

## Lesson 2: Contact: Hudson's Bay Company at Ft. Nisqually Student Instructions and Graphic Organizer

Make a copy of this document.

**Essential Question:** *Was contact with Hudson's Bay Company beneficial or detrimental for the Nisqually People?*

**Criteria: Be able to...**

- Gather evidence (paraphrase, examples, and quotes) to summarize and respond using textual evidence
- Form a position or conclusion from evidence regarding whether contact was beneficial, detrimental, or both for Nisqually Indians.

### **Impact of Contact: *Hudson's Bay Company at Ft. Nisqually***

While reading the article and journal account from the article linked below, list and explain what items or influence was a benefit (helpful) or a detriment (harmful) from contact with the Hudson's Bay Company. Some items or influences of contact could be both good and bad.

*Hudson's Bay Company at Ft. Nisqually*

[Disease at Ft. Nisqually – Journal of Hudson's Bay Company Joseph Heath](#)

<b>List item or influence</b>	<b>Benefit: Good (explain)</b>	<b>Detriment: Bad (Explain)</b>
<b>Example: Guns</b>	<b>Hunt better, protection from enemies</b>	<b>kill more, cause jealousy in others.</b>


**Essential Question:**

In at least one paragraph, explain whether the contact and influence of the Hudson's Bay Company were **more** detrimental or beneficial for the Nisqually People (state reasons and support from evidence (give examples, quotes, or facts from the readings)).

## Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Nisqually

By Abbi Wonacott

Acknowledgment and respect for Nisqually historian Cecelia Carpenter

During the late 1790s, European explorers ventured near the waters and lands of the Nisqually People. As they made their way down the Salish Sea (Puget Sound), the Spanish and British had little contact with the Nisqually People. However, they had been watching in secret. The Nisqually People knew the potential harm these strangers could bring. Many Native Americans had perished from the spread of disease from others who had been in contact with Europeans. Entire villages disappeared as large populations of Native Americans succumbed to slow, agonizing deaths with no cure.



As they charted the sound, British Captain George Vancouver and his men came, re-named already named waters and landforms before sailing back to their home countries. Capt. Vancouver called Ta-co-bet Mt. Rainier in honor of his friend Peter Rainier. A man who was



Photo courtesy of Alex "Skud" Bayley - Flickr: Creative Commons

never in the Salish Sea and never laid eyes on the mountain. The explorers also documented plant and animal life. They brought all this “new” information back to Europe. Shortly after that, European companies realized they could make huge profits from fur-bearing animals that were abundant in the area.

As early as the late 1700s, trapping beaver, sea otters, and other furs was big business in the Pacific Northwest, and the largest was the British-owned Hudson's Bay Company (HBC).

The HBC expanded fur trading up the west coast from Ft. Vancouver by forming the Columbia District to oversee its operations in Oregon Country, which includes what is now Washington State. This expansion was why HBC created Ft. Nisqually. Built in 1833, Ft. Nisqually was the first European trading post on Puget Sound.

The fort was near the mouth of the Nisqually River Delta near the present-day town of DuPont, Washington, next to the village home of the Sequelitchew Nisqually People. The fort's main export was beaver pelts. In Europe, workers called “hatters” used mercury to process the fur into top hats, coats, and other products. The mercury fumes caused brain damage giving birth to the expression “mad as a hatter” or “mad hatter.” The British made huge profits but did not consider the high cost to the economy and lifestyle of the Nisqually People. The Chief Trader Archibald MacDonald returned with surgeon Dr. William Fraser Tolmie and seven men to begin the work.

The fort employed Native American men and women (including Nisqually and Puyallup People) to keep it running and supply food for their employees. Women worked mostly in planting, harvesting, cleaning, and cooking. Men tended the sheep and other livestock, as well as any manual labor such as lifting, transporting, chopping wood, or building. Of the Nisqually People, brothers Leschi and Quiemuth took jobs guarding the horses against theft or wild animals. They lived with their families on the Yelm Prairie. In addition to employing Native Americans, Fort Nisqually also hired Scottish, English, French-Canadians, Kanakas (Hawaiians), and “Metis” (children of HBC employees and their Native American wives). Fort Nisqually grew from an obscure trading post to an international trading establishment. But with a price.



The HBC offered many men jobs but caused significant damage to the beaver and sea otter population, much to the sadness of Native Americans years later. Julie Cajune of the Salish People told of how her ancestors spoke of the great abundance of beaver and sea otter and later how they were over trapped, “But how, in a very short period of time...whole populations in regions were just completely gone.”



The HBC created the Puget Sound Agricultural Company (PSAC) in 1838. They had a contract to supply food to the Russian-American Company (RAC) and wanted to extend their claim to the Northwest even more. Primary PSAC operations centered at Fort Nisqually and Cowlitz Farm near present-day Toledo, Lewis County. The soil around Ft. Nisqually was not good for mass farming like at Cowlitz. It was great for grazing. So, the company concentrated on raising more livestock, mainly sheep and cattle. Critical PSAC farms (called stations) were Tlithlow near the south end of Spanaway Lake, Muck Precincts in the Elk Plain area, and Tenalquot Precinct in Thurston County south of the Nisqually River. The

PSAC boundary covered 150,000 acres from Puget Sound to the foothills of Ta-co-bet and expanded the width of the Nisqually River to just above the Puyallup River. Dr. Tolmie, who had

