

## 1. Description

- 1.1 Name of society, language, and language family: Skagit, Lushootseed, Salishan
- 1.2 ISO code (3 letter code from ethnologue.com): SKA
- 1.3 Location (latitude/longitude): Skagit Valley and Puget Sound Area, Washington
- 1.4 Brief history: The Skagit Tribe has lived in the Puget Sound area for thousands of years. They were first contacted by European explorers in 1791. Soon afterwards, settlers and explorers brought along several diseases, which greatly decimated their numbers. In 1855 representatives from the Skagit Tribe signed the Point Elliot Treaty. The terms of the treaty dictated that the Skagit would give up their land in exchange for reservations and other benefits. Around the same time several members began converting to Christianity, mainly Catholicism. Today the Skagit are divided up among the Upper Skagit, Lower Skagit, and Swinomish. The Upper Skagit have their own 84 acre reservation, while the Lower Skagit joined the Swinomish on a larger reservation. The Upper Skagit currently operate their own casino, and are working with the government and other tribes to help conserve natural resources. (2, 4, and 5)
- 1.5 Influence of missionaries/schools/governments/powerful neighbors: Greatly influenced by US government, have adopted a more typical American way of life. Their traditional land has been drastically reduced in size, with members now living on a reservation.
- 1.6 Ecology: The Skagit live in the Pacific Northwest, an area that is rich in biodiversity. The waters were their primary food source, but the land gave them many kinds of animals and plants to eat.
- 1.7 Population size, mean village size, home range size, density 1,282. 778 came from the Swinomish reservation, and 504 came from the Upper Skagit tribe. (5)

## 2. Economy

- 2.1 Main carbohydrate staple(s): Wild onions, berries, camas, tiger lily and wild carrot (3 and 4).
- 2.2 Main protein-lipid sources: Salmon, shellfish, deer, bear, elk, mountain goat, beaver, otter, raccoon, and rabbit. The Skagit placed great importance on fishing and obtained much of their diet from marine life. (4)
- 2.3 Weapons: Bow and arrow, blowguns?: Skilled toolmakers of arrow and spearheads. (2)
- 2.4 Food storage: Salmon and clams were sun-dried, along with other meats and berries. (3)
- 2.5 Sexual division of production: Men did the hunting, fishing, carpentry, and religious work. At times of war men were also warriors. Women gathered roots, berries, prepared food, made baskets and clothing, carried wood and water, and took care of children and the home. But these rules were not rigid, Men knew how to cook, and did so occasionally, men also helped his their wives if they were busy, such as carrying wood and water, gathering food, and taking care of children. If possible, women also went to assist their husbands with the fishing. (4)
- 2.6 Land tenure: Modified their environment, made prairies, practiced burning of the land. (3)
- 2.7 Ceramics: No ceramics, but basketry was important. (4)
- 2.8 Specified (prescribed or proscribed) sharing patterns: Elders are provided with food by younger tribe members. The Skagit also participated in a potlatch, and gave food to neighboring tribes (2). If fish were absent from a particular area, affected tribal members would ask relatives in another tribe with an abundance of fish to share. If the receiving tribe experienced a good fishing season the following year, they would reciprocate. (4)
- 2.9 Food taboos:
- 2.10 Canoes/watercraft? Trees were used to dig out canoes, which were used to navigate in local waterways. (2)

## 3. Anthropometry

- 3.1 Mean adult height (m and f):
- 3.2 Mean adult weight (m and f):

## 4. Life History, mating, marriage

- 4.1 Age at menarche (f):
- 4.2 Age at first birth (m and f):
- 4.3 Completed family size (m and f):
- 4.4 Inter-birth-interval (f): No rigid rules, but parents would refrain from sex while the child was nursing, making the birth interval about every two years. (4)
- 4.5 Age first marriage (m and f):
- 4.6 Proportion of marriages ending in divorce: Not specified, but before contact with the Europeans it was infrequent, the main reason being the fear of having their children live with stepparents. (4)
- 4.7 Percent marriages polygynous, percent males married polygynously: Percent not specified, but polygamy was widely practiced in the region. (3)
- 4.8 Bride purchase (price), bride service, dowry?: The groom had to pay a bride price to the father of the bride. Before the marriage could become legal he would have to bring enough property to the bride's father. (4)
- 4.9 Inheritance patterns: Camas root plots inherited through the female line, from mothers to daughters. (3)
- 4.10 Parent-offspring interactions and conflict: Fathers taught their sons skills, and mothers taught their daughters skills. The parent-child bond was very deep and affectionate. In the case of death and remarriage, children did not normally like their stepparents. Children had to show respect and couldn't joke freely with their parents. Bonds tended to be the closest between mothers and daughters and fathers and sons. (4)
- 4.11 Homosexual activities, social attitudes towards homosexuals:
- 4.12 Pattern of exogamy (endogamy): Exogamy? "... Universally accepted as desirable, by the contact period. Families would promote exogamy to enhance their shared social standing, as with elites from tribes with access to resources or trade networks not found in their

home villages.” Although a small number of prominent elite families would try to direct their offspring to marry families within their immediate social circle. (3)

