



SOCIAL SCIENCES

# Geography and Mapping Traditional Lands

## ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS

- Since Time Immemorial

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students will use maps to explore the diversity of Oregon geography and of Native American cultures in Oregon prior to contact with non-Indians
- Students will use maps to identify the ancestral territory of Native American tribes in Oregon
- Students will use maps to identify the current reservations of Oregon’s nine federally recognized Native American tribes.
- Students will understand why it is so important for Native American people in Oregon to have a connection to their ancestral territory.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What were the locations and features of the ancestral territory of Indigenous people groups in Oregon?
- What lands do Indigenous people groups in Oregon manage today?
- Why is retaining tribal stewardship of ancestral territory so important for tribes in Oregon and other Indigenous people?

[\(Continued on next page\)](#)

## Overview

Native American people have lived in the area “now known as Oregon since time immemorial (long predating European contact and beyond human memory). During the era of colonialism—and even into the 21st century—non-Native people often portrayed the North American continent as a vast wilderness that was virtually unpopulated when they arrived. This could not be farther from the truth. In Oregon alone there were dozens of tribes, each with its own ancestral territory and rich cultural history. There was not a single region of Oregon that did not have an Indigenous tribe or band living within it.

Despite disease, genocide, forced assimilation, and cultural suppression, many of these tribes managed to survive, and they continue to carry their cultural traditions forward as sovereign tribal nations. To survive, however, required giving up vast areas of their ancestral territory, sometimes by way of treaties and sometimes as a result of force.

The two activities in this lesson will give students an essential understanding of the rich diversity of Native American tribes that existed in Oregon prior to European settlement, the current territory of the nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon, and the inseparable bond between Native people and the land.



## LOGISTICS

- Where does the activity take place?  
In the classroom with a variety of whole class and partner work for engagement.
- How are the students organized?  
 Whole class    Teams: 2 – 4  
 Pairs    Individually

## TIME REQUIRED

1 hour

Students will use their geography skills to interpret maps and will also read and reflect on a short section of an oral history recorded in 1977 in which a Burns Paiute tribal leader explains the importance of the land to Native American people.

## Background for teachers

When undertaking the study of Native American people in Oregon, it is important to begin with their long history on the land. Indigenous people have lived in the territory now known as Oregon for thousands of years, in established communities, with established social structures, languages, and cultures. They were—and remain—deeply and inextricably connected to the land. Oral traditions of tribes include teachings that Indigenous people were created here and have existed here since time immemorial. From the Coast Range to the interior valleys to the Columbia Plateau and the Great Basin, tribal people maintain continuous and balanced relationships with the natural and physical environments in which they live. Oregon was—and is—Indian Country.

Geography and Mapping Traditional Lands

## STANDARDS

### Oregon Social Sciences Standards

#### Civics and Government

**4.2** Explain how Oregon achieved statehood and identify the stakeholders involved.

#### Geography

**4.7** Explain the interactions between the Pacific Northwest physical systems and human systems, with a focus on Native Americans in that region.

**4.8** Compare and contrast varying patterns of settlements in Oregon, considering, past, present, and future trends.

**4.9** Identify conflicts involving use of land, natural resources, economic interests, competition for scarce resources, different political views, boundary disputes, and cultural differences within Oregon and between different geographical areas.

**4.10** Describe how technological developments, societal decisions, and personal practices affect Oregon’s sustainability (dams, wind turbines, climate change and variability, transportation systems, etc.).

#### Historical Knowledge

**4.11** Analyze the distinct way of knowing and living amongst the different American Indian tribes in Oregon prior to colonization, such as religion, language, and cultural practices and the subsequent impact of that colonization.

**4.12** Explain how diverse individuals, groups (including socioeconomic differences, ethnic groups, and social groups and including individuals who are American Indian/Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian or Americans of African, Asian, Pacific Island, Chicano, Latino, or Middle Eastern descent, religious groups), and other traditionally marginalized groups (women, people with disabilities, immigrants, refugees, and individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender), circumstances and events influenced the early growth and changes in Oregon (including, but not limited to fur trappers, traders, Lewis and Clark, pioneers and westward movement).

(Continued on next page)

The ancestral territory of Native American tribes in Oregon included all land in Oregon and, in the case of some tribes, extended into other current states bordering Oregon. Often, tribes had permanent or semi-permanent villages or settlements located in or near a core home territory, usually centered around a stable or predictable food source. From these “home bases,” family groups or bands would range out to other parts of their territories to hunt and forage for food and trade with neighboring bands and tribes during different seasons of the year. The unique landforms, climate, and ecology of each tribe’s ancestral territory profoundly shaped its lifeways and culture.

