

# The Treaty Trail: U. S. - Indian Treaty Councils in the Northwest

## A Treaty Trail Lesson Plan

### The Journey:

### Students Examine Primary Documents on Crossing the Bitterroot Mountains

#### Summary:

In this exercise, students will have the opportunity to examine artworks that are more than a century and a half old, approaching them not only as an artist's perspective, but also as primary, historical documents that reveal clues about the time period of U.S.-Indian treaties in the Pacific Northwest.

After examining a work of art by Gustav Sohon, an artist and interpreter who accompanied Washington Territorial Governor Isaac Stevens on the "Treaty Trail," students will also read primary accounts of the period, and examine maps and secondary sources. The concluding focus will be on an image of the Governor's party crossing the Bitterroot Mountains en route to the final Spokane Council.



*Crossing the Bitter Roots, Nov. 1855 by Gustav Sohon.*  
Washington State Historical Society Collections.







This lesson plan enables students to develop an understanding of essential challenges faced and strategies employed in the quest for agreement between the Indians and the U.S. government as they satisfy EALRs in history, geography, reading, arts, and social studies skills.

#### Essential Questions for Students:

- What can a comparison of maps tell us about the impact of treaties on Indian life in Washington Territory?
- What can be said about the challenges of the 1855 Treaty Trail campaign east of the Cascades? What evidence do you have to support those challenges?
- What can you say about how cultural perspective influences art? Looking at the art of Gustav Sohon, what do you think he was trying to depict about the events that he was a part of? What do you think other artists from other cultures might have shown? How do written accounts correspond with this artwork? Do you think that these accounts reflect the same point of view as the art?

#### DOWNLOAD AREA

Download the PDFs required for this lesson plan:

-  [The Lesson Plan](#)
-  [Primary Source Documents](#)
-  [Secondary Source Documents](#)
-  [Maps](#)
-  [Student Worksheets](#)
-  [Other Teacher Materials](#)

## Essential Understandings:

1. Students will learn to appreciate maps and other historic materials, including artwork, as evidence of the past.
2. Students will realize that primary sources, in the form of accounts, maps, and images, document time and place on a historic journey and reveal the human objectives and challenges encountered along the way.
3. Students will develop geographic skills and use their findings to develop ideas and concepts about the journey of the Treaty Trail. Students will also evaluate the motives behind the decisions made and challenges faced during this period in history.

## Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs)

This lesson plan satisfies the following EALRs: History WA1.2.2, Geography 1.2.2a, Reading 2.3.2, Arts 2.3 and 4.4 as well as the following Social Studies skills: 1.1.2d. [Click here](#) to print out the material for your reference.

## Primary Sources for Student Examination (provided):

1. Gustav Sohon's painting "[Crossing the Bitter Roots, November 1855](#)"
2. "[Crossing the Bitterroots: Who and Why](#)" reading

**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 for Student Examination (provided):

1. [Map of Washington Territory Indian Nations & Tribes](#) (adapted from 1854 Lambert Census Map)
2. [Map of Reservations in 1890](#) (adapted from US Census Office Map, 1890)
3. [Gustav Sohon biography](#)
4. [Spokane Garry biography](#)
5. [Chronology and Location of Treaty Councils](#) reading

**Secondary Sources:** Books, articles, essays, and lectures created, often using primary sources, that describe and interpret a time period after events have taken place.

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## Instructions for Teachers:

### SESSION ONE

#### Step I.

You may find the following sources about the Treaty Trail helpful in preparing to teach this unit:

What is a treaty?

Cause and Effect



Biography of Gustav Sohon



Biography of Spokane Garry



Biography of Isaac Stevens

#### Step II.

Explain to the students that they are going to learn about how the land they live on passed from Native American control to the control of the United States government and how Native Americans were placed on reservations. Define the concept of a treaty and introduce key players to students (artist and interpreter Gustav Sohon, Spokane Tribal Chief, Spokane Garry, and Washington Territory Governor Isaac Stevens) by summarizing sources for students or reading aloud passages. You may choose to illustrate your discussion by projecting the relevant portraits. Explain that they are going to examine artwork, speeches and eyewitness accounts made one hundred and fifty years ago.

Facilitate discussion with students about treaty and biographical information presented and record student ideas on your classroom's chalkboard:

- *Emphasize to students that the class is looking at forces which caused the campaign for treaty signing and placement of Indians on reservations in Washington Territory.*
- *Share one reason why Governor Stevens, as agent of the U.S. Government, needed to negotiate treaties with the Indian tribes of Washington Territory in 1855.*

### Step III.

Project digital images of or show transparency of maps indicating shift from original tribal lands to reservations.



