



PROLOGUE

THE WEST POINT DIG: A LEGACY



By Dale Forbus Hogle

Today's peaceful appearance and seemingly unchanged shape of the sand spit we call West Point was not always so. Steep bluffs and narrow fjordlike passages left by melting Ice Age glaciers afforded no beaches. Condors soared overhead. Sea and land were wracked by furious winds, earthquakes, landslides, and tidal waves. The sea rose and fell. Then, about 5,000 years ago, the sea level stabilized and a beach was formed.^{1,2}

The beach offered shellfish in abundance. The sea was filled with marine life of great variety. The uplands above the cliffs that bordered the beach teemed with wildlife. Douglas fir, red cedar, hemlock, and alder rose high above the beach, sheltering birds and mammals. Oceanspray, huckleberry, blackberry, and fern grew thickly under the trees. The stage was set for human habitation.^{3,4}

Over 4,000 years ago, humans began to inhabit this idyllic location below the cliffs. The beach at that time was U-shaped. A sand spit on the sea side provided protection from wind and wave. There was a small bay between the spit and the cliff that rose on the land side. On the inner curve of the bay a camp was established by early inhabitants. The beach provided basalt cobbles from which to make cutting tools, hearths, and ovens. Mussels covered the beach and were a ready and easy source of food. Elk, deer, and small mammals roamed the uplands above the cliff, providing both food and bone for making tools. Fish could be caught only steps away, at the water's edge. Seasonally, berries were plentiful. Trees and grasses supplied material for fire and shelter. Freshwater streams flowed from the uplands to the sea. All that humans needed for life was there.^{5,6}

The Discovery

Move forward in time to the present. Over the intervening four millennia, West Point has experienced great change, from the shape of the ancient sand spit to its habitation. This story will carry you through those changes. To begin, we will go back to February of 1992, and the discovery of the historical legacy of West Point.

When Brian Atwater, a geologist with the US Geological Survey, visited the construction site of the secondary wastewater treatment facility at the Municipality of Metropolitan Seattle (Metro) West Point Treatment Plant in February 1992, he never envisioned that he would discover an archaeological treasure trove. Atwater was looking for evidence in the earth's strata of an earthquake and tsunami known to have occurred 1,100 years ago.



Local Native American tribes celebrate their cultural heritage that is thousands of years old. Here, traditional dugout canoes make their way through the Hiram M. Chittenden Locks en route to an annual potlatch gathering. Photo by Monica Wooton. Summer 2006.

But, unexpectedly, far below the ground's surface, on the wall of a deeply scooped out trench destined to carry the enormous main sewage outfall pipeline, he saw telltale evidence of past human habitation—the purple color of mussel shell burned by fire. Immediately, the Metro project took on a new direction. Fortunately, Jim Benedict, the Metro construction manager, understood the importance of the artifacts Atwater had found and accepted the responsibility for cooperating in further investigation of the site. Benedict alerted Shirley Marroquin

of Metro, who educated managers and project directors of their responsibilities, and generally started the ball rolling to handle the unexpected situation at West Point.^{7, 8, 9, 10}

Samples were taken from a test pit and examined for preliminary analysis and assessment. Radiocarbon dating revealed the cultural material investigators uncovered to be at least 3,000 years old. The age, condition, and importance of the artifacts made the site eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places and brought into play a wide range of state and federal laws that protect historical resources. As an ancient site of Native pre-Euro-American human habitation, the involvement of the Puget Sound area's tribes—Suquamish, Muckleshoot, and Tulalip—was imperative. In March of 1992, working with tribal and governmental agencies, Metro brought in Lynn Larson and Dennis Lewarch of Larson Anthropological/Archaeological Services (LAAS), who led a 20-person team to direct studies of the site. With Jim Benedict's input, they decided how to coordinate the archaeological dig and construction of the treatment facility.^{11, 12, 13, 14}

Assembling the Team

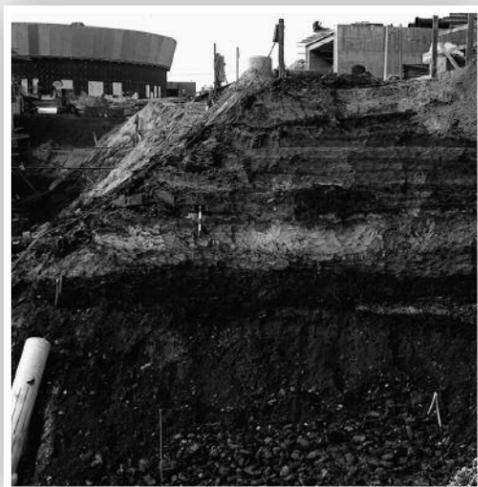
The team brought in to study the West Point site included experts from all over the country in several separate but interdependent disciplines. There were specialists in fire-modified features, avian and mammalian bones, mollusk shells, fish bones, botanical elements, and the composition and layering of earth.¹⁵

West Point's archaeological site was a landmark discovery.

