

## The Voice of the Colville Indians.

On my recent trip to Leavenworth, I had an unexpected opportunity to see a song and dance performance by the Colville Native American Indian tribe. As the salmon festival has expanded over the years, it now includes historical and cultural displays that are related to the salmon and wildlife of the Northwest. The Colville Indians, whose real name is the Shipwoyelpi, have a culture that is strongly tied\* to salmon fishing. When European settlers came to this area, they gave the tribe the name of the river they were based by, the Colville. Salmon has always been an important part of their diet, and therefore, has deep cultural significance for them. I wasn't aware that any Indians at all would be at the festival. I walked around to see the different displays, taking with me a small group of children from the school that my son goes to. As we made our way\* from one booth to another, we suddenly heard drums. We followed the sound until we came to a circular, sheltered area that was covered with pine tree branches. Underneath were displays of animal skins, antlers, bead work, and cultural posters. Inside the sheltered area was a large circle of earth where young men and women were dancing. They were very colorfully dressed, and had all sorts of bells and feathers on their costumes. One performance was just coming to an end as we sat down, so we settled down, and waited for the next. A different set of dancers from the troupe came into the circular area, and when the two singers started banging the drums rhythmically and singing, they started to dance. One young man in particular caught my eye; he was dressed as some kind of bird. He danced slightly crouched over, with jerky, pecking movements. I couldn't take pictures fast enough. The singing was also impressive; the two male singers sang in a very soulful, high pitched manner that certainly kept my attention. I only wish that I knew *what* they were singing. One of them stood up afterwards and explained that he and his friend inherited their love of singing these cultural and historical songs, and had learned how to do so by listening to others, and with the help of\* tapes. More school children started arriving, and filling up the seating area. But soon we had to leave because our bus was going to take us back to Wenatchee. I was anxious to hear and see another performance, and disappointed that we had to leave. However, the images and sounds of the Colville were, for me, the best part of the day, and, at the very least\*, worthy of a podcast.

Related vocabulary and expressions: at the very least, with the help of, to make your way, tied to.

1. At the very least, the famous sculptor deserves an impressive memorial.
2. With the help of podcasts, video clips from You-tube, and magazines, he became fluent in English!
3. We slowly made our way through the maze; it took a lot of time and concentration to get out.
4. His family is tied to the land; they have farmed here for generations.

