
Ferry County ♥ Cycling Federation

Barstow Dispatch



Spring 2021



Bill grinds up Boulder Pass in early spring 2021

Taking rides through the remote forest roads of northeast Ferry County gives your mind time to unwind and wander. This sort of solitude, coupled with the act of moving slowly through this sparsely populated place, can spark your curiosity. Who else has moved through these spaces before us? With little effort, we can imagine the lives lived among this quiet and hard forest. Can

we sense them, silent and still, observing us as we ride through the forests where they once toiled, loved, and died?

In this Dispatch, we talk history. We want to include history snapshot in future Dispatches. But first, we gotta sort out how we think about history. That's what we attempt here. Feedback and corrections are welcome. Send us a postcard!

To think about history in our little northeast corner of Ferry County is complicated. But of course to think about history anywhere is complicated if you consider how we come to know history.

Riding through this area, the artifacts remaining from the era of the hallowed American Western narrative are obvious: numerous abandoned mining cabins and shafts in the scabble mountains east of Orient and Rockcut betray the frantic rush for gold over a hundred years ago, as well as hint at an Asian population that briefly inhabited the region during the same time. There are homestead foundations dotting the old Highway 395 along the Kettle River, taken by eminent domain, then razed for the Grand Coulee dam. And of course, there are

Few artifacts of the Indigenous remain as obvious as those from the more recent European history of the past century: but not none. For example, Kelly Hill, Toulou Mountain, and Nancy Creek are all named for Indigenous people who persisted into the 20th century in the northern half of Ferry County. As for obvious hard artifacts, there's Pia Mission, over a hundred years old, that is now owned by the Confederated Tribes of Colville aside which, a fenced stand of gravestones mark the resting place for hundreds of Indigenous people. Granted, even these examples are artifacts from late 19th and early 20th century. But they serve as a beacon of a history and therefore perhaps as a foothold from which to begin our search into the deeper past.



Liza. The Columbia River.

countless roads named for homesteaders whose families still live and farm the land to this day.

In northeast Ferry County, as in all other regions, Indigenous cultures make up the bulk of human historical presence of this particular place. For at least 10,000 years the Indigenous people have lived in this area.

We aim to learn and write more about the history of this tiny corner of the world where we ride.

And herein lies the complication: attempting to tell a history of this place requires a chorus of voices. Our attempt to tell a history, therefore, must rely on a commitment to seek out the voices and history of the Indigenous as a foundational perspective.

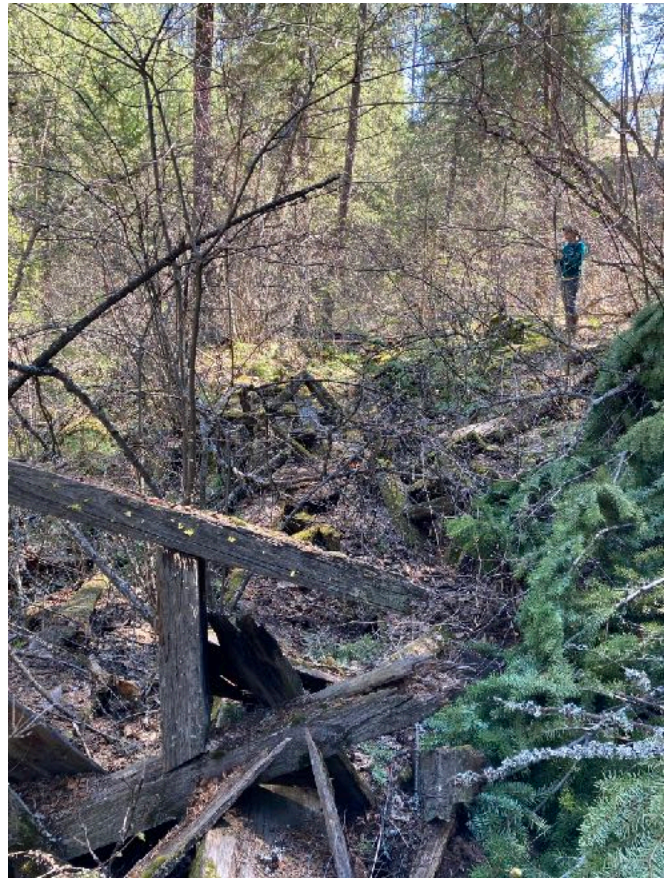
Undoubtedly, this perspective may surface some uncomfortable dissonance with the traditional American-settler historical narrative.