Cultural material was identified in 17 locations throughout the Metro project area at elevations between 2.8 meters below and 2.07 meters above sea level. No other site in middle or south Puget Sound had yielded such old material, as found in more northerly sites. For archaeologists, it was an exciting event. In a recent interview with Dennis Lewarch, archaeologist, and Leonard Forsman, archaeologist and chairman of the Suquamish Tribe, Lewarch related:

“The Old Man House at Port Madison in Kitsap was on a sand spit and was discovered submerged one meter below present sea level. Knowing that, we realized that there could be things under sea level. I'd never thought that much about sea level rise and things being under water. Now we just know, every time we do something, that's part of what we look for. One of the things we addressed here was that when you get into northern Puget Sound and British Columbia,

Brian Atwater, US Geological Survey geologist. Photo by Helen Lambourne. Courtesy of Brian Atwater. 2005.



At right, the lighter-colored wedge-shaped layer toward the middle of the photo is the layer of burned mussel shell spotted by Brian Atwater in 1992. The ancient shell find at West Point prompted an archaeological investigation. Courtesy of Brian Atwater. 1992.

there were shell sites that were fairly early. There weren't any down here in southern Puget Sound older than 2,000 years. So we knew earlier sites should be here. But where were they? They were under water.

“Because of the way the geology's working, when you get north of Everett, the Puget Sound area is kind of tilting upwards, still rebounding from the weight of the glacial ice. Around Everett to Seattle, it's about 50/50. You get south of Seattle and it's actually been inundated.

“There really may not have been villages then, but base camps where a lot of people got together, and West Point was the model. There's material there that's older than what we found. They had already dug part of the sewer outflow line by the time Brian Atwater got on board. They'd already filled the older part of the landform. So there are probably things that go back five, six thousand years and, you know, we were lucky to do what we could. We had these little samples, these little snapshots, based on where they were actually excavating.”¹⁶

Native Americans were sought to participate in the dig. Leonard Forsman, of the Suquamish Tribe, came into the West Point archaeological dig almost by chance. He had worked in the museum in Suquamish for many years, and was used to dealing with management issues and matters regarding human burials and sacred site protection. His college degree and previous work experience were in cultural anthropology. At the West Point dig, Forsman was hired as a trainee. Now an archaeologist, Forsman was first exposed at West Point to an actual dig, the documenting of found material, and archaeological theory. To quote him:

“There was a lot of learning that went on, learning the culture of archaeology—the kind of ‘shovel bum’ dynamic of these folks that kind of migrate around the country looking for sites to dig. Coming into the West Point dig was a real plum. It was seven weeks excavation, overtime pay, and a very interesting site as well. From that perspective, it was an education. From the tribal perspective, it was an opportunity to educate other people about the tribes and the way we feel about our culture.”¹⁷

Forsman became an important element of the archaeological team, adding the tribal background and point of view. The dig was an opportunity to explain to his fellow workers how Native Americans usually see archaeologists as “grave diggers,” and to dispel that idea. Since West Point was not a tribal burial ground, Forsman was able to demonstrate by his work there that archaeology has many more complex and positive goals. The reputed sole interest of archaeologists in this case could not be judged as “just wanting to look at our bones,” as Forsman commented in an interview.¹⁸

To Native Americans, the sciences of archaeology and anthropology—hunting for the past by searching out and excavating ancient cities; prizing and studying relics, artifacts, and anthropological origins of peoples—is a non-native cultural concept and practice. Some tribes view digging into the past as unnecessary, because the past and the present are joined in a continuum of life. They already know their past.

Leonard Forsman and a fellow worker examining a section of the dig site. Courtesy of King County. Collection held in trust at the Burke Museum, Seattle. 1992.



