

Letters from an  
American Princess

Princess Angeline's Letters

Curriculum for Washington State  
Students



By Rick Moulden  
Dedicated to the Duwamish Tribe

Dear Friends,

If you have found these letters I am happy. I wanted to leave some thoughts to tell you about my life before Seattle became a city and what happened after other settlers came to our area.

My name is Princess Angeline and I am a true American princess. My father was Chief Seattle. I want to tell people about my father and our Duwamish Tribe.

My real name is Kikisoblu in our language and my father's name is Si'ahl. Lushootseed is the name of our language, but I learned English, like my father. I am writing these letters in English so everyone can read them.

I was born in the area that is now called Rainier Beach. It was about 1820, but we didn't count years that way back then. My father Si'ahl was born about 1780 on the Black River. My Grandmother was from the Duwamish Tribe and my Grandfather from the Suquamish Tribe. In Lushootseed our tribe is called Dkhw 'Duw' Absh. We lived in the area that is now called Seattle. It was named after my father. We had longhouses as far north as Bothell and as far south as Auburn. We also went east to Issaquah.

My father died many years ago and many of my tribe have died so I wanted to tell you about what our lives were like so we would be remembered.

My people lived in longhouses most of the year. We made our houses of cedar wood to help keep us dry in the rainy times. The longhouses were really large and many times a couple of families would share. It took much time to cut and shape the cedar into planks to build our houses so many people would work together. Today you call these houses apartments. There were movable walls of cedar matting inside to separate the groups of people.

Here is a picture of the a long kind of longhouse we lived in.



Our houses usually faced the water so we could use our canoes to move from place to place. When I was growing up the trees were so thick it was easier to travel by water. Now people have built streets and roads and cut down the trees so life is different. If we wanted water for drinking or for fish and shellfish it was easy to get to. We also ate many plants from the rivers and we got materials to make our baskets. The cedar trees gave us wood for our houses and canoes, but it also gave us bark for clothes and baskets.

We Duwamish people loved the land. It gave us everything we needed to live well.

As I was growing up, new people began to arrive by boat and then by land. I could see how different their way of life was as they built houses and cut down the trees to sell the lumber. Henry Yesler began a sawmill that cut lumber for the people who were moving to Seattle. But he also loaded the lumber on ships to be sold in other places. Our forests began to disappear and I was sad.

You may wonder how I got to be an American Princess. My father, Chief Seattle, was the most important man in our area. As early as the 1820s he was selected as Chief of the area tribes. Doc Maynard was one of the early people to come and live on our lands. His wife, Catherine, began calling me Princess Angeline and soon everyone

was doing it. I have heard about princesses in far away places called Europe, but I don't live in a palace or wear a crown.

I grew up in a longhouse, but our homes were destroyed and I moved to a house near the water between Pike and Pine Streets in Seattle. I made baskets to sell and took in laundry to wash and iron.

I can't complain because my life was good. If you are reading these letters you have found them in the future. I want you to know that our lives were happy before people came to make the city of Seattle. We had much food and great families. We spent much of the rainy season inside telling stories, making baskets and tools and remembering our ancestors.

I will write some more letters to let you know about our lives.

Sincerely,

Your friend, Angeline

1. How were the homes for the Duwamish like apartments or condominiums today?
2. What were some resources that the Duwamish people used?
3. What things could the Duwamish tribe make from the cedar trees?
4. How did Angeline get her name? What was her real name? What was her original language?
5. Write a short note to Princess Angeline to tell her what we do in the rainy times in Washington.

Dear Friends,

I wanted to tell you more about my father, Chief Seattle.

He earned his reputation as a great chief and warrior. We had many enemy raiders who came up from the Green River in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains. He was a leader who ambushed and defeated these enemies so he could protect our people and lands. He really earned the respect of our tribe and the other tribes in the area.

He was tall, nearly six feet in height. He had broad shoulders and a loud voice that he could use when he talked to our tribe or to the later settlers in Seattle. He was an amazing speaker who really could make people listen to what he had to say.

