Stop #4 – Caxlʷsb "Clayey Ground" (Blakely Harbor): Tectonic Forces & Tectonic Changes

Now, before we dive into the bustling industrial past, let's take a moment to imagine what this place looked like long, long ago.

Imagine you're paddling into this deep, sheltered bay – called Caxlʷsb in Lushootseed. The name translates as "Clayey Ground", which is an apt name for the low-lying embayment from the sea that was home to marshlands. This is a perfect winter camp, protected by those rolling hills to the north and south. You're returning from a day spent fishing, perhaps hauling in hefty halibut or silvery salmon, or gathering shellfish and seaweed. This is the life of the Coast Salish people, intimately connected to the waters of the Salish Sea.

And look at your vessel! A magnificent canoe, carved from a massive, ancient cedar log. These weren't just simple boats; they were works of art, marvels of engineering. Nowhere else in the world were canoes developed to such a degree of sophistication and artistry. Think about the labor involved: months of careful work, selecting the perfect old-growth cedar, sometimes 300 to 800 years old, with straight grain and few knots.

Photographs of a Northwest Coast canoe c.1910, by Edward Curtis, is shown above

These canoes weren't just transportation; they were a vital part of the culture, a symbol of community and spirituality. Distances were measured by how far a canoe could travel in a day. Trade routes stretched across the Salish Sea, connecting nations through commerce and marriage.

The carvers prepared themselves spiritually with fasting, prayers, and the sweat lodge. A prayer was offered to the cedar tree, thanking it for its sacrifice. The log was rough-shaped, the bark and sapwood removed with axes and adzes. Then, it was left to season over winter, preventing cracks. The interior was hollowed out with wedges, controlled burning, and more adzing. Finally, hot rocks and water were used to steam-bend the sides, creating that elegant curve and adding strength.

Imagine the skill required! Some of these canoes were massive, over 60 feet long, capable of carrying five tons of cargo or warriors. And when the wind was right, sails made of woven cattail, cedar bark, or even cedar boards were hoisted. Though they couldn't sail directly into the wind, a following breeze could propel them swiftly. And of course, every canoe had bailers, often made from cedar bark, to keep them dry.

Photograph of a traditional canoe with sail, c1910, by Edward Curtis.

Canoe under sail: Photo by Asahel Curtis, Washington State Historical Society, #1943-42-19251

Old Clallam Indian at Jamestown making a canoe from a large cedar log.

Now, as you paddle closer to shore, you might see women gathering mussels, clams, and seaweed. If you were from another village, you'd approach respectfully, paddles raised in peace, asking permission to come ashore. And here, in this sheltered bay, you'd find the Suquamish winter camp, with their longhouses facing the water.

Suquamish woman gathering shellfish. Photo courtesy of Suquamish Museum

These weren't just temporary shelters; they were permanent villages, with rectangular houses built from cedar planks and logs. Some were enormous, up to 600 feet long, housing multiple families.

Fast forward a few centuries, and Blakely Harbor looked very different. By the late 1800s, this quiet bay had transformed into a bustling industrial hub. But before we get to that, if you're paddling in from Restoration Point, take a moment to appreciate the journey. You can even make a side trip to Blakely Rocks, a great spot for a break, with sandy beaches at low tide. Keep an eye out for bald eagles and sea lions, but remember to give them plenty of space!

Route from Restoration Point (Stop 3) to Blakely Harbor (Stop 4). Blakely Rocks is a worthwhile side trip if paddling conditions are suitable. Restoration Point is the location of noticeable (approx. 23 ft) of uplift during the 900AD earthquake on the Seattle Fault (see Stop 3).

Blakely Rocks. There is a sandy landing at lower tides on the west side of the island.

As you paddle into the western end of the harbor, you'll find sandy beaches perfect for landing your kayak. For those of you arriving by car, there's ample parking and trails to

explore. And while you're here, take note: there are restrooms and picnic tables, but no potable water, so bring your own.

As you enter the western end of Blakely Harbor, you can beach your kayak on most of the sandy beaches east of the log pond. If you are local, you can rent space on a kayak rack at the park to have your kayak near the water and ready for paddling.

Blakely Harbor Park Map, including facilities and trails.

Now, let's take a moment to appreciate the contrast. Today, Blakely Harbor is a peaceful retreat. But imagine the clamor of a booming shipyard, the scent of freshly cut cedar and fir, and the sounds of industry. This harbor, once a quiet winter camp, would become a major center for logging and shipbuilding, and a point of arrival for Japanese immigrants to Bainbridge Island. We'll explore that remarkable transformation in the next part of our tour. But first, we need to understand how global geological processes tens of millions of years ago set the stage for habitation and industry.

The Geological Origins of Blakely Harbor – What Happens When Continents Collide!

Let's delve into the fascinating geological history of Blakely Harbor. This isn't just a scenic bay; it's a testament to the immense forces that shaped the Salish Sea and, in turn, influenced the maritime heritage we see here today.

