



THE CHALLENGE
OF THE
PADDLE TO SEATTLE

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR & ILLUSTRATOR

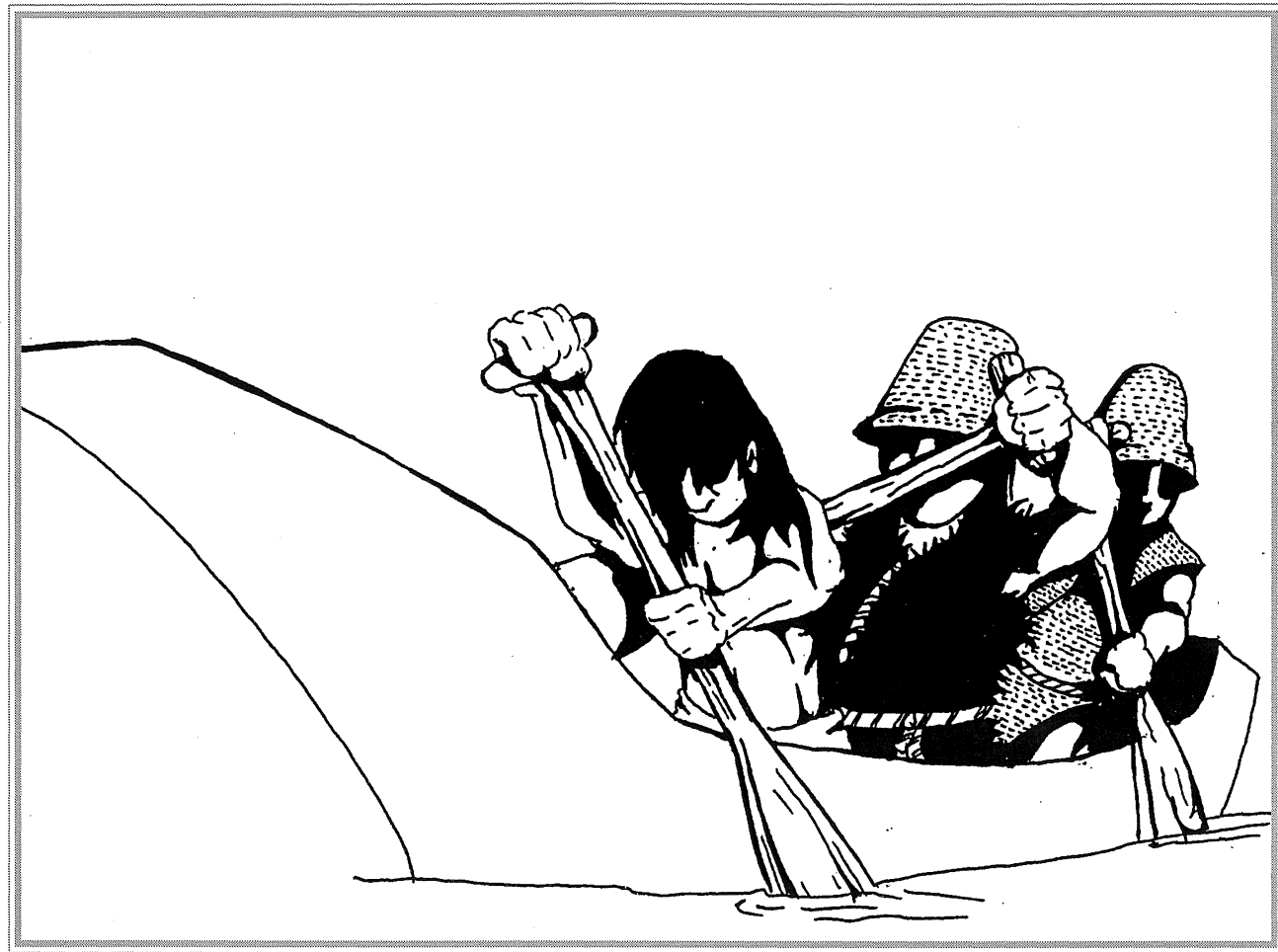
Patrick Finley Bragg Marich & Lynn E. Bragg

Formerly residents of Inchelium on the Colville Reservation, this mother/son team now resides in the Greater Seattle area where Lynn is a writer and Patrick attends high school. He is an enrolled member of the Colville Confederated Tribes.



Quileute women unload a canoe as men push it up onto beach; another canoe is landing behind them, and moored out beyond rocks is a sailboat, with another canoe heading towards the surf. La Push, Washington, ca. 1900

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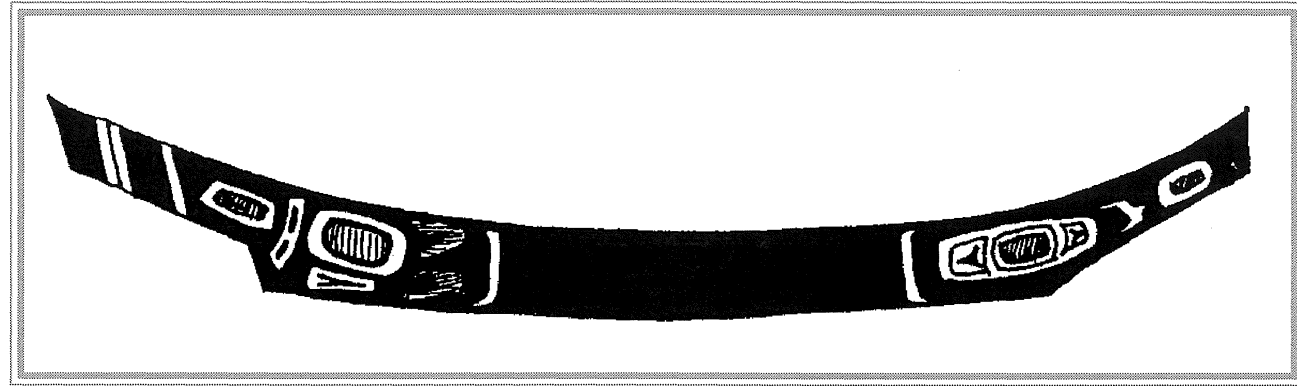


The people of the Quileute Tribe had a dream. That dream was to revive the tribe's ancient art of carving and paddling canoes.

For thousands of years, the Quileutes and their neighboring coastal tribes had paddled canoes up and down Washington's coastline. The canoes took people places and helped them find food such as salmon and whale meat. Sometimes war canoes took the people to fight their enemies. More often canoes brought communities together to sing, dance and share stories.



The Qatawas Festival, Full Circle Paddle, Paddle to La Push and the Power Paddle to Puyallup came after the Paddle to Seattle. The dream of the Quileute people had come true. Through the commitment of the Quileutes and the coastal tribes that participated in the original "Paddle to Seattle," the traditions of the canoe nations of Washington have been reborn and preserved for future generations.

