A Leschi: Justice in our Time Lesson Plan

Listening for Leschi: Voices from the Past

by Gwen Perkins

This may be used as a Dig Deep Classroom-Based Assessment for elementary school students.

Summary:

The name “Leschi” peppers our landscape – from streets to parks and schools. Who was this famous Nisqually man and leader? This lesson plan will encourage students to “dig deep” into primary historical materials to learn about Leschi’s time – mid 19th century western Washington. By exploring both written and oral histories, students will come to understand the significance of this period of time in Washington state history, a time of making treaties and, tragically, a time of making war.

During this lesson, students will learn firsthand the value of oral history by conducting an interview to learn about a family other than their own. Building upon these understandings they will have the opportunity to imagine that they are a reporter who can travel back in time and interview Leschi to create a newspaper article that features him. What would Leschi say about the events of his time?

Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs):
This lesson plan satisfies the following EALRs: History 1.2.1, 1.1.1a, Social Studies Skills 1.1.1f, Reading 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, Communication 1.1, 1.2 and Writing 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 3.1, and 3.2. Click here to print out the material 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.
Essential Questions for Students:
- Who was Leschi? How was he viewed by the people with whom he lived and interacted?
- What were the conflicts that led to his death in 1858? Who were the key figures and events in his struggle?
- How can we use artifacts and documents to help us interpret and tell the story of what happened in the past?

Essential Understandings:
- Students will recognize that historical interpretation requires the use of (often conflicting) multiple types of evidence about the past.
- Students will recognize that not all historical evidence is written down. Oral histories have value and can be used to get a sense of the past from the people who lived it.
- Students will learn to examine primary sources and establish a series of facts to create their own interpretation of the events surrounding Leschi’s life and death.

Primary Sources for Student Understanding:
1. Interview of Mary Leschi
2. Letter from Isaac Stevens
3. The Truth Teller
4. Map of Indian War Battlefields 1855-1856
5. Oral history excerpts from Billy Frank, Jr. (optional)
6. Pictures of artifacts from the Washington State Historical Society

Secondary Sources for Student Understanding:
1. Before the White Man Came to Nisqually Country
2. Treaty Time at Nisqually
3. Tribal Homelands & Treaty ceded areas map
4. Biography of Leschi
5. What is a Treaty?

Materials Needed:
1. Dictionaries and thesauruses (optional)

Instructions for Teachers:
PREPARATION
Part I.
Please note: You may wish to do this unit as a follow-up to another lesson plan on Nisqually culture, such as Before the White Man Came or Understanding Treaties I or this can be done as a stand-alone unit. If your class does not have time to begin with one of these lesson plans, consider asking students to read the following materials aloud or in groups during class to give them a sense of what Nisqually life was like prior to the events illustrated in this unit.

Before the White Man Came to Nisqually Country
To help prepare yourself for teaching this unit, read the following sources about Leschi and the Nisqually people:

| Biography of Leschi | Treaty Time at Nisqually | Mary Leschi interview |

**Part II. (Student Preparation)**

Ask students to bring with them to class an item that they feel tells a story about themselves or their family. This can be a printed article (such as a letter or newspaper clipping), an object that reminds them of an event or special time (perhaps a toy or favorite book) or a photograph. Explain to them beforehand that they will be discussing this object with a partner so that students select an item that they feel they can talk about with others.

**SESSION ONE**

**Part I.**

Pair students up in groups of two (an odd group may be formed if necessary).

Tell students that:
- *Today, each one of you has brought with you something that tells a story. Each one of you has a partner and you will be interviewing each other about the objects that you are holding.*
- *Your job is to find the story behind your partner’s object. You can use the questions on the sheet provided or make up your own. At the end of this project, you will be asked to share some of the things that you have discovered.*

Pass out the Interviewing with an Artifact worksheet to your students. Explain that they will begin by “trading” objects with their partners. Without speaking to their partners, students should spend 10-15 minutes answering the “Observe” and “Consider” sections on the first part of the worksheet.

After this time has passed, ask students to stop writing and return the object they were given.

**Part II.**

Students will now be asked to interview one another about the objects that they have just examined. Explain to them that:
- *You will each take turns asking questions about the objects- or artifacts- that your partner has brought.*
- *Using the questions on the worksheet as a guide, try to find out as much as possible about the story of your partner’s artifact.*

**Part III.**

After students have had the opportunity to interview- and be interviewed by- their partners, bring the group back together to share some of the stories that they discovered about these objects.

After students have finished sharing, engage them in the following discussion:
• Do you think that the stories you learned today were history? Why or why not?
• What are some of the things you learned from this artifact that you could not have learned from a book?
• Look back at what you wrote about the item before you did the interview. Do you think that your feelings about the object changed how you did your interview? Do you think that if you hated the item your partner was holding that you would ask different questions?
• When you talked about your object, how did your feelings change the way you talked about it? Did you tell a different story than you might have if you didn’t feel that way?

Share with students that they will be exploring more artifacts, including letters, photographs and interviews to help tell another story— that of Leschi, the Nisqually leader after whom many places and landmarks are named in Washington state.

SESSION TWO

Part I.

Explain the following to students, projecting the provided maps or photos where appropriate:

• You are going to explore a period of time more than 100 years ago in western Washington state. We are going to focus on a tribe of Native American people who called themselves Squally-absch, or Nisqually.
• We are going to focus on the life of a famous Nisqually man—named Chief Leschi -- who became a leader to his people.
• By looking at very old documents and photos, we are going to explore how different people felt about him.

Ask them to remember the interviews they did before and how their feelings about their partner’s artifact affected the types of things they wanted to know about these objects. They should also be reminded of how the stories they told about their own items changed based on their own experiences.

Part II.

Pair the students up and ask them to read the following article in class. Make sure that dictionaries or other reference material is available.

Have them underline words that they didn’t understand and discuss what they think those words mean. Students will add these words to their vocabulary organizer as they go along.

When you bring them back together, project digital images of, or show transparencies of, maps that show the shift of the Nisqually people from their original tribal homelands to the establishment of their tribal reservation after Medicine Creek.

