

ANTHROPOLOGICAL REPORT ON THE IDENTITY, TREATY STATUS  
AND FISHERIES OF THE NISQUALLY TRIBE OF INDIANS

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NISQUALLY IDENTITY

Throughout western Washington the problem of identifying aboriginal and historic Indian groups with parties named in the treaties of 1854-55 has been complicated by inconsistent use of Indian names by different persons or even by the same person for different purposes. The name Nisqually has the distinction of having acquired by treaty times the widest range of referents of any native name in western Washington.

In the most limited and precise sense, Nisqually referred to a village at the mouth of the river to which the early whites extended the village name. In a broader usage the whites used the name Nisqually to refer to all of the Indians living along the river and its tributary creeks. The name was extended sometimes to include all the natives of the inlets of upper Puget Sound. In its widest extension the name Nisqually was employed to connote all the Indians from Hood Canal around Puget Sound as far as Bellingham Bay, excepting the Chemakum, Clallam, and Lummi.

The reasons why the name Nisqually came to be so widely and variously extended appear to relate to the establishment of a Hudson Bay Company post in the vicinity of the Indian village the name of which was anglicized to Nisqually. The post was established in 1832 and was named Nisqually House after the neighboring village. The term was subsequently used by employees of the Company and visitors to the post to refer to geographic features of the surrounding area, as Nisqually Reach, Nisqually River, and Nisqually Bottom. The term was likewise employed to refer to local Indians, their language, and by extension, to all those Indians who visited the area to trade and who spoke related dialects and appeared culturally similar to the local people.

It is neither necessary nor possible to detail here the precise chronology nor the variety of referents to which the name Nisqually has been extended. For our purposes it is important to know that the name was commonly used to designate the people of the Nisqually River watershed and was also frequently employed to include other peoples from the Puyallup River to the head of Puget Sound. In many of the accounts dating from the 1830's and 1840's it is unclear exactly which people are included under the rubric Nisqually. Consequently, census figures and other data purporting to relate to Nisqually Indians in these records should be used only with considerable caution.

For present purposes, we are concerned with understanding the referents of the term Nisqually as employed by the men who were responsible for negotiating the Treaty of Medicine Creek. Of immediate concern also is the knowledge of these Indians on the part of other interested parties in the area in the years immediately prior to and subsequent to the negotiation of the treaty. For these reasons, we rely primarily upon documents dating from the 1850's, first-hand recollections of that decade which were recorded later, and subsequent ethnographic descriptions of the Nisqually and neighboring peoples.

The most critical source of information for our concerns are the published reports and the unpublished correspondence, notes, and journals of George Gibbs, the lawyer-ethnologist who drafted the treaties for western Washington and who helped to select and survey the original Nisqually reservation. Governor Isaac I. Stevens relied on George Gibbs, Benjamin F. Shaw, and Michael T. Simmons for information and recommendations relative to the Indians. Of the three men, only Gibbs recorded any extensive information regarding the native population prior to the treaties.

Careful study of his published and unpublished reports reveals that while Gibbs employed the term Nisqually in both the most restricted and the widest sense, along with several intermediate usages, and sometimes used the term variously in

a single report, his meaning at any specific point is always clear.

Gibbs is the earliest source for the identification of the name Nisqually with a single village. In an unpublished manuscript listing native geographic names, he noted with reference to the Nisqually River

The name Squally or N's-qually, belongs strictly to the Indian village at the fish dam on it.

(Gibbs: NAA ms.#714)

The date of the unpublished manuscript cited above is 1853.

For the location of the village Gibbs referred to we are indebted to another unpublished manuscript, this one by T.T. Waterman, an anthropologist who also collected native names for geographic locations in the Puget Sound area. Waterman conducted his field research in the years 1917-1920 and without having seen Gibbs' unpublished material. Waterman recorded the following information concerning the village

164. The old village-site at the mouth of the Nisqually River. ~~Ty~~ SqwE'le, "late." The run of salmon was said to be later in the Nisqually than in any other stream. The people there would be engaged in taking and curing salmon after they were gone from the other rivers. The present Anglicized name Nisqually represents this old term, somewhat distorted.

(Waterman: NAA ms.#1864:119)

It may be noted in passing that Marian Smith (1940:12) writing with respect to the name Nisqually commented that "there seems to have been no single village of that name." Smith collected her information

in 1935-36. In view of the two earlier and independent reports of Gibbs and Waterman, I am inclined to think that her information was faulty in this instance. It should be noted that Smith was unaware of either the Gibbs or Waterman manuscripts.

Returning to Gibbs' use of the term Nisqually, we have alluded to the fact that he employed the term at different places with different referents. Although he noted, as in the passage cited on the previous page, that the term strictly referred to a single village, Gibbs usually employed the name Nisqually to include six bands of Indians living on the Nisqually River and its environs.

