Cheech-Ma-Ham, Chief of the Klallams

Born at Ka Tai in 1808

- His father was Lah-Ka-nim, a Klallam Chief
- His mother was Qua-tum-a-low
- He had two wives, Queen Victoria and Jenny Lind.
- He had two sons named, Prince of Whales and Charlie Swan York
- He was 40 years old when the first white settler came to Port Townsend in 1851.
- He was given a royal nickname, 'Duke of York'
Becomes a Chief

- His older brother, King George, was next in line to become chief, left and never returned.
- The Superintendent of Indian Affairs recognized Cheech-Ma-Ham as chief to the Klallam in 1854.
San Francisco

- In 1851, arrangements were made to send Cheech-Ma-Ham to San Francisco.
- He was turned over to James Swan, who took him all over the city. He saw the crowds of people, the soldiers, and the shipping in the harbor.
- Seeing San Francisco must have altered his traditional concepts and view of the future.
Later, when the tribe began to complain to their chief about the encroachments of the white settlers, Cheech-Ma-Ham left in his canoe one evening and rowed to a lonely inlet where he spent the night in thought.

When he returned, he called together the Klallams and made a speech in which he told of the great number of white people.

The speech was effective, and such fear and respect was implanted in the hearts of the Klallams that no further talk of driving the settlers away was heard.
Held Hostage

- In 1854, an outbreak of hostilities between army troops and Klallams at Dungeness left 4 killed.
  - 3 Klallams were arrested
  - 6 months later they escaped from Fort Steilacoom.
  - Cheech-Ma-Ham was taken hostage until the 3 escapees surrendered.
  - Then Cheech-Ma-Ham was released.
1854 Conference

- In 1854, a conference of chiefs from both sides of the mountains gathered near Tulalip.
- They urged immediate action by all natives to drive the settlers out.
- Cheech-Ma-Ham disagreed. He countered by asking, “Whose coats are you wearing? You get them all from the white men. They buy your fish and skins. He spoke about his trip to San Francisco, and how numerous they are.
- The conference came to a close without reaching an agreement.
- Cheech-Ma-hams arguments on behalf of peace were considered the greatest influence in forestalling the Yakima from an immediate call to war.
The role of a Chief

- He served as translator.
- Also served as an Escort or intermediary.
- He interceded on behalf or his tribesmen who were sentenced to hard labor. His action secured their freedom.
- He saved the life of a tribesman about to be hanged by a lynch mob in Port Townsend.
His joint plea with Chief Sealth in 1858 to spare the life of Chief Leschi was unsuccessful.

He thwarted a mob of angry whites who wanted to lynch an Indian for the alleged killing of a mail carrier.

He was credited with searching out sufficient evidence to clear the young Indian and secure his release.
1855 Point-No-Point Treaty

- Cheech-Ma-Ham signed the Point-No-Point Treaty of 1855
- When the treaty was signed by Congress and proclaimed by President Buchanan in early 1859, relocation to the Skokomish Reservation loomed.
Peacekeeper

- Treaty signing provoked Indian wars of 1855-56.
- During this time, a number of Klallams held a secret meeting to decide whether or not to kill the whites in Port Townsend.
- They deliberated for nine days, during which Cheech-Ma-Ham sent a daily signal of danger.
On the 10th day, the message from Sentinal Rock was, in essence, ‘danger is passed.

From that day in late summer or fall of 1857, the threat of war between the Klallams and early settlers in Port Townsend was over.

Cheech-Ma-Ham was considered a hero.
Cheech-Ma-Ham’s Leadership

- He possessed great insight.
- He made a courageous decision and acted upon it.
- He clung to it through a series of trials that ended in complete devastation for his own people.
On Aug. 31, 1871 a fire destroyed the village of KaTai. 45 homes were burned.

Orders had come to Cheech-Ma-Ham that all Klallams living in Port Townsend would have to relocate to the Skokomish Reservation.

Over 20 canoes were towed to Skokomish.

Only one Klallam remained behind, refusing to leave.

Cheech-Ma-Ham did not move to the Skokomish reservation, instead he stayed on Indian Island.
Cheech-Ma-Ham went to Olympia to appeal for help, in attempt to have Indian Island declared a reservation.

After a few days, he triumphantly returned, bringing a written promise assuring his tribesmen that the Great White Father would rectify the wrong done them by compensating the Klallams.

The note, was carried by Queen Victoria until her death.

The note’s promises never fulfilled.
In 1884, Cheech-Ma-Ham’s chieftaincy was reduced in authority by the Superintendent of Indian Affairs to that of sub-chief.

Cheech-Ma-Ham passed down his chieftainship to his son, Lach-Ka-Nim.

Cheech-Ma-Ham died in 1888.
Klallams met with Dr. McChesteby, a government inspector. He interviewed Queen Victoria about the Treaty of Point No Point. He asked, “Did the Klallams think they were getting land for a reservation?” Queen Victoria answered, “Yes, near Dungeness.”