

## Lesson 1: Culture: Nisqually Perspective Student Instructions & Graphic Organizers

*Make a copy of this document.*

**Essential Question:** *How did natural resources form the Nisqually People's perspective about the area where they lived?*

### **Criteria: Be able to...**

- Measure my awareness of the Nisqually People's culture
- Gather evidence (facts, examples, and quotes)
- Summarize main ideas (take-a-ways) from the articles
- Form and explain conclusions about what you learned based on evidence
- Reflect and remeasure my awareness based on new learning and understanding

### **Graphic Organizer #1:**

#### **Before the lesson:**

What do you already know? List or describe anything you know about the Nisqually People:

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**Scale of Awareness:** On a scale of 1-4, how much do you know and understand about Nisqually People's culture?

1 -not aware/none

2 -somewhat know

3 -mostly know and understand

4 -fully know, understand, and can teach others

Number that represents you: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Reading:**

Read the following articles (or slide), take notes, and respond to the prompts below using evidence from what you learned:

Article #1: The People and the Area They Dwelt by Annette Bullchild and Abbi Wonacott  
(included)

Article #2: [Before the White Man Came](#) by Cecelia Carpenter

Describe how and why Nisqually People gathered, hunted, and fished

Resources: list items from nature that supply people's needs

List four new things you learned about the Nisqually People's culture:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

**Essential Question: Explaining the Perspective:** Using what you learned, respond using evidence from the lesson to the answer the following question in at least one paragraph: *How did natural resources form the Nisqually People's perspective on the area (Nisqually Watershed) they lived in?*

**Scale of Awareness Reevaluated:** From what you learned from this lesson, how much more do you know and understand about Nisqually People's culture on a scale of 1-4?

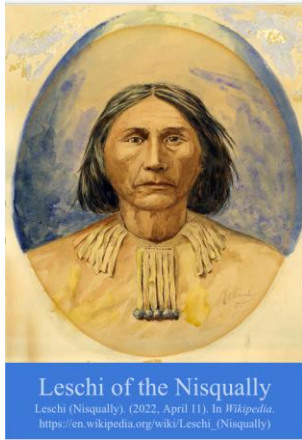
- 1 -still do not know or understand
- 2 -somewhat know or understand
- 3 -mostly know and understand
- 4 -fully know and understand and see how the information applies outside of the classroom.

Number that represents you: \_\_\_\_\_

# Lesson 1: The Nisqually People and the Area They Dwelt

By Annette Bullchild and Abbi Wonacott

*Acknowledgment and respect for Nisqually historian Cecilia Carpenter*

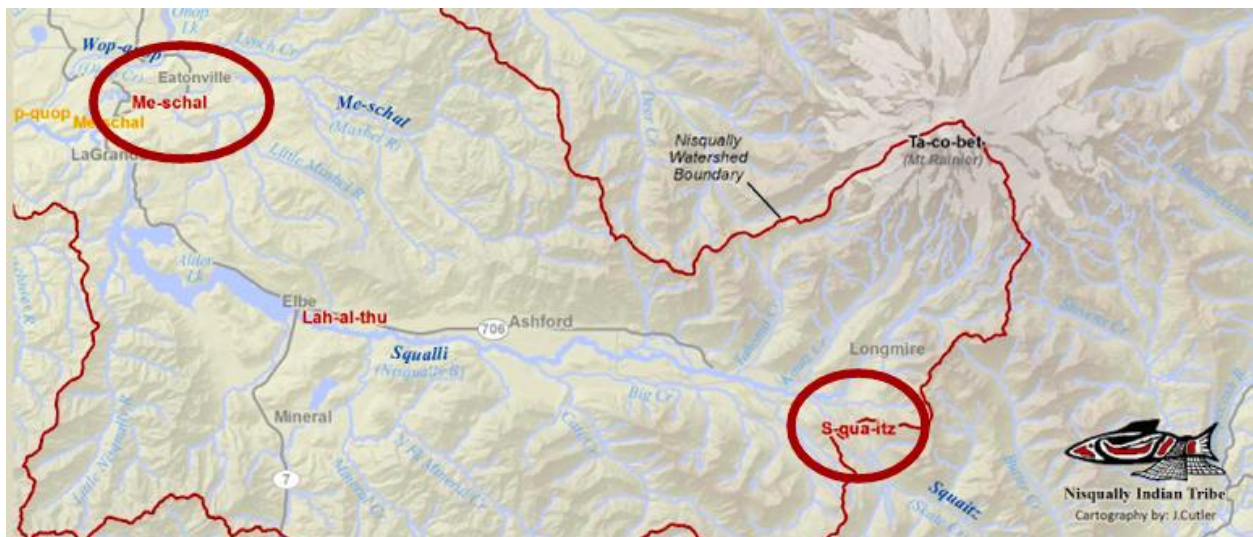


Leschi of the Nisqually  
Leschi (Nisqually). (2022, April 11). In *Wikipedia*.  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leschi\\_\(Nisqually\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leschi_(Nisqually))