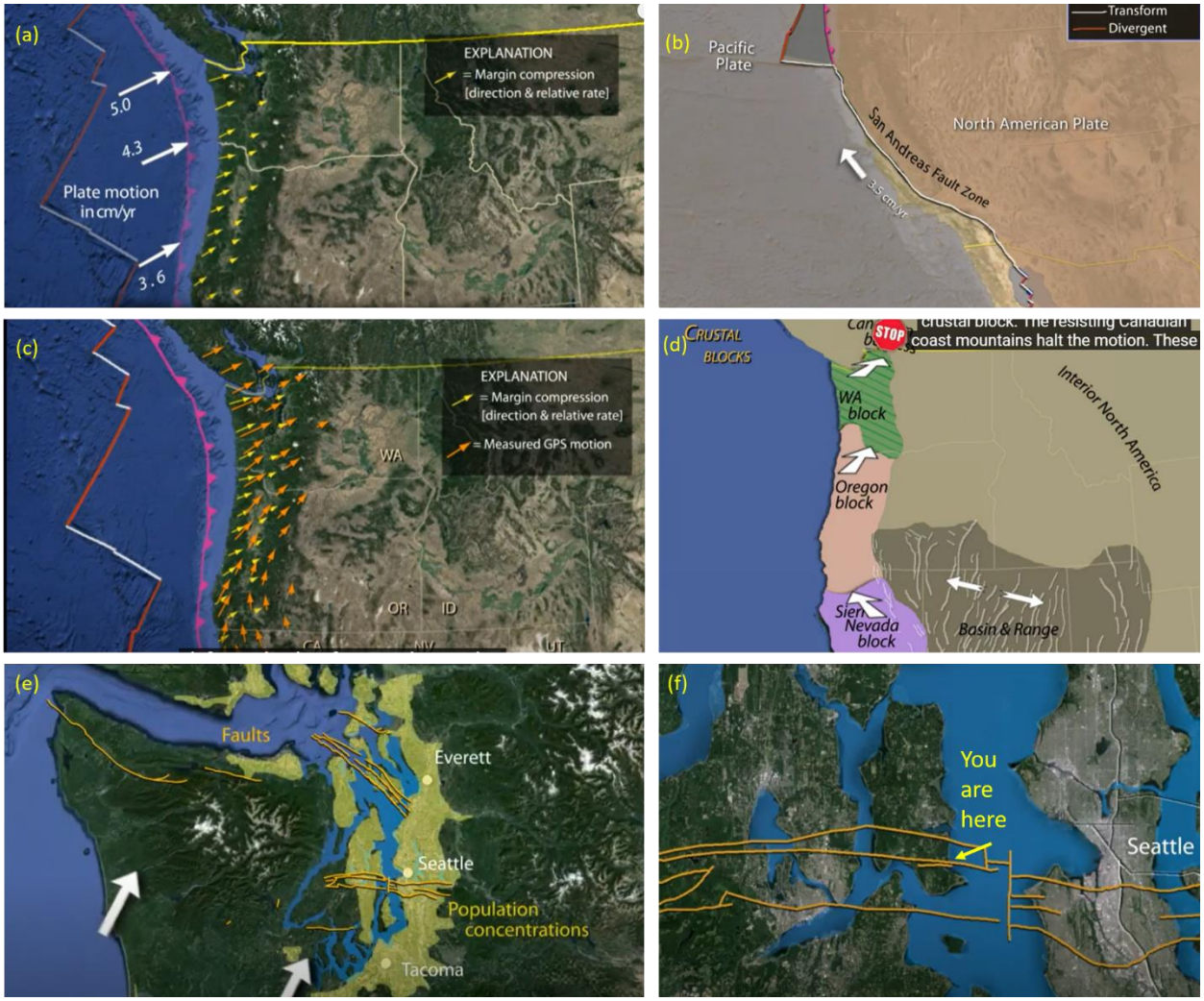
We've touched on plate tectonics and glacial processes at previous stops, but Blakely Harbor allows us to explore these concepts in greater detail. Understanding the geology

here explains why this area was so crucial for the Coast Salish people and later, for the lumber and shipbuilding industries.

Remember our discussion of the Juan de Fuca Plate and the North American Plate at Restoration Point? Well, there's more to the story. To truly understand the formation of Blakely Harbor, I highly recommend checking out this excellent video by IRIS, the Incorporated Research Institutions for Seismology. It provides a fantastic visual explanation of the processes we're about to discuss. Here's the link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_belQwGNolY

Let's break it down:

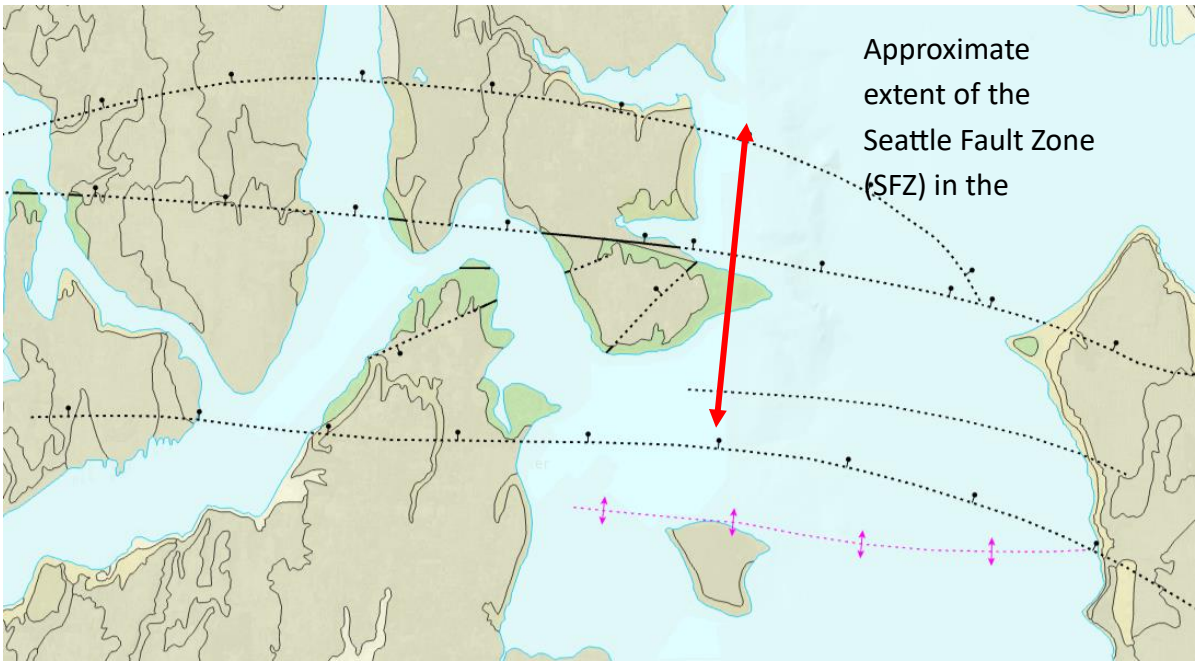
- **The Big Picture:** The Juan de Fuca Plate is moving northeast, colliding and subducting beneath the North American Plate.
- **The San Andreas Factor:** But that's not the whole story. California's San Andreas Fault system adds another layer of complexity. The movement along this fault pushes the Sierra Nevada Block into the Oregon Block, which, in turn, pushes the Washington Block against a stubborn piece of the North American crust, known as the Canadian Buttress.
- **The Squeeze:** This collision with the Canadian Buttress creates immense compressional stress. To relieve this stress, the Washington Block breaks into a series of east-west trending faults and folds. And guess what? One of these faults is the Seattle Fault Zone (SFZ), and a smaller fault, a "backthrust" associated with the main Seattle Fault, cuts right through Blakely Harbor where we stand.



