1 / The Haunted City

EVERY AMERICAN CITY is built on Indian land, but few advertise it like Seattle. Go walking in the city, and you will see Native American images everywhere in the urban landscape. Wolf and Wild Man stalk the public spaces of downtown in the form of totem poles. Tlingit Orca totems adorn manhole covers, and a bronze Indian chieftain raises a welcoming hand as the monorail hums past. Street musicians, protestors, and holiday shoppers move across a plaza paved with bricks laid in the pattern of a cedar-bark basket. Souvenir shops hawk dreamcatchers and sweatshirts with totemic Frogs, while only doors down, a high-end gallery sells argillite totem poles, soapstone walruses, and Earthquake spirit masks carved by modern masters. Massive car ferries with names like *Klickitat* and *Elwha* slide across Puget Sound, passing an island where, since the 1962 world's fair, Kwakwaka'wakw performers have welcomed visitors and world leaders to a North Coast–style longhouse. Out in the neighborhoods, schoolchildren have adorned bus shelters with Haida designs of the Salmon spirit, and Coast Salish spindle whorls have been soldered into a sewage treatment station's security gates. And then there are the names on the land itself: one park named for a red paint used in traditional ceremonies and another for an ancient prairie; a marina called Shilshole and an industrial waterway known as Duwamish; the lakefront enclave of Leschi, named for an executed indigenous leader. Seattle, it seems, is a city in love with its Native American heritage.[1]

Indeed, it is the totem poles, motifs of the Salmon spirit, and ferries with Indian names that tell you where you are: without them, Seattle would somehow be less *Seattle*. Every carved image, every statue of

an Indian, every indigenous name on the land implies that you are here in this place and not in another. They are part of how you know you are not in New York or New Orleans, London or Los Angeles. They are what we expect from Seattle. They are stories about place.

Iconic western writer William Kittredge has described how stories and places are connected:

> Places come to exist in our imaginations because of stories, and so do we. When we reach for a "sense of place," we posit an intimate relationship to a set of stories connected to a particular location, such as Hong Kong or the Grand Canyon or the bed where we were born, thinking of histories and the evolution of personalities in a local context. Having "a sense of self" means possessing a set of stories about who we are and with whom and why.

In Seattle, visitors and residents alike tell and are told stories about this city: that it is built on Indian land, that that land was taken to build a great metropolis, and that such a taking is commemorated by the city's Native American imagery. These stories in and of place, these place-stories, define Seattle as a city with an indigenous pedigree.[2]

But Seattle is also a haunted city. In a metropolis built in indigenous territory, and where cellular phone towers only recently outnumbered totem poles, it comes as no surprise that Seattle has Indian ghosts. There is the tale of Joshua Winfield, a settler who built his home on an Indian cemetery near Lake Washington, only to be frightened into eternity by indigenous revenants one night in 1874. The spectral pleas of another Indian ghost, allegedly that of a murdered Native prostitute, have been heard since the Prohibition era in a rambling Victorian home near the Duwamish. At a nearby golf course, a naked Indian described as a shaman has been seen since the 1960s, dancing at night on what is rumored to be another indigenous burial ground. And at Pike Place Market, the apparition of an Indian woman in a shawl and floor-length skirt has appeared for generations in the windows of the magic shop and in the aisles of the bead store. Meanwhile, members of the local tribes pray for the dead on the banks of the industrial river named for their people, and Native storytellers lead purification ceremonies in the

underground streets and storefronts beneath Pioneer Square, in hopes of bringing peace to wandering indigenous specters.[3]

By far, though, the most famous haunting of Seattle is accomplished by the city's namesake, a man called Seeathl. A local indigenous leader of Duwamish and Suquamish heritage who facilitated the city's founding, Seeathl is best known for words he is said to have spoken during treaty discussions in the 1850s, when Seattle's urban promise seemed to require the dispossession of local Native peoples:

Your religion was written on tablets of stone by the iron finger of an angry God lest you forget. The red man could never comprehend nor remember it. Our religion is the tradition of our ancestors, the dreams of our old men, given to them in the solemn hours of the night by the Great Spirit, and the visions of our leaders, and it is written in the hearts of our people.

Your dead cease to love you and the land of their nativity as soon as they pass the portals of their tomb; they wander far away beyond the stars and are soon forgotten and never return. Our dead never forget this beautiful world that gave them being. They always love its winding rivers, its sacred mountains, and its sequestered vales, and they ever yearn in the tenderest affection over the lonely-hearted living and often return to visit, guide, and comfort them.

