

Pelúucpu never signed treaty

Palúus - 'Something sticking down in the water'

From the Cultural Resources Protection Program

The lower Palúus River and the area surrounding its confluence with the Snake River is known as Palúus to the people of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR). Palúus is the large village site of the Pelúucpu, who occupied the village mostly during the winter and summer. The Pelúucpu never signed a treaty and never gave up their land; their descendants live with many Columbia Plateau tribes today, including the CTUIR.

In the spring of 1905, a steamboat arrived at Palúus loaded with American soldiers who ordered the Indians to gather their belongings and get aboard. From the rear of the boat they watched Standing Rock pass from their view. Standing Rock - the petrified heart of the giant beaver slain long ago by two Pelúucpu warriors - symbolized the strength of the Pelúucpu people. The Indians stood quietly until they lost sight of their village.

EXPLORERS

The first written description of Palúus is from the Lewis and Clark expedition, who passed the site on October 13, 1805. Clark described a "little river in a Stard. bend, immediately below a long bad rapid; in which the water is Confined in a Chanel of about 20 yards between rugid rocks for the distance of a mile and a half and a rapid rocky Chanel for 2 miles above. This must be a verry bad place in high water, here is great fishing place, the timbers of Several houses piled up, and a number of wholes of fish, and the bottom appears to have been made use of as a place of deposit for their fish for ages past... passed Several houses evacuated at established fishing places" (University of Nebraska Press 2005).

David Thompson visited

Palúus on August 8, 1811. More fur traders and explorers arrived one year later; Donald MacKenzie, John Clarke and Ross Cox, working for John Jacob Astor. During their visits, they observed mat covered lodges at Palúus.



POST RESERVATION ERA

Despite all of the efforts to stay on their land, many Indians continued to move to reservations. The Pelúucpu did not feel welcome on the surrounding reservations, as one Pelúucpu elder has explained, "we weren't wanted there either, because that wasn't our area".

In 1897, 75 Pelúucpu still lived at Palúus:

"These Pelúucpu continued 'to cling tenaciously to this barren spot where their children were born and their mothers and fathers have died.' Events had moved rapidly in their lives, but they had 'not changed their minds' about the land" (Trafzer and Scheurman 1986:135).

Their fight to stay was not yet over:

Yakima Agent Lewis T. Irwin visited Palúus in April 1897, to survey the land and the condition of the Indians. He reported that the Indians cultivated ten acres but lived primarily from their fishing. Their root grounds had been destroyed by the plow, and the Indians had difficulty eking out a living fishing due to the intense salmon harvests at the mouth of the Columbia. The agent wrote

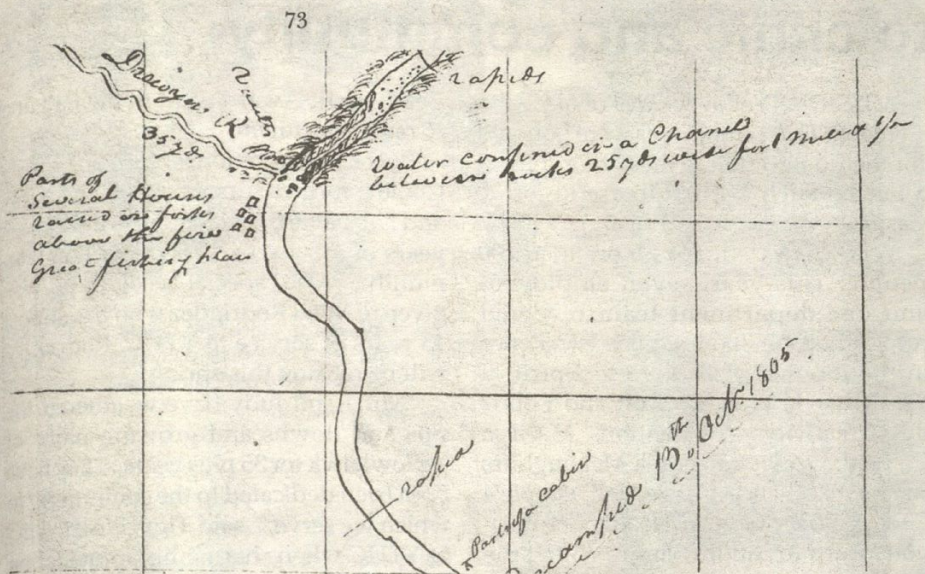
about the Pelúucpu with respect, but he recommended to the commissioner "that they be forcibly removed to either the Nez Perce, Umatilla, or Yakima Reservations. Indian agents and white settlers alike agreed with Irwin's suggestion to remove them. Eight years later, the Indian bureau acted upon this recommendation.