Tectonic evolution of the Seattle Fault Zone (SFZ). (a) relative motion between the Juan de Fuca Plate and the North American Plate due to collision and subduction. (b) motion superimposed on this motion by the strike-slip movement along the San Andreas Fault system. (c) resolved vector motion (orange arrows) showing rotation of the Washington and Oregon blocks of the North American Plate around a point in northeastern Oregon, and leading (d) to stretching in Nevada, creating the extensional Basin and Range geological province and pushing the Washington block against the Canadian Buttress. (e) collision of the Washington Black into the Canadian Buttress produces compressional features such as east-west trending folds and fault systems like the Seattle Fault Zone, in order to relieve the compressional stress. (f) there are several fault splays that are associated with the main Seattle Fault. One of those splays, known as a Backthrust, cuts through Blakely Harbor where you are standing.

The overall plate motions between the oceanic Juan de Fuca Plate and the North American Plate are to the northeast. If those were the only motions, the Seattle Fault Zone (SFZ) would not have formed or would have a different geometry. However, there are also plate movements along the San Andreas Fault system that superimpose some addition stresses. The movement along the San Andreas pushes the Sierra Nevada Block into the Oregon Block, which in turn pushes the Washington Block into a portion of the North American crust, shown as the Canadian Buttress in the figure, which stops the Washington Block

from moving any further northward. As a consequence, the Washington Block accommodates this compression by breaking into a series of east-west trending faults and folds, one of them being the SFZ. The SFZ actually consists of the main Seattle Fault plane, and a series of smaller faults that move in response to movement of the main fault. One of these smaller faults cuts directly through Blakely Harbor, where you are standing.



Area of major disruptive folding and faulting from Rich Passage to Eagle Harbor. Areas of the shoreline shaded in light green represent marine terraces that were uplifted by the earthquake on the Seattle Fault around 900A.D.
https://geologyportal.dnr.wa.gov/2d-view#wigm?-13709961,-13592554,6015412,6071593?Surface_Geology,500k_Surface_Geology,Map_Units

In the cross-section below, we can see how movement on secondary faults associated with movement on the Seattle Fault has produced Toe Jam Hill. The movement along the Seattle Fault and the Toe Jam Hill fault has caused an upthrust of rock. This means a block of earth has been pushed upward. This upthrust action has also resulted in folding of the rock layers. So, it is not just a simple upthrust, but the upthrust is also combined with folding of the rock. The term "pop-up structure" is sometimes used to describe this, where the rock is pushed up and experiences folding due to the faulting. Toe Jam Hill reaches a maximum elevation of 425 ft, making it the highest point on Bainbridge Island.

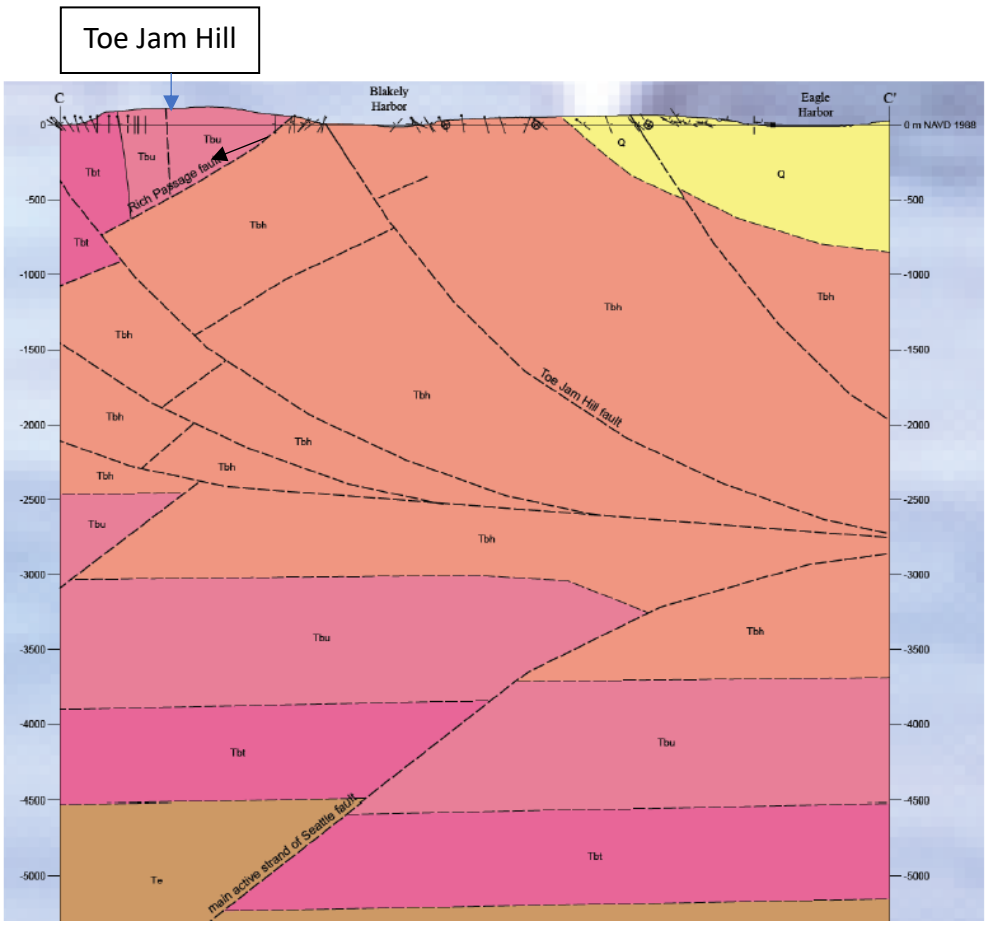


Figure 5. *Section C-C', across southeast Bainbridge Island. North to right. Depths in meters, no vertical exaggeration. Te = unnamed Eocene strata beneath Blakeley Formation. Other unit labels as on geologic map.*

