

Mr. John C. Ewers,
senior scientist;
Smithsonian Institution,
United States National Museum,
Washington D.C. 20560

Jan. 5, 1966

Dear Mr. Ewers:

Thank you for the briefing on the Jefferson Peace Medal.
(These are wanted for one of the display cases at the Wanapum Dam)

When I get somewhat in the clear, I'm making some small sculptured figures now for the Wanapum Dam display cases, have my regular job on the city desk here etc. to take care of, I'll get into some of your specific questions.

Appended: A starter on the Weaseltail death inquiry, and when the weather clears (our snow is mounting now and they are closing schools) I will go into it directly with Jim. My informant, Percy Bull Child, son of George Bull Child, who you probably knew, said he didn't recall Jim being there at the Weaseltail funeral, because of extreme severe weather conditions. But I have known Jim to go back to Browning for several deaths each year. This will unfold no doubt. Percy is also a good informant, and a good artist.

I will go into the first Pieigans, Bloods etc. who came out to the Yakima country, their reasons, etc.

As to inquiry on clay pipes and the Yakimas: Refer to Smith, Harlan, Archaeology of the Yakima Valley, (about 1908), wraps. This has some "clay" pipe drawings. And about the "Irish" type clay pipes, next time I'm at Vancouver I'll make an effort to buy you an unused one. An antique shop there has several I believe. They were bought at Seattle a few years ago. Some excavation work was being done on the waterfront and they got down into the basement of some old buildings that burned about 60 or 70 years ago and found some boxes of these there, and they were of a trade type used among the Northwest Indians in the "Siwash" days. So I think some of this kind of culture moved from the sea trade, east, as well as west to west.

Oh, yes, the Harlan Smith deal has a reference in it and drawing of a headdress incised drawing on a piece of antler, found about 30 miles from here in the Lemhi country. And I think I can dig up some other reference on the early straight up and down headdress type, not bonnet.

In that relation, do you know the Blackfoot story of the origin of the headdress, I'm sure you do. Percy, who says the Blackfoot got their headdresses from the Sioux, "in the way I have heard the old people tell it," said Jim W. knows the headdress story better than he does. It has to do with a Blackfoot out hunting, caught in a storm and holing up in a buffalo carcass. He "dreamed" the headdress like the ribs, boss bones etc. of the buffalo and went home, told his dream and made a headdress.

2-Dr. Lewers

But when I get the chance, and I've sent word by Percy for Jim to start "remembering," and I'll make more of a record than customarily, because I've confined myself mostly to the Yakimas.

I can also jot down some notes on some fragments of Yakima references to pre-Tipi culture, buffalo hide tipis or lodges and use of paints and designs. I have never been able to get more than references to this custom which the good old informants insisted existed, even to the point of paint origin, painting of songs on skins etc., like the Plains skin or hide paintings.

Incidentally if you have a connection with the library and they ever have any more surplus book disposals I'd appreciate another change of getting in on one. Hardly a weekend goes by but graduate students do not come in and utilize my library, notes etc. (Mostly Washington State University) now. I have routed them to sources for setting up a several years project on the impact of Christianity and various kinds of religions on the old Indian religion, etc.

Incidentally, too, when my bronzes come back from the bronze foundry and before they go into the Wanapum Dam Tourist Center we will have to have a religious ceremonial, like a Washat with sons and widows of some of the portraits participating to "make it right" to display these in public. I think that will be some kind of a "first" in the art field. The Game Department is providing some contraband elk and deer and this will be a "private" ceremony with only the Indians and I, at the Priest Rapids Long House, with the old religious leader, now living on the Yakima Reservation, using the Smowhala handbell, feather fans etc. One of the heads is of Chief Kuni or Tommy Thompson of Celilo Falls, about 150 miles down river (the Columbia) His son is now the hereditary chief and his widow, Flora, lives at The Dalles, Ore. I'll have to send them transportation money. Tommy, who was a Wyampum, "threw away" his old name of LaWot and took his father's name, Kuni, when he was about 85 and gave me the name of LaWot which I've never used, although Flora has written to me, using that name. I've spent Christmas in the (now burned) long house at Celilo Falls, before The Dalles Dam was built, and was the only white there among a slug of Indians, some coming from Warm Springs and some pretty drunk one night. I'll never forget the night one tough past middle-aged buck from Warm Springs had a crying jag on, beat his chest and stood before me shouting, look what the white man did to me and started waving a knife around. Old Tommy got up from the table where we were eating and worked him over with a fast tongue lashing.

