

# Priest Lake Museum

Spring 2022 Newsletter



## “We Didn’t Come Here to Swim”

Long before the first summer vacationers arrived here, the Kalispel people (Qlispélixw) traveled to Priest Lake (yisáqwt) as part of their annual rounds. Kalispel families followed an array of trails from the Pend Oreille River, then fanned out to traditional camps at the major creek outlets on both sides of the lake. These sites were located near well-known fishing areas such as Soldier Creek.

During the late summer and fall, they erected stick weirs to funnel abundant runs of whitefish (xw̓yu) into eddies, where they speared, cleaned, and dried the fish for their winter food (stáwéne?). They also harvested bull trout (Saw) and suckers (Éléne?) at the mouths of certain creeks.

Women and children combed the surrounding hills for huckleberries (sisaq). The men followed the caribou (stiyétce?) up to the high ridges. Sometimes they used fire to drive deer into the lake toward waiting hunters. Visitors from other Plateau tribes joined the Qlispélixw to gather what they needed from this rich landscape.



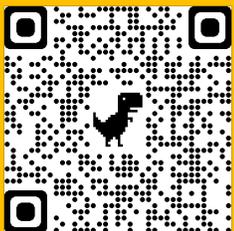
## New Outdoor Signs

The Priest Lake Museum presents new interpretive panels this summer! The Kalispel Language Survival School with J.R. Bluff worked with us to create outdoor interpretative panels about the Tribe's long connections to Priest Lake. The panels illuminate Kalispel traditions at the lake using the Tribe's own voices and language. A panel will be

installed at the museum. Another one will be added near the mouth of Soldier Creek on the east side, where Kalispel people camped each fall and built stick weirs to gather white fish for winter provisions.

Generations of Kalispel also harvested the area's roots, berries, and plants as part of their seasonal rounds. To honor this rich legacy, the museum relabeled our Nature Garden plants in Salish and English with the assistance of the Kalispel Language Survival School last season. The garden boasts over 30 plants native to the Priest Lake region. This summer you can hear J.R. and Stan Bluff read the panel text and many of the plant names in Salish through a QR code. We appreciate

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Use this QR code to listen to Kalispel J.R. Bluff narrate “We didn’t come here to swim.” Open your phone camera and focus in on the code until you see the Priest Lake Museum website link.

# Dear Museum Friends,

Last fall, as I worked on my projects, I was struck by how different of a season it was compared to the past few years. "Indian Summer," the great season that starts right after Labor Day and goes into mid-October, never came. Typically this is a time when the majority of tourists have left, the resorts slow down, but are still open, and the lake belongs to the locals. All we got was cold and rain.

In recent years, with all the new construction happening many builders work outside projects year round. I, too, was planning to start framing a house in October, but pulled the plug telling the owners I had a bad feeling and would delay the project until Spring. Every now and again I get lucky and this was one of those times: winter moved in hard and fast.

By February, I lulled myself into thinking winter was getting over and started planning for spring. On February 26 I was at the Vintage Snowmobile Races basking in the sun when a newcomer asked me if winter was truly over. I replied "Of course!, We may get a few inches of snow

now and then but they won't be significant". Two days later we got hit with "Snowpocalypse;" thirteen inches of snow fell in Kalispell Bay in roughly 8 hours and places north of Nordman got up to two feet. OOOPS!

Comments of "worst winter ever" and "can't wait for mud season" came from many of our residents, and I heard old timers chuckle because this seemed more like what we experienced as pups back in the old days.

The Priest River Experimental Forest (PREF), which was founded around 1910, has complete snowfall records for that location from 1912 to present day. I obtained a copy of them to see how this winter really stacked up to time. The mean snowfall for this period is 77.8 inches, 2021/22 was 85 inches. It should be noted that the PREF is south of the lake so it's numbers will be lower than parts further north but the trend line is similar.

In the 50's, 60's and 70's almost half the years had snowfalls

over 100 inches and two thirds exceeded the historical mean. The decades since then only have one or two years over 100 inches and few over 77.8. Yes, the times they are a-changing.

This data is just a small piece of information that the PREF has developed over the 121 years of it's existence. As a forestry research center, they study the effects of logging, fire, drought, disease, reforestation and more. Having this information available is invaluable; especially with the rapid transformations we are experiencing today.

Looking forward to the opening of the museum on Memorial day weekend and hoping for a great summer. See you at the lake,

*Pancho*

The Priest Lake Museum Association was founded to preserve and promote the rich heritage of the surrounding region. The newsletter is published annually.



*Nordman, 1946*

# Summer Schedule

<b>July 5</b>	Community Church Fellowship Room Hall @7:00 <b>Kalispell Creek: Fire, Railroads, Logging and Restoration</b> presented by Jill Cobb
<b>July 7</b>	USFS Ranger Station HWY 57@ 9:00/3 miles moderately difficult <b>Kalispell Creek Reclamation Hike</b>
<b>July 12</b>	Community Church Fellowship Room Hall @7:00 <b>The Many Mysteries of Mille Adams: Researching a Local Legend</b> presented by Sarah Goettsch
<b>July 14</b>	Meet at trailhead, left off Hwy 57 past mile marker 31 on FS 313 road/easy <b>Hanna Flats Hike</b>
<b>July 20</b>	Inn at Priest Lake @7:00 <b>Putting our Water to Work</b> presented by Nancy Renk
<b>July 21</b>	USFS Ranger Station HWY 57@ 9:00 to carpool/2 miles moderately difficult <b>Indian Mountain Fire Lookout Hike</b>
<b>July 27</b>	Inn at Priest Lake @7:00 <b>Coolin's Long and Hopeful Past</b> presented by Kris Runberg Smith
<b>July 28</b>	Trailhead 1.3 miles past Lionshead State Park turnoff on the East Shore road@9:00/4 miles moderately difficult <b>Upper Priest Lake Eastside Trail Hike</b>
	<b>For more information, check the Priest Lake Museum website: <a href="https://www.priestlakemuseum.org">https://www.priestlakemuseum.org</a></b>

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the efforts of J.R. and Stan Bluff, along with recording engineer Jaye Nordling to make these recordings possible. Jack Nisbet coordinated the effort.

The museum is pleased to place its first interpretative panel on the lake's eastside. The Soldier Creek panel is located at the turn-around where Sherwood Beach road ends at the creek. A shoutout to Bonner Country Road and Bridge engineer Matt Mulder who supported our signage and Innovia and Equinox foundations, who helped fund them.



*Kalispel people at their traditional camp on Soldier Creek in 1887 and 1913*

## Museum Highlights

**FOOL'S GOLD  
MINING AT  
PRIEST LAKE**

This is the last summer to visit “Fool’s Gold: Mining at Priest Lake,” an exhibit in our temporary gallery that explores the stories and privations of the region’s miners. Don’t miss the Outdoor Mining Exhibit featuring interpretive panels and artifacts behind the museum.

