

The Yaxaïk Native People, Origins of the Yachats Name, and the Prison Camp Years



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Acknowledgements

The authors undertook this project to increase awareness and help educate our local community. From the outset we have been clear that, in writing this article what we are doing is pulling together and highlighting existing knowledge from scattered sources. We are grateful to the historians, archaeologists, archivists, and lore keepers who made this work possible.

Our intention is to create as clear a historical record as we can, one that does not ignore or misrepresent the important history of the Yachats area. It is our hope that this article will play a part in improving our community's understanding of the connection between the layers of the past and the present.

The article is a testament to the collaboration of our finest local history experts. The authors are forever grateful for the opportunity to be the recipients of their generosity and knowledge, and to deepen our understanding of local Native People history.

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The article would not have been written without the expert assistance, support, and supervision of Robert Kentta, *Tribal Elder, Cultural Resources Director of the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians of Oregon* and recently retired *Tribal Council Member*, and of Don Whereat, *Tribal Elder, First Historian, and former Tribal Council Member of the Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians*. Both men generously provided their wealth of knowledge, mountains of data, and aided in our interpretation of the information. Phyllis Steeves, retired *Forest Archaeologist for the Siuslaw National Forest and Tribal Liaison*, was instrumental in providing archaeological site studies, teaching us about site significance, and reviewing this article.

Marjorie Hays did a remarkable and comprehensive piece of work with her book, [The Land That Kept Its Promise: A History of South Lincoln County](#). Chapter 8, "Elip Tyee" (Before the White Man), was extremely helpful. The interview with her husband Chester Hays where he related stories of the history he heard from his father, Guy Hayes, about the Alsea People was also highly informative. Unfortunately, Marjorie died before her research and book were complete. Chester gathered Marjorie's notes and turned them over to the Lincoln County Historical Society which prepared the book for publication. At the time of her death, Marjorie had not finished her research and writings on the Alsea People and the prison camp years, hence, those chapters are sparse.

A special thank you is given to the Howell Family, who lived on the family homestead up the North Fork of the Yachats River, for their generosity, information, and hospitality. Janice Gerdemann generously helped by accessing and sharing old maps in her possession.

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These acknowledgments would not be complete without special recognition of the outstanding researcher and scholar, Dr. Stephen Dow Beckham, *retired professor, Lewis and Clark College*. His 1977 publication, [The Indians of Western Oregon: This Land Was Theirs](#), is an accurate and penetrating account of early Native People history and the forced removal and incarceration. It is the authors' hope that this article will stimulate readers' interest to read Dr. Beckham's books and other publications such as those by E. A. Schwartz and David Beck, whose works have contributed to this article.

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The authors completed a second revision of the article in 2023, to include resource material uncovered during ongoing efforts to better understand Yachats area Native People history.

After collecting information generously shared with the authors over the last decade from Robert Kentta, *Cultural Resources Director of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians and Tribal Council Member*, Patty Whereat Phillips, *Linguist, Anthropologist, and former Cultural Resource Protection Coordinator with the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians*, Jesse Beers, *Cultural Stewardship Manager, Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians*, and Donald Slyter, *Chief, Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians* revisions were made to this article enriching it with additional information and photos. Special thanks to Lincoln County Historical Society for their contributions and digital enhancements of photos and to Mike Bahn for his research into his family 's history with Alsea Subagency. Dr. Steve Beckham's research and assistance was again so greatly appreciated in adding new information and details. Drew Caldwell added his expertise to organize, edit and enhance the article, further honoring the important information contained within. And finally the authors acknowledge Shelly Shrock and Cassie Genc for the lovely cover photos of the Amanda statue.

The authors are truly grateful for the trust, guidance, and supervision so generously given by the *Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians* and *Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians* throughout so many years of working to bring these important historical truths to the Yachats community and beyond.

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Important to note that all the professional help given to this article over all three publications was given without compensation. All generously gave incredible amounts of time, expertise and efforts for the reader to have the opportunity to learn, understand and appreciate the true and precious information this article contains.

Throughout the current text of the article, the authors refer to Native People or Indigenous People. When quoting from or providing references to historical documents, the actual text and name of the historic document or reference is used, so that those interested may locate the full document; historic documents often refer to Native People as Indians.

Preface

The authors created this article with three primary purposes in mind:

- To explore the origins and history of the Yachats area Native People
- To rediscover where the names Yachats and Alsea may have come from
- To document the horrors experienced by Native People at the Alsea Sub-agency

Before the first publication of the article, many in the Yachats community knew little about the origins or history of the Yachats area Native People. Many did not know that there were Native People local to the area or how they lived on this land.

After the first publication of this article in 1996, the community began to acknowledge and bring forward a deeper understanding of local history. Interpretive signs, the Amanda Trail, cultural presentations, and other milestones mark the first steps of the journey forward in acknowledging and accepting the past and its impact on the present.

The combination of archaeological site investigations and earlier research gives insight into the history of the Yachats area Native People. Archaeological site investigations reveal very important evidence about the relationship of Native People with the land over time and other important findings. Among other efforts at recording and preserving history, scholars conducted extensive research from the 1880s through the 1940s to better understand the Native People of the central coast. For example, early researchers such as John Harrington, Leo Frachtenberg, Phillip Drucker, Livingston Farrand, and Melville Jacobs conducted on-site interviews of Native People who grew up on the Alsea Sub-agency. The Alsea Sub-agency was, in part, located at present day Yachats from 1859 to 1875. Native People referenced in this article include Lottie Evanoff, Spencer Scott, Frank Drew, Jim Buchanan, Annie Miner Peterson, John Albert, and Leona Ludson.

The second purpose evolved as the authors wrote the first version of this article. They rediscovered information about the possible origins of the names “Alsea” and “Yachats” and how the pronunciation of these words may have evolved.

The third purpose came about in response to historical accounts that portrayed the Alsea Sub-agency as an idyllic settlement while the reality was much more brutal. An accurate historical record acknowledges that U.S. Government sponsored genocidal policies caused the dislocation, forced incarceration, impact of European diseases, starvation, denial of Native practices to obtain food, and other forms of abuse that were all part of the Native People experience during that period.

It is the authors' hope that this article, the footnotes, and the bibliography will help connect the historical past with the present. Our goal is to help make the present-day Yachats community more familiar, more respectful, and more appreciative of our shared local heritage as we continue to move forward.

The Native People of Yaxaik: Archaeological and Other Evidence¹

This section provides an overview based on the archaeological evidence, historical records, and interviews with local historians and lore keepers.

Native People of the central Oregon coast followed the “circles of the seasons” and were hunter-gatherers as well as agriculturalists (see map).² In order to have a steady food supply, they migrated between their summer camps and winter residences.

The Alsea (Wusi) Native People called themselves Wusitsl̥m (OO-sit-slums) translated to person or people of Wusi. The Alsea had as many as twenty permanent villages, locations which were used on a rotating yearly basis as settlements along the Alsea River and the coast from Seal Rock to Tenmile Creek.

Nine villages have been identified north of the Alsea River. At least eleven villages were located south of the Alsea River.³ The names of seventeen of the villages are known⁴, see Appendix I.⁵

The unratified treaty of 1855 (see third section of this article) and testimony from Alsea, Siuslaw and Coos people places the Alsea southern boundary



Map of Oregon Showing the location of Indian Tribes. (1852)

at Tenmile Creek. Tenmile Creek is also the border of important cultural and language

¹ The following information centers on only the Indigenous People of Yachats. To learn more about the Alsea people and their culture who resided in what is now the Waldport area, refer to the bibliography, particularly, Philip Drucker, “Contributions to Alsea Ethnography,” *American Archeology and Ethnography*, University of California (Vol. 35, 1939, pp. 81-101.) Marjorie Hays, *The Land That Kept Its Promise: A History of South Lincoln County* (Vol. 14, Lincoln County Historical Society, 1976, pp. 30-35).

² John Peabody Harrington, “Harrington’s Field Notes,” Reel 23, obtained from the archives of the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians.

³ Drucker, p. 82.

⁴ Henry Zenk, *Indian Tribes of North America*, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 145, pp. 452-3, 1990.