Judy Wright, a Puyallup tribal member, explained the Indian perspective in the 2002 book, *Vashon Island Archaeology: A View from Burton Acres Shell Midden*:

*“Historically, relations between the scientific community of anthropology and archaeology and our people have been tenuous at best. Our hesitation to work within this structure through time has not necessarily been to our benefit . . . Our creation stories, legends, and mythology—the history of our people handed down to us by our people—places us here from the beginning.”*¹⁹

Leonard Forsman of the Suquamish Tribe commented:

*“If archaeology interests tribes, it is primarily because of cultural loss. Some tribes that may be more isolated and, therefore, kept many of their traditional ways may have less interest in archaeological sites. Whereas tribes [such as the Suquamish] have been somewhat assimilated and have experienced cultural breakdown from exposure to non-natives, federal policy, land, and other losses. We [the Suquamish] may have more interest because we are trying to rebuild our culture and also justify politically and legally our rights. Even skeptics have to say that ‘they were here 5,000 years ago fishing and collecting shellfish.’”*²⁰

Native American peoples have a deep and personal connection to their ancestors and the places they inhabited. To Native Americans, cultural material found in those sites

does not merely signify exotic objects or scientific data but also represents their revered ancestral heritage.²¹

Liaison with the tribes was undertaken by Bob Peterson, Metro’s tribal initiatives program manager, who kept the tribes informed of the latest pertinent information. He had the idea of using video to record the activities at the site. Mike Gerber, of Gerber and Associates, and his staff—Karel Bauer, camera operator, and Chris, the sound man—filmed and conducted interviews amid the chaos and pandemonium, then transformed it all into a coherent, culturally sensitive, and entertaining summary of the West Point archaeological experience.²²

The archaeologists soon learned that big construction machines were an asset in removing tons of dirt to get to the artifacts.

As Dennis Lewarch commented, *“backhoes and trackhoes with flat blades—we use them like trowels.”*²³ Lewarch explained:

*“One thing we developed at West Point was using the big construction machinery to our advantage . . . it was there anyway, so we used it to remove fill that had been placed earlier to get down to the archaeology . . . When they built the original sewage plant in the sixties, they had huge amounts of dredge spoils, and they just piled it on and packed it down before they built the plant. In some places it’s 20 to 30 feet thick, so you have to remove the fill to get to the point where you could find the archaeological deposits. We do that on construction jobs a lot now—use the big shovels and dirt movers to get to the find.”*²⁴

Left to right:
Pendant, arrowhead, and
gaming piece from the
early Native Americans
who visited West Point.
Courtesy of King County.
Collection held in trust at
the Burke Museum,
Seattle. Circa 1992.



There was not much time to do their work of carefully scraping away dirt, layer by layer, to find what remained of thousands of years of human activity at West Point. Although investigations would continue until June of 1994, it was agreed that, because of construction needs, the team would be given eight weeks, beginning in March of 1992, to complete their main body of work, to discover what lay beneath the surface of the site.



Heavy construction
equipment already at the
site to build the new sewage
treatment plant became an
asset for the archaeologists
in unearthing the cultural
material and digging
surrounding trenches.
Courtesy of King County.
Collection held in trust
at the Burke Museum,
Seattle. 1992.

Delays and resulting extra costs were a consideration, but finally, while construction continued around the digs, the archaeologists pursued their work. Seventeen test units in the path of the 108-inch pipeline trench were investigated and yielded varied cultural materials, but only 11 were explored. Other areas were left undisturbed.²⁵ Dennis Lewarch explained this method in archaeology:

*“. . . it’s called the ‘Conservation Ethic,’ so the idea is that if you don’t have to excavate a site, you don’t want to, because you want to preserve it. The academic archaeologists go out and excavate sites, but there are a limited number of sites and they are being destroyed by development and natural processes . . . so archaeological preservation now is ‘if you can’t avoid a site and you can’t redesign, you can cover it over.’ Sometimes with a pipeline, or something like that, if you find a site, you can move the pipeline. If it’s a roadway, sometimes you can just cover it over with fill.”*²⁶

How did the team know where the artifacts were? Kathy Troost, geologist with Shannon & Wilson, Inc., used geological data from Metro’s 200-plus boring and test pit logs. While construction engineers were interested in the composition of the subsoil structure for building purposes, Troost was able to use the same material to interpret and map the geologic development of West Point. The data provided the proof of subsidence and submergence of the land from earthquake and tsunami. Julie Stein, a University of Washington geoarchaeologist, interpreted the data that supplied evidence of human occupation of the West Point sand spit.²⁷

