

A Treaty Trail Lesson Plan

Understanding Treaties: Students Explore the Lives of Yakama People Before and After Treaties

by Shana R. Brown (descendant of the Yakama Nation),
Shoreline School District.

Summary:

These lessons involve active role-play of the key players in the Walla Walla treaty negotiations. Students go beyond mere reenactment of facts and speeches, however, to analyze the goals of the tribes and the U.S. government, to evaluate bias, and to emotionally connect with what was gained and lost during this pivotal time. Students will realize that the term 'treaty rights' refers to the guarantee, by treaty, of pre-existing Indian rights, as opposed to special rights given or granted to them.

The first part, "Pre-Contact", describes the lives of Native Americans prior to contact with settlers and the United States government by focusing on the Yakama people. This unit places emphasis on the connection that tribes had with the land and with the daily life that existed prior to Euro-American settlement.

The second part, "Understanding Treaties", is an overview of the U.S.-Indian treaties of Washington State. This unit gives elementary school students the experience of losing places they hold dear and seeks to enrich their understanding of the treaties through role playing and journaling.

Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs)

This unit focuses on EALRs in reading, history and geography.
[Click here for details.](#)



This Clovis point is shown at actual size (15 centimeters long). Dating back 11,000 years, the Clovis points are the oldest artifacts in the Washington State History Museum's collection.

**Washington State Historical Society
Collection.**








Part One

Essential Questions for Students:

1. What sort of meaning and significance does the Sacred Circle have for Native American nations? What sort of beliefs and traditions do you have in your own lives?
2. Think about a place that is important to you. Why is it important? How would you feel if that place was taken away?
3. How did the Yakama Nation and other Native American tribes feel when their lands and important places were taken from them? Why?

DOWNLOAD AREA

Download the PDFs required for this lesson plan:

-  [The Lesson Plan](#)
-  [Secondary Source Readings](#)
-  [Breaking the Sacred Circle](#)
-  [Yakama Nation](#)
-  [What is a Treaty?](#)
-  [Tribal Treaty Rights](#)
-  [Student Worksheets](#)

Essential Understandings:

1. Students will understand that what is now Washington State hosted complex indigenous societies before contact with non-Indians.
2. Students will realize that the land known as the United States was neither “new”, wild, nor unexplored. (It had been explored, mapped, and had an infrastructure created by its indigenous inhabitants.)
3. Students will begin to understand what was at stake as these tribes reluctantly entered treaty negotiations with the United States.

Primary Sources for Student Examination (provided):

1. Images of primary documents and artifacts at the Washington State Historical Society.

Secondary Sources for Student Examination (provided):

1. [“Yakama Creation Legend”](#)
2. [Map of Washington State](#)
3. [“The Legend of Mt. Adams”](#)
4. [“The Ancient Inhabitants of the Eyakema Valley”](#)

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.

Materials Needed:

1. Several pieces of drawing paper
2. Colored pencils or pens
3. Access to a Dictionary

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS:

PART ONE, SESSION ONE

Step I.

To truly understand the impact of the treaties between tribes and the United States government, one must also understand the importance of the land, its resources and the role each played (and continues to play) in the daily practical and spiritual lives of the tribes themselves. Only then can one comprehend what was at stake during the negotiations of

the Walla Walla Councils of 1855 and why treaty rights today are so painstakingly and ferociously guarded by the tribes who entered into them.

Therefore the lessons contained in these units begin with the sacred circle, the integral connection of tribes to their lands. Once students comprehend this symbiosis of people and land, they can begin to understand the high stakes of treaty negotiations and the legacy of sadness, anger, loss and empowerment that continues today.

Students are then—and only then—prepared to study the negotiations themselves.

Step II.

Prepare yourself for this discussion by reviewing the following materials: [Breaking the Sacred Circle](#), [What is a Treaty?](#), the [Yakama Nation packet](#) and [Tribal Treaty Rights](#).

Explain to your students that for the next two classes they will study what life was like for the Yakama nation before the coming of the white man. Their historic lifeways are representative of the Plateau tribes who lived in what is now Washington, Oregon, Northern Idaho, and Montana. Though this might be review, it is essential in understanding the next part of the lesson, treaty settlements.

Step III.

Refer to the teacher copy of "[Breaking the Sacred Circle](#)" pp. 1 – 13 to explain the key elements of the circle.

Explain to the students that the common sacred symbol or object of great significance, for many of the (over 500!) Indian nations in the United States is the circle. Draw it on the board and ask why the circle might be so important to Indians. Responses might vary from seeing the symbol in more commonly seen crafts, such as dream catchers, to being a symbol for eternity, it has no sharp corners, it looks like the sun, the earth, etc.