In the 1700s and 1800s, Indigenous people faced the arrival of non-Indian immigrants. These newcomers, mostly whites of European descent, brought diseases for which Native people had no immunity and encroached on the traditional hunting and gathering grounds to build homesteads, raise livestock, and mine for precious metals. They fought with the Indigenous tribes, and ultimately the U.S. government created and enforced a policy of removing Indigenous people from their ancestral territory. Impacted by hunger, fear, disease, and uncertainty, many tribes signed treaties with the U.S. government to give up their lands in exchange for promises of peace, supplies, and continued access to ancestral territory. The government moved them to reservations—lands set aside for the tribes to resettle on. The reservations were often far from the ancestral territory of a given tribe, and many Native people died on the journey. Once at the reservation, unfamiliar

## STANDARDS (Continued)

### Oregon Social Sciences Standards

#### Historical Knowledge

**4.13** Give examples of changes in Oregon’s agricultural, industrial, political, and business development over time, and the impacts on the people of that state (including people of different socioeconomic status, ethnic groups, religious groups, and other traditionally marginalized groups).

**4.14** Examine the history of the nine federally recognized Oregon tribes.

#### Historical Thinking

**4.17** Use primary and secondary sources to explain events in Oregon history.

#### Multicultural Studies

**4.2** (Civics and Government), **4.7** (Geography), **4.11** (History), **4.12** (History), **4.13** (History), **4.14** (History).

#### Social Science Analysis

**4.23** Explain individual and cooperative approaches people have taken, or could take in the future, to address local, regional, and global problems, as well as predict possible results of those actions.



surroundings and lack of the promised food and supplies caused others to succumb to disease and hunger. In many cases, people from different tribes with different languages and cultures were forced to co-exist on the same reservation. Some Indians escaped the reservation and returned to live on or near their ancestral territory. Meanwhile, settlers continued pressing to open up more Indigenous land for settlement and commercial exploitation, and over time the government reduced the size of the reservation lands.

Despite overwhelming efforts to eradicate their people and culture, Native people in Oregon persisted through a spirit of survivance and self-determination, holding on to their identity and heritage while forging a path into the future and refusing to be defined by the scars of past injustices. Today, there are nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon. These tribes are sovereign nations and are recognized as such by both the U.S. government and the state of Oregon. Several of these tribes are confederations of multiple tribes that were removed to the same reservation. Retaining stewardship over remnants of their ancestral homelands is key to the tribes' identity, history, and future. Native people in Oregon were and are stewards of the land and have always felt a responsibility to care for it.

This lesson makes use of maps that provide a visual approximation of the ancestral territory of the nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon. They are meant to be estimates only. Historic maps of tribal ancestral territory were often drawn by non-Natives who had limited knowledge of Indigenous

## MATERIALS

What materials are needed for students to engage in this activity?

- Large classroom map of Oregon – This will be helpful to guide student map review and check their understanding.
- PowerPoint presentation – This presentation includes copies of the maps listed below. These versions can be used to supplement the physical maps or can be used in place of them (i.e., projected in the classroom or downloaded to computers or tablets). The presentation also includes other content used in the lesson.
- Poster paper and markers
- Blackboard or whiteboard
- List of nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon, written on poster paper or writing surface:
  - Burns Paiute Tribe
  - Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians
  - Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians
  - Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
  - Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs
  - Coquille Indian Tribe
  - Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians
  - The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde
  - The Klamath Tribes



groups and a different understanding of boundaries and property ownership than the tribes. Tribes loosely observed boundaries between groups, allowing borders to be fluid and to shift during seasonal hunting and gathering periods and with political alliances and warfare. In addition, Indigenous people had no sense of “ownership” of the land. They viewed themselves as inseparable from the land and as stewards of it.

It is important to understand that nations are distinct political bodies, but tribal people are interwoven through centuries of social, familial, cultural, and linguistic ties that connect them across the Pacific Northwest. This is still the case even among tribal governments today.

Today, demarcating a tribe’s ancestral territory has legal and political implications, particularly concerning the tribes’ government-to-government relationships with the United States. Tribes in Oregon have undertaken efforts to “officially” define their ancestral territories for these legal purposes, as well as to help both tribal members and outsiders understand the tribes’ historic and modern connections to the land of what is now called Oregon.

### MATERIALS (Continued)

What materials are needed for students to engage in this activity?