The Dig

A plan for excavation of discreet sites was made. The archaeological team chose the isolated block technique in which 1- by 1-meter pits (or units) are excavated in order to provide a larger view into the past. Cultural material was identified in many locations throughout the project area, but four blocks of varying sizes containing 83 units—which represented about 12% of the main site at West Point—were singled out for detailed study. Four-foot-deep trenches were excavated with a 235C track-hoe, connecting the four blocks and permitting the workers to move between them. The blocks were canopied and the team went to work.^{28, 29}



Archaeological material was painstakingly collected. Nested screening racks beginning with a mesh gauge of 1 inch and descending to 1/16 inch were set up to trap particles, from the largest to the tiniest. Material was water-screened with hoses to separate cultural items from the clay, silt, and shell compacted around them. Items found in water had to be kept wet so they would not crack. Extra care was taken with artifacts of a fragile nature. Each item was bagged, labeled, and identified in place. Organic material such as shell, animal bone, and charcoal was sent to be radiocarbon dated—a process that can take four to six weeks.^{30, 31}

More and more artifacts began to appear as workers uncovered deeper and deeper layers. They encountered tools made from basalt cobbles, shells, and bones of fish, whale, and elk; decorative pieces like pendants, lip plugs, stone and bone bracelets, beads, and gambling pieces; obsidian and fine-grained rock from east of the mountains, indicating distant contacts. A geoarchaeologist took soil samples for geological studies; an archaeobotanist studied plant fibers used for clothing and mats or left from seasonal food consumption. Slowly, a picture of the history of West Point came into view. Radiocarbon dating showed the earliest date of habitation was 4250 years BP (Before Present). The materials examined told a story of people fishing, collecting shellfish, hunting mammals, and gathering berries, nuts, wood, and bark, along with the ways those items were processed and utilized in daily life. Discoveries of the area's prehistory were numerous, varied, and noteworthy.^{32, 33}

The processes used by archaeologists to come to a determination sound like those of a detective solving a crime: “from the evidence, find what happened.” Mammalian and avian zooarchaeologist R. Lee Lyman provides an insight into their method of deduction with his example of the probable seasonal nature of deer hunting at West Point:

“Assuming the approximate date of June 1 for deer birth in the Puget Sound area, the season(s) during which deer were killed can be determined. The presence of a neonate indicates deer were hunted in May-June. The 4-month old died in September-October . . . the 6-month old died in November-December . . . the 10-month old died in March-April [and so on]. Deer antlers grow from about May through August, and the antlers are cast or shed in January through March (Anderson 1981). The recovered specimens appear to be fully developed antlers, and thus indicate that at least this individual . . . died sometime between September and January. This is, in fact perhaps the best time to take ungulates such as deer and wapiti [American elk] in temperate latitudes as it is the season when they are in best nutritional condition. From late winter through summer the animals are lean and contain less fat, a potentially important nutrient for foragers without access to pinnipeds and their blubber (Speth and Spielman 1983). Together, these data indicate deer were killed in all months of the year except January and February.”³⁴

Land Use and Culture Development

There is evidence that West Point was inhabited year-round during the period from 4250 to 3550 BP. Around 3550 BP, the sea level in Puget Sound stabilized, but land areas used before that time were covered with water, and the shape of the available land on the spit was slowly changing. Continental rebound (the post-glacial rise of land masses that had been depressed by the huge weight of ice during the last Ice Age), cliff erosion, storms, tides, and currents conspired to reform the land. New sandy beaches emerged, providing habitat for colonies of clams and a change for the area's human inhabitants from the previous shellfish diet of mussels. The food sources available at West Point remained the same from this period forward, although they varied from season to season. Food was collected in the spring, summer, and fall from 2700 to 200 BP. When food gathering during that period shifted primarily to spring and summer, the large seasonal settlements at West Point became small groups visiting just to collect and prepare food.³⁵

Indigenous technology also evolved over the various time periods. Before 2700 BP, locally available basalt cobbles were the main source for toolmaking. The West Point assemblage of points from projectiles such as arrows or spears is small but diverse, and indicates usage until about 2700 BP.³⁶ Local beach cobbles were utilized to pave hearths and ovens. In Puget Sound, aboriginal people used hearths and ovens for heat and for food preparation methods that included fire smoking, stone boiling, “steam baking” shellfish and meat, “pit baking” porpoise and seal, and drying fish, shellfish, and berries.³⁷ Fourteen fire hearths—some referred to as rock pavements—and four rock ovens were found at the West Point dig. All were made from fire-modified rock (rocks that were fractured by alternately heating and cooling them) to create flat surfaces.³⁸ Time periods in which these fire and cooking features were found ranged from more than 4000 BP to 200 BP.³⁹ Features of the shelters used by West Point inhabitants could not be determined. The cedar planks and hardwoods found were more closely associated with fire and food preparation than shelter.⁴⁰