My father married La-Dalia, my mother, but she died and he married a second time and had three sons and four more daughters.

When outside settlers came they brought their religion and my father was baptized in the Roman Catholic Church. It was near the city that is now our State Capital, Olympia. He had an English name, Noah,

after his baptism, just like I took an English name, Angelina.

My father could see that the new settlers were very powerful and were here to stay. He made friends with Doc Maynard, one of the first new settlers and they became friends. This friendship led Doc Maynard to change the name of the new Settlers' place from Duwamps to Seattle. My father established peaceful relationships with the new settlers and when the other local tribes fought the Battle of Seattle in 1856, he kept our people out of the battle.

My father is famous for a speech he gave in 1854. This was at a large gathering in Seattle called by the Governor, Isaac Ingalls Stevens. He called the meeting to discuss the surrender or sale of our lands to the white settlers.

After Doc Maynard introduced Stevens, the Governor explained his mission.

Then my father rose to speak. He put his hand on the head of the Governor who was much smaller than he. He spoke in Lushootseed, our language, and his words were translated into Chinook Jargon and then English.



Here is just a part of his speech. I hope you can find all of it someday.

" My words are like the stars that never change. Whatever Seattle says, the great chief in Washington (the President) can rely upon with as much certainty as he can rely on the return of the sun or the seasons. The white chief (Governor Stevens) says that The Big Chief at Washington sends us greetings of friendship and goodwill. This is kind of him for we know he has little need of our friendship in return. His people are many. They are like the grass that covers vast prairies. My people are few. They resemble the scattering trees of a storm-swept plain....

There was a time when our people covered the land as waves of wind-ruffled sea covers its shell-paved floor, but that time has long since passed away with the greatness of tribes that are now but a mournful memory...

To us the ashes of our ancestors are sacred and their resting place is hallowed ground. You wander far from the graves of your ancestors and seemingly without regret...

Your dead cease to love you and the land of  
Their nativity as soon as they pass the portals  
Of the tomb and wander beyond the stars.  
They are soon forgotten and never return. Our  
Dead never forget this beautiful world that they  
Gave being. They still love its verdant valleys,  
Its murmuring rivers, its magnificent  
Mountains, sequestered vales and verdant  
Lined lakes and bays, and ever yearn in tender  
Fond affection over the lonely hearted living,  
And often return from the happy hunting  
Ground to visit, guide, console and comfort  
Them.

Day and night cannot dwell together. The Red  
Man has ever fled the approach of the White  
Man, as the morning mist flees before the  
Morning sun. However, your proposition seems  
Fair and I think that my people will dwell  
Apart in peace, for the words of the Great White  
Chief seem to be the words of nature speaking  
To my people out of dense darkness...

We will ponder your proposition and when we  
Decide we will let you know. But should we  
Accept it, I here and now make the condition  
That we will not be denied the privilege without  
Molestation of visiting at any time the tombs

Of our ancestors, friends and children. Every  
Part of this soil is sacred in the estimation of  
My people. Every hillside, every valley, every  
Plain and grove has been hallowed by some sad  
Or happy event in days long vanished. Even  
The rocks, which seem to be dumb and dead  
As they swelter in the sun along the silent  
Shore, thrill with memories of stirring events  
Connected with the lives of my people, and the  
Very dust upon which you now stand responds  
More lovingly to their footsteps than yours,  
Because it is rich with the blood of our  
Ancestors...At night when the streets of your  
Cities and villages are silent and you think  
Them deserted, they will throng with the  
Returning hosts that once filled them and still  
Love this beautiful land. The White Man will  
Never be alone.

Let him be just and deal kindly with my people  
For the dead are not altogether powerless.

My father knew that after years of death from  
small pox and other diseases that the new settlers  
brought, our tribe was small and not able to fight  
against the new settlers. He wanted Governor  
Stevens, Doc Maynard and even the President of the  
United States to know that we would give up our

lands and places, but that we wanted to honor those who had died by visiting their graves.

