

Washington tribes 'Paddle to Seattle'

**Native American Press Association
Native American News Service**

SEATTLE, WASH. — As many as 20 ocean-going war canoes, restored or newly carved by Northwest Coast Indians and powered by teams of up to 15 paddlers each, were greeted by thousands of well-wishers as they beached at Seattle's Golden Gardens Park in late July.

Their arrival culminated a three-year-long effort by tribal elders and carvers to stage a canoe relay celebrating the seafaring culture of Northwest Coast tribes, and bringing back the spirit of the war canoes.

Members of the Quileute Tribe, whose reservation borders the Pacific Ocean, were instrumental in organizing the event, which coincided with the Washington state centennial.

Canoe teams came from as far as 450 miles away, such as the Bella Bella, who rowed the entire distance from the Queen Charlotte Islands of northern British Columbia. The team stopped at villages along the way for food and rest.

The Washington coastal tribes, including the Quileute, Quinault and Makah, had to paddle more than 100 miles around the Straits of Juan de Fuca and into Puget Sound to the Suquamish Reservation, where all the canoe crews gathered for a feast July 20 before the final seven-mile lap of the Paddle to Seattle.

Organizers say they are determined it won't be another century before war canoes gather on Puget Sound again.