Vertical north-south cross-section from Rich Passage north to Eagle Harbor. Movement on the Seattle Fault produced movements on secondary faults like the Toe Jam Hill Fault, which caused the fault-bounded wedges of rock to move upwards and compress the rock into a fold, eventually producing what is now named Toe Jam Hill. Northwest Geological Society, *FIELD TRIP GUIDE-BOOK #45 THE SEATTLE FAULT ZONE ON SOUTHERN BAINBRIDGE ISLAND May 17, 2014 Ralph A. Haugerud*

The east-west trend of Toe Jam Hill and Blakely Harbor are nearly perpendicular to the north-south bedrock grain created by the retreating glacial Puget Sound Lobe. The deep east-west valley and deepwater sea bottom comprising Blakely Harbor and the land to the west created favorable conditions for habitation, as the harbor was protected from the brunt of strong southerly or northerly winds and seas, and also could accommodate sailing ships that needed deeper water. These were significant factors in the Maritime Heritage of the Blakely Harbor area.

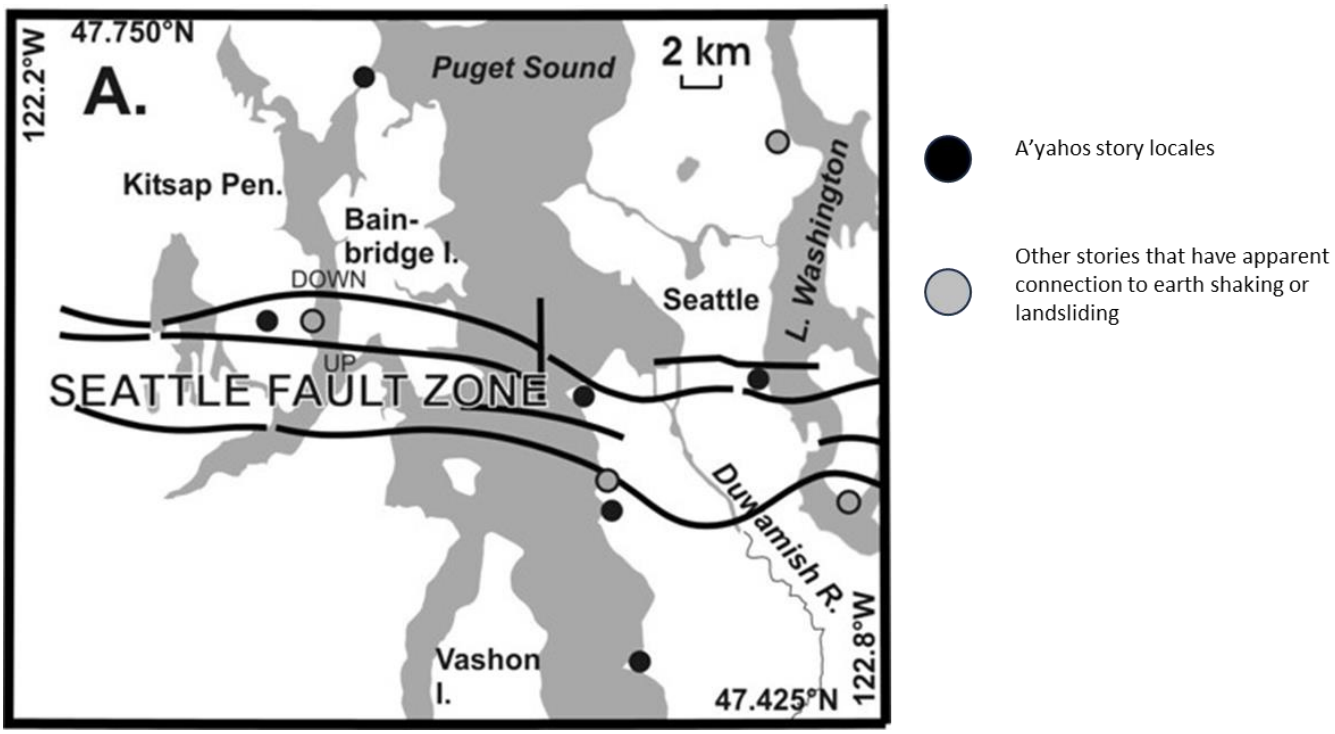
LIDAR image of the rock surface around Rich Passage. The strong north-south hills and valleys were sculpted by the retreating ice sheet as the Puget Sound lobe melted. Toe Jam Hill and the Blakely Harbor Inlet show a contrary east-west grain.

Let us reflect for a moment on the land between Tuxwiəqa'lə (Restoration Point) and Caxlʷsb (Blakely Harbor), with a deeper reverence for the indigenous narratives that permeate its very essence. This location, where the land reveals a dramatic uplift of approximately 23 ft, a consequence of the seismic event of 900-950 AD on the Seattle Fault, holds profound significance within the oral traditions of the Coast Salish peoples, particularly the dxʷsəqʷəbš, "People of the Clear Salt Water" (Suquamish) and the dxʷdəwʔabš, "People of the Inside" (Duwamish).

It is crucial to understand that these narratives are not mere folklore, but rather, sophisticated repositories of historical and geological knowledge. The concept of A'yahos, a spirit entity associated with earthquakes and transformative land movements, represents a complex understanding of the earth's dynamic forces. These beings are not simply metaphors; they are integral to the indigenous worldview, embodying the power and potential volatility of the natural world.