⁵ *Ibid.*

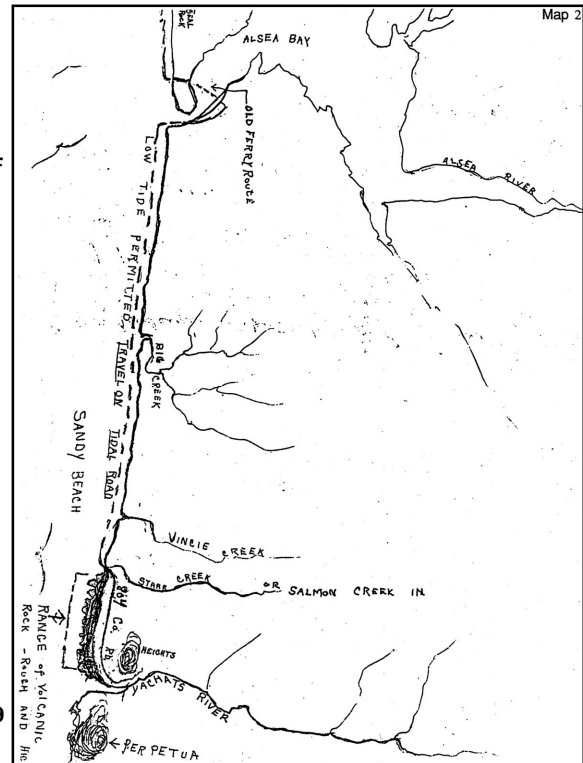
differences between the Alsea and Siuslaw people.⁶

The village site names near the boundary of Tenmile are among those known. The Alsea village site just north of present-day Yachats was called yáxaiky, or Yaxaik (YAH-khike, with a long i and a gargled second h). The name of Tenmile Creek and its Siuslaw camp was tsi'imahl, (the 'i's are short' like in bit, and hl represents a voiceless l.)⁷

There is a broad-based body of evidence that supports the existence of the southern Alsea village known as the *Yahuch* band (Coos pronunciation) of the Alsea Native People, located on or near the Yachats River.⁸

Philip Drucker in his article "Contribution to Alsea Ethnography" interviewed Leona Ludson, a full-blooded Yaquina/Alsea at Siletz. She stated that south along the coast was the town of *Yahaitc* (also pronounced YAH-khike.)⁹

Spencer Scott, a Lower Umpqua/Siuslaw, reported to John Peabody Harrington that members of the Alsea villages regularly came south to *Yachatc* (pronounced Ya'huch.) There they gathered mussels and salmon. He added that some Alsea also lived in *Yachatc*.¹⁰



Early Map of Yachats Area
Courtesy of Hazel Miller, Yachats

⁶ Robert Kentta, Cultural Resources Director and Tribal Council Member of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians of Oregon; and Don Whereat, Retired Historian, Former Tribal Council Member, and Tribal Elder for the Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians, January 1995-June 1996; and Harrington's Field Notes.

⁷ Patty Whereat Phillips, Linguist, former Cultural Director of the Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians, Kentta, and Guy L. Tasa, Todd J. Braje, and Thomas J. Connolly, "Archaeological Evaluation of Sites within the Yachats Ocean Road Project," Report 2004-8, State Museum of Anthropology, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon, p. 8.

⁸ Oregon Historical Quarterly, (Vol. 28, 1927, p. 61)

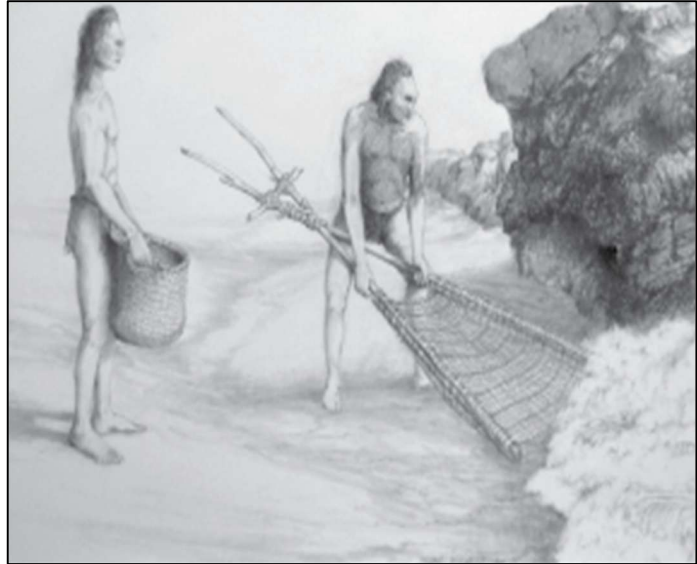
⁹ Drucker, p. 82.

¹⁰ Harrington's Field Notes.

Note the similarities and differences in the Alsea and Coos / Siuslaw spellings and pronunciations, *Yahaitc* vs *Yachatc*.

Jeanine Rowley wrote in her book *The Cape Perpetua Story*, “The Alsea Indians had village sites near Cape Perpetua, Seal Rock, along the Alsea River and Bay.” Rowley added that “the Alsea Indians had a seasonal camp located below Cape Perpetua on the ocean shoreline.”¹¹

In “Notes on the Alsea Indians of Oregon,” Livingston Farrand described the geographical locations of the Alsea villages and identified the most southern village as the present site of Yachats.¹²



Ya'Xaik Men Smelt Fishing, Painted by Phillip Schuster

Leo Frachtenberg refers to the origin of the Yakonan and Siuslawan Tribes.¹³ The legend is another indication of the long history of the Native People of the Yachats area. In this legend, the Creator sends out a man and a woman related as husband and wife to populate new lands. The Creator sent the couple to Yakona, then their offspring were sent to Alsea, and their offspring in turn were sent to *Yahach*.

Lottie Evanoff lived in the Yachats area at the Alsea Sub-agency. Her father was Chief Daloos Jackson¹⁴ of the Coos Tribe. She related that her father said to her “The Indian People of the *Yahach* area spoke Alsea and were light complected. The Alsea people were more like the Tillamook than the Coos. And the Indian houses in *Yahach* were pits in the ground, only the roofs were sticking out.” These subterranean structures had walls and gabled roofs made of cedar planks.¹⁵ These depictions are like those of the Native People who lived in the region around Alsea Bay.

¹¹ Jeanine A. Rowley, *The Cape Perpetua Story* (U.S. Forest Service, 1980). pp. 3-4.

¹² Livingston Farrand, “Notes on the Alsea Indians of Oregon,” *American Anthropology* (Vol. 3, 1901) pp. 239-50.

¹³ Leo J. Frachtenberg, *Alsea Texts and Myths* (Smithsonian Institution Bureau of American Ethnology, Vol. 67, 1920) pp. 111, 219.

¹⁴ Patty Whereat Phillips, Linguist, Anthropologist, and Former Cultural Resource Protection Coordinator with the Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians states, “How to spell Chief Jackson's first name is interesting I've seen it spelled many different ways - daluus, doloos, even doloose I think. It was a nickname (he had another nickname, t̥eighəl, but I don't know what that means) and in the Coosan languages nicknames were at times very playful. Altering the sounds within a word to create a nickname was common. Daluus/doloos comes from diiluuṯ: youth, young man. Somewhere I'd read he got the name because he liked to dress nicely “

¹⁵ Harrington's Field Notes and Patty Whereat Phillips who adds, “Lottie Evanoff, whose husband Alec Evanoff was Russian and Aleut, spoke Hanis. From something I remember seeing her mention, when a child she also spoke some Miluk but by the time she was an older woman, interviewed by Harrington in 1942, she seemed to recall little of it. Almost all her linguistic information was given in Hanis.”



*Lottie Evanoff wears dentalia shell necklaces, Circa 1940
Photo courtesy of the Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians*

Local archaeological site investigations reveal a wide diet consisting of land and marine mammals, birds, fish, and shellfish. The smoking and drying of foods gave the Native People a continuous food supply.

Additionally, various berries, fruits, camas, ferns, roots such as skunk cabbage, nuts, seeds, and other vegetation were a dietary staple. Native People cultivated food as well to make sure they had a continuous supply of bulbous and other edible plants and fruits.¹⁶

Both Evanoff and Drew reported that camas used to grow east of Cape Perpetua. Drew said, "There is an open place, a grassy spot, on a hillside where they go to dig camas [behind] Perpetua Mountain." Phyllis Steeves, Archaeologist, states camas are still found there.¹⁷

Trade among the southern and northern bands was common. The Alsea brought dried fish from *Yahach* to the Coos villages. The Coos would give the *Yahuch* clothes. The Siuslaw also traded with the *Yahauch*,

coming as far north as *Yahauch* Creek.¹⁸

The *Yahauch* and Coos would play the "shinny game" during trading visits. Philip Drucker and other researchers, including Robert Kentta and Don Whereat, identified a variety of games the local Native People played. These games are also discussed in Leo Frachtenberg's *Alsea Texts and Myths* including shinny ball. It required teams, a ball, clubs, and a playing field.¹⁹ Whereat found a map by Frank Drew in Harrington's *Field Notes*, showing a "shinny field" located along the beach, south of the mouth of the Yachats River. Robert Kentta refers to "*koho*" as the name of the shinny game. The name may have been of the Alsea dialect or may have been part of the trading language used among the coastal bands, the Chinook Jargon.²⁰



Odessa Johnson and younger brother, William in cedar bark cloaks and carrying shinny sticks. Coquille-Miluk. Photo Courtesy of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians

¹⁶ Drucker, p. 82 and Henry Zenk, "Alseans," *Handbook of North American Indians* (Vol. 7) p. 568-70.

¹⁷ Harrington *Field Notes* and Steeves..

¹⁸ Drucker, p. 82.

¹⁹ Frachtenberg, pp. 197-201, Kentta and Whereat.

²⁰ Harrington's *Field Notes* and Kentta, 2009.

This is the origin of the name of the Koho development south of the bridge in modern day Yachats, as well as the source of inspiration for several street names in the development such as Catkin Loop.

What happened to the Native People whose home was Yachats?



