



President's Introduction to Our New Chapter

Many of you may be curious about the strange name of our newsletter – *Whulj*. It is a Coast Salish word meaning “the saltwater we know.” This is a more fitting description for the inland marine waters of the Pacific Northwest than the more restrictive term “Puget Sound.” The Puget Sound officially comprises only a small part of the greater inland sea of Washington and British Columbia, also known as the *Salish Sea*. The marine mammals that inhabit our waters can travel large distances and they bring joy to many people regardless of geopolitical boundaries. These same animals are subject to ecosystem pressures that may originate anywhere from their immediate vicinity to thousands of kilometers away. For these reasons and because we feel the term *Whulj* best describes the habitat toward which we direct both our fondness and concern, we have chosen it as the name for our newsletter.

With the broader concept of *Whulj* in mind, I would like to explain the Puget Sound Chapter's conservation emphasis. Each chapter of the American Cetacean Society is tasked to choose a conservation issue on which to focus. Our board realizes there are several important concerns regarding marine mammals in the Pacific Northwest and these arise from a multiplicity of factors. Therefore, we have decided to take an ecosystem approach to marine mammal conservation issues. Concerns dealing with specific cetaceans will be used as focal issues, but we will do our best to educate ourselves, our members and the public on the “big picture” surrounding the issue. You can experience an example of our ecosystem approach to conservation at our next General Meeting on Wednesday, March 1 (see the enclosed meeting announcement). Dr. Peter Ross will deliver a talk on the extremely high levels of toxic chemicals he has found in our resident killer whales. We

will have representatives from the *People for Puget Sound* and the *Washington Toxics Coalition* at the meeting to answer your questions about sources of environmental toxins and what you can do about it.

As many of you already know, the Puget Sound Chapter of ACS was reformed in August 1999. I have been a member of ACS for over a decade and attended several of the chapter's general meetings at the Seattle Aquarium during the 1990s. However, I was never truly active in the organization. When the Northwest Chapter was dissolved a couple years ago, I inquired a few times about trying to get it going again but nothing ever came from my mild efforts at reformation. When whaling members of the Makah tribe killed a gray whale in May 1999, my motivation to get a local chapter of ACS started again was reinvigorated. The resumption of whaling might have been the impetus for restarting this chapter, and it remains an important issue, but it is part of a larger conservation philosophy on which we will continue to expand.

There were several reasons why the previous Northwest chapter of ACS was dissolved. One of the reasons was lack of involvement from the members and, as I just mentioned, I was one of those noninvolved members. We are an all-volunteer organization so it is difficult to make rapid progress on huge projects, yet we can make a difference by taking many small steps with care. Our chapter already has several dedicated board members (see page 3 in this issue of *Whulj*) but we need more volunteers to help with the various committees. I urge you to get involved, even if it is only for an hour or two every week (or month). If we all do a little then our chapter will be able to make a difference in the protection of cetaceans and their habitat.

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(President's Intro... Continued from page 1)

In closing, I would like to thank all of you who attended our first general meeting in October 1999. Makah elder, Alberta Thompson, was our guest speaker and she gave us a very heartfelt and detailed explanation as to why she continues to oppose her tribe's whaling activities. You can read an account of Alberta's message to us in the article below. In addition, you can watch a video of her

talk on the Internet at www.TappedIntoTheEarth.com. I look forward to meeting many of you at our next general meeting on March 1 or at one of our board meetings on the second Monday of every month at the Greenwood library in Seattle. There is much education and conservation work to be done, but we will have a lot of fun accomplishing it!

Puget Sound Chapter's First General Meeting *By Susan Alter, Chapter Secretary*

Upon being introduced to an audience of about 45 people at our first General Meeting on October 19, 1999, Alberta Thompson walked to the front of the room and sat down. She then began to tell us of her experiences with the tribal families who support the Makah Whale hunts. She did not relay her story in a linear fashion as many of us are accustomed, so to maintain the feel of Alberta's presentation, the timeline of her story has not been "straightened out" for this article.



Alberta Thompson

Alberta is a very open and sensitive person with a great deal of integrity and a lot of wisdom and character thrown in. She related to us, with a smile, that she has found she has a lot of power because the Makah whale hunters have threatened her, sent lawyers to threaten her, and harassed her and her family. She says that they spend an

inordinate amount of time and energy in this practice, so she must be very powerful.