In an unpublished manuscript which is clearly a partial draft of the report which was later published under date of March 4, 1854 in the Pacific Railroad Reports, Gibbs undertook to identify and enumerate or estimate the native population around Puget Sound. The following are extracted from a longer tabulation

Names of Tribes & Bands	Where located	Men	Women	Boys	Girls	Slaves	Total
Noo-seh-chatl	South Bay					est.	12
Squalli-ah-mish 6 bands	Nisqually river & vicinity	47	54	37	46		184
Steilacoom-a- mish	Steilacoom Creek & vicinity					est.	25

The material cited above is extracted from (Gibbs: NAA ms.#2356) and differs from the published version in that the population figures are given by age as well as by sex. The above cited material makes several points clear. First, Gibbs included neither the South Bay (Henderson

Inlet) nor the Steilacoom Indians in his definition of Nisqually Indians at this time. Second, the Nisqually figures are based on an actual count in contrast to the South Bay and Steilacoom figures which are labelled as estimates. Third, although the Nisqually figures are based on actual count, they evidently did not include all Nisqually. It is not clear from his subsequent writing whether some members of the aforementioned six bands were not enumerated, or whether additional bands were later discovered to have been omitted, but Gibbs and others later counted more Nisqually. Possibly both sources of discrepancy were involved.

At this time it does not seem possible to resolve the question with any certainty because subsequent to the Treaty of Medicine Creek Gibbs also included the Steilacoom in his definition of Nisqually. As we have seen, prior to the treaty he listed them separately. They are named separately in the preamble to the Treaty of Medicine Creek as well.

Although Gibbs mentions "6 bands" of Nisqually in several unpublished manuscripts and in the report which was published in the volumes of the Pacific Railroad Reports, the only listing of Nisqually bands which I have been able to discover occurs in his unpublished journal of Indiaa Notes dated 1854-1855. Since the journal is unpagged and the notes do not appear to be entered consecutively, the date of the entry must remain uncertain. In this list there are more than six entries and the Steilacoom are included which suggests the list dates from 1855.

The following is excerpted from Gibbs' notebook.

Nisqually bands

	S'qually	n. side below Packwood's
	Segwallichew	the mill stream
	Steilacoom	winter Mouth of Cr.
	Sukatowkh	summer Minson's
ext.	Muck	Extinct
	Yelm	
	Tahnoot }	a few only left
	Mishahl }	
Leshigh	Kwod-kwooi,	between Yelm & Squally, Gravelle's
	Klithlow,	Dean's, a few
	Spanoway,	Labouchelier's, Extinct
Quiemiehl	Squkekwas	
	Shodahdab,	Mc'Allister's; a few Indians left.
	Kl-ko-minn,	Chamber's pre.

Three additional entries on the page appear to have been included as place names in the Nisqually area. There is no indication that they are meant to indicate band locations.

The list of bands given above cannot be taken as a complete listing of Nisqually settlements. Gibbs elsewhere mentions at least one other village and additional living sites are mentioned by other contemporary observers. Nevertheless, the list is of critical value for several reasons.

First, it provides us with a clear idea of what Gibbs included in his definition of Nisqually Indians circa 1855. The claims of the various settlers mentioned in the list, Packwood, Minson, Gravelle, Dean, Labouchelier, McAllister and Chambers can all be found on the map titled Steilacoom and Vicinity (National Archives Record Group 77, W 31-5) along with Gibbs' own farm located back of Steilacoom.



All of the locations mentioned in the list lie between McAllister's Creek in the southwest and Chambers' Creek to the northeast. In this more inclusive view of the Nisqually, Gibbs clearly subsumed the people of McAllister Creek, Sequelitchu Creek, and Steilacoom in addition to the villages on the Nisqually River and its tributary creeks.

Second, Gibbs' list appears to be the only extant record of its kind dating from the time of Medicine Creek or immediately thereafter. As such, it constitutes a unique and invaluable record of Nisqually bands and their locations as of circa 1855.

Third, the list may be used to cross-check information collected at later dates regarding living sites and fishing locations of Nisqually Indians. In anticipation of materials discussed elsewhere in this report, it may be noted that the Gibbs list serves to corroborate data collected many years later by Waterman and Swindell.

Returning to a consideration of Gibbs' varying referents for the term Nisqually, we observed that his list of bands contrasted with the earlier works cited in subsuming the Steilacoom people as Nisqually. This usage contrasts also with his treatment of the Steilacoom in Tribes of Western Washington and Northwestern Oregon published posthumously in 1877. In that work Gibbs treats the Steilacoom and the people of Sequelitchu Creek as distinct from the Nisqually but suggests that they may all be grouped together in contrast to the people of the upper Sound inlets to the west and in contrast to the people of Vashon Island and the Puyallup

River to the north and east. The relevant passage follows.

2d. The bands occupying Puget Sound and the inlets opening into it as far down as Point Pully. These all speak the same dialect, the Niskwalli proper, and were all included in treaties made at Shenah-nam, or Medicine Creek, December, 1854, since ratified by the Senate. They number collectively 893. A division might be made of these into three subtribes, the first consisting of the S'Hotlemamish of Case Inlet, Sahehwamish of Hamersly Inlet, Sawamish of Totten Inlet, Skwai-aitl of Eld Inlet, Stehtsasamish of Budd Inlet, and Nusehtsatl of South Bay or Henderson Inlet; the second consisting of the Skwalliahmish or Niskwalli, including the Segwallitsu, Steilakumamish, and other small bands; the third of the Puyallupamish, T'Kawkwamish, and S'Homamish of the Puyallup River and Vashon Island.

