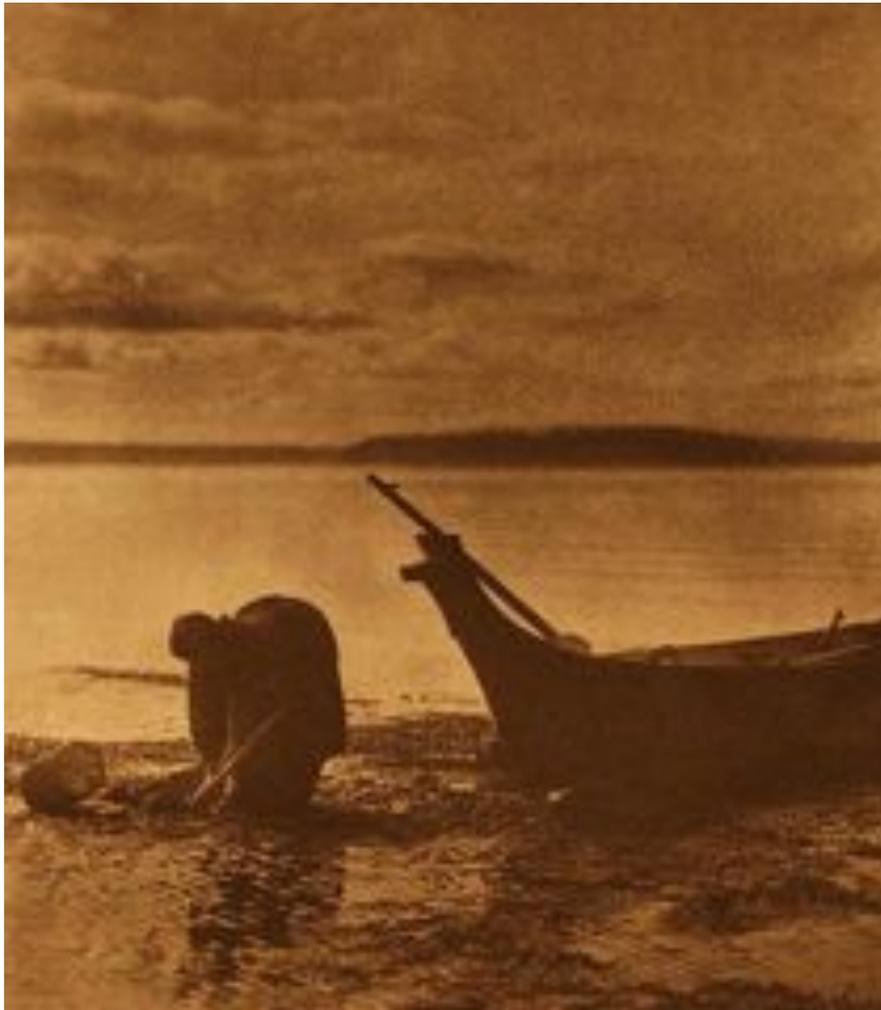


Destination Vashon - The Native People of Vashon Island
Destination Vashon 2014-2015

Native People have lived on Vashon-Maury Island for thousands of years. Before Euro-Americans arrived there were approximately 650 Native People living on Vashon-Maury Island who identified themselves as the Sqababsh in the Lushootseed Language, or the S'Homamish in the later Chinook Jargon (chinuk wawa) trade language. In the 2010 Census there were 220 Vashon-Maury Island residents who identified as Native American. Of these 7 were identified as being "Puget Sound Salish", the original Native People of Vashon-Maury Island. The other 213 Native People identify as being from 26 other tribes.



Clam Digger, Edward Curtis, 1898

The estimated 650 Sqababsh on Vashon lived in five major permanent village sites and used numerous temporary gathering sites. The permanent villages were located at Burton, Shawnee, Quartermaster, Manzanita, and Tahlequah; the smaller temporary gathering sites were located at Assembly Point, Jensen Point, Kingsbury Beach, Newport, Burton Inner Harbor, Judd Creek, Ellisport, and Peter Point.

The Native People of Vashon-Maury Island depended on both the land and the saltwater resources of the Island. The land provided timber, fiber, fresh water, and plant and animal foods. The Sound provided transportation and abundant fish, mammal, bird, and shellfish foods.

The Sqababsh spoke what is now known as Lushootseed, a Coast Salish language. The monument to Native People at McMurray Middle School is the only place Lushootseed continues to find a voice here on the Island. It reads:

gwe?eslaxedx cel ki ?aciltal bix tudi?a? ?al ti?a? swawtixed

(In honor of those who went before us, the Native People of Vashon-Maury Island)

These Native People were decimated by a series of epidemics of European diseases that swept through the Puget Sound region from the 1770's to the 1850s. The great irony of the Coast Salish People was that the very things that made their culture successful, were the things that made these Native People so susceptible to European diseases. The communal houses they lived in, the mobility of the canoes they used, the way they collected and stored food, and the social organization of their villages all worked to spread and increase the severity of these waves of epidemics. By the 1850s the Native People had lost over two-thirds of their population to these epidemics.



Wapato John, Lucy Slagham (Gerand), and Tome Milroy at 1926 Native Claims Tribunal. Last three survivors who attended the Medicine Creek Treaty signing in 1857

The Sqababsh, noted as the S'Homamish on the Treaty, signed the Medicine Creek Treaty in December 1854. Disputes over the Medicine Creek Treaty led to the Puget Sound Indian War and the Sqababsh were interned at Fox Island. This First Internment (the Second Internment was the Japanese during World War II) began in December 1855 and was a grim experience. Exposed to the Puget Sound winter with no shelter and without their traditional stores of food, the interned Indians faced a steady physical and cultural deterioration. By May 1856 over one-third of the population was sick.

Following the Internment and the end of the War, the Sqababsh were assigned to the Puyallup Reservation at Tacoma. But, they did not disappear from the Island. By adopting white clothes, white tools, and white weapons, they began to become a part of the white culture that engulfed them, and many returned when they could to their traditional home on Vashon. They worked in the lumber mills, they fished and dug clams, and they worked as domestics, adapting to the culture of the Euro-Americans who overwhelmed and replaced them on this Island they called home. Some individuals and some families continue to live on the Island.

Today, Vashon-Maury Island is home to the descendants of the original Native People. The Island is considered one of the traditional homes of The Puyallup People who call themselves S'Puyalupubsh, "a people who are generous and welcoming to all people (friends and strangers) who enter our lands." The Island is also home to a number of Native People from other groups and other parts of the United States and Canada. It is also home to aqua-cultural lands on the northeast side of the Island owned by the Muckelshoot Tribe from the Auburn/Kent area of South King County. The Native People of Vashon-Maury Island are still an important part of our community. They are not all the same Native People who lived here when Euro-Americans first came, but they are Native People who call Vashon-Maury Island home.