



## RESILIENT TRADITIONS THRIVE IN CHINOOK

By MARIA BROOKS  
For EO Media Group

**C**HINOOK, Wash. — Chinook is a town most people pass through on the way to someplace else. For a long time, that was just fine with the residents. Their eyes were on the river — the fishing industry has been the town’s bread and butter for more than 100 years.

Quiet Chinook has attracted new residents who purchased homes beside neighbors whose families may have settled here 100 years ago. The town’s population is an enticing mix — from bar pilots to studio potters and building contractors. The census says that 25 percent of the residents call themselves carpenters.

This unincorporated village is home to about 500 folks, but tourists flood the highway during the summer. For the tourist who cares to stop, Chinook has surprises to offer and a rich history to share.

### The Sleepy Hollow of the Northwest

Unsettling events have sometimes occurred in Chinook. This year as the sun was setting on Halloween, commuters were jolted to attention.

Ever so slowly coming toward them, in silhouette, a horse and rider. It was a Headless Horseman — a real one.

The broad-shouldered figure was dressed completely in black up to the stump where a head should be. Horse and rider drifted through Chinook as commuters grabbed for iPhones and cameras. And just as suddenly, horse and rider were gone.

The rider had been on the road before, timing his visits to rainless Halloween evenings. Old timers didn’t know the rider’s identity, others didn’t want to know — they liked the mystery.

Dale Hughes saw the rider as he left his boat shed and walked between a row of skiffs spilling out of his Chinook Marine Repair. He had an idea who the rider was but he wasn’t certain. Hughes, a master craftsman, is a third-generation boat builder working in the same spot on the highway, and he usually knows what’s going on in town.

Locals said the Horseman was seeking the man who attacked him, or perhaps the celebrated “Legend of Sleepy Hollow” author Washington Irving, who is rumored to have visited Chinook 170 years ago.

In Sleepy Hollow, a scrawny schoolteacher goes out for a walk in the waning light, not knowing that the ghost of an angry decapitated German horseman returns every evening to the place where he suffered his indignity. The schoolteacher and the Headless Horseman confront one another on the road. With his powerful arms, the Horseman

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DAMIAN MULINIX — EO Media Group  
Children run along the tree-lined sidewalks of Chinook last summer. The bucolic town is particularly family-friendly.



Courtesy of Lisa Gillespie  
This Headless Horseman, shown here on Halloween afternoon, has become a popular legend in Chinook.



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Winter sunlight shines through ferns on a stretch of the Fort Columbia Trail.



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