(Gibbs 1877:178)

The foregoing account, in which the Steilacoom and Sequialtchu are mentioned separately from the Nisqually but included with them for purposes of classification, appears to be an intermediate step between Gibbs' separate listing of these groups and his subsuming them all together as Nisqually bands in the journal entry.

In the 1877 publication Gibbs also employs a very wide and inclusive use of the term Nisqually to embrace almost all of the Indians on Puget Sound from the Skokomish on Hood Canal to the Canadian border on the east side of the Strait. While this usage obviously contrasts sharply with his employment of the term as noted in the passage cited above, the two are kept distinct in the work in question. When Gibbs uses the wider referent, he writes of the Niskwalli nation.

In summary, although Gibbs used the term Nisqually to refer to various groups of Indians, it seems possible to ascertain his

meaning in any given instance. Briefly, although he recognized that the name properly referred to people of a single downstream village on the Nisqually River, Gibbs normally used the term to include all the people of the Nisqually River drainage system. At times he included also people of neighboring streams such as McAllister Creek and the creeks near Steilacoom. When he wrote of the Nisqually nation, Gibbs included most of the Indians of western Washington.

At the time of the Treaty of Medicine Creek his use of the term Nisqually clearly did not include the Steilacoom people as they were mentioned separately in the preamble. He probably did mean to subsume with Nisqually those people associated with McAllister Creek (where the treaty was signed) for they were not mentioned separately.

#### THE ROLE OF FISHING IN NISQUALLY CULTURE

The central role of fish and fishing in Nisqually culture in the years just prior to and subsequent to the Treaty of Medicine Creek is attested to in a variety of ways by contemporary observers.

Like most of their neighbors in western Washington, the Nisqually held the salmon in special esteem and were concerned to insure that the supply should never fail. To this end, a complex of special rites and observances were performed. In the anthropological literature, this complex of traits is known as The First Salmon Ceremony.

Specific details of the ceremonial complex varied from one group to another but the basic reasons and format were consistent for the Nisqually and most of the other Indians of the coast. The first salmon ceremony was the most important form of animal ceremonialism in the area, a clear reflection of the central importance of salmon in the native economy. The purpose of the ceremony was to welcome the first salmon of the season and to show respect to the salmon in order to ensure an abundance of the species in the local streams. It was thought that if the salmon were not treated properly, they would become offended and cease to return to the stream where they had been improperly attended.

The first salmon taken in a given run were usually handled in a ritual manner. They might be painted with red ochre, were usually cut in an unusual manner, and generally had to be consumed by specific persons, after having been cooked in a prescribed way. The bones were then returned to the stream so that other salmon might follow.

Among the Nisqually, salmon were normally prepared in a variety of ways including boiling. In aboriginal times this was accomplished by a method known as stone boiling. A water-tight container such as a rigid, tightly woven basket lined with pitch or a water-tight box made out of cedar was partly filled with water and heated stones lifted from the fire with wooden tongs

were placed in the container in order to bring the water to a boil.

Among the Nisqually, first-run salmon were not boiled. In his journal of Indian notes dated 1854-55, Gibbs includes the following entry

The Nisqually Indians like the Chinook, would not sell the first salmon to the whites for fear they would boil them and the others would not come. They associate the *Rubus Spectabilis* with the fish in the same way as the latter tribe. So the Sklallams took out the heart before selling the fish for fear it should be given to a dog or thrown in the water.

In addition to the prohibition on boiling the first salmon of the season, the Nisqually along with their neighbors restricted other sorts of behavior which might offend the salmon. Curtis (1913:95) mentions the suspension of certain types of games and sports during the salmon spawning season.

The very common hoop-and-pole game was current in this region. The hoop, about six inches in diameter, was rolled swiftly toward the contestants, who with their spears stood waiting thirty or forty feet away and endeavored to hurl their shafts through it in such a manner that the spear would transfix the turf and hold the hoop. Bows and arrows sometimes took the place of spears. Shooting arrows at a mark was much practised. But none of these contests were held during the salmon spawning season, for the invisible spirits of the salmon, passing through the village on their way up stream, might be struck by a missile and become angered, not to return that way again.

Smith (1940:101) mentions for the Puyallup-Nisqually that the first salmon caught after the building of a large tripod fish trap were eaten at a community feast and had to be cut in a parti-

cular manner.

In part, also, the feast may have been ritualistic for the salmon were cut lengthwise, never cross-wise, or "they would get insulted and not come any more".

Among other items, Smith notes that the salmon

were boiled entire, flesh, entrails, gills and bones, and all had to be finished to the last scrap.

The requirement that every bit of the first salmon be consumed is a recurring feature of the first salmon ceremony throughout the Northwest Coast culture area. The underlying concern appears to be that no part of the salmon should be improperly disposed of, as, for example, eaten by dogs.