We will ponder your proposition, and when we decide, we will tell you. But should we accept it, I here and now make this the first condition, that we will not be denied the privilege, without molestation, of visiting at will the graves where we have buried our ancestors, and our friends, and our children.

Every part of this country is sacred to my people. Every hillside, every valley, every plain and grove has been hallowed by some fond memory or some sad experience of my tribe. Even the rocks, which seem to lie dumb as they swelter in the sun along the silent seashore in solemn grandeur, thrill with memories of past events connected with the lives of my people.

And when the last red man shall have perished from the earth and his memory among the white men shall have become a myth, these shores will swarm with the invisible dead of my tribe; and when your children's children shall think themselves alone in the fields, the store, the shop, upon the highway, or in the silence of the pathless woods, they will not be alone. In all the earth there is no place dedicated to solitude.

At night when the streets of your cities and villages will be silent and you

think them deserted, they will throng with returning hosts that once filled 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 powerless. Dead—did I say? There is no death, only a change of worlds.

According to *Seattle Times* writer Eric Scigliano, the Chief Seattle Speech, as it has come to be known, is a "ghost story like no other." It represents not just the words of one man but also "the innumerable souls who fished and sang and made art along these shores and had no inkling of cities." Seeathl gave voice to those "wraiths," and the city's modern residents, Scigliano warns, should "tread lightly and treat the land softly. You never know who might be watching—from above, or even nearer."[4]

But like any good haunting, the authenticity of the speech cannot be proven. It first appeared in print more than three decades after Seeathl put his mark on the Treaty of Point Elliott, and it bears a suspicious resemblance to Victorian prose lamenting the passing of the "red man." There is no question that Seeathl spoke eloquently at the treaty proceedings—he carried Thunder, which gave skills of oratory, as one of his many spirit powers—but his exact words are lost. What we do know, however, is that the speech has become a key text of both indigenous rights and environmentalist thinking, with some of its adherents going so far as to call it a "fifth Gospel." Simultaneously urtext and Rorschach test, the words of Seeathl haunt Seattle, telling stories of Native nobility, American colonialism, and longing for a lost environmental paradise. Somewhere between fiction and fact, these place-stories haunt any history of Seattle. But they often have little to do with the more complicated story of the real Seeathl, who died in 1866 on a reservation across Puget Sound from Seattle and was buried in a grave bearing his new Catholic name: Noah. Instead, these ghost stories of Seeathl have far more to do with the people telling them.[5]

This is the power of ghost stories, of phantoms at the Market, and the sage wisdom of dead chiefs: they tell us more about ourselves, and about our time, than they tell us about other people or the past. In writing of the role of ghosts in medieval European society, historian Jean-

Claude Schmitt has claimed that "the dead have no existence other than that which the living imagine for them," and recent scholarship on American ghosts has shown that hauntings are among the most telling of cultural phenomena, expressing powerful anxieties, desires, and regrets. As Judith Richardson has illustrated in her work on ghosts in New York's Hudson Valley, hauntings are in fact social memories inspired by rapid cultural and environmental change, arising not so much from moldering graves as from the struggle to create a meaningful history. Ghosts are also rooted in places, perhaps none more so than the ghosts of Indians. In her analysis of hauntings in American literature, Renée Bergland has argued that stories of Indian ghosts are also place-stories about what happened in particular places and what those happenings meant. "Europeans take possession of Native American lands, to be sure," Bergland writes, "but at the same time, Native Americans take supernatural possession of their dispossessors." Thence springs the resonance of the Chief Seattle Speech, which is not easily separated from the winding rivers and sequestered vales it mourns. It is a story about a place as much as it is a story about a people, and it is a story about us in the present as much as it is about historical actors.[6]

There is also an intimacy to Seattle's ghost stories. Among the indigenous people of Puget Sound, the phantasms most feared were those of the recent dead and of kin; these sorts of ghosts vexed the living and put them in great danger, particularly in the rainy winter months. The ghosts of strangers were far less dangerous. The greater its entanglement with the living, it was thought, the greater a phantom's power. And so it is in Seattle's ghostly history: the closer we have lived to each other, the more we have been haunted.