About 1,500 years ago, fine-grained tools of obsidian and petrified wood began to appear, suggesting trade or intermarriage with tribes from eastern Washington and southern Oregon. Travel north to British Columbia and trade with natives there may have occurred. Tools for working wood emerged, and technology advanced to accommodate the variations in available resources. The shape of the land continued to change, and repeated landslides prompted relocation of campsites.^{41, 42}

Then, in 1100 BP, an unexpected event took place.^{43, 44, 45, 46, 47}

Evidence of Earthquake and Tsunami

The archaeological team knew something had happened long ago at West Point that changed everything—its size, its shape, its sea life, its use. Why was there evidence of two periods of occupation separated or disturbed by a large burden of earth? And why, when people returned, had there been such changes? Why was evidence of habitation far below sea level? Geologists knew from earlier discovery of the Seattle Fault that southern Puget Sound had experienced an enormous earthquake 1,100 years ago. The fault runs under the waters of



The beach and uplands at West Point. The beach has changed over the millennia; features of beach, cliffs, and uplands still remain.

Photo by Monica Wooton. 2006.

Puget Sound from the south end of Bainbridge Island, along the shores of Alki Beach, all the way to Lake Sammamish. The geologists were unaware how the violent shaking had disturbed waters in the basin of Puget Sound and affected West Point until excavations for the new wastewater treatment facility began.^{48, 49, 50, 51, 52}

The tremor was so severe that it raised Alki Beach and Bainbridge Island 25 feet, while West Point dropped 3 feet. Could there have been a tsunami following the quake? This is just what the study team realized from the evidence. A great 20-foot-high tidal wave had followed the earthquake, washed over West Point and covered it with thick layers of silt that spread over the land and buried all previous human settlement. The sand spit at West Point was inundated and shrank in size. The protective berm of sand and the small bay had disappeared, and land that had formerly been inhabited vanished under the sea.^{53, 54, 55, 56, 57}

After the sand spit and water settled following the earthquake and tsunami in 1100 BP, it did not take long for people to return to West Point and resume their customary hunting, fishing, and gathering. However, by that period, from roughly 1000 to 200 BP, the principal foods gathered there were shellfish and salmon. There were other reasons for less extensive usage of West Point. The same geologic event that reshaped West Point helped to create other livable areas of land around Elliott Bay. Groups of the area's indigenous tribe built villages along the Duwamish River and Smith (Smith's) Cove, where abundant salmon runs existed. There was no settlement at West Point, which was used only for food gathering, and the nearest village was in Shilshole or Salmon Bay. West Point was probably a camping

location for seasonal use as well. The lack of a permanent settlement may have been due to West Point's comparatively inhospitable location. The natives had a name for it—Pka'dzElcu—that means “thrust far out” and describes its unusual westerly intrusion into Puget Sound. While West Point was ideal for shellfish and salmon harvesting, it was probably overexposed to wind and weather and inadequately protected from attack to serve as a village and winter longhouse site. When the Euro-Americans arrived 150 years ago and began to settle in this area, West Point was largely abandoned as a site of native habitation.⁵⁸

The People of West Point, Yesterday and Today

Ask any non-Native American in Seattle where he or she is from and you may get the answer, “I live here, but I was born in Michigan (or New York, or California, or the Philippines). My grandparents were from Iowa (or Mississippi, or Ireland, or Japan).” Ask a Puget Sound Native American the same question and the answer will likely be, “I am from here. My people have always been here. My ancestors are buried here also.”

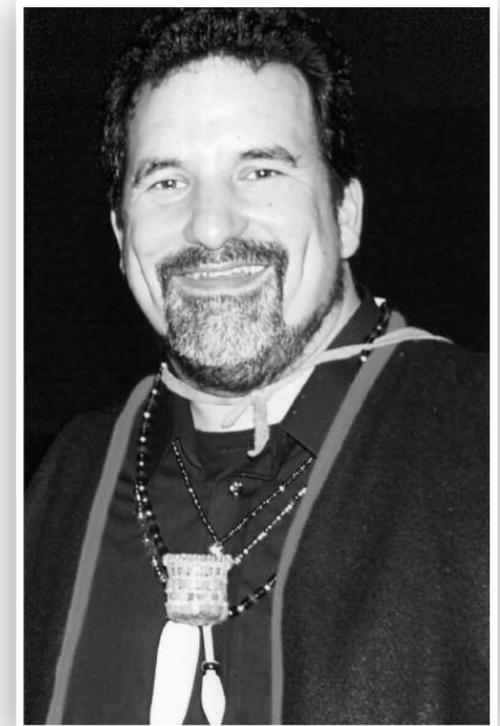
So who were the people who inhabited West Point four and more millennia ago? Archaeologists try to answer that question in a scientific way by studying the traces of culture lying beneath the ground. Observing cultural practices still in existence today sometimes aids in tracking the origins of a people. An example of this was noted by archaeologist