The Sacred Circle...

- Represents the cyclical power of nature and therefore life itself, as opposed to the linear direction of Western European progress;
- Represents the concept that everything in nature has its own place;
- Includes the mental, spiritual, cultural and physical well being of individuals and groups;
- Is a shape that is repeatedly found in Nature;
- Is a shape that is reflected in traditional Indian activities and artifacts: the base of the tipi and campfire circles, for example.

Ask students if they know of any other symbols that are commonly understood among many countries, perhaps even the whole world. Responses might vary from a white flag, symbolizing surrender or peace, to the dove, the United Nations symbol on its flag, to the Red Cross as a symbol for medical assistance. Still others will identify the Christian cross, the Star of David, and other religious symbols.

Point out to the students that to combine all the meanings of the symbols they've just identified would just about illustrate the importance of the Sacred Circle to tribal people all over what is now the United States and Canada.

Step IV.

Students will now take out one piece of drawing paper and their pens or pencils. Ask them to:

- *Draw a circle as large as the paper allows.*

Read to your students the "[Yakama Creation Legend](#)" that describes the beginning of life of the Yakama Nation prior to non-Indian contact. Explain that as legends were handed down in the oral tradition, it is essential that the story be read aloud. As they listen to the *Yakama Creation Legend*, ask students to:

- *Draw or list within or around the circle the important items and ideas contained in the legend.*

Explain that living outside of this circle, that is, outside of natural harmony, was never considered a possibility for tribal people, as this belief was as fundamental as breathing. You might ask your students to think of beliefs, traditions, and life ways in their own lives that are important and help to define who they are as individuals, families, and communities. To give up all of that (and more) is what Indian people faced after the coming of the white man.

Step V.

Ask students to complete the following as homework:

- *Create a floor plan of a place you consider uniquely yours and sacred. This is typically a bedroom, but could also be a favorite, private place that you like to go to play or think, or it could be a church or a place of prayer.*
- *Be as detailed as possible and list or draw all the items contained in this area.*

This might be an opportunity to introduce or reinforce map skills. You will need to explain the bird's eye or overhead view concept so that students can use this to define their floor plans. You may choose to model a floor plan by drawing a bird's eye view of the classroom on the board.

Hand out the [floorplan assignment sheet](#) and ask students to complete this drawing before your next lesson on the history and everyday life of the Yakama People. You can explain to them that it will be used to illustrate the treaty negotiation process that the Walla Walla and Yakama tribes entered into in 1855.

PART ONE, SESSION TWO

Step I.

Distribute the copies of the [map of Washington State](#). Students should outline Adams, Chelan, Franklin, Kittitas, and Yakama counties and approximately half of adjoining Douglas and Klickitat counties. Stress that this is the area in which the Yakamas (as well as other tribes) roamed freely before the coming of the white man.

Step II.

Distribute "[The Ancient Inhabitants of the Eyakema Valley](#)". The focus of this reading should be to understand the life ways of the ancient Yakama people and to connect to their previous day's lesson about the sacred circle. Following this reading, have students do the [card sort](#) activity. This activity should be done after taking notes and discussion to reinforce comprehension of the readings from this lesson.

- Use the vocabulary words from the reading or the supplied [worksheet](#). You can use the blank cards provided on the worksheet to supplement the material with vocabulary choices of your own for words that you plan to introduce into the discussion.
- Group students into pairs.
- Ask them to sort the cards into 2 piles- one pile of words they know and one pile of words that they do not.

- Have students take the words they don't know and turn them into flash cards by writing the definition of those words on the back, then practicing those terms with their partner.
- Once students are comfortable with the new words, ask them to sort the cards again. This time, they should create categories that different words fit into. In order to be a category, 1) the student has to be able to justify and explain their choice and 2) it must have more than one card. If needed, provide students with prompts for different ways that words can fit together (places, events, subject matter, ideas, etc.)
- Share out categories to the class and call on them for "evidence". Ask if other students have these words in different categories.

Step III. (Homework)

Hand out and have them read the [Legend of Mt. Adams](#).

PART ONE, SESSION THREE

Step I.

Students should answer, either alone or in groups, orally or in writing, the clarifying questions from the [first student handout](#). The answers can be found in the [Legend of Mt. Adams](#) assignment from Session Two.

Step II.

Make sure each student has her own sacred space floorplan in hand. Facilitate a discussion where the students try to describe their sacred places. Compare the connections they feel to their sacred places with the connection of the Yakama people to their land.

Step III.

