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# SEATTLE'S WATERFRONT HISTORY CURRICULUM



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PORT OF SEATTLE





### Inquiry Description

In this lesson students will look at how to assess primary and secondary sources. Students will explore the larger questions of “How is history written?” by reading and discussing the history of Ballast Island in Seattle. Students will also be looking at the supporting questions of “How do we assess the sources we learn from?” Students will do this by looking at what is included and not included in sources.

For this lesson to be the most effective teachers should consider how this might fit into their scope and sequence of their class. This lesson would work well after students are learning about the Puget Sound War in Washington 1855-1856. Students should know about Treaty Times and the important parts of treaties between the U.S. Government and Native Tribes of Washington. Students should have read and discussed the Point Elliott Treaty and treaties that have an impact on the local Native People where they live.

Within this lesson there are secondary sources that have been written from the perspective of non-Indigenous writers. There are also many factors that make accessing primary sources with Native perspectives a complex process. When possible, teachers should always look for ways to work in association with their local Tribes to make sure that more voices and perspectives are included.

### Standards

#### *Washington State Social Studies Standards*

- SSS1.6-8.1 Analyze positions and evidence supporting an issue or an event
- SSS2.6-8.2 Evaluate the breadth, reliability, and credibility of primary and secondary sources to determine the need for new or additional information when researching an issue or event.
- H1.6-8.4 Analyze a major historical event and how it is represented on timelines for different cultural perspectives, including those of Indigenous people.

#### *Social Justice Standards*

- Students will examine diversity in social, cultural, political and historical contexts rather than in ways that are superficial or oversimplified.

#### *Middle Level Since Time Immemorial Outcomes:*

By the time Washington state students leave middle school, they will know:

- that according to the US Constitution, treaties are "the supreme law of the land" consequently treaty rights supersede most state laws;
- that Tribal sovereignty has cultural, political, and economic bases;
- that Tribes are subject to federal law and taxes, as well as some state regulations;
- that Tribal sovereignty is ever-evolving and therefore levels of sovereignty and status vary from Tribe to Tribe; and
- that there were and are frequent and continued threats to Tribal sovereignty that are mostly addressed through the courts.

## Learning goals/ Objectives

At the end of this lesson students will be able to:

1. Identify the geographic and cultural importance of Dzidzilalich.
2. Evaluate what is included and not included in primary and secondary sources.

## Key Vocabulary and Terminology

Treaty  
Sovereignty  
Ceded vs. Unceded land  
Dzidzilalich

## Focused Inquiry

**Compelling Question:** How is history written?

### Staging the question:

Have students review the maps on Student Handout #1 and answer the questions that go with it for the pre-reading activity. Students should share their thinking about the map. The teacher can collect their ideas on the board or on chart paper. This should be up for the duration of the lesson. Students will go back to the map after reading Student Handout #2. Teachers should add to the charts as the lesson goes.

The intent of this map is to help frame student thinking. This map activity should help students to come up with questions

**Supporting question(s):** How do we assess the sources we learn from?

### Performance Task:

#### *Whole class activity:*

At the beginning of the lesson students should read through the Point Elliott Treaty of 1855. This could be done as a reading or as a presentation. Teachers should use their knowledge of student reading levels and use modified or shortened versions.

#### Discussion Questions:

- What rights are reserved by Native People?
- What questions do you have about this document?
- How does who wrote the document impact who will benefit from the document?

To support students with this treaty reading, it is recommended that other treaties are reviewed. One option is to use the Since Time Immemorial lesson "[Medicine Creek Treaty of 1854](#)."

Students will then read "Exile to Ballast Island" by the Duwamish Tribe.

#### Discussion Question:

- What predictions can you make about why Ballast Island was significant to the history of Indigenous people and the history of the Seattle Waterfront?

#### *Small group activity:*

Students should work in groups of 3 to complete a jig-saw activity. They will read secondary sources about the history of Ballast Island. After they read they are asked to write reflections about the information and evaluate the source. Students will share this information with their group.