The Medicine Creek Treaty

• The treaty got its name from She-Nah-Num Medicine Creek where the treaty negotiations were held.
• 600 Indians were present with representatives from the Nisqually, Puyallup, Steilacoom, Squawksin, S’Homamish, Steh’chass, T’Peek-sin, Squialt and Sa-heh-wamish tribes.
• When it was announced that the reservation for the Nisquallies was located on the high forested land west of the Nisqually delta, Leschi refused to sign the treaty. One of the reasons was because the tribe’s request for a portion of the Nisqually River was denied.
• The Puyallup tribe was also disappointed with the reservation land proposed. The Squaxin Island reserve appears to be the only land ceded without question.
• The Medicine Creek Treaty was the only treaty to be ratified in 1855 by the U.S. government.
With your students, examine the effects of the Medicine Creek treaty on the Nisqually people. Provide them with a brief overview about what happened and discuss what treaties were.

After students have had a chance to read through the article provided, engage them in discussion about treaties and their effects on the Nisqually people.

Ask them to consider the following:
- What is a treaty?
- Why didn’t Leschi want to sign the Medicine Creek treaty?
- What was at stake for the tribes? What was at stake for the U.S. government?
- What were the effects of the treaty on the Nisqually people?

Part III. (Homework)
Pass out to students the biography on Leschi for reading as homework. Review with them what a timeline is and make sure that they are comfortable with the timeline organizer provided. Explain that as they read the biography, they should add events that they feel are important to the timeline. Suggest that they use this timeline as a guide to their readings so that they can follow important events.

Request that they bring their timeline to class as it will be of use to them in outlining their papers.

SESSION THREE
Part I.
Have students post their timelines around the room. What were some of the things that students noted as important? What questions did they generate?

Explain to students that now that they have read about Leschi and who he was, explain to them that they will be investigating his life further. Now they are going to look at primary documents. Explain for them the difference between primary and secondary materials. The first thing that they will be asked to do is look at a series of pictures. Pass out the photograph assignment sheet.

Ask students the following:
- Do you recognize any of the names underneath the pictures?
- Who do you know? What do you know about them from the reading?
- How do these people fit into the story of Leschi?

Part II.
After discussing what students know about these people, ask them to break into small groups. Each group should be assigned 1-2 photographs to write about in their assignment sheets. They should use the readings that they have already been assigned in order to complete this activity. Remind them to use their timelines as
needed to record valuable information that they may find during the course of this activity.

**Part III.**
Divide the class into 2 parts. Give one half of the class one reading (the Mary Leschi interview) and the other half of the class the other reading (the letter from Isaac Stevens) as homework. Alternately, the Truth Teller (believed to be written by August Kautz and William Tolmie) can be used to divide the class into a third group or as a supplement, using the same worksheet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview with Mary Leschi</th>
<th>Letter from Isaac Stevens</th>
<th>The Truth Teller</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Document Analysis Worksheet</td>
<td></td>
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Ask them to consider the following points as they read for discussion in class the next day:
- *Who was the person that told the story?*
- *Do you think that this person liked Leschi? Why or why not?*
- *Based on this reading, what kind of person do you think Leschi was? Do you agree or disagree with what the writer or person interviewed had to say?*

**SESSION FOUR**

**Part I.**
Gather the class together and ask them: *what does your document say about Leschi?* You may wish to have the group that read the Stevens letter sit on one side of the room and the group that read the Mary Leschi interview sit on the other. Take turns calling on students to answer in the discussion.

Some possible discussion points are:
- *Who were the people telling the story? How did they feel about Leschi?*
- *How did what you read match up with some of the things that have already been discussed about Leschi?*
- *Do you think they gave a realistic interpretation of what kind of man Leschi was? Why or why not do you believe what they had to say?*
- *After listening to your classmates, how do these stories differ in what they say about Leschi and what happened? What things do they agree upon?*

Ask students to revisit the exercise that they did at the beginning of the lesson- that of interviewing someone else about their artifact. How did their personal feelings about the items that they saw affect how they portrayed those objects? Do they feel that either person in the materials they read let their own feelings affect how they described people or events?

**Part II.**
Review with students some of the things that they have discovered in their readings and lectures. Ask them to look over some of the tools that they have used throughout this lesson: the timeline, the artifact analysis and the interview analysis worksheets.
Explain to students that they will be using the information that they have gathered about these people when they imagine that they are a reporter who can travel back in time to speak to the Nisqually leader, Leschi. They will have to imagine that he is answering the questions provided and *support their reasons* for why they believe he would have answered that way. It is suggested that the questions be reviewed or that students select questions provided on the interview prompt sheet. Students will need to dig into the past to ask Leschi questions about some of the events they have studied.

**Interviewing Leschi worksheet**

During this process, students will discover their own interpretations of this historical figure as well as describe what this period of history was like. Please refer back to the scoring goals listed in the [CBA Rubric](#) to determine grading for this assignment.

Students may complete the assignment in class or do as homework. It is recommended that you provide them with dictionaries and thesauruses in order to finish the assignment. You may wish to have them complete a first draft and peer review each other’s work before turning in the final paper.
In a recent interview with the widow of Leschi, who then was young, I learned more of the particulars of their flight and the part she took in the events following their escape from the Eaton Rangers, the force acting Governor Mason had sent to apprehend Leschi.

"We left home at night but did not go far" she said, "only to Aubry's place" (Aubry, Dean about five miles distant) "and camped in a small clump of timber near the house. Next day we went to Senator prairie" (Connell's) "but did not stop and went right on over to Greene River where we afterwards camped so long. I didn't know there was to be war. Leschi never told me anything about it. There were only five of us, three men and two women, that traveled together.

The men sat up and talked nearly all night but I didn't pay much attention to what they were saying. I heard there was to be war I wouldn't have gone. I didn't know anything about there being war until I heard the guns a few days after we went away from home.

"Did Leschi ever tell you there would be war?" I asked.

"No, Leschi never told me anything, only small talk" (Oiltis wawa). "He never told me anything about his business. I was young and I think fool for marrying him" (high-poh-ton). He was old enough to be my father.