Photo Courtesy of the Lincoln County Historical Society

Evanoff states, “The Indians who lived in the Yachats area were gone before the Alsea Sub-agency was established in 1860. Disease was likely the culprit for the Indians’ disappearance.”²¹

Evanoff relates that when her father, Chief Jackson, was a boy, there was a smallpox epidemic. The Alsea Native People would run from the sweat houses to the ocean attempting to cure themselves but “all the Alsea died in *Yahatc*.” This led to the total annihilation of the village(s) in the Yachats area. She added that her father told her that most died about 30 years before the Alsea Sub-agency’s inception. Evanoff stated that there was a “large ancient cemetery” located where the town of Yachats is now located. Robert Kentta noted that there may have been survivors who joined their relatives near the Alsea River.²²

In the early 1860s, when the Coos and Umpqua were forcibly marched by the United States Army from their homeland in the south to the Yachats River, they came across a hut filled with bodies. This discovery was related by Lottie Evanoff in Harrington’s Field Notes. “Just south of Silver Salmon Creek is where the caving-in Indians houses were. The Indians died right in their houses, all died without exception.”²³

When Lottie Evanoff was asked by Harrington where the caving-in Indian houses were, she described the area north of Yachats, close to what is now the north end of the 804 Trail, where the rocks end and the beach begins.²⁴ This is where Starr Creek meets the ocean. A map obtained by Hazel Miller of Yachats and given to Janice Gerdemann, also

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

of Yachats, indicates the present Starr Creek was once called Salmon Creek. Is today's Starr Creek also the past's Silver Salmon Creek? ²⁵

Robert Kentta stated the Coos and Umpqua probably came across a burial hut of an Alsea village located near the present town of Yachats. Since there were southern villages of the Alsea and followed the rituals of the Alsea, they would have interred their dead above ground.



Alsea Woman with Cedar Canoe
Photo Courtesy of the Lincoln County Historical Society

Don Whereat's interpretation is different. According to Don, the Coos and Umpqua were familiar with the Alsea death rituals. Rather, the Alsea population was decimated by tuberculosis, smallpox, and other European induced diseases years before the Alsea Sub-agency came into existence. Cultural and spiritual practices were lost to basic survival. Whereat contends the Coos and Umpqua came across the last Alsea to die in the Yachats area. ²⁶

Still another burial area was at Bob Creek, five miles south of Yachats. "Bob Creek is where the dead Alsea lay. The Coos Indians called this creek *tsxuwitc*, which means 'Alsea lying'." ²⁷

Earlier site investigations of the Oregon Coast by Lloyd R. Collins in 1951 identified multiple pit houses in the Yachats area. Most are buried or have been destroyed by recent construction. ²⁸

Rediscovered Archaeological Sites and Carbon Dating

One important question looks at the earliest evidence of human activity near Yachats. It also looks at how robust human activity was over many thousands of years.

One type of archaeological site is a midden. Middens are the piles of bones, shells, tools, hearths, and additional important remnants of culture and domestic life. These middens are often close to pit-house sites and water sources. Midden sites are extremely valuable to Indigenous Peoples since they are sometimes the clearest window into their rich culture, everyday living, and self-sustaining history. ²⁹

²⁵ Map is courtesy of Janice Gerdemann of Yachats. Map is part of a survey done in 1919 in cooperation with the War Department.

²⁶ Drucker, p. 86, Kentta and Whereat.

²⁷ Harrington's Field Notes.

²⁸ Minor and Greenspan, pp. 107-11.

²⁹ Erlandson and Steeves, Archaeologists, Principal Investigators, Kittel Property (2008).

National Registry of History Places

Many may be unaware that an archaeological site near Cape Perpetua is on the National Registry of Historic Places. *It provides evidence of human occupation as far back as 9,000 years ago, in approximately 7,000 BC.*³⁰

Despite being mostly destroyed by construction, looting and erosion, the site has well preserved shell midden deposits, including bone and shell tools, animal remains, and other features of domestic life. Because of these attributes, the site has been placed in the National Register of Historic Places. "This highly significant site has the potential to yield valuable data on a variety of aspects of past Alsea environments, subsistence, settlement and demography, site structure, architecture, and technology Finally, as a tangible link to the past [this site] is highly significant to descendants of the Alsea and other Oregon Coast Tribes."³¹

Some of the most significant sites are in the Cape Perpetua area indicating occupation for thousands of years. Charcoal from a hearth feature was dated at 4770+/- 40 BP confirming this site to represent one of the oldest sites on the Central Oregon Coast.³² *People lived at that site approximately in the year 2820 B.C.*

Other Archaeological Site Investigations

Other archaeological site investigations and surface radio-carbon dating have been conducted in the Yachats area, at the Cape Perpetua Scenic Area, and at private property just north of Cape Perpetua. The earliest evidence of human activity discovered at those sites so far is from a shell midden site just north of Cape Perpetua and is dated at approximately 130 AD. The earliest evidence of pit-house habitation discovered so far at those sites is from approximately 570 AD.

These results suggest humans were here close to 2,000 years ago, and that the sites were seasonally occupied as far back as 1,500 years ago.³³ Some highlights:

³⁰ Steeves states the 9000-year-old date recovered from the Neptune site is in the process of being confirmed.

³¹ Tasa, Braje, and Connolly, pp.1506, Erlandson and Moss, pp. 32-4, and the National Register of Historic Places Registration, Lane County, Oregon, Native American Archaeological Sites of the Oregon Coast. Document on file at the Oregon State Preservation Office, Salem, Oregon.

³² Guy L. Tasa and Thomas Connolly, " Archaeological Investigations at Cook's Chasm Bridge, The Good Fortune Point Site and the Neptune Site," Report 2001-4, State Museum of Anthropology, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon. Steeves reports that much older dates are now coming from the south coast at uplifted Pleistocene sites.

³³ Interview with Phyllis Steeves, Forest Archaeologist, Siuslaw National Forest, Spring, 1995.

- In Yachats, the remains of a pit-house were radiocarbon dated at 1380 +/- 70 before present (or BP defined as 1950, the year of the testing).³⁴ The pit-house was thought to be from approximately 570 A.D.
- At the Cape Creek site, located at the base of Cape Perpetua, the remains of a pit-house were radiocarbon dated to 810 +/- 60 BP. The pit-house was thought to be from approximately 1140 A.D.
- Beads from Russia, Bohemia, and Italy were unearthed south at the Cape Creek site; radiocarbon dating suggests they are from between 1790 and 1820. Some Italian beads may be dated as late as 1840. These findings suggest Cape Creek site was occupied intensively and for a long period of time.³⁵
- Additional radiocarbon dating was conducted on private property just north of Cape Perpetua in 2008. Fragments of California mussel shells were removed from two midden sites on either end of the property.. One was dated at 880+/-15 BP, or from approximately 1070 A.D. The other was dated at 1820+/- 15 BP, meaning people were there in approximately 130 A.D.

These are some but not all the archaeological site investigations conducted in the Yachats area. They help to set context for the continuous occupation by Native People since prehistoric times.

Unfortunately, most prehistoric sites in the Yachats area have been destroyed by modern construction, deliberate looting and annihilation, or ignorance about what an ancient site might look like.

[Why haven't more sites been found with dates older than 5000 BP?](#)

Sea levels rose rapidly between 10,000 and 5,500 years ago. That translates to 60 to 10 meters below modern mean tide levels, or about a meter every 100 years. Sea levels have continued to rise since then, but at a slower rate of less than 20 cm. per 100 years. Scientists believe many older sites may now be on the ocean floor.³⁶



*Annie Miner Peterson, Coos
Photo Courtesy of the Confederated
Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua and
Siuslaw Indians*

³⁴ Jon M. Erlandson and Madonna L. Moss, "An Evaluation, Survey, and Dating Program for Archaeological Site on State Lands of the Central Oregon Coast" (Oregon Site Historic Preservation Office Parks and Recreation Department, Salem) pp. 32-4.

³⁵ Rick Minor, Ruth Greenspan, Archeology of the Cape Creek Shell Midden. Cape Perpetua Scenic Area. Central Oregon Coast: Interim Report of the 1991 Investigations," Unpublished. (Coastal Pre-History Program, Oregon State Museum of Anthropology, University of Oregon, 10/2/95,) pp.38, 107-11.

³⁶ Lee L. Lyman, Prehistory of the Oregon Coast: The Effects of Excavation Strategies and Assemblage Size on Archaeological Inquiry, Academic Press, San Diego, 1991 and Tasa, Braje, and Connolly, p. 12.

The mixed issues of being made public

Exact locations of preserved historical Native sites are often kept confidential. It is unfortunate that publicizing their locations can increase their vulnerability to destruction by the curious or those wanting to steal artifacts.

Some locations, such as the one south of the Devil's Churn at the Cape Perpetua Scenic Area, have been made public. With this exposure, the positive result has been an increased awareness of Native People history, and an improved understanding of community for Indigenous People.³⁷

To ensure the protection of archaeological sites, resources, and objects, there are specific state and federal laws that are strictly enforced. Any removal, disturbance, or destruction of resources is subject to prosecution and substantial penalties.³⁸ See Appendix 2 for additional notes of interest.