Reading and reflection activity is on student handout #2-#5

**Featured Source(s):**

Primary:

- [Point Elliott Treaty](#)
- [Photos of Ballast Island](#)

Secondary:

- [Exile to Ballast Island](#)
- [Dzidizilalich \(Little Crossing Over Place\)](#)
- [Seattle Board of Trustees passes ordinance, calling for removal of Indians from the town, on February 7, 1865.](#)
- [Oregon Improvement Company completes purchase of Seattle & Walla Walla Railroad Company and Seattle Coal & Transportation Company on November 26, 1880.](#)
- Ballast Island Nomination Language

**Summative Activity:**

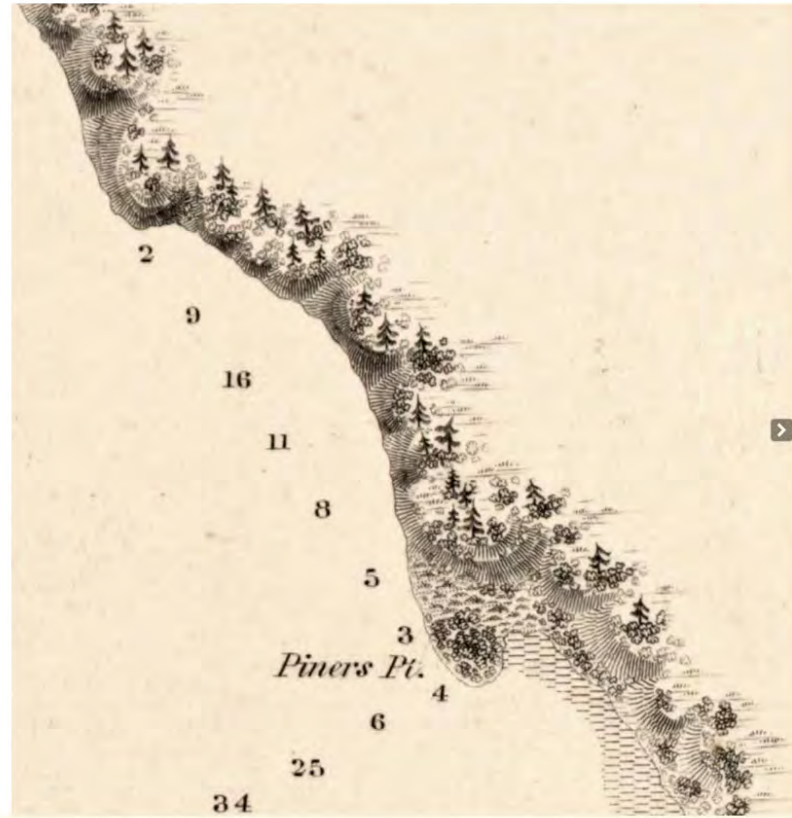
In a whole group setting students will come up with ways they can evaluate primary and secondary sources for their values and limitations. Students can create anchor charts that can be used when they read secondary sources in class.

*Student Handout #1*

Name:

**Direction:** Review the following map and answer the analysis and reflection questions below.

Wilkes' 1841 survey of Elliott Bay showing Piner's Point (future site of Pioneer Square) and steep ridges to the north



**Before you read student handout #1**

1. What do you notice about this map?
2. What is something that you know for sure about this map?
3. What are at least 1 question that you have about this map?

**After you read student handout #2**

4. What is the connection between this map and the reading?
5. Based on the reading, what is missing from this map?
6. What is at least 1 question that you NOW have about the map?

## *Student Handout #2*

Name:

**Directions:** As you read, highlight information about this historical event in one color and what questions you have in another.

Excerpt is from *Dzidzilalich (Little Crossing-Over Place)* By Jennifer Ott posted to [historylink.org](http://historylink.org) 11/10/2014

### **Dzidzilalich- Little Crossing-Over Place**

Coast Salish communities on Puget Sound located villages in places that offered access to resources they could use or trade. On the Elliott Bay waterfront at what is now the foot of Seattle's Yesler Way, the ancestors of today's Duwamish, Suquamish, and Muckleshoot tribal members chose a space they called Dzidzilalich, which can be translated as Little Crossing-Over Place. It was adjacent to a flounder fishery, shellfish beds, salmon fishing grounds, places to gather plant resources, and a source of freshwater. It was also a centrally located place where people could gather to socialize, make alliances, trade, and share traditional knowledge.

