

OFFICE SUPERINTENDENT INDIAN AFFAIRS,  
*Olympia, W. T., May 31, 1856.*

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?

Leschi, the leader of the hostiles on the Sound, was familiarly known to most of our citizens; had in part adopted the habits and usages of civilized life, was a good farmer, an expert hunter, and believed to be an honest man.

Nelson, the monster who perpetrated the massacre on White river, was in like manner treated and respected by the inhabitants of the county of King.

The other leaders were held in similar trust. I have never heard of any charge that they had been maltreated by the settlers. I know they were treated with consideration and respect.

Recollect, Leschi lived within three hours' ride of Olympia, and two hours of Steilacoom; that he frequently visited both places; and Nelson was a welcome and frequent visitor to the town of Seattle, and so with the other leaders. Conceive, therefore, of the consternation of this whole community, when the Indians, believed to be the most reliable, in direct violation of their solemn word, commenced the war by the massacre of an entire settlement.

McAlister and Edgar were betrayed and shot by their own guides. McAlister went with his neighbor Stahi to see Leschi, believing that their old friendship of ten years could be appealed to to induce Leschi to continue friendly. Stahi treacherously betrayed and shot him on the road, and joined the enemy.

Were it necessary, I could give many cases. Moses and Miles, returning from the east of the mountains with several other gentlemen, passed through the camp of Leschi, on White river, believing them to

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.



Fort Stevens, Wash. D.C.