The stories relating to the uplift at Restoration Point, interpreted through the lens of A'yahos, are not fantastical embellishments but rather, precise observations of significant geological phenomena. The narrative of a conflict between A'yahos and a guardian spirit,

resulting in the dramatic alteration of the landscape, should be understood as a cultural articulation of the immense forces that reshaped this region.

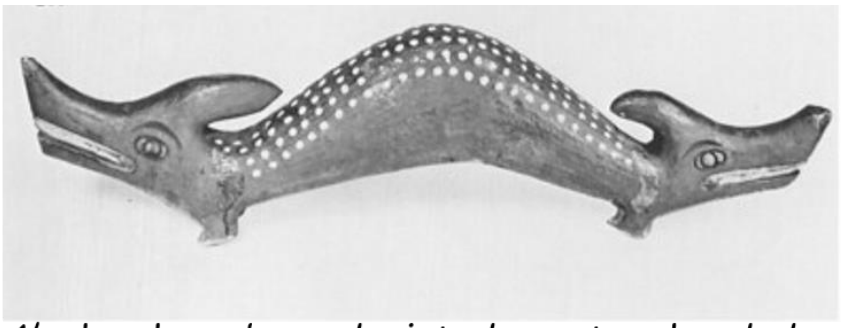


Map showing the location of A'yohos in Native American stories and the location of strands of the Seattle Fault Zone. From Serpent Spirit-power Stories Along the Seattle Fault, Seismological Research Letters · July 2005

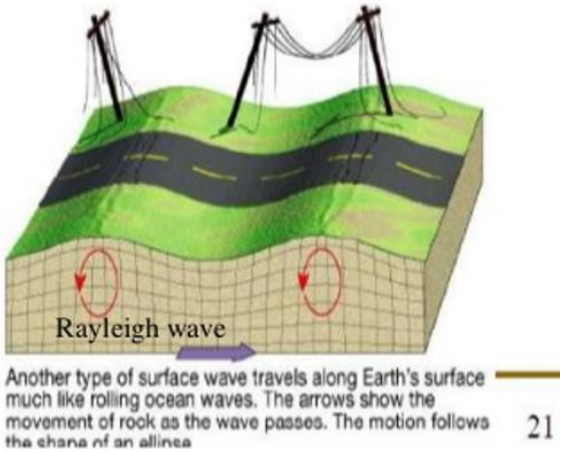
Similarly, the accounts of land submergence and subsequent re-emergence, accompanied by significant changes in shoreline morphology, are not mythical fabrications. They are, in fact, detailed records of the profound impact of seismic activity and associated tsunamis. These narratives demonstrate a deep observational understanding of the environment, passed down through generations.

The warnings against prolonged presence near certain shorelines, particularly those prone to seismic activity, are not cautionary tales but rather, practical guidance rooted in ancestral knowledge of hazardous natural occurrences. The perceived communication between the land and water, and the notion of spirits "remembering" past events, reflect a holistic understanding of the interconnectedness of natural phenomena.

It is fascinating that the A'yahos were depicted as two-headed snakes whose movement differed from that of ordinary snakes: instead of slithering side to side, their bodies undulated in a vertical plane. During large earthquakes, seismic waves ripple through the ground in similar up-and-down motions. These vertical undulations closely resemble the movement attributed to A'yahos in Indigenous accounts, offering a striking parallel between myth and natural phenomenon.



A'yahos have been depicted as a two-headed horned serpent. The undulation of the ground during a large earthquake as the seismic waves pass through it certainly mirrors the serpentine movement of a snake, BUT with a significant difference!



A-yahos have been depicted as a two-headed horned serpent. The undulation of the ground during a large earthquake as the seismic waves pass through it certainly mirrors the serpentine movement of a snake!

It is imperative that we acknowledge and respect the intellectual rigor and cultural significance of these indigenous narratives. They represent a profound understanding of the environment, a knowledge system that predates and complements modern scientific understanding. These stories are not merely about the past; they are also about the present, reminding us of the enduring power of the earth and the importance of respecting its forces.

Therefore, as we observe this landscape, we must recognize that we are not simply viewing a past geological event. We are engaging with a place imbued with cultural memory, a living testament to the resilience and wisdom of the indigenous peoples who have called this land home for millennia. Let us approach this place with humility and respect, recognizing that we are in the presence of a profound and enduring cultural legacy.

Pre-European Native American Inhabitation

Let's step back in time and explore the pre-European inhabitation of Blakely Harbor and Bainbridge Island. Archaeological studies tell us that people have lived in this area for at least 14,500 years. That's a staggering length of time!

The dxʷsəqʷəbš (Suquamish) were the first to settle in the lands west of Puget Sound, including Bainbridge Island. They established winter villages at various locations around the island, including Port Madison, Blakely Harbor, Manzanita Bay, Rolling Bay, Eagle Harbor and Blakely Harbor.

The first Europeans to arrive were Captain George Vancouver and Lieutenant Peter Puget of the British Royal Navy in 1792. Nearly 50 years later, in 1841, Lieutenant Charles Wilkes with the U.S. Navy Exploring Expedition renamed Bainbridge Island and many traditional Suquamish sites with English place names, often erasing the original indigenous names.

The Suquamish, like other Coast Salish peoples, lived a seasonal lifestyle, moving between camps based on resource availability. Their winter camps were carefully chosen based on several key criteria:

- **Shelter from Harsh Weather:**
    - They sought protected areas like bays and inlets, shielded from strong winds and storms.
    - Dense tree cover provided additional protection from the elements.
- **Access to Reliable Food Sources:**
    - Unlike summer camps, which were near seasonal food-gathering sites, winter camps needed year-round food sources.
    - This included shellfish like clams, oysters, and mussels, smoked and dried fish (especially salmon), hunting grounds for deer, elk, and waterfowl, and stored plant foods like roots and camas bulbs.
- **Fresh Water Availability:**
    - A reliable fresh water source, like a spring or stream, was essential.
- **Sustainable Firewood Supply:**
    - Camps needed access to abundant firewood, such as cedar and fir trees.