Bringing in the Indigenous perspective is a requirement to really understand the history here. There's a tendency of historical writing that we will try to avoid as we seek to tell a history. In our reading for this Dispatch, we discovered poet and scholar, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, who summarizes this tendency. She writes about how American authors and historians have generally framed Western history:

Un-self-consciously; they write about [Indigenous people] and their own experiences in an attempt to clarify their own identities.

Which is exactly where the first draft of this historical Dispatch began... So, our goal, in writing about the history of this place, is to write about the *identity of the place*. To do so requires that we understand, as much as we are able, the concatenation of cause-effect of human presence on that identity. Of course it's impossible to capture this chain of effect with any kind of true fidelity, but that's the aim nonetheless!

We will be including historical snapshots throughout these Dispatches. We submit these historical snapshots with the humble recognition that such a task is error prone at best and apologize in advance for any mistakes we make. We are not historians. But we will make a best effort to be motivated by curiosity, empathy, and a commitment to understand. But when we step in it—and we will—please feel free to send us feedback, corrections, and criticism.



Remains of the Sherman Creek log flume.

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Shonitkwu

Any attempt at telling a history of the Barstow Chapter must begin with Kettle Falls.

So let's begin by riding on Highway 395.

As a rule, we avoid riding Highway 395. It's an unpleasant place to ride. However, we make an exception in this case. In fact, we ask that you stop reading now and do this:

Go to the town of Kettle Falls and ride north on 395. In a couple miles, you'll crest the hill above the Columbia River. Roll down 395 and take in the scenery. When you get to the bridge, don't ride the deck. Instead, walk your bike on the south catwalk and stop in the middle of the span. Stare into the calm water of Lake Roosevelt below and imagine...

Today, the little town on 395, formerly known as Meyers Falls, is now called Kettle Falls. But 100 years ago, Kettle Falls referred to a pinch in the Columbia River where the elevation dropped about 50 feet and water roared around and over a series of massive quartzite slabs into deep cauldrons boiling with salmon.

This place is referred to as Shonitkwu by the Indigenous Colville (s̓x̓'ý?łpx) people.

Shontikwu was the social, spiritual, and economic epicenter for this region for thousands of years. Every summer, massive runs of salmon traversed the falls here to reach their spawning grounds upriver—so many salmon, the legend goes, that a man could walk across the river on the backs of salmon. The Colville would catch these salmon with baskets attached to



Water color titled, "Kettle Falls, Fort Colvile," by Paul Kane. 1847

long poles as the fish leapt up through the terraced falls.

With the salmon arrived thousands of travelers from across the region to share in the fishing bounty: the Coastal Salish from the west, the Kalispel and Nez Perce, the Plains people from as far away as Montana, the Lake Arrow People from the north, the Cayuse from the south.

As the host tribe, the Colville salmon chief controlled fishing rights and salmon distribution. The Colville were well-suited for this task, as according to legend, Coyote long ago blessed the falls with massive salmon runs as a result of the generosity that the Colville people showed him.

In the early 1840's, early missionaries and trappers estimated that the Indigenous people fishing during the summer would catch about 3000 fish a day. *A day.*

So, it's summer: food is plentiful. Thousands of people from all manner of tribes are camping, eating, trading interesting stuff. Marriages, truces, pacts, and other agreements are being negotiated. Annual festivities and friendships are renewed. New connections made. One can only imagine what a highlight of the year this must have been for so many people for countless generations.

No doubt, we are guilty of-romanticizing our vision of this place as we stare down into the still waters below. But let's indulge ourselves and linger a bit, because we know how this story ends. And all lives in all times include sadness and some misery and relative levels of suffering but by all accounts this place, buried under 30 feet of water, until just 100 years ago, was undoubtedly a place of joy for thousands of people for millennia. Somewhere deep



Shonitkwu is a Salish word and written as such in our Roman alphabet, it is an approximation of the phonetic pronunciation (we've seen it also referred to as, *Schonet Koo*). It's likely that this place came to be called Kettle Falls from French-Canadian traders who referred to the frothy cauldrons below the falls as *La Chaudière*, which sort of translates to kettle. When we talk about the specific place—this place that once raged beneath where you now stand, staring into the water from the bridge deck of 395—we'll refer to it as *Shonitkwu*.



Overlooking Kettle River valley. Early morning, Spring 2020.

under the water below, perhaps the joy still reverberates through the quartzite slabs.