"Then why did you marry him?"
"Oh well, Leschi was always making me presents, and he always dressed well and combed his hair nice and was almost as white as a Boston man; and then he was rich and had lots of horses and like a fool I married him."

"Well, was he ugly to you or cross?"

"Oh no! (with emphasis) not that. I never saw him angry in my life and he never spoke an angry word to me and always let me have all the nice clothes I wanted, but somehow he didn't seem to want to stay at home much and didn't talk to me much."

"How did he get the money to buy you the nice clothes and make you presents?"

"Well, he would take a horse to the Fort and sell it and bring home a lot of things. We always lived well."

In answer to further inquiries she said, "Leschi never worked much. He was nearly always on horseback unless we were away hunting and as soon as we would get home he would go away again and often stay away all night."

"Tell us about your hunting trips, will you please?"

"We used to go away up the river (Nisqually) nearly to where the snow laid on the ground, not quite to it though. We would take horses with us and stay sometimes half a month and Leschi would kill lots of game, all we could pack out."
"One time when we were way up in the mountains and out of water Leschi went way down into a deep place where we could hear the water running; even so far down. While Leschi was down there he found gold and brought some of it up with him and showed it to me but I didn't think much about it then and I know I could not find the place again and that is the reason I have always refused to try though some Bostoners have offered me money if I would tell them where the place was."

I had heard of this kind of gold before, but Leschi in his lifetime never would divulge the secret as to the location—only

said he found it in the mountains.

"How many horses do you think Leschi had when the war broke out Mary?"

"Well, I have no idea. I never count-ed them and Leschi never told me. There was a whole field full of them, I know, that I have seen at one time." I should judge from the manner of expressing herself there were from one to two hundred head—certainly not less than one hundred.

I questioned her closely about whether Leschi signed the treaty but she said she did not know.

"There were a great many about where Stevens and Simons tent stood and I didn't go there much and didn't know much about
what they were doing. Leschi told Simons he did not want land on
the bay and said he wanted his own hunting ground. Simons told
the Indians they would get a hat full of money but when the talk
was done they only got a few yards of calico and some "black strap"
(black molasses) "and not much of that."

Mary's description of her former husband differs somewhat from
my recollection, caused doubtless in a measure from the different
conditions under which I last saw him and remember him best.

When I saw him last, he had just been captured after his long
siege in the war of constant activity and scant food for over a
year, which had visibly changed his appearance. He was then on

trial for his life and I was one of the jurors facing him. I
shall never forget his searching eyes as he glanced over the jury
with seeming contentment as he knew several of them. His hair at
that time was long and countenance haggard, nevertheless the
glow on his cheeks showed he was in good health. Mary said, "Leschi
was white for an Indian and wore his hair short and combed back like
a white man." He was round faced with a flush color on his cheeks
which showed good health. He was a very strong man and seemed never
to get tired." She said, while visibly affected at the revival of
old memories "but was always cheerful and good natured but he didn't
talk much."
As she talked her manner showed she had been possessed of a burning jealousy that had left its lasting impress upon her and that had it not been for Leschi's former wife, (then living) she would have been happier than now with her present husband, a white man, to whom she has been married a great many years.

Mary said the report that Leschi had killed his own child to escape discovery from the noise he made was not true as they had no children with them. The little boy he thought so much of remained with its mother, Leschi's first wife, who did not go to the war.

It was a pathetic story Mary told of the breakup at the end of the war. The Indians were scattered; Leschi had gone over the mountains, and she with Mrs. Quilichuth and another Indian woman were left in hiding alone in the mountains. As near as I could gather her narrative, these three withdrew far up White River into the mountains and traveled along near the head waters of the three rivers, White, Puyallup and Nisqually Rivers, hunting grounds of the Nisqually, where they fell in with and obtained food after three days without anything to eat. "Oh dear me" she exclaimed "what a time." Sure enough, what a time.

\[\text{Yelm Lim.}\]
The excerpt below is from a letter written by Territorial Governor Isaac Stevens. In this letter, he describes his thoughts on Leschi and the progress of the Indian Wars. As you read it, consider the following things:

• Who was Isaac Stevens? What did he do for a living? How might this have affected what he thought about Leschi and other Native American leaders?
• As you read, try to figure out if Stevens liked Leschi. Why or why not do you think he did?
• Based on this reading, what kind of a person do you think Leschi was? Do you agree or disagree with what Stevens has to say?
be friends. They met as such, shaking hands and exchanging friendly greetings; but as soon as their backs were turned the Indians fired upon them, and Moses and Miles, prominent citizens, the first the inspector of customs at Nisqually, the latter a lawyer of Olympia, and one of the colonels of the territorial militia, were the first martyrs of the war. Fortunately, though the Indians on the Sound outnumbered the whites nearly two to one, we have a law-abiding population, and we had a superintendent, Governor Mason, and an agent equal to the emergency.

Would it have been surprising if in the universal alarm, for all the Indians began to show unequivocal signs of hostility, the inhabitants had sought safety in the indiscriminate massacre of all Indians? Could it, even under the circumstances, have brought upon them the imputation of cruelty? I shall not answer these questions, but I put them as the most significant method of presenting the case.

The people took no such course. They sustained the course of Governor Mason and agent M. F. Simmons, in protecting all Indians not actually in the hostile ranks; and through difficulties and discouragements of the darkest character the Indians, four thousand in number, were moved from the war ground on the Sound to reservations, where they have since remained. Not an Indian was killed or molested except in battle.
Plan of Tenalcut or Connell's Prairie, Surveyed by Lieut. Kautz, D. M. Tollein, & W. Tidd
A Point where Leschi was left by the express party.
B Swamp where Moses was shot.
C Military Road. Route pursued by express party; distance 68 chains.
D Road 85 chains has been traversed by Leschi; distance 104 ½ chains.
E Junction of the two roads; distance 33 and 49 ½ chains. From C to swamp 85 chains.
F Dense forest; much undergrowth and fallen timber.
G Trail to MuckleShute.
H Connell's house.
I Williamson's house.
J Block-house.
K Springs.
L Swamp and ravine. M. north.
The express party came upon the trail from the east. Met Leschi and other Indians at A, left there and rode swiftly to B, where they were fired upon, and Moses was mortally wounded. Rabboni testified that he saw Leschi at both places. None of the others of the party saw him. There were six others besides Rabboni. This occurred on the 30th of Oct. 1855.

