Seattle is Indian Country. The city is named for a hereditary chief of the Suquamish and Duwamish people, many of our communities and landscape features have Indian names, and tribal artwork can be found throughout the city’s museums, galleries and public spaces. Several Indian tribes call the region around Seattle home, including the Duwamish, Suquamish, Muckleshoot, Snoqualmie, Tulalip, and Puyallup Nations. In addition, Seattle is home to a diverse group of Native people from throughout Washington, Alaska and the rest of North America.

“We have always been here, we are still here, we will always be here.”
— Upper Skagit Elder VJ T’ak’Sidilla Gilbert (1918 - 2000)

Lushootseed, or Puget Sound Salish, is the Coast Salish language that is traditionally spoken in the Seattle area, and tribes are working hard to revitalize the language through youth and adult education programs.

In recent years, a cultural revival has taken place in Puget Sound Native communities, based on renewing and passing on such traditions as canoe carving, weaving, and preparation of traditional foods. Archaeological sites in the Puget Sound area date back over 10,000 years. Sites are found throughout the landscape, from high in the Cascade Mountains to lowland rivers and beaches. For many generations, traditional life centered on two primary resources: cedar and salmon. Oral histories among tribal groups feature a spirit being called Transformer who created the landscape where people live. Given the region’s dynamic history of earthquakes and volcanoes, Transformer may still be at work today.
There’s a universal language that touches the souls of people from around the world—art. Natives are no different in this respect, as they have a rich history of artistic traditions and practices that are deeply rooted in their cultures and ways of life. In this section of our guide, we explore the various forms of art created by Native people, including their distinctive artistic expressions that have evolved over centuries.

INTRODUCTION

“The ubiquitous totem pole, the most visible example of Native art in Seattle, actually comes from Southeast Alaska and British Columbia. Since the Klondike Gold Rush of 1897, Seattle has had close ties to the Northwest Coast, and many monumental works of art from Haida, Tsimshian and Tlingit carvers can be seen in Seattle.”

COAST SALISH ARTWORK

The ubiquitous totem pole, the most visible example of Native art in Seattle, actually comes from Southeast Alaska and British Columbia.

Small items such as spindle whorls and canes, parfleches were both utilitarian and ornately carved artworks. Twined baskets, as well as hats and clothing were made from cedar, and master weavers created elegant blankets, and robes on large looms using yarn spun from the hair of mountain goats and woolly dogs.

Local design traditions have long been overshadowed by more imposing artistic styles from further north, but contemporary artists such as Susan Point, Roger Fernandes, Andrew Wilbur-Sigo and Shawn Peterson are reviving Coast Salish aesthetics. These and other Native artists draw on traditional styles, and incorporate new materials such as glass and metal, to create works that are increasingly visible in Seattle’s galleries, museums, and public artworks.

FIRST SALMON CELEBRATION

Spring has met with Indian sacred elements throughout the Pacific Northwest.

These annual ceremonies are observed by many tribes, depending on the timing of local salmon runs. According to tradition, the first salmon caught each season is welcomed as a sacred guest, and treated with respect. This time-honored event is an opportunity to thank the salmon for returning and for giving its life to feed the people. Contact individual tribes for information about dates and locations; a directory of tribes can be found at goia.wa.gov.

SPIRIT OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE FESTIVAL

June, Seattle Center

This festival brings together American Indians, Alaska Natives and First Nations People for a powwow, Native art market, music and dance performances, and cultural celebration.

SEAFAR INDIAN DAYS POW WOW

July, Depoe Bay Star Indian Cultural Center in Discovery Park

Hundreds of dancers in full regalia, dozens of drum groups and thousands of spectators gather to celebrate the richness of Native American cultures.

CANOE JOURNEY

July and August

Distillation changes annually

Canoe families represent tribes throughout the region travel for weeks each July in large cedar dugout canoes. This journey, which is alcohol and drug free, culminates in a week-long celebration at the destination village or tribal community.

CHIEF SEATTLE DAYS

August, Suquamish, Port Madison Reservation

In partnership with Lummi House Media, this series presents the work of emerging Native American and indigenous filmmakers.

INDIGENOUS SHOWCASE

Ongoing, Northwest Film Forum

In partnership with Lummi House Media, this series presents the work of emerging Native American and indigenous filmmakers.

Seattle is the only major city named for a Native American chief. Recognized as a leader of the Suquamish and Duwamish people, Chief Seattle was known as a peace maker, and as a great speaker in his native Lushootseed language. This 1854 studio portrait is the only known photograph of the famous Indian leader. The Chief’s name was pronounced “See-Ahtl,” which was difficult for English speaking settlers to say, so they smoothed it out by changing it to “Seattle,” and it is sometimes written as “Sahhtl.”

