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## Native Seattle

### 1. *Passage*

Indians came to Seattle for many reasons. "Social status, religious observance, and political alliance were all part of the urban indigenous frontier on Puget Sound and offered means for Native men and women to participate in urban society."<sup>1</sup> More importantly, however, Indians came to Seattle for jobs. Indians contributed greatly to Seattle's economy. Their continuous contribution demonstrated that the indigenous presence in Seattle was nowhere close to ending, but instead, they saw Seattle as their community and they saw themselves as equal partners in its creation.<sup>2</sup> The question then was what the settlers, civic leaders, and their federal government were going to do.

### *Thoughts and Questions*

I highlighted the above passage because I found its phrasing very interesting, as well as the information that was presented. As Coll Thrush points out, we often learn history through only one lens: the lens of white, European settlers. This lens often does not expose the contribution of others, including native peoples. The overall point, theme, or thesis of Native Seattle, and especially the third chapter, is that Indians had a significant impact on the development and creation of Seattle. Rather than discussing only the removal of Indians from their traditional lands, Thrush focuses on the contributions that Indians made to settler society.

I also thought that the way that this passage ended by asking what federal officials were going to do about indigenous presence in Seattle was interesting and curious. It almost felt to me like the final sentence of the passage came out of nowhere. Up until that point in the paragraph, Thrush had focused on the contributions of Indians to Seattle, and then he abruptly switches to the reactions of settlers and the federal government. Ultimately, I think that he was using this sentence as a transition to the discussion coming up in the rest of the chapter.

### 2. *Passage*

Without the presence of Indians in Seattle, the town would not have developed into a city. "Let there be no mistake: without the labor of Indians, Seattle would have been stillborn."<sup>3</sup> Much of the growth that did take place was thanks to Indian labor.<sup>4</sup> Native people kept Seattle

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<sup>1</sup> Coll Thrush, *Native Seattle: Histories from the Crossing-Over Place* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), 45.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, at 45.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, at 47.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, at 55.

from becoming another failed urban vision. Despite this fact, Indians remained a threat to the settlers views and visions of the future of the region.<sup>5</sup>

### *Thoughts and Questions*

The reason I chose the above passage because it touched on a theme that was present in our prior readings out of "Contested Boundaries." In "Contested Boundaries" the authors described the early settlement of the Pacific Northwest by white settlers. This section described the importance of the fur trade to settlers. More importantly it discussed the critical role that Native people had in facilitating the fur trade. Without the assistance and labor of native peoples, the extent and success of the fur trade would not have been possible. Similarly Coll Thrush discusses the importance of Indian labor to the development of Seattle. From both these books it is clear that Indians were central to the development of the northwest, and their contributions have often gone unrecognized and/or undervalued.

### 3. *Passage*

There were tremendous changes to Seattle's ecology that needed to take place before it could become a thriving urban center. "The creators of Seattle's new urban ecology thought that they were improving nature."<sup>6</sup> For example, some of the creators referred to the Duwamish as "ugly." They preferred to see the river channelized for ease of transportation. However, by "reordering the landscape for urban utility, Seattle's Changers had dramatically reduced the utility – and habitability – of that landscape for indigenous people."<sup>7</sup>

### *Thoughts and Questions*

I chose the above passage because it reflects a broader theme that has come up across the course and across the different readings. The theme that I noted in the above passage was that European settlers tended to have specific requirements for the "use" of land. For example, in "Contested Boundaries" the authors discussed the fact that the settlers didn't think that Indians had any claim to the land because they had not put the land to "good use." "Good use" to European settler meant that the Indians should have developed the land for, among other things, farming or agriculture practices. The Changers, or European settlers, did not see Seattle's natural ecology as useful. In changing Seattle's habitat the Changers made it more useful for very particular purposes, such as shipping cargo. However, in many ways they actually made the land and the sea less useful, especially for people that relied on the land and the sea in its natural state for subsistence. For example, Thrush notes that because of the actions of the Changers, the Indians had trouble finding their traditional foods, such as salmon and herring.