³⁷ Steeves, Kentta, and Whereat.

³⁸ Oregon State Law provides for the protection of archaeological sites, resources and objects (see ORS 358.905 and 358.955) and American Indian burials (ORS 97.740 to 97.760) on both public (nonfederal) and private property. Similar laws provide legal protection to cultural sites and objects on lands now managed by Federal agencies, such as the USDA Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. Federal historic preservation laws (36 CFR 296) were enacted to conserve cultural resources for the benefit of future generations. Specific laws prohibit the removal of any cultural object from federal lands, unless authorized by special permit by the State Historic Preservation Office in consultation with the Federal land manager.

Possible Origins of Names in the Yachats Area

Each band of Native People rarely named themselves. The bands usually called themselves “The People.” The tribal names we use today are often names given to them by other bands or tribes.³⁹

Confusion about the origin of names can also be partially attributed to the European and Euro-Americans who were the keepers of the available written language records. Coastal Native People, like many others, did not have a written language at that time.

Alsea

For example, the Alsea’s own name for the Alsea Bay and Alsea River was *Wu si* (pronounced Hoo she). The Alsea people called themselves *Wusitsl̄m (hiitsl̄m* meaning person - pronounced Hoo sit slum - which combines to translate as “people of *Wusi*”.

The Alsea, Alsee, Alsi, and Alsi-ya (pronounced UI se ah) names appear to originate from other bands.⁴⁰ For consistency in this article, the Alsea spelling has been used (see Appendix 1 for additional Alsea related name information).

Variations in names and spellings for Alsea are also reflected in the available writings. The written record was often created by non-native speakers of European cultural origin, who pieced together information from Native speakers of different language groups with different local variations.

Yachats

Like Alsea, there is much debate over the actual name and meaning of Yachats. Each language group had their own name for Yachats, and the local languages had sounds in them that were hard for English speaking people to pronounce. Spellings used by English speaking people were often contradictory.⁴¹ That being said, there is a trail of linguistic clues that indicate a possible origin for the name Yachats.

³⁹ Kentta and Whereat.

⁴⁰ Henry Zenk, “Alsea,” Handbook of North American Indians (Vol. 7) p. 570, Whereat, and Phillips.

⁴¹ Phillips.

Oral Traditions

Leona Ludson, a Yaquina/Alesea, mentioned a village south along the coast of *Yahaitc*.⁴² In Harrington's Field Notes, Harrington, a linguist with an excellent ear for languages, states that both Evanoff and Scott called this area *yáxaik*.⁴³ Don Whereat, a linguist and historian, pronounces Ludson's and the linguistic spelling as *Ya'hike*, (raspy "a" and with a hard "i" like in hike.) This is an Alesea pronunciation.⁴⁴

Annie Miner Peterson, Frank Drew and Lottie Evanoff spoke the Hanis / Miluk dialects of the Coos language. They called this area *yáxaich* (Coos Hanis) and *yáxach* (Lower Umpqua/Siuslaw) pronounced *Ya'häch*.⁴⁵

In 1805-06, Lewis and Clark asked the Indigenous People of the Columbia River region the names of the bands along the coast. The Yachats area was known as *Youitts* (pronounced *Ya haches*) by the lower Chinook Native People.⁴⁶



From left is Major Ludson (Alesea and Chetco), Leona Ludson, wife of Major and daughter of Yaquina John and Jackson Brothers, all Alesea

Written Records

The written language of the Europeans and Euro-American conquerors has been used to shape much of the post-colonial official history of Native People and their

⁴² Drucker, p. 82.

⁴³ Harrington's Field Notes.

⁴⁴ Whereat and Phillips who modified the orthography to make it a little more friendly.

⁴⁵ Harrington's Field Notes, Whereat and Phillips.

⁴⁶ Hays, p. 1-15, and Whereat, "Newsletter Article – March," 1996.

languages.⁴⁷ For example, the researchers and linguists who studied the Alsea and other coastal bands were German and Euro-Americans.

In addition, the present-day Yachats name is influenced by the different agents and Superintendents of Farms for the Alsea Sub-agency. When personnel changed, the spelling and pronunciation of the area changed also. For example, in 1863 it was the *Yawhuch* prairie. In 1864, it was the *Yawhick* prairie. By 1872, Sam Case called it, “The *Yachants*.”⁴⁸ These pronunciations appear to be poor phonetic attempts to pronounce the Alsea and Coos names for the Yachats area. This may be why so many possible spellings have been uncovered as reviewed both in Hay’s book and by Alma Wardell Mosher in an article she wrote for the Waldport Reporter in 1948.

A reference found in the 1862 Alsea Sub-agency Report, written by Agent Linus Brooks, states, “This farm [referring to the Coos-Umpqua reservation area north of the Yachats River] is situated on the south end of a narrow prairie, the Indians name of this was *Ya-ha-u tah*, [this appears to be a phonetic spelling] which derives its name from the small river which empties into the ocean at this point.”⁴⁹

In Hays’ book, The Land That Kept Its Promise: A History of South Lincoln County, she described a childhood memory of her husband, Chester who was born and raised in South Lincoln County. Chester and his father, Guy, were fishing at the mouth of the Yachats River with other Native People who had come down from the Siletz Reservation to fish for smelt. Guy Hays knew Chinook Jargon, the trade language used among the Native People of the region. One of them asked why the river was called Yachats. The Alsea stated it was not the correct pronunciation. Rather, the name was *Yahutë*.⁵⁰ Chester’s memory of this Alsea name for the river is closer to the agent’s pronunciation.

Don Whereat states, “*Yahutë* was too simple and should have been more like the early pronunciations, such as *Yahaich*. Native names or words can be difficult to pronounce

⁴⁷ Kentta and Whereat.

⁴⁸ Agents Annual Reports, 1859-1873 from the Alsea Sub-agency as acquired from the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians and Confederated Tribes of Coos Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians.

⁴⁹ Agents’ Annual Report, 1862.

⁵⁰ Hays, and interview with Chester Hays, 1995.



A Coos Hide dress once worn by Princess Lottie Jackson Evanoff as displayed at the Laquawiiyat'as Gallery. Currently with the Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians

for English speaking people. Additionally, the same Informants may say a word a little differently the next time they say it.

Harrington's notes also attest to this. The same language will often be slightly different in another village of the same tribe. A good linguist will attempt to write a word exactly as it is spoken, but the same Informant may say it with a slight difference the next time. For example, in the 1932 Hearings for Land Claims, Lottie Evanoff recounted a number of village names. Ten years later when giving Harrington the same names it was hard to recognize many of them. If it is close, it is good enough."⁵¹ Therefore, the various spellings and pronunciations of Yachats are likely from names given to this area by the Alsea and Coos and mispronounced over time by the agents.⁵²

As to the meaning of Yachats, Hays gives a summary of several interpretations: "Dark water at the foot of the mountain." "Dark water between timbered hill." The Chinook

⁵¹ Whereat.

⁵² Phillips contributes, "The x symbol in the Native languages is for a raspy h sound, kind of the equivalent of the *ch* in German. The

diphthong *ai* rhymes with the *i* in words like hike. The ^y*k* at the end of the Alsea word is a 'palatalized K'. Meaning, it is pronounced toward the front of the palate. In English, the way we pronounce the *k* sound in words like key and cop are different – the 'ee' vowel in key is more forward in the mouth than the 'aw' vowel sound in cop, and in English pronunciation the fronted vowel sound ee pulls the *k* forward in the mouth, the aw pulls it back – so we don't pronounce the *k* quite the same way in these two words. Alsea, unlike

English, makes a distinction between the ^y*k* sound and *q*, which is pronounced in the back of the mouth.

The Lower Umpqua/Siuslaw pronunciation is closest to the modern English – *yáxach* versus Yachats.

I don't have enough info on Alsea to know if *yaxxaik* means 'at the end of the beach' but it could. In Frachtenberg's glossary at the end of his Alsea Texts, words next to *Yáxaik* are the verb root *yax-*, to go; and *yáxali't'*, road, trail, path.

The two Coos Bay languages (Hanis and Miluk) are posited to be related to Siuslaw/Umpqua and Alsea/Yaquina (which these two have been grouped in the Yakonan family, so they are more closely related to each other than to the 2 Coos Bay languages) and in turn are all part of the Penutian superstock – a large, old family of languages. So, they may be distantly related to Kalapuyan, Takelman, Chinookan, Klamath-Modoc, etc.

The northern neighbors of the Alsea and Yaquina peoples, the Tillamook, spoke a language from an entirely different and unrelated family – the Salish family. Salishan languages were primarily distributed in western Washington and in parts of British Columbia, and I think a few in the interior as far east as Montana. To Tillamook speakers, the name Yachats sounded close to their word for sexual intercourse. The name Yachats for the reservation and town made them laugh."

meaning of *Yahutes* is, “little River with big mouth.”⁵³

During our review of Harrington’s Field Notes, additional information emerged.

