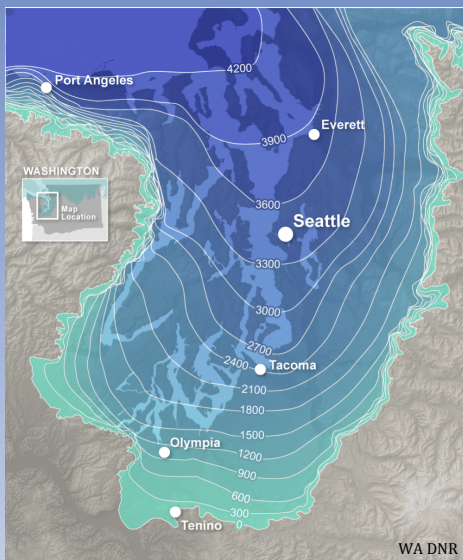


Glacial History of Seattle

At many point throughout history the area now known as Seattle was covered by massive ice sheets called *glaciers*, which extended over most of North America.

The Vashon Glacier



At its peak, the Vashon Glacier completely covered Puget Sound. As the glacier began to retreat melting snow and ice filled Puget Sound with fresh water. Eventually, the glacier moved far enough north that Puget Sound was able to reconnect with the Pacific Ocean, filling the Sound with salt water once again.

During our last ice age, about 17,000 years ago, Seattle was completely covered by a glacier more than half a mile thick! This glacier, known as Vashon, was extremely heavy and shaped the land beneath as it slowly moved. The weight of Vashon ground up the rock beneath it creating gravel and finely crushed rock known as *silt*.

Very slowly the Vashon glacier began to melt as the *climate* grew warmer. As it melted, it retreated north and left behind a new landscape full of silt, gravel, and large boulders in a process known as *deposition*. Sometimes large pieces of ice would break off and remain, slowly melting and creating low areas where marshes and lakes eventually formed, like Green Lake. Glacial melt water collected into rivers and streams, carving and further shaping the land through *erosion*.

Key Vocabulary

Climate
Weather conditions of an area that exist over a period of time.

Deposition
Debris left

behind by flowing water or moving ice.

Erosion
Gradual wearing away of soil or rock by water or wind.

Glacier
A thick mass of slowly moving ice and snow.

Silt
Fine sand or clay created by erosion.

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Life after the glaciers

After the Vashon glacier retreated this area looked very different than it does today.

The land was bare; there were no trees or forests. Eventually grasses, shrubs, and some trees began to grow creating large grassy plains. These grasslands attracted large animals like mastodon and bison as well as large herds of elk and deer. People soon followed to hunt these animals; a spear point found in the skeleton of a mastodon on the Olympic Peninsula, west of Seattle, is thought to be at least 14,000 years old!

Since Time Immemorial

People have lived in the Seattle area for over 10,000 years. Many tribes, like the Duwamish people, have stories about this area that may be even older. Their cultures and ways of life have been shaped by the land and ecosystems around them. Native peoples' history is often described as "Since Time Immemorial"

"The original citizens of what is now Western Washington gained their identity by developing a way of life closely fitted to the resources of the maritime and river valley Northwest." –K.G. Watson

Over time the climate settled into what we see today, wet winters and dry summers. Forests slowly began to grow over the area, changing the way people used and moved through the land. Native peoples would intentionally burn some forested areas to keep them open and free of trees so other plants, like the edible camas plant, could grow. Salmon also returned to our rivers and streams, providing native peoples with a new food source.

Sources: Watson, K.G. (1999). *Essay 1506*. HistoryLink. <http://historylink.org/File/1506>, Amir Sheikh, et al. (2016). *Waterlines*. The Burke Museum. <http://www.burkemuseum.org/static/waterlines/>, Michael R. Waters, et. Al.(2011). Pre-Clovis Mastodon Hunting 13,800 Years Ago at the Manis Site, Washington. *Science*, 334(6054), pp. 351-353, *Our History*.(n.d.). <https://www.duwamishtribe.org/history>



Native Peoples of Seattle

The ancestors of the Duwamish, Muckleshoot, and Suquamish and other Salish tribes lived in or frequently used the place now known as Seattle. They moved around the area throughout the year, often travelling seasonally to find the best foods and resources as well as visiting sites of importance like gathering places and burial grounds.

Current tribal names (Duwamish, Snoqualmie, Puyallup, etc.) come from the original names of villages, locations, and rivers throughout the region. The peoples of this area spoke dialects of the Salish language known as Lushootseed.

The name Seattle comes from Si'ahl, the leader of six of the tribes of central

Puget Sound in the 1800's including the Duwamish.

By 1852 American settlers came to live in the Seattle area. These newcomers forcefully pushed native peoples off the land and by 1855 many native groups (including Si'ahl) had signed the Treaty of Point Elliott in which the tribes agreed to give up their lands in exchange for payment, reservations, and other rights such as the ability to fish and hunt.

Unfortunately, some of these promises remain unfulfilled to this day. For example, the U.S. government still refuses to recognize the Duwamish peoples as a legal tribe.

To learn more about tribal history of Seattle check out www.duwamishtribe.org

Native peoples of the Puget Sound area still live in and around Seattle to this day. Tribal culture thrives and can be seen through the artwork of many modern native artists. Many tribes are also taking the lead on local environmental issues and continue to fight for their rights as both tribes and stakeholders of this region.



Sources: Watson, K.G. (1999). *Essay 1506*. HistoryLink. <http://historylink.org/File/1506>, *Our History*. (n.d.). <https://www.duwamishtribe.org/history>, *Chief Si'ahl* (n.d.) <https://www.duwamishtribe.org/chief-siah>



Duwamishtribe.org