A Card.

The virtuous indignation of the people of Thurston and Pierce appeared to have been thoroughly aroused against the officers of the army stationed at Fort Steilacoom, with but one signalized exception. Although not having been particularly mentioned so far, in any of the mass meetings, except to have been the subject of billegante and vituperation from one or more of that class of valiant individuals who never have been known to express such opinions face to face with the persons mentioned in their vulgar tirade; still, I cannot in justice to myself, and in accordance with my position as executive officer on the 22d January, 1858, allow any impression or assertion, that my action was actuated by the same sense of duty as that of my brother officers, to pass unobserved.

The orders given to me by the commanding officer, (Col. Casey) were, to deliver the prisoner, Leschi, to the sheriff upon presentation of the proper warrant; no such authority was presented, from the fact of the sheriff having been arrested, which came to my knowledge about 12 p.m. As to the suspicion that Col. Casey had arrested the sheriff and confined him in the guard house, I think the cross-questioning by the Secretary of the Territory, of myself, should have been sufficient.

It has been suggested, I understand, by some far-sighted "wise acers" that the "Officer of the day" secreted himself for the purpose of avoiding the process of delivering the prisoner to the sheriff. Supposing this absurd suspicion to be true, it was certainly well-known to any sensible individual, and there were certain persons present who are quite conversant with military customs, that the prisoner would have been quite as promptly delivered up to the proper authorities, upon application to the commanding officer, as he would have been to the "Officer of the day."

My object in presenting this card to the public, is to publish the fact that I have acted as all officers of this post have done, (who have been annihilated by efficient and terrible resolutions, to send them out of the country and deprive them of their commissions,) feel as they do, perfectly conscious of having done right.

ARTHUR SHAAF.
2d Lieutenant, 4th Infantry, U. S. A.

To the Citizens of Washington Territory:

Considering the unpleasant situation in which I have been placed by the action of a public meeting held at Steilacoom on the 2d of January, and by a series of resolutions passed by a meeting held at Olympia on the 26th January, I have thought proper, in this manner, to address the public.

The proceedings of both the meetings alluded to, which were formed and carried through by men laboring under a wild frenzy of excitement, contain nothing more than hasty assertions—natural, and becoming those who act without reflection—controlled by misguided passion.

I consider myself, under the above circumstances, justified in making a plain and unequivocal denial of having had any knowledge whatever, of the intention of my arrest previous to the time the writ was served upon me by the deputy United States Marshal.

My own conscience assures me, that as an officer of Justice, I have done nothing that was not in consonance with prudence, and in strict conformity with that respect which should be shown to the law by every good and honest citizen.

When those who have taken part in the passing resolutions, rash and ungoverned in their nature, produce argument or proof in place of assertions, I am prepared to meet them on any and every point—confident that I shall be able to show to the world that I have committed no act unworthy myself as a man, or my duty as a public officer.

GEORGE WILLIAMS,
Sheriff, Pierce County.

Had a plain statement of Facts and a smaller exercise of imagination, been made by the parties who drew up the resolutions adopted by the recent meetings at Steilacoom and Olympia, relative to the case of Leschi, there would have existed no necessity for the undersigned to vindicate himself from the false charges made against his conduct as U. S. Commissioner. In times of popular excitement, much injustice is apt to be done to individuals, and although a cooler temper will undoubtedly ensue, and many regrets be made by those who are most savage in their demonstrations; still, it is generally true, he has not the right altogether, to remain quiet, but that he owes a duty to himself, his friends and to society, to state plain and honest Truth.

At the meeting of the 22d of January, an affidavit was made before me by an Indian, to the effect, that Mr. Williams, who resides near Fort Steilacoom, had on a certain occasion sold a quantity of whiskey to an Indian. As I am the U. S. Commissioner it was my duty to immediately issue a warrant for the arrest of said Williams, which I accordingly did. It was served upon him by Mr. Kautz, a citizen of this Territory, whom I appointed acting U. S. Marshal. At any other time than the 22d of January, Mr. Williams might have been arrested for selling liquor to Indians without a single shriek on the part of the public, or a solitary howl from the crowd that went to Fort Steilacoom to see Leschi hanged. But on this occasion it was to be set aside; a man charged with the misdemeanor of selling liquor to Indians was to escape without punishment, but forsooth, that man happened to be a sheriff—a man, who according to the law books of the Olympic and Steilacoom reformers, can only be arrested on certain days of the year. If I know my duty at all, I always endeavor to do it well and promptly, and in issuing a warrant for the immediate arrest of Mr. Williams, was simply carrying out what I was sworn to do in my official capacity.

But the cry is that there was a plot to arrest him, and that it is said, was held, (nobody knows where,) by a set of persons, (nobody knows who,) to do something, (nobody knows what,) which would result in saving Leschi from the gallows. Now, if there was a plot I certainly am the victim, and (if the carrying out of the law, in the case of Leschi was prevented, it certainly is the fault of the law itself, which does not ordain that sheriffs cannot be arrested for selling liquor to Indians. The shallowness of reasoning, and the vivacity of imagination brought to bear in blinding me for exercising for a legitimate purpose, the powers vested in me by the law, are truly extraordinary. It was a matter of indifference to me whether Leschi was hanged or not, and I left it to my friends to declare whether I ever expressed an opinion about the propriety of hanging Indians. I sometimes tell the lot of honorable men who do their duty to be abused, and I cannot expect to be free from the common chances of life; but I do enter my protest against being included in any plot. I know that the good sense of the community will finally uphold my official acts, whatever their results may be. My motto in life has always been to do my duty and leave the consequences to take care of themselves.

J. M. BACHELDER,
U. S. Commissioner 2d Jud. Dist.

TRUTH TELLER.