- Maps - Assemble six packets of the following maps, one for each student group to use during the mapping activity. Copies are available in the lesson materials, and many are also available from the Student Atlas of Oregon <https://www.pdx.edu/geography-education/student-atlas-of-oregon>
- Ideally, maps should be printed in color to decipher key attributes, but they can also be printed as transparencies and displayed on an overhead projector, displayed using the provided PowerPoint presentation, or downloaded and displayed on classroom or lab computers or on tablets and other mobile devices.
  - General Reference Map of Oregon
  - Pre-Contact Indigenous Cultural Regions of Oregon Map
  - Physical Regions of the Pacific Northwest Map
  - Oregon Topographical Map
  - Oregon Rivers and Lakes Map
  - Oregon Ecoregions Map
  - Oregon Ecoregions in Pictures Map
  - Oregon Vegetation Zones Map
  - Oregon Vegetation Zones Map- Elevation Cross-Section Map
  - Oregon Wildlife Distribution Map
  - Oregon Native Americans: 1780 Population Map

(Continued on next page)



## Resources

- The Oregon Encyclopedia  
[https://oregonencyclopedia.org/theme/environment\\_and\\_natural\\_resources/](https://oregonencyclopedia.org/theme/environment_and_natural_resources/)
- Portland State Center for Geography Education in Oregon  
<https://www.pdx.edu/geography-education/>
- Oregon Department of Education - Social Science  
[www.ode.state.or.us/go/SocialSciences](http://www.ode.state.or.us/go/SocialSciences)

## Considerations for teachers

### Assessment

- Students will engage in discussions with others in pairs or groups. The teacher should actively monitor student discussion for correct understanding and should intervene when there are misconceptions or bias.
- Students should be assessed both formatively and summatively. The formative assessment will consist of teacher observation of student participation in class and group discussions. The summative assessment will consist of teacher review of each student's written analysis of an Indigenous cultural area to confirm understanding of important facts and themes.

### Practices

The teacher must have a grasp of how to read a variety of maps of Oregon (e.g., general reference, topographical, physical).

- The teacher must have some knowledge of the geography of Oregon, including place names and major mountain ranges and waterways.

### MATERIALS (Continued)

What materials are needed for students to engage in this activity?

- Oregon Tribes Today
- Oregon Satellite Image
- Indigenous Cultural Regions Analysis (one copy per student)
- The Importance of Land (one copy per student)
- Cow Creek Native Plant Plaques

### VOCABULARY

**Ancestral territory** – Lands inhabited by Indigenous people since time immemorial.

**Natural environment** – Encompasses all living and nonliving things occurring naturally, meaning, in this case, not artificial.

**Cartographer** – A person who draws or produces maps.

**Indigenous** – Native to an area; living in an area prior to the arrival of later inhabitants.

**Topographical map** – A map that shows many kinds of geographic features, including mountains, elevations, vegetations types, animal types, rivers, lakes and much more.

**General reference map** – A simple map that shows important physical (natural and man-made) features in an area. The purpose is to summarize the major features of a landscape.

**Physical map** – A map that focuses on the geography of an area and often shows the mountains and valleys.

(Continued on next page)



- The teacher must be prepared to activate engagement strategies, such as think-pair-share and group discussion.
- The teacher must have some understanding of tribal sovereignty and the ancestral territory of the nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon.

### Learning targets

- I can identify key land features using multiple maps, including a general reference map, physical map, rivers and lakes map, and topographical map.
- I can use maps to make inferences about the traditional lifeways of Indigenous people living in different parts of Oregon.
- I can explain why Indigenous people in Oregon lost access to most of their ancestral territory.
- I understand why keeping a connection to their ancestral territory is so important for Indigenous people in Oregon.

### Options/extensions

- As a class or individually, have students visit the Native Land website (<https://native-land.ca/>) and enter one or more addresses, ZIP codes, or cities and view and zoom in and out of the results to see what Native American group(s) historically lived in that location. As a preview or a debrief, encourage students to reflect on and consider the strengths and limitations of the site (the site provides a disclaimer as well as a teacher's guide to help with this discussion).

### VOCABULARY (Continued)

**Ecoregion** – An area of land in which similar climate, plants, and animals interact to create a distinct environment.

**Reservation** – An area of land set aside for a Native American or Alaska Native tribe or group of tribes as payment for their removal from their ancestral territory.