4.13 What is the belief of the role of males in conception; is paternity partible? Are these “other fathers” recognized?

4.14 What is the belief of the mother’s role in procreation exactly? (e.g., “receptacle in which fetus grows”)

4.15 Is conception believed to be an incremental process (i.e., semen builds up over time)?

4.16 Occurrence of sexual coercion, rape

4.17 Preferential category for spouse (e.g., cross cousin) The most desirable spouse would be from another village, as to increase social standing and available resources. (3)

4.18 Do females enjoy sexual freedoms?

4.19 Evidence of giving gifts to extramarital partners or extramarital offspring

4.20 If mother dies, whose raises children? The oldest brother of the dead parent decides the welfare of his nieces and nephews. The father needs permission from his deceased wife’s family to remarry. Children may be raised by the father and stepmother, or aunts and uncles. (4)

4.21 Adult sex ratio: number of adult males divided by number of (reproductive) females

4.22 Evidence for couvades

4.23 Different distinctions for potential fathers (e.g., lesser/younger vs. major/older)

4.24 Kin avoidance and respect? Children had to respect their parents, aunts, and uncles, relationships with grandparents were more warm and relaxed. (4)

4.24 Joking relationships?

4.25 Patterns of descent (e.g., bilateral, matrilineal) for certain rights, names or associations Females inherit garden plots through their mothers. Heritage is claimed through both sides, depending on the situation. (4)

4.26 Incest avoidance rules Marriages between relatives less than four degrees removed from each other were not permitted

4.27 Is there a formal marriage ceremony? Yes, usually. It ranged from a small dinner to a potlatch feast. The groom and his family would arrive by canoe to the bride’s home, and would enter by dancing in single file and singing. The couple would be seated together before their fathers and lectured on the responsibilities of marriage. (4)

4.28 In what way(s) does one get a name, change their name, and obtain another name? People can be given two names, and a ceremony could be held in infancy. One name could be a spirit name, which was given at a private dinner and not used in daily speech. The second name was an honor name, which was usually from a relative and skipped a generation. Parents watched their children for years and talked about potential honor names with the child before giving it to them. No more than one person could hold a name at a time, a person may assume a new name whenever they like. (4)

4.29 Is marriage usually (or preferred to be) within community or outside community? (m/f difference?) Outside the community. 3

4.30 Are marriages arranged? Who arranges (e.g., parents, close kin)? Marriages were arranged to promote resources. Older relatives arranged them, with the father playing an important role. (4)

4.31 Evidence for conflict of interest over who marries who:

### **Warfare/homicide**

4.14 Percent adult (male) deaths due to warfare:

4.15 Outgroup vs ingroup cause of violent death:

4.16 Reported causes of in-group and out-group killing:

4.17 Number, diversity and relationship with neighboring societies (external relations): The Skagit were not warlike. They stressed peace and friendliness with their neighbors, but their main enemy the Thompson tribe. (4)

4.18 Cannibalism?

### **5. Socio-Political organization and interaction**

5.1 Mean local residential (village) group size:

5.2 Mobility pattern: (seasonality): Sedentary with some local seasonal movement. (2)

5.3 Political system: (chiefs, clans etc, wealth or status classes): Evidence of a class system, with village chiefs being at the top, then commoners, and slaves being at the bottom. (3)

5.4 Post marital residence: Post marital residence was left up to the husband, who usually chose patrilocality.

5.5 Territoriality? (defined boundaries, active defense): Fishing, hunting, and gathering sites were closely guarded, and permission was needed to enter a different territory. (3)

5.6 Social interaction divisions ? (age and sex):

5.7 Special friendships/joking relationships:

5.8 Village and house organization: Permanent villages with small homes and multifamily longhouses (2).

5.9 Specialized village structures (mens’ houses): Longhouses, a huge structure, up to 60 by 480 feet, served as a meeting place, living residence, and religious purposes (3).

5.10 Sleep in hammocks or on ground or elsewhere? Slept on raised platforms with animal skins and mountain goat woolen blankets for bedding. (4).

5.11 Social organization, clans, moieties, lineages, etc: Lineages changed depending on the situation. In one situation a person would claim their father’s heritage, while in other situations a person would claim their mother’s heritage. (3)

5.12 Trade: Traded with Puget Sound and Eastern Washington tribes. Salmon was one of the most valuable trading goods at their disposal. (2)

5.13 Indications of social hierarchies? Yes, chiefs were at the top of the hierarchy, with slaves being at the very bottom. The middle was composed of commoners, who would be divided up based on material wealth (3).