Smith's information that the first salmon were boiled appears to conflict with Gibb's comment that they should not be boiled. It is possible that the two comments refer to different local custom, to different species of salmon, or that custom changed in the seventy odd year interval between the two reports. Whatever the explanation of that particular point, certain conclusions can be drawn.

It is clear that the Nisqually were concerned that the salmon runs should continue in their streams. This concern was manifested by the performance of certain ritual acts on the part of the local community to welcome and honor the salmon. It was also evidenced by the nonperformance of certain activities on the part of individuals in order to avoid offense or injury to the salmon. The latter concern extended to protecting the salmon from unwitting injury on the part of others as demonstrated by the refusal to sell first-run salmon to the whites.

The traditional importance of fish and fishing in aboriginal Nisqually culture is also reflected in the little information preserved to us regarding the astronomical observations of these people.

In his unpublished journal of Indian notes dated 1854-55, Gibbs made some notations regarding the astronomical knowledge of the Nisqually Indians. Gibbs noted the names of three constellations recognized by the Indians and, interestingly, all were identified with fish and fishing.

The first constellation, for which Gibbs did not know a European name, was called in the Nisqually language "edad" and was said to represent a fish weir.

Orion's belt was identified by the Nisqually as three Indians catching small fish in schools. The sword was said to represent the fish.

Pleiades was described as a species of fish with large heads and small tails.

Elsewhere in the same journal Gibbs reported that the Nisqually attribute the northern lights to schools of herring turning up the whites of their bellies.

The foregoing appear to contain the sum total of information recorded by Gibbs on Nisqually astronomical lore. The facts speak for themselves. Nisqually preoccupation with fish and fisheries was projected in their perception of stellar configurations and celestial phenomena.

Additional contemporaneous information on the role of fishing in Nisqually culture at treaty times is available in the fisheries reports of Dr. G. Suckley whose zoological investigations are part of the scientific record of the Pacific Railroad Reports. Suckley's work is a pioneer effort to identify and classify fishes of the northwest, particularly the Salmonidae.

His reports include observations on Indian techniques of taking, preparing, and curing of fish as well as Indian statements about salmon characteristics and migration patterns. Suckley was based at Fort Steilacoom intermittently between 1854 and 1856 and much of his data relate specifically to the Indians living around Steilacoom and in the Nisqually watershed. Suckley employed the name Nisqually to include both these groups.

Suckley tentatively identified sixteen species of salmon and salmon-trout for the Columbia River and Puget Sound regions. While he expected that further investigation would reduce the number of species, he thought that the native taxonomic systems erred in the other direction, merging under a single category what must be distinct species.

It is instructive to note that the Nisqually salmon nomenclature as recorded by Suckley circa 1854 makes virtually the same species distinctions as our present scientific classification.



The Nisqually had separate names for the Chum or Dog salmon (Tl'hwai), Coho (Skowitz), Humpback (Huddo), and Chinook (Satsup). King or Tyee salmon were recognized as Satsup, but were called To-walt, the basis of distinction being size. Sockeye were not present in the Nisqually area. Steelhead (Skowol) at that time were regarded by both whites and Indians as a salmon species.

Suckley's first hand observations on the numbers of steelhead present and Indian methods of taking them in the years immediately before and after the treaties are of crucial interest.

While residing at Puget Sound I collected the following information from the Indians respecting the salmon known to the Nisquallies as the skowol, which I consider identical with the Klutchin of the Clallums, a specimen of which has served as the typical example of the present species. This fine salmon is second to none in beauty, size, or excellence. It arrives in the bays and estuaries of Puget Sound about the middle of autumn, and towards the first of December commences to run up the larger rivers emptying into the sound. Their ascent of these streams continue through December and January. This arrival of the species in fresh water is not as simultaneous, neither do they arrive in such great numbers at any one time or in "schools," as is the case with the skourtz and several other species, but the "run" being somewhat more "drawn out" affords a steady moderate supply to the Indians during its continuance. In the fall and winter large numbers are taken by the Indians from the salt water by trolling with hook and line in the bays and coves of Puget Sound. The bait used is generally a small kind of herring, a little larger than the common sardine of commerce. After entering the rivers it is taken by the Indians in nets, traps, baskets, &c., and also by spearing.

It seems clear from the foregoing that in the mid 1850's steelhead were abundant despite the fact that large numbers were taken by trolling in the Sound and that a variety of taking techniques were employed in the rivers, including nets.

Suckley does not include information on the preparation and preservation of steelhead by the Indians, but from subsequent ethnographic descriptions it is known that throughout the Puget Sound area steelhead were eaten fresh and were also smoked for winter stores. Smith (1940:238) specifically mentions this practice for the Puyallup-Nisqually.

Smoked salmon was prepared from the dog salmon and from the steelhead when it could be caught in quantity.

It may be assumed that in the 1850's when steelhead were more abundant, numbers of them were smoked in order to provide variety in the cured fish diet.