By the time anthropologists and historians began to look for traces of Dzidzilalich in the twentieth century, the longhouses at the site had long since been removed and the area had been regraded and filled to such an extent that the original landscape had disappeared. Old maps showed a point of land (named Piner's Point by early explorers), which was regularly cut off from the mainland by high tide, extending south from the area of today's First Avenue and Yesler Way.

### **The People of Dzidzilalich**

Not very much is known about the people who built and lived in the village because it was abandoned by the time non-Native settlers came to Elliott Bay in the 1850s, a time of tremendous change and upheaval in the Indigenous communities. It is likely that the village was abandoned because epidemics of European diseases, to which the inhabitants had no immunity, had reduced the local population significantly and the survivors had gathered at inland villages along the Duwamish and Black rivers.

Dzidzilalich is primarily identified as a Duwamish village because that name has been used to identify the people living in the Seattle and Renton region. Though non-Native settlers, and particularly the territorial government, identified the Duwamish as a tribe that included people living on Lake Washington, the Cedar, Black, and Duwamish rivers, and Elliott Bay, it is more accurate to describe those Native communities as autonomous bands who shared language, customs, and social relations with other nearby bands, often living in the same watershed...

People living on the western side of Lake Washington, sometimes called Lake Duwamish, and those living on Elliott Bay were also included in the Duwamish tribe by early settlers and Indian agents. This grouping of autonomous bands was further formalized by the treaty process. The desire of territorial government officials to work with leaders of large groups, rather than with each band, led them to impose a different hierarchy and type of relationship, such as the concept of a chief with control over numerous bands, than what actually existed among the Duwamish or other Coast Salish people.



It is also likely that both the Suquamish from across Puget Sound and the groups from farther up the valleys of the White and Green rivers that today make up the Muckleshoot Native Tribe also gathered at Dzidzilalich...

### **A Crossing-Over Place**

The historical record also indicates that two trails led inland from Dzidzilalich (the likely source of the name "Little Crossing-Over Place"). One trail crossed over the low ground between the point and the mainland to the lagoon. The Duwamish and others fished for flounder in the lagoon. The other traversed the hills between the bay and Lake Washington, which provided a route between Elliott Bay and the Cascade foothills. Travelers paddled through the slough connecting Lake Washington with Lake Sammamish. (The slough has since straightened and is known as the Sammamish River.) From Lake Sammamish they could travel on foot up into the mountains to hunt game, gather berries, or socialize and trade with Native Peoples from both sides of the Cascades...

### **Change and Persistence**

It was not long after non-Native settlers claimed the land at the site of Dzidzilalich, in 1852, that Native People were no longer welcome there. In the Treaty of Point Elliott, signed at Mukilteo in 1855, the Duwamish, the Suquamish, and the tribes that would become the Muckleshoot Native Tribe, ceded the majority of their land in exchange for payments and services. Though the tribes were expected to go to the reservation established at Port Madison on the west shore of Puget Sound, or, later, to the Muckleshoot reservation in what is now south King County, many of the Duwamish continued to live independently around the region.

The non-Native settlers at Seattle, who named their new town for a Duwamish and Suquamish leader, needed Native People to trade food items with them, provide transportation in their canoes, and work at Yesler's mill, the economic backbone of the settlement.

This interdependence did not translate into a desire to integrate the two cultures. The new city council officially prohibited Native People from residing within the city limits in an 1865 ordinance (though that law was not reinstated when Seattle incorporated a second time in 1869). As the town grew, Native People were relegated to other areas around Elliot Bay, and, as undeveloped areas along the shoreline shrank, they were tolerated on Ballast Island at the foot of Washington and Main streets, just a block or two from the site of Dzidzilalich.

[Sources from [historylink.org](http://historylink.org)]

*Reflection:* What surprised you about this information?

*Reflection:* What is valuable about this source (sourcing, information, and/ or perspective)?

*Reflection:* What is limiting about this source (sourcing, information, and/or perspective)?

*Reflection:* What is one question you would like to ask the author about this source?

## Student Handout #3

Name:

**Directions:** As you read, highlight information about this historical event in one color and what questions you have in another.