## **6. Ritual/Ceremony/Religion (RCR)**

6 Time allocation to RCR:

6.1 Specialization (shamans and medicine): Men can become shamans, which doubled as a doctor. (4)

6.2 Stimulants:

6.3 Passage rituals (birth, death, puberty, seasonal):

- Women had several rules they had to obey during pregnancy and birth. While she was pregnant, a woman couldn't eat fresh salmon, nor could she pull her clothes up over her head. If she witnessed something frightening, she had to go spit outside in order to prevent her baby from being deformed. Women were also encouraged to keep their weight down and remain active by doing light work. After birth the baby was rubbed with grease, and the placenta was secretly buried, while the umbilical cord was preserved. (4)
- Males had no puberty rituals, but females had a long ritual. When she had her first period, a special house was built for her, and she lived there alone for six weeks, during which she could only have one daily meal. During this isolation she went through many "dark and light phases," which was to suppose to represent the phases of the moon. Her first five days were dark, during which only her mother could see her, she then become light for four days and dark again, after her isolation she became light again. On dark days her face was painted red, and a bag was placed over her head, so no one could accidentally see her. During light days all of her female relatives would visit her, they would give her advice, and sometimes presents. The mother would tie strips of bark around her abdomen and waist and breasts in order to suppress growth in those areas. Every morning the girl's mother directed her to water where she had to dive in four times, as the girl would bathe the mother would wash her face, massage her, and brush her hair, because the girl was forbidden to touch her head during her isolation. After the initial isolation period was over she returned home, she went back to her isolation house for her next three periods, following the fasting and bathing rituals she had done previously. Afterwards she was eligible for marriage. (4)
- After death the surviving spouse would cut their hair to their shoulders, a week later it was also cut a second time. Relatives came to the home to take all of the possessions of the dead person, so that the person's ghost was not drawn back to their possessions and try to take any family members with them. Then the surviving parent, child, or spouse would leave the house for a while. Since relatives would take the deceased's possessions, they would often supply the surviving family members with new items. Burials could range from a shallow grave to a canoe burial- which was the most expensive and prestigious burial form. After the death of a spouse the surviving spouse would be waken up by their parents to go bathe and scrape their bodies. (4)

6.4 Other rituals:

6.5 Myths (Creation): According to legend, a son of a headman wandered away from his camp, accompanied by his dog. The pair suffered many difficulties, but the son purified his spirit and received great powers. His powers allowed him to transform his dog into a beautiful princess, who he later married. The pair made people by sowing and throwing rocks on the earth. (3)

6.6 Cultural material (art, music, games):

6.7 Sex differences in RCR: Men are shamans, women are not. (4)

6.8 Missionary effect: The Roman Catholic Church began ministering to the Skagit Tribe in the middle of the 1800s, and today most of them are baptized as Roman Catholics. (4)

6.9 RCR revival:

6.10 Death and afterlife beliefs: See 6.3

6.11 Taboo of naming dead people?

6.12 Is there teknonymy? Yes. An elderly person could give a child their name, and once their name was given they took another name. (4)

6.13 Briefly describe religion (animism, ancestor worship, deism, magic, totems etc.) A person would obtain at least one guardian spirit in their lifetime, normally by going on a quest, and a spirit would fall into two types, either lay spirits or shamanistic spirits. Lay spirits would help with everyday tasks, while shamanistic spirits were used only for curing or killing. Spirits were normally in animal, element, or natural phenomenon form, all spirits could also had a human form that could appear at any time. The shaman did the healing and religious practices for the tribe. The shaman would channel one of his shamanistic spirits and perform his duties. The Skagit believe in a soul, which gave life to the body, but could separate from it. (4)

## **7. Adornment**

7.1 Body paint: Both men and women painted their faces red. Women used some white paint on their faces and on their babies, men wore black during war. (4)

7.2 Piercings: Piercing was not practiced, except some who wore a bone through their septum. (4)

7.3 Haircut: Men parted their hair in the middle and tied back with beaver skin. Women's hair was parted in the middle and braided on the side. (4)

7.4 Scarification:

7.5 Adornment (beads, feathers, lip plates, etc.): Both sexes might wear some feathers in their hair. 4

7.6 Ceremonial/Ritual adornment:

7.7 Sex differences in adornment: When it was warm enough, men went naked and women wore long cedar bark skirts. Women had small tattoos above their wrists (4).

7.8 Missionary effect: Wore little clothing before contact, but afterwards adopted a more European style of dress, including dresses and trousers (4). Today they wear modern clothing.

7.9 Cultural revival in adornment:

## **8. Kinship systems**

8.1 Sibling classification system:

8.2 Sororate, levirate:

8.3 Other notable kinship typology, especially cross-cousin (MBD/FZD) typology (Crow/Hawaiian/Omaha etc.):

## **9. Other interesting cultural features (list them):**

### **Numbered references**

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3. [http://www.cfr.washington.edu/research.cesu/reports/J9W88040021\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://www.cfr.washington.edu/research.cesu/reports/J9W88040021_final_report.pdf)
4. Collins, June M. *Valley of the Spirits: The Upper Skagit Indians of Western Washington*. Seattle: University of Washington, 1974.
5. <http://www.npaihb.org/>