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For over a century, we, the Duwamish Tribe, have fought to realize the promises made by the federal government to us, but still left unfulfilled, in the 1855 Treaty of Point Elliott. The Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, a non-signatory to the Treaty, recently released a “Duwamish Fact Sheet,” in which it attempts to discredit our efforts. Although disheartened, we are not surprised. The Muckleshoot’s efforts are simultaneously as regrettable and as routine as the federal government’s refusal to live up to its promises to the Duwamish Tribe. We, the Duwamish people, offer a brief history of our Tribe to correct the record.

The Duwamish Tribe was the lead signatory to the Treaty of Point Elliott in 1855 and the Tribe maintains its efforts to realize the promises made in that Treaty to this day.

- Chief Si’ahl, also known as Chief Seattle and for whom the City of Seattle is named, was the leader of the Duwamish and Suquamish tribes and was the lead signatory on the Treaty of Point Elliott, on behalf of the Duwamish and allied tribes, in 1855.
- The Duwamish Tribe’s members today are direct descendants of the Duwamish Tribe, on whose behalf Chief Seattle signed the Treaty of Point Elliott.
- Despite continuous efforts by Duwamish leaders since 1855, the Duwamish Tribe has yet to secure the reservation promised to its members in the Treaty of Point Elliott.
- From the 1860s to the present, tribal leaders have advocated on the Duwamish Tribe’s behalf before Congress, in the Federal Courts, and at the Bureau of Indian Affairs within the Department of Interior.
- Also since the 1860s to the present, Duwamish tribal members and their descendants have participated in tribal meetings, gatherings, and cultural practices, and have been engaged with the larger Seattle and Pacific Northwest community.
- To this day, the Duwamish Tribe acts pursuant to its Tribal Council, which seeks, secures, and administers group resources for the benefit of the Duwamish Tribe’s members.
- The Tribe and its members also take part in and lead communal and cultural events in the larger Indian and non-Indian communities. The Tribe continues to host its Annual Meeting at the Duwamish Longhouse and Cultural Center in modern-day West Seattle and welcomes thousands of tribal and non-tribal visitors to the Longhouse annually.

Settlers forced the removal of the Duwamish Tribe from present-day Seattle.

- Without a reservation, Duwamish members were forcibly removed from the Seattle area.
- In 1865, Seattle passed laws banning all Duwamish from residing within the limits of the growing town.
- In 1873, the city passed an ordinance prohibiting “dissolute Indian women” from being present in the city at night.

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- Twenty years later, in 1893, settlers burned the Duwamish Tribe's housing and belongings in what is now West Seattle.
- The opening of the Lake Washington Ship Canal in 1916, which cut a channel from the Ballard Locks through Lake Union and Portage Bay to the higher elevation Lake Washington, drained the lake by 25 feet and left the historic Duwamish village on the Black River without a source of food or a mode of transportation.

Despite repeated setbacks, Duwamish Tribe members have persevered and maintained community ties.

- Notwithstanding the discriminatory laws and feats of civil engineering that forced the Duwamish from their ancestral homelands, from the 1860s through the 1920s, the Tribe's members remained in King and Kitsap counties, including at logging camps, makeshift Duwamish homesteads, and in some cases, with no reservation of their own, on reservations of other tribes.
- Many of the Duwamish Tribe's members continue to reside in King and Kitsap counties to this day.
- The dispersed tribal members also continued to maintain their communal ties.
- Some 300 Duwamish tribal members attended a cultural ceremony held at the Black River village in 1894. Members continued to live there until the Black River was drained in 1916.
- Seattle newspapers reported on the Tribe's historic chief in a 1905 article, on two Duwamish potlatches in 1906, and a treaty signing commemoration in 1913.

The Duwamish Tribe's leaders have fought long and hard for the Tribe's rights in multiple forums.

- In the early 1920s, Duwamish Chief Satiacum and his successor and grandnephew, Peter James, represented the Tribe in a multi-tribal council known as the Northwest Federation of American Indians and before Congress.
- Meetings with the Northwest Federation of American Indians and testimony by Duwamish leaders before Congress gave rise to the 1925 special jurisdictional Act, under which "Indian nations, tribes, and bands," including the Duwamish Tribe, were eligible for and received benefits from the federal government.
- The tribe pursued litigation under the 1925 Act, and in 1934, the Court of Claims found that the current Duwamish Tribe had standing to enforce the 1855 Treaty of Point Elliott and entered a monetary judgment for property that had been taken without just compensation.