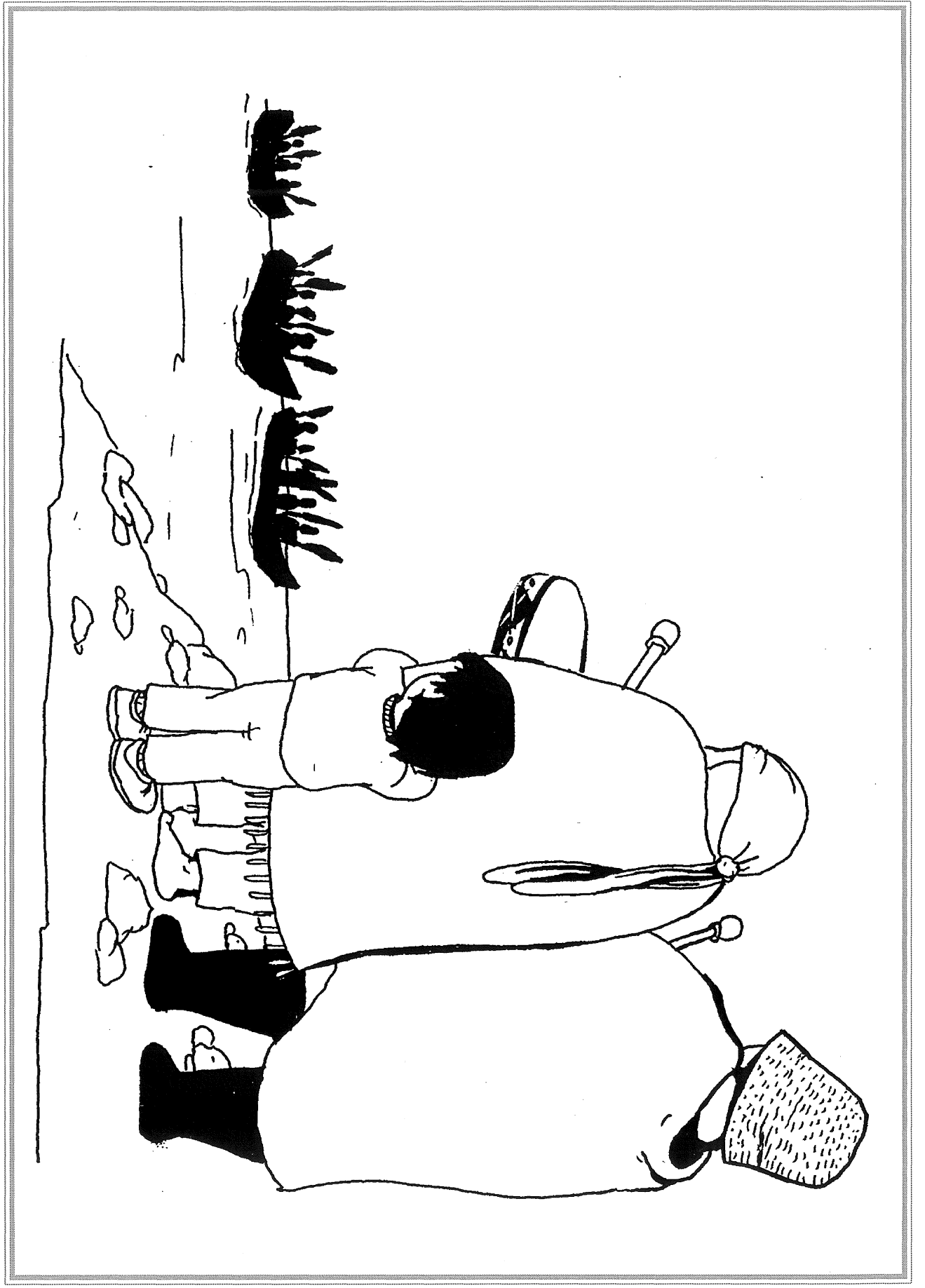
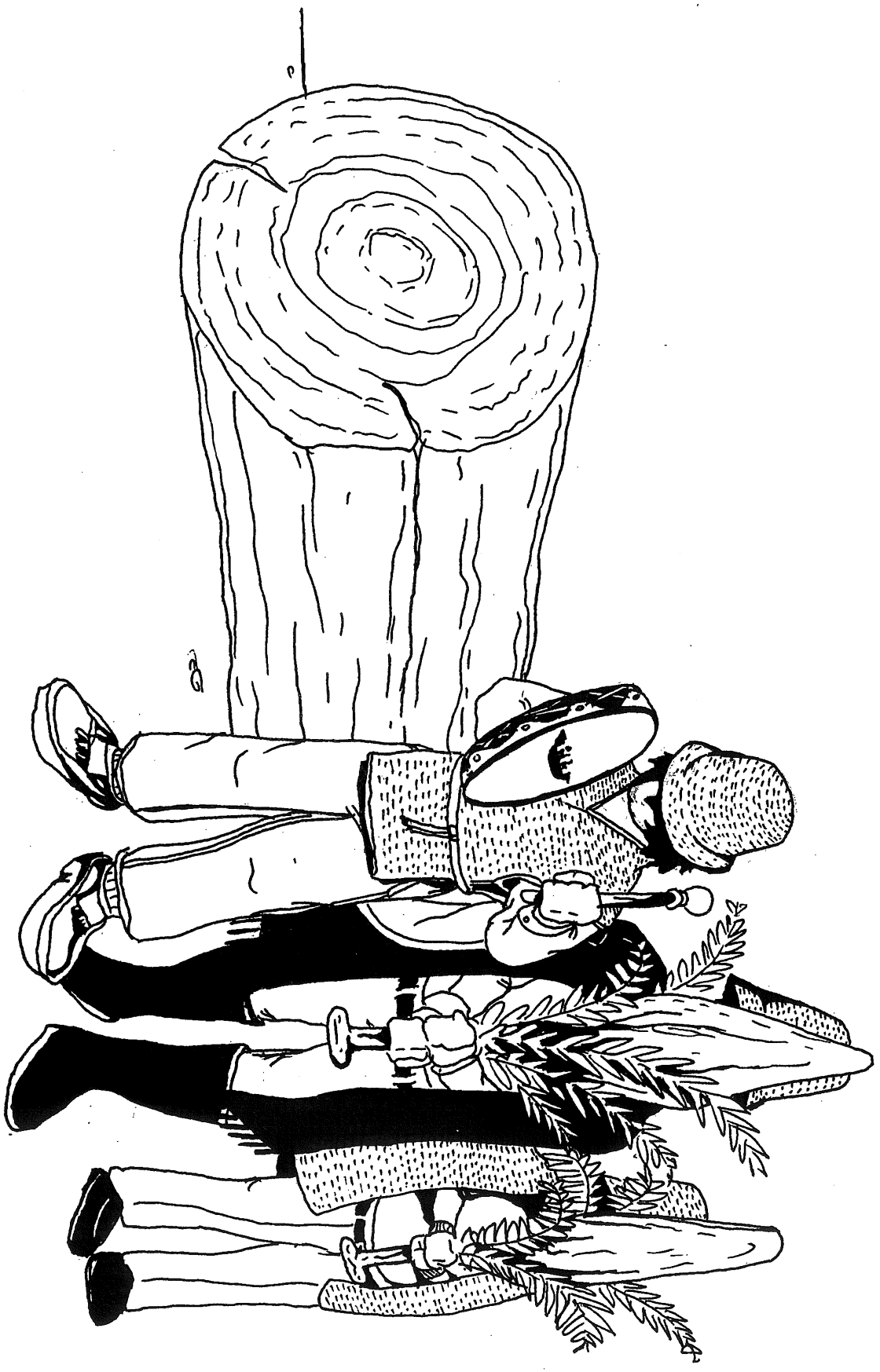