My father knew that progress was coming and he accepted the inevitable. However after he died in 1866, the new settlers began to push us out of our lands and homes. He was a brave warrior and a great leader, but he couldn't know what the future would bring for me and the Duwamish tribe.

Here is a picture of my father. It was a photograph taken in 1865 a year before he died. You can't tell how tall he was, but at 85 years of age he still seemed very young.



I am tired and will put down my pen. I will try to write another letter to let you know about our lives and the things that I did.

Sincerely,

Your friend, Angeline

1. What kind of person was Chief Seattle?
2. Why was Seattle named after him when it was already named Duwamps?
3. Why did Chief Seattle agree to the terms of the treaty promised by Governor Stevens?
4. What did he ask as a condition for the treaty?
5. How do you know that the Duwamish people loved their environment?
6. Write a note to Angeline to let her know some of the things that have happened to the land after her father died.

Dear Friends,

I already told you that I made baskets to sell. It was a way for me to earn my living. I also took in laundry because I had to.

When I was growing up, baskets were one of the most important things in our tribe. We used baskets to hold the food we gathered and stored, but we also cooked in baskets. We used the same skills to make the mats we wore as clothes and the walls of our summer homes. We also used them to transport the food we gathered from one place to another. Baskets weren't just decorations, but we did make them to be beautiful and we gave them to friends and relatives as objects to be admired.

The cedar root and bark were used for our baskets, but we also gathered cattails and other reeds.

The coiled baskets were used for many things. They had solid sides so we could pick berries into them, but we could also carry liquids. We made our baskets so well that they would hold water.

We also had open weave baskets that could be used for things like gathering clams or fish.

We would gather roots and limbs of the cedar tree and split them into narrow strips to get the materials. We would make a frame and then weave the cedar into the frame. Sometimes we used things like horsetail root or dyed cedar to create a design as we were building the basket. We could also create geometric patterns by folding under small strips of colored material.

Coiled baskets were made with softer reeds that were sewn together. We would make a needle or an awl from bone and sew the strips together.

Our clam baskets were very important. They were open so the water would drain when we collected the clams. We could dig clams all year round on the beaches and they provided fresh food all year long. In the winter when low tides came at night we would use torches of cedar bark covered with pitch and lit on fire to see as we dug clams. In the spring we gathered little neck clams, horse clams and cockles and dried them so we would have them all year long.

We could wash the clams of sand by simply shaking the basket underwater. We used small baskets to gather the clams and bigger baskets in our canoes to bring them home.



In the summer we would leave our longhouses and move to get berries and fish. The baskets helped us move our things and then bring the food back to the longhouse for the rainy times.

Our berry baskets usually flare out at the top. That means each layer of berries puts the weight further out and the berries don't get crushed while we are picking.

We used baskets to gather water because we could make them so tight that water wouldn't soak through. To cook in a basket you fill it with water and put heated rocks into the water to heat the water and food.

Our mats could be made from cedar bark or cattails. We also made our rain clothing and hats from the same materials. The mats were the walls to divide our longhouses and they were the walls of our summer homes while we were gathering food.

Here is a picture of one of our summer homes.



We gathered cattails in July or August before they dried too much. Then we dried them in the sun and bundled them up for storage in the longhouse rafters until we had time to work on the mats.

We made mat creasers to help us and needles to sew together the mats.

I wish you could see some of the baskets I made. People really liked them and the White Settlers bought many of them to decorate their homes or for use. They said I was a great basketmaker, but our tribe depended on the baskets for so many things that we had to be good basketmakers to survive.

Your Friend,

Princess Angeline

1. How did the Duwamish people use baskets?
2. What materials were available for them to make baskets and mats?
3. What tools were helpful to them?
4. Why was it necessary to be a good basketmaker?
5. Write a note to Princess Angeline telling her what we use instead of baskets for our needs.