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The Federal Government has interacted with and acknowledged its relationship the Duwamish Tribe on numerous occasions. Indeed, on more than one occasion, the Bureau of Indian Affairs itself has determined that the Tribe should be federally recognized.

- During the 1920s through the 1940s, Congress accepted testimony from Peter James on behalf of the Duwamish Tribe on multiple occasions.
- A 1953 comprehensive congressional report lists the Duwamish Tribal Council as one of “193 tribal governments at present recognized by the Indian Bureau.” The Duwamish Tribe is the only entity listed on that table that the Bureau of Indian Affairs does not currently recognize pursuant to its regulatory process.
- In 1974, a formal task force commissioned by the Bureau of Indian Affairs to determine the eligibility of various tribes for recognition resulted in the Three Stars report. That report recommended that the Duwamish Tribe be federally recognized. The BIA never implemented that recommendation.
- In 2001, the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs, within the Bureau of Indians Affairs, again determined that the Duwamish Tribe should be federally recognized at the end of the Clinton administration. That determination was reversed by the incoming Bush administration.

Judge Coughenour overturned the Bureau of Indian Affairs’ refusal to recognize the Duwamish Tribe and ordered the agency to provide the Duwamish Tribe a fair process, which the agency has continually refused to do.

- It is rare for a federal court to overturn and vacate a federal agency decision, yet that is what Judge Coughenour did to the Bureau of Indian Affairs’ decision to not recognize the Duwamish Tribe.
- Judge Coughenour ordered the BIA to institute a fair process for the Tribe.
- Unfortunately, in blatant disregard of the court’s order, the agency doubled down on its prior refusal to conduct a fair and complete review of the Tribe’s petition for federal recognition and based on that improper process again refused to recognize the Duwamish Tribe.
- The Tribe appealed that decision to the Interior Board of Indian Appeals, who has also improperly refused to recognize the Duwamish Tribe.

The Duwamish Tribe’s continued perseverance and community and cultural activities to this day.

- In 1983, the tribe established the Duwamish Tribal Services (DTS), a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, to provide economic, social, educational, health, and cultural programs to its members given their lack of access to federal programs.

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- DTS allocates group resources by, among other things, administering tribal food programs and small loans and grants.
- In 1989, the Duwamish Tribe hosted the Paddle to the Seattle for the 1989 Washington Centennial Commission.
- The Tribe also hosts an annual Princess Angeline Tea Party and a regular Duwamish Native Food Program, and created the award-winning cultural heritage group called T'ilibshudub or "Singing Feet."
- In 2009, the Tribe opened the Duwamish Longhouse and Cultural Center, which serves as the Tribe's governmental, economic, and cultural hub.
- The Longhouse hosts thousands of tribal and non-tribal visitors each year.
- The Tribe uses the Longhouse to instruct the next generation of Duwamish in tribal song and dance, to support Duwamish Master Artisans, and to administer food vouchers for needy tribal families.
- The Tribe received letters of support for the Longhouse from Washington State Governor Gary Locke, United States Senator Patty Murray, United States Senator Maria Cantwell, Seattle City Mayor Greg Nickels, and Seattle City Councilmember Nick Licata.
- The Duwamish Tribe routinely receives requests to participate in public events. For example, the Tribe and its members have participated in cultural ceremonies, events, and exhibits at the Museum of History and Industry and at the Seattle Art Museum, among other places.
- The Tribe has also participated in screenings of the film Princess Angeline, which documents the history of the Duwamish Tribe, at various locations throughout the Puget Sound region, including the Seattle Unitarian Universalist Church, Seattle Community College, and other locations.
- The Duwamish Tribe has also interacted with tribes inside Washington State (e.g., Lummi, Snoqualmie, and Chinook) and outside of the State (e.g., Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux, Tlingit), as well as with Alaskan Native Villages.

The Tribe continues to seek federal recognition notwithstanding the Bureau of Indian Affairs' repeated refusals to ensure an adequate and proper review of the Tribe's petition for federal recognition.

- Notwithstanding the Bureau of Indian Affairs repeated and improper refusals to recognize the Duwamish, the Tribe continues its fight for federal recognition to this day.