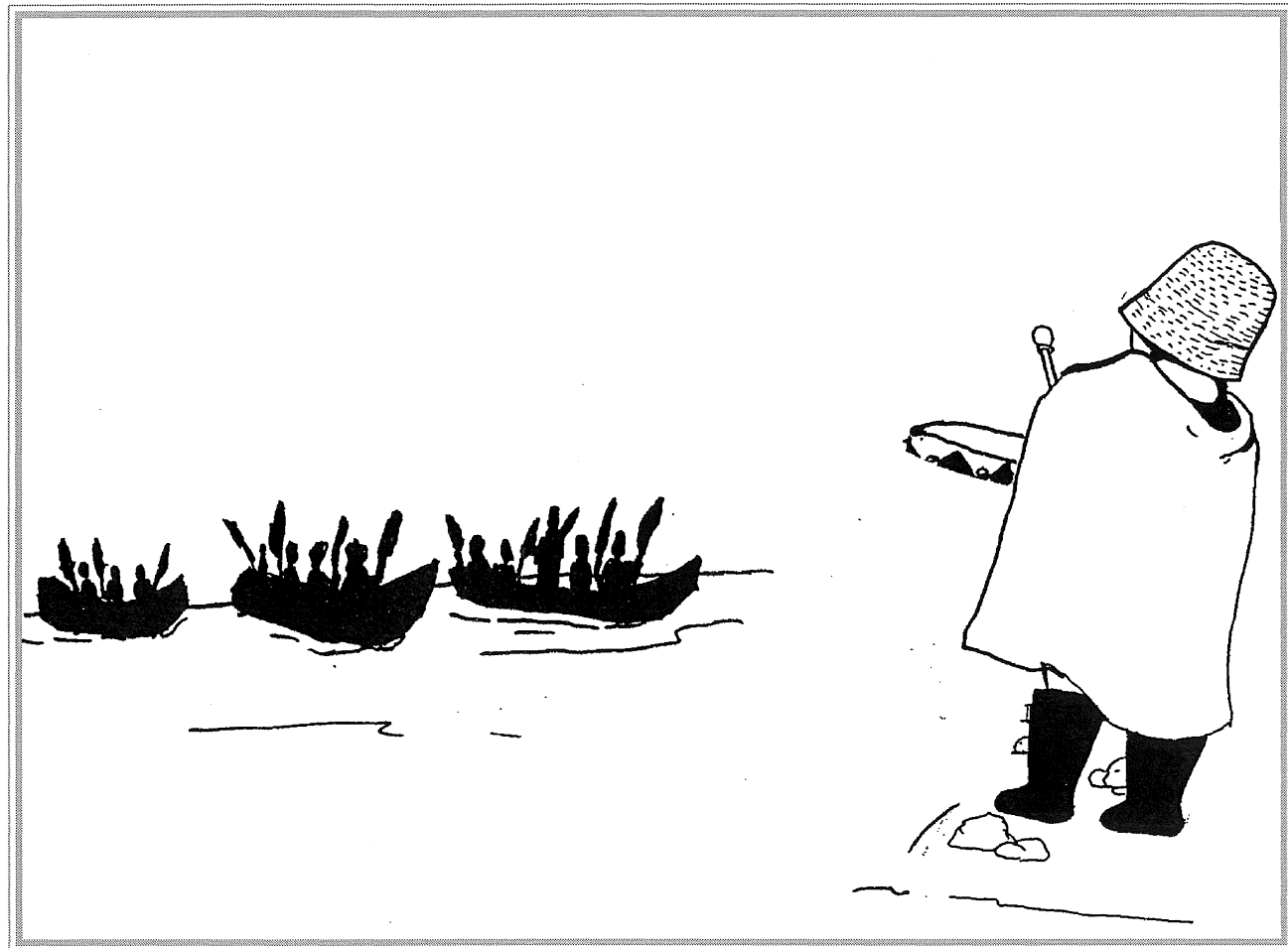
During one of the ceremonies, members of the Heiltsuk Tribe of Bella Bella sang out an invitation. They asked all of the paddlers to come to their home on Vancouver Island in Canada in four years. The people from Bella Bella told the other tribes, “We will host an encampment of ocean going canoes.”

The “Paddle to Seattle,” in 1989, started a tradition among the canoe nations. Now, canoe gatherings are held at least every four years. At each celebration, a different tribe challenges the others to paddle to their home for the next gathering.



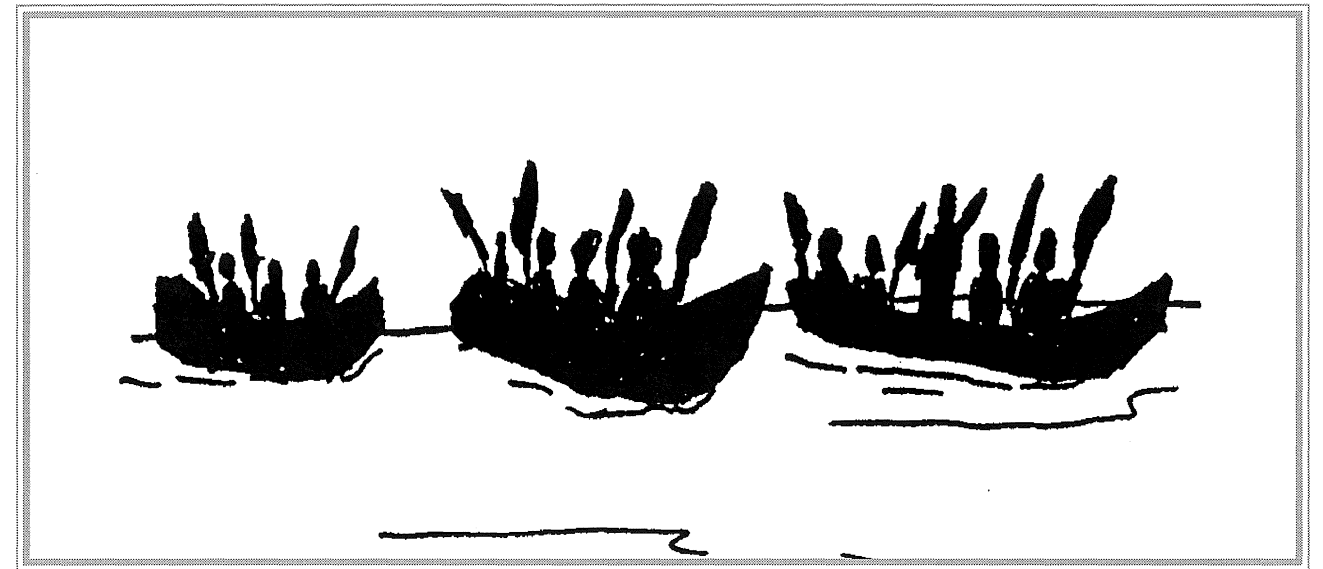
The canoe was regarded as a sacred vessel, a gift from above. In those days, every family had at least one canoe, carved and painted with that family’s crests. A family’s canoes were both works of art and symbols of wealth and power. The ocean was the people’s life source. Life surrounding the canoe was rich with culture and tradition.





