Chinook Indian Nation
Cathlamet • Clatsop • Lower Chinook • Wahkiakum • Willapa

The Chinook Indian Nation consists of the five westernmost Chinookan speaking tribes. Two of these groups, the Kathlamet of present day Oregon and the Wahkiakum of Washington state reside on the shores of Columbia River east of its mouth. While the Clatsop live on the south shore at the mouth, the Lower Chinook on the north shore at the mouth and the Willapa in the protected bay north of the Great River that shares their name. Chinookan people have lived in this place since time immemorial and were once rich with the resources of our forests, rivers and sea.

Tribal elder (Millie Lagergren, deceased) poses with a basket commissioned for the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial. The basket is now housed in the collection of the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington DC.

Help the Chinook Indian Nation clarify its status as a Federally Recognized Tribe

The Chinook Indian Nation is not a Federally Recognized Tribe despite years of recognition and interaction with the federal government. Chinook status remains unclear. Punished for not relocating from its homeland, Chinook needs your assistance. Our resources are extremely limited. The printed materials we produce are done grails by volunteers. If you have resources that you’d like to share that would help us in our fight, please contact our office. We welcome donations of services, professional expertise, and materials or cash. Anything we can use to teach our history, spread the Chinook story and continue to seek justice from a Government that gave away our land without fair compensation.

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and the Federal Government

200 Years ...
1805 Lewis & Clark arrive in Chinook territory on the North side of the Columbia. Ten days later they moved to Clatsop land on the South side to build Ft. Clatsop.

1848 Oregon Territorial status assures that the government will deal with Natives in good faith and never take their land without consent.

1851 Superintendent of Indian Affairs Anson Dart negotiates the Tansy Point treaties. The treaties allow the Chinook to remain in their homelands and promise both provisions and annuities.

1852 The Tansy Point Treaties are read into the Congressional record, but they are not ratified at that time.

1853 Chinookan peoples living on opposite sides of the river are artificially divided when the government creates Washington Territory.

1855 Chehalis River Treaty negotiations are held. Governor Stevens insists the tribes relocate to a single reservation far to the north. When the Chinook and their neighbors refused Stevens left the treaty grounds.

1864 By order of the Secretary of the Interior, the U.S. government takes the whole of Chinookan territory in Southwest Washington.

1899 Chinook petition the Claims Commission seeking damages under the Tansy Point treaties. The claim results in annuity payments in 1912.

1951 The Chinook Nation sues in the Court of Indian Claims arguing that the $26,308 awarded in 1912 for the 762,000 acres relinquished was unconscionable. In 1970, the Claims Commission awarded $75,000 for the aboriginal Clatsop and Lower Chinook lands after which after deducting the previous balance results in a final judgment of $48,692 (10¢ an acre). Although awarded, Chinook has not received these funds because of being removed from the list of federally recognized tribes.

1994 After petitioning the government under a new process created in late 1970s, Chinook is finally placed on active consideration by the Office of Federal Acknowledgment. After several months Chinook receives a preliminary negative determination.

1999 Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs, Kevin Gover, hires an independent scholar to assess Chinook history and advise on the tribe's federal relationship.

January 2001 Chinook is acknowledged as a recognized tribe.

July 2002 The decision is reversed by the new Bush Administration and Chinook is no longer a recognized Tribe.

2008 & 2009 Washington Representative Brian Baird introduces H.R. 6689, and later H.R. 2576, "Chinook Restoration Act." These bills are sent to Committee are not acted on by a dysfunctional Congress.

2015 The Chinook Tribal Council initiates the Chinook Executive Recognition Justice Project and begins writing President Obama a letter a day asking for an Executive Order granting Federal Recognition. You can view what was sent to date at ChinookNation.org