In the latter half of the 19th century, the first cannery was started at the mouth of the Columbia in Oregon by some brothers from Maine. Salmon were abundant and easy to catch. By the end of the century, 55 canneries had set up shop. By 1930, the Colville were catching about 1500 fish per year. *Per year.*

In 1930, the Rock Island Dam was built downstream on the Columbia near Wenatchee. In 1930, the Colville annual catch was 267 salmon.

But the worse was yet to come. In the late 1930's the US Department of Reclamation built the Grand

Coulee Dam and flooded Shonitkwu under water.

Do not take your gaze from the water. Imagine a June day in 1940. Thousands of somber Indigenous are driving in from all over the region: the Colville, the Sinixt, the Cayuse, the Okanagon, the San Poil, the Nez Perce, the Kalispel, the Spokane, the Coeur d'Alene. Many of the 10,000 who make the trip are undoubtedly elders who are returning to this place where they had spent some of the most joyous summers of their lives. Perhaps a small handful recall those days where 3000 fish a day was the norm. They have arrived for the "Ceremony of Tears" and are gathering here for the last time, before the dam fills the once-raging Shonitkwu and is buried by Lake Roosevelt.

And with it, hundreds of miles of shoreline all the way into the neighboring tribes of the Spokane and San Poil and the Lake Arrow People (Sinixt) to the north are flooded.

We will not attempt to summarize the enormity of loss to the Indigenous people. No doubt we'll touch on some details of this event in future Dispatches.

One final thought before you break the hold of your stare into the water below: The Indigenous are not dead. The cultures, the tribes, the nations—the people are alive. Our tradition, those of the European armchair chroniclers, tends to frame these histories as the telling of dead cultures of a dead people who played a role in the order of a preordained evolutionary cultural history.

Events such as the “Ceremony of Tears” may mark the end of an era. But it certainly did not mark the end. Rather, perhaps this event might serve as a critical milestone in how we understand the history of the Indigenous of this region. Cook-Lynn describes an analogous event in Sioux history when she explains that the massacre at Wounded Knee was not the end of Sioux history, but rather, that the event was “the beginning of hard times, the basis for evidence of a long and glorious history, the focal point of survival.”

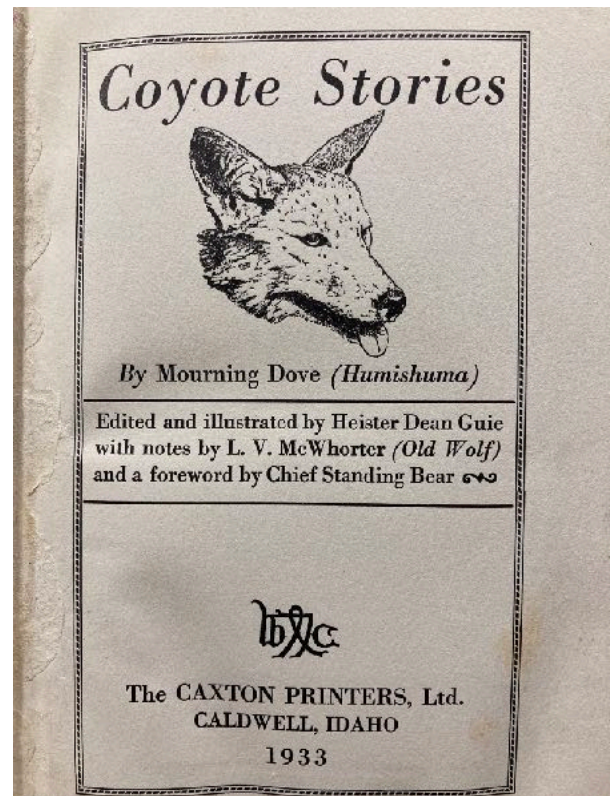
Language

Like most (but not all) languages spoken by Pacific NW Indigenous, the language is Salish. In this place, the language is referred to as “Interior Salish.”

An organization in Spokane, “Salish School of Spokane,” is a preschool and K-12 school that includes Salish language curriculum. Their mission :

Dynamic Salish language revitalization powering cultural renewal and building a stronger, healthier community.

The school is a non-profit organization. Consider donating if you are able.



A bibliography of sorts

For an authoritative summary of the Indigenous tribes in this region, start with the *Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation* website.

As for the books below, some have been on our bookshelf for years, others are new-to-us. If they're listed here, then they've contributed in some way to the history that we've started writing about in this Dispatch.

- Cook-Lynn, E. (1997). *Why I can't read Wallace Stegner: and other essays: A tribal voice*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.
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- McKay, Kathryn L. and Renk, Nancy F. (2002). *Currents and Undercurrents: An Administrative History of Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area*. National Park

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