Lynn Larson regarding an ancient method of drying clams. Stone hearths at the West Point dig were found accompanied by partially burned hardwood sticks, and it was determined that this was proof of the fire roasting and drying of clams. Today, Lawrence Webster, a Suquamish tribal elder, describes the traditional way of drying clams:

“They'd have sticks made out of, mostly out of willow, ironwood or anything that was firm, hazelnut. And make sticks about three feet long, narrow, and they'd string anywhere from a dozen to eighteen clams on that and have a fire going with a rack running above and they'd put these sticks up against that so they'd get the heat of the fire and turn them till they were just about cooked. Then they'd take them off from that and they'd run a piece of cedar bark . . . it was a string and they'd take two sticks and put it on one of the strings in a circle. Then you'd hang those strings in the smokehouse and smoke them dry the rest of the way . . . They didn't build the fire like we would for salmon.”⁵⁹

Observations by the Euro-Americans who arrived at Alki Point in Puget Sound in the mid-19th century and started the settlement that was to become Seattle offer other clues to the origins of the area's Native Americans. The settlers wrote about their encounters with natives of the area living in their own ways, which were foreign to Euro-Americans. The newcomers found that tribal groups distinguished themselves from one another by name, familial relationships, and the tribal lands they inhabited. Ethnographers referred to the aboriginal groups who inhabited the land and villages around Elliott Bay, Salmon Bay, Shilshole Bay, the Duwamish River, the Black River, the Cedar River, Lake Washington,

Leonard Forsman, chairman of the Suquamish Tribe today, a member of the archaeological team on the West Point dig, and author of the final sidebar in this chapter. Courtesy of Leonard Forsman. Circa 2007.



Lake Sammamish, Lake Union, and the lower White River as the Duwamish, a name derived from a village on the Black River known as t'duwa'bc. While the resources utilized by these groups depended on their location, all of them relied on salmon supplemented with shellfish and land game for their primary subsistence—just like the ancient inhabitants of West Point.⁶⁰

According to archaeologists Larson and Lewarch's report for Metro, *The Archaeology of West Point, Seattle, Washington: 4,000 Years of Hunter-Fisher-Gatherer Land Use in Southern Puget Sound*, the ancestors of the Duwamish, Muckleshoot, and Suquamish tribes are most likely the Native Americans who peopled the region directly surrounding West Point, the primary inhabitants being the Duwamish.⁶¹

After the arrival of the Euro-Americans, continuation of the tribes' ancient way of life became increasingly difficult. The Euro-Americans began to see the Native Americans as an incongruous element in the newcomers' ever-expanding settlement of the south Puget Sound area and looked for a way to move the indigenous tribes to lands of their own. The solution was the Treaty of Point Elliott, signed in 1855, which abrogated Native American interests in lands specified by the treaty, including West Point. Reservations were created to which all signatory tribes and bands were to move. While most tribes relocated to these reservations, which were scattered across the surrounding land and islands, Native Americans have also continued to live elsewhere throughout the southern Puget Sound area. Native Americans have not collected shellfish and salmon at West Point for a very long time.⁶²

West Point, the Shilshole Bay tidelands, and the adjacent uplands have been variously used in the last 100 or more years by the US Coast Guard's West Point Lighthouse (1881), the Fort Lawton military base (1898), outfall for Seattle sewage lines (1911), Metro's primary sewage treatment plant (1966), and the Metro/King County secondary wastewater treatment facilities (1995). Seattle's Discovery Park was created in 1972 when the federal government transferred 391 acres of Fort Lawton to the City of Seattle for development of a city park. At the same time, 40 surplus acres at West Point were transferred to Metro. The ancient history of Magnolia came full circle in 1977 when the Daybreak Star Indian Cultural Center of the United Indians of All Tribes Foundation opened in the uplands above West Point.⁶³

