



Susan Hess

customs. Are customs of a poor tribe different from those of a rich tribe?

What is constant through most American Indian tribes is Blood Quantum. It's a way of defining membership in a Native American group. It wasn't something I could see or hear about it in a discussion, and so I didn't learn about it for several years. I found out about it because my friend Ann from the village told me her cousin was dating someone outside the tribe, "I tell my kids it's okay to have a romance with someone outside the tribe, but they should marry someone from the tribe."

"My kids are 100 percent Warm Springs. If they marry a Nez Perce or Umatilla or white, their kids are only half Warm Springs," she said. "If their children marry outside the tribe, they are only a quarter. Less than a quarter they lose all their benefits. They can't be enrolled in the tribe."

My husband was born in Germany to a German father and an American mother. At birth he became a citizen of both countries. But this is not the way of these tribes. I understand Ann's concern. If someone is enrolled in a tribe, the tribe is there for many things. Ann's husband was in a car accident last year far from home; the tribe paid her expenses to travel there.

She is enrolled Warm Springs. Enrolled members have first preference for jobs in tribal enterprises. The tribe pays college or vocational training tuition and expenses. Every month each member gets a payment and at Christmas a bonus from tribal enterprises, from things like—timber sales, manufacturing lumber, power right-of-ways, casino profits. This is not taxpayer money. It's like tribal members are investors in the tribal corporations.

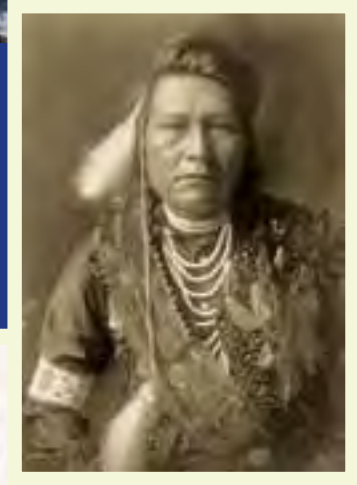
For three years, I had been in the village and not known about quantum blood, but once I knew, I saw how it affected people's sense of security. Some people could trace Indian ancestry back hundreds of years and yet not be eligible to enroll in any tribe. Enrolled people might be poor, but they belonged.

I have friends and neighbors who travel to India or Africa or Italy or Peru to see another culture. Yet mere miles from their homes they can visit rich cultures. The second weekend in April Celilo Village holds its annual salmon feast and the last weekend in October a powwow. They welcome all.

And that is all I have to say.



▲ Fishing at Celilo Falls, now inundated by The Dalles Dam



▲ Yakama man



◀ Young Yakama woman



▲ Warm Springs family group



Umatilla youth in holiday costume ▶

◀ (opposite) Longhouse at Celilo Village