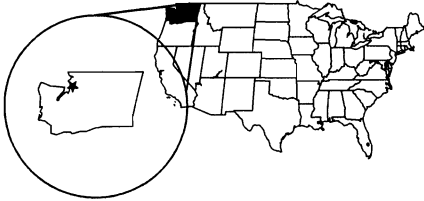


## SWINOMISH



The Coast Salish Swinomish Tribal Community is located on the eastern shore of Puget Sound in northwestern Washington. Members of the Community descended from the Swinomish, Kikialius, Samish, and Lower Skagit tribes, who lived in the Skagit River valley and on the

coastline and islands around the river's mouth. All spoke the Coast Salish language. According to tradition, the Swinomish tribe originated "when a chief's son wandered from camp with his dog and suffered many hardships. Through purification of the spirit, he obtained great powers that enabled him to convert his dog into a beautiful princess, who became the wife and mother of the people whom he created by sowing rocks on the earth."

During the 1840s and 1850s the smallpox, measles, and tuberculosis brought by whites killed most of the Indian population. Armed conflict led to the 1855 Treaty of Point Elliott, known by the

Coast Salish as the Mukilteo Treaty. Implemented over the twenty years it took for U.S. Senate ratification, it led to the scattering of many Indians around Puget Sound in search of employment.



The flag of the Swinomish Tribal Community reflects two central cultural themes which members have retained across generations—fishing and ceremonial traditions. Fishing remains a central tribal activity and provides an important focus of cultural association. Salmon barbecues, races, and games are held on holidays and other major cultural events. The Swinomish often caught sockeye salmon with a distinctive fishing spear. Spiritual meaning permeates all aspects of

Swinomish culture, forming a central theme of everyday life. The Swinomish celebrate the *Seowyn* religious and ceremonial traditions, which frequently use drums.

The Swinomish flag places a drum, a spear, and writing on a yellow background. An eight-sided white drum edged in black, placed near the upper left, bears a leaping salmon. Depicted in the distinctive Pacific Northwest Coast style, the salmon is white and black with red elements in the tail, eye, and on the body. Eight red decorative symbols surround the salmon around the drum's edge. Behind the drum, a horizontal black fishing spear with white sections carries a red rope with white accents. "SWINOMISH TRIBAL COMMUNITY" appears in black, in three lines, to the right of the drum, under the spear.

The combination of ceremonial and animate symbols, the drum and the fish, alludes to the mythology and legends passed through generations of Swinomish—according to which the Indian and all living things had a common language and helped one another in their struggle through life. The flag uses the four traditional colors of American Indian design—red, white, black, and yellow—which carry significant multiple meanings [see Miccosukee]. 🐟

[Thanks to Mr. Brian Cladoosby, Swinomish Tribal Chairman, for providing the creation story along with most of the information in this section from the tribal publication *Portrait of a Homeland*.]