DEVOTED TO THE DESEMINATION OF TRUTH, AND SUPPRESSION OF HUMBUG.
There was once a time before the white man came to the shores of southern Puget Sound. The Nisqually Indian people lived in their natural and undisturbed habitat. At that time, the Nisqually people called themselves *Squally-absch*. Grouping together in bands and villages, they lived in houses made from the cedar tree. They built their houses beside the freshwater outlets that flowed into and mixed with the saltwater of Puget Sound. Therein lay the home of the salmon, the mainstay of the Indian diet. Prairie lands bordered both sides of the lower reaches of the Nisqually River and extended far into the forested foothills of Tacobet, the mountain now known as Rainier. Tacobet dictated the climate that nourished the lands of the Nisqually River Basin, the homeland of the Nisqually Indian people.

In those days the Squally-absch depended on the warm, wet climate to nurture the foods of the earth. It ripened the camas on the prairies and the hazelnuts in the lowland meadows. Sunshine in the spring, summer, and fall helped the Squally-absch to dry the assorted foodstuffs they had gathered so they could store them for winter. Each year the Indian people followed the same pattern of gathering and hunting, followed by the winter months spent in giving thanks and addressing their spirit powers for the gifts provided for them, for there were no stores for making purchases.

The Squally-absch were alone in their effort to clothe, feed, and shelter their families. From their cedar homes—hewn from giant red cedar trees—and from their warm beds, the Squally-absch enjoyed the winter months. They made clothes out of cedar bark and deer furs gathered during the summer trek. The women wove their baskets from spruce roots and cedar bark and fashioned mats made from carefully prepared dried cattails. Catching salmon in the river and its tributaries was a never-ending job for the menfolk of the village. At almost any time of the year the Squally-absch would go out on the sandy beaches to gather clams, oysters, and geoducks and cook them over the hot rocks found in their cooking fires.

In a constant pursuit of food, the Squally-absch would concentrate first on the food found on the prairies. The vast expanses of prairie land would be burned off in the fall of the year so one could see far across the prairies in those days. To harvest the camas bulb, a steam pit would be dug with an ironwood stick sharpened to a point. The people steamed the camas bulbs for two or three days before drying and storing them in baskets. Catching salmon in the river and its tributaries was a never-ending job for the menfolk of the village. At almost any time of the year the Squally-absch would go out on the sandy beaches to gather clams, oysters, and geoducks and cook them over the hot rocks found in their cooking fires.

In a constant pursuit of food, the Squally-absch would concentrate first on the food found on the prairies. The vast expanses of prairie land would be burned off in the fall of the year so one could see far across the prairies in those days. To harvest the camas bulb, a steam pit would be dug with an ironwood stick sharpened to a point. The people steamed the camas bulbs for two or three days before drying them and storing them in baskets for winter use. Many of the food items from the meadows and lowlands consisted of roots and leaves of the brake fern, the wood fern, the dandelion, the wild sunflower, and the tiger lily. Some of the roots were eaten raw while others were blanched in a basket of hot water warmed by hot rocks from the family cooking fire.

The foothills yielded berries of all kinds, such as the blackberry, the salmonberry, the elderberry, the salal berry and the blackcap. All of these berries, with
the exception of the salmonberry, were placed on racks above a slow-burning fire before packing them away in storage baskets. The salmon berry and the thimble berry contained so much moisture that they would be eaten fresh or mixed with water for juice. Dried berries would be mixed on the grinding rock with animal fat or ground meat to make pemmican.

The Squally-absch hunted deer in the foothills or sometimes on the prairies and in the meadows. They also hunted by digging pits on animal paths. Sometimes a lasso was laid on the ground so that the animal would find itself yanked high in the air. Bows and arrows were also used for hunting the mountain goat, the bear, and the coyote. Every part of the animal was used. The hide was dried on a rack to be tanned and made into clothing items or used for the family bed. The meat was carefully cut into strips and roasted by the cooking fire. The bones were made into necessary tools. Small animals such as the beaver, the rabbit, or the squirrel were roasted for a quick meal. Small bits of their fur were used for decorations. Birds were caught by stringing nets between two trees where the pheasant and the grouse would become entangled and would make a tasty meal.

As members of a hunting party journeyed home-ward they would watch for hazelnuts and acorns. The hazelnuts would be laid out in the sun and dried while the acorn would have to be boiled to remove the acid taste. To keep the acorns for later use, they could be buried in the mud next to a stream.

There were five distinct runs of salmon that came into the Nisqually River and any one of the species could be caught at any one time almost all year around. They were caught in wooden weirs built across the river or in the more quiet tributaries that drained into the larger body of water. They were brought in by the basket, cleaned, and spread out in a fillet-style structure and roasted before the cooking fire. No winter dwelling would be without rows of salmon strung from the ceiling rafters where they would hang until the cook cut one down for the evening meal.

The Nisqually family was an extended family where grandparents, aunts and uncles, mothers and fathers, as well as children lived together in a winter home. There might be five cooking fires adorning the center of one building to accommodate the many households residing there. Each family had its own sleeping quarters on the sleeping benches built along the sides of the winter dwelling. This extended family ensured that the many families within its structure would have plenty of men to hunt and fish and plenty of women to gather camas bulbs and berries to keep food on the table. That is the way it was before the white men came to Nisqually Country.

—CECILIA SVINTH CARPENTER

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cecilia Svinth Carpenter has been a prolific and respected American Indian author since 1971. Her many articles and books include Leschi, Last Chief of the Nisquallies; Fort Nisqually: A Documented History of Indian and British Interaction, and The Nisqually, My People. Carpenter has a master’s degree in education from Pacific Lutheran University and nearly 20 years of teaching experience in Tacoma schools.
TREATY TIME AT NISQUALLY

TREATY TALK IN NISQUALLY COUNTRY was new to the Nisqually Indian people. In a period of three short days in the cold winter month of December of 1854, the treaty team moved onto the delta of Medicine Creek to negotiate an agreement between the Nisqually tribe and the United States. The territorial governor of Washington, Isaac Stevens, was in charge. The treaty was signed on December 26, 1854.

