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## The Cowichan Thunderbird and Orca Legend. as told by Joe Jack

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One of the earliest legends in the history of the Cowichan Indian Tribes is the legend of the Thunderbird and Orca.



Life along the Cowichan River was one of plenty and good fortune for the Cowichan People. The Cowichan Bay, and Sansum Narrows was full of octopus, crabs, seals, and sea urchins, the beaches full of clams, and oysters. The mountains were bountiful with wild animals, berries, herbs, and roots. The Cowichan and Koksilah Rivers were rich with salmon, trout, and steelhead.

However, there was one time in the history of the Cowichan people when the Rivers went silent from the sounds of salmon splashing up the rivers.

The Cowichan people realized that there was something terribly wrong; there was absolutely no salmon in the Cowichan and Koksilah river system. The people gathered along the shores, and then worked their way down to the mouth of the Rivers trying to find the cause. At the mouth of the river they discovered the cause of the disappearing salmon; to their horror a Supernatural Killer Whale had set claim to the mouth of the Cowichan River, and the salmon were all being mercilessly eaten.

The Cowichan people paddled their huge War Canoes out to the Orca; banging on the sides of their canoes, trying to rid their waters of this mighty creature, but try as they might; they were unable to drive this skilled allusive ocean predator from their home waters.



The Medicine people of all the Cowichan Villages joined together to call upon the powerful support of a Supernatural creature known as Tzinquaw (the Thunderbird).

For four days and four nights the people sang their most ancestral spiritual songs to the Thunderbird, and soon the Thunderbird appeared, and was quickly locked in a fierce battle with the Orca in the skies above St. Ann's field. The Thunderbird was victorious and the salmon run was saved.

The respect of the traditional lands, the animals, the fish, and the Supernatural has always been a way of life for all Indigenous Native Indian people.

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**"The Cowichan Thunderbird and Orca Legend, this beautiful Salish Legend has been told and retold from generation to generation; it's an old legend that every Cowichan person has heard at a very young age. Indian children sitting beside their parents or their grandparents, listening to their words; visualizing the images, as the words and the images pulsate through their young veins, ever sinking deep into their young hearts, and at that very moment in time, never knowing that one day they will be hearing their own voices retell that very same story to their children and grandchildren." Coast Salish Artist Joe Jack.**

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**This is an old oral historical Coast Salish legend that originates from time immemorial.**

