



## The Spokane Tribe

**Summary and Definition:** The semi-nomadic Spokane tribe were fishers, hunter-gatherers and traders of the Plateau cultural group who mainly lived by the Spokane River and in the west by the Columbia River on the Columbia River Plateau. The picture, by artist Paul Kane, was painted in 1847 and depicts the Scalp Dance by Spokane Native Indians.

## Facts about the Spokane Native Indian Tribe

This article contains fast, fun facts and interesting information about the Spokane Native American Indian tribe. Find answers to questions like where did the Spokane tribe live, what clothes did they wear, what did they eat and who were the names of their most famous leaders? Discover what happened to the tribe with facts about their wars and history.

## What language did the Spokane tribe speak?

The Spokane tribe spoke in a Salishan dialect similar, the language use by the Northwest Pacific coastal tribes. The meaning of their name was "children of the sun". The tribe consisted of three bands known as the Upper, Middle and Lower Spokane Indians.

## What was the lifestyle and culture of the Spokane tribe?

The Spokane were influenced by the coastal tribes and many built villages of plank houses. Others built pit houses as their winter shelters. Their summer shelters suited their nomadic style and they lived in Tule-mat lodges that were fast to erect and easy to dismantle. After the introduction of the horse in the 1750's the Spokane people of the Plateau region traveled to the Great Plains to hunt buffalo and adopted the some of the lifestyle elements of this cultural group, including the tepee and similar clothing made from buffalo hides.

## Who were the allies and enemies of the Spokane tribe?

The allies of the Spokane tribe were many of the other Native American Indians who inhabited the Plateau region including the Cayuse, Walla Walla, Coeur D'Alene, Palouse and the Nez Perce. The main enemies of the Spokane tribe were the Great Basin groups to the south, including the Shoshone, Blackfeet, Northern Paiute, and the Bannock tribes.

**Where did the Spokane tribe live?**

The Spokane are people of the Plateau Native American cultural group. The location of their tribal homelands are shown on the map although the core of Spokane territory was in modern day Washington, the tribe controlled additional territory in Idaho and Montana. The geography of the region in which they lived dictated the lifestyle and culture of the tribe.

- The tribe lived along the banks of the Spokane River, and in the west by the Columbia River
- Land: Fast flowing rivers, lakes, forests and prairies
- Climate: Warm summers and cold, snowy winters
- Animals: The animals included elk, deer, mountain goat, groundhog, coyote, raccoon, bear, fox, porcupine, weasel, beaver and hare
- Fish: Salmon, steelhead trout
- Natural Resources: Berries, bulbs, roots and seeds



## Spokane History

- 1750's: The Spokane acquire the horse and their lifestyle changed as they were able to travel to the Great Plains to hunt buffalo
- 1800: Two French-Canadian fur trappers, Le Blanc and Le Gasse, were the first white men to make contact with the tribe. They were sent by explorer and trapper David Thompson to spend a winter with the Native Indians
- 1805: The Lewis and Clark expedition met the tribe on their travels along the Columbia river.
- 1812: A trading post known as Spokane House was built near the confluence of Spokane and Little Spokane Rivers
- 1825: The Hudson's Bay Company established Fort Vancouver as a trading post
- 1825: The sons of Spokane Indian leaders are sent to the Red River mission school by the Hudson's Bay Company.
- 1836: A missionary called Samuel Jackson made contact with the tribe
- 1830: The Indian Removal Act was passed by Congress
- 1843: The first major migration along the Oregon Trail took place which eventually led to violent conflicts with the white settlers who traveled in wagon trains along the Oregon trail
- 1845: The white settlers brought various diseases to the Native Indians who lived in the surrounding areas of the Oregon Trail
- 1847: Many of the Spokane tribe are wiped out by a devastating series of measles and smallpox epidemics
- 1855: The Yakima treaty was signed on 9 July 1855 and ceded more than 10 million acres to the United States government in exchange for over 1 million acres of reservation lands
- 1855: The Yakima War (1855-1858) erupted, fought by members of the Native Indian alliance including the Spokane, Cayuse, Walla Walla, Umatilla, and Nez Perce tribes.
- 1857: The Fraser Canyon gold Rush began in 1857 after gold was discovered on the Thompson River in British Columbia at its confluence with the Nicoamen River. White prospectors rushed to the area
- 1858: The Coeur d'Alene War (aka Spokane, Coeur d'Alene and Palouse Indian war) was fought in the Washington and Idaho areas. The alliance of Native Indian tribes attacked and defeated a force of 164 US troops under Major Edward Steptoe
- 1858: Colonel Wright ordered the destruction of 700 Palouse horses at "Horse Slaughter Camp," hanged several Palouse Indians. This concluded the Coeur d'Alene and the Yakima Wars
- 1859: The treaties with the tribes were broken, the US gave only half of what was promised
- 1881: The Lower Spokane moved onto the newly formed Spokane Reservation.
- 1887: Dawes General Allotment Act passed by Congress led to the break up of the large Indian Reservations and the sale of Indian lands to white settlers