



THE WASQ'U

PEOPLE &
THE BIG RIVER

PREFACE





Daminwa—For All Time

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Daminwa—For All Time

Welcome from the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs

The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs is a sovereign nation made up of three Tribes, the Wasq'u (also spelled Wasco), Warm Springs, and Northern Paiute people. This curriculum focuses on the experience of the Wasq'u Tribe.

Past, Present, and Future of the Big River

The Big River, or Columbia River, is called lyagaitł Wimał in the Wasq'u language. The Wasq'u language is called Kiksht.

Wasq'u people lived along the Big River from time immemorial until they signed a treaty with



Edna David (left) and Stella McKinley (right) drying salmon at Celilo Village. *Oreg. Hist. Soc. Research Lib. OHQ 2-03*



Dipnet fishing at the Cul-De-Sac of Celilo Falls (Columbia River) around 1957. *Credit: United States Army Corps of Engineers*

the U.S. Government in 1855. The Treaty stated that they had to move to the Warm Springs Reservation but would continue to have the right to hunt, fish, and gather at their usual and accustomed places, including along the River.

The Wasq'u homeland includes the section of the Big River from what is now Cascade Locks to The Dalles including several important fishing and village sites. Other Kiksht-speaking communities lived downriver from the Wasq'u all the way to the Pacific Ocean.

The Wasq'u homeland includes critical transportation and trade areas along the River that connect the High Desert of the inland Columbia Plateau to the wet forests and ocean west of the Cascade Mountains. Before the 1850s, Wasq'u communities supported their families as savvy traders, expert fishers, and accomplished craftspeople along this corridor. Wasq'u people today continue many of these traditions in contemporary ways.

In addition to having to move, colonization impacted Wasq'u and other Big River nations in dramatic ways. Damming the river, destroying habitat used for traditional foods, imposing policies to decimate cultural traditions and languages, and many other actions by government agencies made life for Native peoples in the Northwest very hard. Despite these disruptions, the Wasq'u people and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs have worked hard to maintain their cultures and languages, care for the Big River and homelands, and advocate for their communities. This curriculum focuses on the strength, commitment, and the continuation of the community (not the



Wasq'u teachers Deanie Johnson, Valerie Switzler, and Doris "Teeney" Miller showing how to prepare salmon in different ways. Credit: Jarrette Werk / Underscore News + Report For America

losses) that define the Wasq'u and the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs.

Want to learn more? Check out these resources.

Books and articles by Wasq'u authors and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs:

When the River Ran Wild book by George Aguilar Sr.

Recalling Celilo: An Essay by Elizabeth Woody
<http://www.gatheringthestories.org/2014/01/05/recalling-celilo-an-essay-by-elizabeth-woody>

"The Long Narrows: The Forgotten Geographic and Cultural Wonder" article by Pat Courtney Gold in the Oregon Historical Quarterly, Winter, 2007, Vol. 108, No. 4, Remembering Celilo Falls (Winter, 2007), pp. 596-605

History of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs on the CTWS website <https://warmsprings-nsn.gov/history>

The People's Keepsake document created by The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs
<https://warmsprings-nsn.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/keepsakeyesterday.pdf>

Natural History Pub: Homelands, Treaty and Culture video featuring Bobby Brunoe, General Manager of Natural Resources and Tribal Historic Preservation Officer of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nbUioaMaqgk>

Resources for educators on how to teach Indigenous history and culture:

Native Knowledge 360° from the National Museum of the American Indian <https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360>

Confluence Educator Professional Development and Learning Community <https://www.confluenceproject.org/stories-learning/in-the-schools>

Redbud Resource Group <https://www.redbudresourcegroup.org>

General information and history of Tribes in the Northwest:

Essential Understandings of Native Americans in Oregon from Tribal History, Shared History <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/equity/nativeamericaneducation/pages/senate-bill-13-tribal-historyshared-history.aspx>

Broken Treaties: An Oral History Tracing Oregon's Native Population by Oregon Public Broadcasting <https://www.opb.org/artsandlife/series/brokentreaties/oregon-tribes-oral-history-broken-treaties>

The First Oregonians book edited by Laura Berg

Creating & Using the Curriculum

The Wasq'u People & The Big River curriculum is a collaborative effort between the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Culture and Heritage Department, High Desert Museum, Confluence, and The Museum at Warm Springs. To help you understand how to use the curriculum, we want to share how it came to be.

Gratitude

To start, we want to thank the Elders, including those who have long passed and left their stories behind, Indigenous partners, and non-Indigenous partners who worked together on this project including the following:

Wasq'u Elders & Language Teachers

Adwai Margaret Boise
Adwai Pat Courtney Gold
Adwai Madeline McInturff
Adwai Gladys Thompson
Adwai Jermayne Tuckta
George Aguilar Sr.
Pam Cardenas
Mike Clements
Charles Jackson
Radine "Deanie" Johnson
Valerie Switzler

Indigenous Teachers

Atwai Margaret Suppah
Rain Circle
Delray Johnson
Lonnie James
Myra Johnson
Rosalind "Rosie" Johnson
Roberta Kirk

Viola Governor
Alison Mitchell-Schuster
Lexy Brunoe Montgomery
Tyson Montgomery
Charlene Rhoan
Gina Ricketts
Angela Smith
Joyce Suppah
Lorraine Suppah
Lori Switzler
Dallas Winshut
Elizabeth Woody

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Confluence

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Heather Shá xat k'ei Gurko
(Tlingit)
Lily Hart
Courtney Yilk

Mason Bee Interpretive Planning

Kyrie Kellett

Tule Films

Woodrow Hunt
(Klamath, Modoc, and Cherokee)

Educators

Gena Bennett
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Frank Heimerdinger
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Photo by Radine “Deanie” Johnson

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Tashina Eastman

Radine “Deanie” Johnson

Roberta Kirk

Natalie Kirk

Savannah Holliday-Smith

J’Von Smith

Jordan Smith

Alan Govenar, Courtesy Documentary Arts

Oregon Historical Society

Historic Photo Archive

While we each came from a different perspective, we were all committed to centering Indigenous knowledge, experience, and lifeways. We also wanted to cultivate understanding beyond facts by providing a fuller, more accurate perspective of history and space to build relationships with contemporary Indigenous Peoples of the area.