**Wildlife** – Native wild animals of a region.

**Vegetation** – Plants found in an area or habitat.

**Ceded Lands** – An area once occupied by tribal peoples removed by treaty.



- Have students research the following for each tribe: eco-region(s); vegetation zone(s); population range in 1780; wildlife distribution (what wildlife lived in the area of the tribe); and river(s) or lake(s) are near the tribe (hand-out is attached).
- Have students visit the websites of one or more of the nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon and see if they can locate information or maps demarcating what the tribes define as their ancestral territories and report back to the class.
- Teacher can contact the tribal education director of one or more of the nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon to see if they can arrange for an elder to visit the class.
- Students can explore the topic of gentrification and its impacts on current communities as a parallel to thinking about land, ownership, and territories.

## Reflection/closure

Sum up the lesson by reviewing the learning targets. Have students provide two or three sentences that briefly explain what people groups originally lived in Oregon, how those people are connected to the land, and why they feel it is important to maintain that connection today.

## Appendix

Materials included in the electronic folder that support this lesson are:

- Slides.PPT
- Materials\_General Reference Map of Oregon
- Materials\_Pre-Contact Indigenous Cultural Regions of Oregon Map
- Materials\_Physical Regions of the Pacific Northwest Map
- Materials\_Oregon Topographical Map
- Materials\_Oregon Rivers and Lakes Map
- Materials\_Oregon Ecoregions Map
- Materials\_Oregon Ecoregions in Pictures Map
- Materials\_Oregon Vegetation Zones Map

- Materials\_Oregon Vegetation Zones Map-Elevation Cross-Section Map
- Materials\_Oregon Wildlife Distribution Map
- Materials\_Oregon Native Americans: 1780 Population Map
- Materials\_Oregon Tribes Today
- Materials\_Indigenous Cultural Regions Analysis
- Materials\_The Importance of Land
- Materials\_Oregon Native American Tribes and Language Groups Map

---

## Activity 1

# Mapping traditional lands

---

### Step 1:

Gather students as a group or in small groups and have them discuss the following questions (ask or write each question on a sheet of poster paper, blackboard, or whiteboard).

- What does “ancestral territory” mean?
- What do you know about your own family’s ancestral territory? [Prompt to get them to think of the places their ancestors lived].
- On whose ancestral territory do we currently live?

### Step 2:

After students have discussed for several minutes, share the definition of ancestral territory provided in the vocabulary list.

### Say:

*The land currently known as Oregon was fully inhabited by Native American tribes since time immemorial. These groups were and are intimately connected to the land. In all likelihood, our school is located on Native American ancestral territory. Native American people had names for all these places, just as we have names for them today, and sometimes the names we use come directly from the language or name of the tribe that lived here. [Note: Alter this script as necessary to reflect your local context. If you know what tribe lived in the area and have examples of place names that are taken directly from the tribe’s language, feel free to use that knowledge here.]*

### Step 3:

Show students the slide that has the essential understanding: The Pacific Northwest is Indian Country.

---

## Activity 1 (Continued)

**Say:**

*There are nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon [point to list of nine Tribes] whose members are descendants of these Indigenous groups [define Indigenous using the definition in the vocabulary list, if needed]. Like their ancestors, modern Native Americans have a strong connection to the land and share a sense of responsibility to care for it. In today's lesson we'll use maps to examine the traditional lands of the Indigenous people of Oregon.*

**Step 4:**

Show the slide with the general reference map of Oregon and/or use the large classroom map. Orient students to the map and remind them of previous studies they have done of Oregon geography in middle school or earlier grades.

**Step 5:**

Show the slide with the map of the Indigenous cultural regions of Oregon.

**Say:**

*Oregon is a large state with many different regions. From the Coast Range to the Cascade Mountains to the high desert plains, there are many types of landscape and climate in our beautiful state. The Indigenous people who live in Oregon have cultures and societies that are well adapted to the land in which they live. Today, we're going to work together in groups to explore the different landscapes of Native American tribes in Oregon, both past and present.*

---

## Activity 1 (Continued)

### Step 6:

Have students form groups of four to six. Have each group assign the following roles:

1. One student is the **task leader** who will make sure the group stays focused
2. One student is the **question keeper** who will ask the teacher for help if the group gets stuck
3. One student is the **notetaker** whose worksheet will represent the group's discussion
4. One student is the **reporter** who will share the group's discussion with the whole class

### Step 7:

Distribute a copy of the Indigenous Cultural Regions Analysis worksheet to each student.

### Step 8:

Distribute a map packet to each group (and/or confirm the group has electronic access to the maps).

