

Upper Skagit First Spring Salmon Ceremony
Charlie adsəd Anderson

When they fished the first springs on the river, if they caught 2 or 3 springs, they (the head fisherman) would give some to everyone at the home ground there. For the first springs, there had to be 4 men on the šəbəd and when they came home with 2 or 3 springs they were cooked by the head fisherman (or his wife). They cooked every bit of the fish and divided it among the few families there -- every bit. Charlie Anderson's father was the first head fisherman. The h^wulux was the head man to grab the net and put the salmon in the canoe and kill it. He was on the stern end. The bow man who paddles is the yu'cwil. The first fish are killed with a deer bone about 8 inches to 10 inches long and sharpened on one end. It was stuck right in the back of the canoe in back of the sternman. When they got the salmon in the canoe, he would get the bone and snag it on the fish's backbone -- break the cord off from the backbone. When he takes it from the river, the fish is still wrapped in the net. This bone is the cəkačəd (cə'kəd 'snag it'), to snag the back of the salmon's head. The h^wulux's wife would cook the salmon for his family -- and he helps along to keep the fire going. A is trained by his father to do this when he grows up, and he knows just how to handle it. Some people had power to do this fishing -- nothing else but fishing. The bone was used just for the first springs, and wasn't used for anything else at all. If you catch any

other fish at all later, you would [26/27] club them on the heads. When the first springs were cooked, they were divided among the different families. To cook it, they have 5 poles each about 10-12 feet long laid over the fire about 3 feet from the ground. Then small sticks are laid across the 5 poles, and the salmon is laid over these to roast. The small poles were about 3-3 1/2 feet long. All the fish, every part was used, such as the eggs. To cook the eggs they peeled alder bark from a small tree about 5 inches in diameter, and pieces of the bark would be about 2 feet long. The salmon eggs were put in the bark container over the sticks and roasted. Springs have a special way to be cut up. They claim if you don't cut it up just right, when you go to fish with the šəbəd the fish won't stay there. The bones of springs must be disposed of in the water if you catch the first spring in the šəbəd. If you catch it some other way, you are not particular. If you don't follow these rules, the salmon will hear and turn and never get caught. There was no ceremony or anything for any other kind of salmon (even the first catch). The First Spring Ceremony was Upper Skagit, a rule of the Skagit. Charlie Anderson was the h^wulux. You always grab the salmon by its gill. If you tighten the net behind the gills, the fish will get loose. You hold the fish under the neck by the gills. The h^wulux give the bowman orders in paddling.