Things had become hectic for the Nisqually people. The British had set up Fort Nisqually in 1833. They came to collect furs, not to settle on Nisqually land. By 1845 the Americans had started coming up the trail from the Columbia River to seek free land on which to settle. More Americans came when the United States passed the 1850 Donation Land Act which stated that each white man could claim 320 acres which doubled if he were married. The United States claimed authority over the Indian people; to give the settlers title to their donation land claims, the process of extinguishing Indian ownership began.

The Treaty of Medicine Creek was set up to remove Nisqually ownership of the land and clear the way for American settlement. What a shock it was for the Nisqually people. They learned of the disenfranchisement (when plans for it were already under way) as they were told to gather at the mouth of Medicine Creek. They and their neighboring tribes were to give up title to over 400 square miles in exchange for three small reserved parcels of land, one for the Nisqually Indians, one for the Puyallup Indians, and one for the Squaxins.

George Gibbs tells of his experience at the treaty camp. His job was to copy the treaty. He tells of what happened: “The commission, soon joined by Stevens, camped on a marsh near the tidal flats while the Indians took their quarters on a forested bench a short distance away. The scene was lively…. Thin temporary huts of mats with the smoke of their numerous camp fires, the prows of the canoes hauled up on the bank and protruding from among the huts, the horses grazing on the marsh, the gloom of the firs and the cedars with their long depending moss and the scattered and moving groups of Indians in all kinds of odd and fantastic dresses present a curious picture....” (Beckham: 1969, 159-160)

The treaty was read and interpreted by Benjamin F. Shaw into Chinook Jargon. The 662 Indians who listened heard a jumble of words that made little sense as they sat trying to understand. The treaty was signed as indicated with an X following each name. The governor had chosen Quiemuth to sign as the Nisqually chief and Leschi to sign as sub-chief. When it became Leschi’s turn he refused to sign, yet an X appeared beside his name. He told the Governor that he was upset with the choice of reserved lands. No way would he accept the two sections of land west of the treaty grounds of high rocky land that bordered the Whulge, or Puget Sound. He had requested reserved land on the Nisqually River so that his people might fish and some prairie ground so that their horses might graze.

The forerunners from the treaty team had met with the Nisqually people and had told them they would have a choice of which lands they wanted for their reserved lands. But when the Nisqually people arrived at the treaty grounds, the reserved lands had been de-
Leschi left the treaty camp angry. In inspecting the treaty one could see where the Nisquallies had ceded their homeland by the words “the tribes hereby cede, relinquish and convey to the United States all their right, title and interests in and to the lands and country occupied by them.” Would they have given up the Nisqually River Basin, their homeland, if they had realized what they had signed? Perhaps not!

Article II of the treaty described the boundaries of the reserved lands and indicated that the Nisqually tribe had exclusive rights on those lands. It also stated that they had a year to move onto those lands.

Article III of the treaty discussed off-reservation rights. It stated: “The right of taking fish, at all usual and accustomed grounds and stations, is further secured to said Indians, in common with all citizens of the Territory.” Also included in this article were their hunting rights as well as the rights of taking shellfish. These rights would later make this treaty worthwhile just by reminding the whiteman that the Nisqually fishermen had the right to one half of the fish.

Article IV stated the amount that would be paid for the land and Article V arranged for the clearing of the lands in preparation for occupation. Article VI was sneaked in on the Nisqually people. It provided an outlet for the governor to further move them to another reservation to condense the many tribes into one out-of-the-way place. Their reserved lands appeared not to be a permanent home. However, this would backfire on the makers of the treaty. This sixth article also allowed for a survey of the reservation “into lots and assign the same to individuals as families” which indicated to the Nisquallies of dividing them by removing the extended family concept which had been their safety net for so many years whereas they could always depend on several members of their extended family to be there for them in times of turmoil. Separating the Nisqually families on individual parcels of land would leave them with a foreboding feeling. It seemed that the United States President, also referred to as the “Great White Father”, planned to make and take them into his family of Americans whether they liked it or not.

The rest of the treaty dealt with mundane items seemingly important to the treaty makers except for Article X which guaranteed the tribes that the United States government would provide education, medicine, and doctors.

The Nisqually people returned to their villages wondering if they had just signed their death warrant. Leschi had not signed but Stahi, Hiaten, Sluggia, and Wapowtee had signed.

—Cecilia Svinth Carpenter

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Cecilia Svinth Carpenter has been a prolific and respected American Indian author since 1971. Her many articles and books include Leschi, Last Chief of the Nisquallies; Fort Nisqually: A Documented History of Indian and British Interaction, and The Nisqually, My People. Carpenter has a master’s degree in education from Pacific Lutheran University and nearly 20 years of teaching experience in Tacoma schools.
Treaties and Councils: What is a Treaty?

Today, all Americans live on what was once Indian land. Treaties transferred that land from Indian to United States control.

Treaties are documents that formalize relationships and understandings between two or more sovereign states. Sovereign states govern themselves, recognizing no superior power. Like the thirteen original states, Indian tribes were originally considered independent nations with established territories and the power of self-governance. Treaties brought Indian tribes into the Union with their inherent sovereignty intact, although federal statutes, court decisions, and administrative policies limited its actual exercise.

Long before the American Revolution, Indian tribes formed complex networks of alliances. In 1751, Benjamin Franklin noted the contrast between the masterful alliances within the Iroquois Confederation and the inability of early colonial leaders to do the same:

"It would be a very strange thing if Six Nations of Ignorant Savages should be capable of forming a scheme for such a Union and be able to execute in such a manner, as that it has subsisted for ages, and appears indissoluble, and yet a like Union should be impracticable for ten or a dozen English colonies."

Letter to James Parker, 1751.

President George Washington signed the first treaties with Indian tribes for the newly independent United States. These first negotiations were between two bargaining equals and were treaties of peace. Both sides were militarily powerful.