Sorry for the rambling letter but wanted to impart a little "sincerity" to my request and qualification for any library surplus disposal that might come up. All my material of course will go into proper repository in time.

Sincerely

Enclosed:

Click Melander

- 1-Clipping regarding Wanapum Dam, reference to sculpture
- 2-Fragmentary notes on Weaseltail's death.

[Enclosure, 5 Jan 1966]

Subject: Weaseltail

Fragmentary notes made on incidental interview with Percy Bull Child of White Swan on occasion of his visit to bring some sinew, 1/4/66

Percy Bull Child, son of George Bull Child, lives on Yakima Reservation with his wife, a Blackfoot, (related by marriage to various Yakimas)

I asked him if he could tell me something of Weaseltail's death or should I ask Jim.

"I think I can tell you about as much as he can, because I was there... I don't remember for sure whether he was there or not, he was living at White Swan and it was a bad winter. I helped dig the grave.

(Tell Jim when I see him I will talk to him about it.--All right)

(Did he starve to death?)

No, he didn 't starve to death. I've heard that story. It 's a lie. (Percy B.C. has always been honest with me, even about things that were to his detriment)

I'll tell you what I remember about it.

(Where did he die?)

In his home near the Star School.

(Where was that?)

On the Reservation, a community northwest, about 6 miles I think it must be, from Browning. There must have been 300 people living around that community.

(When was it?)

It must have been about this time of year (January) Jim will know. Without checking I don 't know when it was (what year) Jim will know, when yousee him.

There was a lot of snow on the ground, about like this (measuring about 3 feet) It was cold, 50 or 54 degrees below. I've seen it 56 below there. It was so cold that cows and horses froze where they stood. The people at the house had to have some food and it was not quite so cold then. Weaseltail's daughter, Maggie, went into Browning to get some

and itsnowed and got bad so they didn 't come right back, they were gone maybe three or four days.

The old man was left with another old man in the house. The people around had a little to eat, enough to get by on. The old man went down to the hot spring, not far from the house. He went down and jumped in and took a bath just like the old people used to do all the time, summer or winter. He went back to the house and got sick and went to bed and the next morning he was found dead in bed, but he didn 't starve to death.

His daughter 's name was Maggie Many Hides. She is married to LouisX Plenty Treaty now and lives at Browning.

(Where did they bury him?)

They buried him across from the Star School.

(What kind of a graveyard is that, a family graveyard or what?)

It 's a regular graveyard.

(What kind of a service did they have, an Indian service?)

No, it was a Catholic service. I helped dig the grave.

(Was Jim there?)

Right now, like this, I don't remember. But maybe he wasn 't. It seems like the weather got so bad no one could travel around.

(Tell Jim when I see him we'll talk about it and some other things)

Allright.

(I want to find this out for Mr. Ewers who works at Smithsonian institution)

Seems like I know about him. I think my father knew him.

(When opportunity presents I'll get interviews on present living members, where and when old people died, and try and get enough names of Blackfeet who live here part of the year or most of the year and the reason)

CR

3701 Commonwealth Rd.

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Jan. 19, 1966

Director, U.S. Mint,
Philadelphia, Penn. x

Dear Sir:

Enclosed is postal note for \$6, for which please send 2(two)
Jefferson Peace Medals No. 103, (Lewis and Clark peace medal)

I am sorry I do not have U.S. Mint order form, and would appreciate
one, listing the various U.S. Presidential medals.

Sincerely Yours

Click Relander