

March 11, 2025

Dear Val, and to Puts son and daughter,

I am sitting in my waterfront office of the Suquamish Tribal Education building on the Suquamish Reservation. I work for my tribe as I have for many years. Currently I work to help create the Suquamish specific curriculum for the public and tribal schools. I love my work, and this tribal specific curriculum work was not always an imagined possibility in the state of Washington. Now that it is, we are making a difference for anyone who wants to know true Tribal history and culture. I am positive Put knew about this valuable work and supported it fiercely!

Just yesterday I said his name...

I was a guest speaker at my son Nigel Lawrence's classroom at the University of Washington where he is teaching a class centered on the importance of The Tribal Canoe Journeys. The Tribal Canoe Journeys were born in the Washington State Centennial Celebration in 1989. It was in 1984 or 1985 when I first met Put. I will never forget his voice talking to me on the phone or in person on that Centennial Celebration planning work, way back then. I will never forget his guidance of me as a very young twenty something, Native representing Tribes on the Washington State Centennial Commission. Like a kind uncle who cared deeply about an important mission; that's how he treated me. We had many deep involved conversations about Tribal/State relationships. He believed in me when I represented all the tribes in Washington State and spoke publicly about the importance of The Centennial Celebration, even as I had concerns about what was to come of it all. He believed in me when I left the Centennial Commission and went to college. He believed in me and the issues that I was committed to, repatriating Native human remains from federal and state institutions, using archaeology of Native places as the last resort whenever and wherever possible to not disturb the places rather than studying everything possible, revitalizing the tribal languages and place names wherever possible. He truly cared about us as Indigenous People and stood up for us and what we held as imperative.

Just yesterday I said his name, Putnum Barber, as I recounted my participating in the Centennial Commission and the birth of Canoe Journeys, all because of celebrating The State of Washington's 100th Birthday.

Just yesterday, (March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025) I said his name, Putnum Barber, along with Ralph Munro, Jean Gardner and Boothe Gardner, and Emmett Oliver, as I have every time, I recount the Centennial Celebration and the birth of The Canoe Journeys. These were a few of the top-level people who were committed to the Tribal participation in; and celebration of Tribes, during the states 100<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations.

Just yesterday, I said his name, Putnum Barber, when telling students at the University of Washington (most of whom weren't born yet in 1989) when I recalled the details of the planning of the Centennial Celebrations. The Canoe Journeys are the single most important tribal cultural revitalization that has ever come into existence in the entire history of the west coast of the U.S., including Alaska and Canada! The Canoe Journeys exists because the State of Washington wanted to honor the 100 years of existence as a state;

and dearly wanted to include the thousands of years of the Indigenous Peoples history and current realities, while doing so. Putnum Barber had a guiding hand involved in helping to create the welcoming place for tribal participation. This was no little thing.

Just yesterday I said his name, Putnam Barber. And today, I am crying looking out my waterfront window, to the water that my now adult children, my grandchildren and now my great grandchild are regularly in canoes on the water, singing paddle songs, speaking lushootseed, and living a proud Native life. All my offspring and their offspring have been on Canoe Journeys every year that they happen. These generations know that I was on the Centennial Commission and these generations know the names Putnum Barber, Ralph Munro, Jean Gardner, Boothe Gardner and Emmett Oliver, because I retell the story over and over again. Important stories need to be told as often as possible. Each time I tell of the birth of Canoe Journeys, I say their names.

On the Paddle to Seattle in 1989 there were 12 or 13 canoes on the water from Suquamish to Seattle. In 2012 there were 103 canoes on the water that landed at Squaxin Island on the annual Tribal Canoe Journeys.

What is important to know is this, Canoe Journeys didn't just bring back canoes, and natives on the water. Canoe Journeys brought back canoe carving, paddle making, cedar weaving, wool weaving, tribal language speaking, traditional native songs, and dances, and cultural celebrations. Canoe Journeys brought back an importance on physical health, anti-smoking, anti-alcohol, anti-drugs, anti-obesity, anti-bullying, anti-violence of any kind. Canoe Journeys brought back tribal Identity, deep pride and knowledge in our traditional ways, introspection of our educational systems and celebrations of our accomplishments of all kinds. Canoe Journeys brought scholarly work in reinstating our culture and the multifaceted benefits of cultural teachings into curriculum and into how schools operate. The statistics prove that re-instilling cultural teachings and tribal ways into the schools equals impressive improvements in academic successes and lowering of negative demographics. Again, the importance of the Canoe Journeys that were born in The Centennial Celebration cannot be understated. The exponential growth and prosperity of Tribal Culture due to Canoe Journey is the single most important lasting legacy of Washington States Centennial Celebration of 1989. Thirty-six years of tribal cultural growth and celebration born in Washington State and spreading as far north as Alaska and as far south as Oregon, including all the Canoe Nations. We have had Hawaiian and Māori Peoples join us as well.

Just yesterday I said his name, Putnum Barber....

Even though I haven't seen him in many years, Put has remained an important person in my life. I was a young, twenty something Suquamish Tribal member, Suquamish Museum Tour Guide and researcher, when I met Put. I am now a 67-year-old tribal elder, who still tells the story of Washington State Centennial Celebration and the birth of Canoe Journeys.

Just yesterday I said his name.....

It is with tears streaming down my face, and my heart breaking, that I write this to you. Your husband, your dad, is also **our Put.** He was and will always be, important to me, like a proud guiding Uncle, and I will always continue to say his name when I tell the story of Tribal Canoe Journeys.

*Respectfully,*

*Barbara Lawrence BA MBA*

*Suquamish Tribe Education Administration Department*

*Since Time Immemorial Curriculum Specialist*

*Education Outreach Specialist*

*360.621.7850*

*[blawrence@suquamish.nsn.us](mailto:blawrence@suquamish.nsn.us)*