

The Treaty Trail: U. S. - Indian Treaty Councils in the Northwest

A Treaty Trail Lesson Plan

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

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

Summary:

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

In order to accomplish this task, students will identify

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



A hide coat that once belonged to Washington Territorial Governor Isaac Stevens and was donated to the Washington State Historical Society in 1921. [Click to zoom](#)

Essential Questions for Students:

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

DOWNLOAD AREA

Download the PDFs required for this lesson plan:

- [The Lesson Plan](#)
- [Dig Deep Student Worksheets](#)
- [Primary Source Documents](#)
- [Secondary Source Readings](#)
- [Graphic Timeline Organizer](#)
- [Map of Key Locations](#)

Essential Understandings:

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

Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs)

This lesson plan satisfies the following EALRs: History WA1.1.3b, Arts 2.3, Arts 4.4 and the following Social Studies skills: 2.1.3b, 3.1.4a and 3.1.4b. [Click here](#) to print out these EALRs for your reference.

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

Background:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 for Student Examination (provided):

1. [Map](#) of key locations in the United States & Canada.
2. [Isaac Stevens biography](#)
3. [Spokane Garry biography](#)
4. [Louis Riel biography](#)
5. [Nez Perce cultural material](#)

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

Instructions for Teachers:

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

WashingtonHistoryOnline.org contains a great deal of information about specific treaties and tribes, including tape-recorded interviews with tribal people. Please encourage your students to look at some of these or direct them to the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs to access information about Native American communities today.

e. Encourage classroom discussions and debate of their readings and draft outlines of press release. Begin with questions such as "Who made this coat? Why do you think this?". What is the evidence?

10. You will need to schedule how each step of the assignment fits with your classroom periods and the working pace of your students.

11. You may extend this classroom-based assessment, if you wish, by asking students to make verbal presentations, Powerpoint presentations, or graphic layouts of their article as though they were printed in a contemporary newspaper. There are some wonderful interactives at ReadWriteThink.org that help students format their newspaper article.

12. You may be pleased to find that students begin to debate their differing historical interpretations. If time allows, channel this dialogue into either a debate or into newspaper editorials that disagree with other students' interpretations. Classroom walls can become a "gallery" of newspaper articles for students to view and critique.

13. Refer to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction website to learn how to submit student work for scoring their research, analysis and writing.