- Clara Pearson, a Tillamook, reported to Harrington that in the Tillamook dialect Yachats is a slang term for sexual intercourse.⁵⁴
- Ludson, Albert, Evanoff, and Scott all stated Yachats was in Alsea territory: Scott interpreted *Yaxaik* to mean, “as far as you can go along the beach or road.”⁵⁵

Robert Kentta recalls, “ ‘Maybe (to go) ‘off the beach’ - or ‘to leave the beach’ meaning? - that’s what I’ve always heard that Yachats/Yaxaik means - the usual version being: where the trail leaves the beach.”

This definition makes sense as it described where the rocks begin at the north end of the Yachats’ 804 Trail near the last known village site described by Chief Jackson to his daughter, Lottie.

Leo Frachtenberg’s *Alsea Myth and Texts* is the only definitive written account of the Alsea language. In this text “ya” translates to “to go” (along) and “ya xali” translates to road. ⁽⁵⁷⁾ From Frachtenberg’s source, “ya” does not mean water.

- John Albert told Harrington that *Yákayak* is a landmark name at the south end of the Yachats spit. Patty Whereat Phillips says that *Yákayak* is the place name, while *Yaxaik* is the village name.
- Patty also said another name, *yaqaisuk*, means ‘as far as you can go’ on the beach about one mile north of the old agency building. She thought this was where the shoreline switches from sand to rock near Starr Creek

All these interpretations reflect that Native People often named their respective areas or other territories by geographical descriptions.⁵⁶

⁵³ Hays, p. 115.

⁵⁴ Harrington’s Field Notes.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Frachtenberg, pp.248,297,299.

⁵⁶ Kentta and Whereat.

Other Local Names

Cape Perpetua

There are more local names of interest from the Harrington Field notes rediscovered by Patty Whereat Phillips. The Alsea name for Cape Perpetua is *halqaik^y* pronounced “*hal kike*” (the “a” pronounced soft and the “i” pronounced hard.) The meaning could be

uncovered place, open place, or exposed place. The Coos name for the Cape is *halaqaich* pronounced “hala kich” (the “a” soft and the “i” hard.) The Coos meaning was ascertained probably because Harrington’s informant at the time was Coos. The Coos meaning is “brother-in-law place.”⁵⁷



Ten Mile Creek

As mentioned in Section One, the name of Tenmile Creek is tsi'imahl in Siuslaw, (the 'i's are short' like in bit, and hl represents a voiceless l.) The Coos name is chamahlgehiich (the two i's at the end make long 'ee' sound). Both mean 'clay land' for the two languages name for clay. The Alsea name for that creek is similar.

Somewhere along Ten Mile creek there was likely a deposit of white clay. Native Peoples mixed white clay with a fat - elk grease, marrow grease or similar fats – to make a body paint that was also used to paint canoes and tools.⁵⁸

From left, Frank Drew, Jim Buchannan and Eli Metcalfe giving testimony at Florence, Oregon ca.1925. Courtesy of the Confederated Tribes of the Coos Courtesy, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians

⁵⁷ Harrington Field Notes and Phillips.

⁵⁸ Phillips.

Insights into the Alsea Sub-Agency (1859-1875)⁵⁹

Where did it start?

The Coast Reservation was established in fulfillment of a stipulation from treaties that the Rogue, Umpqua, and Willamette Valley Tribes signed under duress in 1853-55, as a result of forcibly losing their homelands. The treaties called for the President of the United States to select a permanent reservation.

The Coast Reservation, encompassing 1.1 million acres of the Central Oregon Coast and the Coast Range, was established in November of 1855 by order of President Franklin Pierce. All western Oregon Tribes were to be removed and confederated at the Siletz Reservation and the Grand Ronde Reservation.

The Coos, Lower Umpqua, Alsea, and Siuslaw, along with the other Oregon Coast Tribes who signed the same 1855 treaty, signed the treaties with the understanding that they would receive goods, implements, and services to re-establish a new homeland when they were moved to reservations.⁶⁰

What happened next

The Native Peoples were forcibly shipped or marched off their land. Many died along the way. When survivors arrived at the Siletz and Grand Ronde locations, they found they were imprisoned rather than having the 1.1 million acres promised to them to reestablish their new homeland.

Initially, the Coos and Lower Umpqua were forced onto a sandy spit near the mouth of the Umpqua River in 1856. They were held right next to Fort Umpqua for several years with little in the way of resources to sustain themselves.

⁵⁹ This is not a comprehensive history of the Alsea Sub -Agency. To know and understand about the agency years refer to the bibliography: Stephen Dow Beckham, The Indians of Western Oregon. This Land Was Theirs (Coos Bay: Arago Books, 1977); Stephen Dow Beckham and Don Whereat, "Captured Heritage: Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians," The Indians of Western Oregon. This Land was Theirs (Coos Bay; Arago Books, 1977); David R. M. Beck, Seeking Recognition, The Termination and Restoration of the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians (University of Nebraska Press, 2009); Harrington's Field Notes Interviews with Annie Miner Peterson and Lottie Evanoff from Melville Jacobs, "Coos Narrative and Ethnologic Text," University of Washington, Publications in Anthropology (Vol 8, No. 1, 1939), pp. 1-126; Terence O'Donnell, An Arrow in the Earth (Oregon Historical Society Press; E.A. Schwartz, "Sick Hearts: Indian Removal on the Oregon Coast 1875-1881," Oregon Historical Quarterly, (Vol. 92, No. 3, Fall, 1991); Agency Annual Reports from the Alsea Sub-agency to the Superintendent of Indian Affairs and the Secretary of Interior, 1860, 1861, 1862, 1863, 1864, 1866, 1868, 1869, 1870, 1871, 1872, 1873, Courtesy of Whereat and Kentta and Dark Waters: The Reservation Years (The Story of the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians from the 1840's to 1875), Videotape (2007).

⁶⁰ Beckham, pp. 147-169, Dark Waters: The Reservation Years, Beck, pp. 17-40, Whereat, and Kentta.

Imprisonment and a Lack of Food, Clothing, Shelter



*1859, Coos or Lower Umpqua Man
Courtesy of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians*

The treaty was never ratified by Congress. Without ratification, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs did not send the goods and services promised. The people were accustomed to hunting and gathering from the land. They were removed from familiar fisheries, hunting grounds, and the places where native plants grew and could be harvested. Hunting weapons were taken away for fear they would be used against the agents and soldiers. What few goods and services the dislocated people received were of poor quality and nearly unusable.

Without established homes like the ones they had left, and with few tools to split new planks or shovels to excavate new house pits, shelter after relocation was very limited. The people were provided with little or no clothing to protect them against the weather.

They were exposed to a variety of contagious diseases and had little to no medical care.

The result

Many people died from starvation, malnourishment, exposure, abuse, depression of spirits, and diseases such as smallpox and tuberculosis.⁶¹

The Alsea Sub-Agency

The Alsea Sub-Agency (under the supervision of the Siletz Reservation) was not established until September 3, 1859. This part of the Coast Reservation was to imprison the Alsea, Siuslaw, Coos, and Lower Umpqua people.

For the second time, the Coos and Lower Umpqua were removed. This time from the first encampment on the Umpqua River. All the Coos and Lower Umpqua men, women and children at the encampment were taken from the Coos Bay area 80 miles north to

⁶¹ Ibid.

the Yachats River in a series of forced marches from 1860 to 1862 under the supervision of the first of seven Alsea Sub-agents, Joshua Sykes.

These were exceedingly dangerous journeys resulting in the deaths and injuries of children, the elderly, and the disabled. There were an unknown number of forced marches over the next several years as more Coos and Lower Umpqua people who were hiding or ran away were found.⁶²

This was a wrenching dislocation for the Coos and Lower Umpqua. Conditions were deplorable in Yachats. They lost everything familiar and much that was critical to their survival and culture.

The Alsea and some of the Siuslaw may have fared a bit better initially because they were left at their original locations. This may have helped preserve some sense of home and tradition at first. It was, however, only temporary.

In 1865, the land from two miles south of the Siletz Agency headquarters to the Alsea River was opened to settlement and homesteading, dividing the Coast reservation into two distinct sections. The Alsea whose home was north of the Alsea River were forced to go just south of the Alsea River to live among other Alsea villages whose food and shelter sources were sparse.⁶³



From left, Lottie Evanhoff, niece of Annie Miner Jackson-Peterson and daughter of Daloos, Chief Daloos Jackson, Fannie Jackson, Wife of Doloos and mother of Lottie, and Annie Miner Jackson-Peterson, Fannie's half-sister and Lottie's aunt..

Settlement on the reservations was not voluntary and native people were not free to leave.

In his book, The Indians of Western Oregon, Dr. Stephen Beckham wrote, "If they had a pass, some Indian men could leave the reservation to chop wood or work for white settlers. Without a work pass, soldiers would come after them. Many times, the soldiers and the agent set out for southern Oregon to recapture Indians and bring them back to the reservations.

In April and May 1864, soldiers from Fort Yamhill went with the agent to Coos (Coos Bay region) to round up Indians. They captured thirty-two people and headed them back

⁶² Beckham, pp. 147-70, E.A. Schwartz, pp. 229-264, Beck, pp. 35-40, Annual Agent's Report 1860, Whereat and Kentta.