In addition, natural or unchanged places (by European standards) have significant utility. As I was reading this chapter and section, I also could not help but think about current events in Puget Sound. Orca whales are struggling to survive in today's Puget Sound. Their food supplies

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, at 56.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, at 95.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, at 97.

have decreased steadily and many are dying of starvation. When we look at the changes to the Puget Sound in a more holistic way, I think it is clear, that the changes served a particular purpose, but I think that it is hard to argue that these changes actually increased Puget Sound's utility.

#### 4. *Passage*

As more native people moved to Seattle for economic opportunity, there were increasing Native symbols seen throughout the city.<sup>8</sup> "If the movement of Indian people to and from the city had changed both the Native hinterland and its urban center, the movement of Indian things had also changed both places as well, providing a new iconography of urban empire."<sup>9</sup> In addition, to the movement of Indian things throughout Seattle, the collection of Indian artifacts had become a status symbol among settlers.<sup>10</sup> For example, Carrie Burke added a new wing to her home to display her "Indian collection."

#### *Thoughts and Questions*

I chose the above passages because it brought up several questions for me as I was reading. My first thought upon reading the above description was frustration. The passage demonstrates that settlers appreciated, at least on some level, Indian culture, art, and creations. However, this appreciation was only extended to the extent that it served the white settler's interests. For example, they would collect Indian art and artifacts to display it in their homes as a status of wealth. This paradox brought a question for me: how can people discriminate against a group, yet also believe that the group's creations are valuable and a symbol of status?

The above passage also made me think that maybe this idolism of Indian art and culture was one way to make sure that Indian culture was preserved, possibly even promoted. However, at what cost, and who is determining what is valuable? Who gets to tell the stories of native peoples when the artifacts or art is in the homes of white settlers? Does this promotion of native art, empower native peoples, or disempower them by removing their voices?

#### 5. *Passage*

The place-story of Seattle resonated with the national narrative associated with westward expansion. "Seathl was the noble savage par excellence, assuaging guilt of conquest through hospitality and prophecy."<sup>11</sup>

#### *Thoughts and Questions*

I highlighted the above passage primarily because I thought it illustrated a point that is difficult to explicitly express in words. Something I have thought a lot about while reading

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, at 113.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, at 113.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, at 124.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, at 147.

“Native Seattle” is the extent to which white settlers appropriated and exploited the stories of native peoples. The portrayal of Seeathl as a “noble savage” is one example of this appropriation. This portrayal fit the broad stories that settlers told about westward expansion. Seathl’s portrayal was in stark contrast to the portrayal of other native peoples as dangerous. These stories were told for a particular purpose, and exacerbated stereotypes.

## 6. *Passage*

Throughout the final chapter Thrush discusses that in the late 1970s Seattle became a city that was born again as an environmentally friendly metropolis.<sup>12</sup> “Seeathl the symbolic Indian was reborn as well. More than the city’s patron saint, he now became the city’s first environmentalist.”<sup>13</sup> In the past non-natives were able to appropriate and tell the stories of natives. By the 1960s, something new was happening. The developments of the 1960s “allowed the very real descendants of Seeathl and their tribal compatriots to assert a new kind of influence over the city.”<sup>14</sup>

### *Thoughts and Questions*

The above passage highlights another example of appropriation of the stories of native people. The appropriation of native peoples and their stories is a complicated issue. Similar to the idea discussed earlier regarding the collection of Indian artifacts, valuing or telling the stories of native people is not necessarily a black or white issue. In many ways it is deeply problematic for white settlers to appropriate native culture, especially without letting the people themselves have a voice or effect on the message. In other ways, the promotion of these stories might lead to greater acceptance and appreciation of native culture and peoples. In some cases it may actually be used to promote an idea or movement that is for the public good. I think that Thrush’s nuanced discussion of this issue very helpful. For example, on page 188 Thrush poses a question, which I think gets at the heart of what is troubling about cultural appropriation. Thrush asks “[b]ut the question remained: who was Seeathl now being asked to serve.”<sup>15</sup> Thrush then explains that so often stories told about native people were not about native peoples, but about non-native peoples. I also found it heartening and interesting to learn that the civil rights movement of the 1960s empowered native groups to shape the stories told about them and their history.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid, at 187.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, at 187.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, at 189.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, at 188.

