Voices of the First People is a project created to honor the life and work of Vi Hilbert by making accessible audio and video recordings that are part of the Vi Hilbert Collection in the University of Washington Ethnomusicology Archives. It is a project of Northwest Heritage Resources in partnership with the University of Washington Ethnomusicology Archives and Lushootseed Research. Jill La Pointe, granddaughter of Vi Hilbert and president of Lushootseed Research, has acted as project advisor.

Visit the Voices of the First People

Voices of the First People includes a selection of recordings made between 1968 and 2008. We’ve organized them into 6 categories that highlight aspects of Vi Hilbert’s life and work, focusing on her commitment to the preservation, documentation, and revitalization of Lushootseed language and lifeways:

- Stories
- Talking about stories and traditional knowledge
- Language work
- Personal history
- Talking about Lushootseed culture
- Talking about The Healing Heart Symphony

Vi Hilbert (1918–2008) was a member and noted elder of the Upper Skagit tribe. Her first language was Lushootseed, a Coast Salish language found in the Puget Sound region of western Washington state. During her long and productive life, Vi Hilbert played a major role in the revitalization of the language and culture of the First People of the Pacific Northwest. She became known as a teacher, storyteller, publisher, and public speaker. For over 40 years she built and maintained a research archive of cultural materials. Working with other scholars, she developed and published teaching materials and volumes of stories through Lushootseed Research, an organization which she founded. Her commitment to preserving Lushootseed language and literature is largely responsible for the renaissance of interest in Lushootseed culture and the growth of tribal language programs all over western Washington.

Visit the Voices of the First People website.