“Whatever the future holds, do not forget who you are. Teach your children, teach your children’s children. Teach them the pride of a great people. A time will come again when they will celebrate together with joy. When that happens, my spirit will be there with you.” -Leschi (Leader of the Nisqually: 1808-1858)

Their name Nisqually is from their ancestors, the Squalli-absch, meaning “people of the grass country.” “The Nisqually People have lived in relative peace and prosperity in their aboriginal [native] homeland of about two million acres near the present-day towns of Olympia, Tenino, and Dupont, extending to Mount Rainier.” - Nisqually Indian Tribe

Life revolves around water and land. For the Nisqually People, life-giving water still flows within the Nisqually Watershed. This **watershed** (boundary line in red on the map below) begins from Ta-co-bet (or Mt. Rainier) and forms the Nisqually River that flows to the bottom of the Salish Sea (or Puget Sound).



“According to legend, the Squalli-absch ... came north from the Great Basin, crossed the Cascade Mountain Range, and erected their first village in a basin now known as Skate Creek [S-gua-it-z] [on the map above in red circle], just outside the Nisqually River Watershed southern boundary. Later, a major village [Me-schal] [red circle] would be located near the Mashel River.” -Nisqually Indian Tribe

Alongside the waters of the Nisqually River, the Nisqually People built eleven more villages. According to tribal historian Cecilia Carpenter, a typical village was close to a river and only had fifty to a hundred people who lived in two to three cedar homes. When Nisqually

people traveled to visit friends or family, they would introduce themselves by stating their name, their parents (ancestors), and the name of their village. Each village had a “headwoman” or “headman” as their leader. This leader was an elder who proved wise and caring for their people. Whenever there was a threat of an attack or war, the people of each village chose individuals as leaders.

One such leader was Leschi. Leschi was born on January 29, 1808, in the upper mountain Me-schal Village, where the Mashel River meets the Nisqually River near present-day Eatonville. His father was the village headman, and his mother was from the Yakama People and related to tribal leaders. Every January, near or on his birthday, the Nisqually Indian Tribe closes its offices, and Nisqually People take time to reflect on his life and leadership during Chief Leschi Day.

When Nisqually People look at the saltwater shoreline, wetlands, prairies, or forests, they see the **natural resources** for themselves and their ancestors. They are **stewards** of the land because the natural world provides all. The rains of Western Washington nourished the land. The plentiful forest kept the air clean. The cedar trees provided wood for canoes, planks for houses, bark for baskets, boughs for medicine, and many other uses. In addition to the cedar, the plant and animal life supplied all their needs for shelter, food, clothing, medicines, and more.



For thousands of years, during the different seasons, Nisqually People traveled within an area of 2,000,000 acres with extended family to a gathering, hunting, or fishing camp in designated locations. Families walked near and vast distances to where the animals and plants were thriving in their particular ecosystem and elevation. They looked forward to going to these familiar places known **since time immemorial**. They could stay for days or weeks fishing and gathering for food sources such as salmon or camas.



Being people of the river, salmon was a crucial part of the Nisqually diet. With different seasons came different types of salmon. The Chum salmon traveled the river in the fall, and the Tyee salmon swam up in the spring. “The fish runs came down into the south Puget Sound, milled about at the mouth of the Nisqually River, then per a signal only they could hear, they began the swim up the river to the sand and gravel beds to the place of their birth to spawn and die (Carpenter).” Men used fishing traps called weirs that caught the fish coming upstream. At fish camps (or stations), men set weirs on smaller, slower **tributary** rivers. The mouth of the Mashel River was a well-known camp.



Camas was another primary food source gathered on the prairies during the spring when the lavender flowers bloomed. At gathering camps, Women used wooden digging sticks with a handle made of an elk horn to dig up the Camas' bulbs. Then, they baked them in an earth pit for days to prepare them for food and trade.

When villagers lived closer to specific resources, they traded with people from other villages. A Nisqually villager who lived near the shoreline exchanged shellfish for elk from a villager living closer to the mountain forest. This trade increased their resources.

Today, the Nisqually Indian community still revolves around the water that nourishes the land. Though their community is only 5000 acres of land, they still gather, fish, and hunt during certain seasons in vast locations and to the foothills of Ta-co-bet. Their present-day community is in Thurston County near the city of Yelm and on the border of Joint Base Lewis-McChord.



The Nisqually People do not dwell on as much land; however, they continue to have tremendous gratitude and respect for the land and water. Many are active in keeping the wildlife of the natural world flourishing. In addition to several other groups, the Nisqually Tribe coordinates with the Nisqually Land Trust, which works to protect and restore wildlife habitats. The Nisqually Tribe is also active in salmon restoration and water protection to benefit all Washingtonians.