

River culture subject of 'The Shattered Civilization'

By George Aguilar
Author and tribal member

In 1936 there were no per capita payments, no roads, utilities, health or other benefits we experience today.

During this time there was a rush to get children living on the Warm Springs placed on the new proposed enrollment list. In this scuttle my grandmother tried frantically to get me enrolled.

The only motive then was to just be recognized as a member of this Warm Springs group. With relentless determination grandmother succeeded, and I became Enrollment number 0008 on the tribal rolls.

This excerpt is taken from my next book: "The Shattered Civilization":

This book is primarily designed for informational purposes for my people of the Warm Springs.

This information might be of benefit to them and their posterity, though of less interest and importance to others.

Falling now from remembrance are most of the old timers, who lived, fished along the Columbia River. The elders of that time have worn out their moccasins and passed from this life, and the earlier time dominant way of life also vanished under the backwaters of the massive dams.

The oral history and memory of the wild river by the Native American is in danger of disappearing. Five-Mile Rapids and Celilo Falls and the deep foundation of culture that once flourished will someday live only on the Whiteman's talking paper.

Marriage, trading and allied ties with other groups were as far as the now Canadian Western Coastal Border.

The canoe users also had trade, and marriage arrangement ties with the Spokane's, Cayuse and Nez Perce and others from where the sun makes its daily appearance.

The entire populations of the Pacific Northwest were always known as allies and the ultimate traders, and these ties were because of the animistic belief system (primal religions).

Their position on the river being one of the very best for taking fish, the River People had an unlimited supply for their own use and ample stores for

barter, which gave them everything they needed.

Enormous supplies of stored salmon and other foods contributed to visiting groups who came to their area during the medicine dance and child inauguration for the guardian spirit festivities in the late fall and winter months.

With the introduction of the white man's diseases and government policies the River People's civilization was annihilated and shattered, as a consequence began a new era with a small glimpse here and there of how it was from the years of about 1700s to 1855.

During the epidemics of the 1770s to 1858, the Cascade Indians' population almost disappeared. No longer did they control the river.

All the future children of the Warm Springs civilization are on a crash avenue into extinction. This is brought on by the present tribal enrollment policy.

Take a solemn look into about a hundred years from now, there will be possibly no one person eligible for enrollment on the Warm Springs.

The Wasco people are already in this warp through intermarriages from other groups other than Warm Springs.

Chinookan speakers no longer exist as separate tribal entities.

Reservation life has mingled the remnants of many tribes and other ethnic groups.

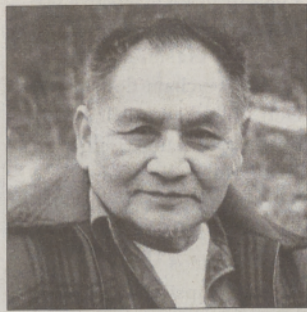
However, the heritage of bloodlines recorded in the BIA realty records survives at Warm Springs Reservation.

The remaining members of the once thriving River people stand in fear of what the future brings, they will never again hear the roaring waters of the Cascades Rapids and Iskulia's fishing place, the Coyote stories are no longer heard, they died out several generations ago.

In the future remnant children of the Warm Springs will be asking, did such a civilization ever exist? Even to this day some people are asking this very same question.

The Old River People's Ghosts and Land remember: From out of the ghostly past voices cry out from the Ilxla'max! The Wasco Kiksht word Ilxla'max! Means all the progenitors from several generations past. *Sapir Wisbram Texts, 169.*

The Great Creator put River



George Aguilar

people on the Columbia River... but, the sacred ground know them no more...

The River once thronged with these people... The River and the people are silent now... The River's keepers are gone...

The River expresses grief, of their absence like a lover, broken with heartache... The River barely rolls on, without a sound of a soft whisper...

The mythical sadistic Walla Walla winds try to breathe life into the lifeless river but to no avail...

The River has become enslaved to technological progress... the Wild River has become lazy and dirty.

She was once the Queen of all rivers; there were none like her...

She was wild and feisty... Her people grieve now for her demise...

The River people were torn away from her bosom and sent far away...

If the surrounding landscape of the river could speak, it almost certainly would tell us, "There was once a thickly populated peopled village that stayed here or there..."

The naked forested hills in all probability would have said: "I was once clothed with beautiful stately fir tree forests, I now cover my nakedness with the large maple leaf."