In addition to the city which bears his name, Chief Seattle’s most enduring legacy is his 1854 speech which includes the famous statement above.

In 1876, more than 30 years later, the speech was first printed in a Seattle newspaper, based on notes by Seattle pioneer Henry Smith. How the speech was recorded in 1854 is known throughout the world as a powerful statement from an Indian leader about his people’s deep attachment to their native lands. To read Chief Seattle’s speech, visit suquamish.org.
**NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE SITES**

**A. DAYBREAK STAR INDIAN CULTURAL CENTER**

Daybreak Star, 1501 Alki Beach Way SW, 206.931.1022

Daybreak Star is dedicated to the cultural heritage of the Northwest Coast Native American people. The museum exhibits feature Native American art and artifacts, providing a glimpse into the lives and traditions of these cultures. Daybreak Star offers educational programs and events that celebrate Native American culture and history.

**B. A SALISH WELCOME**

1451 6th Avenue, Suite 520, 206.623.1124

This site offers an introduction to the Lushootseed language, also known as Puget Sound Salish. Visitors can engage in interactive activities and learn about the history and culture of the Puget Sound Salish people.

**C. BURKE MUSEUM**

17th Avenue NE at NE 41st Street, 206.543.5000

The Burke Museum, located within the University of Washington campus, is a comprehensive museum that explores the natural history and culture of the Pacific Northwest. It features exhibits on the archaeology, anthropology, and biology of the region's indigenous peoples.

**D. CHIEF SEATTLE STATUE**

Lake Union Loop, 3rd Ave & Wall St, 206.623.1445

This monument is a representation of Chief Seattle, a leader of the Seattle area Native Americans, and is located on Lake Union. The statue serves as a tributary to the history of the area and as a symbol of the city's cultural heritage.

**E. IVAR'S SALMON HOUSE & WATERWAY 15**

451 NW 50th Street, 206.623.0147

Ivar's Salmon House is a popular restaurant that celebrates the local salmon industry. The restaurant offers a variety of seafood dishes and provides a glimpse into the cultural significance of salmon in Native American traditions.

**F. CHESHIAHOU LEAK UNION LOOP**

This site offers a view of the Seattle waterfront and a chance to learn about the history of the city's waterways. Visitors can explore the area's connection to Native American culture and the salmon fishing industry.

**G. THE CENTER FOR WOODEN BOATS**

Lake Union Park, 800 Valley Street, 206.386.2626

This center is dedicated to the history and preservation of wooden boats. It features exhibits, tours, and educational programs that highlight the role of wooden boats in Seattle's history and culture.

**H. MUSEUM OF HISTORY & INDUSTRY (MOHAI)**

215 Executive Way, Suite 200, 206.324.1126

MOHAI is a museum dedicated to preserving the history of Seattle and the Pacific Northwest. It features exhibits on a wide range of topics, including Native American culture and history.

**I. CHIEF SEATTLE STATUE**

Lake Union Loop, 3rd Ave & Wall St, 206.623.1445

This monument is a representation of Chief Seattle, a leader of the Seattle area Native Americans, and is located on Lake Union. The statue serves as a tributary to the history of the area and as a symbol of the city's cultural heritage.

**J. SEATTLE ART MUSEUM**

305 Union Street, 2nd Floor, 206.441.3388

The Seattle Art Museum is a major cultural institution that features a wide range of exhibits on Native American art, as well as other aspects of the culture's history and art.

**K. SEATTLE UNIVERSITY VI HILBERT ETHNOBOTANICAL GARDEN**

1740 Northeast 45th Street, 206.293.1024

This garden is dedicated to the preservation and education of Northwest Coast Native American plants. Visitors can learn about the cultural significance of these plants and see them in a living context.

**L. DOWNTOWN GALLERIES**

130 Sixth Avenue, 206.623.1124

This site is home to a variety of galleries that feature contemporary Native American art. Visitors can explore the diverse range of artistic expressions from these cultures.

**M. PIONEER SQUARE**

First Avenue and Yesler Way

Seattle's oldest neighborhood is rich in history and culture. It features a variety of museums and cultural sites that highlight the city's cultural heritage.

**N. LOG HOUSE MUSEUM AND BIRTHPLACE OF SEATTLE MONUMENT**

40th Avenue SW and yesler Way, 206.393.5251

This site is dedicated to the history of Seattle's founding. Visitors can learn about the First Salmon Ceremony and see a replica of the Duwamish longhouse that is associated with this event.