The smoking of Chum or dog salmon mentioned by Smith above was also remarked on in Suckley's report.

The spotted or lekai salmon enters the rivers of Puget Sound in great numbers every autumn, generally appearing between September 15 and October 10. They come in vast numbers, and arrive so simultaneously as to seem to be in shoals. ....They enter, by preference, the smaller streams....Vast numbers are taken by the Indians with spears, gaff hooks, weirs, &c., and dried for winter use. ....

Like several other species of salmon they are very regular in the periodical arrivals at the mouths of the rivers. In 1856 they arrived in the vicinity of Fort Steilacoom on the 3d of October, and by the 7th

were in such numbers that a boy, with a pole armed with a gaff hook, could readily take one or two hundred pounds weight in an hour. ....

Mr. Gibbs says of this species: "The common dog-salmon is preferred by the Indians for drying, because there is but little fat upon it. ...The Indians do not dry them until they have been in fresh water some time, and have lost what little fat they had. They arrive about October 1, and last until late in the winter. The Indians split them very thin, take out the back bone, and dry all parts. (Suckley 1860:341-2)

Smith (1940:236-242) describes in detail a variety of curing methods. Special mention was made of the fact that male dog salmon heads were roasted and then smoked. Dog salmon eggs were smoked in a sac made by sewing two dog salmon skins together.

In considering the role of fish and fishing in Nisqually culture, it should be noted that fish and fish products were used for a variety of purposes in addition to serving as food. As just mentioned above, dog salmon skins were sewn together to form a storage and cooking container. A few additional non-food uses of salmon may serve to illustrate the point. The inner skin of the dog salmon was used in preparing a glue for joining wood surfaces (Smith 1940:277). Dog salmon skin glue was used in the manufacture of sinew backed bows (Smith 1940:294). Salmon eggs were used for shampoo (Smith 1940:199). Salmon egg oil was chewed to provide a base for paint to be used on wooden objects (Smith 1940:276). A face mask was made of dog salmon skin (Smith 1940:187).

Returning to Suckley's 1854-56 reports of Nisqually fishing, we briefly note his observations regarding the Pink or Humpback salmon.

The Indians say that this salmon is usually quite fat, and that as food they like it very much. They state that it enters Puget Sound and the rivers on alternate years, it being very rare for even a single individual to be caught in the intermediate season. The "run" of the huddoh in its regular years is large, coming in vast numbers, comparing favorably, in this respect, with the satsup, skowitz, or Tl-hwhai. According to the natives of our coast, the hunch-back never return to the sea after spawning, but die in fresh water. (Suckley 1860:339)

Because they were fat, the Humpback were not particularly suitable for curing by Indian methods and consequently were eaten fresh. In contrast, the leaner Coho constituted the main salmon harvest of the Indians.

The skowitz is a very abundant species, and affords, in fact, the principal salmon harvest to the natives, who dry vast quantities for winter consumption. This species commences to run up the fresh water streams emptying into Puget Sound in September, and continues arriving until near Christmas. During the months of January, February, and March, they are found abundantly in small shallow brooks and streams tributary to the larger rivers....During the month of April they suddenly disappear, probably returning by the spring floods to salt water, although the Indians say that but few return to the sea. (Suckley 1860:336-7)

Although the Indians relied primarily on Coho and Chum because of their keeping qualities, the favored salmon species was Chinook.

The Puget Sound Indians take a salmon in summer which is known to the Skadgetts as the yoo-mitch, and to the bands speaking the Nisqually dialect as the satsup. This they consider to be the best of all the kinds of sal-

mon which they catch. It commences to run up the fresh water streams about June 15, and continues ascending until about the middle or end of August. (Suckley 1860:332)

Chinook were likely the reason for the large flotilla of canoes observed by Meeker off the mouth of the Nisqually in June 1853.

....It was here, and during this visit, we began seeing Indians in considerable numbers. Off the mouth of the Nisqually and several places along the beach and floating on the bay we saw several hundred in the aggregate of all ages and kind. There seemed to be a perfect abandon as to care or thought for the future, or even as to the immediate present, literally floating with the tide.

(Meeker 1908:115)

In addition to the material already cited concerning Indian salmon and steelhead fisheries, Suckley's reports contain information regarding other fish and shellfish taken in Nisqually waters and used by the Indians for food and bait.

The most important bait used by the Indians in their salt water troll fisheries for Chinook and Coho was herring. Suckley notes the Indian method of taking, often referred to as "raking."

The present species of herring is quite common at Fort Steilacoom. The Indians, at certain seasons, take them by throwing or scooping them out of the water with poles, along the sides of which, for two or three feet, nails have been driven in closely together and their ends left standing out in rows resembling the teeth of a comb. These fish average about six inches in length, and, despite the immense number of bones, are of excellent flavor, and may be considered an agreeable table delicacy. The Indians eat great numbers, but they principally make use of them as bait when trolling for salmon. The herring is tied to a hook of the proper size, and gently trolled with a jerking motion. The natives, in this way, take many splendid salmon. (Suckley 1860:364)

Before the introduction of iron nails, the teeth of the herring rake were made of bone. The aboriginal herring rake was described repeatedly by early voyagers to the coast, perhaps as Drucker suggested, because its apparent simplicity belied its efficiency.