The towering bluffs of the river may have said, "The full of life children used this rock slide; the children played in that stream, or children were told coyote did this or that."

The petroglyphs spirits no longer utter, drowned forever underneath tainted waters...

The rites of passages no longer exploited as an avenue into the spirit world...

Knowledge, wisdom, prophecies, instruction no longer accomplished in dreams, in visions of the night when deep sleep fall on the old as they lie on their beds...

The land announces, "I have been plague-ridden with many different people..."

Their destructive systems displease the Creator...

I am no longer perfumed with the fragrance of beautiful flowers...

All brilliancy and majesty of the fields gone...

The atmosphere angrily replies too much too many bad airs...

For many snowmelts the River people stood afar... observed the landscape being stripped and humiliated...

In the midst of all the ghosts of the River People...

They remember happy bygone days before the dreaded diseases... the ghosts of the River People also remember: "When the River Ran Wild!" *George W. Aguilar Sr.*

The villages of the River People lined both sides of the river; the smoke from their lodges thickened the clear blue skies the parents took it easy in their large houses during the winter months.

A gathering of the village men probably could have been seen sitting in a circle and doing a social smoke gathering, and while the smoke pipes blue smoke lazily curled and ascended to the atmosphere each man may have told of some war story or some other pursuit or exploit, but all those goings-on are no more.

The River People's civilization once stood tall.

But each and every one of these speaking groups are no more, the few remnants of the River People who survived the epidemics were sent to countries far from where the Creator put them.

They that remained on the River were pushed aside.

The Wasco opera song dog

Coyote made this announcement: "Many people are coming to our land, and so we cannot do all that we are used to doing. We must share with our new friends. We must learn to bear our hardships and our sorrows as best we can." *Ref Ella Clark*

So, the River people shared their food, their land and gave with an open heart.

But they were coerced from the use of their homeland.

They wanted peace, and to trade, but they were torn away from each other.

Their family members were separated, genealogical ties were shattered, and family members were dispersed to different reservations.

All this was because other brothers of the human race wanted more land.

The superior ethnic group tried to destroy and shatter the elderly people's spirit.

They said, "You must now throw away the red man's law and live by the Whiteman's civilization." *A.B. Meacham Wigwam and War Path 1871*

Waters were contaminated and the Iganut (salmon) come in abundance no more.

They built massive dams, and in the last dying struggle of the Columbia River she gave her last wild, small splash, and she then laid still and died.

The God given land to the River People was altered; roots and beautiful wild flowers grow no more.

Settlers turned under the fields of camas lilies, and their cattle, hogs and horses up-rooted and grazed off other native plants and grasses.

Prior to the advent of the prophesied intruders, the River People existed on a well-balanced life in this God given homeland.

For the River people life was easy, and they worked hard to

secure and maintain their supplies, but for them the natural world was kind.

The bones of Kiksht ancestors buried along the River are no longer remembered, their skeletal remains disturbed, up-rooted, and placed into whitemans concrete graves.

The utensils of the former civilization, bags, trinkets, toys of the long ago children now live in museums as the only mementos of a civilization of many bygone winter snow melts.

Some Elders still remember and have held their heads high, and the spirits of the elders still flow through them as if they never died.

As long as the use of the few deep-rooted Indian names are in use, those Elders will live on forever and the River people's nations will be reborn through the use of the Warm Springs Reservation language program and by the giving of the Indian Names from those bygone elders.

The early U.S. Government policies have accomplished its mission by destroying and shattering the River people's civilizations.

All of our customs and culture may have been dismally shattered, however, gambling and warrior traditions of our culture were never crushed; it has always been a foremost constituent of the River People's culture.

The government policies are further pursuing the extermination of the indigenous languages by inadvertently establishing policies similar to the "No Child Left Behind."

When this policy was legislated it obliterated native language lessons in the local schools, and the Confederates Tribes language program has been stymied by this recent legislated policy.

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Narcotics Anonymous meetings
Meetings at the Family Resource Center Conference Room
Thursdays: 6-7:30 p.m.
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Tribes accepting bids for lease

The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs is accepting lease proposals for the service station building by the Rainbow Market. Anyone wishing to submit a proposal should contact Urbana Manion, tribal land services administrator. She can be reached at 553-3271. Or by mail at CTWS Land Services, PO Box C, Warm Springs, OR 97761. Lease terms are negotiable.



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