



Suquamish Olalla Neighbors

bringing OLD MAN HOUSE home



The Suquamish Tribe

Summer/Fall 2003

Tribe invites community to create a win-win for Old Man House Park

By Rob Purser, Suquamish Tribal Council treasurer

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Several decades before white settlers inhabited the Puget Sound area, a group of Indians led by a man named Sealth clashed with a rival band of Indians on the White River. The rival group was looking to raid tribes living along the shores of the sound, but was held back and defeated by Sealth and his men.

According to the historical account, word of the victory quickly reached Old Man House in Suquamish, where several tribal leaders meeting at the large cedar longhouse decided it was time to name Sealth their major chief.

While that one event inside Old Man House – the home of Chief Sealth, for whom the City of Seattle is named – is

historically important to the Puget Sound area, it's just one of many reasons the site is culturally and spiritually important to the Suquamish Tribe. For more than 2,000 years, the Agate Passage beach was the site of the Suquamish Indians winter village, and the tribe would like to once again regain ownership of a portion of that land taken from its ancestors.

This ancient village site (known as D'Suq'Wub) is within the boundaries of the Port Madison Indian Reservation, in which a small part of the ancient site is now Old Man House State Park. The state, grappling with budget problems, is considering whether this property should



Old Man House Park. Foreground is a Suquamish Museum photo of tribal members at their village, circa 1875.

ALAN BERNER / THE SEATTLE TIMES ©2003, Reprinted with permission

be transferred as surplus lands.

The tribe's interest in obtaining ownership of this culturally important property is with a strong commitment of protecting and maintaining the site as a park with access to the general public.

(Cont. Page Two)

The Future of Old Man House State Park

The state of Washington is considering turning over various state parks to local government authorities. Among them is Old Man House Park, located at the foot of Division Street in Suquamish. The Suquamish Tribe and the state have been in conversation about the Tribe acquiring the park, which has deep historic and cultural significance to the Tribe (as described above).

How would the park be managed? What would change and what would stay the same if the Tribe acquires the park? The Tribal Council has already

made clear that the park would remain open to all people and that there would be no fireworks or alcohol allowed. **But what of other issues?** The Suquamish Tribe has asked Suquamish Olalla Neighbors to partner in engaging the broader community in developing a management plan.

To do that, we need to know what you think. How do you use the park and what policies and practices would make it work best for all who use it now and may use it years into the future? You can express your views on our

community survey (online at www.soneighbors.org), by emailing us (olalla@ecoisp.com) or by attending a public workshop or meeting, held this fall at the Suquamish Tribal Center on Sandy Hook Road. Watch our websites or local newspapers for meeting details.

September 18th
 Community Workshop on draft outline & goals

November 13th
 Community Meeting on draft management plan

Points of Agreement Under tribal ownership Old Man House Park (Chief Seattle Park) will be

- * Accessible to the general public
- * A cultural and educational resource
- * Planned and managed with the community
- * Preserved for future generations
- * And, alcohol, drugs & fireworks will be prohibited

D'Suq'Wub, "place of clear salt water"



... a win-win for Old Man House Park (cont)

The tribe would maintain and preserve Old Man House Park as a cultural and educational center, repairing and updating existing exhibits and displays, and prohibiting the use of alcohol and fireworks. Preservation of the park for future generations is the main goal.

The tribe is also committed to working with the community in developing a park management plan. We hope that the management of the park would be a true community effort.

The tribe would be the best caretaker because Suquamish Indians have a spiritual commitment to preserving the site. Even though the Old Man House was dismantled and burned in about 1870, a large

number of tribal families continued to live at the Old Man House village site until



Rob Purser at Old Man House Park
Photo by GIBERT W. ARIAS/
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1905. At that time, homes within the Old Man House village were dismantled and the people whose ancestors had lived there for thousands of years were forced to move elsewhere on the reservation.

The federal government had decided that the village site would serve best as a military fortification to protect a Navy facility in Bremerton. No fortifications, however, were built on the site and it was eventually sold to a private buyer,

instead of being given back to the tribe.

Today, most of the former village site has been developed, and all that remains is about an acre for the park. In owning the Old Man House Park property, the Suquamish Tribe hopes to preserve and maintain that small piece of historically important land, so it can be used as an educational tool and enjoyed by future generations.

