

NATIVE NATIONS

WEEKLY NEWSLETTER FEATURING DIFFERENT AMERICAN INDIAN TRIBES



QUICK FACTS

- **Language** - Makah. It is part of the Wakashan language family, which is distinct from the Salish languages spoken by most other Washington tribes.
- **Enrollment** - 2800+
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- **Location** - Washington
- **Traditional Name** -(pronounced roughly as kwi-dih-chuh-at).

Ozette village sparked a cultural renaissance, reviving dormant traditions. Today, the Makah exercise sovereignty in Neah Bay, honoring their ancestors through language preservation, cedar carving, and canoe journeys while protecting their treaty rights.

TRIBAL HISTORY

The Makah Tribe, known as the "People of the Cape," has inhabited Washington's northwest tip for millennia. Renowned as expert mariners, their identity is anchored in the sea, a relationship codified in the 1855 Treaty of Neah Bay—the only U.S. treaty securing the right to hunt whales. The excavation of the ancient



CULTURAL HERITAGE

Beyond the sea, the Makah are defined by the miraculous discovery at Ozette. In 1970, a storm revealed a village buried by a mudslide centuries ago, where clay perfectly preserved over 55,000 artifacts. Known as the "Pompeii of the West," this site recovered intact cedar longhouses, canoes, and baskets. The excavation validated centuries of oral history and sparked a profound cultural renaissance. It allowed the tribe to reclaim lost artistic techniques and language, ensuring their heritage is not just remembered, but lived.



FEDERAL RECOGNITION & TREATIES

The Makah Tribe's sovereign status is firmly rooted in the Treaty of Neah Bay, signed on January 31, 1855, which established a continuous government-to-government relationship with the United States that has endured for over 160 years. In this historic agreement, tribal leaders ceded 300,000 acres of ancestral timberlands to the U.S. government but shrewdly negotiated to retain their most vital asset: the ocean.

Through Article 4 of the treaty, the Makah explicitly reserved their rights to "whaling and sealing at usual and accustomed grounds"—a provision that remains the only guarantee of its kind in the nation. While the reservation's land boundaries were later refined and expanded through Executive Orders in 1872 and 1873 to better encompass their coastal villages, the tribe solidified its modern political structure by adopting a constitution under the Indian Reorganization Act in 1936. Today, this unique legal history allows the Makah to manage their marine resources and govern their territory with an authority that predates the formation of Washington State.

Relatives & Neighbors

The Makah occupy a unique cultural position on the Olympic Peninsula, where their closest ancestors are actually separated from them by international waters. Linguistically and culturally, they are part of the Wakashan-speaking family, making them true kin to the Nuu-chah-nulth, Ditidaht, and Pacheedaht First Nations across the Strait of Juan de Fuca on Vancouver Island. When the 1846 border was drawn, it politically divided these families, though they remain connected today. On the American side, the Makah are bordered by the Quileute and Hoh to the south and the various Klallam bands to the east. While they share the peninsula with these tribes, they are historically distinct, often engaging in complex relationships of trade, intermarriage, and warfare with these Salish and Chimakuan-speaking neighbors.

ISSUE- THE BRIDGEPORT INDIAN COLONY

Sources

1. Official Tribal Resources

Makah Tribe Official Website:

Information: Governance, current news, departments, and general history.

<https://makah.com/>

Makah Cultural and Research Center (The Museum):

Information: Detailed history of the Ozette excavation, cedar culture, and the Nuu-chah-nulth connection.

<https://makahmuseum.com/>

2. Legal & Treaty Documents

Governor's Office of Indian Affairs (WA):

Information: Full text of the Treaty of Neah Bay (1855), including Article 4 (Whaling Rights).

<https://goia.wa.gov/tribal-government/treaty-neah-bay-1855>

NOAA Fisheries:

Information: Current legal status of the Makah grey whale hunt and management plans.

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/west-coast/marine-mammal-protection/makah-tribal-whale-hunt>

3. History & Archaeology (Ozette)

HistoryLink (Encyclopedia of Washington State History):

Information: Detailed account of the "Pompeii of the West" (Ozette Village) discovery and excavation.

<https://www.historylink.org/File/5302>

National Park Service (Olympic National Park):

Information: Overview of the Makah people's relationship with the land and the Cape Flattery region.

<https://www.nps.gov/olym/learn/historyculture/the-makah.htm>

4. Language & Culture

University of Washington (Burke Museum):

Information: Information on the "Potlatch" traditions and the Ozette collection held in trust.

<https://www.burkemuseum.org/collections-and-research/culture/ethnology/collections/ozette>