⁶³ Beckham, Schwartz, Beck, Whereat and Kentta.

to Yachats. Royal A. Bensell, one of the soldiers, became very angry with the Alsea Sub-agency Agent Amos Harvey. Harvey did not have food for the Indians and pushed them on and on along the coast trail. Bensell finally wrote, 'Harvey expects the blind to see, the lame to walk and all *siwash* (Indians) to subsist on nothing.'" ⁶⁴

Beckham wrote of the reservation years that Native People were not allowed to follow their traditions of gathering and hunting food. Instead, they were forced to take up farming. Planting of food staples such as wheat, beans and other vegetables close to the ocean led to frequent crop failures and the Indian people starved. ⁶⁵

In 1930, Annie Miner Peterson was interviewed by Melville Jacobs. Peterson, a Coos Indian reared at the Alsea Sub-agency, married an Alsea, and lived at Siletz Agency after 1875. She later moved back to Coos Bay and was the last known living Coos who fluently spoke both the Hanis and Miluk dialects of the Coos language. About her early life in *Ya 'hatc*, she related, 'We lived poorly, we had nothing, we had no food, only just some Indian foods. That is how we lived at *Yahatc*. The Indian's head man, the agent, [referring to Collins] did not look after us. We had no clothes; we had to wear any old thing. That is how I grew up.'" ⁶⁶

Frank Drew related in Harrington's Field Notes that one of the Indians on the reservation found a big gold nugget on the west side of Klickitat Mountain and took the nugget to Agent Collins. Collins refused to return the nugget and only wanted to know where it was found. "Old Collins was pretty crooked and he did not stand with the Indians. Shortly after the gold nugget discovery, [Collins] quit." ⁶⁷

Reading Collins' Annual Reports, one would think the Coos, Lower Umpqua, Siuslaw, and Alsea were leading idyllic lives. ⁶⁸ After Collins quit, an Army Lieutenant, F. A. Battey, was the temporary agent at the Alsea Sub-agency (1869-1870). He reported very different conditions. "Everything pertaining to the agency [is] in a dilapidated and worn-out condition . . . births are few due to women being raped by a degraded class of early settlers. . . . Many Indians were quite destitute." ⁶⁹

As with the Siletz and Grand Ronde locations, the Alsea Sub-agency was in truth a prison camp.

Reviewing the annual Agent Reports, the following was discovered: During the 15 years of the Alsea Sub-agency existence, many Native People died from starvation, exposure, disease, and abuse including murder as a result of their incarceration. In 1863, the Indian population was recorded at 521. Ten years later the population was 343. The 343

⁶⁴ Beckham, pp. 155-156 and 160.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 156.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Harrington's Field Notes.

⁶⁸ Agency Annual Reports from the Alsea Sub-agency to the Superintendent of Indian Affairs and the Secretary of Interior, 1860, 1861, 1862, 1863, 1864, 1866, 1868, 1869.

⁶⁹ Agency Annual Report., 1870.

figure included an average yearly birth rate of 10 to 12. This figure also includes 30+ Indians who escaped and whose whereabouts were unknown.⁷⁰ There were approximately 300 deaths in just 10 years.



Coos Chief Daloos Jackson who died in 1907, dreamed a song late in his life. In part its lyrics say, "We will never fall down." That song is still sung by Tribal members today. Photo courtesy of the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians

Throughout the early 1930s in Yachats, Howard Howell and Chester Hays worked on Highway 101. They recounted seeing skeletons and artifacts being uncovered during the excavation for the highway in Yachats.⁷¹ Kentta and Whereat both believe these may have been burial grounds for the Lower Umpqua and Coos during the reservation years since the Coos and Lower Umpqua buried their dead underground and the Alsea's generally practiced above ground interment. Some of the bodies and their belongings were taken for preservation or souvenirs. Most became part of the fill underneath Highway 101.⁷²

An important note: As a result of the government sponsored genocidal policies the same horrific conditions resulted in suffering and many deaths of Native People incarcerated at the Siletz and Grand Ronde locations.

⁷⁰ Agency Annual Reports, 1862-1873.

⁷¹ Interviews with Howard Howell, Chester Hays, and for additional information, read Marjorie Hays, p. 33.

⁷² Kentta and Whereat.

The Amanda Story

The depth of suffering was further documented by Royal A. Bensell (quoted in Beckham's *The Indians of Western Oregon*). It is from this account that we know about Amanda, a blind Coos woman who was the common law wife of a white man, named DeCuys. They had a daughter, Julia.

After the establishment of the reservations, soldiers had the right to remove Native People to the reservations. The soldiers could do this even to Native People with children unless they had a legal marriage to a white person. This particular white man, DeCuys, refused to marry Amanda.

In 1864, Amanda was forcibly taken from her daughter and marched to Yachats. Beckham writes, "Little pity was given to Indians who escaped the Reservation. The Coos woman, Amanda, had a terrible time climbing around Cape Perpetua on the forced march in 1864. Bensell noted, 'Amanda who is blind, tore her feet horribly over these ragged rocks, leaving blood sufficient to track her by. . . I curse the Indian Agents generally, Harvey particularly.'"⁷³



*Amanda Statue II
Located on the Amanda Trail
Photo Courtesy of Shelly Shrock*

People who know the Cape Perpetua Scenic Area may be aware of the Amanda Trail. This trail was named by Loyd Collett who worked on the Siuslaw National Forest in the 1970's. Loyd learned of the terrible conditions at the Alsea Sub-agency and was deeply affected by the story of Amanda.

No further information is known about Amanda. We do not know if she survived or if she ever saw her daughter again.

There is additional information about Julia from research shared from Dr. Beckham. Just a few years after 1864, Julia was living with a different family as a 'domestic'. She married a Scottish immigrant millworker. They were married for more than 35 years and had four children. Julia's husband tragically passed away from an accident in 1909. Julia passed away 6 years later in 1915. Both are buried in Coos County. Amanda may have descendants living presently.⁷⁴

⁷³ Beckham, pp. 160-161.

⁷⁴ Stephen Beckham from emails shared from October 1-8, 2022.

A Brief Opportunity to Thrive

Twelve years after the Alsea Sub-agency opened, Samuel Case became the Agent. He appeared more benevolent, as did George Litchfield, and certainly more agriculturally astute, allowing the Coos and Lower Umpqua to develop agricultural plots away from the ocean up the Yachats River.

In 1872, less than three years before the Alsea Sub-agency closed, agent Case wrote, "Last spring, the Coos and Umpqua opened a road ten miles in length to a prairie up the *Yau-hants* (a small stream emptying into the ocean at the south end of the agency farm). Here they planted and sowed small quantities of potatoes, oats, wheat and corn."⁷⁵ Howard Howell, whose father homesteaded their tract of land up the North Fork of the Yachats River acknowledged that there was an old Indian trail along the Yachats River on which his family and other settlers depended to reach their homesteads miles up the Yachats River.⁷⁶

The Native People at the Alsea Sub-agency began to subsist. Crops were able to grow up the Yachats River. They were able to return to their hunting. They began to build adequate homes as a result of trade for their goods with settlers, not from any help from the United States Government.⁷⁷

As the Indians at the Alsea Sub-agency were slowly building a new life against incredible odds, the United States Government (Oregon's Senator Mitchell) wanted to close the Alsea Sub Agency and open the area for homesteading. However, Annual Reports written by both Case and Litchfield initially advocated that the Alsea Sub-agency should not be disbanded.⁷⁸ In addition, an Act of Congress (March 3, 1875) decreed, "Indians shall not be removed from their present reservation without their [Indians] consent."⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Annual Agency Report, 1872.

⁷⁶ Howell.

⁷⁷ Kenta, Whereat, and transcript from the Yachats Conference of 1875 obtained from the Archives of the Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians.

⁷⁸ Annual Agency Reports, 1872, 1873.

⁷⁹ Beckham, pp. 163-4.

On June 17, 1875, J.H. Fairchild, Agent at Siletz, and George Litchfield, Subagent, met with all the chiefs and leaders of the Alsea, Coos, Umpqua, and Siuslaw met at what is now Yachats to ascertain their response to closing the Alsea Sub-agency. The Indians were given the promise that if they were removed to Siletz, each family or single man would be given a farm and agricultural implements. Each of the seventeen headsmen spoke. The following are examples of what the Indian leaders said:

Jack Rogers, Coos Chief:

“We want you to give us help that we can improve our lands, and not give us any trouble about leaving our country. We do not want any more agents to come and talk to us about our leaving this country, as we will never give up this country.”

Joe Scott, Umpqua Chief:

“We do not ask the government to give us things, but to fulfill their promises made a long time ago. The old agents used to make us promises and not keep them.”

