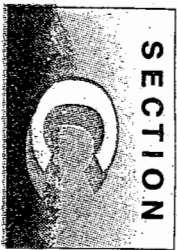


SECTION



Our Peninsula

HOMER SMITH INSURANCE



Serving the Olympic Peninsula
Auto • Home • Fire

360.683.4970

360.437.8192

Sedgwick

Port Ludlow

Port

Joyous' end to bitter rift

Graving yard pact lets sides look to future

By JIM CASEY
PENINSULA DAILY NEWS

PORT ANGELES — Monday's signing of agreements by the Lower Elwha Kallam tribe, the city and the Port of Port Angeles and the state of Washington ended a nearly three-year-long impasse over excavating a huge dry dock in the midst of the ancient Kallam village of Tse-whit-zen and its tribal cemetery.

In Gov. Chris Gregoire's words Monday, the ceremony was "joyous," and so it was for Lower Elwha Chairwoman Frances Charles and the city and Port dignitaries who squeezed onto the podium at the Vern Burton Community Center for pictures with the governor.

However, a more somber, subtler feeling underlay the hour-long event:



A smiling Frances Charles, Lower Elwha Kallam tribal chairwoman, smiles and waves during a ceremony Monday settling differences over the defunct graving yard site on the Port Angeles waterfront.



Washington Gov. Chris Gregoire, right, hugs Frances Charles, of the Lower Elwha Kallam tribe, after Charles presents Gregoire ceremonial paddle Monday at Vern Burton Community Center in

TOM THOMPSON

Plans to rebury 337 remains of men, women and children that had been uncovered at the site.

They now rest in hand-crafted cedar boxes.

"Now we can rebury the ancestors," said Robert "Sonny" Francis, who had led two-dozen Lower Elwha singers and drummers in a song of Tse-whit-zen.

The village once existed along the shoreline just east of the present-day Nippon Paper Industries USA mill.

"My heart has been heavy," Francis said. "Now I can be glad."

'Painful experience'

Gregoire also acknowledged the sorrow beneath the joy.

"This agreement brings positive closure to a difficult and painful experience," she told the nearly 200 people who filled the community center, which is next to Port Angeles City Hall.

Charles echoed the sentiment.

"This has been a difficult experience for everyone," she said.

"We have been forced to understand each other. We look forward to when our ancestors will return to

"Now we can rebury the ancestors. My heart has been heavy. Now I can be glad."

ROBERT 'SONNY' FRANCIS
organizer, Lower Elwha Kiallam
singing, drumming group

their final resting place.

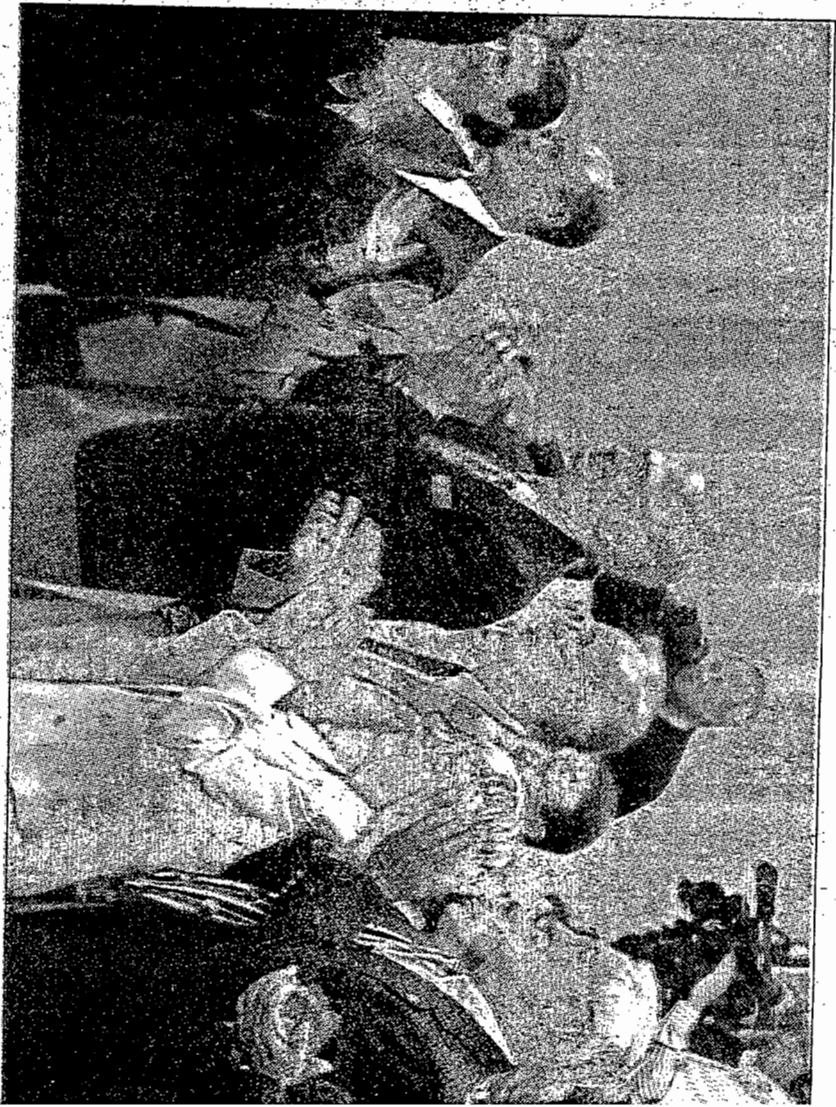
"For us, reburial is what this has always been about."

After the governor had departed, and the others began to drift away, a tribal elder sat alone and, without a word, summed up what had happened and what lay ahead.

Johnson Charles, the Lower Elwha elder who had prayed over so many of the ancestral remains taken from what had been Tse-whit-zen, opened Monday's ceremonies with prayers in Kiallam and English.

Now he took out his wooden flute and played "Amazing Grace."

Reporter Jim Casey can be reached at 360-417-3538 or at jim.casey@peninsuladailynews.com.



Members of state, Port Angeles city and Port of Port Angeles governments applaud a resolving issues over the defunct graving yard Monday before documents are signed.