The tribe regaining ownership of a part of an ancient village site, preserving the property as a park for future generations, and making management a true community effort is a win-win situation for all involved. The Suquamish Tribe encourages people to support us on this culturally significant endeavor by contacting Alan Wolslegel at the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission (253)-931-3907, and local elected leaders. *Rob Purser can be reached at 360-394-8436.*

Bainbridge Island/North Kitsap Interfaith Council letter to the State

June 2, 2003

To: Alan Wolslegel,
Washington State Parks &
Recreation Commission
Senator Betti Sheldon
Rep. Beverly Woods
Rep. Phil Rockefeller

Re: Old Man House State Park

I am writing on behalf of the Bainbridge Island/North Kitsap Interfaith Council, an association of 19 local churches and congregations of many different faiths, representing several thousand persons. We write to urge that our State seek a solution for the Old Man House State Park in Suquamish that respects the sacredness of this land to the Suquamish Tribe and helps to heal past wrongs to the Tribe and divisions existing in the community.

Our concern about this issue stems from faith-based values we share, which are reflected in our Interfaith Council's stated purposes that include: to work for dignity and justice for all persons, to speak for the voiceless and bring healing

to the wounded, and to nurture peace and unity in our communities. These beliefs have led our Council to recognize that, as groups and people of faith we can and should help to build bridges of understanding and friendship that can help overcome the prejudices and mistrust that have created long-standing barriers between our Native American neighbors and others in the community.



"Unite" in Lushootseed

We understand that Old Man House Park is on land that has profound spiritual and historic significance to the Suquamish Tribe and its members. We have learned that this land was taken from these, our first people, by the federal Government, which also destroyed the land's long-house and evicted its Native residents (who had lived there for many hundreds of years), then refused to return the land to the Tribe when federal occu-

pancy ended.

Now that the State wishes to transfer ownership of the park, the Tribe has requested return of that land to the Tribe, and proposes to address concerns of neighbors by assuring access by all to the park, proper maintenance, and prohibition of disruption by fireworks or alcohol use. However, we understand that the Parks and Recreation Commission has received and is considering, instead, a proposal by a group that is opposed to tribal ownership of the Park, for an immediate, long term contract under which that group would be put in charge of maintenance, educational and interpretive services for the Park. We are concerned that acceptance of such a proposal could seriously undermine efforts of the Tribe and neighbors to work out a solution that honors the Suquamish peoples' worth, traditions and deep ties to this land and contributes to peace and better relationships in the community.

In our region, as in others, the rights, culture and dignity of our Native American neighbors have too often been trampled and degraded. But in the future
(Cont Page Three)



Suquamish Olalla Neighbors Resolution on Old Man House State Park

On behalf of the Suquamish Olalla Neighbors we urge the State of Washington to seek a solution for the Old Man House State Park on the Port Madison Reservation that respects the sacredness of this land to the Suquamish Tribe and helps to heal past wrongs to the Tribe and divisions existing in the local community.

We recognize that the area that includes Old Man House State Park has a unique and historic significance to the "First Residents" of this area. We also acknowledge that the park is highly valued by the current area residents and is the focal point of many neighborhood activities.

Our concern about this issue stems from our purpose in fostering a sense of community and understanding among

tribal and non-tribal residents of the Port Madison Reservation. We support the Suquamish Tribe in its right to self-determination and governance while also promoting friendship and healing between tribal and non-tribal residents.

The Suquamish Olalla Neighbors support the transfer of Old Man House State Park to the Suquamish Tribe. We look upon the Tribe's formal proposal of a community management plan for the park as an opportunity to build harmony and mutual respect among neighbors.

We believe that this can be done in a way that allows all those who now enjoy the park's amenities to continue to do so.

We eagerly offer our support to help make this opportunity a reality.



Suquamish Elementary second graders watch eagle on Old Man House Park field trip

KATHRYN KEVE,
PHOTOGRAPHER

Interfaith Letter (cont)

trampled and degraded. But in the future of Old Man House Park there is an opportunity for past injustices and wrongs to be righted rather than perpetuated, for wounds to be healed rather than reopened, for neighbors of different races to build harmony and mutual respect rather than resentment, polarization and conflict. We urge the State to do what it can to help that opportunity to become a reality.

Thank you for your consideration of our views.