- **Proximity to Longhouses and Community Sites:**
    - Winter villages were permanent settlements with large cedar plank longhouses, serving as centers for storytelling, ceremonies, and tool-making.
- **Avoiding Flood-Prone or Exposed Areas:**
    - They avoided low-lying areas prone to flooding or extreme tides, opting for slightly elevated sites.

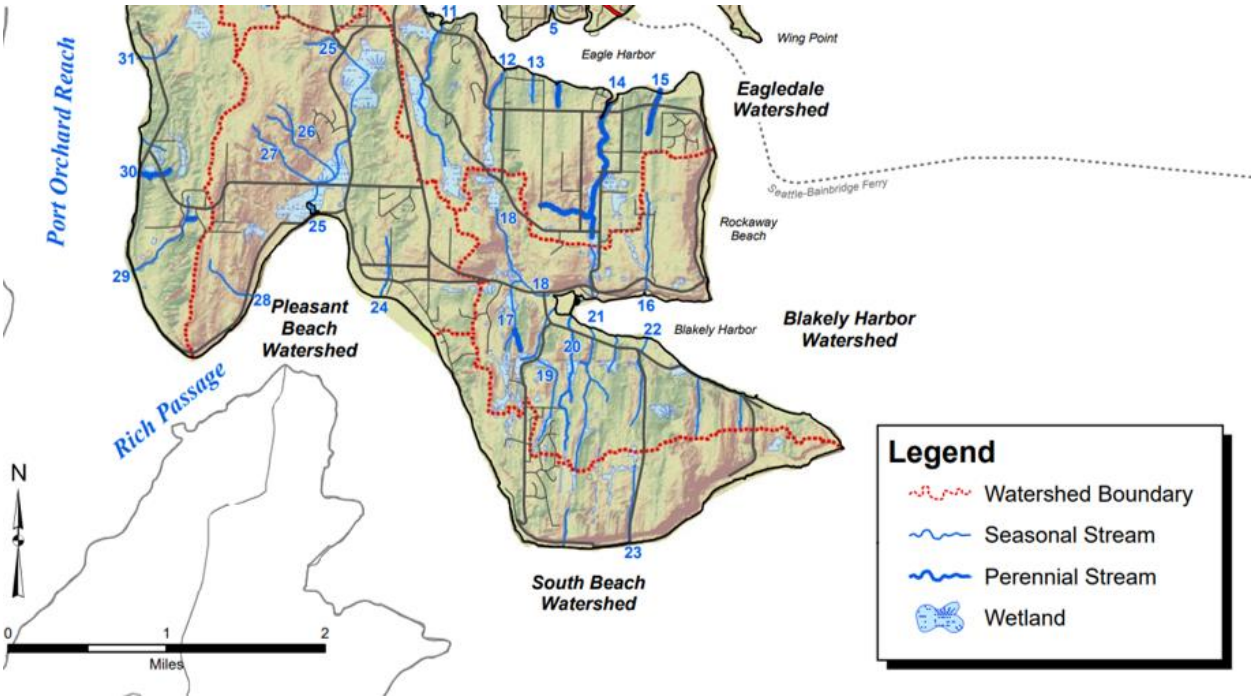
Blakely Harbor perfectly met these criteria. Its deep-water embayment, protected by the hills to the south and north, provided shelter from strong winds and storms.

Blakely Harbor, in particular, offered significant protection from the dominant southerly and northerly storms. Toe Jam Hill, rising 425 feet to the south, acted as a natural windbreak.

Access to fresh water was also crucial. Before wells, surface water sources were essential. The topography of Toe Jam Hill and the northern hills, shaped by the Seattle Fault, created or enhanced streams draining into Blakely Harbor.

And look at this map. Notice how these streams run linearly north-south. That's because they follow grooves carved by retreating glaciers, which were then tilted towards Blakely Harbor by the uplift of the fault blocks. This created a more dependable and abundant supply of fresh surface water than elsewhere on Bainbridge Island.

These wetland areas also provided fertile environments for edible plants and attracted game. These streams would also provide a needed supply of fresh water for the Blakely Company milling and the Hall Bros. shipbuilding operations in the second half of the 19th century.



Location of seasonal and perennial streams on southern Bainbridge Island. Note the abundant streams and small ponds/wetlands draining towards Blakely Harbor. These streams follow "grooves" created by the retreating glaciers.

An Era of Milling & Ship Building

Let's really unpack this pivotal era of milling and shipbuilding at Blakely Harbor, and delve into the nuances of the societal shifts that accompanied it.

The arrival of European settlers in the 1800s initiated a profound disruption to the ancient rhythms of the Coast Salish people, whose relationship with the land was deeply interwoven with their cultural and spiritual identity. Imagine standing here, where towering cedars once stood, and the air was filled with the sounds of the Salish Sea.

The Coast Salish peoples, whose deep-rooted traditions span thousands of years, saw themselves as part of a vast and interconnected ecosystem. On the other hand, the European settlers arrived with a starkly different approach, driven by economic expansion and resource extraction. The landscape you see today bears the marks of both perspectives. Let's explore these contrasting relationships with nature and their lasting impact.

Native Peoples' Perspective: Living Within the Land

Imagine standing in this very spot centuries ago, surrounded by towering cedars and the rhythm of the tides. To the Coast Salish peoples, the natural world was not merely a backdrop to their lives but an intricate web of relationships.

- **Interconnectedness:** Every resource—whether salmon, cedar, or shellfish—was not just a commodity but an integral piece of a delicate balance. They understood that the health of the land and waters directly influenced their own well-being.
- **Sustainability:** Generations of careful stewardship ensured that nature's bounty would continue. Fishing, hunting, and gathering followed seasonal cycles, with methods like selective harvesting and controlled burns maintaining balance and preventing depletion.
- **Spiritual Significance:** Resources were more than sustenance—they were sacred. The first salmon of the season was honored in ceremony, and cedar trees were carefully chosen and respectfully harvested, reinforcing a spiritual connection to the land.
- **Long-Term Vision:** With thousands of years of experience in this region, indigenous communities developed resource management systems that ensured abundance for future generations. The land provided, and in return, they protected it.

