The Past is our Heritage

- The most prestigious position in the Makah culture was as a Whale hunter.
- A Whale hunter was also a chief.
- To become a Whale hunter, a person had to acquire from a spirit power.
- Whale hunters required the most extensive ritual process for spirit acquisition.
• 1855 Treaty included the right to hunt whale.
• The last whale hunt was in 1921. The Makah decided to stop because the gray whale was becoming endangered from unmanaged hunting.
• In 1994 the gray whale was removed from the Endangered Species List.
In 1995 the Makah announced its intention to resume traditional subsistence whaling practices.

To re-establish whaling traditions (physically, spiritually, and emotionally challenge young people)

To preserve the Makah’s tribal identity as traditional Whaler’s.

To provide traditional foods.
• U.S. took the request to the International Whaling Commission in 1997.
• Makah received a quota of 20 gray whale over 5 years.
• May 17, 1999 Makah harpooned its first whale in over 70 years.
• They went whaling again in 2000, but was stopped by a federal appeals court ruling that they must seek a waiver from the marine Mammal Protection Act.
• On February 3, 2005 the Makah applied for a waiver.
• They also files a request to the Marine Mammal Protection act 8 days later.
• The National Marine Fisheries Service will draft an environmental impact statement on the proposal.
• The National Marine Fisheries Service can 1. Deny the request
  2. Approve the request.
  3. Amend the request with suggestions garnered from a series of scooping meetings.
What is in the request?

- To hunt only during annual gray whale migration between Dec. 1 and May 31.
- To forgo hunting in the Strait of Juan de Fuca and avoid killing whales of the Pacific Coast Feeding Aggregation.
What is the supporting argument for the request?

- The treaty along gives it the right to hunt whale.
- Whale hunting was a keystone to Makah culture (1,500)
- Whaling has become a symbol of Makah sovereignty, treaty rights and cultural renaissance.
- Whaling was once a staple of the seagoing tribe’s diet.
• After the scoping meetings, the fisheries service will take about a year to draft an Environmental Impact Statement.
• It will then be submitted for public comment.
• If the agency favors the waiver, it next will send its final statement to a federal administrative law judge.
• The judge will review it and perhaps call for further hearings before setting rules and regulations.
• This process could run past the 2007 expiration of the Makah’s quota from the International Whaling Commission.

What happens next?
If that happens, then the Makah’s must ask the U.S. to petition the Commission for a new quota.