

# DOWNTOWN SPOKANE Brownfields WALKING TOUR



**FOR MANY GENERATIONS,** Spokane Tribal families relied on river waterways for nourishment and medicinal and spiritual purposes, with the grand Spokane Falls serving as a gathering place for Spokane Tribal Ancestors. Now they share that gathering place—and the name of the tribe itself—with the modern, thriving City of Spokane. Through innovative redevelopment, areas that were once contaminated by industry have been revitalized into beneficial public spaces.

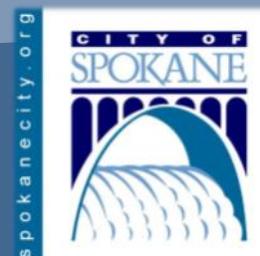
## Tribal history

Native mythology ties humans to this place from the beginning of creation, though archeologists have evidence of human habitation reaching nearly to the end of the last Ice Age some 15,000 years ago.

Successive waves of inhabitants developed one strand of what anthropologists call Columbia Plateau Culture, including the Spokane Tribe. Three major Spokane groups lived along the river—the Lower Spokanes, near the river’s connection with the Columbia River; and two other bands, the Middle and Upper Spokanes, who occupied lands along shorelines and tributaries as far east as Lake Coeur d’Alene.

Spokane Tribal members hunted, fished, and collected roots and berries to feed their families throughout the year. Salmon ran up as far as the Spokane Falls and into the river’s tributaries.

The Spokanes and other regional tribes gathered along the river annually to fish for salmon, a staple of their diet. They fished in several locations, including the Little Falls downstream near the Columbia, near the outflow of the Little Spokane River, at the mouth of Latah (Hangman) Creek, and at the Lower Spokane Falls, the last point at which the salmon could travel on the river.



Debbie Finley, historian and member of the Colville Tribe, wrote in a 1995 *Spokesman-Review* article that between 200 and 5,000 Indians gathered near the falls every year for the salmon harvest.

The lower falls and gorge are still considered sacred to the Spokane Tribe. To this day, regional tribes gather every year near the falls (the Spokane Pow-Wow) to celebrate their traditional and contemporary culture. Many of the same fishing and hunting practices are used, just as the same roots and berries are collected by modern Spokane Tribal families. Spokane Tribal Elders continue to teach the Salish language to the youngest



members of their tribe. Salish language classes are held on the Spokane Indian Reservation. Oral history remains the main source of history preservation.

## Riverfront Park

Riverfront Park's 100 acres of land and water have a rich and varied history.



Development started in the late 1870s with industries that used Spokane Falls for power generation. Factories, flour and lumber mills, and various commercial enterprises were built by the 1880s, as well as a residential population. Railroad lines to service these industries were completed, including railroad trestles on the south bank of the river.

Rail traffic increased when Great Northern Railroad arrived in 1881. Most of downtown Spokane and several buildings within the park were destroyed in the Great Fire of 1889. The area was rebuilt after the fire, and by 1900, new development was in place along the south bank of the Spokane River, predominantly city and municipal buildings but also paint shops and printing facilities. Mill activities used the Spokane River to transport and store logs. When the Union Pacific Passenger Depot was built in 1914, many of the residences and lodgings in the area became displaced. By 1929, the park area was almost completely developed with buildings and railroad infrastructure. Eventually

the site became a regional hub for rail industry and transportation, containing multiple factories, depots, and tracks for four transcontinental railroads. Some tracks had to be built on trestles to accommodate through-traffic. The area continued to be used for industry and transportation with little disruption until the late 1950s when declining industrial conditions led to the vacancy and demolition of many long-standing buildings. By the 1960s, most buildings (including both rail depots) had been demolished and replaced with parking areas.

The City of Spokane acquired the railroad properties in the park area in 1972, and all remaining railroad and industrial structures (except the clocktower) were removed by 1973. The park was then constructed as the site for the World's Fair of 1974 (Expo '74), which was the first to have an environmental theme. Plans included an extensive alteration of the park area, including the addition of large amounts of fill to bring areas to grade. Many permanent and temporary structures were built for Expo '74; the temporary buildings were largely demolished by 1975. The 1909 Looff Carrousel, originally located in Natatorium Park, was also moved to Riverfront Park. Only the pavilion, gondolas, and clocktower remained. The park has remained relatively unchanged since 1975.