According to Suckley, two species of trout were very common in the streams, brooks, and lakes of the Nisqually area. He was uncertain as to whether one of these was anadromous. The trout could be taken with half-dried salmon roe. Among the fishing spots mentioned was McAllister's creek where Suckley also noted the presence of "silver salmon." (Suckley 1860:345-7).

Various species were speared by the Nisqually for food and were taken in the salt water. Among these Suckley mentioned sculpin, cod, flounder, sole, and perch.

The major Nisqually taking techniques which can be documented for the period 1854-56 are trolling, spearing, and raking in the salt water and in fresh water fishing the use of nets, traps, gaffs, weirs, spears, and hook and line.

The importance of salmon to the Nisqually Indians is further reported by Special Indian Agent Gosnell in an 1858 report to his superiors in the Indian Service. He wrote:

"There are likewise indications of a plentiful run of salmon this season; this useful article has ever been their main source of subsistence; the Indians catch them during the early part of summer, and in the fall of the year cure them by exposing them to dry in the sun; when perfectly dry they are put up into bales, and stored away for winter use. With

the fair prospects now before them of reaping a plentiful harvest and an abundance of fish, I have strong hopes that the coming winter will find them independent of the department for subsistence." (Gosnell 1858:595)

#### FISHING LOCATIONS

Suckley's reports make it clear that fish abounded in the lakes, creeks, brooks, streams, "tide prairies," river and the Sound adjacent to Nisqually country. The Indians trolled for salmon in the Sound, speared them in the bay, and took them with nets, traps, and weirs as well as by gaffing in the rivers and creeks. It is not possible to document and pinpoint every location at which Indians took fish in 1854, but it is probable that they took them at all convenient and feasible locations. For discussion of this point, please refer to the Anthropological Report on the Traditional Fisheries of the Muckleshoot Indians pages 1 through 4.

Upriver fisheries were normally used by the locally resident group. Saltwater fisheries and fisheries at the mouth of the mouth of the Nisqually River traditionally were used by visitors as well as the local residents. Visitors might use these fisheries because they held claims to them by virtue of kin ties with the local people or they might be accorded guest privileges by virtue of friendship. The Nisqually intermarried with Steilacoom, Puyallup and Duwamish to the north and east and with people from the various inlets all around the head of the Sound to the west. People from any of these groups were likely among the "several hundred" Meeker observed fishing at the mouth of the Nisqually in June 1853 (see quoted material on page 20).

There are at least three separate notations of fish traps or fish dams on the Nisqually River in the unpublished works of George Gibbs. We have already noted the first of these in which he commented that the name Squally properly belonged to the village at the fish dam. That village has been located near the mouth of the river by Waterman.

In another place in that same unpublished manuscript Gibbs (NAA ms.#714) listed another Nisqually village as follows:

Mit-suk-wie Village at Salmon Trap on Squally

In my opinion this is likely the same village that Smith (1940:13) notes at the junction of Clear Creek and the Nisqually River. Her rendering of the native name is sákwiqbc, meaning people of sákwi. Smith was told that this was "perhaps the largest" Nisqually village at the time of the treaty.

Gibbs also mentions a fish dam on the Nisqually river in an unpublished diary, under date of June 23, 1854.

Rode to Olympia to attend laying the cornerstone of Masonic Lodge. Took the upper trail across the Nisqually river at the fish dam.

It is unclear from the information presently at hand whether this refers to a third weir or whether it refers to the village at Clear Creek.

Smith notes other Nisqually villages all of them located either at the mouths of creeks, or at the junction of a creek with a river or lake. These would all have been situated with regard to suitability as fishing sites and it is likely that weirs were constructed at most, if not all these locations.



Smith (1940:12-13) reports Nisqually villages at the following locations: at the present site of Steilacoom, at Clover Creek, mouth of the Nisqually River, mouth of McAllister Creek, junction of Dupont Creek and the Sequalitcu River, Nisqually Lake at the mouth of sizeable creek, junction of Muck Creek and the Nisqually River, junction of Clear Creek and the Nisqually River, and on Mashell Creek. The last noted village is well known as the home of Leschi, who figured prominently in the Indian hostilities following the treaty negotiations.

Additional information on Nisqually fishing sites was recorded on the Nisqually Reservation in 1941 by Edward Swindell in an interview with Allen Yellout, a Nisqually tribal member who was at that time about 69 years old. Smith collected her information among the Nisqually in 1935-36, but did not work with Yellout.

The two lists agree with respect to sites at McAllister Creek, Muck Creek, and Mashell Creek. Yellout associates Leschi with the Muck Creek settlement. According to other historical sources, Leschi lived at both locations. Yellout's list cites additional locations some of which are living sites with fish traps and others temporary fish camps. The entire body of his information is presented as an appendix to this report. The Yellout data include descriptions of gear used at the particular sites.