European Settlers' Perspective: *A Land of Opportunity*

Now, fast forward to the 18th and 19th centuries, when European settlers arrived, their ships heavy with tools and ambitions. To them, this landscape was filled with untapped wealth, waiting to be harnessed.

- **Commodity-Based View:** Natural resources were seen as economic assets, ready for extraction and trade. Timber, fish, and fur were harvested at unprecedented rates, with little consideration for long-term impact.
- **Exploitation:** Industrial fishing and large-scale logging quickly transformed the landscape. The lush forests and thriving waters that had sustained indigenous communities for millennia were depleted in just a few generations.
- **Dominion Over Nature:** European settlers often carried a belief that humans had a right to control and dominate the environment. This philosophy drove rapid expansion and led to irreversible changes in the ecosystem.
- **Short-Term Focus:** Immediate gain took precedence over long-term sustainability. Clear-cut logging, overfishing, and land development prioritized economic growth over ecological health.

The Rise of Port Blakely: A Mill Town Emerges

To truly visualize the rapid transformation of this area, I highly recommend watching this video (scan the QR code to watch the video):

Captain William Renton, the namesake of Renton, Washington, sought to capitalize on the region's abundant timber resources. Driven by the California Gold Rush, Renton explored the Salish Sea for a suitable mill site. His initial attempts at Alki Point and Enetai failed due to weather exposure and navigational challenges, respectively. Finally, in 1863, at 45, Renton leveraged the U.S. government's Donation Land Act to purchase 160 acres at Blakely Harbor for $1.25 an acre. The harbor's protected deep waters and freshwater access made it ideal. By 1870, Port Blakely was home to 64 residents, primarily immigrants from Northern Europe.

The Port Blakely Mill's workforce was a mix of European immigrants, Asian immigrants (primarily Japanese after the Chinese Exclusion Act), and Native Americans, as well as those born in the united states.

The mill's construction had a devastating impact on the Suquamish people, who had lived here for millennia. They were forcibly relocated to the Port Madison Indian Reservation (now Suquamish, Kitsap County) under the terms of the 1855 Point Elliott Treaty. This displacement also marked the beginning of large-scale clearcutting on Bainbridge Island.

In the early 1870s, the Port Blakely mill was just one of many small mills in the region. However, its output rapidly increased, reaching 50,000 board feet per day within its first year. The broader timber industry in Washington Territory also experienced explosive growth, with annual production soaring from 160 million board feet in the 1880s to over a billion. The Blakely Mill Company shipped lumber throughout the Pacific Rim, with California being its primary market.

Photos of the Blakely Mill and environs. (a) the Mill Pond west of the mill (b) view looking westwards along the north shore (c) the second mill looking towards the west (d) With lumber donated by the mill, Japanese immigrants built these homes along the hillside above Port Blakely harbor. Yama housed some 300 residents in about fifty homes. After the mill closed in the early 1920s the town was demolished. Today there is very little evidence of this bustling town. (Bainbridge Island Historical Society Collection, credit Viola Lund).

The mill town of Port Blakely served as a magnet for immigrant labor. Inexpensive two-person bachelor quarters were provided for single workers, while married workers could rent houses. The town also featured a hotel, meeting hall, company store, and other businesses. By the late 1870s, Port Blakely had transformed from a frontier boomtown into a more established community. Renton aimed to create a "haven in the wilderness" to attract and retain workers.

The mill offered lower wages than those typically accepted by American-born workers. For example, in 1890, Japanese immigrants earned $1 per day, including meals. However, these wages were still competitive compared to Eastern factories, making Port Blakely an attractive destination for new immigrants. Despite the diverse ethnic, racial and linguistic backgrounds, residents generally coexisted peacefully.

The town offered various recreational and social activities, including hiking, fishing, boating, baseball, and gatherings at the hotel saloon. Religious services were held in homes, the Masonic hall, and the school. Fraternal orders provided fellowship, and the town featured stores, restaurants, and entertainment venues. The nearby Pleasant Beach resort offered additional amenities.

The growing city of Seattle was easily accessible by steamboat, and San Francisco was a six-day journey by steamer. Residents engaged in various pastimes, including reading newspapers, discussing politics, attending concerts and theatrical performances, and watching silent films. Despite occasional excitement, Port Blakely was generally a quiet and industrious community, reflecting the personality of its patriarch.

The mill's growing demand for labor led to the recruitment of immigrants from various backgrounds. However, this period was also marked by racial prejudice and discriminatory practices. Chinese immigrants, who had played a crucial role in building the railroads, faced increasing hostility and exclusion.

Economic factors, such as competition for jobs and lower wages, fueled resentment among white laborers. Deeply ingrained racial prejudice and stereotypes also contributed to anti-Chinese sentiment. The concentration of Chinese immigrants in "Chinatowns" further exacerbated these fears and misconceptions. Politicians exploited these sentiments for political gain, leading to the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the first U.S. law to prevent a specific ethnic group from immigrating.

Japanese immigration followed a different trajectory, at least initially. Their smaller numbers and later arrival meant they were initially perceived as less of an economic

threat. They also filled different labor niches, particularly in agriculture. The U.S. had strategic interests in maintaining good relations with Japan, which influenced immigration policies. Some viewed Japanese immigrants as more "assimilable" than Chinese immigrants, contributing to the "model minority" myth.

However, this relative tolerance was temporary. As their numbers grew, Japanese immigrants also faced increasing discrimination, culminating in the Japanese American internment during World War II (this issue and its impact on the maritime heritage of Bainbridge Island is explored in more detail at Stop #5).