Dear Friends,

I know I have mentioned some of our foods already, but I want to tell you about the foods we ate and how we prepared them.

We were one of the luckiest tribes because we had so many foods available right where we lived. As I told you, we lived in Longhouses that were right on the rivers and beaches. This meant that we had fish, shellfish and plants available year round. In the summer we would move from our longhouses and set up mat houses where we could gather berries, fish and other game. Our canoes and river system meant that we could easily transport our mats and baskets and then bring back all of our foods and reeds for the winter.

Some of our berries were wonderful. One of our favorites was Squassom. It grew near Discovery Bay and in June we would gather them while they were still green and then we would dry them. Later we soaked them in boiling water until they were soft. Then we would beat them with salal berry leaves until they made Indian ice cream. We would add sugar or jam later and it was delicious.

We gathered many kinds of wild potatoes and the bulbs or lilies that were like onions. We had the roots of ferns

and dandelions and wild sunflowers. There were also wild nuts we would gather in the fall.

Our meat and fish could be roasted on stakes by the fire or by putting fire-heated rocks in our tightly woven baskets that were filled with water.

We also had birds like ducks we could catch and eat and we hunted deer and bear.

To serve our meals we put out bowls or platters made of carved alder on cattail mats. Each person dished out a portion with their own spoons which were made of carved wood or horns of animals. We could know our spoon because it was decorated with a carved or painted design.

We made tools to help us gather our food. We had digging sticks sharpened to dig for clams and to dig up the roots of camas and lilies. We made berry pickers which had many arms that would shake the berries off the bush into a mat. We would use wood and split the end to make something that looked like a giant fork.

Fishing was one of our most important sources of food. My tribe knew just how to be successful. We would build nets, traps, weirs and spears to catch salmon. A favorite way was to make a weir or net and put it at the edge of the shore. The fish would be carried over when the tide

came in, but be caught when the tide rolled out. Then we would gather them. From the edge of the water we could spear the salmon in the streams. We also used nets to scoop up the fish.

We even raked up small fish like the smelt and herring. We had a wonderful supply of fish that we could eat fresh and still have more to dry for the rest of the year. One thing we asked for in the treaties with the United States government was to be allowed to fish in our usual places because the fish were so important to us.

We also used our canoes and went out with harpoons to capture porpoise and seals.



We Duwamish people were very lucky to have food available in such a large amount. We prospered for many years and would have been a powerful tribe if the new settlers didn't bring diseases like small pox that killed many of our people.

Now the new settlers have access to the fish, shell fish and berries that we enjoyed for so many centuries.

If you live in the Puget Sound area you are very lucky to have these resources.

Your friend,

Princess Angeline

1. What kinds of foods did the Duwamish tribe have readily available?
2. Why did they leave their longhouses for part of the year?
3. What tools did they use to gather and cook their foods?
4. Why did the Indian Treaties specify that the Indians could fish in their usual places?
5. Write a note to tell Princess Angelina telling her what some of our favorite foods are today and which ones she would probably like best.



Dear Friends,

You may wonder why other Tribes got reservations to live on, but there is no Duwamish Reservation.

When my father, Chief Seattle, first signed the treaties in 1854 with Governor Stevens, we were promised a reservation. Reservations were set up for many tribes at that time. The Muckleshoot Reservation was created near Auburn. Some of our Duwamish people were moved to a temporary reservation at Port Madison on Bainbridge Island, but we were a river people and couldn't live there. Most of the Duwamish came back to the mouth of the Duwamish River so we could fish as usual.

We lived in villages along the rivers and on the waterfront. Many of our Tribe began to work in the sawmills and on the docks loading and unloading ships. Many of the women in my tribe married White Settlers and began raising families.

We were told that we had to leave Seattle, but many of us stayed. It was where we had lived and the White Settlers needed us for workers.

