Two major issues in North American archaeology, or archaeology anywhere, are the evolution of social complexity among hunter-gatherers, or in any societies regardless of economic base, and disentangling the complicated dynamics of colonialism. Archaeological research and excavations over the past 27 years along the Lower Columbia River of Oregon and Washington have investigated the political economies of Chinookan households at four sites dating as a group between ca. AD 1400 and 1855. They thus span the period from just before the European influx into the Western Hemisphere to the beginning of the reservation era. The peoples of all four were Northwest coast complex hunter-gatherers and actively engaged in the maritime fur trade. Our research has focused on household and community production and consumption, the relationships among household organization, production, exchange and status and how these relationships played out in the creation and maintenance of prestige and high status and the communities’ and households’ engagement in the fur trade after 1792.