Indian tribes believed the treaties became effective when they were signed. But United States law required Congress to approve all treaties after they were negotiated. Between 1789 and 1871, the United States negotiated approximately 800 treaties, but Congress ratified, or approved, fewer than 400—including the ten treaties negotiated by Isaac Stevens between 1854 and 1856.
Leader.” “Husband.” “Enemy.” “Role Model.” “Murderer.” How can these words possibly apply to just one person? There was a man who lived more than one hundred and fifty years ago who has been called all of these things. Even though he died in 1858, this man continues to touch the present, inspiring many people and puzzling others. His name was Leschi; eventually he became known to the Nisqually Nation and the non-Native settlers of Washington Territory as “Chief Leschi.”

Use your imagination to go back in time to the early 1800s. Take away the miles and miles of highways, the countless buildings of brick and steel, the telephone poles and cell phone towers. Take all of that away. Undo the endless suburban neighborhoods. What do you see? Let the grasslands and forest take their place. The area now known as Western Washington State did not even belong to the United States when Leschi was born in 1808. When Leschi was a young man, his people were getting along fairly well with the “newcomers” in their territory. At first these settlers were British citizens who were working for the Hudson’s Bay Company and living at trading posts, such as Fort Nisqually.

Leschi was probably comfortable with trying to understand people of other nations. His mother was from the Yakama Nation, east of the Cascade Mountains and his father was Nisqually. Many Native American peoples lived within a one-day journey on horseback and they all spoke different languages. Leschi’s family cared for a large herd of horses. They were among the Nisqually families who lived on the grassy slopes below the mountain, Tacobet (now known as Mt. Rainier). As the glacial snow on Tacobet melted, it flowed to the sea in a river that today bears the name of the people who lived along its length, the Nisqually River. Leschi and his brother, Quiemuth, began to work with those who lived at Fort Nisqually.

How can we know what Leschi’s life was like so long ago? We can find clues in some of the historic records and in Native oral history. We can look at some of the records of Fort Nisqually that have been preserved. These tell us that Leschi was among those Native Americans whose skills supported sheep shearing and potato harvesting at Fort Nisqually. Leschi was an expert horseman and he tended horses for the Hudson’s Bay Company on the Yelm Prairie.

The man in charge of the fort, William Tolmie, wrote about his experiences and memories. He remembered that Leschi and his brother “continued to be our steadfast friends” despite the strain of having the Hudson Bay Company farm and raise sheep on the Nisqually Plains. Also, a white settler named Ezra Meeker interviewed one of the women who married Leschi and she remembered him as “…always cheerful and good natured but he didn’t talk much”. We also know from written records that on February 19, 1858 Leschi was put to death in Steilacoom, hung by officials of Washington Territory.

What went wrong in the years before 1858?

If Leschi was respected by his own people and by those who lived and worked at Fort Nisqually, what happened between Leschi and the American government? The answer is the Oregon Land Donation Act, the Medicine Creek Treaty, and the conflict that followed, known as the Indian Wars.

More than 10,000 settlers had moved into the Pacific Northwest by 1849, driving Native American peoples from their homelands. The United States Congress decided that they wanted to move Native peoples to free up this land for settlers. They decided that they needed to negotiate treaties or agreements where tribes would “cede” or give up their lands to the U.S. government. Before these treaties occurred, however, Congress passed the Oregon Land Donation Act which “gave away” thousands of acres of Native land to settlers. If settlers farmed their land for four years in a row, they received the “title” or ownership of the land “as the free gift of a generous nation.” The government was giving away land that did not belong to them. As Governor of Washington Territory, Isaac Stevens was put in charge of negotiating treaties to secure settlers’ rights to the land.
Governor Stevens called together the first council or meeting of tribes. The Nisqually people were one among many there.

Stevens wanted to create an official document that would record the agreement, a treaty. And, he needed Native leaders to sign it. Stevens named Quiemuth as “chief” and Leschi as “sub chief” of the Nisqually. William Tolmie wrote that Leschi did not like Stevens’ plan:

“Leschi, I have learned from both whites and Indians who were present at the treaty making at Medicine Creek in the winter of 1854-5, protested vehemently there against the reservation originally appointed for the Nisquallies.”

Some say Leschi refused to sign the treaty at all and that he did not make the “X” marked next to his name. What we know for sure is that the Treaty of Medicine Creek protected the Nisqually rights to fish. However, the treaty did not protect enough land to support Nisqually farming or to care for large herds of horses. With their way of life in danger, many Native peoples felt that they had to fight back. This included Leschi. The territory was their homeland. Without it, where would they go? How would they live?

Flight, Betrayal and Capture

In October of 1855, Leschi and his brother, Quiemuth, were plowing fields to prepare for planting. Then they heard that a militia unit named “Eaton’s Rangers” was riding out to capture Leschi and take him to Olympia. They mounted their horses and fled. During the following year, Native peoples expressed their outrage at the loss of their homeland. On Halloween in 1855, along the Naches Trail, a group of Native peoples attacked a seven-man militia unit returning from Yakima. One of the men, Abram Benton Moses, was shot and killed. Was Leschi the person who shot Moses? Leschi was accused of being the murderer and Governor Stevens offered a reward for the capture, dead or alive, of Leschi, his brother Quiemuth, and other Native leaders.

Leschi escaped capture for some time. Then, in 1856, Leschi’s nephew, Sluggia, heard about a reward. Sluggia led authorities to his uncle and betrayed him. Soon after, Quiemuth surrendered, giving himself up to a friend of Governor Stevens.

Meanwhile, Leschi faced a long imprisonment as Washington Territory attempted to prove that he had murdered A.B. Moses. Moses had been a military combatant, working with the United States Army at Fort Steilacoom.

A number of non-Native people defended Leschi when he was brought to trial. The first trial, held in Steilacoom, failed to convict Leschi. Governor Stevens held a second trial in Olympia.

August Kautz and William Tolmie surveyed the scene of Moses’ death and, much like investigators do today, they tried to show that Leschi could not

Innocent or Guilty?

ACT OF WAR

An act of war is a military attack or action taken against one nation by another.

One of the arguments used in Leschi’s legal defense was that Leschi was a lawful combatant and therefore could not be charged with murder during a time of war.
have been there at that time. Nonetheless, Leschi was judged to be guilty and sentenced to hang. Leschi continued to insist he was innocent. After the execution, even the hangman said: I felt then that I was hanging an innocent man and I believe it yet."