Focus

Our goal for this collaboration is to create a curriculum that builds community in the classroom and beyond. We want students and teachers—Native and non-Native—to deepen their sense of identity and cultural connection. We also hope the experience will help all people be good neighbors and decision makers long after the class is over. This focus is different from what many of us have experienced in other educational settings and pushes us to shift our lenses to lift up Indigenous voices.

Inspiration



Basket by Adwai Patricia Courtney Gold (Wasq'u)

WEAVING

By Elizabeth Woody

For Margaret Jim-Pennah and Gladys McDonald

Weaving baskets you twine the strands into four parts.
Then, another four. The four directions many times.
Pairs of fibers spiral around smaller and smaller sets of threads.
Then, one each time. Spirals hold all this design
airtight and pure. This is our house, over and over.
Our little sisters, Khoush, Sowitk, Piaxi, Wakamu,
the roots will rest inside.
We will be together in this basket.
We will be together in this life.

Elizabeth Woody's poem—dedicated to her teachers—inspired our team to imagine the complicated learning process like a weaver building a basket. The Essential Understandings of Tribal History/Shared History form the structure of our metaphorical basket. With each activity, students tie new knots of understanding and weave in their own experiences. Students circle back to each concept multiple times revealing new patterns as the basket grows. Throughout, the teacher is there as a model and guide for the student.

Over time, the activities build a conceptual basket that is unique to each student. Their baskets express their identity, collect new knowledge, and provide a way to share their gifts with others.



The heart of our basket for this curriculum is the Wasq'u people and homeland. As we learn more, the base of the basket is formed by the core practices illustrated in the image below.

We are inviting students and teachers to...



When we integrate these foundational practices into our classroom, we help students weave together the threads of their own experiences to build identity, responsibility, and empathy.

What do we share?

The threads running through all of the lessons are the Essential Understandings outlined by the Tribal History, Shared History Curriculum:

Sovereignty
Lifeways
Identity
Language
History

Since time immemorial
Treaties with the United States
Tribal government
Genocide, federal policy, and laws

Wasq'u teachers and Elders identified four strands to focus on:

Identity, Culture, & Nationhood, including cultural and individual identity for Native and non-Native students. Central to this theme is highlighting the important roles women hold and the critical role of Indigenous languages in maintaining sovereignty and culture. This strand also includes addressing damaging myths and stereotypes about Wasq'u and regional Indigenous communities.

People of the Big River, including how the area has been a place of gathering and trade for many nations from time immemorial and continues today. This strand paints a picture of the vibrancy and resiliency of the Big River communities in the past and today. Central to this story is understanding the sovereignty of the region's Native Nations and the role of contemporary Indigenous communities in the life of the communities on the Big River.

Connection to Place, focusing on the interconnectedness between place, plants, animals, and people. This strand explains how Tribal sovereignty relates to contemporary hunting, fishing, and gathering rights and restoration efforts.

Seasonal Rounds & Food Sovereignty, helps us understand the importance of salmon, roots, and other traditional foods to the Wasq'u people. Tribal people have a reciprocal relationship with the land. This strand tells the story of the connection between the land and the food, culture, lifeways, ingenuity, and artistry of the people.

Over time, the combined experiences thread together to help students form deeper understanding of the Wasq'u people, a stronger connection to their place, and a sense of their role in the community.

Overview for 4th Grade

In this series of activities, students will build a foundational awareness of the Wasq'u people and their past, present, and future along the Big River. The first activity invites each student to reflect on a place that is personally relevant, then compare that to why the Big River is special to the Wasq'u. The second lesson uses maps to invite students to connect parts of the landscape to important parts of Wasq'u culture. In the third lesson, students participate in a trading activity to explore why the Wasq'u homeland along the River is a particularly important place for trade and culture in the Northwest. The fourth activity invites students to learn how the Wasq'u continue to care for the River today and reflect on how they can also care for the places where they live.

Overview for 8th Grade LESSON COMING SOON

In this series of activities, students will learn about the Wasq'u people and their connection to the Big River, mountains, high desert, and neighboring people of their homelands. Students will use photos, videos, primary historical documents, and contemporary accounts to understand important places along the Big River, how cultural and ecological disruptions impact these places, and how the Indigenous people of the Big River continue to nurture the river and their cultures.

Students will capture this information in the provided packet. Teachers can choose to teach just the introductory lesson, add the research lessons, or have students complete all lessons including integrating their research into a visual project and presentation for the class.

Word of Encouragement

Teachers new to teaching about Indigenous experiences or integrating Indigenous approaches can feel overwhelmed by its complexity. Or, we might fear making mistakes. But, like learning the complex art of weaving a beautiful Wasq'u basket, we can start small and recognize that mistakes are part of the process. We can only learn by doing. We must start weaving to learn to weave. And however your first attempt turns out, you and your students will have created something valuable and learned so much in the process.



Photos courtesy of Roberta Kirk and Natalie Kirk