In the spring of 1905, a steamboat arrived at Palúus loaded with American soldiers who ordered the Indians to gather their belongings and get aboard. The Indians complied, and after boarding, they congregated at the stern of the boat where they looked at their homes and the graves of their loved ones. From the rear of the boat they watched Standing Rock pass from their view. Standing Rock - the petrified heart of the giant beaver slain long ago by two Pelúucpu warriors - symbolized the strength of the Pelúucpu

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Pelúucpu



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people. The Indians stood quietly until they lost sight of their village. One Pelúucpu Indian, a small boy at the time, recalled the entire scene which appeared in his mind, "like a vision of the way things were." Now, enrolled on the Colville reservation, Andrew George remembered the removal of his family like a dream or an event which occurred outside the confines of his mind. When Andrew grew older, he asked tribal elders about that spring but found that "they never wanted to talk about it much." The memory of their removal was too painful for them to discuss. Andrew said that when the elders spoke about the event, the men and women grew silent and often wept [Trafzer and Scheuerman 1986:135].

Still, the Pelúucpu returned to Palúus and some spent their remaining days there. In 1914, the village consisted of "two tipis, a canvas-tule mat lodge, and several wooden shacks. The 87-year old Waughaskie, commonly known as Old Bones, [and a Cayuse Indian,] led the small band. Blind in his old age, Waughaskie lived with his wife, Meyatat, their children, Hiyowath (Peter Bones), Me-a-tu-kin-ma, and an elderly couple" (Trafzer and Scheuerman 1986:136).

Subsistence

CTUIR tribal members tell stories of traveling on horseback up the Snake River to Palúus in the early to mid-1900s to visit family. They gathered traditional plants along the way. They would teach their children and grandchildren about the traditional plants growing in the vicinity of Palúus. Tribal members talk about how they can feel the people who have been at Palúus before. Songs that they've never heard before come to them.

Tribal members also remember learning about the storage pits their ancestors built to store food through the winter. Each pit was to last a certain period of time, so people were sure there would be enough food.

One tribal member recalls, "Long, long time ago, they used to make those storage pits, and my grandmother told us, they used to make storage cellars and then they stored their food in there. This first cellar was for so

many months before they could open up the next cellar. Then they'd open up the next cellar for so many months, then they'd have food all winter, but if you eat up all your food too fast, then you'd go without until the new foods come out. And then if you were a lazy person, they called you grasshopper."

The connection with the land continues

While near Palúus, one elder said:

"All of your ancestors are watching you, if you had ancestors from this area. The old people always told me that anytime you needed help, you really need help, you can call on your ancestors that have gone on before you and they will come help you".

"I always have to talk to my people when I go into their nisáwtas. This is a big nisáwtas. Nisáwtas is where they used to live and they don't live there anymore so that's what they call this." (A CTUIR language specialist provides the following definition: "nisáwtas is a place that is sacred and where our ancestors used to live or go gathering, hunting or fishing. It has a special meaning to people who speak the native tongue.)

Another elder said:

"Any time we come into an area where we know where our ancestors have traveled, or lived, we always pay respects with a prayer. Whether it is a song, prayer, or words, because we know there are burial sites near and around. And, even though they have been dead a number of years, we as Native American Indian people truly believe that when the judgment day comes, they will all arise. So we want to keep in touch with them, in our prayers".

Names

Elders speak of the importance of protecting these people and places: "We have great respect for them, even, you know, they've been gone a long time. Our names, our given names are derived from this area. Our given Indian names are derived from this area." The CTUIR has many living tribal members with Pelúucpu descent.

The CTUIR has the following place names associated with Palúus:

- póotkwistot, meaning "gambling winnings." This place refers to a contest

between Sturgeon and Grizzly Bear, the evidence of which is a rock formation above Ayer Junction. The name also applies to camping and fishing sites on both sides of the river. People fished and some passed the winter here as wood was available.

- liptopa, meaning unknown. A winter fishing and camping location of the Pelúucpu and Walúlapam up the Palúus River.

- apítapit, meaning "many stones." This is the name of the area from

Palúus Falls to Little Palúus Falls, and for Palúus Falls itself. The name refers to a chief's talus slope burial.

- shlahopea, meaning "wash out fish place", is another name for Palúus Falls.

While no longer occupied, Palúus still exists in the hearts and minds of descendants and carries the same importance to the CTUIR as all of the aboriginal lands that hold the natural and cultural resources of the Indian people of the Plateau.



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