Excerpt from *Seattle Board of Trustees passes ordinance, calling for removal of Native People from the town, on February 7, 1865* by Jennifer Ott posted to [historylink.org](http://historylink.org) 12/07/2014

### **Seattle Ordinance No. 5**

On February 7, 1865, the Seattle Board of Trustees passed Ordinance No. 5, calling for the removal of Natives from the town. Ten years after local tribes signed the Treaty of Point Elliott, ceding most of their land to non-Native settlers, and six years after the U.S. Congress ratified the treaty, many members of those tribes continue to live in places other than the reservations established by the treaty. Deep-seated prejudices lead Seattle's non-Native settlers to seek exclusion of Native people from the town, even as they look to Native People for labor and trade. The Native People in turn not only want to be connected to the new settlement through work and commerce, but also have strong cultural ties to the place that stretch back thousands of years...

### **Land Claims and Treaties**

When the board of trustees passed Ordinance No. 5, there were several layers of legal structure related to land ownership in Seattle... A treaty with the tribes who lived on Elliott Bay and the surrounding area was not signed until 1855, at Point Elliott, and was only ratified in 1859, but this did not prevent members of the Denny Party, the first non-Native settlers in what became Seattle, from claiming land along the shore of Elliott Bay in 1852.

In the 1855 Treaty of Point Elliott, the tribes living on the west side of the Cascade Mountains and around Puget Sound north of the Tacoma area ceded their territory -- except for small portions that were "reserved" for their use (the reservations) -- in exchange for payments and services the federal government promised to provide. They also reserved their right to "taking fish at usual and accustomed grounds and stations." ("Treaty of Point Elliott, 1855").

### **Underlying Assumptions**

There were a number of assumptions underlying the United States' treaty-making process. First, it was widely believed that it was the "Manifest Destiny" of Americans to occupy and control as much land on the North American continent... This belief was based in Americans' sense that their government, economy, and culture were superior to others' and that their use of that land was the best use for it.

Second, the treaties were part of a long series of efforts by the federal government to keep Native communities separate from white communities...

Third, many whites assumed the Native tribes would disappear in the near future. They thought disease and other forces would wipe out the Native populations and they would not have to accommodate the reservations or rights agreed to in the treaties for long.

These attitudes toward Native communities underlay Seattle's removal ordinance...

### **Complexities**

...Congress took several years to ratify the Treaty of Point Elliott, finally doing so in 1859. The lands set aside for reservations did not have towns, with their opportunities for work and commerce, on or often even near them. Moreover, some of the tribes aggregated together on single reservations -- the Muckleshoot and Tulalip reservations, among others, were established for several tribes each -- did not agree to the aggregation or want to move to lands they did not traditionally live on. It took several years to establish government agencies at the reservations and, even early on, government payments and distributions of goods did not happen as promised. Further, a proposed reservation not far from Seattle along the Duwamish River for the Duwamish Tribe, whose members lived on Elliott Bay and the Duwamish and Black rivers, was blocked by non-Native residents in 1866.

At the same time, non-Native settlements needed Native laborers to conduct business, run households, and build towns. The new settlers also wanted to trade with Native Peoples for fish, shellfish, and goods they produced, such as baskets. These economic relations kept the two communities intermingling.

Likewise, personal relationships created links between the two communities. Non-Native men involved in the fur trade and, later, in establishing towns and businesses on the sound, married Native women...The Washington territorial legislature outlawed these unions in 1854, then legalized them again in 1868.

### **Be It Ordained**

The text of the 1865 Seattle ordinance encapsulated the complicated relationship between Native and non-Native people. The first section stated:

*"Be it ordained by the Board of Trustees of the Town of Seattle, That no Indian or Indians shall be permitted to reside, or locate their residences on any street, highway, lane, or alley or any vacant lot in the town of Seattle, from a point known as the South side of Chas. Plummer's ten acre lot to a point known as the South side of Bell's land claim" (Seattle Weekly Gazette).*

In 1867, the state legislature dissolved the government of Seattle, at the request of the town's residents. When the town was reincorporated in 1869, the ban on Native residents was not re-enacted. Attempts to exclude Native continued, however, through extralegal means ranging from the 1893 burning of the Duwamish winter village Herring's House, at the mouth of the Duwamish River, to the discriminatory actions of individual people in everyday life.

