A Treaty Trail Lesson Plan

The Journey:
Students Examine Primary Documents on Crossing the Bitterroot Mountains

Summary:
In this exercise, students will have the opportunity to examine artworks that are more than a century and a half old, approaching them not only as an artist’s perspective, but also as primary, historical documents that reveal clues about the time period of U.S.-Indian treaties in the Pacific Northwest.

After examining a work of art by Gustav Sohon, an artist and interpreter who accompanied Washington Territorial Governor Isaac Stevens on the “Treaty Trail,” students will also read primary accounts of the period, and examine maps and secondary sources. The concluding focus will be on an image of the Governor’s party crossing the Bitterroot Mountains en route to the final Spokane Council.

This lesson plan enables students to develop an understanding of essential challenges faced and strategies employed in the quest for agreement between the Indians and the U.S. government as they satisfy EALRs in history, geography, reading, arts, and social studies skills.

Essential Questions for Students:

- What can a comparison of maps tell us about the impact of treaties on Indian life in Washington Territory?
- What can be said about the challenges of the 1855 Treaty Trail campaign east of the Cascades? What evidence do you have to support those challenges?
- What can you say about how cultural perspective influences art? Looking at the art of Gustav Sohon, what do you think he was trying to depict about the events that he was a part of? What do you think other artists from other cultures might have shown? How do written accounts correspond with this artwork? Do you think that these accounts reflect the same point of view as the art?
Essential Understandings:

1. Students will learn to appreciate maps and other historic materials, including artwork, as evidence of the past.
2. Students will realize that primary sources, in the form of accounts, maps, and images, document time and place on a historic journey and reveal the human objectives and challenges encountered along the way.
3. Students will develop geographic skills and use their findings to develop ideas and concepts about the journey of the Treaty Trail. Students will also evaluate the motives behind the decisions made and challenges faced during this period in history.

Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs)

This lesson plan satisfies the following EALRs: History WA1.2.2, Geography 1.2.2a, Reading 2.3.2, Arts 2.3 and 4.4 as well as the following Social Studies skills: 1.1.2d. Click here to print out the material for your reference.

Primary Sources for Student Examination (provided):

1. Gustav Sohon’s painting “Crossing the Bitter Roots, November 1855”
2. “Crossing the Bitterroots: Who and Why” reading

Secondary Sources for Student Examination (provided):

1. Map of Washington Territory Indian Nations & Tribes (adapted from 1854 Lambert Census Map)
2. Map of Reservations in 1890 (adapted from US Census Office Map, 1890)
3. Gustav Sohon biography
4. Spokan Garry biography
5. Chronology and Location of Treaty Councils reading

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.

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:

SESSION ONE

Step I.

You may find the following sources about the Treaty Trail helpful in preparing to teach this unit:

What is a treaty?

Cause and Effect

Step II.

Explain to the students that they are going to learn about how the land they live on passed from Native American control to the control of the United States government and how Native Americans were placed on reservations. Define the concept of a treaty and introduce key players to students (artist and interpreter Gustav Sohon, Spokane Tribal Chief, Spokan Garry, and Washington Territory Governor Isaac Stevens) by summarizing sources for students or reading aloud passages. You may choose to illustrate your discussion by projecting the relevant portraits. Explain that they are going to examine artwork, speeches and eyewitness accounts made one hundred and fifty years ago.
Facilitate discussion with students about treaty and biographical information presented and record student ideas on your classroom’s chalkboard:

- *Emphasize to students that the class is looking at forces which caused the campaign for treaty signing and placement of Indians on reservations in Washington Territory.*
- *Share one reason why Governor Stevens, as agent of the U.S. Government, needed to negotiate treaties with the Indian tribes of Washington Territory in 1855.*

**Step III.**
Project digital images of or show transparency of maps indicating shift from original tribal lands to reservations.

- Ask the students to compare these maps. *What has changed as a result of the treaties?*
- Ask them to write down (and then share with the class) one example of how they might expect that the change shown on the maps would affect the traditional way of life of Washington Territory Indians.

**Step IV.**
Distribute a copy of *Chronology and Location of Treaty Councils East of the Cascade Mountains* and a copy of the *Washington Territory Treaty Trail map* to each student.

**Ask students to work individually or in pairs to:**
- *Find the location of each treaty council (it is already labeled) on the map they received, and add the dates of each council and the direction of the party’s travel in colored pencil or pen.*

When they are finished, have them add their names to the maps and hand them in.