Curation: The West Point Archaeological Collection

The enormity and variety of material collected during the archaeological excavations included 8,000 pieces of fire modified rock weighing a total of 1.2 metric tons; 27 decorated artifacts comprised of labrets (lip plugs), bracelet fragments, pendants, a blanket pin, gaming pieces, and beads of ground stone, wood, and shell; and 121 bone and antler artifacts, with adzes, awls, bipoints, chisels, fleshers, needles, a net gauge, and rodent incisors representing numerous activities. Needless to say, all of these pieces required special efforts for their storage, cataloging, and conservation—their curation.^{64, 65}

Curation is a detailed, painstaking process of meticulous, repetitive tasks that include cleaning, drying, sorting, and packaging. Artifacts and samples are preserved for posterity. Laboratory records—hard copy and electronic files—were prepared using US Department of

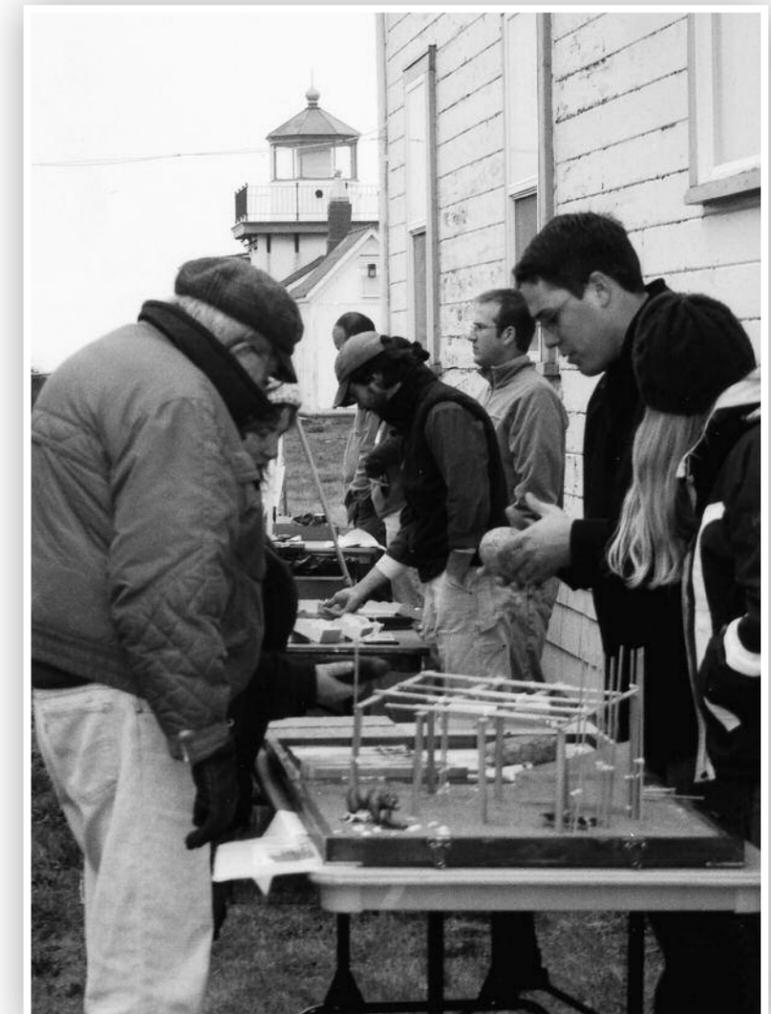
the Interior guidelines for curation. In the end, all efforts ensure the preservation of material and data as well as permit future access and research opportunities. The curation of 14,000 bags of recovered material was accomplished in less than a year after the fieldwork at West Point ended.^{66, 67}

In order to direct and manage these important resources, the West Point Tribal Oversight Committee was formed with representatives of the Burke Museum, the Muckleshoot Tribe, the Suquamish Tribe, the Tulalip Tribes, and King County. They make decisions regarding the collecting, management, and disposition of the valuable artifacts. The committee appointed the Burke Museum, at the University of Washington, as curator of the archaeological collection. The King County Wastewater Treatment Division, the agency that eventually succeeded Metro after it merged with King County in response to a court ruling that the Metro Council was unconstitutional, also is dedicated to preservation of the archaeological resource base at West Point.^{68, 69}

