



Clamming at low tide in Sequim Bay late 1800s. Jefferson County Historical Society

A DIGITAL HISTORIOGRAPHY OF TREATIES AND DISPUTES BETWEEN THE COAST SALISH TRIBES AND THE U.S. GOVERNMENT

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[View the StoryMap here.](#)

Introduction

This StoryMap serves as an introduction to the treaties & disputes regarding the Coast Salish tribes in relation to the United States Government. Indigenous lands in the Pacific Northwest region have been erased and exploited since the arrival of European settlers, and while Indigenous rights to their land are starting to improve, a history plagued by colonialism, racism, eurocentric superiority is still present to this day.

My research question is: *How have the Coast Salish peoples' land rights fluctuated over time as a result of the U.S. government?*

I aim to answer this question through counter-mapping as a means to display the changes of Indigenous landmass over time.

Narrative I : Before the Europeans



Coast Salish elder in traditional garments

Prior to European settlement and colonization of the Pacific Northwest, Coast Salish Indigenous tribes and nations freely thrived on the natural abundance of fish, plants, and other resources.

According to the Swinomish nation, "For thousands of years, these Coast Salish tribes maintained a culture centered around abundant saltwater resources that included salmon, shellfish, and marine mammals, as well as upland resources such as cedar, camas, berries, and wild game" (Swinomish, 2017). The center of life for these tribes was their land and all it had to offer them. Before settlers explored the Pacific Northwest, the Indigenous peoples possessed full ownership of their land, using it to sustain life and flourish.

Contrary to popular belief, the Coast Salish peoples were never civilized by the Europeans--rather they had pre-existing civilizations of their own. The Swinomish nation explains, "They lived in large villages during the winter and in summer encampments that followed the seasonal cycle of resource gathering; from the mouths of rivers and streams where salmon were abundant and coastal shorelines where shellfish and herring and other forage fish could be found, to the finfish and sea mammals inhabited marine waters and inland forests where wild game and berries harvested" (2017).

Narrative II: Initial Response



Coast Salish family in European dress <https://www.salishseasidehaven.com/location/history>

The arrival of European settlers to the Pacific Northwest was a shock to the Indigenous communities already occupying the land. The Europeans brought with them guns, germs, and steel that drastically altered Indigenous life, but primarily causing anguish, poverty, and death as they had no immunity to European disease. Marting J. Sampson, the chairman of the Swinomish tribal council, described the situation as "Greater hunger hath the white men's pocket brought on the mouths of our Indian children, let alone the old helpless men and women. The outlook was indeed dark. Many of our leaders could not see the light of tomorrow" (Sampson).

In addition to the diseases brought by foreign settlers, Indigenous lands were significantly inhibited as the Europeans began to build their own civilizations on Coast Salish lands. According to the American Antiquarian Society, the white settlers "have erected saw mills, built stores and towns, and cultivated farms in the midst of these Indians. Our loggers have entered their woods, and our fishermen their waters. Our ships and steamers have frequented their shores. They have broken up their seclusion, and have introduced the habits, virtues, and vices of the white man" (1887).

Narrative III: Treaties & Disputes



*Princess Angeline, the eldest daughter of Chief Seattle, walking in downtown Seattle
Sandra Osawa*

The disputes over land between the Coast Salish tribes and the United States government have been numerous. Many treaties were signed by the Indigenous Peoples as a result of immense pressure by the government to do so, thus allowing tribal lands to be taken and developed by the United States. Some of the most prominent treaties include:

"The Oregon Donation Act of September 27, 1850, The Amendatory Act of February 14, 1853, The Enabling Act of March 2, 1853, establishing the Territory of Washington, The Act of July 17, 1854, extending the provisions of the Oregon Donation Act to Washington

Territory, The Act of March 2, 1853, The Act of July 17, 1854, The Treaty of March 16, 1854, with the Omaha, The Treaty of Medicine Creek (Washington Territory) concluded December 26, 1854, ratified March 3, 1855, and proclaimed April 10, 1855, The Treaty of Point Elliott (Washington Territory) concluded January 22, 1855, ratified March 8, 1859, and proclaimed April 11, 1859, The Treaty of Point-no-Point (Washington Territory) concluded January 26, 1855, ratified March 8, 1859, and proclaimed April 29, 1859, The Act of August 24, 1912, The Jurisdictional Act of February 12, 1925." (The Supreme Court of the United States, 1934).

These treaties were brought about as a careful way for the government to occupy Indigenous land by coercing tribes to agree to these treaties. In order to provide incentives, the government would promise to preserve Indigenous practices, cultures, fishing methods, etc. In addition, the government relocated Coast Salish peoples to different reservations, essentially giving them only small, undesirable plots of land while unjustly occupying the rest of their land. However, the tribes resisted as they "were the owners, by virtue of aboriginal and immemorial possession, of the right of occupancy in large tracts of land in western Washington, of which they were dispossessed without compensation by the United States through patents and grants to white persons, and sought to recover in the court below the value of this right of occupancy. The Court of Claims denied recovery" (The Supreme Court of the United States, 1934). The U.S. government took control of the Pacific Northwest and the lands of the Coast Salish peoples, dispossessing tribes from their native land and failing to recognize Indigenous rights to remain on that land.

