Elder Emmet Oliver was born in Chinook territory (South Bend, Washington) on December 2, 1913. He was raised there as part of our Native community and came to be one of the best known and respected Natives of Washington State.

Emmet conceived the Paddle to Seattle that occurred in 1989 as part of Washington’s Centennial Celebration. This event led Frank Brown (Heilstuk) to challenge the canoe nations to paddle to Bella Bella in 1993. This was the birth of our annual Tribal Journeys that has changed the lives of so many Pacific Northwest Native Americans.

He was also the first Director of Indian Education for the state of Washington. Over the years Emmet has enjoyed returning to Chinook territory to visit with friends, family and Native students in the Indian Education program that he founded in South Bend.

Emmet is the oldest living Chinook Indian, and our community is proud of its connections to his long and accomplished life. Today, his grandchildren continue honoring this connection by participating as members of the Chinook Indian Nation Canoe Family.
George and Fred were born and raised on the South Nemah River. They remembered Chinook ancestors who resided there. Both fought throughout their life times to see the Chinook Indian Nation recognized.

George and wife Milly raised their family in Bay Center, Washington, on what was the portage from the south end of Willapa Bay to the Palix River. George served on the Chinook Nation’s Business and Enrollment Committees. His daughter, Peggy Disney, currently serves as a Chinook Tribal Councilwoman and has for more than 20 years.

Fred, who also lived in Bay Center, served as a Chinook Tribal Councilman and as head of the Business Committee.
Elmer Wilson was born in Clatskanie, Oregon in 1928. He was raised at the base of Saddle Mountain, near Astoria, Oregon where he later lived. He served on the Chinook Indian Nation Tribal Council for over 35 years.

Elmer was an original Allottee on the Quinault Indian Reservation. He is pictured here with Mary Leitka, former Chairwoman of the Hoh Indian Tribe, and longtime friend of the Chinook.
Background information: Lewis and Clark arrived on the Columbia River in the Winter of 1805. They spent an unusually cold winter in Chinook Territory, on the South side of the Columbia River with the Clatsops. When Spring came, the Corps of Discovery prepared for the journey long home. During their stay, the Corps had admired the Chinook canoes and wanted to buy one for the trip home. When they found a canoe was not for sale, they decided to steal one.

In 2005, the United States celebrated the Bi-Centennial of the Corps of Discovery and the Chinook Nation took part in the celebration by hosting the reenactors in November of that year. When the celebration ended, Chinook Chairman, Ray Gardner, reminded the Corps Leaders, which included descendants of Wm. Clark, about the canoe that was taken 200 years before. The Clark family agreed that this wrong should be made right and arranged for the building of a replacement canoe.

On September 24, 2011, a seventh generation Clark family member, Carlota Clark Holton, her husband Rick Holton, their grandson, Robert and granddaughter, Greta, made the presentation of new 36’ canoe to the Chinook Indian Nation. The canoe is currently the largest canoe owned by our tribe. It is made to carry us anywhere we want to paddle, including the ocean. Tribal members agreed that the new canoe should be named kthlmin the Chinook word for the moon, and the name of an important chief about the
name of an important chief about the time of Lewis and Clark. It also seemed appropriate because the moon controls the tides which our canoes pullers depend upon for travel.

The Clark-Holton family generously brought other gifts for the witnesses and the Tribal Council. As a witness, I received a white woolen blanket made especially for this occasion, with a blue stripe representing the Columbia River and red-orange stripe representing the salmon. They also gave knives in elk skin sheaths decorated in porcupine quills in the shape of a red salmon with a blue border representing the Columbia River. Witnesses also received other gifts of smoked salmon, blackberry jelly, fry bread mix kthlmin tee-shirts, Middle Village Park mugs and necklaces. The tribe presented gifts to our visitors, as well as drummed, sang and danced for them.

Joan Wekell, is a descendant of Tonwa who was raised amongst her relatives, the Great Chiefs of the Clatsop and Lower Chinook people.

Read more about this event visit at our website: ChinookNation.org Click on Lewis & Clark in the Press section.

Chinook canoes skakwal and kLmin along with the knife and blanket given to witness.

kthlmin being cleansed as part of his naming

kthlmin nd Chinook Indian Nation members on Puget Sound in 2012