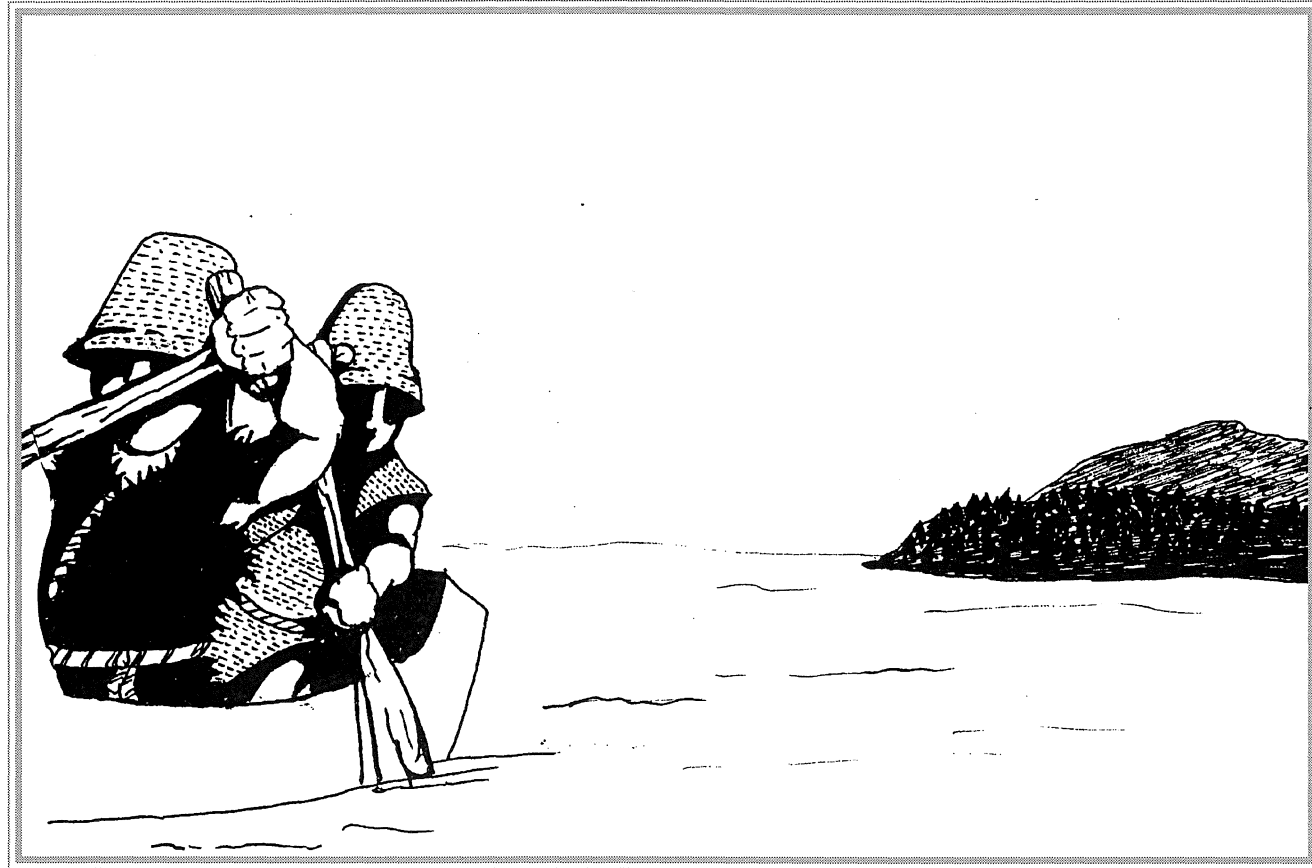
The hosting elder of the Duwamish Tribe called out his answer, “We welcome you to our shore. Come eat and drink. We are happy that you have come. Our food is your food, our home your home.”

Welcoming songs rang out from the shore. Singing and drumming guided the paddlers onto the beach. A celebration was held to mark the historic return of the canoes to Puget Sound. Salmon were baked on stakes over hot fires. There was feasting, dancing, singing, and drumming. Canoe races were held throughout the weekend.