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Reading Log #6

In *Native Seattle: Histories from the Crossing-Over Place*, Coll Thrush (2017) mainly focuses on the Native people and the process of building Seattle in the chapter 2. In this chapter, I notice several points, and I really like the author's writing style of bringing out something he wanted to talk about. The first one is the way he mentioned about "three indigenous communities—the Duwamish, the Lakes, and the Shilsholes" (Thrush, 2017, 23). The reason I like the way is because Thrush used one of indigenous people, Wahalchoo's incredible and mystical story of gaining the power, to the surroundings of his village. And then brought out the three groups of indigenous people. It is kind of interesting of reading history combined with fiction story. Moreover, I see a lot of history books talk about the diseases that explorers brought to the Native people. Like in this chapter, British explorer George Vancouver talked about the smallpox was "[a] deplorable disease, is not only common, but it is greatly to be apprehended is very fatal among them, as its indelible marks were seen on many" (Thrush, 2017, 24). Foreign explorers were not satisfied about their territories, they chose to take adventures to gain more lands. Of course they would bring some bacteria or virus to the new land, and it had a big chance to spread to the indigenous people, and lead them to have some diseases which were hard to recover. For me, Native people seen to be the victims under the explored, they lived in their region as the original. But explorers came to their lands and spread diseases to them.



In the chapter 3, Thrush emphasized the "village period," (Thrush, 2017, 41) which was during the 1850s to the 1870s. It was the period that "stretching from the Denny Party's move to Little Crossing-Over Place" (Thrush, 2017, 41). Before the new settlers came to the Seattle, there was a large amount of Indigenous people lived there. They were like the most important supporters in Seattle. However, later in this chapter, Thrush mentions that Indians did help the settlements of Seattle, but they also brought some problems to the place. Some people thanked to Indians because of what they did to Seattle; however, some people did not have same feelings, the relationship was still awkward between settlers and Indians. "A series of legal restrictions placed on indigenous people reflected settlers' deep ambivalence about the place of Indians in urban life," (Thrush, 2017, 47) it seemed like settlers' were still having a strong and deep prejudices to Indians. Moreover, that might have different races work together in the company, but Natives still needed to accomplish something they had to do. And they worked side by side, I believed that there would not have any communication or interaction between different races. I remembered I also read the same thing in the *Contested Boundaries*, that racial discrimination in the work place. I understood it was one of the federal government's policies, but I could not understand what the benefit of this policy. For me, having this kind



of policies were trying to make each races lived by themselves. And we all know that this was impossible, everyone still need to interact with different people, and even have some commercial businesses with each other.

Thrush describes about the disappearances of the race in Seattle, and the two fires were not only the city's turning points, they also represented "Seattle's urban triumph and the dispossession of local indigenous people" (Thrush, 2-17, 80). In 1889's Great Fire, this was the first fire, and it brought huge damages to the city, such as buildings and the businesses. But this fire could also seen as the change point, which made a lot of people work harder than before to repair the damages and problems they faced. For the second fire, the victims under the violation were all indigenous people. The white settlers came to the places where indigenous people lived, evicted them and even burn their houses. In my opinion, if the city's improvement and development needed to used the races' cultures and traditional to replace, then there was no need to develop the city. Similar thing happened in my country, foreign settlers kept killing and destroying Native people lived in Taiwan. They did not want to know the Native people, they just wanted to get more places to live and wanted to gain more stuffs for businesses. So the settlers asked them to leave, and dominated the plains Native people lived before. For the people who were evicted, there was no choice they only place they could survive were the mountains. Therefore, when I saw the film in the class, there was something really made me feel sad. The definition of the Native people kept changing, it seems like the people who lived in the mountain were all Native people. This was also the first impression when I heard Native people, but this was only because if they wanted to maintain their cultures, they had to find the place to live, no matter how hard it would be.