Since treaty times the Nisqually have consistently claimed the right to fish in the Nisqually River. Dr. W. F. Tolmie, who was in charge of the Puget Sound Agricultural Company operation

at Nisqually at the time of the Medicine Creek Treaty and who had been resident at Nisqually for more than a decade at that time, knew the local Indians intimately. In his unpublished History of Puget Sound and the Northwest Coast, Tolmie noted that at the time of the treaty negotiations the Nisqually had sought to retain their traditional fishing rights in the Nisqually River.

As one instance of the inconsiderate way of dealing with the Indians, it may be mentioned that the Nisqually Indians, a small tribe, accustomed to hunt over and consider as their own the plains north and south of the Nisqually River, approximating to an area of about 300,000 square miles of prairie, woodland, and fresh-water-lake swamp were directed in 1855 to betake themselves to a timbered reservation of a few miles in extent where as they piteously declared both themselves & their horses must starve. They asked for the right of salmon fishing on the Nisqually River, and the occupancy as a reservation of a few square miles of well-watered prairie land immediately north of it but were at this time (1854 or 55) were flatly refused. (sic)

(Tolmie ms. p.39)

Tolmie's comment about flat refusal clearly refers only to the request for prairie land. The right of fishing at usual and accustomed places is clearly stated in the Treaty. Our interest in Tolmie's statement is two-fold. It documents an early and informed non-Indian view of Nisqually territory as well as the Nisquallies own claim of fishing rights on the Nisqually River at the time of the Treaty.

#### TREATY STATUS

Both the Nisqually and Steilacoom are named in the preamble to the Treaty of Medicine Creek, December 26, 1854, 10 Stat., 1132. Ratified Mar. 3, 1855. Proclaimed Apr. 10, 1855. None of the sig-

natories to that treaty is identified as to band. However, the first two names listed, that of Qui-ee-metl and Sno-ho-dumset are elsewhere identified by Gibbs (1877:179) as having been designated as head chiefs of the Nisqually. Lesh-high, whose name is listed third, was designated a sub-chief. Other names included such as Slug-yeh can be identified as Nisqually from contemporaneous records. Still other names such as Yul-lout survive as surnames held by modern members of the Nisqually community.

#### CONCLUSIONS

1. The Nisqually Indian Community of the Nisqually Reservation is composed primarily of descendants of the Nisqually and other neighboring Indians, including the Steilacoom, living near the Nisqually River in 1854.
2. The Nisqually and Steilacoom are mentioned by name in the preamble to the Treaty of Medicine Creek, December 26, 1854. None of the signatories to that treaty is identified on the document as to tribe or band, but several of the men whose names appear as signatories can be identified as Nisqually through other historical documents.
3. The Indians who were assigned to the Nisqually Reservation, including the Steilacoom, were thereafter known as Nisqually Indians and were dealt with by the United States as a separate and collective entity.
4. The principal fisheries of the Nisqually Indians included the Nisqually River and its tributaries, McAllister Creek and its tributaries, Sequalitycu Creek, Chambers Creek and the lakes between Steilacoom and McAllister Creek.

5. Although some of the principal villages at the time of the Treaty were located upriver at the junction of various creeks with the Nisqually River, salt water fisheries were utilized and were important.
6. Salmon (including steelhead) was the most important single food of the Nisqually. Salmon products were used in the manufacture of glue, paint, containers, masks and otherwise played an integral role in the economic and ceremonial life of the Nisqually.
7. Salmon continue to be important to the Nisqually as evidenced by continued fishing activity.
8. At the time of the Treaty of Medicine Creek, salmon were taken in the Nisqually River system by the Indians using various taking techniques including weirs, traps, and nets.
9. The fisheries on the lower reaches of the Nisqually River were undoubtedly used not only by the locally resident villagers, but by people from other Nisqually villages and by members of other groups, such as the people of the upper Sound inlets, the Steilacoom, Puyallup, and some Duwamish.
10. Use of lower Nisqually fisheries by non-Nisqually was with the permission of the local people and would have been accorded automatically to people claiming descent from someone who had come from the local village or who had married into it. People with more distant kin ties to the local village or with none would be accorded fishing privileges on request if amicable relations obtained.

Transcript of testimony given by Allen Yellout at Nisqually Reservation, Washington, on December 3, 1941.

Is a member of the Nisqually Indian tribe and that he is approximately 69 years old.

WINDY CANYON

Says that there was an old Indian village known as SPOOY-AILS located on the Nisqually River at a distance of about 300 yards, or one-quarter mile above the railroad bridge. That this was the village of old Chicken (Joseph), and, as he remembers, there was just one house remaining.

That old Chicken did the fishing at this place and the other Indians would get fish from him. He, however, fished there when a young man and he was then given to understand that this place had been a Nisqually village.

The Indians caught fish here with spears and also had a trap made of cedar boughs in which there were openings to which nets were attached. These nets were made out of twine consisting of rolled cedar or willow bark.

The trap stretched all across the river but the Indians only closed the openings of the nets when they needed fish, and at other times they took the nets from the opening so that the fish could go upstream and spawn.