Narrative IV: Land Acknowledgements



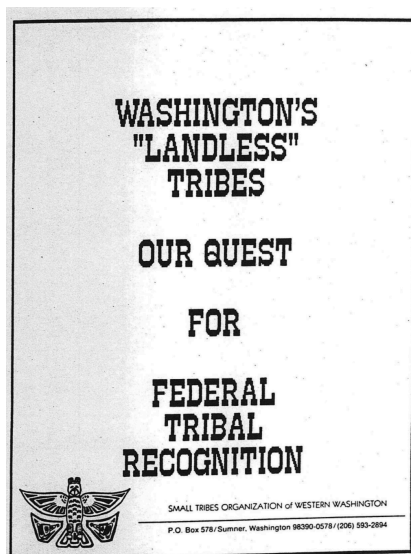
Portrait of a young Cowichan woman

It is no secret that over the course of history, Indigenous Peoples in the United States have been stripped of their land. These exploitative treaties that the Coast Salish peoples were obligated to sign may seem as if they are events of the past, but in reality, they were the foundation for the abuse and discrimination of Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous land that is still present to this day.

Although it will never account for the Indigenous lives taken, land stolen, and culture stripped, people in the United States are finally beginning to practice land acknowledgments--particularly in the Pacific Northwest. The University of Washington has created its own land acknowledgment, stating that *"The University of Washington acknowledges the Coast Salish peoples of this land, the land which touches the shared waters of all tribes and bands within the Suquamish, Tulalip and Muckleshoot nations."*

However, it fails to include the federally unrecognized Duwamish Tribe, which is "Seattle's only aboriginal tribe. Seattle, Washington's largest city, is named after the Duwamish Chief Sealth. The tribe has had no communally-owned land since past treaty times" (The Association on American Indian Affairs, 1988). Nonetheless, practicing land acknowledgments alone is not enough to make up for the realities of indigenous colonization, but it is a good place to start.

Archival Resources



The research I have conducted could not have been done without my content set within the Gale Digital Scholar Lab (DSD). Using the DSL, I gathered information regarding Coast Salish tribal relations with the U.S. government in the form of documents ranging from as early as 1861 to as recent as 1989. The archives I used include the following:

- U.S. Supreme Court Records and Briefs, 1832-1978
- Indigenous Peoples of North America
- Sabin Americana: History of the Americas, 1500-1926
- The Times Literary Supplement Historical Archive, 1902-2014
- Nineteenth Century U.S. Newspapers
- International Herald Tribune Historical Archive, 1887-2013
- American Historical Periodicals from the American Antiquarian Society

Additionally, the information I gathered to craft my content set came from the following libraries:

- New York City Bar Library
- American Antiquarian Society
- Firestone Library, Princeton University
- Mudd Library, Princeton University
- Times Newspapers Limited
- The New York Times Company
- Library of Congress (1)

Data Curation & Cleaning



Summer Cattail Mat Shelters. Photo courtesy of the Museum of History and Industry, Seattle, Washington, cir. 1910.

To my surprise, the state of the texts I found was very tidy. The OCR levels were mostly above 80%, and many of them were about 90%. I believe that this is because most of the documents I found are official records of court cases, which are typed in English. I have very few handwritten materials, which could account for why the OCR levels of my documents are so high. However, the OCR levels of some of the treaties are a bit lower. I think this is because the treaties tend to be older, some from the 1800s. In addition, the indigenous names are not always recognized as proper English by the OCR, which could bring its level down a bit.

In terms of curating my content set, I began searching the DSL for "coast salish AND treaty AND treaties AND indigenous AND land" but did not have much luck finding documents that were relevant. I then searched "treaty of point elliott" to be more specific, as I know this treaty has a remarkable significance. My strategy for the rest of my searches was to search DuckDuckGo for information about the specific treaties, court cases, disputes, etc. and then search those terms up in the DSL. In the end, my most successful search terms proved to be "coast salish treaties" and "coast salish v united states."

In terms of effectively cleaning my data, I strategically chose to refrain from refining my cleaning configuration too much, mainly because special characters and extended ASCII

characters may be part of indigenous names, as some documents use non-ASCII characters to express indigenous names.

However, I removed the following: "... " and "--" because in many of the court documents, those characters are overly present and not meaningful to the content. Later on, I added in the stopwords of "indian", "men" , and "government" to my cleaning configuration to more effectively filter my data.