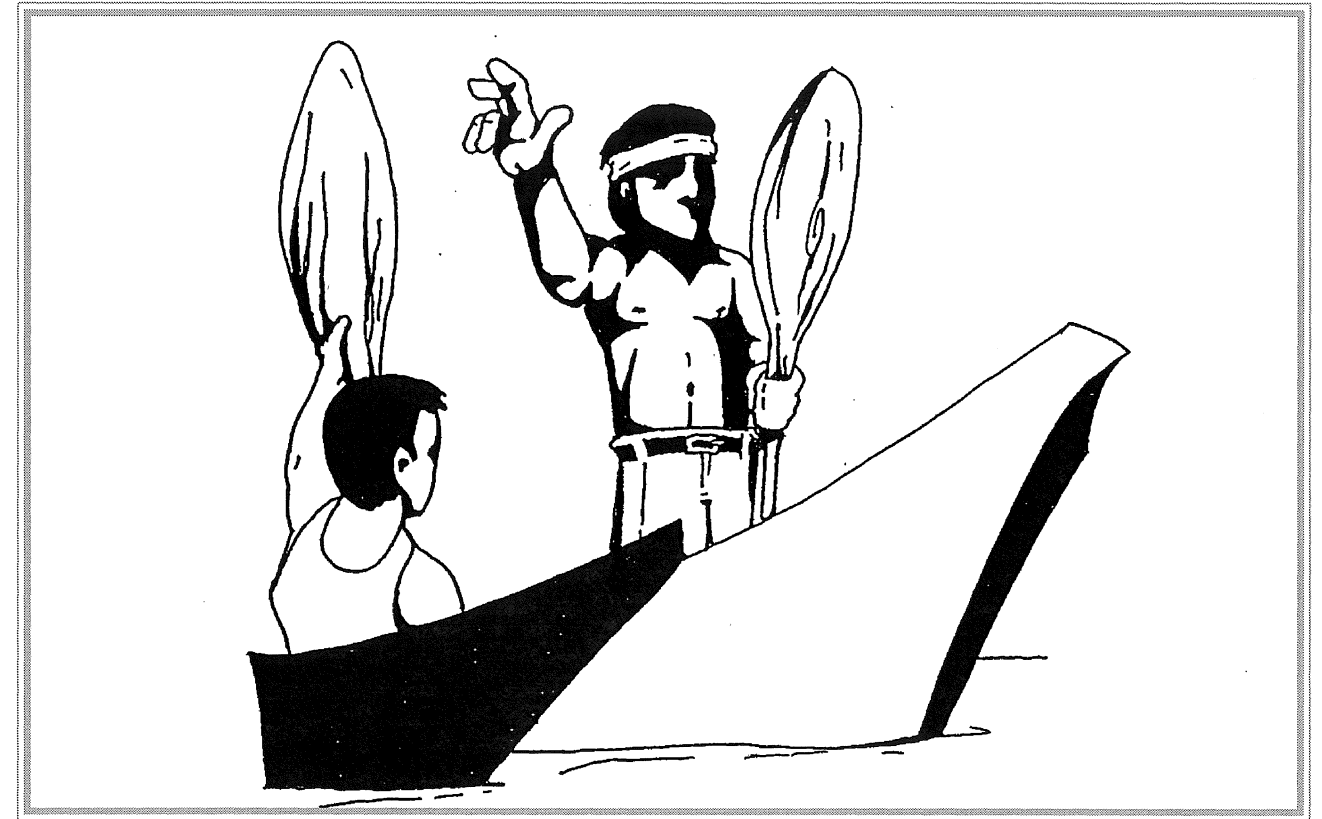
Early European explorers told of being greeted by hundreds of canoes when they arrived in Northwest ports. The tribes used canoes to trade with the settlers. Canoes piled high with furs were paddled to trading posts to barter for goods.

The first missionaries among the Northwest tribes discouraged the use of traditional tribal ways. Before long, the people became less dependent on the sea for food and trade. Whale hunting and salmon fishing were no longer needed for the tribes to survive. Fewer people learned how to hunt and fish. Though they had once been great canoe-going sea hunters, tribal fishermen began to use boats with motors.



Could the people of the Quileute Tribe revive the art of canoe carving? Could they learn to paddle the canoes as their ancestors had? No one knew if it could be done, but the people believed in themselves. They knew, if they all worked together, they could bring canoe traditions back to their tribe.

There was much work to be done. Giant cedar trees with large, straight trunks had to be found. After a tree was chosen, songs blessing the tree were sung. The cedar's spirit was promised that it would be reborn as a canoe which would serve a proud and useful life with the tribe.



One by one, the captain of each canoe stood and announced his people:

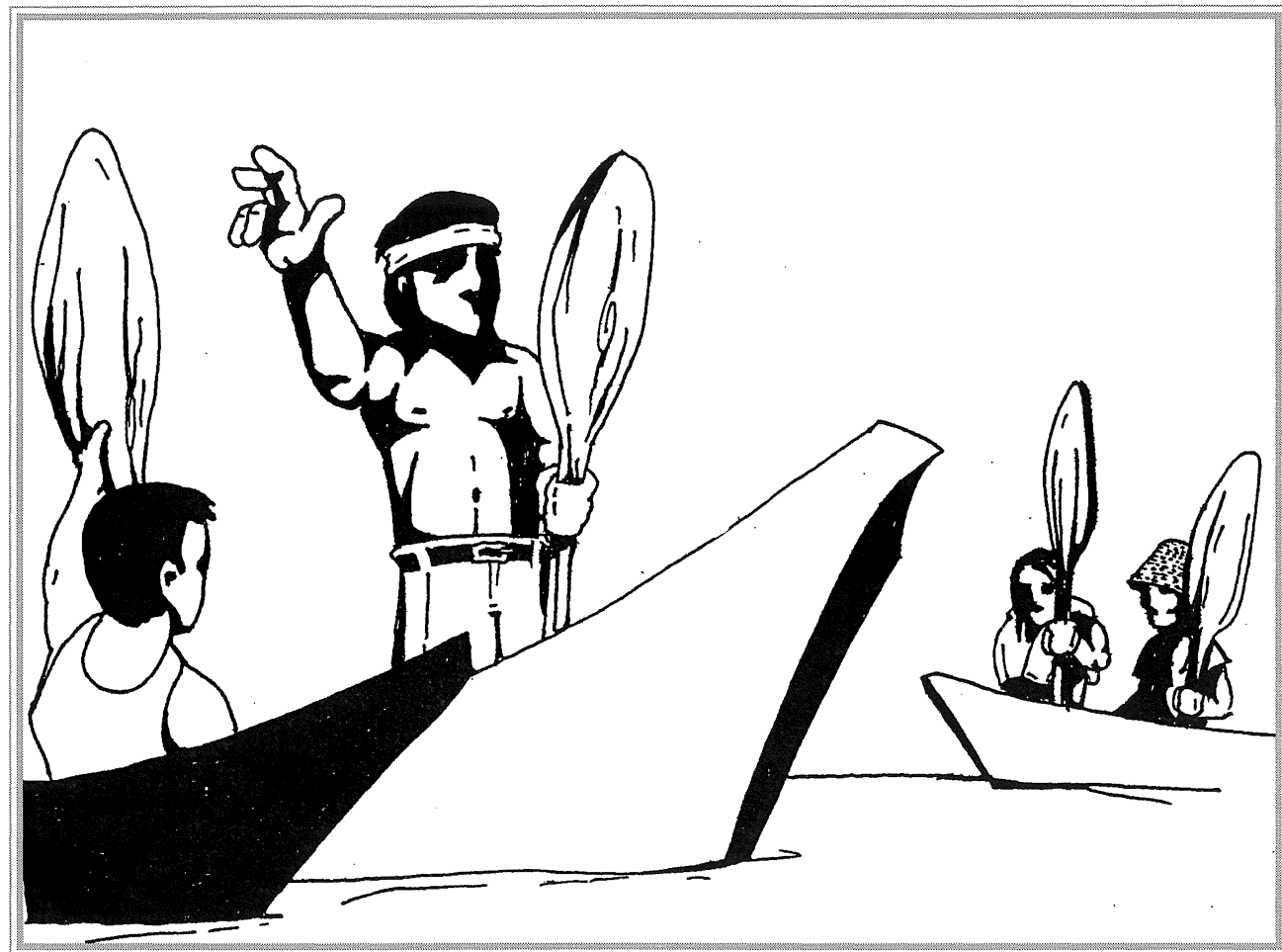
“We are the Makah Nation,”

“We are the Quinault Nation,”

“We are the Klallam Nation.”