Project a transparency of the Washington Territory Treaty Trail map with dates marked on it. Invite students to identify, describe and share a challenge posed by the time and place of the Treaty Trail councils and records on board.

**Ask students:**
- *How many months does this journey east of the Cascade Mountains take? How many miles does it cover? What means for travel would the Stevens party be using?*
- *Think about geographical features on the route: rivers, mountain ranges...think about the seasons and the weather that might have been encountered along the way...*
- *Write down, and then share with the class, one challenge you think that the Stevens party would have encountered because of topography (place) and chronology (time) on the Treaty Trail journey east of the Cascade Mountains.*
Assign the biographies of Gustav Sohon and Spokan Garry as homework reading. Let them know they are going to study Sohon’s artwork in your next session.

**SESSION TWO**

**Step I.**
Hand back student copies of the Washington Territory Treaty Trail map completed in Session I, Step IV for them to use as reference during this exercise.

Project image of primary source (power point or overhead transparency): *Crossing the Bitter Roots, Nov. 1855* by Gustav Sohon, artist who visually documented the Treaty Trail.

Help students locate the place on the Treaty Trail that the picture depicts.

**Step II.**
Continue to project Sohon art. Distribute copies to each student of the *Responding to Primary Sources* worksheet and a copy of the painting, *Crossing the Bitter Roots* (or direct them to the online collection).

**Ask students to do the following:**

- Use the art vocabulary words and definitions to help you describe, analyze and interpret Gustav Sohon’s *Crossing the Bitter Root Mountains, Nov. 1855.*

**SESSION THREE**

**Step I.**
Ask students to share their conclusions about Washington Territory Governor Isaac Stevens’ motives by sharing their responses to the questions entered on the *Responding to Primary Sources* worksheet.


Have students put their names on all worksheets and assignments and turn them into you.
Step II.
Review and reflect on targets, criteria, and learning process. Distribute copies of student worksheet: *Self assessment checklist* to each student. Facilitate use of checklist for self assessment by students.

**Student worksheet:**  
Self assessment checklist

Complete teacher assessment checklist and compares with student self assessment checklist worksheets.

**Teacher assessment checklist**
The picture above, *Crossing the Bitter Root Mountains Nov. 1855*, depicts the Governor Isaac Stevens party crossing the Bitterroot Mountains. Two men and several horses or mules are following a steep trail through a snow-covered landscape. The painter, Gustav Sohon, was one of the men who accompanied Isaac Stevens during his treaty expeditions. The painting itself was done in pencil, ink and watercolors.

Washington State Historical Society Collections.
CROSSING THE BITTERROOTS: WHO AND WHY

Twelve days after the Walla Walla treaty was signed, the Oregon Weekly Times published this announcement:

*By an express provision of the treaty, the country embraced in these cessions (land given up) and not included in the reservation is open to settlement excepting, that the Indians are secured in the possession of their buildings and implements until removal to the reservations...*

As a result of this public announcement, a stream of pioneers headed east of the Cascades. The treaties had not yet been authorized by the U.S. Government. Legally, those lands were still not available to settlement at that time.

The Indians felt the invitation for settlers to enter the land was premature and considered the settlers, trespassers. The Yakima war was a tragic response to this event.

On the evening of October 28th, 1855, when Governor Stevens’ party was beginning their return trip westward following the Blackfoot Council, they were startled to receive the news that the Yakama Indians had killed their Indian Agent, A.I. Bolon, and several other White men on the Bolon party’s way to the mines near Fort Colville. Open war had begun.

In considering his party’s route to the next (and last) treaty council of 1855, the Spokane Council, Governor Stevens described his dilemma...

"The question was, what should be our route home. It was important...to our success that we should be able to cross the mountains and throw ourselves into the nearest tribes, without their having the slightest notice of our coming. I felt a strong assurance that if I could bring this
about, I could handle enough tribes and conciliate the friendship of enough Indians to be sufficiently strong to defy the rest. There would certainly be no difficulty from the snow down the Clark’s Fork [River]; but it was known that the Pend D’Oreille Indians were along the road and no party could travel over it without [it] being communicated to the Indians; whereas Indian report had it that the Coeur D’Alene pass was blocked up with snow at this season and I felt satisfied that [hostile Indians] would not expect us on this route, and therefore I determined to move over it. It was also the shorter route of the two; it was a route where I desired to make additional [topographic] examinations; it...enabled me to creep up, as it were, to the first Indian tribe, and then, moving rapidly, to jump upon them without their having time for preparation.