At the same time, the problem inherent in Seattle's Indian ghost stories—indeed the central problem of Seattle's Native American history—is that none of these imagined Indians was ever real. While there may be some kernel of historical truth to some of them, for the most part they are historical creations, both because they spring out of the city's past and because they are ways to make sense of that past. The danger in this, however, is that they all too often tell us exactly what we expected to hear. The restless Indian dead confirm the city's story-

line, which is this: Native history and urban history—and, indeed, Indians and cities—cannot coexist, and one must necessarily be eclipsed by the other. The standard story told about Seeathl and the city named for him is perhaps the best example of this narrative; take, for example, *New York Times* correspondent Tim Egan's version. In his best-selling meditation on Pacific Northwest history and landscape, *The Good Rain*, Egan writes of kayaking on Elliott Bay and pondering the connections between Seeathl and Seattle. Looking back and forth between the modern urban skyline and the site of the indigenous leader's grave across Puget Sound, Egan summarizes the story of the man and the city: "He lived to be a very old man, going from aboriginal king of Elliott Bay and the river that drained into it, to a withered curiosity on the muddy streets of what would become the largest city in the country named after a Native American." To understand Seeathl and Seattle, it seems that this is all you need to know, and it tells us what we knew all along: that the Native past must give way to the urban future. The place-story of Chief Seattle is about the change from one world to another, with Native history surviving only as a prophetic shadow, a disturbing memory, an instructive haunting.[7]

This is not to say that Indian people do not exist in the urban present. Of course they do—in the thousands. Some of them, in fact, have also become part of the city's narrative. Along with totem poles and Seeathl, the homeless street Indian completes the city's trinity of Native imagery. This third kind of Indian place-story, however, is less often an indictment of the injustices of the urban political economy than it is a tale about racial inevitability. In short, stories about Native people on Seattle's streets are also a kind of ghost story. In Jack Cady's murder mystery *Street*, for example, the shape-shifting narrator takes on the form of "an aging Tlingit seduced south from Alaska" who dreams of killer whales and talking salmon, while in *Still Life with Woodpecker,* Tom Robbins's heroine Princess Leigh-Cheri wanders through downtown, noticing that "Indian winos, in particular, were unhurried by the weather." Both Robbins and Cady conflate street Indians with the very atmosphere of the city: Robbins cloaks his version of Seattle in a "shamanic rain" that whispers "like the ecstasy of primitives," while Cady's city hun-

kers down under weather systems "more gray and ancient than a solitary old Indian." Meanwhile, in *Hunting Mr. Heartbreak*, Jonathan Raban recalls seeing homeless Native people sprawled in a bricked-over doorway in Belltown on his first visit to Seattle. They were "like sacks of garbage waiting for collection by the early-morning truck. I tiptoed past them," he notes, "as one walks needlessly quietly in the presence of the dead."[8]

And so here is the moral of the urban Indian story as we think we know it: that Native people in the city are barely people; they are instead shades of the past, linked almost mystically to a lost nature. Cady spells it out directly: one of his characters, a homeless Haida-Filipino man named Jimmy, is described as "turning into a ghost right before our eyes. That's not a white man's metaphor," Cady's narrator tells us. "It's an Indian fact." It is as though the returning hosts, those phantoms prophesied in the Chief Seattle Speech, have turned out to be nothing more than homeless Indians. Even Seattle resident Sherman Alexie, the Spokane–Coeur d'Alene Indian author rightly lauded for the complicated humanity of his Native characters, slides effortlessly into this urban parable. In his novel *Indian Killer*, in which "every city was a city of white men," racist cops and a serial killer share Seattle with a troupe of Indians living under the Alaskan Way Viaduct, all dampening in that same rain, here an "occupying force." But his hero, John Smith, who may or may not be the murderer scalping white men throughout the city, has nothing to fear from the rain: "He was aboriginal," Alexie writes. "He stepped through this rain and fog without incident." Even in *Indian Killer*, otherwise a powerful meditation on what it means to be both modern and Indian, cities are somehow places where Native people cannot belong except as half-fulfilled people or as ciphers for nature. Being a metaphor in Seattle, it would seem, is an Indian fact.[9]