The chants came until every tribe had been introduced to their Duwamish hosts on the beach. Each leader said a prayer and greeting in his language, and asked to come ashore.

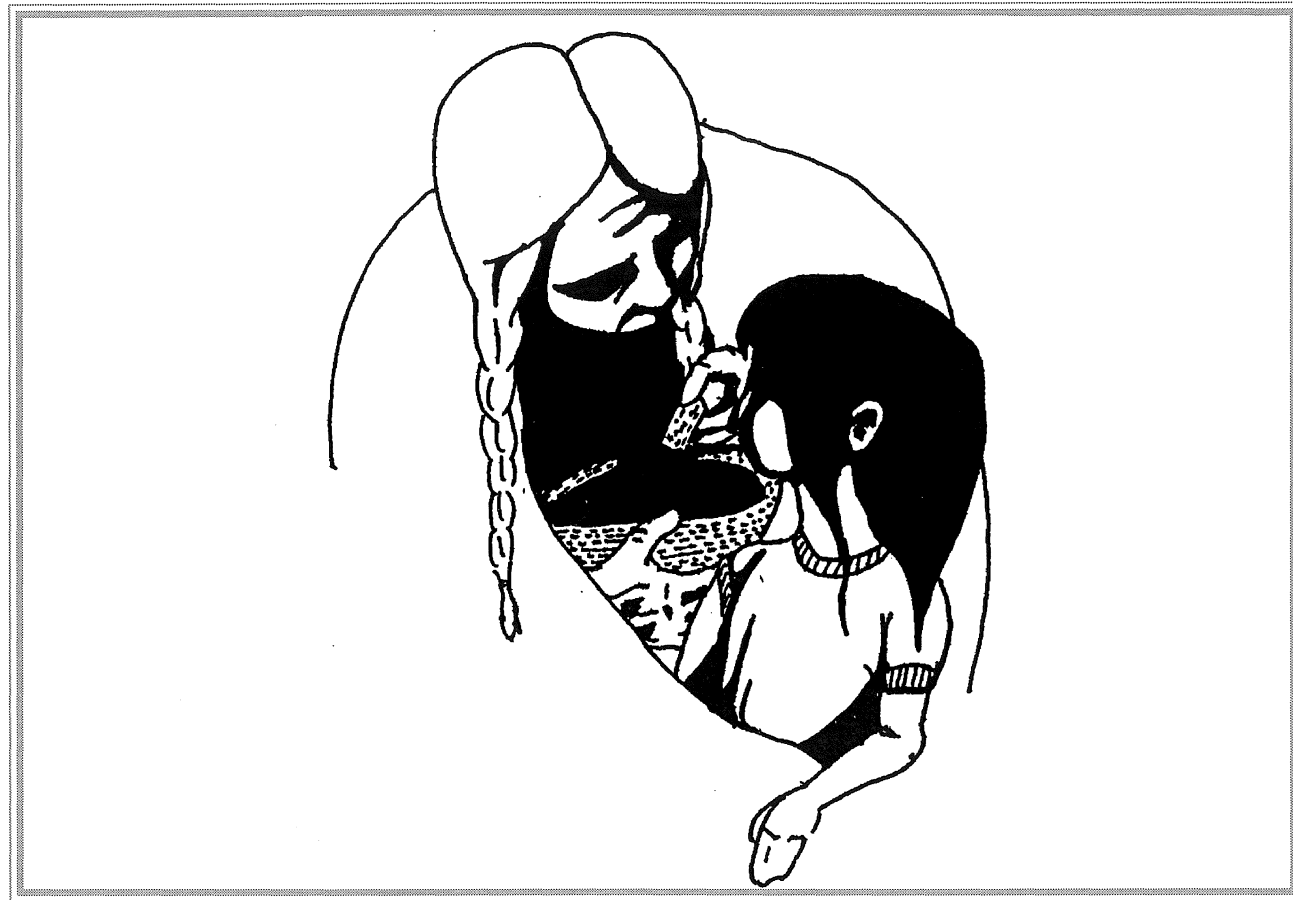
“We come in peace to visit our relatives. We are tired, thirsty and hungry. We have traveled a very long way.”



The singing of the paddlers reached the beach before the canoes. This beach was on the Duwamish Tribe's traditional land at Golden Gardens Park. Once the canoes had stopped, the paddlers lifted their oars straight up into the air. Then, the captain of the first canoe stood and addressed the people on the beach, "We are the Quileute Nation."



The art of carving canoes was taught to young carvers by patient master carvers. Each tool the carvers worked with was first blessed and raised up in prayer. Carvers used axes and adzes to chip away at the cedar log, hollowing it into a shell. These shells were sometimes heated. The heated wood became soft and was bent to spread the sides and shape the canoe's bow and stern. Cedar cross-bars were inserted to hold the shape. Once carved, the canoe was sanded and polished. Then, it could be painted or decorated with traditional patterns.