**Leschi Today**

Even today, Leschi continues to be an important name in Washington State. There are dozens of public places in Washington that bear his name. Also, the largest of the seven tribal schools in Washington, located on the Puyallup Indian Reservation, proudly bears his name. Many Native American youth look to Leschi as a role model, a leader who fought to protect his people and a way of life.

In December of 2004, a Washington Historical Court of Inquiry and Justice met to discuss the issue of Leschi’s innocence. Witnesses gave testimony based on historical evidence in front of Washington State Supreme Court Justice. In the end, this court exonerated Leschi for the murder of A.B. Moses.

Cynthia Iyall, a descendant of Chief Leschi and member of the Nisqually tribe, explains why the exoneration of Leschi is important:

"...Not only is Chief Leschi noted in history as a murderer but also the first convicted murderer in Washington. He was known for his intelligence, for being a good father and husband and for being a man of great leadership. A man who maintained that Squally-absch (Nisqually) people retain their heritage deserves to have the truth be told... it is important to have Leschi portrayed correctly so that the future, our children, have a true sense of where they come from. They should inherit and feel the strength, pride, tenacity and intelligence that Leschi left us."

**EXONERATION**

An exoneration is a freeing or clearing of accusation or guilt.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


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**INTERVIEWING WITH AN ARTIFACT**

**OBSERVE**

What do you think this object is?

__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

What type of object is it? (Describe the material from which it was made.)

__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

Does it have any special qualities? (How does it look? Feel? Is there anything written on it?)

__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
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**CONSIDER**

What do you think this was used for?

__________________________________________________________________________________________

Have you seen anything like this before? ___________________________________________________

How do you feel about this item? Do you have any experiences with something like this item? What were they?

__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

Without talking to the owner of this item, what can you guess about it?

__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
INTERVIEW

What is it? (Ask this question even if you think you know the answer.)

__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

Who used or uses it? What was it used for?

__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

Why is this important to the person who brought it? How do they feel about it?

__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

Is there a story or memory that is special about this object? What is it?

__________________________________________________________________________________________
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REFLECT

Write 1-2 sentences about what is most important about the artifact you interviewed.

__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

Turn to the other page of this sheet and look at what you wrote about the item before you did the interview. Do you think that your feelings about the object changed before you did your interview? Do you think that if you hated the item that your partner was holding that you would ask different questions?

__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
**Before Reading:** Select vocabulary words that you don't know from the article. Be sure that you can pronounce them.

**During Reading:** Write what you think the word means based on what you read in the article.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary Word</th>
<th>What I think the word means</th>
<th>What the dictionary says</th>
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**Practice what you know!**

Choose two words from the vocabulary list you have made. In your own words, use each word you have chosen in a sentence. Underline the word you have chosen where it appears in each sentence.

Write the words down below:

1. __________________________

2. __________________________
Use the timeline below to keep track of the important dates in the history of Leschi.

**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.

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<th>Year</th>
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<td>1840</td>
<td>1850</td>
<td>1860</td>
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</table>
1) **Type of Artifact** Describe the material from which it was made: bone, pottery, metal, wood, stone, leather, glass, paper, cardboard, cotton, wood, plastic, or other material.

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

2) **Special Qualities of the Artifact** Describe how it looks and feels: shape, color, texture, size, weight, movable parts, anything printed, stamped, or written on it.

____________________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________________

3) **Uses of the Artifact**
   A. What might it have been used for?

   __________________________________________________________________________________

   B. Who might have used it?

   __________________________________________________________________________________

   C. Where might it have been used?

   __________________________________________________________________________________

   D. When might it have been used?

   __________________________________________________________________________________

4) **What the Artifact Tells Us**
   A. What does it tell us about the technology of the time in which it was made and used?

   __________________________________________________________________________________

   B. What does it tell us about the life and times of the people who made it and used it?

   __________________________________________________________________________________

   C. Describe a similar item from today.

   __________________________________________________________________________________
1) **Type of Document**  (Check One)
   - __ Newspaper  __ Memorandum  __ Press Release  __ Congressional Record
   - __ Letter  __ Map  __ Report  __ Census Report
   - __ Patent  __ Telegram  __ Advertisement  __ Other

2) **Unique Physical Qualities of the Document**  (Check All That Apply)
   - __ Interesting Letterhead  __ Typed  __ Notations  __ Other
   - __ Handwritten  __ Seals  __ “RECEIVED” Stamp

3) **Date(s) of Document:**
   __________________________________________________________________________

4) **Author or Creator of the Document:**
   __________________________________________________________________________
   **Job/Position:** __________________________________________________________________________

5) **Audience:**
   __________________________________________________________________________

6) **Document Analysis**  (There are many possible ways to answer A–E.)
   A. List three things the author said that you think are important. __________________________________________________________________________

   __________________________________________________________________________

   B. Why do you think this document was written? __________________________________________________________________________

   __________________________________________________________________________

   C. What evidence in the document helps you know why it was written? Quote from the document. __________________________________________________________________________

   __________________________________________________________________________

   D. List two things the document tells you about life during the time period. __________________________________________________________________________

   __________________________________________________________________________

   E. Write a question to the author that is left unanswered by the document. __________________________________________________________________________
Imagine that you can travel back in time to the 1850’s in Washington Territory. While you are there, you are given the chance to interview the Nisqually leader, Leschi. What kinds of questions do you want to ask him? What do you think he will say to you?

Using the information you have gained from your readings and your timeline, write an imaginary interview with Leschi. You will want to show your audience who Leschi was and what it was like to live in Washington Territory during this time period. Use your imagination to ask creative questions and create answers based on what you think he would have actually said.

Use the space on the right to brainstorm and think of some of the questions you might want to ask Leschi.

Stuck?
Start with the following ideas:

• How did the Nisqually people live? (What sort of foods did they eat? Where did they live?)
• What kinds of people did Leschi meet? (Remember to have him talk about more than one group of people.)
• What happened when the settlers came?
• How did the treaty change Leschi’s life?
• What happened after the treaty?

What other questions can you think of? Write them down and then pick from these questions to create your interview!