[Sources from [historylink.org](http://historylink.org)]

*Reflection:* What surprised you about this information?

*Reflection:* What is valuable about this source (sourcing, information, and/ or perspective)?

*Reflection:* What is limiting about this source (sourcing, information, and/or perspective)?

*Reflection:* What is one question you would like to ask the author about this source?



## Student Handout #4

Name:

**Directions:** As you read, highlight information about this historical event in one color and what questions you have in another.

Excerpt from *Oregon Improvement Company completes purchase of Seattle & Walla Walla Railroad Company and Seattle Coal & Transportation Company on November 26, 1880* by John Caldbick posted to [historylink.org](http://historylink.org) 10/09/2014

### **Oregon Improvement Company**

On November 26, 1880, the newly formed Oregon Improvement Company (OIC) completes the purchase of the Seattle & Walla Railroad & Transportation Company and the Seattle Coal & Transportation Company. The purchase of the railroad gives the OIC direct rail access from Seattle's waterfront to the coal mines at Newcastle in southeast King County, which are included in the Seattle Coal purchase. Founded by Henry Villard (1835-1900), the Oregon Improvement Company is one component of an ambitious, multipronged attempt to dominate the economic development of the Pacific Northwest. Part of that effort will include construction of two imposing piers and appurtenant facilities on Seattle's waterfront. The ships that dock there will contribute to the creation of Ballast Island, among the last homes in that era for Native Americans in the city...

### **Ballast Island**

In 1865, Seattle had passed an ordinance that prohibited Native Americans from residing anywhere within the young city's limits unless they were employed and housed by a non-Native. While it does not seem to have been enforced with draconian rigor, it cleared the city of much of its remaining indigenous population, a continuing injustice that began with forced relocations during the [Puget Sound] Wars of the mid-1850s. But it remained a stubborn fact that Native Peoples were willing to perform work, including harvesting hops in the river valleys southeast of the city, that non-Natives did not have the will or the numbers, or both, to do. They also gathered foodstuffs and made handicrafts that found willing buyers among the city's residents. Despite the law, Native People remained a significant presence on Seattle's waterfront for years, with most eventually living on an artificial island along the city's downtown shoreline just off Washington Street.

Henry Yesler's (1810?-1892) sawmill and other waterfront businesses had been dumping waste materials into Elliott Bay since 1854 and had managed to fill some marshy areas along the shore with scrap lumber and other industrial detritus. Before the widespread appearance of steel-hulled vessels and the invention of powerful means of pumping water for ballast, ships traveling without cargo or only partially filled carried sand, rocks, and other heavy material in their holds to provide stability and distribute the stresses on the hull. This solid ballast had to be laboriously taken aboard when the ship was empty and then laboriously disposed of to free the space for cargo. Ballast that was no longer wanted was simply dumped overboard, and because of the need to maintain stability this most often did not occur until a ship was at or very near its mooring place.

When multiplied by hundreds of ships, the jettisoning of ballast presented a considerable disposal problem. For some time, it was illegal for ships to do so in Seattle's harbor. More than one captain was prosecuted, but commercial necessity prevailed and an area just offshore at Washington Street was set aside for such dumping. At first slowly and then more rapidly, an island began to appear in 1881 that was composed of rocks and other materials taken on as ballast from locations around the world, including 40,000 tons from San Francisco's Telegraph Hill.

When completed, the Oregon Improvement Company's City Dock and Ocean Dock could accommodate four ships simultaneously, and with their contributions, Ballast Island began to grow rapidly. At its peak, it reached 400 feet into Elliott Bay and provided a place where Native Americans could reside without fear of eviction. Many were Duwamish who were understandably reluctant to live on the reservation of the Suquamish Tribe across Puget Sound, to which they had been consigned in the mid-1850s, or that of the Muckleshoots to the south, where they were later sent. Longhouses they had built near the mouth of the Duwamish and on the beaches of West Seattle had been burned by white settlers, and together with other Natives, the Duwamish set up shop on Ballast Island, which eventually took on the appearance of a tent city:

"Duwamish families and other Native Americans came by canoe to the Seattle waterfront. Some were seasonal visitors, seeking work. Native Americans harvested and sold shellfish, and sold woven baskets and carvings, catering to the Whites' demand for souvenirs. Some were traveling to harvest the hop fields upriver. For some Duwamish, Ballast Island became a year-round residence by 1885" ("Exile to Ballast Island").