And if cities indelibly mark their Indian inhabitants in urban ghost stories, then these homeless Indians also mark the city in return, and not just in fictional accounts. Although more than ten thousand people of indigenous ancestry—including lawyers and activists, bus drivers and artists, bankers and newspaper editors—now call Seattle home, it is the homeless Indians who are most visible in Seattle's urban land-

scape and who in fact seem to make Seattle *Seattle*. They make Pike Place Market's public restrooms one of the city's "true" landmarks according to one local alternative weekly, because the toilets are "the one place where bustling tourists, drunken Indians, and desperate junkies come together . . . in a sort of cultural nexus, representing all that is truly great about this fine city." For some like local essayist Emily Baillargeon, Native people on the streets signify urban inequality. "As new corporate legions rush home or to their after-hours playgrounds," she wrote during the high-tech boom of the 1990s, "they brush past alcoholic Native Americans camped out on rain-slicked corners." Even among the homeless themselves, Native people are part of Seattle's geography: one white street kid in the University District, for example, noted that "downtown it's all drunk Indians." So while we can infer from some ghost stories that Native people are somehow incapable of being fully human in Seattle—that the urban and the Indian are somehow antonyms—we also learn more about this place through stories about Indians: what kind of city Seattle is, and who belongs where.[10]

None of this is to say that homelessness and other, more subtle forms of dislocation are not central to the urban Indian experience. On the contrary, loss of cultural identity, debilitating poverty, and institutionalized racism have each shaped the lives of many Native people throughout Seattle's history. The history that follows makes this clear. The problem with stories about metaphorical urban Indians, however, is that they allow us to imagine only certain kinds of Native history in the city: the parts we are prepared to see by the stories we tell. These stories mask more complicated experiences: the surprising opportunities offered by urban life, the creative struggles to carve out Indian spaces in the city, and, most importantly, the ways in which Native women and men have contributed to urban life. Stories of ghosts and totem poles and dispossessed chieftains cast Indians only as passive victims of, rather than active participants in, the urban story. These place-stories are the easy way out, allowing us to avoid doing our homework. In other words, they make appealing fiction but bad history.

If the prophetic chieftains and totem poles, like the shamanic rains and homeless ghosts, are all supposed to make Seattle somehow

unique (and each of these stories is tied closely to urban boosterism and marketing, as we shall see), then it is surprising how closely Seattle's stories track with national narratives. Our city's place-stories and those of our nation mirror each other—Indians and cities exist at opposite ends of the American imaginary; one represents the past, while the other represents the future. For all their differences, last Mohicans, final showdowns at Wounded Knees, and lone Ishis wandering out of the California foothills are variations on the same theme: the inevitable disappearance of indigenous peoples before the onslaught of American progress. Cities, on the other hand, are the ultimate avatars of that progress, representing the pinnacle of American technology, commerce, and cultural sophistication. It comes as no surprise, then, that many nineteenth-century representations of American expansion show Indians watching forlornly as townscapes appear on the horizon. John Gast's famous *American Progress* (1872), for example, shows Progress embodied as an enormous (and, dare we say it, ghostly) white woman floating westward over the continent, trailing telegraph wire. Behind her, a locomotive steams across the plains and a great city of bridges and smokestacks sprawls in the sunrise, while ahead of her Indians and buffalo flee into the shrinking darkness. Seattle's counterpart is a 1906 brochure selling real estate on the tideflats south of downtown; it features figures that look suspiciously like Hiawatha and Pocahontas gazing over placid waters toward a belching urban skyline. These are place-stories, telling us how the nation became what it is and who belongs where—and when.[11]

If popular culture has placed cities and Indians at two ends of the nation's historical trajectory, then academic scholarship has given that place-story its legitimacy. The connections between urban and Indian histories—both in Seattle and across the nation—have yet to be made, even in studies of the American West, a region defined both by its urban nature and by the persistence of Native peoples. From the Allegheny Mountains to the Pacific Coast, towns and cities were the vanguards of American conquest, appearing (and sometimes disappearing again) with stunning rapidity. The survival of western cities hinged on their ability to control hinterlands of people, places, and things—loggers, goldfields,

water—and so the consolidation and conquest of the American West were urban phenomena. In urban histories, however, Indians all too often appear only in the introduction or first chapter, then exit stage left after a treaty or a battle. Its regional mythology, and much of its scholarship, still defined by the battle between civilization and savagery, the American West seems to have room for either cities or Indians but not both.[12]