Hazard Stevens, Governor Stevens’ son who accompanied him on the journey, wrote of the route crossing Lookout Pass Nov. 17-20, 1855:

...(the mules) were continually getting off the narrow beaten path in the snow, and floundering helpless in the fleecy material, and then half a dozen sturdy packers would unsling the packs, seize the unlucky mule by tail and ears, neck- rope and saddle, and haul him on the trail by main strength.

Sources:


BIOGRAPHY OF GUSTAV SOHON

Born in 1825 in Belgium, Gustav Sohon was educated in Tilsit, Germany. He immigrated to the United States in 1842, and in the early 1850s, he enlisted in the U.S. Army. Upon his enlistment he was stationed in the west, and eventually found his way to Fort Steilacoom, Washington Territory. One of his first assignments was with Lieutenant John Mullan, who was surveying the country between the Rocky and Bitterroot Mountains for the railroad survey led by Isaac Stevens.

Sohon Reaches the Northwest

From that moment on, Sohon witnessed and contributed to some of the most important events in the history of the Northwest. As an army private, he served with the Stevens railroad survey for over a year before Washington Territorial Governor Isaac Stevens noticed his artistic ability. Sohon traveled with Governor Isaac Stevens on his historic campaign of 1855: the Treaty Trail, where he documented events of the journey and treaty councils with Native American tribes. Sohon proved to have a flair for languages, and was soon fluent in the Flathead and Pend d’Oreille languages. He could communicate with the Native peoples, and many allowed him to draw pictures of them.

Sohon was also a talented painter, who produced accurate landscapes and vivid scenes from native life, including the first panoramic view of the Rocky Mountains and the earliest-known sketch of the Great Falls of the Missouri.

What is a landscape?

To an artist, a landscape is art that represents a place in the natural environment.
The End of Army Life

Sohon's five-year enlistment ended in July 1857. He then sought out his earlier friend and mentor, Lieutenant John Mullan. Mullan was leading the construction of a military road from Walla Walla to Fort Benton, and Sohon surveyed routes and kept track of the construction progress. In 1860 Sohon guided the first wagon party to cross the Rocky and Bitterroot Mountains to the Columbia Plateau by a route other than the more commonly used Overland Trail. When Mullan's Road was complete, Sohon went with him to Washington, DC, to assist in the preparation of topographical data, maps, and illustrations for a report on the road's construction. He never returned to the Northwest.

Marriage and Family

In April 1863, Gustav Sohon and Julianna Groh were married. For a brief time they lived in San Francisco, where Sohon ran a photography studio. Several years later, they returned to Washington, DC, where Sohon disappeared from public life, running a shoe business and raising a large family with Julianna. He died on September 9, 1903.

As an artist, Sohon was a product of his time and his depictions of treaty events reflect this. His drawings and watercolor paintings allow everyone who views them to see, through his eyes, the treaty councils between the United States Government and Indian tribes of the Pacific Northwest.

This painting by Sohon, "Bloods Come into Council, Blackfoot Country, 1855," portrays the artist's perspective of a scene at the Blackfeet Council with four Blood Indians riding into camp on horseback. Two men in the foreground, one carrying a large American flag and shooting a gun into the air. The other man also has a firearm and is holding the bottom corner of the flag. In the background are two women on horseback. One horse is pulling a travois. Both women's horses have decorated collars or martingales. Courtesy of the Washington State Historical Society.

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:


BIOGRAPHY OF ISAAC INGALLS STEVENS

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:**


CHRONOLOGY AND LOCATION OF TREATY COUNCILS EAST OF THE CASCADES

Washington Territory Governor Isaac Stevens 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.

The Walla Walla Treaty Council: Walla Walla Valley
News of the western treaties had quickly passed to the eastern Washington tribes, along with sad tales from the nation's interior and East concerning the plight of the tribes in those regions. Washington tribes were aware that Indian lands had been ceded, but fair compensation and services had not been received in exchange for lands. They were understandably wary of Stevens and the treaty proceedings.

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 chiefs at the Walla Walla Council were firm, businesslike negotiators, sure of their strength and confident in their negotiating skills. When faced with the inevitable decline of their way of life, they sought to gain the best treaty terms possible. Stevens was forced to make compromises, and the Walla Walla Treaty was signed by all the tribes present.