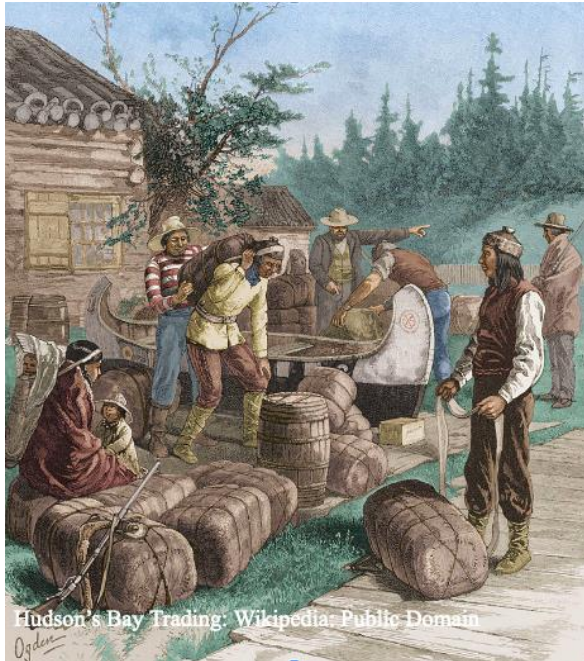


only remained a few months in 1833, returned to manage the PSAC and served from 1843-1857.

However, livestock, such as sheep, grazed deep down to the roots of many native plants. Many camas fields and medicine plants disappeared from the overgrazing. Other plants disappeared forever, ruining the traditional diet of the Nisqually People. Many started planting and eating potatoes instead.

Even more devastating impact of Europeans on Native Americans was the spread of diseases like smallpox, malaria, and measles. The Nisqually had not encountered these diseases and did not have the immunities that the British had to combat the sickness. The devastation was compounded by the shortage of Native American medicines again from the overgrazing of the HBC livestock. Approximately 28,000 Native Americans perished from disease in Western Washington alone.

The worst incident to the fort happened on May 1, 1849, when Snoqualmie and Skykomish warriors under Patkanim attacked the Nisqually village on the Sequatchew River. The Snoqualmie were angered because they believed that Wyamooch, the son of the Nisqually



leader La-ha-let, had mistreated his wife, who was from the Snoqualmie People. A warning horn sounded out from Ft. Nisqually, and many went inside for cover. While Patkanim searched for Wyamooch, the fort leaders asked him to come inside to discuss the problem. Suddenly, a shot rang out. The gun blast provoked some Snoqualmie warriors, and a fight broke out. In the end, a medicine man named Skeywhamish, another man named Segeass (Stzeeass), the father of Lashanugh (name unknown), and an American named Leander Wallace were all killed. Others were wounded, and Patkanim and the other warriors escaped to their canoes. Six Snoqualmie men went on trial for these deaths. Two were found guilty and hanged.

Life at the fort went back to normal operations, and, for many, there were benefits to the HBC's business dealings with the Nisqually People. In return for furs, fish, and other raw goods, Native Americans traded to gain muskets, rifles, pots, pans, wool cloth, and many other items. "Metal objects were of great interest to the Indian population. Cooking pans were a vast improvement over the woven baskets." -Cecelia Carpenter. The metal pieces used for arrow tips held firm and pierced their prey more accurately. Perhaps the most significant innovation was the gun. A musket opened new methods for self-protection and for killing wild game. Guns also served to intimidate enemies as well. In addition, cloth garments and wool blankets were other highly prized items. Instead of gathering material and weaving, women could make clothing much quicker and have ready-made blankets. Wool blankets are still used as gifts in ceremonies. Even trinkets such as mirrors and trading beads were of interest. Trade beads made beautiful jewelry or were sewn into garments for special occasions. "Nisqually villages were among those native people who followed the [European] surveyors in their canoes and traded berries, fish, and clams for bits of copper and assorted trinkets." -Cecelia Carpenter.

Another significant influence on Nisqually People's life was the addition of horses.

Many came from east of the Cascades mountains from Plateau Native Americans (who gained them from the Shoshone Plains People. They got them from the Spanish) as gifts or trades. The Hudson's Bay Company brought in more horses. Horses increased how far and fast Nisqually men could travel to visit, hunt, or fight.

In addition to gaining trade goods, HBC employees' and Native Americans' lives began to blend into a somewhat merged culture. They often blended their cultures in how they dressed, ate, built shelters, and more. Many HBC men married Nisqually, Puyallup, and other Native American women and started families. John McLeod was a Scottish immigrant and Hudson's Bay employee who came to Puget Sound in 1837. He married a Native American woman called Mary. She was the daughter of the well-known Cowlitz Chief, Clapat-Swhadawa. McLeod later became a US citizen gaining a 320-acre farm in the area east of the Mountain Highway at the base of Muck Creek Hill along the Muck Creek (Cougar Mountain. Middle and Rocky Ridge Schools are on parts of McLeod's old

claim). A census taker or an official misspelled McLeod's name to read "McCloud." Many Nisqually tribal members bear the name McCloud and are descendants of John McLeod. His daughter Catherine married Daniel Mounts, and they had ten children together. Adam Benston married a Native American woman named Sarah. Their two sons remained in the area. The name "Benston" appears on old maps (now Graham, Wa), and one can still drive on Benston Kapowsin Drive (260th). Those with the last names of Kalama and Ross can also trace back to their HBC employee ancestors.

Over the years, the blending of cultures between Hudson's Bay Company employees changed the lifestyle of many local Native Americans. Many Native Americans started to dress like Europeans. By the early 1850s, many Nisqually men wore trousers, button-up shirts, and boots, while many Nisqually women wore skirts and blouses. There were no significant conflicts between them. At that time, Nisqually People still fished, hunted, and gathered in traditional areas and were free to follow their beliefs and practices since time immemorial.



Catherine Mounts

"Catherine Mounts" 1915, unknown. General Subjects Photograph Collection, 1845-2005, Washington State Archives, Digital Archives, <http://www.digitalarchives.wa.gov/>, 7/11/22