**O. DUWAMISH LONGHOUSE AND CULTURAL CENTER**

4705 West Marginal Way SW, 206.411.1122

This center is dedicated to the history and culture of the Duwamish people. Visitors can learn about the Duwamish longhouse and see a variety of exhibits on Native American culture.

**P. TILICUM VILLAGE**

Blake Island State Park, 206.623.1445

Tillicum Village is a cultural center that features Native American arts and crafts. Visitors can see traditional drumming and dancing performances and learn about Native American culture.

**Q. DUWAMISH LONGHOUSE AND CULTURAL CENTER**

34th Avenue NW Street End, 206.441.3388

This center is dedicated to the history and culture of the Duwamish people. Visitors can learn about the Duwamish longhouse and see a variety of exhibits on Native American culture.

**R. A SALISH WELCOME**

1451 6th Avenue, Suite 520, 206.623.1124

This site offers an introduction to the Lushootseed language, also known as Puget Sound Salish. Visitors can engage in interactive activities and learn about the history and culture of the Puget Sound Salish people.

**S. BURKE MUSEUM**

17th Avenue NE at NE 41st Street, 206.543.5000

The Burke Museum, located within the University of Washington campus, is a comprehensive museum that explores the natural history and culture of the Pacific Northwest. It features exhibits on the archaeology, anthropology, and biology of the region's indigenous peoples.

**T. CHIEF SEATTLE STATUE**

Lake Union Loop, 3rd Ave & Wall St, 206.623.1445

This monument is a representation of Chief Seattle, a leader of the Seattle area Native Americans, and is located on Lake Union. The statue serves as a tributary to the history of the area and as a symbol of the city's cultural heritage.

**U. MUSEUM OF HISTORY & INDUSTRY (MOHAI)**

215 Executive Way, Suite 200, 206.324.1126

MOHAI is a museum dedicated to preserving the history of Seattle and the Pacific Northwest. It features exhibits on a wide range of topics, including Native American culture and history.

**V. CHIEF SEATTLE STATUE**

Lake Union Loop, 3rd Ave & Wall St, 206.623.1445

This monument is a representation of Chief Seattle, a leader of the Seattle area Native Americans, and is located on Lake Union. The statue serves as a tributary to the history of the area and as a symbol of the city's cultural heritage.

**W. MUSEUM OF HISTORY & INDUSTRY (MOHAI)**

215 Executive Way, Suite 200, 206.324.1126

MOHAI is a museum dedicated to preserving the history of Seattle and the Pacific Northwest. It features exhibits on a wide range of topics, including Native American culture and history.

**X. DUWAMISH LONGHOUSE AND CULTURAL CENTER**

4705 West Marginal Way SW, 206.411.1122

This center is dedicated to the history and culture of the Duwamish people. Visitors can learn about the Duwamish longhouse and see a variety of exhibits on Native American culture.

**Y. DUWAMISH LONGHOUSE AND CULTURAL CENTER**

4705 West Marginal Way SW, 206.411.1122

This center is dedicated to the history and culture of the Duwamish people. Visitors can learn about the Duwamish longhouse and see a variety of exhibits on Native American culture.

**Z. DUWAMISH LONGHOUSE AND CULTURAL CENTER**

4705 West Marginal Way SW, 206.411.1122

This center is dedicated to the history and culture of the Duwamish people. Visitors can learn about the Duwamish longhouse and see a variety of exhibits on Native American culture.

**DUWAMISH LONGHOUSE AND CULTURAL CENTER**

4705 West Marginal Way SW, 206.411.1122

This center is dedicated to the history and culture of the Duwamish people. Visitors can learn about the Duwamish longhouse and see a variety of exhibits on Native American culture.

**FURTHER READING**

**WHEN & WHERE ARE VISITORS WELCOME?**

Visitors are generally welcome at tribal events held at outdoor venues and in public areas of cultural centers. By contrast, spiritual ceremonies may not be accessible to visitors. When in doubt, ask if an event is open to the public. It’s always respectful to ask permission before taking photographs of individuals.

**ARCHAEOLOGY – A PROTECTED LEGACY**

Many places around Seattle, from the Hood Canal to hiking trails, contain archaeological artifacts made by Native Americans. All archaeological sites are protected by law, and artifacts cannot be taken from them. If you find an artifact, contact your local archaeological institution or tribal office.

**CASINOS**

As in other parts of the country, the commercial gambling played by Native American tribes is an important source of income for these communities. Casino profits contribute to economic self-sufficiency for tribes, and support cultural preservation efforts such as tribal language programs, museums, and history projects.