WASHINGTON TERRITORY  
INDIAN NATIONS & TRIBES

Adapted from 1854 Lambert Census Map



RESERVATIONS 1890

Adapted from 1890 U.S. Census Map

- *Ask the students to compare these maps. What has changed as a result of the treaties?*
- *Ask them to write down (and then share with the class) one example of how they might expect that the change shown on the maps would affect the traditional way of life of Washington Territory Indians.*

### Step IV.

Distribute a copy of [Chronology and Location of Treaty Councils East of the Cascade Mountains](#) and a copy of the [Washington Territory Treaty Trail map](#) to each student.

Chronology and location of treaty councils east of the Cascades



Student worksheet: Washington Territory Treaty Trail map

**Ask students to work individually or in pairs to:**

- *Find the location of each treaty council (it is already labeled) on the map they received, and add the dates of each council and the direction of the party's travel in colored pencil or pen.*

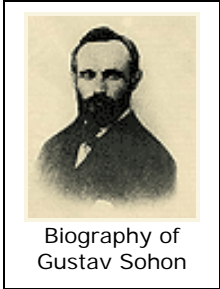
When they are finished, have them add their names to the maps and hand them in.

Project a transparency of the Washington Territory Treaty Trail map with dates marked on it. Invite students to identify, describe and share a challenge posed by the time and place of the Treaty Trail councils and records on board.

**Ask students:**

- *How many months does this journey east of the Cascade Mountains take? How many miles does it cover? What means for travel would the Stevens party be using?*
- *Think about geographical features on the route: rivers, mountain ranges...think about the seasons and the weather that might have been encountered along the way...*
- *Write down, and then share with the class, one challenge you think that the Stevens party would have encountered because of topography (place) and chronology (time) on the Treaty Trail journey east of the Cascade Mountains.*

Assign the biographies of Gustav Sohon and Spokan Garry as homework reading. Let them know they are going to study Sohon's artwork in your next session.



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## SESSION TWO

### Step I.

Hand back student copies of the Washington Territory Treaty Trail map completed in Session I, Step IV for them to use as reference during this exercise.

Project image of primary source (power point or overhead transparency): *Crossing the Bitter Roots, Nov. 1855* by Gustav Sohon, artist who visually documented the Treaty Trail.

Help students locate the place on the Treaty Trail that the picture depicts.

### Step II.

Continue to project Sohon art. Distribute copies to each student of the *Responding to Primary Sources* worksheet and a copy of the painting, *Crossing the Bitter Roots* (or direct them to the online collection).

Student worksheet:  
Responding to Primary Sources

### Ask students to do the following:

- Use the art vocabulary words and definitions to help you describe, analyze and interpret Gustav Sohon's *Crossing the Bitter Root Mountains, Nov. 1855*.

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## SESSION THREE

### Step I.

Ask students to share their conclusions about Washington Territory Governor Isaac Stevens' motives by sharing their responses to the questions entered on the *Responding to Primary Sources* worksheet.

Distribute copies of student reading, *Crossing the Bitterroots: Who and Why*, as a secondary source.

Crossing the Bitterroots:  
Who and Why

Have students put their names on all worksheets and assignments and turn them into you.

## Art Vocabulary:

### art elements:

**color** what the eye sees when a wavelength of light is reflected from a surface

**line** mark made with a tool across a surface

**shape** a 2-dimensional enclosed space

**space** feeling of depth in 2-dimensional art

**texture** real or implied tactile characteristics of a surface

**value** lightness or darkness of an area of color or tone

**composition** the organization of art elements into a unified whole

### principles of organization:

**balance** equalization of elements in a work of art

**emphasis** use of contrasts (color, size, shapes) to place greater attention on specific parts of a work of art

**pattern** repeating sequence of lines, shapes or colors

**rhythm** movement in art created through repetition of elements

**unity** wholeness, all elements belonging together in a work of art

**variety** diverse elements used together to create visual interest in a work of art

**atmospheric perspective** the illusion of distance created through reducing detail and muting colors as objects or figures recede in space

**horizon** where earth and sky meet

**landscape** art representing a place in the natural environment

**perspective** the illusion of distance created in a 2-dimensional work of art through reduction of size of objects, figures, or environmental features

**scale** the relative size of objects, figures or features of the environment

**Step II.**

Review and reflect on targets, criteria, and learning process. Distribute copies of student worksheet: *Self assessment checklist* to each student. Facilitate use of checklist for self assessment by students.

Student worksheet:  
Self assessment checklist

Complete teacher assessment checklist and compares with student self assessment checklist worksheets.

Teacher assessment  
checklist