His father told him that the Indians used to dry lots of fish here. In the spring they would dry the Tyee salmon, then next would come the silver side salmon, followed by dog salmon, and finally the humpback and steelhead.

He heard that in the old days there were about 600 Nisqually Indians, but that all did not live in one place. He does not know how many lived in this particular village.

He also said that in the old days before he was born he understood that the Indians used to catch fish both above and below the trap by using a net fastened to two canoes.

YELM CREEK

Says that there was an Indian village located on both sides of the creek where it entered the Nisqually River; that the Indian name for this place was DOP-SHET.

Has seen Indians camp there and that they lived in cedar bark houses.

This was the place where the Nisquallians caught their dog salmon in the fall of the year, or about the time this statement was being given (December 3, 1941).

The Indians would remain at this place about five or six weeks or until the salmon they had caught were dried.

At this place the Indians caught fish with spears and also with a trap made out of cedar boughs and shaped like a corral. This shape was possible due to the fact that Yelm Creek was a small creek. They would leave the trap overnight and empty it each morning. Before taking the fish from the trap, they would hit them over the head with a club.

This place was used by all of the valley's band of Nisqually Indians. In the old days, the catch would be divided amongst themselves rather than for each individual to keep what he might be able to catch himself.

Has fished at this place himself. When he fished there, he took fish with a gaff hook.

The Indians have not had a trap at this place for many years or ever since the State prohibited them from using such appliances.

He has not fished at this place since about 1925 although the fish still run in Yelm Creek.

#### WALKER PLACE

Says that there was an Indian fishing place on the Nisqually called KEH-CULS-DUTS which in the white man's language means "canoe pole" or a place where the Indians had to use poles to go upstream in their canoes.

This place was used by most all of the Nisquallians and it was located on the Nisqually River about two miles above the county road bridge of the road between Yelm and McKenna.

The Indians stayed at this place about two months, which was about as long as the salmon run lasted. They did this each year.

#### MUCK CREEK

This creek used to be known as Douglas Creek. The Indian name for this place was YELL-WHAHLSE and had no special meaning.

It was located about 8 miles above the mouth of the creek. Some Indians lived there all the time while others came during the time the fish would run.

This was the home of LESHU, the Nisqually chief who signed the treaty with Governor Stevens.

The fishing place of many of the Nisquallies was located at the mouth of the creek. At this place they would construct a small dam and at the bottom of it they would place a basket into which the fish would fall when they tried to get over the dam and could not make it.

Has himself fished at this place but the Indians stopped using it when the army took Camp Lewis over, about 1918.

All along Muck Creek the Indians were accustomed to catching fish with spears. They would also catch trout by building traps with small sticks and after the fish entered the trap they would club them.

#### McALLISTER

The Indian name for this place was SHE-NAH-DA-DO<sup>B</sup> (NOTE: This is the creek at which the treaty was signed; in English known as Medicine Creek and referred to as the treaty under the Indian name of SHE-NAH-NAM).

The Indians fished all along this creek using spears and gaff hooks. It was used by most of the Nisqually Indians.

The dog salmon used to ride early in the year and the Indians would set up camps in which to live and dry the fish they caught.

From these camps they would go out into the bay to catch flounders and dig clams.

This was the principal place of the Nisqually down to high tide. Flounder were caught at the mouth of the creek by stepping on them and then spearing them with a small stick. The clams were dug all along the west side of the creek wherever it appeared they could be found the easiest.

At this place the Indians would also go over to Anderson Island to dig clams and they would stay over there for several weeks.

#### BENNETT PLACE

This was the place on the Nisqually River where the Indians used to build a big trap but it was not used until after the signing of the treaty. It was located just above the new highway bridge or about 1 mile below the old Indian fishing place at Windy Canyon (SPOOY-AILS).

#### MICHEL OR MOSHEL RIVER

The Indian name for this place was Michel and it had no particular meaning. The place was located near Eatonville, Washington.

Here the Indians caught fish with spears and gaff hooks but have not done so for many years, probably because the land was taken up by white people who would not let them camp there as their ancestors had been accustomed to doing.

OHOP

The Indian name for this place was WOP-QUOP. This was the name of both a creek and a lake.

He has heard that some Indians still fish there but he does not know for certain as he has not been up there to see for himself. He does know, however, that they used to fish there because he was told so and they caught the fish with spears and gaff hooks.

MURRAY CREEK

The Indian name for this place was TSE-ALUM.

It was located about 200 yards above the Northern Pacific railroad bridge near Yelm and McKenna.

He has never fished there but has seen other Indians fishing at this place.

His father and the other old people say that had always been a fishing place of the Nisqually Indians.

Says he understands this was only what might be called an overnight stopping place. He does not believe the Indians smoked any fish there. They merely caught fish for immediate consumption while on their way from their permanent villages up towards the mountains to the root and berry grounds.

At this place the Indians caught the fish with spears and gaff hooks.

(NOTE: Peter Kalama and Frank Mounts will confirm; also George Bobb.)



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