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Bioregional Field Studies: the Duwamish River
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The Duwamish Tribes are still fighting to gain the rights given to them in a treaty signed in Jan 1855. The American Federal Government, having removed the tribe from their land and burnt all their longhouses now call them a "Landless Tribe" and they remain unrecognized in the official sense. However, their roots are ingrained in the much manipulated soil of the Duwamish area and like all deep root systems they are now pushing up new shoots, building a new longhouse on Duwamish land, and will continue to flower and propagate.

The Lowland Puget sound area has been constantly changing and evolving over the last 16,000 years when the rapidly melting Vashon Age Ice Sheet lifted the heavy burden from the earth, caused the land and sea to rise, and carved channels through the landscape. Volcanic activity in the area has continued to change the topography and ecology of the region and in this temperate coastal climate, earthquakes, tsunami waves, landslides and lunar tides have added and subtracted great sums of wood and mineral deposits, creating richness, diversity and balance. The Duwamish people and the salmon of the Duwamish River learned to adapt to the many varied natural hazards of the locale over thousands of years. Both were able to adjust to the many floods and natural geological phenomenal changes, embracing them and giving them the necessary spiritual significance they deserve in their mystery and immenseness. Arrival of the first white settlers to the neighborhood in 1841 brought upon great and grave changes not only to the river and salmon, but also to the people who lived interdependently as part of a vast balanced ecosystem. Modification of the river started in 1895 to turn it into a shipping and sewage channel and by 1920 the great river of life had turned so much that Seetoowathl starved to death on its banks, along with his wife. The wide meandering shallow river was turned on its side to form a deep fast flowing narrow one and the Alluvial fans of the Puget Sound were dammed and filled, along with the flattening of hills to build the city of Seattle. The chief of Seattle "Chief Si'ahl" was moved out and the tribes' longhouses burnt in the 1890's. Thankfully, forest fires aid new growth and the Native Americans have made use of fires in the past to sustain their lives and culture, and are adapting again to their new environment.