

Living Nations, Living Words: A Map of First Peoples Poetry  
Poem commentary by Duane Niatum, 2020

Speaker: Duane Niatum

Date of recording: July 7, 2020

Location: Seattle, Washington, poet's home

Length: 3 minutes, 57 seconds

START OF RECORDING

Duane Niatum: This is Duane Niatum reading "Old Humptulips" for my grandfather, Francis Patsey.

[Duane Niatum reads "Old Humptulips"]

DN: Commentary on "Old Humptulips." I chose this poem about my Grandpa because he told me this wonderful story about what happened when the Klallams were run out of their villages and land by the new local governments in the nineteenth century, to allow white settlers to come and occupy their land. The government officials had guards pack up and send off the Klallams to the Swinomish Nation across the Salish Sea. The idea was to start a fight between the two tribal nations. But the Klallam families still had their canoes and supplies and one night, under cover of darkness when no one was looking, they headed back home to Klallam country, where their people had lived for thousands of years.

Eventually the families pooled what money they had and bought the land that had been stolen by the whites. It was a small part of what was originally their home base, but it gave them the chance to start a new life from the pain of displacement. The irony is terrific because the Klallams of today have been far more financially successful than the white people of the Sequim area. The Jamestown S'Klallam Seven Cedars Casino generates more revenue for the region than the entire local white business community. This revenue allows the Jamestown Klallam Nation to provide health care, dental and other services to the tribe and the community at large.

My grandfather, if he were still alive, would get a happy chuckle from this turn of fortunes. My grandfather taught me to value the land, along with the sea, the community of people and creatures that we live with.

END OF RECORDING