

Muckleshoot MESSENGER



A Friend of Muckleshoot Publishes a Book about Mount Rainier



By Jeff Antonelis-Lapp

My friendship with Jeff goes back to when I was the tribal grantwriter, before the casino opened. He and I collaborated on a successful grant that expanded the offerings at what was then the main education building, at Brown's Corner. We were standing outside talking about what kind of sign to put on the building when I said, "What the heck – just go with 'Muckleshoot Tribal College.' Give it a big name and let it grow into it." The rest, as they say, is history. And now Jeff has published a book! People above a certain age will remember him well and fondly. – JL Here's Jeff.

When I interviewed with the Tribe's Personnel Committee for a job teaching Adult Education,

a committee member asked me, "Do you like bingo?" "Well," I answered cautiously, "Yeah, I like bingo all right." "Good," came the reply, "Because we pay you in bingo vouchers!"

Thus began my 13-year teaching career with the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, which led to a faculty position with The Evergreen State College, teaching mostly on Indian reservations. I knew that folks were joking about the bingo vouchers, but I didn't know that my time with the Tribe would change my life.

One day in 1997, with the fledgling Muckleshoot Tribal College offering GED and computer education classes and a few college courses, Virginia Cross said to me, "What you're doing is good, but what we really want is a way for tribal members to finish college. Why don't you see who will bring a degree completion program to Muckleshoot?"

At the meeting a few months later among tribal representatives and those from The Evergreen State College, everyone seemed to know everyone else – it was like a reunion. Evergreen faculty Gary Peterson (Skokomish) had played baseball at Muckleshoot.

The meeting was full of reminiscing and laughter. When it ended, handshakes sealed the agreement that Evergreen would begin a B.A. degree completion program at Muckleshoot, fall quarter 1998. I co-taught that first quarter with Charlotte Williams. From that point forward, I taught in Evergreen's program at Muckleshoot through the spring of 2008.

I've always said that I learned more at Muckleshoot than I ever taught my students. Early on, I began studying Wuhlshoosseed, first under Doris Allen, then with Zeke Zahir. Donna Starr became my language teacher in 2000, and she occasionally tutors me today.

Sharon Hamilton took me on cedar gathering trips near Mount Rainier, taught me how to prepare bark for weaving, and helped me weave my own hat. Yvonne Peterson (Chehalis) also took me cedar gathering, taught me more weaving, and taught me how to make a drum. Countless others shared cultural teachings and knowledge.

In 2008, I decided to teach on the Evergreen campus in the areas of my academic training, environmental education and science education. While planning a course on Mount Rainier,

I was unable to find a book on the mountain's natural history. When I mentioned this to my colleagues, they pestered me until I agreed to write the book that I had searched for.

Early on, I attended a workshop featuring Muckleshoot tribal elders and the park archaeologist. Sonny Miller talked about huckleberry picking "in the old days" up on the mountain. I was fascinated. I began learning about Indian people going to Mount Rainier. Also early in my research, Donna Hogerhuis helped me research the tribal archives, and Wilma "Tweet" Cabanas reviewed a first draft.

Ten years later, the result is
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Jeff and The Mountain

Jeff Antonelis-Lapp Book

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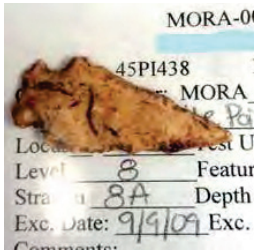
Tahoma and Its People, a natural history of Mount Rainier National Park, due for release by Washington State University Press in early March 2020. Natural history covers many subjects, including geology and the glaciers, interrelationships within and between plant and animal communities, weather and climate influences on ecosystems, endangered species, restoration projects, and other topics.

One of the most important things I learned was that Native people have gone to Mount Rainier for over 9,000 years, with evidence of Indian presence at over 100 locations. I like to think of the sites as like beads on a necklace, encircling the mountain.

My personal connection to Mount Rainier began in the 1970s, but without my time at Muckleshoot, the book – if I had written it at all – would have been entirely different. Without knowledge of the language or cultural traditions, which many of you shared so generously, I would not have been able to write about them. I might not have participated in archaeological digs on the mountain as I did, nor would I have understood the draw of native people to the mountain over the millennia.

Thank you for treating me like friends and family – you have made *Tahoma* a richer book because of your friendship. I hope that you will see, as Tribal vice-chair Donny Stevenson wrote for the book's back cover, that it "includes an accurate and respectful rendering of the long-standing relationship of Indian people to Mount Rainier or, as my ancestors knew it, Taqó'bid."

Maybe someday we will sit together and tell stories about the mountain we love so much.



Projectile Point from a Mount Rainier site within Muckleshoot traditional use range