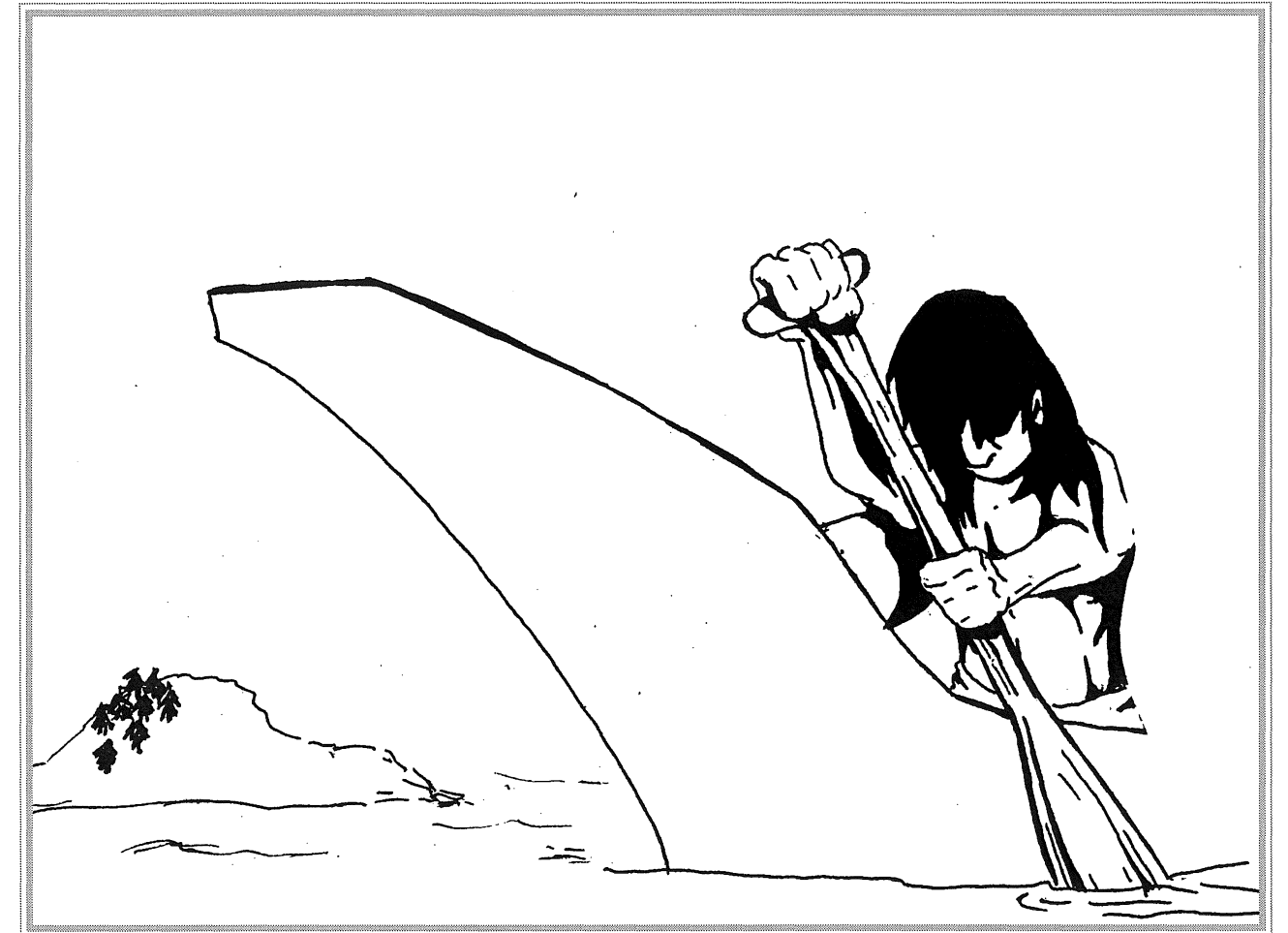
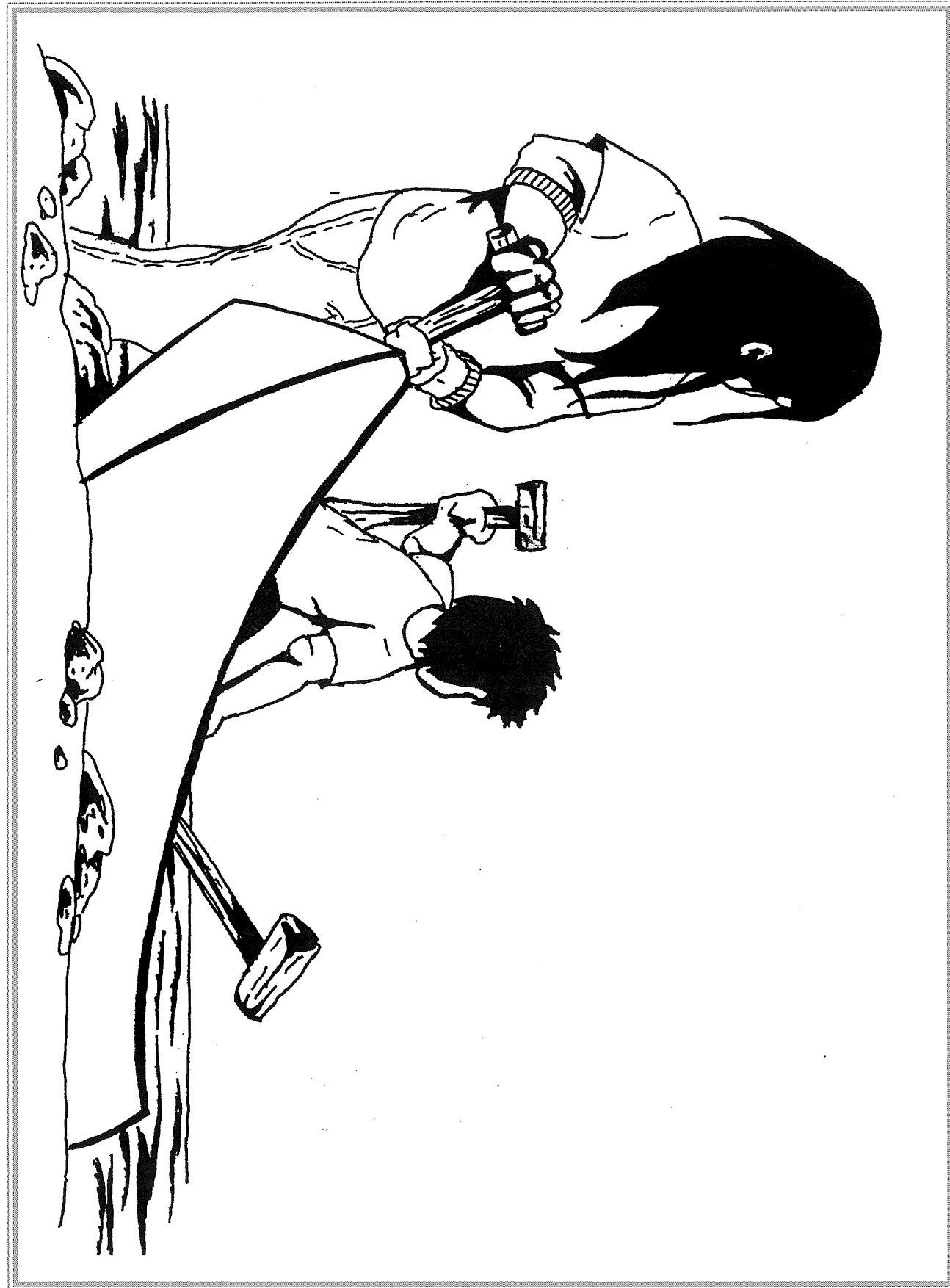


The carvers spent two years making the large canoes. The entire community helped in some way. Some helped to cut the cedars and move them from the forest. Others were needed to carve paddles. Some gathered cedar bark from giant trees and wove clothing such as capes, hats and vests from the bark. Still others assembled tools, like bailers, needed for the journey.