Sincerely
Bainbridge Island/North Kitsap
Interfaith Council
By Richard L. Goff, President

*... In all these years,
the Tribe has honored all
the conditions of the
contract ...*

Virginia Cowling

Letter from Virginia Cowling, Suquamish Neighbor

I have been told that the Park Department has funding problems and is hoping to get communities to take over maintenance.. this includes Ol' Man Park. The Tribe has requested that it be returned to them and said they would not bar non-natives from the use of it. Then the Friends of the Park seems to worry that the Tribe might not adhere to that and had offered to look after the park and raise money for its maintenance. What a wonderful opportunity this could be for all of us to work on!

Historically and ethically, of course, the Park belongs to the Tribe and if the Friends Group wants to look after it, why cant The Tribe give them a contract to do that?

Perhaps my own experience can reassure the worryers.

For over a quarter of a century, I have had a very happy and respectful relationship with the Tribe, first when my husband and I allowed them to try an experimental hatchery on one of our streams. When we learned this would mean dams and ponds, my husband insisted they insure us in case of accidents. They readily complied.

Now, in 2003, they own the 13 acres

of land, I have life estate and live here. The Tribe pays property taxes They have hatcheries on both streams, and have the most successful small hatchery in the State. It provides employment and enough returning salmon for all the fisherfolk, both commercial and sport, native and non-native. Carcasses are given to the community, often for free, for smoking and fertilizer. Surplus eggs are used to seed streams all over Kitsap County and other counties and Seattle .School children are brought here and learn the importance of protecting the environment for all the creatures that live here.

In all these years, the Tribe has honored all the conditions of the contract, keeping the requirements of Open Space category and being good stewards of the land.. The Tribe has invites me to many of their events, and I feel privileged and happy to have this contact.

Nearing 87, I have learned that no one knows the future but to worry about problems that **might** happen can make living unhappy. Open your hearts and minds to the rich culture around us.

Enjoy!

Virgina Cowling



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The Suquamish Tribe
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Attn: Rich Brooks
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Suquamish Olalla Neighbors Statement of Purpose

The purpose of Suquamish Olalla Neighbors is to foster a sense of community and understanding among tribal and non-tribal residents of the Port Madison Reservation and surrounding area.

The objectives of this group are to:

- Promote friendship and healing between tribal and non-tribal residents;
- Support the tribe's right of self-determination and governance;
- Educate ourselves and the larger community about history and current issues of the tribal and non-tribal people of this area.

We're on the web!
The Suquamish Tribe
www.suquamish.nsn.us
Suquamish Olalla Neighbors
www.soneighbors.org

Some Community Comments

I am a resident of Bainbridge Island and have taken many visitors to Ol' Man Park in Suquamish as part of a history tour of Kitsap County. I like to show people Chief Seattle's grave, the totem pole in Suquamish and the Suquamish Museum, as well . . . I believe very strongly that Ol' Man State Park should return to tribal jurisdiction. This would be some small measure of justice for the Suquamish native people and would be the right thing to do.

Ruth Ballard

This park should be returned to the tribe. The tribe knows the history of this sacred place . . . I am not a Native American, but do live in the community of Suquamish. I want to honor the traditions of the tribe. I want to be their friend, I do not want them to see the white man as their enemy. Give them back what is rightfully theirs.

A concerned citizen, Carrie Gentile

*Though I am not a member of Olalla Suquamish Neighbors, I . . . know there is a great need for their work of reconciliation and problem-solving in our community. . . When an issue like Ole Man House arises, it is difficult, but it is also an opportunity to bring us closer, to teach us how to solve problems together, to deepen our understanding of our differences and our common concerns . . . I urge you (the State) to listen to **all** interested parties and take the time needed to find a win/win solution. It will make future problem-solving easier and more fruitful if we begin now to listen to each other and to solve problems together."*

Barbara Brooking



Suquamish tribal members under the last standing crossbeam of the Old Man House longhouse, in about 1875.

THE SUQUAMISH MUSEUM

I believe that ultimately the land should be returned to the Suquamish Tribe, and I believe a means can be found to ensure access by all to the park, to ensure the park is maintained and disorder is avoided. Finally, I believe returning the land to the Suquamish Tribe will help heal an historic wrong and create the conditions for peace and healing in the community.

Rod Arakaki

**Chief Seattle lived and died at D'Suq'Wub,
Old Man House Village**