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The chapter 7 tells about the Tilikums and pioneers who were not Indians used Indian imagery to tell the stories of Seattle. From this chapter, I really like the poem parts. Actually, as I said before, reading poems helped me to know more about the event, person, and even the poet's thought. The first poem from Edith Sanderson Redfield shows the sadness of the disappearance of Indians and their culture. And it gave the feelings of although Seattle became the city that everyone wanted to live, but where those unique cultures went and did anyone realized it? For me, knowing different races' traditional and cultures is very interesting, because I could not experience in my daily life. But I did not think everyone has same feelings with me. Settlers evicted and destroyed them, whitemen utilized their imagery, and citizens did not recognize those things. It was the waste of forgetting and losing those cultures, but still not everyone knows what happens now. Moreover, there were several lines I really like in the second poem which written by Francis Henry. "Some say this country's improving, / And boast of its commerce and trade, / But measured by social enjoyment / I find it has sadly decayed" (Thrush, 2017, 140). Although this country were improving and


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developing; however, people who live in this country were not happy. They were finding the best efficient way that helped them to earn more money. Look back to the pioneers' days, though the living conditions were not that wonderful compare to recent, but everyone was enjoying their life. This poem could also connect to this century, when we want more, we will lose more we have. Although we have high quality of life, it is obvious that we did not have that close relationship with friends and families.

The chapter 9 talks about after the war, there were many groups of races appear. The Second World War was "a turning point in Indian history" (Thrush, 2017, 164). Many Indian men and women worked in Boeing company to replace the workers who went to the war. But when the war end, when workers came back to work, the first group of people that had to leave were those people who were colored. Therefore, for those who lost their jobs, the only place they could live comfortable was the Skid Road. And almost "30 percent of Pioneer Square's inhabitants were either 'Indian or Oriental'" (Thrush, 2017, 165). When I read until now, I need to say the same thing happened again. The people who worked hard had to leave the company were not because they did not bring benefits to the company, it just because their skin colors. Furthermore, in the recent days, I can see there were still a lot of people around Pioneer Square, although I am not sure they are Indians or not. But it is like that place is the most comfortable area for homeless people to live. And before the World War II, there were still the serious problem of racial discrimination. But after the war ended, the government chose to "reinvestment in city-hood meant both the creation of institutions like the Indian center and daybreak star and the destruction of an Indian neighborhood in the name of historic preservation" (Thrush, 2017, 180). I think it was quite a big movement of protecting Indian's culture.



In chapter 10, Thrush talks about the revivification of local tribes. In the early twentieth century, Duwamish was invisible. They knew where they were, what their culture was, but they could not let the public see. It was just like they did not exist in the city, in this country. It was until the twenty-first, their efforts started to have some feedback to Duwamish. They find the place where to rebuild their cultural center and the longhouses, "the Duwamish longhouse, once built, would be a way for one Indian community to tell its place-stories to a large community that finally appeared to be listening" (Thrush, 2017, 199). Although there were some good reflections due to Duwamish's fights, there were still a lot of people did not know the local tribes. For me, because I am the foreigner, I did not know many things which relates to the local tribes. If I did not take this class, I would not know anything about the local tribes. Therefore, I think that Duwamish could hold some activities or celebration parties to share the information of the local tribes, and help more people to know more about their existence. And as more people know the tribes, I think it will be easier to get more helps



from the residents or visitors. And at the end of this chapter, Thrush talks about that place-stories will not be the jokes or tales, “but will be dialogues about the transformations of landscape and power in the city and about strategies for living together humanely in this place” (Thrush, 2017, 207). From reading more place-stories, I gain a lot knowledge of Seattle, and I also learn about something that I did not know before. It is kind of the best thing I take this class and read those historical books. ✓

#### Work Cited

Coll Thrush. 2017. *Native Seattle: Histories from the Crossing-Over Place*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.