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# WEEKEND BREAK



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Julie Brown

Isle of Skye fishery in Scotland.

# CULTURAL COUSINS ON DIFFERENT SEAS

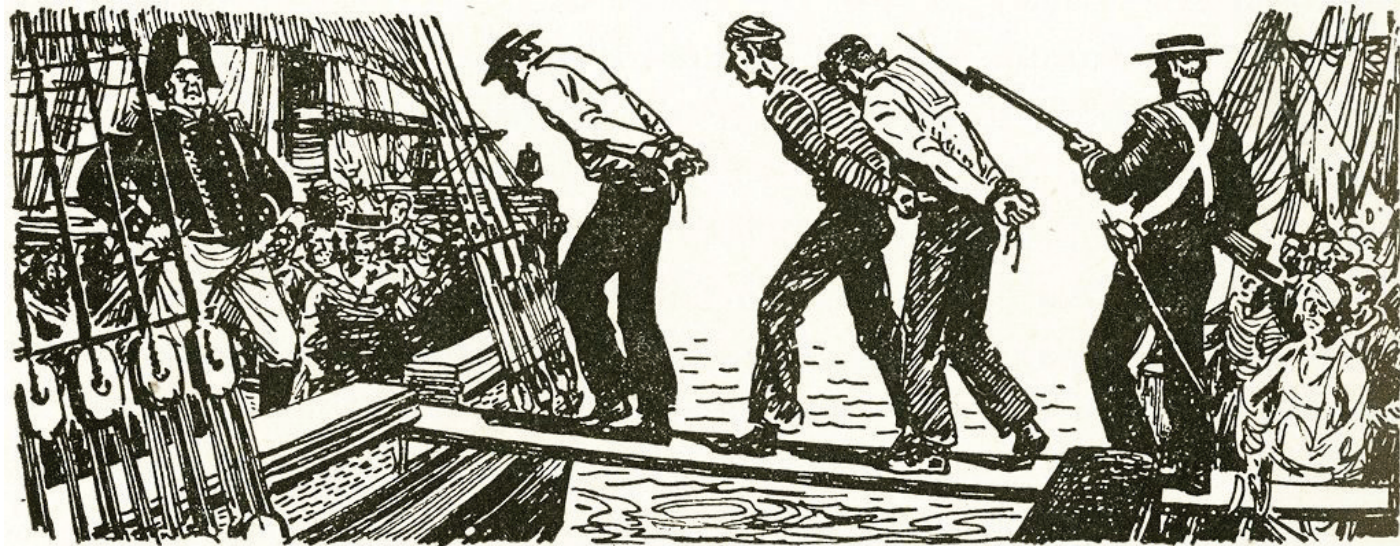
Professor finds maritime culture similarities in Scotland, Astoria

By **JULIE BROWN**  
For *The Astorian*

I was sitting in a brew pub listening to fiddle and banjo. The people around me—wearing plaid flannel shirts and jeans—were enjoying the small-craft beer and lively music. The space was a converted industrial building, complete with open-beamed ceilings and stained cement floors. Listening in to conversations around me, I heard the worried talk of fishermen and heated discussions about land-use planning along the river. I could have been in Astoria, Oregon, but I wasn't—I was in Inverness, Scotland, beginning my one-month appointed stint teaching Maritime Culture at the University of the Highlands and Islands.

Our connection to this part of the world is more than just tartan flannel. As I toured around the Scottish Highlands and islands, digging into archives and talking with as many old-timers as I could find, interesting parallels jumped out at me between our part of the world—the mouth of the Columbia River—and theirs.

I visited classrooms and shared stories about the Chinook Indians, about how important the water was to their way of life. I explained to them how Astoria's indigenous people based an entire way of life on the water—transportation by canoe, diet based on local seafood and even mythology and religion heavily reliant on the wise salmon gods. I learned that the early people of Scotland—the Picts—had a similar rela-



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An English press gang.

tionship to the landscape and its animals. An early Pictish drawing showed a boat shaped much like a canoe. Pictish petroglyphs prominently featured salmon, and their myths included stories based on “the wisdom of the salmon.”