### Step 9:

Give groups about 25 minutes to examine the maps and make notes in their analysis worksheets. Monitor group activity and answer questions and check for understanding as needed.

### Step 10:

After groups have completed their worksheets, ask each presenter to share what their group recorded for each of the Indigenous cultural areas they explored.

---

## Activity 2

### Traditional lands today

---

#### **Step 1:**

Debrief the previous activity and set up this one.

#### **Say:**

*As we've seen, Indigenous people lived in every part of the state. Let's think and talk a bit more about the last maps we looked at.*

#### **Step 2:**

Display the slide with the Native American Tribes and language groups, and then the slide with the 1780 Indigenous population and modern reservations.

#### **Say:**

*We have to keep in mind that these maps are only estimates or best guesses by the cartographers. We don't know where precisely all the Indigenous groups lived. Tribes did not keep written records, and they had a different sense of boundaries and property ownership than Euro-American people who came later and drew many of these types of maps. With that in mind, what can we infer from the two slides?*

#### **Step 3:**

Have students discuss the following questions (ask or write on a sheet of poster paper, blackboard, or whiteboard):

- What is the story the two maps tell us?
- Why does the first map show many Indigenous groups living all over Oregon, while the second map shows only the nine reservations that exist today?
- Why are some of the names of groups on the second map different from those on the first map?
- What do you think happened to the other groups?

## Activity 2 (Continued)

### Step 4:

Show the “Oregon Tribes Today” slide and share the following with students.

### Say:

*While Native American had lived in Oregon since time immemorial, newcomers—mostly people of European descent—began arriving in the territory in large numbers in the 1800s to mine for gold, trap animals for their fur, and create farms and ranches. They competed with Native American tribes for use of the land. Sometimes the two groups would fight, and the U.S. government would send troops to suppress the Native people.*

*Over time, the settlers wanted more and more land, and the government took many actions to encourage settlement and to remove the tribes from their land and give it to the settlers. Ultimately, the U.S. government negotiated treaties—legal agreements—with many tribes, in which the tribes agreed to cede (give up) most of their land and move to areas set aside for them, called reservations, in exchange for protection, payment, and the guarantee of other goods and services. In most cases, tribes had very little choice but to sign the treaties because they were threatened with violence and weakened by disease and hunger.*

*Sometimes these reservations were far away from a tribe’s ancestral territory, and many tribal members died on the journey there. In many cases, when tribal members arrived at the reservation, the food and supplies that had been promised were never provided, so many Native people died of hunger. In addition, they sometimes found that the reservation was to be shared with other tribes, with languages and cultures different from their own.*

*Even this move to the reservations did not satisfy the desire of settlers for more land. Over time, they even took some of the land that had been set aside for the tribes. They did this illegally, breaking the terms of the treaties that had been signed and refusing to pay for the land they stole. As a result, the size of the reservations kept shrinking. What you see on the map is what is left.*



## Activity 2 (Continued)

*Despite these efforts to destroy their culture and steal their land, Native people have survived. There are now nine Native American tribes in Oregon [point to pre-written list of nine federally recognized tribes in Oregon] that the U.S. government recognizes as sovereign nations, which means they are independent nations with the right to set their own laws. As you can see, some of these sovereign nations are called the “confederated tribes” because they are actually made up of multiple tribes that were forced together onto a single reservation and who now work together for the good of all.*

### **Step 5:**

Pause to hold a short debrief and see if there are any questions or if students want to debrief. Students may want to explore this history at greater length. Acknowledge that this is a complex topic and that other lessons will provide a longer and more in-depth treatment of the interaction between Native people and Euro-American settlers.

### **Step 6:**

Distribute copies of the handout, The Importance of Land, to each student.

### **Say:**

*As we’ve just heard, Native American tribes in Oregon had almost all of their ancestral territory taken away. They were removed to reservations that—as you could see from comparing the maps—represented a very small portion of the land they had occupied since time immemorial. While all of their ancestral territory is sacred to Native people, the tribes’ ability to retain stewardship over at least some portion of that territory is vitally important to them. Many tribal members live on reservations, and they serve as the center of tribal life and tribal government. Right now, we’re going to read part of an interview in which a Burns Paiute tribal leader describes why it is important for his tribe and other Indigenous groups to have at least some land that all tribal members own together. As you will see, the connection between Indigenous people and the land is as strong as ever.*



---

## Activity 2 (Continued)

### **Step 7:**

Give students several minutes to read the handout. Take any questions and ask a volunteer or two to summarize in their own words what the message of the reading is.