

Sidebar:

Indian, Native American or First People?

What's in a name? "Respect and dignity," says Vi Hilbert, an upper Skagit Tribal member who founded Lushootseed Research, a Burien based non-profit organization dedicated to teaching, preserving, and archiving the language and literature of the Puget Sound area's Salish tribes.

"Accuracy too," explained Hilbert. "The term 'native' is derived from the Roman term 'nativis' for bondsman or unfree person, while 'Indian' refers to a misidentified race of people. Neither is appropriate. The term 'First People' is more correct. 'Dwampsh' is the actual name for the tribe."

In Lushootseed '*apsb*' (pronounced *mish* in English) refers to river in this case the Duwamish River. "They were the first people of the Seattle area."

Those who drafted the Point Elliott Treaty of 1855 mislabeled the tribe as 'Dwamish' and over the years the letter U was added to become the name that refers to both the tribe and the river. In its 1955 Constitution the Tribe officially adopted the spelling.

-KJ