The Walla Walla, Cayuse and Umatilla Treaty Council: Mill Creek, Washington
Treaty signed: June 9th, 1855
Tribes: Cayuse, Umatilla

The Yakama Treaty Council: Mill Creek, Washington
Treaty signed: June 9th 1855
Tribes: Yakama, Palouse, Pisquouse, Wenatshapam, Klikatat, Klinquit, Kow-was-say-ee, Li-ay-was, Skin-pah, Wish-ham, Shyiks, Ochechotes, Yakama, Palouse Pisquouse Wenatshapam, Klikatat

The Nez Perce Treaty Council: Mill Creek, Washington
Treaty signed: June 11, 1855
Tribe: Nez Perce
Hell Gate Treaty Council: 
**Missoula, Montana**

Proceeding further east, into what is now Montana, Stevens met with the Flathead, Salish, Pend d'Oreille, and Kootenai tribes. These tribes were under constant attack by the Blackfeet Indians, so Stevens promised that he would procure easement rights from the Blackfeet to allow the tribes to hunt on the plains east of the Rocky Mountains.

Once again, Stevens's misunderstanding of tribal culture created conflict at the proceedings, and angry words were exchanged before an agreement was finally reached.

**Treaty signed: July 16th 1855**
**Tribes:** Flathead, Kootenay, Upper Pend d'Oreilles

The Blackfeet Treaty Council: 
**Fort Benton, Montana**

Three tribes comprised the Blackfeet Nation—the Blackfeet of the north, the Piegan, and the Blood. These three, sharing kinship ties, customs, a common language, and traditional enemies, were collectively the most powerful and feared tribes of the region. They actively resisted the activities of American explorers and fur traders.

Fifty-nine chiefs attended the Blackfeet Council, including delegates from tribes west of the Bitterroot Mountains. Three thousand five hundred Blackfeet, Nez Perce, Flathead, Salish, Kootenai, and Pend d'Oreille Indians attended the council, and once again Stevens persuaded the tribes to sign a treaty with the United States.

**Treaty signed: October 17th**
**Tribes:** Blackfoot Nation: Piegan, Blood, Blackfeet, Gros Ventres
**Flathead Nation:** Flathead, Pend d'Oreille, Kootenay, Nez Perce

War Breaks Out

Twelve days after the Walla Walla Treaty was signed but before it was ratified by Congress, the *Oregon Weekly Times* prematurely published this announcement: "By an express provision of the treaty, the country embraced by the cession (lands given up by the Indians) and not included in the reservation is open to settlement..." This announcement sent streams of settlers and gold seekers to lands east of the Cascades, igniting outrage among the tribes and eventually driving the Yakamas to war against the intruders.

While Stevens was still returning from the Blackfeet Council, he learned of warfare in the Territory. Proceeding on through the Bitterroot Mountains and into the Spokane River valley, Stevens demanded a council with the chiefs of the Spokane, Coeur d'Alene, Colville, and Isle de Pierre tribes.

The Spokane Treaty Council
**Dec. 5th, 1855**

The Spokane Council was unique: of the four councils held in the eastern part of the Territory, this was the only one that did not produce a treaty. Stevens had a true dialog with an Indian leader, Spokan Garry who had been educated by the Hudson's Bay Company mission school and spoke excellent English. His wisdom and command of the language placed Stevens in defensive position. Although no treaty was signed, Stevens counted the council as a minor victory since it had secured a promise from the Spokane that they would not join with the Yakamas to create an alliance against settlers.

Sources:


STUDENT WORKSHEET: RESPONDING TO ART AS A PRIMARY SOURCE

Art Vocabulary:

- **space** feeling of depth in 2-dimensional art
- **texture** real or implied tactile characteristics of a surface
- **value** lightness or darkness of an area of color or tone
- **composition** the organization of art elements into a unified whole
- **emphasis** use of contrasts (color, size, shapes) to place greater attention on specific parts of a work of art
- **pattern** repeating sequence of lines, shapes or colors
- **rhythm** movement in art created through repetition of elements
- **atmospheric perspective** the illusion of distance created through reducing detail and muting colors as objects or figures recede in space
- **horizon** where earth and sky meet
- **landscape** art representing a place in the natural environment
- **perspective** the illusion of distance created in a 2-dimensional work of art through reduction of size of objects, figures, or environmental features
- **scale** the relative size of objects, figures or features of the environment

- **Make sure that before you begin you have read both Gustav Sohon’s biography to learn more about the artist who created the art and Spokan Garry’s biography to learn more about the Spokane Indians and Garry’s point of view.**