In 1889, the City and Ocean docks were destroyed in the Great Fire, and along the entire waterfront south of University Street only Ballast Island remained unscathed. The Oregon Improvement Company soon built two even larger facilities on the ruins, which would be designated, less descriptively, as Docks A and B. They were eventually replaced by today's Pier 48, built in the mid-1930s and taken over by the Port of Seattle in 1950 to serve a variety of shippers. Between 1967 and 1989, Pier 48 was the Seattle terminal for the ferries of the Alaska Marine Highway System, and later accommodated summer steamship service to Vancouver, B.C. In 2014 the pier was home to the King County Water Taxi maintenance barge and served as a temporary staging area for the tunnel being drilled to replace the Alaskan Way Viaduct.

Before the nineteenth century ended, Ballast Island was subsumed in the landfill used to create Railroad Avenue (now Alaskan Way). The Oregon Improvement Company lived on for many years as a cog in a number of different conglomerate empires, the complexity of which make it almost impossible to trace with great accuracy. It was finally stricken from the State of Washington's corporate roster in 1923. At a date that seems to have been unrecorded, the Yukon Club and Propeller Club installed a historical marker on shore near the former site of Ballast Island, providing a reminder of the thousands of years of Native American presence on what is today one of the leading waterfronts of the world.

[Sources from [historylink.org](http://historylink.org)]

*Reflection:* What surprised you about this information?

*Reflection:* What is valuable about this source (sourcing, information, and/ or perspective)?

*Reflection:* What is limiting about this source (sourcing, information, and/or perspective)?

*Reflection:* What is one question you would like to ask the author about this source?

## Student Handout #5

Name:

**Directions:** As you read, highlight information about this historical event in one color and what questions you have in another.

Excerpts from Ballast Island National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, prepared by Dr. Giorgio H. Curti, Dr. Dayna Bowker Lee, and Cassandra Manetas, 2020.

There's a lot of unique areas in the city that have a lot of history, but this one is unique because it highlights a time in Seattle's history that is not talked about. Natives were forced out of that area. But practically speaking you can't just kick people out of an area, especially when you rely on those people ... for the [non-Native] hop farmers, economics was the primary driver. Realizing that the Native population in the region was the most accessible workers, you needed a place for the Natives to feel somewhat safe. And that is one of the many factors [associated with] the location that makes it unique in the downtown area of Seattle, that has a story that is very ugly, very painful, but very unique.

– Steven Mullen Moses (Snoqualmie), 2018

A lot of tribal people have a history of traveling to and from different areas within the region for tribal gatherings, to meet relatives, to meet friends, to conduct ceremonies, to sing and dance, and to play traditional games. The hop industry was a means that people could continue those traditions at a time when Natives were not allowed to gather socially, they were not allowed to speak their language, they weren't allowed to sing and dance, much less practice ceremonies."

Steven Mullen Moses (Snoqualmie), 2018

And they [Native people at Ballast Island] are going right to the front ... [it] is the front line of ignorance. This is the front line of hatred. This is the front line of oppression. This is the front line of assimilation ... It's when our cultural values were being watered down, [when they] were being diluted with alcohol, with greed, with another religion, with another language.

- Warren King George (Muckleshoot), 2017

Ballast Island is just one small piece, but one heck of a statement of racism, degradation, poisoning, assimilation, that you can come up with. And there's uglier words to say it. "But [we, the settlers] can go out there and shoot stuff out from the bilges of our ships and poison your water, but you [Native people] can't come in the city" .... It almost seems like...hatred.

- Bardow Lewis (Suquamish), 2018

There's nothing that's going to extinguish that memory, that connection, it's never going to be severed...I still feel that I belong there.

- Warren King George (Muckleshoot), 2017

*Reflection:* What surprised you about this information?

*Reflection:* What is valuable about this source (sourcing, information, and/ or perspective)?



*Reflection:* What is limiting about this source (sourcing, information, and/or perspective)?

*Reflection:* What is one question you would like to ask the author about this source?