Alberta is 75 years old and she is still fighting for what she believes in. She started work against whaling activities in 1996. In brief, she stated that the tribe began their plan for whaling in 1995 while they negotiated with Norway and Japan for a marine mammal processing plant.

The first time that she ever met gray whales, they swam right up to the boat. She met a female with its calf, and with the whale's insistence, she pet first the calf then the mother. Alberta said that when she touched them she felt a spiritual communication. While she was telling us about her experience, it became obvious that this mutual interaction created a bond between the whales and Alberta forever. Alberta was in tears while she was talking about what she described as an almost religious experience.

The council who rules the Reservation and the canoe

paddlers (whalers) are the only ones in the tribe that give her a hard time. She said she knows who she is and that what she believes in is worthwhile. Alberta also stated that many people in the tribe agree with her values, but the tribal council and the whaling families have so much power that these people are afraid to speak up. They could lose their jobs or homes. She said that there are about 2000 members of the tribe, and that Alberta and her family are only mistreated by the canoe family and the canoe paddlers.

With the support of all of the tribal elders behind her, she related to us, that the Port Angeles newspaper printed her letter regarding her position against the whale hunts. Alberta mentioned how one Elder from a very prominent family spoke out against whaling and brought up all of the same issues that she has been fighting against. She said "the only reason for the hunt is for money. Traditions are just the excuse." She also talked about an Elder that supported and worked with her until she found out that nothing they were doing was being taken seriously by outsiders.

Alberta received airline tickets to go to an IWC Meeting in Scotland. There were four delegates from the tribe and four from the US government. Alberta's group won the fight there, but Washington D.C. tabled the issue, because of lack of information regarding the treaty. Alberta said the government stated that the homework had not been done on the issue, and she agreed. She asserted that "Washington would like to divide the tribe on whaling issues so they can break the tribal treaty."

In 1996, Alberta spoke about the whaling issues. She was just one voice yet the tribe passed a five page ordinance on "Crowd Control" to keep her quiet. This was done so she couldn't talk about whaling with tribal members in large groups. She promptly invited 15 people to her trailer to talk about whaling issues. Alberta also stated that the whaling family has the money, lawyers, and power on their side, and she is just one voice.



While she was in Baja she was interviewed by CNN, and because of her emotional involvement with the whales, she couldn't talk without crying.

In 1998, Alberta was fired from her job for having people at her house regarding whaling. The tribal counsel claimed it was because she was making personal phone calls on company time. These allegations are emphatically denied by Alberta. She couldn't re-apply for a job for a year after that, because of the tribal rules (normally six months). Her daughter was forced out of her own home. Her grandson is mistreated at school. Nonetheless, after all of this mistreatment her family still supports her in her efforts.

Alberta went to Australia for a conference, and while she was there, her dog was found dead a mile away from her house; the dog always stayed close to home. Alberta is convinced that her dog was killed because of her anti-whaling activities. At the conference in Australia, ten *Elders for the World* were selected and she was voted one of them. You could see her glow when she told us about this honor.

Several questions were asked about the whale hunt that occurred in May 1999. Was the whale meat used in accordance with the rules of the treaty? Alberta said that the much of the meat was put in a cold locker, but the power went out for three days and the meat spoiled. She said that some women in the tribe had dried and smoked some of it for their own use. She referred to a tribal celebration where the whale meat was put out on a platter, but it wasn't properly prepared and no one wanted any of it, so it spoiled. She talked about the tribal

people being accustomed to hamburger, hotdogs and chicken, and that traditional dishes have become passé. Alberta talked about the whale skeleton being put into the bay to be cleaned for use in artworks, but she didn't have any idea what happened to it after that. Alberta spoke of the needless waste of the juvenile whale's life.

She also talked about the Aboriginal tribes in New Zealand who, instead of hunting whales, have started whale watching tour businesses to improve their way of living. This practice has greatly improved the living conditions of these tribal people. She mentioned that she is going to petition the Makah tribe for her family to start a whale watching tour business. Yet Alberta is concerned that one impact of whale watching is that the whales lose their fear of people, and like the juvenile whale killed in the initial hunt, they will swim right up to a whaling canoe. Thinking about this, she said the benefit of a whale watching business is that "the whales might not be with us for very long, and this way our children and grand children will get a chance to see them in their natural habitat."

