



# **Shadow Tribe: The Making of Columbia River Indian Identity (Emil and Kathleen Sick Book Series in Western History and Biography)**

*Andrew Fisher*

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*Shadow Tribe* offers the first in-depth history of the Pacific Northwest's Columbia River Indians -- the defiant River People whose ancestors refused to settle on the reservations established for them in central Oregon and Washington. Largely overlooked in traditional accounts of tribal dispossession and confinement, their story illuminates the persistence of off-reservation Native communities and the fluidity of their identities over time. Cast in the imperfect light of federal policy and dimly perceived by non-Indian eyes, the flickering presence of the Columbia River Indians has followed the treaty tribes down the difficult path marked out by the forces of American colonization.

Based on more than a decade of archival research and conversations with Native people, Andrew Fisher's groundbreaking book traces the waxing and waning of Columbia River Indian identity from the mid-nineteenth through the late twentieth centuries. Fisher explains how, despite policies designed to destroy them, the shared experience of being off the reservation and at odds with recognized tribes forged far-flung river communities into a loose confederation called the Columbia River Tribe. Environmental changes and political pressures eroded their autonomy during the second half of the twentieth century, yet many River People continued to honor a common heritage of ancestral connection to the Columbia, resistance to the reservation system, devotion to cultural traditions, and detachment from the institutions of federal control and tribal governance. At times, their independent and uncompromising attitude has challenged the sovereignty of the recognized tribes, earning Columbia River Indians a reputation as radicals and troublemakers even among their own people.

*Shadow Tribe* is part of a new wave of historical scholarship that shows Native American identities to be socially constructed, layered, and contested rather than fixed, singular, and unchanging. From his vantage point on the Columbia, Fisher has written a pioneering study that uses regional history to broaden our understanding of how Indians thwarted efforts to confine and define their existence within narrow reservation boundaries.

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