Assign students the following low-stakes writing assignment in class:

- *Journal for at least 15 minutes on the following questions: "What are the things I believe are most important to the Yakamas? How are these things similar in importance to my own sacred place?"*

Part Two

Summary:

This is a very brief lesson on the U.S.-Indian treaties of Washington State. The purpose is to give elementary students the experience of having to lose places they hold dear (this place is established by Lesson 1).

The students will be broken up into four groups, each representing different historic actors or stakeholders and interests. After each group is prepared for their role, the groups will engage in mock treaty negotiations. These negotiations will be used to illustrate the effects of U.S.-Indian treaties on both sides involved.

Students will then come together and debrief their experiences and



Arrival of the Nez Perce Walla Walla Treaty, May 1855
by Gustav Sohon.

journal their experiences as homework or in-class work.

Essential Understandings:

- Through an experiential activity, students will understand the loss of land and resources as a result of treaty negotiations.
- Students will understand that treaties were a guarantee of pre-existing Indian rights, as opposed to special rights given or granted to them.
- Students will be readied for Washington State and United States History Lessons in middle school grades, dealing with westward movement, manifest destiny, and Indian removal policies.
- See also [EALRs](#)

Primary Sources:

1. Images of primary documents and artifacts at the Washington State Historical Society.

Secondary Sources:

1. ["What is a Treaty?"](#)
2. ["Tribal Treaty Rights"](#) by Carol Craig

Treaty: "...an agreement, binding and legal between two or more sovereign nations. When nations make treaties with each other, they also recognize that each is sovereign; that is, that each has legitimate political power of its own."

Materials Needed:

1. A floor plan of their "sacred space" (see Lesson 1)
2. Colored pencils or pens
3. The photocopy of a detailed map of Washington State created in Session 2, Step I with the Yakama territories outlined.
4. [Student Handouts 2, 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d](#)

Teacher Instructions:

PART TWO, SESSION ONE

Step I.

Explain to students that today they will roleplay the potential loss of some of the sacred places they have drawn. Some will take on the role of a younger or older brother or sister in trying to share the sacred place and some will take on the role of parents.

Step II.

Have the students look at the maps of their sacred places and ask the following questions:

- *"What would it take for you to be forced to give up your sacred places?"*

Possible responses might include parents force them to move (but this could be a good thing, because they might have a promise of a bigger, better sacred place—as in the case of many colonists), a fire or some other disaster destroys it, or there is a family problem (death, divorce, or some other personal safety issue) that forces a move (as in the case of some colonists or immigrants)

- *"What would it take for you to be willing to give up part of your sacred place?"*

Possible responses might include a new family member who needs to share the space, or parents need part of the space for various reasons, etc.

Step III.

Distribute copies of [What is a Treaty?](#) and ask students to read them in class.

Step IV.

Distribute the [Vocabulary Graphic Organizer](#) and make dictionaries available.

Engage in classroom discussion about:

- *What are the meaning of the following terms: treaty and sovereignty?*

This exercise can be done in a number of ways, either giving all students both terms to define or by dividing the class into half and assigning each half of the class a different word, with discussion to follow after the students have completed the activity. You have the option of dividing students into groups or having them work individually on this assignment. Alternately, this can be assigned as homework prior to the roleplaying session. Make sure students read and understand these terms *before* they begin to negotiate.

Sovereignty: "The exclusive right to exercise supreme political authority over a geographic region, group of people or oneself."

Consider asking students some of the following questions after they have completed this activity:

- *What did you think your word meant? What does the word really mean? How do those two things differ? Do you think that this word can mean different things to different people? How might it differ and why?*
- *What words did you think related to this word? Why? Out of the things that we have discussed so far, how many of them are connected to this word? How are they connected?*
- *What sort of sentences did you come up with for this word? Can this word be used in more than one way?*

Step IV.

Make sure each student has her own floor plan of her sacred place from the previous lesson. Break up the students into four equal groups—A, B, C, D – as follows:

<p>A. "Siblings"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Negotiates with Group B• Are as powerful (or less powerful) than the people they are negotiating with.• Want to get as much of the other person's sacred space as possible.	<p>B. "Siblings"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Negotiates with Group A• Are as powerful as people they are negotiating with.• Willing to help siblings.• Want to protect as much of their sacred place as possible.
<p>C. "Sons/Daughters"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Negotiates with Group D• Are less powerful than other group.• Less willing to help others because of how they have been treated in the past.• Trying to protect as much of their space as possible.	<p>D. "Parents"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Negotiates with Group C• Are enormously powerful.• Want to get as much of the other person's sacred space as possible.• See the other side's surrender as inevitable.

Note: Those who do not have floor plans should be placed in either Group A or Group C instead of B or D.

Step VI (optional).

Break the students into their assigned groups and distribute their corresponding handouts (3a – 3d).