Analysis Summary



Suquamish woman gathering shellfish. Suquamish Museum Archives

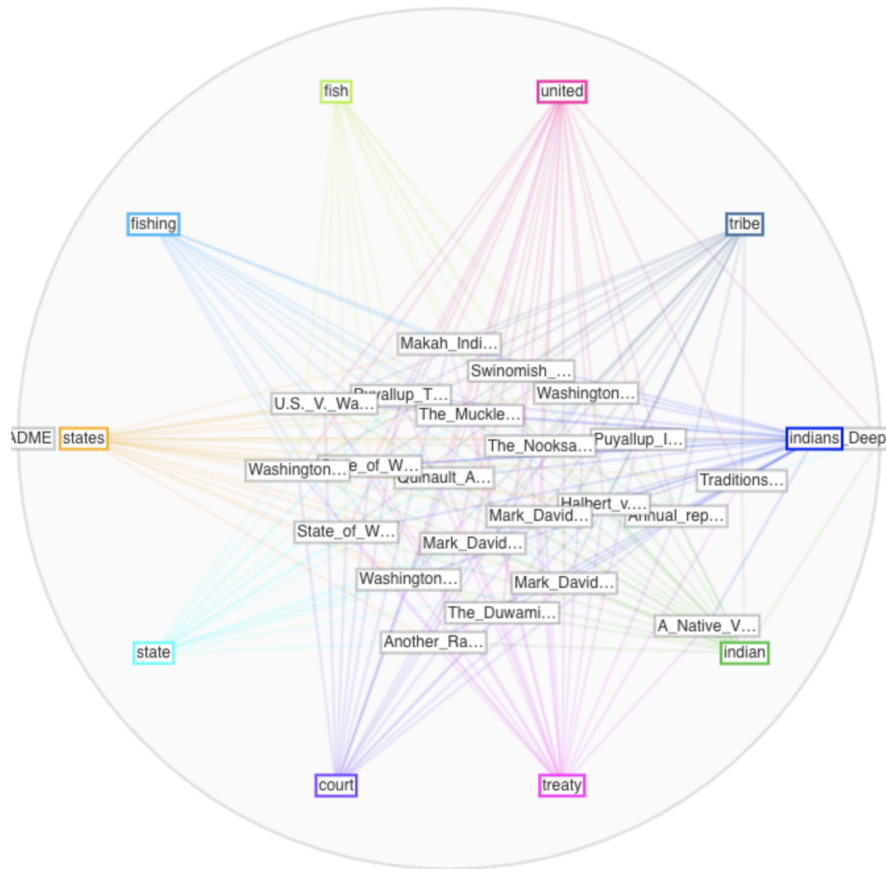
The six analyses I carried out in Gale Digital Scholar Lab were:

- Document Clustering
- Parts of Speech Tagger
- Name Entity Recognition (NER)
- Sentiment Analysis
- Ngram
- Topic Modeling

Document Clustering serves to provide a scatter plot that groups different documents together as a means of organization to facilitate research. The Parts of Speech Tagger generates a visualization of the many parts of speech in the English language and their frequencies by each respective author. Name Entity Recognition (NER) displays the top 200 entities, their categories, which documents contain those entities, and the total entity count. The Sentiment Analysis tool displays a time series of sentiment across publication years. The Ngram tool provides a word cloud in addition to a bar chart, both containing the most common words within each document. Finally, Topic Modeling shows different topics, their probabilities, and their counts as well as a comparison of each topic.

The tools I found to be most useful in exploring this question were probably the Name Entity Recognition (NER) tool and the Topic Modeling tool. I liked the NER tool because it highlighted the most common and important words in my documents, however considering that my topic is about indigenous peoples, I was disappointed to find that the words 'indigenous' or 'native' were nowhere to be seen. This is not a criticism of the NER tool-rather it is a criticism of the archaic language used in the documents that refer to all indigenous peoples in general as 'indians.' The Topic Modeling tool was useful to me because it broke down which documents contained certain topics, so it helped me get a better sense of how I can group my documents and which ones I will find most relevant to my topic.

Analysis Result II



Voyant Mandala Tool Visualization

The Mandala tool was very interesting and fun to use. I applied the configuration of my text-cleaning and stop-word list. As a result, the common terms that showed up in my content sets were lining the outside, while more specific terms were placed inside the inner part of the mandala. These terms included Coast Salish tribal names such as "Muckleshoot", "Quinalt", "Puyallup", and "Duwamish". This would make sense considering many of the court cases are a specific Coast Salish tribe vs the United States. Relatedly, I found the term "U.S. v." to be very common in the Mandala, considering that many of the cases titled "U.S. v. [insert the name of some Coast Salish tribe or nation]." The mandala tool provided me with the most different information in contrast to the other tools I used. It is useful in answering my research question because it shows me which tribal names are linked with different words, displaying the connections between different tribes and why their land was disputed. I did not curate any additional data for this analysis.

Learning Summary



Coast Salish people in a canoe

What I have found unexpected about text mining investigations is the exclusion of Indigenous voices in this field. This class has taught me how humanities and technology can intersect.

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