

# Training Safer Divers

The Lummi Nation organized a dive safety course this spring for 32 tribal divers.

Underwater harvest of sea cucumbers, geoducks and sea urchins is integral to the livelihood of many tribal fishermen, especially in light of declining salmon runs.

"Our *schelangen*, or way of life, depends on the natural resources of the sea," said Lummi Chairman Cliff Cultee. "Crab, prawn and salmon seasons are short, so dive fisheries can be a more stable source of income."

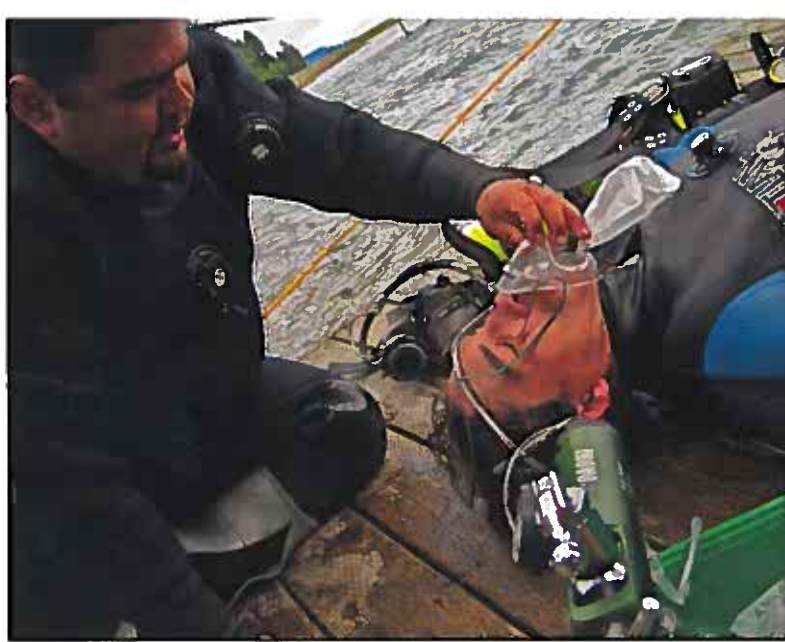
Most tribal divers use a surface supplied air system rather than scuba gear. An umbilical hose connects the diver to an onboard air compressor at the surface.

"The primary reason for using surface supplied air is to maximize divers' bottom times without limiting their air supplies while exerting themselves underwater," said Lummi fisheries management biologist Karl Mueller.

Dive safety is like first-aid training, and should be reviewed regularly. Mueller organized the course at Edmonds Technical Diving Services in Hoodspport, and is planning to hold at least one more this year.

"The participants had a wide range of experience, from veteran divers to those recently certified," he said. "Everyone got something out of the course."

The training included CPR using oxygen and an automatic defibrillator, equipment maintenance and rescue scenarios. Div-



Karl Mueller/Lummi Nation

Recently certified diver Michael Alexander administers oxygen to experienced diver Jason Sieber during an unconscious diver rescue scenario.

ers simulated tugging the umbilical line to communicate during a failure in voice communication, and bringing an unconscious diver to the surface

"In the diver down scenario, they practiced stripping gear efficiently," Mueller said. "The fastest anyone was able to administer oxygen was 20 seconds." — K. Neumeyer

## North Sound Blessings



Left: Swinomish tribal member Jimmy Wilbur blesses tribal fishermen with a cedar bough during the Swinomish Tribe's annual Blessing of the Fleet and First Salmon Ceremony. Below: Lummi tribal member Harlan James presents the remains of the first salmon to each of the four directions before it is released into Hale Passage during Lummi's First Salmon Ceremony.



K. Neumeyer (2)





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