John, Siuslaw Chief:

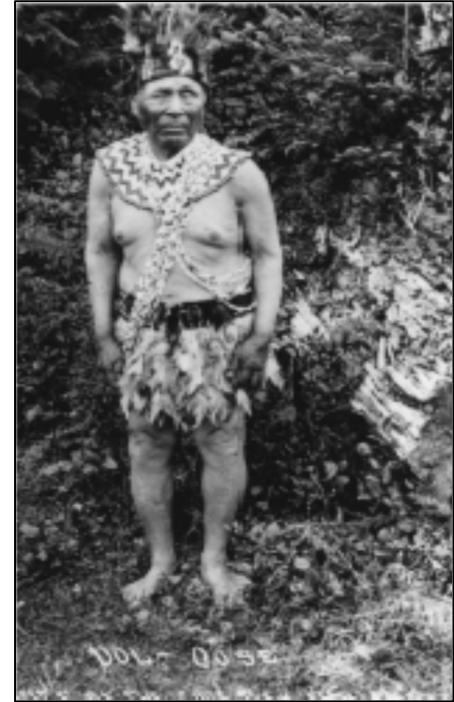
“If I was to talk for several days, I should talk the same way all the time. It was not my mind to come where I am now living, but the will of the government. This country where I now live, I will never give up. General Palmer gave it to us.”

Albert, Chief of Alsea:

“I very much want to tell this man my heart. This is my heart. I very much want to remain in my country . . .When we die we want it to go to our children, and for them to give it to their children.”

George Cameron, Coos:

“My heart is full and sick with this talk of leaving this country. It seems as though bad white people took us away from our old home and brought us to this country. Today I do not want to be removed again. How long is it to be before we are like the whites, to be improved as we have been promised? We received this country from the Washington chief a long time ago. The treaty made with General Palmer was never carried out and that is one trouble with us today. The whites don't lie to each other when they make a treaty. Why do they lie when they make a treaty with Indians? When they owe one another, they pay. Why don't they pay us? I want to hear no more of their promises, nor do I want to hear of our leaving our country. Our chief never received any benefits from



Chief Daloos Jackson

the treaty. He has been dead several years. I don't want to give up my country anymore."⁸⁰

Not one of the seventeen plus Headmen and Chiefs of the Coos, Umpqua, Alsea or Siuslaw consented to the removal. Yet former Siletz Agent Simpson (who then was the federal Surveyor General of Oregon), falsely reported that the Indians of the Alsea Sub-agency did give their consent.

Simpson was the same agent who promoted the 1865 reduction from south of Siletz to the Alsea River. In 1875, the United States Government violated its own laws and disbanded the Alsea Sub-agency.⁸¹



Alsea Subagency agent's house photo was taken in 1886, 11 years after the Sub-agency was closed.. To the left is still standing the whipping post. "Disobedient" captives were tied to the post and whipped in front of the other incarcerated Indigenous People. Standing to the right of the post is homesteader, Mary Jane Emmitt Hosford. Her husband, Erwin and she moved to Yachats in 1880. Their granddaughter, Betty Bahn was a long-time resident of Yachats. Courtesy of and digitally enhanced by the Lincoln County Historical Society.

⁸⁰ Transcript from the Yachats Conference of 1875, and Beck, pp. 41-67.

⁸¹ Kentta and Beckham, pp. 163-4.

After the Alsea Sub-Agency

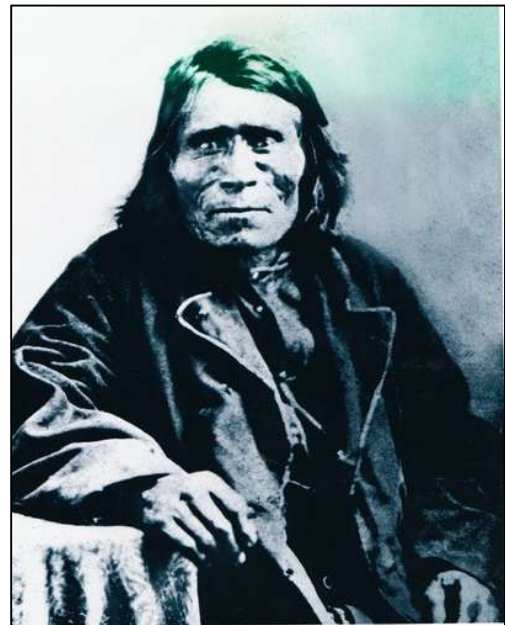
When it was time to be removed, many of the Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Alsea were not to be found by the United States Army. By 1877, a number of Alsea continued to stay in the Alsea Bay area. Finally, some Alsea were located and forcibly marched to Siletz. Agent Bagley stated the transfer went smoothly and all had enough to eat. However, this account does not correlate with the observations of sea captain J.J. Winant, who, upon returning from Yaquina Bay, saw 70-80 starving Alsea and also noted many new graves.⁸²

Most of the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw people escaped south. It is thought that some Alsea may have escaped too. The Coast Reservation was downsized by two-thirds (700,000 acres) without a dime of compensation.

Tribal people, especially those who were on Reservations that were being downsized substantially, like the Coast Reservation, qualified for land allotments established by the General Allotment Act or Dawes Severalty Act (1887). Allotments were intended to break-up individual Indians relationship with their Tribes and culture with the goal of assimilation.

For those who received allotments, such, at best, provided a supplemental living with farming, and became barriers from their traditional life-saving traditions of hunting and fishing. Those who had allotments faced the anti-Indian sentiment from non-Indian neighbors. Many had to leave their properties to find additional work causing them to lose their allotted land just for leaving, or for other reasons as a result of a complicated set of regulations and restrictions about which they were never educated. Land was even lost to inheritance and the illegal taking of their land by “land grab” speculators and timber companies.⁸³ After the large land grabs, the Bureau of Indian Affairs largely ignored western Oregon Indians after allotment and the titles to allotments were mostly moved out of Indian hands.

The abuses against Native Peoples continued here as in the remainder of North America with children forcibly being taken away from their parents in U.S. Government sponsored prison camps called Indian Schools. Present day Salem, Oregon was one location. These children suffered unspeakable abuses in the name of forced



*Tar Heel, born around 1810.
Captured with Amanda Decius on the forced
march to the Alsea Subagency in 1864.
Survived the prison camp years.*

⁸² Schwartz, pp. 252-4.

⁸³ Beckham, 167-8, and Beck, pp.61, 79-82.

assimilation. Many died. Of those who survived, many were permanently traumatized. That traumatization was passed down generationally. Historical trauma can become intergenerational trauma. Urbanization was another culprit of their cultural genocide.

In 1954, Congress passed the Western Oregon Termination Act, cutting off the federal recognition of those tribes as governments with which the U.S. had a government-to-government relationship – more horrific federal statutes by the U.S. Government that resulted in cultural genocide of Native People's identity and spirit.

In 1977 the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians became the second of the terminated Tribes to convince Congress to repeal their termination. The Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians currently have some Alsea, Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw descendants as tribal members today.

Other families and individuals of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw ancestry severed ties with Siletz. Public Law 98-481 passed October 17, 1984 by the United States Congress allowed the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians to become recognized as a sovereign government.

Today there are nine sovereign nations in Oregon.

Conclusion

Native People lived in the Yachats area before the reservation years. The way Native People related to the land was very different from whites. However, that difference does not discredit their ties with and entitlement to their lands.

It is important to understand that local Native People, the Yaxaik, had winter and summer homes. They used the Yachats shores in the summer, as part of maintaining a balanced, year-round food supply. There is strong evidence that settlement was continuous for thousands of years. The most recent Indigenous People to live in the Yachats area were southern Alsea.

The Alsea Sub-agency was a brutal prison camp meant to destroy Indigenous Cultures as dictated under guidelines from the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

A few of the agents in the camp's final years were sympathetic. However, with no money, few and inferior supplies, and being initially denied the ability to live by traditional ways of gathering food, the Native People were forced to labor as agriculturalists on the ocean shores. Between the sandy soil and the salty air, crop failures were inevitable. After each crop failure, they would have to scramble to gather enough traditional foods to survive the long winters.

Despite extremely harsh conditions, Native People began to subsist and make a new home for themselves. The Coos, Umpqua, Alsea and Siuslaw people made this area habitable and productive through hard work, resiliency and commitment. Through their efforts, the land became enticing for homesteading.

The U.S. Government's violations of their own laws and treaties illegally forced Native People out of the Sub-agency territory, forcibly marching what Alsea they could find to the Siletz Reservation. As for the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw people, they largely became refugees in their own homeland.

The Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians and the Confederated Tribes of Siletz have done more than survive, they have spent the last 135 years struggling against great discriminatory barriers. They have fought to become restored independently sovereign governments and communities, re-establishing their culture and traditions and transcending historical trauma.

Like many Tribes throughout North America, among these traditions are to honor and respect their ancestors and their remains. This sacred tradition includes the honoring of their ancestors who died in Yachats.

With this in mind, readers are asked to pay their respects to and honor the Alsea, Siuslaw, Lower Umpqua and Coos people who lost their lives as a result of their forced incarceration and horrific treatment in Yachats.

The Amanda Trail that connects Yachats to Cape Perpetua is a spiritual and solemn path that remembers this history in perpetuity. The Amanda trail also has a sister trail on the north side of town, called the Ya'Xaik Trail in remembrance of the Original People who called this area their homeland.