Note:

Students will negotiate in pairs, but the group discussions will allow students to brainstorm ideas, address concerns, and understand goals and concepts. If you are short on time, or if you believe your students understand the concepts involved, you might skip this step.

All students should feel free to negotiate a treaty based on what is best for them individually and what is unique to their situation (the maps of the sacred places), but ask that they remain within the parameters of the handouts.

You will need to explain to students the roles associated with their group designation by getting them to look at the top of their Treaty Negotiation handouts. Expect that all students will want to be parents (the power structure will not be lost on them!) You, the teacher, will act as the ultimate authority in these negotiations. Note: You will constantly side with Group D (the parents of Group C) and Group B (siblings of Group A) even if their tactics are unfair.

Give student groups time to work through the questions and concepts in the handouts and develop their strategies. After students have had time to prepare their strategies, place each tribal representative with a corresponding colonial or U.S. agent.

Distribute [Student Handout 4](#) for students. *Ask them to record their treaty settlements on the handout.*

Let the negotiations begin! Allow at least 15 minutes for the negotiations. Expect that discussions will get heated; try your best not to interfere.

Homework: Ask them to journal about their feelings during the treaty negotiation.

PART TWO, SESSION TWO

Step I.

Be sure to re-read sections II and III of the “*Tribal Treaty Rights*” outline before you embark on the next portion of this lesson.

Give students a mini-lecture to review important points of previous readings so that they can better analyze the negotiations that they have recently completed.

Review what a treaty is and give two examples:

1. An early treaty between a tribe and the English colonial government, e.g. the Iroquois.
2. A later treaty between a tribe and the United States government, e.g. the Yakama.

Be sure to discuss the nature of both treaties.

Step II.

Bring the class back together. Collect their papers and organize them into two piles: 1) the A-B negotiations and C-D negotiations. Read examples from each set aloud.

Ask how sibling-to-sibling negotiations differed from parent to child negotiations.

Project the 1851 map provided of the United States. Use this map to illustrate to students the approximate locations of the groups in the following discussion.



Share with the students that the primary differences between early treaties (i.e. English colonial treaties with Indian tribes versus later treaties (U.S. government treaties with tribes) were identical to their own experiences. Explain what each group represented (Group A represented English Colonial interests, Group B Northeast tribes, Group C United States interests and Group D Washington Territory tribes).

Explain that:

- *These feelings and realities are identical to the realities of treaty tribes from colonial times to the end of treaty negotiations in 1870.*

Incorporate elements of the [Tribal Treaty Rights](#) reading, e.g. the General Allotment Act of 1887 or the pressure in the 1950's to terminate tribal identity. Facilitate a discussion that during the treaty era, the United States government broke almost all of its treaties, including the over 60 treaties it negotiated with Pacific Northwest tribes.

Step III.

Facilitate a discussion by asking students to look at their newly negotiated sacred places, then discuss the following:

- *What is different about the geography?*
- *What personal habits or practices will have to change as a result of the treaties you negotiated?*
- *Did you ever feel threatened or feel like you had no choice in what was happening to their sacred places?*

Now that they see their sacred places carved up (and for some they might be displaced altogether), also ask them to answer the following questions:

- *How do you feel toward the person with whom you negotiated?*
- *What is the level of trust and respect between you and them?*
- *How confident are you that you've seen the last of this type of negotiation?*
- *Do you feel like you were given rights to your sacred places, or did you feel like rights were taken away?*

Be sure to allow time for the sharing of emotions. Students may either journal or discuss in pairs, groups, or as a class. For further suggestions, see "Extended Activities" below.

Extended Activities

1. Ask students to research the actual treaty negotiation of the tribes of the Northwest. What were the outcomes? What were the long-term effects? See this site for the text of all treaties: <http://washingtonhistoryonline.org/treatytrail/treaties/timeline/timeline.htm>

2. Visit the Washington State History Museum. Visit other local tribal museums (See the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs as a starting point for internet and contact information: <http://www.goia.wa.gov/Tribal-Information/Tribal-Information.htm>.)

3. Emotional Responses: Depending on the intensity of the emotions of the students, teachers will likely bear witness to emotions ranging from anger and resentment to extreme sadness. Teachers can and should support their students during this experience. Help students understand that these emotions are exactly those of nearly all of the tribes who entered into treaties with the U.S. Government. There are a number of ways to address the emotions and allow students to express their feelings:

- Have students create artwork that expresses their feelings
- Have students journal
- Write creative stories about how they feel the negotiations should have occurred and what the results should have been
- Contact local tribes and ask about their treaties and negotiations
- Write letters to local tribal councils expressing their concern, asking questions, or merely expressing what they've learned.