Meanwhile, the vast literature on Native peoples in the American West has uncovered the economic, political, cultural, and social components of Indian dispossession, as well as the diverse ways in which Native people responded, ranging from accommodation to resistance. Much of this western Indian history has focused on reservations, and for a good reason: these are the places where colonial policies created long paper trails, and these are the places where indigenous and tribal ways of life have remained most visible. In cities, Indians are harder to find, and as a result, among the thousands of books, monographs, and articles on Indian history in the West, only a scant few focus on urban places.[13]

When scholars do study Indians in cities, their research falls into two camps. First, there are studies of the problems facing Native people in urban places, often focusing on the notion of "disaffiliation." While offering insights into the experiences of Native people in cities, such studies (including many conducted in Seattle) often pathologize their subjects and take for granted the alleged inability of many Native people to cope with urban (and, by association, modern) life. The second kind of scholarship about urban Indians, based in the New Social History inspired by the civil-rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s, focuses on the development of urban Indian organizations in cities throughout the country. More than simply institutional histories, these works also examine the role such organizations have played in the creation of new Indian, and especially pan-Indian, identities. Increasingly, they are written by Native people themselves. But virtually none of these works of recent urban Indian history include the deeper, indigenous histories of the places where those organizations took form. If urban and Native histories rarely speak to each other, then the histories of indigenous peoples on whose lands cities were built and the histories of present-day urban Indian communities are also estranged.[14]

In *Native Seattle*, I bring together multiple kinds of Native history in order to challenge the assumption that Indian and urban histories are somehow mutually exclusive. I include histories of the indigenous people of Seattle—of the Duwamish and Shilshole and Lake peoples who helped birth the city and yet who bore its greatest burdens. I also include histories of the many Indian migrants, from dozens of tribes and communities, who have been coming to this place for much longer than most of us realize. Lastly, I include the Chief Seattle Speech and other Indian imagery that has often been closely linked to debates about who belongs in the city and what it has meant to live in a place that has been transformed so quickly and so utterly.

Throughout Seattle's past, the strands of urban and Indian history have been entwined, and there is very little distance, in either space or time, between the dispossession of local indigenous people, the rise of an urban pan-Indian community, and the development of urban narratives populated with Indian metaphors. At almost every turn, what it meant to be urban and what it meant to be Native have been inextricably linked in Seattle.

The histories in these pages are drawn not just from the mythic narratives of Seattle's received history but from archival materials and oral traditions. They are linked to particular places in the city, and to the dramatic changes that have, quite literally, *taken place* on Seattle's shores and hills and streets. While not as explicitly an environmental history as other studies, *Native Seattle* nonetheless combats the urban-Indian-as-metaphor stereotype by not only describing the lived experiences of Native people in the city and its hinterland but by grounding the city within particular Native places ranging from a fishing camp buried beneath fill in the heart of the city to a British Columbia village linked to Seattle by trade and migration. By examining the environmental transformations of these places and the movement of people, things, and symbols between and among them, this book links Seattle's urban Native pasts to the broader scholarship regarding the resettlement of indigenous territories, the ecology of cities and their hinterlands, and narratives regarding nature, culture, and history.

One place where these kinds of histories come together is Pioneer

Place Park at the corner of First Avenue and Yesler Way, where a long-vanished sawmill once powered Seattle's commercial beginnings. Here, a Tlingit totem pole, a bronze bust of Seeathl, and an art installation calling attention to the struggles of homeless Indians represent the three facets of Seattle's Native iconography: the exotic aesthetics of the northern Northwest Coast, the noble urban namesake, and the pathetic Indian of the streets. Pioneer Place Park, like the historic Pioneer Square neighborhood that surrounds it, is an archive of urban narratives. But in Whulshootseed, the indigenous language of Puget Sound country, neither carries the name "Pioneer," a word that reflects only one version of history. In Whulshootseed, it is "Little Crossing-Over Place." Long before Henry Yesler set up his sawmill, this was a tidal lagoon tucked behind a small island. It was home to great cedar longhouses, whose residents fished for flounders in the lagoon, gathered berries and bulbs in nearby prairies, drank clear water from springs in the hillside, and buried their dead on a bluff overlooking Elliott Bay. Before it was a place of narratives *about* Indians, then, this was a place inhabited *by* Indians. And long after Yesler's sawmill had burned, Pioneer Place became, for a while at least, the heart of an urban Indian community whose members eked out a living in the district of flophouses and taverns that birthed the term "skid road." Different places with the same set of coordinates, Little Crossing-Over Place, Skid Road, and Pioneer Place Park are three layers in an urban palimpsest, a gathering of place-stories. In between them lie ashes and sawdust, brick and asphalt, opportunity and misery—in other words, the detritus of Seattle's Native multiple pasts.