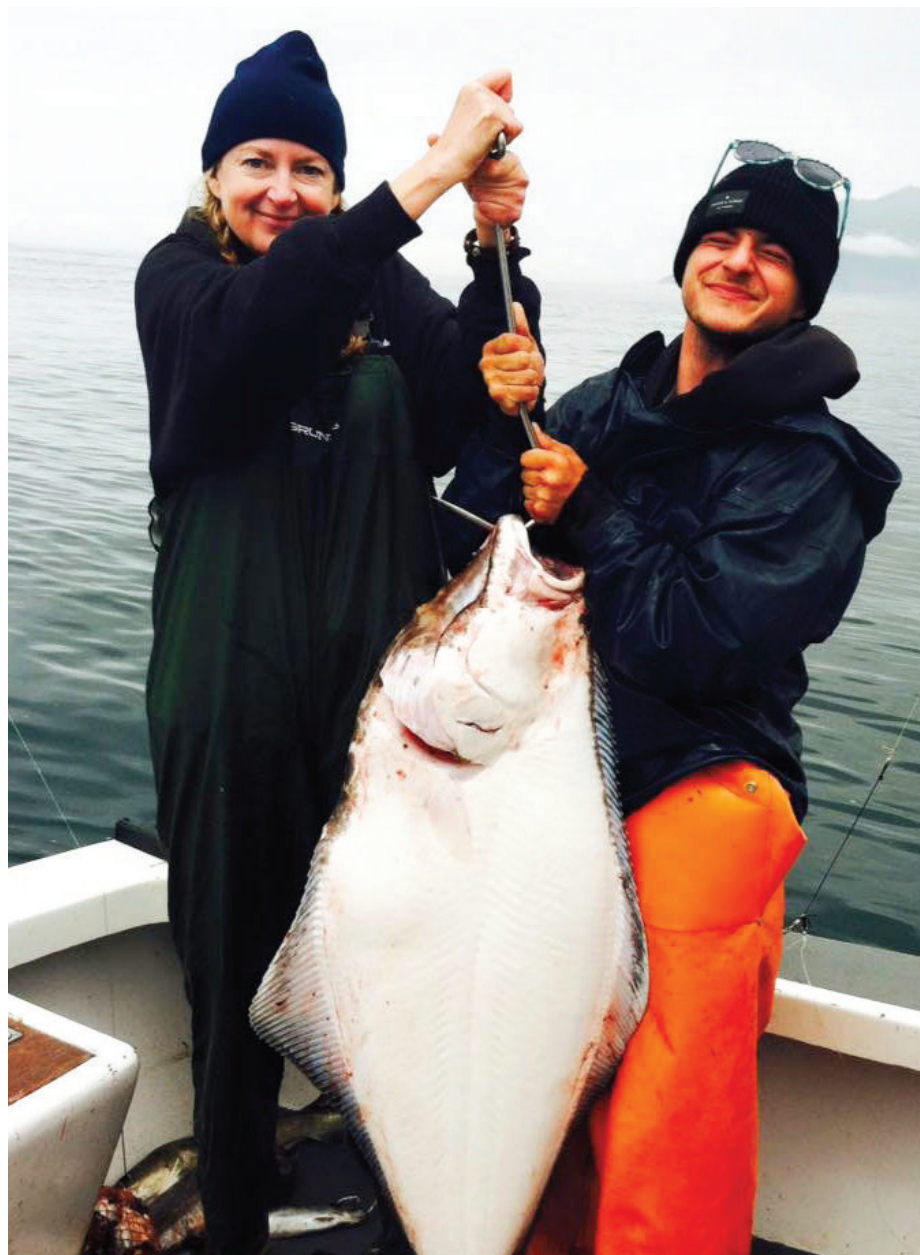
Some of the earliest “newcomers” to move to Astoria were Scandinavians who brought their culture with them and from it re-created many strong traditions based on their relationship to boats and fishing. The same was true in Scotland—Vikings from Norway landed at the Shetland Islands, Orkney Islands and all along the north and east coastlines of the Scottish Highlands, bringing

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Julie Brown

Isle of Skye fishing boat in Scotland.



Julie Brown

Professor Julie Brown's halibut catch.