Alberta is a powerful person – because she has ideals that she believes in. She ended her talk by stating that she would continue protesting the hunting of whales by her tribe as long as she possibly can. Her family continues to support her position even though they have been severely mistreated by the tribe.

You can watch the video of Alberta's presentation to the Puget Sound Chapter on the Internet by pointing your browser to www.TappedIntoTheEarth.com.

We Need Your Active Involvement!

Would you like to become more actively involved in the Puget Sound Chapter of ACS? We would love to have your help. Our board members have volunteered to chair various committees and now we need volunteers from the general membership to assist with committee activities. Any amount of time you can donate will help to protect marine mammals and is greatly appreciated.

There are a number of ways in which you can help. The **Newsletter** committee can use assistance with editing, folding, etc. We need help preparing informational literature and setting up for our **General Meetings**. There are numerous pressures affecting the marine mammals of *Whulj* and your input to the **Conservation** committee can be quite valuable. We need help developing and disseminating our **Educational** information for both children and adults. Finally, **Membership** is critical to the success of our organization, so we always need assistance in recruiting energized members.

The Puget Sound Chapter Board

Officers:

President – Joe Olson, acs@cetaceanresearch.com
Vice President – Mari Smultea, mmsmultea@aol.com
Secretary – Susan Alter, susan.alter@pss.boeing.com
Treasurer – Julie Anderson-Moore, deca7743@aol.com
Chapter Rep – Stephanie Norman, whaledoc@flash.net

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Conservation – Erin O'Connell, freewhales@hotmail.com
General Meetings – Stephanie Farwell, farwell@home.com
Education – Elizabeth Petras, elizabethpetras@hotmail.com
Membership – Julia Adams, jmka@u.washington.edu
Newsletter – Bob Wood, clwar84@aol.com

If you can help us, please contact a committee member. You can also call 206-297-1310 for more information or to speak directly with the Chapter President, Joe Olson.

AMERICAN CETACEAN SOCIETY



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LABEL

Southern Resident Community of Killer Whales in Trouble

The population of the Southern Resident Community of killer whales (J, K & L Pods) has steadily declined over the past four years. The most recent population count is now only 83 whales, from a recorded high of 99 in 1995.

In a report to the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC), Puget Sound Chapter member, Dr. Robin Baird, described the many possible threats to the orca populations in Canada. The Southern Resident Community, which travels the waters between British Columbia and Washington State, was of particular concern. These whales, along with the Northern Residents, contain high levels of toxic chemicals and are confronted with a loss of prey species (e.g. salmon). As a result of Dr. Baird's report, both resident populations have been given the designation of **Threatened** by COSEWIC. This designation is not the same as that used in the U.S. Endangered Species Act.

Of these two very critical conservation problems, toxic chemicals and loss of prey species, the latter may have been what motivated K & L pods to venture nearly 1000 miles south to Monterey Bay. No Resident orcas have ever been documented south of Grays Harbor, Washing-

ton until January 29th when Monterey Chapter member, Nancy Black, saw K & L pods. It is believed that their motivation for traveling so far south was the search for food.



K pod in Haro Strait, WA

The decline in the Southern Resident population is getting attention from the US government as well as the Canadian. The National Marine Mammal Laboratory will hold a workshop on the status of these whales on the first weekend of April in its Seattle facility.

To learn more about the high levels of toxic chemicals carried in Pacific Northwest orcas, join us at our **first general meeting of 2000** on March 1 at 7:00 pm at Odyssey: the Maritime Discovery Center (see enclosed flyer). **Dr. Peter Ross** of the Institute of Ocean Sciences in Sidney, BC will tell us about the PCBs and other toxic chemicals he has discovered in these orcas.

Future General Meeting Speaker:

Jim Nollman, Interspecies Communication, Inc.
Thursday, March 30, 7:30 pm at Odyssey

YES! ENROLL ME AS A MEMBER OF THE PUGET SOUND CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN CETACEAN SOCIETY!

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