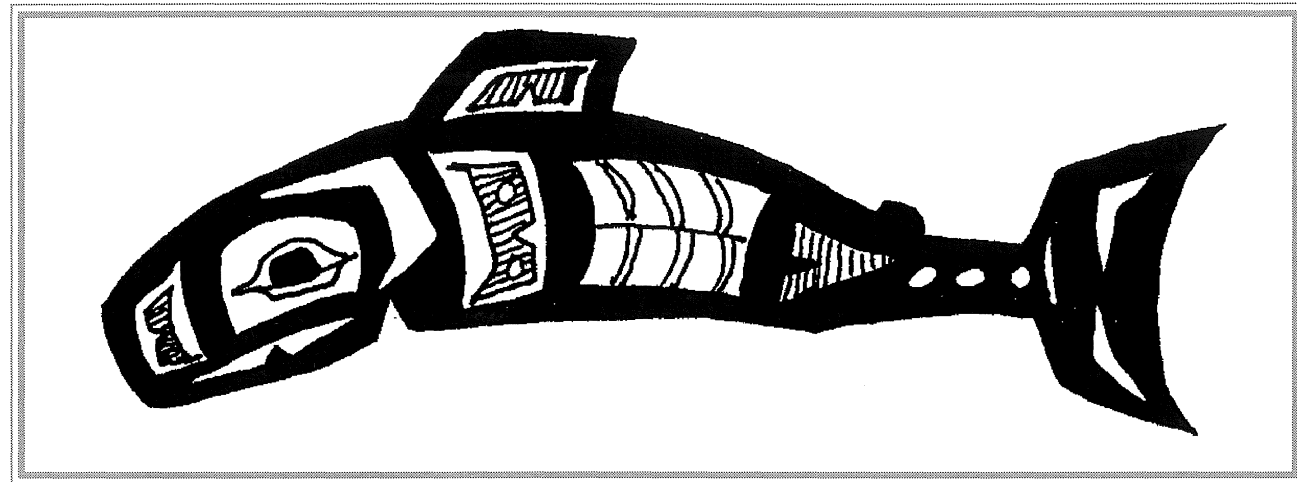
Elders blessed the project. They taught respect, songs, and the traditions of the canoe. The elders also taught the young paddlers the proper ceremony for visiting other shores, welcoming guest paddlers, and gift giving.



The last rest stop was near the burial place of Chief Seattle at “Old Man House” on the Suquamish Tribe’s Reservation. There, canoes from other tribes came together. They held a potlatch before completing the final leg of their journey. The next day, the Suquamish canoes led the group from their reservation, through their waters to Seattle.

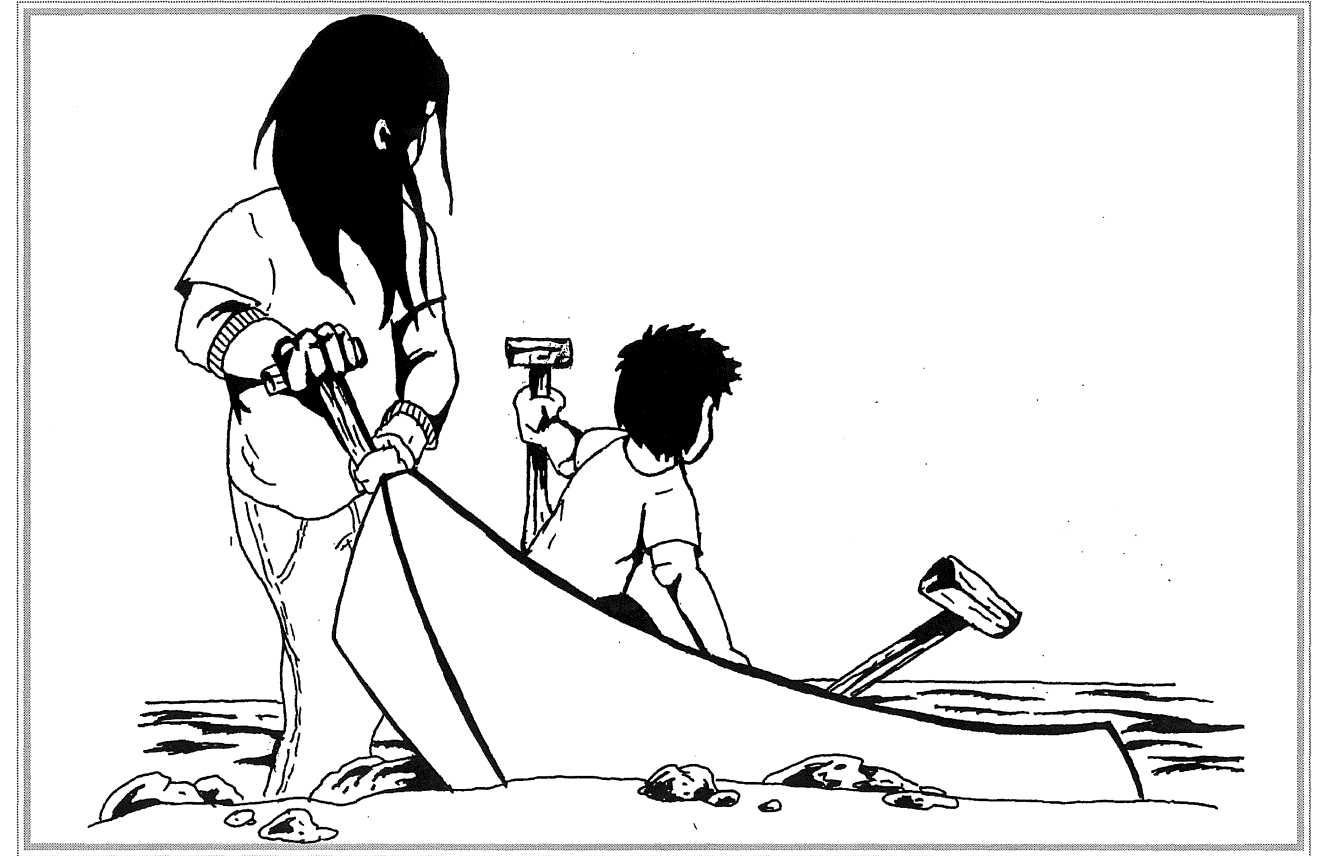


Some members of the tribe learned to paddle the sea-going, shovel nosed canoes. At first, it was frightening to paddle out into the rough ocean waves. The paddlers learned that they must work together, as a team, to glide the canoes through dangerous and choppy water. Songs helped them set the pace and pull together as if they were one. It took great discipline and many hours of practice to learn the art of canoe pulling.



In 1989 Washington State had its 100th birthday. The coastal tribes of Washington decided to honor the state in the traditional way. The Quileutes would paddle canoes to Seattle like members of their tribe had done seventy years before.

Nearly twenty other tribes were invited to join in the celebration. Tribes, including the: Duwamish, Puyallup, Muckleshoot, Nisqually, Lummi, Makah, Nooksak, Quileute, Quinault, Hoh, Samish, Upper Skagit, Skokomish, Swinomish, Suquamish, Tulalip, Lower Elwha Klallam, Port Gamble S'Klallam, Jamestown S'Klallam, together with tribes from Canada, were invited to take part in the paddle.



The Quileute paddlers started the journey by launching their canoes off the coast at La Push. Three canoes began their journey to Seattle by heading north. The 170-mile trip would take them about a week. A fourth canoe met them near Port Angeles. At Neah Bay the Makah canoes joined the Quileutes.

Old rest camps along the way were prepared to welcome the tired travelers. The paddlers stopped at every reservation on the coast. At each stop, the paddlers asked if they could come ashore to rest and eat. The paddlers' songs told the people on the shore who they were and why they had come. After the host tribe had welcomed them ashore, the visitors would present their hosts with a gift to thank them for their hospitality.