Contamination at the site is mainly related to its railroad history, industrial history, usage of fill, and the Great Fire. Rail use often contributes metals-contaminated ash from cleaning coal-fired engines, petroleum from various fuels (diesel, bunker C oil, or lubrication oil), and some solvents from metal part cleaning and maintenance. Industrial uses contribute solvents from

metal cleaning, paint, and dry cleaning fluid. The high quantity of fill used at the site contained large amounts of ash and burned material from the Great Fire, which contains polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) created during combustion. These compounds are in soils at the park, and pose a risk if directly contacted, ingested, or inhaled. If these soils erode into the river, it risks degrading water quality. The lower concentrations and lower leachability of these contaminants lowers the risk to groundwater.

The cleanup approach at the park is to reduce the chance of direct contact, dust generation, or erosion. This is often accomplished by containing the soils in-place, usually through capping. As work has progressed through different areas of the park, soil is sampled. These areas include the Ice Ribbon/Skyride, Loeff Carrousel, Central Green, former Canada Island, and North Bank. Contaminated soil is excavated and stockpiled in a protected location. The approximately 8,000 cubic yards of stockpiled soil will be used, along with crushed concrete and other clean material from the park, to create a terraced embankment under the pavilion area. The embankment will only have contaminated soil at the bottom center and will be surrounded by a protective layer of clean soil on all exposed faces to prevent erosion and contact. This area



will be a public gathering space for performances.

In 2016, the City of Spokane applied for three U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) cleanup grants to assist in the estimated \$3-million remediation. This only covers remediation and containment of contaminated soils encountered during construction, not the entire 100-acre park. In 2017, the EPA awarded all three \$200,000 grants for Havermale Island, Canada Island, and North Bank.

In 2017, The Spokane Park Board voted unanimously to rename Canada Island “snxw mene®” (sin-HOO-men-huh), meaning “salmon people.”

## Spokane Tribal Gathering Place, “The Place Where Salmon is Prepared,” and Huntington Park

Located north of Spokane’s City Hall on Post Street, the Spokane Tribal Gathering Place connects Riverfront Park with Huntington Park, a public space showcasing the powerful Spokane Falls. It provides a great venue for community events and enjoying the river.

The Gathering Place was once a parking lot between the historic City Hall and Washington Water Power (WWP) buildings. There was no access to the river. Avista removed and disposed of approximately 5,000 cubic yards of contaminated material (PAHs and lead) from beneath the City Hall parking lot at a cost of \$294,704.

The park is named after David L. Huntington, WWP's third president who served from 1910 to 1927. Huntington led WWP during a time of unprecedented expansion. Avista redeveloped this park to give residents and visitors a close-up look at the awesome



power of this great river. Located on the south bank of the Spokane River, within the shadow of the original WWP Post Street substation and the spray zone of the Lower Falls, Huntington Park is a legacy to the city and the area’s tribal history.

## Kendall Yards

The 77-acre Kendall Yards property is near downtown and south of one of Spokane's oldest neighborhoods, West Central.

In 1914, North Pacific and Milwaukee Railroad (later Union Pacific) built bridges across the Spokane River and purchased the property from Spokane College for a rail line operational facility. Great Northern Railroad brought its main line along the northern edge of the property. The complex was on the western portion of the site and included a turntable, above-ground oil tanks, and oil-distribution pipelines. Coal- and oil-fired steam engines were serviced here. The railroads operated until 1955. Between 1955 and the late 1980s, the railroad corridors were abandoned, parts of the elevated Union Pacific corridor were removed, and the sunken Great Northern corridor was filled to grade.

The central portion of the property only had railroad tracks. The eastern portion included warehousing, a plating operation, perishable goods storage, and several municipal facilities.

Contaminants are similar to Riverfront Park given the railroad history. Bunker C fuel and metals-containing ash were found over much of the western part. The eastern portion contained metals, solvents, PAHs, and petroleum from the plating and municipal uses.

The parcel has been through several owners and attempts at cleanup. Black Rock Development purchased it from Metropolitan Mortgage due to bankruptcy and entered Ecology's Voluntary Cleanup Program. They received \$3,775,000 from the



Revolving Loan Fund for cleanup. Contaminated soils were excavated and disposed at an approved landfill. About 20 acres were cleaned up, with over 140,000 cubic yards of soil removed. Dust control was a major component given the dry soils and nearby homes.

Washington has a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) type tool called Local Revitalization Financing (LRF) (Ch. 39.104 RCW). It is similar to other state's TIF programs but is not nearly as robust. Kendall Yards is an LRF and a Multi-Family Tax Exempt area. These economic development incentives are two of the largest incentives at work in the area.

Kendall Yards is a multi-use walkable community with connectivity to downtown Spokane. Street-level commercial businesses are mixed with public spaces and art, Centennial Trail connection, and single- and multi-family housing. Construction began with multi-family housing and the commercial district, and more apartments, condos, and houses have followed. A locally owned grocery store was constructed to serve the community. The later phases will primarily involve residential and public spaces.

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