- **Use the art vocabulary words and definitions to help you describe, analyze and interpret Gustav Sohon’s Crossing the Bitter Root Mountains, Nov. 1855.**
**Observe and describe:**
Create an inventory of what you see...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who or what is in the picture? List people, animals, objects...</th>
<th>Where is the place or setting? List buildings, structures, landforms, plants, trees...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What time of day or season is it? What is the weather like? Temperature?</td>
<td>Which art elements did the artist use to create the picture? List colors, lines, shapes, space, texture, values...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How was the picture made? Is it a photograph, a painting, a drawing?</td>
<td>When was the picture made? Why is this date significant?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Question and analyze:**
Investigate what you see by examining the details...
Consider the artist’s choices in making the art...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where do you see the most detail or information in the picture? How did the artist create <strong>emphasis</strong> or draw attention to certain parts of the picture?</th>
<th>Who are the people? What clues tell us about their cultural identity? What are each of the people and animals doing in the picture? What do you think they are thinking or feeling? Why?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where are the people, landscape features and animals in space? How does the artist use <strong>perspective</strong> to communicate information about the landscape?</td>
<td>Where do you see <strong>rhythm</strong> in the picture? How does the artist’s use of repetition show movement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why do you think the artist made this picture? Who might be looking at it at the time it was made?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Use observations and clues to develop a historical interpretation of the art:
What is the artist communicating about time, place, and the interaction of cultures?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is happening in the picture? Use descriptive words, details and ideas about choices the artist made (documented on this worksheet) to support your interpretation.</th>
<th>What does the art communicate about this part of the Treaty Trail journey?</th>
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### Consider whether or not the readings change how you see Gustav Sohon’s artwork.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compare the art to the written account of crossing the mountains. What might the figures in the artwork might have been thinking?</th>
<th>Describe how you think a Native American artist might have shown these men crossing the mountains. Would the art show a different perspective?</th>
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</table>
List specific findings from the primary sources (artwork and written accounts) as evidence to help answer the following questions...

<table>
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# THE TREATY TRAIL: THE JOURNEY
**STUDENT WORKSHEET**

## Student Self Assessment Checklist

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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.
STUDENT READING: CAUSE AND EFFECT

INDIAN LIFE BEFORE RESERVATIONS
Before European/American arrival in the Northwest, there were no empty lands. The original homelands of native groups covered the entire expanse of lands now known as Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana. These lands were places where Indians lived, traveled, hunted, fished, and gathered food. Sacred places where ancestors were buried and religious rites and ceremonies performed also were a part of these lands.

However, the U.S.-Indian treaties of 1854 through 1856 left Indian tribes with only a small part of their former homelands. Tribes gave up millions of acres in Washington Territory alone, in exchange for a guarantee or promise that their rights would be protected, that some lands would be reserved, and that many goods and services would be provided for them by the U.S. Government.

For example, the fisheries around The Dalles and Celilo Falls provided an important food source for many native groups from different tribes. The gatherings at these important places were times for different tribes to trade, share information, and develop relationships with each other. Because many native people spoke multiple languages, they could communicate with other groups.

Native people used plants, animals, and other resources carefully so that their children and grandchildren would be able to use them as well. Caring for these resources was a way of respecting the land and treating what it had to offer as gifts. Each Indian community had responsibilities and obligations to care for the natural resources. These responsibilities and relationships with the land were different from the European idea of private property and ownership of land.
EARLY SETTLERS
In the 1820s, Congressmen and others urged Americans to consider the Oregon Country as a new place to live. Beginning in the 1830s and increasing dramatically in the 1840s, a large number of Americans came into the Oregon Country. The Willamette Valley was one of the first places settled.

As the United States continued to explore the western half of the country, the creation of new laws made it easier for settlers to cross the country. Accurate maps, enthusiastic reports, and trail guides helped attract people to the western territory.

Unfavorable living conditions in the rest of the United States also encouraged many people to choose to immigrate to Oregon Territory. In the Mississippi Valley, for example, nearly ten years of hard times began in 1837. Bad weather and widespread sickness worsened living conditions already made difficult by economic depression.

THE COMING OF THE RAILROAD
In 1853 Isaac 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 asked for and was given a job with the proposed transcontinental railroad survey.

Stevens was placed in command of documenting the northern route by recording information about plants, animals, Indian tribes, and topography of the land. The railroad would bring large numbers of people and economic development to the region.

