe.