Examining Artifacts of Encounter:
Students Report on the History of Isaac Stevens' Coat

Summary:
In this exercise, students will have the opportunity to imagine that they are a museum curator who examines old artifacts and documents for clues of an earlier time period. They then have an opportunity to write up their interpretation of this history by crafting a press release announcing the rediscovery of an artifact that was donated to the Washington State Historical Society's collection in 1921.

In order to accomplish this task, students will identify significant events from the 19th and early 20th century time periods by examining related artifacts, primary documents, and secondary source readings and plotting them on a timeline. By using evidence from artifacts and primary sources to develop an interpretation and historical account of a time period, students can satisfy a classroom-based assessment for history, in addition to satisfying EALRs in language arts, history and geography. Alternatively you can simply use this as a lesson plan that fits into your curriculum.

Essential Questions for Students:

- How do objects reflect culture? How do objects reflect relationships between different cultures?
- How can historic photos, artifacts and documents help us to understand the past?

Essential Understandings:

1. Students will recognize that historical interpretation requires the use of (often conflicting) multiple types of evidence about the past.
2. Students will recognize that cultures exchange and challenge ideas, designs, and values when they encounter each other.
3. Extensive trade networks linked tribes over extensive geographical areas.
4. Native American culture is not static but constantly changing and evolving. Part of this change has been forced by assimilation and part has occurred through dynamic cultural development.
5. The coat likely represents an encounter between Isaac Stevens and the Nez Perce.
6. Clothing reflects the identity status of the wearer.

DOWNLOAD AREA

Download the PDFs required for this lesson plan:

- The Lesson Plan
- Dig Deep Student Worksheets
- Primary Source Documents
- Secondary Source Readings
- Graphic Timeline Organizer
- Map of Key Locations
Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs)
This lesson plan satisfies the following EALRs: History WA1.1.3b, Arts 2.3, Arts 4.4 and the following Social Studies skills: 2.1.3b, 3.1.4a and 3.1.4b. Click here to print out these EALRs for your reference.

CBA Scoring Rubric and Notes: The Office of State Public Instruction has created a scoring rubric for the Dig Deep Classroom Based Assessment. Click here to download and print this rubric for your information.

Background:
In 1921, a descendant of Washington Territorial Governor Isaac Stevens donated a hide coat to the Washington State Historical Society. Documents associated with the gift state that a chief of the Nez Perce tribe gave the coat to Stevens in 1854 as part of the Walla Walla treaty council. However, to date, other documents have not been found to verify this story. Comparison with approximately ten other similar coats affirms the mid-1850s date of manufacture.

Careful examination of the coat determined that, curiously, the coat does not appear to be a Nez Perce clothing style. Most likely the coat moved down to the Nez Perce from northern Métis (pronounced may-tee) neighbors of the Canadian Red River Valley. There are many possible explanations for how this could have occurred, including via trade through direct transportation by a Nez Perce individual that lived among the Métis.

Extensive trade networks between the Nez Perce and other cultural groups make this scenario for the Stevens coat plausible, but not confirmed.

Although the history of the coat is not known precisely, the object does reveal important information about cultural encounter between Native Americans and Euro-Americans, and between tribal nations. This lesson plan is designed to reveal that significance, and to foster excellent reading, writing, research, and critical thinking skills.

Primary Sources for Student Examination (provided below for teachers and at washingtonhistoryonline.org/students/classroom-exp.html for students):

1. Isaac Stevens’ coat - multiple views
2. Photo of Stevens wearing the coat
3. Handwritten notation on back of photo
4. Label from back of photo
5. Letter from Mr. Bonney (Wash. State Historical Society) to Mrs. Eskridge, 1921
6. Diary entry by William P. Bonney
7. A photograph of Spokan Garry of the Spokan people
8. A photograph of a similar Métis coat given to artist, Frank Mayer who attended an 1851 treaty council in Minnesota entitled "Winter Dress of a Red River Half Breed"
9. Gustav Sohon’s painting “Arrival of the Nez Perce at Walla Walla, 1855”

Primary Sources: A piece of evidence created during the time period under investigation by someone who participated in, witnessed, or commented upon the events that you are studying. It is the surviving record of past events such as photographs, diaries, or artifacts.

The Métis Nation (metis in French means literally "mixed") developed in northwestern Canada in the 18th and 19th centuries from intermarriage between French and Scottish fur traders and Cree, Ojibwa, Saulteaux, and Assiniboine women. While the initial offspring were individuals who possessed mixed ancestry, the gradual establishment of distinct Métis communities, outside of Indian and European cultures and settlements, as well as the subsequent intermarriages between Métis women and Métis men, resulted in the genesis of a new Aboriginal people - the Métis.
Secondary Sources for Student Examination (provided):

1. Map of key locations in the United States & Canada.
2. Isaac Stevens biography
3. Spokan Garry biography
4. Louis Riel biography
5. Nez Perce cultural material

Secondary Sources: Books, articles, essays, and lectures created, often using primary sources, that describe and interpret a time period after events have taken place.

Instructions for Teachers:

1. Give students an overview of the task ahead of them - an exciting opportunity to imagine that they are a museum curator who examines old artifacts and documents for clues of an earlier time period. Explain that they will examine a piece of clothing that tells a story about the encounter between Euro-American and Native American cultures in Washington Territory, and beyond, during the 1800’s. They will then have an opportunity to write up their interpretation of this history by crafting a press release announcing the rediscovery of a 1921 donation of an artifact into the collection.
2. Explain that you need to introduce some of the "actors" and "scenes" where this history takes place. Please note the options available to you as you do this: print and circulate images to your students, or make overheads of them, or incorporate them into Powerpoint or other digital presentations.
3. You will need to point out on the map provided the following, indicated locations: the Metis people's homeland, the Nez Perce people's homeland, the capitol of Washington Territory where Territorial Governor Isaac Stevens was based, the location of the Walla Walla Treaty Council, and the location of the Washington State Historical Society's Research Center.
4. Using the images provided, introduce Territorial Governor Isaac Stevens and Spokan Garry. Let them know that they will be reading about them.
5. Using the images provided, introduce an essential artifact for this lesson plan - a coat of Isaac Stevens. Let them know that this is the artifact that they will be researching.
6. Explain to them what a treaty, using the material provided, and that these treaties between the United States and Indian tribes are an important part of the story.
7. Explain to them that they are going to be investigators, or historians, who are going to review a variety of information and come up with their own interpretation or "life history" of this historic coat. They must support their argument by examining sources and demonstrating the historic evidence.
8. Student assignments and work materials can be accessed by students online at http://www.washingtonhistoryonline.org/, or alternatively materials can be printed out and photocopied for them. Either way, they must begin with reading the material provided (see student worksheet) and then construct a timeline that maps out significant events related to the Walla Walla treaty council, when the coat might have been made and where, where it was traded to and when, to whom it was given and where, when the treaty signing took place, and when it entered into the museum collection.
9. You will need to monitor their ability to read historic documents, identify significant information, record it, and organize it chronologically. More specifically:
   a. Monitor for meaning by identifying where and why comprehension was lost and use different instructional strategies to regain meaning.
   b. Develop questions before, during, and after reading and use knowledge of questioning strategies to locate answers.
   c. Encourage mental imagery while reading.
   d. Encourage organizations of images and information into a self-created graphic organizer to enhance text comprehension.

WashingtonHistoryOnline.org contains a great deal of information about specific treaties and tribes, including tape-recorded interviews with tribal people. Please encourage your students to look at some of these or direct them to the Governor’s Office of Indian Affairs to access information about Native American communities today.
e. Encourage classroom discussions and debate of their readings and draft outlines of press release. Begin with questions such as “Who made this coat? Why do you think this?”. What is the evidence?

10. You will need to schedule how each step of the assignment fits with your classroom periods and the working pace of your students.
11. You may extend this classroom-based assessment, if you wish, by asking students to make verbal presentations, Powerpoint presentations, or graphic layouts of their article as though they were printed in a contemporary newspaper. There are some wonderful interactives at ReadWriteThink.org that help students format their newspaper article.
12. You may be pleased to find that students begin to debate their differing historical interpretations. If time allows, channel this dialogue into either a debate or into newspaper editorials that disagree with other students’ interpretations. Classroom walls can become a “gallery” of newspaper articles for students to view and critique.
13. Refer to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction website to learn how to submit student work for scoring their research, analysis and writing.
These photographs show different views of the coat donated by the Estate of Isaac Stevens’ son, Hazard.
This is a photograph of Isaac Stevens wearing the hide coat featured in this exercise. Curators believe that the original photo was badly faded and that someone altered it to make it look better before it was rephotographed. All of the fur on the collar & cuffs, the crossed bandoliers, and Stevens’ hands have been added or retouched.

Courtesy Washington State Historical Society.
Item No. PORT STE 25a.
This notation was handwritten by an unknown author on the back of the photograph of Isaac Stevens.

Courtesy Washington State Historical Society.
Item No. Port STE25a
This label was fastened (probably with glue) on the back of the photograph of Isaac Stevens in the Washington State Historical Society’s collections.

Courtesy Washington State Historical Society.
Item No. PORT STE 25 a.
Isaac Stevens’ daughter, Susan

Property in Olympia purchased by Isaac Stevens when he was governor and later the site of Hazard Stevens’ dairy farm and home.

Isaac Stevens’ daughter, Kate

Isaac Stevens’ son

William P. Bonney, who served for many years as secretary of the Washington State Historical Society and curator for the Ferry Museum.

Courtesy Washington State Historical Society. Isaac Stevens/Family Manuscript Collection, Special Collections MS T-178, Box 1 of 26.
William P. Bonney was a curator at the Washington State Historical Society and kept all of his records in books that the Society now calls the "Bonney Diaries". This entry discusses some of his findings about the coat.

Rain.

September Wednesday 7, 1921

W.P.B. went to Olympia with Judge and O.J. Ellis. Judge to attend the funeral of Judge Mount in the Temple of Justice. Mrs. Ellis and Bonney went to Clover Fields Farm to enquire re a map that had been drawn of the country between Puget Sound and Columbia River that Mrs. Ellis had seen when planning the sites for the Oregon Trail markers.

Mrs. Bates had been unable to locate the map. She did turn over to Mr. Bonney an old buck-skin coat trimmed with porcupine quills, that had supposedly been given to Governor Stevens. It is apparently [sic] the one he had on when [he] had his picture taken.

By examining the back of photo we find the coat was given to I.I. Stevens 1854 by an Indian Chief of the Nez Perce tribe.
This photograph shows Spokan Garry, a leader of the Spokane people. Garry was one of those present at the Walla Walla Treaty Council of 1855.

These sketches by Frank Blackwell Mayer, entitled “Winter Dress of a Red River Half-breed”, were created during his time at the Red River camp in 1851. The term “Half-breed”, not a phrase we use today, was used during the 1800’s by English speakers to describe the Metis people.

Courtesy the Newberry Library Special Collections.
This painting, “Arrival of the Nez Perce at Walla Walla Treaty”, was created by Gustav Sohon on May 24, 1855. Isaac Stevens stands with a group of other Euro-Americans at the center of the scene. To the left of them, a group of Indians stands next to their horses. The Nez Perce are riding in a long curving line around the central group.

A small man of large ambition and keen intelligence, Isaac Stevens made a large impact on the military and political institutions of the 19th century. Although his family was among the earliest settlers of Andover and the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and played a prominent role in colonial society, Stevens insisted that "he rose from humble but honest circumstances to win education, forge a career, and emerge as a figure of national prominence."

Education and Early Military Experience
Following his education at Phillips Academy in Massachusetts, Stevens attended West Point Academy, where he graduated in 1839, first in his class. His skills in mathematics, engineering, surveying, military strategy, and politics earned him a job in the prestigious Corps of Engineers, a government agency responsible at that time for the largest public works projects.

As an officer in the War with Mexico (1846-48), he had his first taste of combat. He returned home with a commission promoting him to the rank of major, and convinced of his country's "manifest destiny." Stevens returned to the Corps of Engineers for a time, later joining the newly established U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey. This was the agency destined to map the nation and its newly acquired territories.

Stevens' Political Career Begins
His active support of Democrat Franklin Pierce's 1852 candidacy for President launched his own political career. In 1853 Stevens successfully applied to President Pierce for the governorship of the new Washington Territory, a post that also carried the title of Superintendent of Indian Affairs. Not content with just two jobs, Stevens also lobbied for a position with the proposed transcontinental railroad survey. Secretary of War Jefferson Davis placed him in command of the survey of the northern route.

Stevens's survey expedition left Minnesota in June 1853. The expedition was responsible for documenting the potential route of the railroad, and recording information about the flora, fauna, and the Native American tribes whose homelands were being surveyed.

Wasting no time, Governor Stevens quickly organized a territorial government, settled claims by the British-owned Hudson's Bay Company, expended $5,000 for books to set up a territorial library, and petitioned Congress for land on which to build a university. However, it would be his duties as Superintendent of Indian Affairs that would truly define his long-term impact on the future State of Washington.

In June of 1854, leaving acting Governor Charles Mason and the new legislature in charge, Stevens returned to the nation's
capital to lobby for money to cover the remaining debts from the railroad survey expedition, and to secure funding for the Indian treaty councils. He returned home with money to build military roads and funding for the treaty councils.

Stevens immediately plunged into the task of organizing the councils. He intended to make treaties with the Indians to secure the necessary resources for building the railroad and to obtain land sought by the ever-increasing stream of settlers flowing into the region. His agents had already been visiting the various Indian villages, selecting individuals to represent each tribe.

**The Medicine Creek Council**

On the day after Christmas in 1854, Stevens held his first treaty council at Medicine Creek in the Nisqually Delta. The Nisqually, Puyallup, Steilacoom, Squaxin, and other tribes, were informed in advance of the upcoming negotiations. They were anticipating fair payment for land settlers had already appropriated, and a reservation of land that would sustain their families and future generations.

What the tribes received were several widely separated small reservations. These brought different tribal bands together, but allowed the tribes to continue to fish, hunt, and gather food and other supplies in their usual accustomed places outside the reservations. The government also pledged to provide schools, blacksmith shops, carpenters, and medical care. In return, the United States acquired 2.5 million acres of tribal land.

Understandably pleased at the positive outcome of the Medicine Creek Treaty, Stevens prematurely speculated that if the whole treaty program proceeded as smoothly, all the tribes would soon be on reservations. However, his lack of understanding of native culture led him to make some serious mistakes. He did not understand that Indian leaders had limited powers to represent their tribes, nor did he recognize that there would be resistance to moving tribes, who had traditionally been enemies, onto a single reservation.

News of the western treaties had quickly passed to the eastern Washington tribes, along with sad tales from the nation's interior and eastern states concerning the plight of the tribes in those regions. The Indians were aware that their lands had been ceded, and that just compensation and the promised services had not been received from the "Great Father" in Washington, DC. They were understandably wary of Stevens and the treaty proceedings.

**The Walla Walla Council**

Although the Nez Perce, traditionally friendly to the whites, readily agreed to attend the Walla Walla Council, the Yakama, Walla Walla, and Cayuse bands were initially very reluctant to participate. Despite their misgivings, however, the Council formally convened on May 29,
1855, with thousands of tribal members in attendance.

**The Civil War**
When the Civil War broke out, Stevens offered his services to the Union government. He met his death fighting in the battle of Chantilly—the battle in which his son, Hazard, was also wounded—on September 1, 1862.

**Sources:**
BIOGRAPHY OF SPOKAN GARRY (1811-1892)

Spokan Garry was born in 1811. Although his boyhood name is not known, we know that early traders mistook his father's name, Illim-Spokanee, for the name of the tribe. In this way, the Sma-hoo-men-a-ish people became known as the Middle Spokanes. Garry grew up around the white traders who built their post near his tribe, so he was very familiar with the "King George" men (the British) and the "Bostons" (the Americans).

Garry Goes to School and Returns
At the age of fourteen, Garry was selected as one of two boys from the surrounding tribes to be sent to the Red River School at Fort Garry, sponsored by the Hudson's Bay Company and run by the Church Missionary Society of the Church of England. There Garry learned history, geography, religious studies, and he learned to read and speak English and French.

In 1828, at the age of eighteen, Garry traveled the 1800-mile trip back to the Spokane River. The encroachment of the white population on the tribes of the Northwest put stress on their traditional religious beliefs. The tribe accepted the Christian teachings brought back by Garry upon his return and combined them with their traditional beliefs.

When George Gibbs traveled through the area, he described how Spokan Garry appeared to him:

Garry himself accompanied us to the forks of the Spokane, where his band usually reside. A few lodges, chiefly old men and women, were there at the time. His own, in neatness and comfort, was far beyond any we had seen. His family were dressed in the costume of the whites, which in fact now prevails over their own. Many of the Spokanes, besides their intercourse with the fort, visit the American settlements, where they earn money by occasional work, most of which is spent in clothing, blankets, &c. The chief offered us the hospitality of his house with much cordiality - a cup of tea or coffee and bread.
The Coming of the American Missionaries
When missionaries arrived in the area, rather than building on Garry’s teachings, they began attacking the way he understood Christianity. This conflict led Garry to give up his school and public preaching. He also stopped wearing white man’s clothing, gradually returning to traditional dress and activities, many of which did not meet the approval of the Missionaries.

Washington Becomes a Territory
On October 17, 1853, Garry was summoned to a meeting with newly-appointed Governor of Washington Territory, Isaac Stevens, who was making his way east from Olympia, the new territorial capital. Garry surprised Stevens by carrying on a lengthy and fluent conversation that evening, in both English and French. Garry was uncertain of Stevens’ intent with regard to the Indians, so he remained as noncommittal as possible on the issues.

Stevens and the Treaties
In Spring of 1855, Spokan Garry attended the Walla Walla Treaty Council as an observer. The Yakama tribe was one of several tribes signing treaties at this time. A few days after the treaty an announcement published in a newspaper encouraged a stream of pioneers to east of the Cascades and settle on Yakama land. The Yakamas decided to fight to keep whites out of their territory and recruited other tribes to help them. Many of the younger Spokanes joined. Garry pleaded for no action against the whites until they could talk to Governor Stevens.

The Treaty council with Spokan Garry and the Spokane Tribe was the last treaty council of 1855. Stevens, hearing about the outbreak of war while traveling back from Blackfeet country, arrived suddenly in the Spokane village on the evening of November 27, and surprised the Spokanes by demanding an instant decision for war or peace.

When the chiefs of the Spokane, Coeur d'Alenes, Colvilles were assembled, along with some French Canadians, Stevens opened the council and promised friendship. Stevens then urged that the tribes relinquish lands and move to reservations.

Garry had been appointed spokesman for the tribes. He delivered a long and passionate speech revealing the Indians' point of view.

This speech left Stevens, for the first time in the treaty process, on the defensive. Of all the councils held by Stevens with the Indians, the Spokane Council was the only one that failed to produce a signed treaty.

The Later Years
As the white settlers poured into the region in the years following the Civil War, Garry tried to protect himself and his followers by continually seeking to secure a treaty with the Government and preserve a portion of
his country for his tribe. This, he felt, had been promised by Governor Stevens. In 1881 the Spokane reservation was created as a subdivision of the Colville Agency.

The following year, while Garry and his family were at a temporary fishing camp, trespassers took possession of his own farm, which he had fenced and cultivated for many years. Garry tried to recover his land through the legal system. Shortly before his death, a final judgment was made against his claim of ownership; his home, valued at $2,500, passed into the hands of another man with no compensation made to Garry or his family.

On January 14, 1892, Spokane Garry died in poverty. Today many members of the Spokane Tribe reside on the Spokane Indian Reservation.

Sources:


Louis Riel
Historical Cultural Figure

Louis Riel is one of the Canada's most controversial historical figures. To the Métis and French Canadians, he is a hero. Early Canada and the majority of settlers in the Canadian west in 1885 regarded him a villain; although today he is seen as an early protester of central Canadian political and economic power.

Riel, like most of the 12,000 inhabitants of the Red River area [now Manitoba], was Métis—the offspring of French fur traders and their aboriginal wives. The Métis had a distinctive culture based on hunting buffalo and were concerned about protecting it since they were nomadic and had no paper title to their land. Declining buffalo herds, increasing smallpox epidemics, and the threat of further white settlement raised their fears.

When Rupert's Land was bought from the Hudson's Bay Company and no provision was made for the natives, Riel led a successful rebellion that eventually resulted in the Manitoba Act. The region joined Canada as the bilingual, bicultural, and bicultural province of Manitoba on July 15, 1870. A full amnesty was extended to all rebels except three Métis leaders, including Riel. He was given a five-year term of exile, but was quietly allowed to return after he promised to keep the peace.

However, Métis rights continued to pose a challenge. After Manitoba entered Confederation, many Métis traveled westward into present-day Saskatchewan and Alberta. Although promised their distinctive way of life would be preserved there, buffalo herds were disappearing and no Métis outside of Manitoba had legal title to their land. In 1884, a new threat arose—the transcontinental railway. The Métis turned to the one man they believed could save them.

Riel sent a petition to Prime Minister John A. Macdonald asking for provincial status, an elected government, and control over natural resources. Although Macdonald promised to investigate the requests, no government policies came forward. Riel took action and, in March 1885, he declared a provisional government at Batoche, promising to arm his followers. This threat of violence lost him the support of the Roman Catholic Church and many settlers who favored change by legal and peaceful means. Riel had only the backing of the Métis and some of the aboriginal tribes in the region. Standing against them were the Canadian government, the Mounted Police, and the railway. Battles began in April 1885 but Riel was overwhelmed and surrendered by May 15.

Riel's trial in Regina created tremendous interest throughout Canada. He refused a plea of insanity (although he had spent several years in asylums convinced that he was a prophet of God), and, after brief deliberation, a jury of six white males found Riel guilty of high treason. Although the jury recommended mercy, the judge in the case could not decide the sentence and passed the decision on to the Prime Minister.

It was reputed Prime Minister Macdonald said, "He shall hang, though every dog in Quebec bark in his favor." On November 16th, the execution was carried out.

The hanging of Riel changed the political landscape of Canada. French Canada erupted in fury and Honoré Mercier, founder of the Parti National in Quebec, became premier within two years. Wilfred Laurier, largely supported by the Quebec vote, became the first French-Canadian Prime Minister from 1896 to 1911. It would be over seventy years before a Conservative, the party of Macdonald and Cartier, would win a majority of the federal seats in Quebec.

This article by Tina Storer was first published in “O Canada! The True North Strong and Free”, a Newspaper in Education Supplement in the Washington Times, April 13, 2004. (pp. 13)
Federally-Recognized Tribes of the Columbia-Snake Basin

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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
Bonneville Power Administration
THE NIMIIPU (NEZ PERCE)

THE EARTH WAS THE
MOTHER OF ALL LIFE AND THE
MOTHER OF THE PEOPLE. THE
NEZ PERCE VALUES THE EARTH
NOT FOR WHAT IT REPRESENTS IN
GOODS OR MONEY, BUT FOR ITS
BEING THE SOURCE OF HIS LIFE AND
PROVIDING ALL HIS NEEDS.

We, the Nimipu people, believe in our own
creation story that has been told from our ances-
tors in the early times until today. Our story tells
of a new world before there were any men. A huge
Monster lived in the Kamiah area, which is located
in the Clearwater Valley. The Monster swallowed
all of the animals for miles around and this
angered Coyote. Coyote then decided that he
would kill the Monster. Coyote allowed himself to
be swallowed by the Monster. Coyote cut up the
heart of the Monster, and with five agate knives he
cut the Monster’s body into small pieces. From
the small pieces came the many different tribes;
these tribes had their own strengths and identities
along with a place where they could live. But
Coyote had forgotten about the land where he was
standing and his friend the Fox reminded him that
the beautiful Kamiah valley was without people.
Coyote did not despair; from a few drops of the
Monster’s blood from the heart
came the last and most noble of
the tribes, the Nez Perce. The
Monster’s heart is still visible today
in the Clearwater Valley at Kamiah,
Idaho.

The earliest Indian people existed
here for well over 8,000 years. Ancient artifacts
have been found at the Weis Rockshelter near the
town of Cottonwood, Idaho. Many of these
artifacts prove that the Indians did hunt, fish and
gather their food. The early Indians used crude
tools, pots and other utensils during that time.

In the early days, the Nez Perce people were
scattered over great distances and lived in small
groups or bands along rivers, small streams and
canyons. The areas occupied by the Nez Perce
people usually had an Indian name, which is still
in use today, such as Palouse, Asotin, Pataha,
Wallowa, Kamiah, Lapwai and Tucannon. There
are many other Indian homes sites, which are
located outside the Nez Perce Reservation; they
are included in the history of the Nez Perce Indian
Tribe. In many of these early Indian home sites,
there are rock carvings called “petroglyphs,”
which represent birds, elk, rivers, mountains or
even man. These writings or carvings were early
forms of communication,
storytelling, or a recording of
events of the early Indian people
who lived here.

Many years ago before the
contact with the white man, the
Nez Perce traveled great dis-
tances overland for buffalo
hunting to the eastern plains
toward what is now Montana.
The Nez Perce searched for food
in the vast territories known as
Oregon, Washington and a great
area in Idaho. The early groups
or bands of the Nez Perce were
dependent on the environment
and the areas where they lived. The big game the Nez Perce hunted included the deer, elk, moose, bear and mountain sheep, which were usually found in the higher elevations. Large land areas were needed to support a family in their food gathering activities, which made it necessary to move with the growing seasons of certain roots, berries and herbs. A favorite and major food source for the Nez Perce was a bulb known as “camas,” which was harvested in the upper elevations in the surrounding prairies. This food is still harvested today, and remains a favorite.

When Indian people moved from area to area, they traveled with their families and carried all their household goods with them. Before the horse was introduced to the Indian people, the moving was done primarily with the use of dogs and family members. However, with the introduction of the horse in Indian territory, the horse became an important factor in the lives of the Indian people. Moving from food gathering areas to hunting areas was usually a major family event that required the cooperation of all family members.

In the winter, the Nez Perce lived in teepees made from the hide of the buffalo and tule mats. The foundations of these winter quarters were usually dug two feet deep below the level of the ground to keep the heat in the teepee and the wind out. Indian families were usually large. Extended family groups consisted of all children, parents, aunts, uncles and the elderly members such as grandparents. Due to the size of the Indian families during the winter months, they lived in a “long house,” which was usually over a hundred and fifty feet in length. These long houses helped conserve wood and offered protection for the family. During the winter months, women cooked, sewed and did their weaving of baskets or bags for their own use or to be used later for trading. The male members of a family usually made ropes from horsehair, or made nets for fishing, arrows for hunting, or trapped along the streams for furs for use by the family. The elders of the Indian family held a place of prominence for they were the teachers, advisors, recorders of important events, instructors in living and caretakers of the young. They were also the family members who were responsible for carrying on and teaching the Nez Perce traditions from generation to generation.

It was not until President Thomas Jefferson obtained a grant from Congress in 1803 for the exploration of the northwest region to the Pacific coast that a large scale expedition through the Louisiana Territory became a reality. In 1804, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark led an expedition from St. Louis, Missouri to the Pacific coast that explored the Louisiana Territory. The explorers traveled by boat, on horseback and on foot until they reached the Bitterroot Mountains, where they encountered perilous conditions. It was after this crossing of the Lolo Pass that Lewis and Clark first met the Nez Perce people in September of 1805. The Nez Perce befriended them when they arrived in Nez Perce country in a starved and ragged condition. The explorers were greeted with warm hospitality, willing assistance and cooperation from the Nez Perce that enabled the expedition to continue to the Pacific coast.

This historical event opened the Northwest Territory for trading companies and their mountain men, who soon converged on the virgin wilderness that was home for the Nez Perce and other tribes. This vast wilderness contained ample furbearing animals, such as mink, otter, fox and the coveted beaver. The furs from these animals were in great demand on the eastern shores of the United States, as well as in England, France and Spain. As fur traders
and trappers penetrated the Rocky Mountains and explored the far west, others searched for precious metals, especially gold. Others wanted land to farm or raise cattle on. The Nez Perce did not usually trap furs for the fur companies, but did trap for their own use.

Many times fur trading companies became a threat to the established way of life for the Indian people by depleting many of the furbearing animals that provided food or clothing for them. The arrival of settlers and cattlemen in Indian country also proved to be detrimental, when they fenced prime grazing lands and natural springs, and allowed cattle or sheep to destroy native food sites. The westward movement began with the surge of people demanding land that was considered free in the new territory, giving little thought to the Indian people who had occupied the land from the earlier times. This demand by the settlers and others for free access to land, even land occupied by the Indians, gave cause for the first appointed governor of Washington territory, Isaac Ingalls Stevens, to make plans for meeting with the Indians in their home base areas. Governor Stevens' prime concern was to keep the Indians from uprising and impeding the westward movement of the settlers. Another consideration that made the meeting with the Indians imperative was the fact that, in 1853, four northern army expeditions had been outfitted for the purpose of determining possible route for a railroad to the Pacific coast. The governor realized that the steady influx of settlers, miners and others would only increase and eventually cause conflict with the Indians whose lands were being slowly eroded. Stevens' role as Superintendent of Indian Affairs offered him an opportunity to negotiate with the tribes, and segregate the Indian people by force if necessary to reserves of land, either within the Indian home base or within another area.

A great council was held in the Walla Walla valley during the month of May in 1855 for the purpose of inducing the Indian tribes, which included the Nez Perce, Cayuse, Walla Wallas, Umatillas and the Yakamas. Each tribe wished to keep a portion of their own home land as part of its reserved land or reservation. Governor Stevens was forced to keep peace with the tribes by agreeing to their request, which allowed the Nez Perce people to remain in their own territory.

In an effort to obtain a mutual understanding and peace for the settlers and others who were rapidly populating the northwest, Governor Stevens proposed a large reservation for the Nez Perce people in return for yielding their right to land they had occupied for generations. But the Nez Perce did not give up their right to fish and hunt on land that was relinquished in the treaty of 1855, or in any later treaty. They also reserved the
right to fish outside the reservation and use public lands for grazing their horses and cattle outside the reservation. As part of the treaty agreements, the government agreed to build, furnish, and operate two schools, two blacksmith shops, two mills, one tin shop and one hospital. The Nez Perce were promised $200,000 for a period of twenty years for improvements on the reservation and the purchasing of merchandise for distribution to tribal members. The following years proved to be filled with delays, frustrations and anger for the Nez Perce people, who waited for the treaty stipulations to be enforced. For many of the tribal people the reality of the treaty stipulations were never to be realized; for others the promises were again just broken promises.

Again a change was on the horizon, for gold was discovered on the reservation at a location that was to be known as Pierce. Again there followed an invasion of gold miners on the reservation, which was contrary to the stipulations of the 1855 treaty. The growing conflict between the Nez Perce and the settlers, land developers and now the gold miners became an issue that caused a demand for a new treaty that would change the boundaries and release more land for the settlers and the many others who were finding their way into the land of the Nez Perce. A council was assembled in May 1863 and was held at Fort Lapwai where three hundred soldiers came to prevent conflict at the council. The second treaty of 1863 greatly reduced the original reserved land base of the Nez Perce people to a fraction of its former size, forcing a majority of the many bands that made up the Nez Perce people to give up their land, which was prime land that had been their home. The new treaty brought new dissension among the Nez Perce because of the changes in the size of the boundaries, but also because of the non-payment for improvements on the reservation for the 1855 treaty, and because of the agreement that all settlers were to be kept off the reservation, which had not happened.

Dissatisfaction and resentment of the new stipulations brought on vigorous resistance by the bands that lived in the Wallowa country, the people of Chief Joseph. During the years of 1870 and 1877, the cattlemen and settlers moved into the Wallowa territory, built homes, put up fences around springs and prime range land. No white encroachment was more bitterly resented than this blatant land takeover from the Chief Joseph band. The Wallowa Territory had been the homeland for the Joseph people for generations, for it was a valley with beautiful lakes and streams that were abundant with salmon, and forests with enough game to fill the needs of the families who occupied the land. It was the 1863 treaty that would change these circumstances by taking over the land of the Joseph people without their consent. The resistance of the non-treaty bands - who were being forced to leave their lands to a greatly reduced reservation - resulted in the famous Nez Perce War between Chief Joseph and Colonel O. Howard. The war resulted in the Chief Joseph people being sent into the Oklahoma
territory where many died and others waited to be returned to the northwest. This marked the end of an era that forever restricted buffalo hunting expeditions to the east, traditional migratory movements for hunting, fishing and trapping throughout the territory, bringing an end to their tribal independence.

All western tribes soon suffered the same fate as the Indians of the east, for the northwest Indians who had been forced to accept reservation life became more and more dependent on the government for survival. Congress had passed laws that increased federal control over the Indian people with one of the main objectives being the assimilation of the Indian into white mainstream. Educating the Indian became a major goal, and by 1887 over two hundred Indian schools had been established. This major thrust for education was by force in many instances, for Indian families had to send their children to school. Usually these schools were located in different states and alien surroundings, and lasted for long periods of time with the hope that this would mark the end for Indian language and customs for those who would accept education and return to the reservation to teach others. Although Indians throughout the United States had become the subject of government pressure for great changes, acculturation and inducement to leave their homelands, the Nez Perce people were determined to retain their culture, language and many of the traditions of the tribe.

In 1887, the General Allotment Act, or the "Dawes Act," was passed by Congress in an effort to accelerate the assimilation process of the Indian people. This act allowed the government to divide communally held tribal lands into individual parcels that would require each individual tribal member an allotted number of acres to be held in trust in his or her name for a period of twenty-five years. The land that was not "allotted" to a tribal member was considered surplus and sold to white settlers for farms and cattle ranches. This policy was detrimental to the economy of those tribes that were never given the opportunity of making their objections concerning future land use. The Dawes Act created many scattered Indian land holdings, but none large enough to build a sound land base. Due to the Dawes Act, many reservations were soon overrun with white people and by 1934, only 50 million acres belonged to the Indian tribes across the nation.

In 1924, citizenship was granted to the Indian people including the Nez Perce. However, this citizenship offered no solution to their extreme poverty, nor did it open job opportunities on the reservations.

On June 18, 1934, Congress passed another bill called the "Indian Reorganization Act," or the "Wheeler-Howard Act," with the express purpose of rehabilitating the Indian tribes' economic situation and helping them realize their own potential and initiative, which had almost been destroyed during a century of oppression, conflict and government interference. This bill also put an end to further allotment of Indian tribal lands to individual Indians, and also allowed the Secretary of the Interior the authority to create new reservations for landless tribes and to restore lands not sold to non-Indians to tribal ownership. Tribes were also encouraged to adopt their own governments and to conduct business for their reservations and people. These changes in policy during different administrations proved to be inadequate for any long range economic planning for the reservation.

The Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee, the authorized representatives of the Nez Perce Tribe, have assumed a vital role similar to state governments. This executive committee, from its inception in the 1930s, has inherited many diverse problems that impede the progress of tribes and their people. The complex relationship between the tribes and the United States under the treaties - assuming the role of sovereign nations as well as the role of citizens and voting members of the
state in which they reside - has proven to be a
learning experience for all those concerned. For
the Indian people as with all citizens of this
country, the responsibilities of government are not
taken lightly, nor are the Indians allowed the
opportunities to be complacent about any laws
that affect them.
1. The Metis people’s homeland (The Red River in Manitoba, Canada)
2. The Nez Perce people’s homeland (Washington, Oregon and parts of Idaho and Montana)
3. The capitol of Washington Territory (now Olympia, WA)
4. The location of the Walla Walla Treaty Council
5. The location of the Washington State Historical Society Research Center (now Tacoma, WA)
Use the timeline below to keep track of the important dates in the history of Isaac Stevens and the coat that you are researching.

**Chronology:** Chronology is the science of locating events in time. A chronology may be either relative — that is, locating related events relative to each other — or absolute — locating these events to specific dates in a Chronological Era. An arrangement of events, with absolute dates, from either earliest to latest or the reverse, is also called a chronology or a timeline.


1921: Donation of Isaac Stevens' coat to Washington State Historical Society.
Examining Artifacts of Encounter: Student Assignment Sheet

Are you ready to investigate a historic puzzle and write about it? Well, then, welcome to the Washington State Historical Society’s collection of historic artifacts and documents! The Historical Society was founded in 1891 and arrived at its first permanent home— the Ferry Museum in the Stadium District of Tacoma— in 1911.

Our collection of artifacts and documents are still cared for in this original building, even though we built a “new” building for our exhibits in downtown Tacoma in 1996.

For this assignment, imagine that you are one of our museum curators who has rediscovered an artifact that was donated in 1921 by the family of Isaac Stevens, the famous governor of Washington Territory.

Your assignment: Develop an interpretation of the “life history” of this coat and include this in your mock press release announcing the rediscovery. Where was the coat made? How might it have ended up in Isaac Stevens’ possession?

The family says that the Nez Perce Indian people gave this coat to Isaac Stevens in the 1850’s. Did they, you wonder? There is more than one possible story about the coat and several different ways that you can approach its life history. You will need to explore historical sources to find the full story of what happened.

You want to write a press release so that the Tacoma newspaper will publish the exciting donation from a famous governor in Washington history, but first you need to do your research. Proceed to the Student Checklist and have fun!
Student Checklist for

Dig Deep: Artifacts of Encounter

___ Your first task is to read about Isaac Stevens and the Nez Perce people. Who was he? Who were they? Why was the 1850s an important but difficult time in Washington history? Pay careful attention to when significant events occurred and where they occurred. Think about what caused these events and be sure to incorporate at least two reasons for them in your press release.

___ When you find something important in your reading you may use the attached fact organization sheets to help you organize these events. Make sure you write down the source, or where you found the information. You will need at least three sources to complete your paper.

___ Using the graph below, begin creating a timeline. Fill in the fact sheets and shuffle them according to date of event; this will help you sort your information in chronological order.

___ Examine the historical documents and look at the pictures from the museum archive that came along with the donated coat. What do they tell us about where the coat came from, who made it, and why it is important? Do we know who provided this information? Enter any clues on your fact sheets and timeline.

___ Consider the places involved in the history of the coat. Where could the coat have come from? How did these places affect the people who lived there? Were there any events that were influenced by these places? How? Don’t forget to use this information in your press release.

___ Look at your timeline and decide if you feel you are ready to tell the story of the coat. Make a list of questions that you cannot answer about the coat.

___ Write an outline of a newspaper article that announces the donation of the coat to the museum. Pretend that you are the curator writing it and informing the public of its importance and its story. Don’t be afraid to identify any ongoing mysteries of the coat!
FACT ORGANIZER

Name: ____________________________

Who? ____________________________________________________________

What? ____________________________________________________________

When? ____________________________________________________________

Where? ____________________________________________________________

Why? ____________________________________________________________

Source of Information: ____________________________

FACT ORGANIZER

Name: ____________________________

Who? ____________________________________________________________

What? ____________________________________________________________

When? ____________________________________________________________

Where? ____________________________________________________________

Why? ____________________________________________________________

Source of Information: ____________________________
**PRESS RELEASE WORKSHEET**

**NAME:** ______________________  **DATE:** _______________________

Use this worksheet to help organize research for your press release. You have one single-spaced page to send a clear and effective message about the rediscovery of Isaac Stevens’ coat in the museum’s collections.

**To develop this message, answer the following questions:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who is the intended audience for your press release?</td>
<td>What has prompted you, as museum curator, to write this press release?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the most interesting fact(s) or detail(s) that will “hook” your readers’ attention?</td>
<td>What historical events, images, or personalities could you use to help tell the story of the coat?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What kinds of historic evidence did you use to develop an explanation for the history of this coat?</td>
<td>What question(s) remain unanswered about this coat?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What will be your ending “punch”? Why should members of the public notice this discovery or appreciate its importance?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PRESS RELEASE OUTLINE

DATE: _______________________

Your name and job title at the Washington State Historical Society:

________________________________________________________________________

The main point of writing the press release:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Your interpretation of where this artifact came from and how it ended up with Isaac Stevens:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Why this item is important/what we can learn from it:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

What were some of the most important events occurring at the time this coat was made?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Remember... a press release is a written or recorded statement to members of the press to announce something of news value. To catch your audience’s attention, you will want to make your paper clear, effective and entertaining!