THE TREATY TRAIL
From 1854 - 1855, Governor Isaac Stevens traveled hundreds of miles across the modern states of Washington and parts of Montana, Oregon and Idaho negotiating ten treaties that would open the territory for future, ongoing white settlement of the region. The American drive for occupation of Western land led to the creation of a reservation system established through the treaty councils.

The treaties attempted to isolate Indian society and remove Native Americans from their traditional land and culture. One of the goals of the Reservation system was to concentrate the Indians upon a few reservations, and encourage them to abandon Indian culture and adopt European types of farming, schooling, and prayer.

This period of United States History was greatly influenced by the vision of “Manifest Destiny”, the belief that the United States had a mission to expand freedom and democracy. The term became used to describe expansion of the United States westward from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean.

The Treaty Trail in the Northwest changed how both Native American peoples and non-native peoples have experienced life in the United States since 1854. As a result some of our family histories involve triumphant journeys westward to start a new life; other family histories tell of displacement, survival, and innovation amid discrimination. By opening up the region to the commercial development of natural resources, even the landscape around us is evidence of the Treaty Trail.
TEACHER AND STUDENT READING
BIOGRAPHY OF GUSTAV SOHON

Born in 1825 in Belgium, Gustav Sohon was educated in Tilsit, Germany. He immigrated to the United States in 1842, and in the early 1850s, he enlisted in the U.S. Army. Upon his enlistment he was stationed in the west, and eventually found his way to Fort Steilacoom, Washington Territory. One of his first assignments was with Lieutenant John Mullan, who was surveying the country between the Rocky and Bitterroot Mountains for the railroad survey led by Isaac Stevens.

Sohon Reaches the Northwest

From that moment on, Sohon witnessed and contributed to some of the most important events in the history of the Northwest. As an army private, he served with the Stevens railroad survey for over a year before Washington Territorial Governor Isaac Stevens noticed his artistic ability. Sohon traveled with Governor Isaac Stevens on his historic campaign of 1855: the Treaty Trail, where he documented events of the journey and treaty councils with Native American tribes. Sohon proved to have a flair for languages, and was soon fluent in the Flathead and Pend d’Oreille languages. He could communicate with the Native peoples, and many allowed him to draw pictures of them.

Sohon was also a talented painter, who produced accurate landscapes and vivid scenes from native life, including the first panoramic view of the Rocky Mountains and the earliest-known sketch of the Great Falls of the Missouri.

What is a landscape?
To an artist, a landscape is art that represents a place in the natural environment.
**The End of Army Life**

Sohon’s five-year enlistment ended in July 1857. He then sought out his earlier friend and mentor, Lieutenant John Mullan. Mullan was leading the construction of a military road from Walla Walla to Fort Benton, and Sohon surveyed routes and kept track of the construction progress. In 1860 Sohon guided the first wagon party to cross the Rocky and Bitterroot Mountains to the Columbia Plateau by a route other than the more commonly used Overland Trail. When Mullan’s Road was complete, Sohon went with him to Washington, DC, to assist in the preparation of topographical data, maps, and illustrations for a report on the road’s construction. He never returned to the Northwest.

**Marriage and Family**

In April 1863, Gustav Sohon and Julianna Groh were married. For a brief time they lived in San Francisco, where Sohon ran a photography studio. Several years later, they returned to Washington, DC, where Sohon disappeared from public life, running a shoe business and raising a large family with Julianna. He died on September 9, 1903.

As an artist, Sohon was a product of his time and his depictions of treaty events reflect this. His drawings and watercolor paintings allow everyone who views them to see, through his eyes, the treaty councils between the United States Government and Indian tribes of the Pacific Northwest.

![Image of Sohon's painting "Bloods Come into Council, Blackfoot Country, 1855"

This painting by Sohon, "Bloods Come into Council, Blackfoot Country, 1855", portrays the artist’s perspective of a scene at the Blackfeet Council with four Blood Indians riding into camp on horseback. Two men in the foreground, one carrying a large American flag and shooting a gun into the air. The other man also has a firearm and is holding the bottom corner of the flag. In the background are two women on horseback. One horse is pulling a travois. Both women’s horses have decorated collars or martingales. Courtesy of the Washington State Historical Society.

**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:**


BIOGRAPHY OF ISAAC INGALLS STEVENS

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** 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:**


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## STUDENT WORKSHEET

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## MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER CHECKLIST

### Teacher Assessment Checklist

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