Readers are asked to celebrate and appreciate the courage and perseverance of all nine recognized Sovereign Nations in Oregon:

- Burns Paiute Tribe
- Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians
- Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde
- Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians
- Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Reservation
- Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Reservation
- Coquille Indian Tribe
- Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians
- Klamath Tribes

Appendix 1: Bureau of American Ethnology

Alsea. A corruption of Alsé, their own name, meaning unknown. Also called:

Kunis'tunne, Chastacosta *name*. Paifan amim, Luckiamute Kalapuya name.
Si ni'të-li tunne, Naltunne name, meaning "flatheads."
Tcha yaxo amim, Luckiamute Kalapuya name.
Tehayasatlu, Nestucca name.

Connections. — The Alsea belonged to the Yakonan linguistic stock.
Location.—On Alsea River and Bay.

Villages

Chiink, on the south side of Alsea River.
Kakhtshanwaish, on the north side of Alsea River.
Kalbusht, on the lower course of Alsea River.
Kauhuk, on the south side of Alsea River.
Kaukhwan, on the north side of Alsea River at Beaver Creek.
Khlimekwaish, on the south side of Alsea River.
Khlokhwaiyutslu, on the north side of Alsea River.
Kutauwa, on the north side of Alsea River at its mouth.
Kwamk, on the south side of Alsea River.
Kwuisit, on the south side of Alsea River.
Kyamaisu, on the north side of Alsea River at its mouth,
Panit, on the south side of Alsea River.
Shiuwauk, on the north side of Alsea River.
Skhakhwaiyutslu, on the south side of Alsea River.
Tachuwit, on the north side of Alsea River.
Thlekuhweyuk, on the south side of Alsea River.
Thlekushauk, on the south side of Alsea River.

Population. - Mooney (1928) estimates the number of Indians belonging to the Yakonan stock at 6,000 in 1780. The census of 1910 returned 29 Indians under this name, and that of 1930 only 9 under the entire Yakonan stock.

Connection in which they have become noted. Alsea or Alseya River, Alsea Bay and the village of Alsea, Benton County, Oreg. preserve the name of the Alsea Indians.

Appendix 2: Additional Notes of Interest via the Harrington Field Notes.

Frank Drew, a Coos Indian, grew up at the Alsea Sub Agency and lived much of his life on the Siuslaw River. When the Sub Agency was dissolved, a number of Coos and Lower Umpqua people settled on the Siuslaw River. Since initially the Siuslaw River was part of the Coast Reservation, the Siuslaw Indians had not been moved, thereby creating an intertribal community. The remainder of the Coos and Lower Umpqua did move back to the Umpqua River or Coos area. Frank, because of where he grew up, married a Lower Umpqua woman and was also fluent in the Lower Umpqua language. As was common with his generation, he also knew Chinook Jargon.⁸⁴

Frank Drew was an informant for John Harrington. According to Whereat, Drew may have received much of his information from Jim Buchanan, who was older than Drew and also lived at the Sub-agency. Drew spoke of a great fire that swept the coastal area prior to his birth in the 1840's. From Frachtenberg's Alsea Text and Myths, one story tells of a family traveling north from Siuslaw and being forced to camp at the beach in *Yahach* to escape a fire. It appears from this story that *Yahach* was not engulfed by the fire. This was also implied in the Alsea Sub-agency Annual Report of 1862. Evanoff and Drew further substantiated how plentiful and large the fir and spruce trees were in the Yachats area during their incarceration at the Alsea Sub-agency.⁸⁵

Drew reported the mountains between Cape Perpetua and Cummins Creek were the location of a trail that the Indians who used to live in this area used for their hunting grounds. The trail began at "Sweathouse Rock, just north of Al Gwynn's place."⁸⁶ Drew is describing the Gwynn Creek area where its west end is located at the north parking area of Neptune Beach.

Again, from Drew, at the mouth of the Cook's Chasm was a large deposit of what the local Indians called *bluing*. They used *bluing* for paint. Drew stated he had this examined at Corvallis. He was told it was potassium of cyanide.⁸⁷

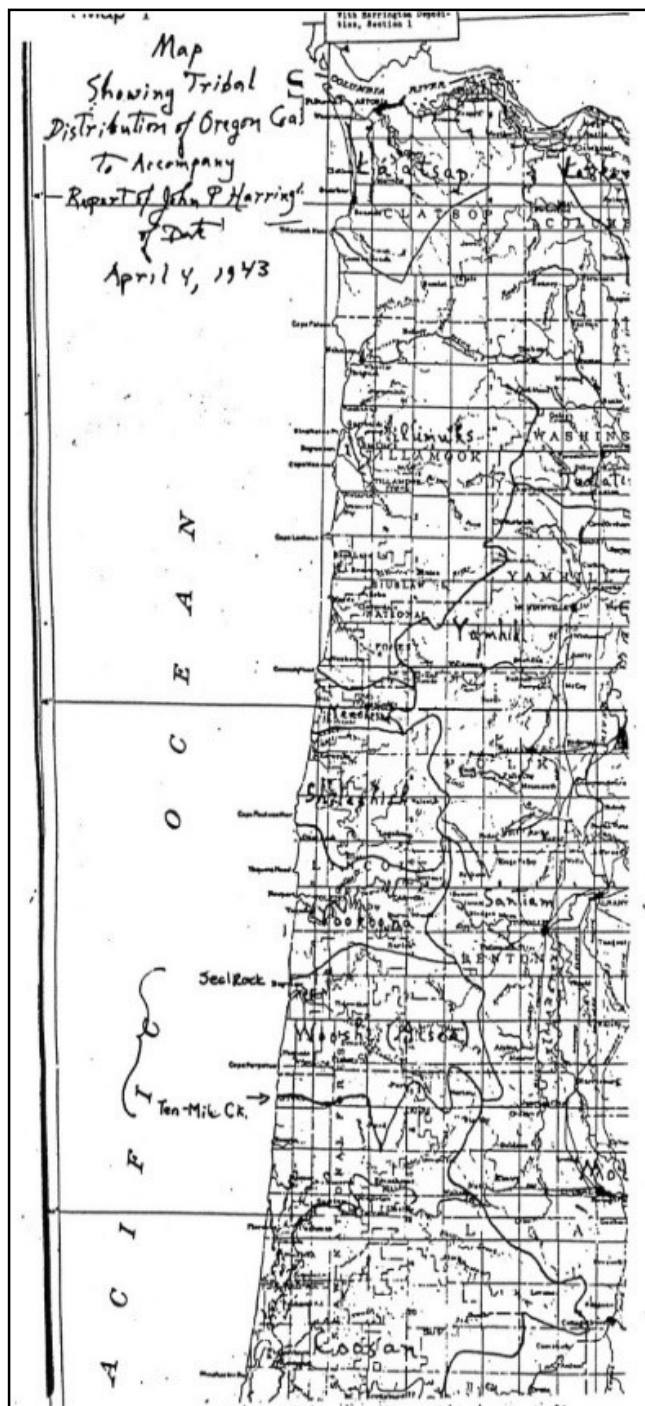
Harrington Field Notes also make reference to red ochre deposit on top of Cape Perpetua and near Tenmile Creek. Patty Whereat Phillips states, "Often the deposits are yellowish, and with being heated, turn red. Oregon coast people kept the ochre in little bags and as needed, used the red ochre to paint designs on arrows, paint canoes, and probably other tools, and was used as a face and body paint. To make the paint, the ochre is mixed with fat, depending on local preferences, deer, elk, or bear fat or marrow. Women painted their faces with it to protect their skin from sun and seashore

⁸⁴ Phillips.

⁸⁵ Harrington's Field Notes.

⁸⁶ Harrington Field Notes.

⁸⁷ Ibid.



Harrington Field Notes, Real 23-4, 1942. Courtesy of the Spithsonian Institute

winds while gathering mussels, etc. The old timers said it was medicinal - paint on sores, pimples and cuts to help them heal. I imagine the Perpetua deposit was used by the *yáxaik* villagers.”⁸⁸

Alsea word for skunk cabbage is *qaiyal* (pronounced *y'all*).⁸⁹

Big Creek, north of Yachats, was known by Alsea Indians as “*ndzaqulda*” which means “steelhead.” Drift Creek is *qáwXan* or *qáwXank(y)*, with the Alsea locative suffix of *-k(y)*. *Éhámmax(y)k(y)* is a creek north of Seal Rock, now called Beaver Creek. Harrington noted that silverside (Coho salmon) was fished at that location early in the fall. *Yaqqáys*, was the name of the first “riffle” going up the Alsea River.⁹⁰

Locals know about the large redwood stump just north of Big Creek. Evanoff states that it is her understanding that the stump washed up from California. An Alsea had told her that it had been there for many years, and thought it marked the middle of the world.⁹¹

John Albert reports the Waldport town side was called 'Iniq'ayu (inn-ee-kah-you) etymology 'one skirts around a point'. 'Ini'q'ayu had a pile of sand there that people skirted around it. He said there used to be a high bank at the shore of Waldport but it gradually washed away.⁹²

⁸⁸ Ibid. and Phillips

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

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Additionally, check View the Future's website, www.viewthefuture.org and to the link View the Past to access this article online and additional historical articles about the Yachats area.

The Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians can be found at www.ctsi.nsn.us/

The Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians can be found at www.ctclusi.org/