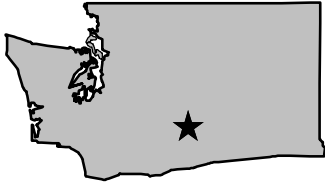


CHAPTER 6 — Yakima Reservation, Yakama Tribe



Toppenish, Washington
(Area: 1.37 million acres)

Game: The Bowl Game

The bowl game was played during midwinter ceremonies. This two-person game was played with six peach pits and a decorated wooden bowl with drawings on the bottom depicting clan animal mascots. One side of the peach pit was charred black so that it could be easily distinguished from the other side.

The players would take turns hitting the bowl with the pits. If the peach pit displayed either the black or the other side five or six times, that player scored a point and was given another turn. A modern version of the game can be played with paper bowls and six dice. If a player throws five or six dice and they turn up either all even or all odd, a point and another turn would be awarded. The first player to earn six points is the winner.

In the mid-1850s, Chief Kamiakin (c. 1798-1877) was a major leader of the Yakama during a wave of resistance to treaties negotiated and later broken by Washington territory governor, Isaac Stevens.

Kamiakin originally was friendly to the first white settlers in the region. The chief later became concerned over the increase in immigration in the wake of reports that gold had been discovered in the Washington territory.

Kamiakin's tribe did not sign the treaty of 1855 with Governor Stevens out of distrust. That distrust was well founded, when 12 days following signing of the treaty with other tribal representatives, Stevens declared Indian lands open to white settlement.

The Yakama War broke out, and fearing for his life following the capture and execution of his nephew's by the Army, Chief Kamiakin fled to British Columbia. He returned to the region in 1860 where he lived out the remainder of his life on the Spokane reservation.



History

The Yakama occupied ancestral territory along the Yakima River, which is a tributary of the Columbia River in what is now southern Washington State. In 1805, the Lewis and Clark expedition met up with the Yakama near the junction of the Columbia and Yakima Rivers.

The acquisition of horses around 1730 signaled greater mobility and the ability to hunt buffalo and increase contact with the Plains Indians.

Like other Plateau Indians, the Yakama subsisted primarily on salmon during its annual spawning runs, small game, roots, and nuts. With the influx of white settlers to the region the Yakama learned new methods of trapping, fishing, and gathering.



Culture

The diversity of the Yakama was reflected in their construction of lodge pole houses for homes and worship. Many extended families traditionally lived in large winter lodges, coming together in permanent winter villages and then dispersing into camps for the spring and summer.

As in many Indian cultures, the Yakama is strongly tied to the land. Throughout the year, the Yakama migrated to different areas

so that they could survive. Survival was linked with nature, the sacredness of the earth, and life on it. The Yakama believed that gods gave them the necessities of life. They believe that the land has material and spiritual values.

Epidemics reduced the numbers of the tribes so greatly that by the time of the first white contact in 1805, the Yakama had dwindled from about 7,000 to about 3,500.



Government

In 1933, the Yakama Nation established a tribal government. Each tribe and band elects representatives to the Yakama Nation General Council. The headquarters of the 1.37-million-acre reservation is in Toppenish, Washington.