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Most of these references list place names along the shores of the Salish Sea, especially Puget Sound. A few are useful general discussions of place name research and theory (the study of toponymy), with particular mastery illustrated by the works of George Stewart, Robert Hitchman, Bryce Wood, Gary Reese, Gene Hunn, and Dale Kinkade. Basso (1996) is state of the art for Indian Country. Of note, place names can indicate the different languages once spoken in a region, and thus show shifts in population over time. For example, in southern Puget Sound, historically occupied by Southern Lushootseed speakers, traces of its occupation by Tsamosan speakers are indicated by a few of its place names. Also, several branches of Coast Salish passed down the Salishan Funnel of the Chehalis River after it was widened as the outflow from the huge glacier that carved out Puget Sound.

Glaciers and volcanic eruptions also shifted languages over time. For instance, the Skagit once flowed into the Fraser River, the 1700 Tsumani rearranged the Washington Coast, and the Osceola mudflow (lahar) off Mount Rainier impacted natives along its slopes.

Today, the shores of the Salish Sea are marked by place names from languages spoken all over the world, yet those of the First People still provide the base line.

Dr Jay Miller Lushootseed Research Lushootseed.org

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Break Downs

Place names can have a variety of meanings, grammatical segments, and references. Two examples are the early work of Edmond Meany and Thomas Waterman.

Meany (1923, vi) lists 2813 place name entries for Washington state, with 771 being cross references. Of the remaining 2042 names, 842 refer to individuals, 399 to physical features, 191 to towns, states, countries, 115 to crops, trees, animals, or birds; 68 to freakish ideas, 17 to American ships; and 6 to British ships, while 386 come from native languages, 33 from Spanish, and 6 are Biblical names.

Within the TT Waterman place name manuscript, Seattle and vicinity has 323 native place names, which separate into six categories referring to $actions^1$ (55), bio-species² (73), geo-anatomy³ (113), devices⁴ (24), religious⁵ (7), and unknown (51). Examples of each category are footnoted below.

- ¹ Actions = canoeing, paddling, sliding, digging
- ² Bio-Species = animal 11, plant 36, fish 12, bird 13, shell 1
- ³ Anatomy 33 = nose, mouth, head, neck, lip, ear, breast, fingers, space-shape 20 Geography 50 = prairie, lake, creek, slough, bog, marsh, rock, trail, water, colors
- ⁴ Devices = tool, clothing, construction, building
- ⁵ Religious = taboo, spirits, rite