Community Outreach

While those given access to archaeological artifacts tend to be confined to academics, the Burke Museum provided for more people to have access to the story of the ancient culture on the shores of West Point. An outreach program for educational purposes was developed. The important matter of how to show valuable and irreplaceable artifacts was solved by hand-making replicas virtually indistinguishable from the originals. Archaeologist Jeff Flenniken created the artifact replicas from natural materials. The Burke Museum Archaeology Department made kits that included the copied artifacts plus information and lesson plans for teachers' use. Funding came from the Muckleshoot and Tulalip Tribes and 4Culture, a King County program whose mission includes promoting the cultural heritage of many groups of the area. The Burke also has created an educational, award-winning website at www.washington.edu/burkemuseum/westpoint/ that tells the story of West Point's archaeology.^{70, 71, 72}

Outreach programs are an important feature of the Burke Museum at the University of Washington. Hands-on exhibits like this one at the West Point Lighthouse teach participants about ancient ways of area Native Americans. Photo by Monica Wootton. 2006.





Some members of the Larson Anthropological/Archaeological Services team. Left to right: Paula Johnson, Guy Moura, Andrew Fahlund, David Albaugh, Leonard Forsman, Evan Stein, and Judy Donald, in front. Courtesy of King County. Collection held in trust at the Burke Museum, Seattle. 1992.

Epilogue: The Future of the West Point Archaeological Site

Cultural deposits at West Point were identified in 17 areas in the course of the two-year construction project, but not all were excavated. Where possible, they were covered with geotextile fabric and preserved in place. The sites are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places; therefore, they cannot be adversely affected. Much cultural material remains under protection.^{73, 74} Future construction projects of the West Point Treatment Plant may affect the cultural deposits. Because of its historic status, a professional archaeologist must be contacted in the early stages if excavation is planned in any potentially sensitive areas.^{75, 76}

In early November 2006, in response to a query about the current position of the King County Wastewater Treatment Division on the archaeological treasures at West Point, Shirley Marroquin, King County environmental planning and community relations supervisor, stated:

“King County has worked, and will continue to work, with the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, the Suquamish Indian Tribe, the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, and the Tulalip Tribes to protect and preserve the important archaeological sites that lie beneath the West Point Treatment Plant.”⁷⁷

With the West Point archaeological discovery, we learned how humans flourished and adapted to more than 4,000 years of ever-changing landscape at West Point—a small sand spit that only recently offered up its geological history and cache of hidden treasures, providing a better understanding of our corner of Puget Sound.

SETTING A NEW STANDARD

By Dennis Lewarch

The West Point archaeology project had a tremendous effect on the conduct of professional archaeology in Puget Sound, and interpretations by archaeologists about the hunting-fishing-gathering indigenous people who lived in the region. West Point was the largest archaeological excavation project conducted in the Puget Sound region until 2004. We learned numerous lessons about doing large-scale archaeological data recovery because of the support and monetary resources that were allocated to the project by Metro. Archaeologists developed close working relationships with engineers, construction managers, construction personnel, geologists, and tribal members, who worked together as a team to solve problems and to make sure the important project moved forward. We learned how to use the skills of heavy equipment operators and large earth-moving equipment as tools to expose and help recover archaeological deposits.

Geologists provided insights regarding the effects of rising sea level, development of marine shoreline landforms, and effects of tsunamis. We learned about construction techniques and fill placement, which helped us interpret the archaeological record at West Point, and also helped preserve intact archaeological deposits for future generations. The interest, insights, and knowledge of tribal members were invaluable to understanding the importance of the archaeology to them. Field techniques, communication protocols among team members, project scheduling and planning procedures, use of heavy equipment, and the participation of archaeologists in project planning and scheduling are now common in most public construction projects in the region, and West Point was the crucible where the contemporary approaches were forged. The project changed my life and the way I view the archaeology and the environment of the Puget Sound region. I was doubly blessed because the project also allowed me the privilege of developing new friendships with Indian people.¹

THE DIG: LIFE-CHANGING

By Leonard Forsman

West Point remains an important place to me on many levels. I grew as a person through my interactions with other archaeologists as we toiled in the field against the elements and a tight schedule. In addition, I learned about myself and my relationship with my ancestors, which caused great, positive changes in my life. I also grew as a tribal leader in my work with other tribes (such as the Muckleshoot, Tulalip, and Duwamish), in making decisions regarding the site and its future. The Indians of Puget Sound had many gatherings at West Point for thousands of years, and my experience there was probably much like those old gatherings where tribal groups met and learned from each other, recalled the old ways, and learned new things about each other.¹