In 1866, just after my father died, we thought we would get a reservation of our own. We were promised 640 acres in Renton where the Black River used to join the

Duwamish River. More than 275 members of the Duwamish Tribe lived there. But coal was discovered there. More than 150 White Settlers signed a petition against the plan. They said that the land was of little value to our Tribe. Even Doc Maynard, my father's old friend, signed the petition. So did Henry Yesler and David Denny. The United States Government broke their promise.

We weren't given the land. We were told we couldn't live in Seattle, even though the city was named for my father. Many of us stayed anyway.

I live at the foot of Pike and Pine Streets. Up until a few years ago there were longhouses throughout Seattle, but they have been burned down and we weren't allowed to rebuild.

Many of us found work. I took in laundry and made baskets. Others of our Tribe work in shipping, fishing, the sawmills.

Many members of our Tribe have died because of diseases brought by the White Settlers. People who moved to reservations were more protected from contact with White Settlers and have stayed healthier. Since many of the Duwamish Tribe live and work in Seattle every ship load of new Settlers brings diseases that we have no resistance

to. I am very lucky because I am 76 years old now. My father lived to be about 86 years old. We survived a long time, but many of my friends and family have died much younger.

I have chosen to live in Seattle because Seattle is my home. Sometimes children throw rocks at me or call me names, but most of the adults treat me well. They still call me Princess Angeline and remember what a good man my father was. Edward Curtis and other photographers love to take my picture.

Sometimes I long for the good old days when we Indians had the land to ourselves and lived an easier life. But I know that progress has come and we must make the best of the changes. My father taught me that in the speech he gave for Governor Stevens.

I hope you treat my tribe with respect and honor. We did much to help the White Settlers who created Seattle and Washington State.

Your friend,

Angeline

1. What were the Duwamish people promised in the treaties of 1854?
2. Where would the Duwamish Reservation have been? Why wasn't it created?
3. Even though the Duwamish Tribe were forbidden to live in Seattle, why did Tribe members stay there?
4. Why were the Duwamish more susceptible to diseases than other Tribes.
5. Write a note to Princess Angeline telling her about Seattle and Washington today.

Dear Friends,

I hope you enjoyed Princess Angeline's letters. My name is Rick and I wanted to tell you what happened after the letters.

Princess Angeline died in 1896 at the age of seventy-six. She had lived a long life and saw many changes.

Seattle honored her with a large church funeral and then she was buried in Lake View Cemetery on Capitol Hill.

*The Chronicle of Holy Names Academy* reported in their paper:

The Death of Princess Angeline  
May 29, 1896

"With the death of Angeline in Seattle died the last of the direct descendants of the great Chief Seattle for whom this city was named. Angeline - Princess Angeline - as she was generally called, was famous all over the world. Angeline was a familiar figure of the streets, bent and wrinkled with a red handkerchief over her head, a shawl about her, walking slowly and painfully with the aid of a cane; it was no infrequent sight to see this poor old Indian woman seated on the sidewalk devoutly reciting

her beads. The kindness and generosity of Seattle's people toward the daughter of the chief...was shown in her funeral...which took place from the Church of Our Lady of Good Help. The church was magnificently decorated; ...in a casket in the form of a canoe rested all that was mortal of Princess Angeline."

Princess Angeline was also remembered with a street named for her that goes from Beacon Hill and Columbia City through Seward Park.

When Seattle celebrated the Alaska Yukon Pacific Exposition in 1909 her image was used on many of the publications and souvenirs.

She helped keep the story of Chief Seattle alive and she became a symbol of the Duwamish Tribe.

Would you write a letter to your friend, Princess Angeline, and tell her "Thank You" for sharing her life with you. Tell her what impressed you most in her letter. What did you enjoy learning about the Duwamish Tribe and their part in Seattle's history?

If you can do research, find out in books or by visiting the internet what has become of the Duwamish Tribe. You can tell Princess Angeline about the struggles of her tribe to be recognized by the American Government and about

the building of the Longhouse on the Duwamish River  
where the tribe is helping people to learn about the  
Duwamish people.

Enjoy writing your letter to her.

Your new friend,

Rick