There is Little Crossing-Over Place, where an indigenous community gave way to sawmills and single-resident occupancy hotels, but there is also the larger crossing-over place of Seattle as a whole. Go virtually anywhere in Seattle, and you are close to it. Among the bungalows and beachside biking trails are the home of a sacred horned serpent, the site of a burning longhouse, and an upland clearing full of marsh tea and cranberries. Between and behind the art galleries and gas stations are the first Indian Center, the riverside studio of a Native artist hired to carve totem poles, and the apartment of a woman down from Juneau to get an education. The entire city is a palimpsest, a text erased only

partially and then written over again. It is a landscape of places changed by power, of Indian places transformed into urban ones and sometimes back again. Or, to borrow the words of historian James Ronda, the story of Seattle is "a story about power and places, and what happens when power changes places, and then how places are in turn changed." Seattle's past is rich with these kinds of crossings.[15]

Native Seattle is also intended as a crossing of different kinds of history. Beyond bringing together urban and Indian histories, it also brings cultural, social, and environmental histories into conversation with each other. Literary criticism and postcolonial studies have emphasized the power of narrative to define, debase, and control the Other, and Seattle is no exception. The place-stories told in this city were a key method of dispossession and discrimination, and in trying to understand them, *Native Seattle* is a cultural history. But as Cole Harris, the elder statesman of Canadian geography, has shown, it is not enough to merely tell stories about stories: we must look beyond the literary and cultural forms of colonialism to examine the material conditions that ultimately implemented those stories. We need to examine the roles that physical power, the state, flows of capital, and technologies like law and mapping played in turning indigenous territory into a modern metropolis. I accomplish this here through the lenses of social history—the unearthing of the lived experiences of ordinary people—and environmental history. Nature may not have agency in this story as clearly as it does in most works of environmental history, but the irruptions of unfinished history, so common in Seattle's urban story, are grounded in place. As the land is transformed, it gives up new stories and reveals new layers of the past, and in those new stories can be found the agency of ancient, inhabited natures. Finally, it should not be forgotten that all environmental history in the Americas, by definition, is Native history, because it has all happened on Indian land.[16]

With these multiple Native histories in mind, then, Seattle's story can offer insights into other places. For all its uniqueness (again, few large American cities have so consistently used Indian imagery to define their own image), Seattle's history suggests that other cities may have urban Indian stories of their own. In Chicago, with its origins in the

Fort Dearborn "massacre," or in New York City and its "$24 Question," as Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace have called the Dutch purchase of indigenous Manhattan, the opportunities exist for a new kind of urban history that begins with those cities' place-stories. Meanwhile, bringing the benevolent friars and pious neophytes who haunt the place-stories of Californian cities into conversation with Native social history might reorient the meaning of places like San Francisco and Los Angeles. Every American city—Boston, Omaha, Honolulu, Savannah—has the potential for this kind of history, as do places like Vancouver or Veracruz, Sapporo or Sydney, or any other place shaped by encounters between the urban and the indigenous.[17]

In the end, though, all history is local, and so I limit my view to one city, and in doing so reorient Seattle's urban story by placing its Native histories at the center. I challenge narratives of civic progress by focusing on the costs, both planned and unforeseen, of urban development. This is not always a happy story. In his classic, remarkable study of the Marquesas, Greg Dening describes the metaphorical islands and beaches—the categories of "we" and "they" and the boundaries between them—that shaped the history of real islands and beaches in the Pacific. He notes that, for the people who experienced them, and to some extent for the people who study them, "the remaking of those sorts of islands and the crossing of those sorts of beaches can be cruelly painful." This is certainly true of Seattle's history or, in the words of poet Colleen McElroy, "Seattle's awful history, where all that is breathtaking is breath taking." This is not always a happy story, but perhaps more importantly, it is rarely a simple one either.[18]

Seattle is haunted by urban conquest and by its many Native pasts. But put the ghost stories aside, and see what happened here before the ghosts came. Begin at the supposed beginning, at the moment when the first breath was taken: in Seattle's version of the encounter between Pawtuxet and Plymouth, between indigenous and European worlds. On a beach, to be precise.