The mill operated for four decades and at one point was the largest sawmill under one roof. The mill's growth led to an increase in Japanese immigration to Bainbridge Island, with communities like "Yama" and "Nagaya" being established. In 1894, the first child of Japanese parents was born on the island, and in 1896, a direct steamship route between Yokohama and Seattle was established.

The Port Blakely Mill ceased operations in 1922 due to the depletion of old-growth timber, shifting economic factors, and technological changes. The closure marked the end of an era and the shift of the timber industry to other areas

Shipbuilding at Blakely Harbor

Blakely Harbor witnessed the rise of one of the most prominent shipbuilding families on the Pacific Coast: the Hall brothers. Their legacy in wooden shipbuilding during the late 19th century is unparalleled, with shipyards at Port Ludlow, Blakely Harbor, and eventually, Winslow. Over 30 years, they constructed a diverse fleet of wooden vessels, including barks, barkentines, and schooners with three, four, and even five masts.

The Hall brothers' shipbuilding heritage originated in the Boston area in the early 1800s. However, by 1865, the East Coast shipbuilding industry was in decline due to the depletion of oak forests, the lingering effects of the Civil War, and labor unrest. Seeking new opportunities, the Hall brothers migrated to the San Francisco area.

Initially, ships used on the West Coast were built in the East, as San Francisco lacked readily available shipbuilding timber. However, in the late 1860s, timber began to be sourced from Humboldt Bay in Northern California and the Columbia River area. But purchasing timber from distant sawmills eroded profits.

Recognizing the abundance of the Douglas fir forests in the Salish Sea, Isaac Hall ventured north. Fir proved to be an excellent shipbuilding material, lighter than oak, and

labor costs in the Salish Sea area were significantly lower than in the Bay Area. In 1874, the Hall brothers established their first shipyard at Port Ludlow.

However, the Port Ludlow shipyard faced challenges due to litigation involving its lumber supplier. Seeking a more reliable lumber source, the Hall Shipyard relocated to Port Blakely, where the Port Blakely Lumber Mill could meet their shipbuilding needs. Blakely Harbor also offered a deep, protected harbor suitable for launching large ships and a readily available pool of carpenters and shipwrights.

Ship building and milling operations in Blakely Harbor.

Ships under construction at Blakely Harbor.

Many of the ships built by the Hall brothers at Blakely Harbor were sold and delivered to owners in the Bay Area. Others served as timber schooners, transporting lumber along the Pacific Coast. These ships often returned to Seattle with goods and services unavailable locally, acting as a vital link to the global trade network centered in San Francisco. Typical return cargoes included manufactured goods, consumer goods, and foodstuffs. This trade dynamic fueled the growth of the Salish Sea region's communities and economies.

By 1901, the Hall brothers sought a new location to expand their shipbuilding operations. The terrain at Port Blakely, with its steep hills, was becoming restrictive. After considering various locations, they chose Eagle Harbor.

Eagle Harbor offered a more expansive, 77-acre site with level ground and a gentler slope, providing ample space for constructing larger vessels. This move enabled the Hall brothers to build a modern, fully equipped shipbuilding and ship repair facility, capable of producing larger and more complex vessels, including five-masted schooners.

Following the Hall brothers' move to Eagle Harbor and the Blakely Mill's closure, many Japanese immigrants who had worked in these industries remained on Bainbridge Island. They transitioned from mill work to agriculture, becoming successful farmers and a vital part of the island's economy.

After working for the mill for a short while Zenhichi Harui and his brother Zenmatsu Seko (he took his wife's last name) started a small fruit and vegetable farm on New Brooklyn Road. In 1913 the brothers started the Bainbridge Gardens and Nursery located on Miller Road and Battle Point Drive.

The Japanese American farmers on Bainbridge Island became renowned for their agricultural success, particularly with strawberries. The island's climate and soil conditions were ideal for growing Marshall strawberries, a large and juicy variety. At one point, two-thirds of Washington's strawberries came from Bainbridge Island.

They also cultivated other berries, such as currants, raspberries, and boysenberries, as well as vegetables like tomatoes. Some families operated greenhouses, growing flowers and nursery plants.

Their success was attributed to several factors:

- **Hard Work and Intensive Farming:** They were known for their strong work ethic and ability to cultivate challenging land.
- **Agricultural Expertise:** Some had previous farming experience in Japan, which they adapted to local conditions.
- **Community Collaboration:** They formed associations like the Winslow Berry Growers Association to support their endeavors.

- **Market Access:** They used the "mosquito fleet" to transport their produce to Seattle markets.

In 1908, Hyakutaro Moritani became the first Issei (first-generation Japanese) to raise strawberries on Bainbridge Island. Other Japanese families followed, and in 1909, the Okamoto family built the island's first greenhouse.

The Washington Farmers Association, formed by Japanese farmers in 1910, and the White Farm Growers Association represented different farming groups. By 1912, Japanese farmers sold their produce at Seattle's Pike Place Market, occupying 70 percent of the stalls by 1914.

The Blakely Mill operations played a significant role in the large-scale immigration of Japanese to Bainbridge Island. Once the mill closed, they leveraged their agricultural expertise and community strengths to build successful lives.

However, this success would later be overshadowed by the unjust and tragic treatment they faced during the first half of the 20th century.

Three Suyematsu Sons, Akio, Ish, & Tosh working the strawberry field after school, c. 1930's. (Courtesy of Suyematsu Family)

The Lasting Impact

Differing worldviews have shaped the Salish Sea in profound ways. Where indigenous communities sought harmony, settlers pursued dominance. The consequences of these contrasting approaches can still be seen today: declining salmon populations, deforestation, and shifts in the delicate ecological balance.

But the story does not end here. Today, there is a growing recognition of indigenous stewardship principles and their vital role in restoring the environment. Collaborative conservation efforts seek to blend traditional ecological knowledge with modern science, working toward a more sustainable future.

As we stand here, reflecting on the past, we invite you to consider this question: How can we learn from these two perspectives to create a balance between human needs and nature's resilience?

Paddling route to from Blakely Harbor (Stop #4) to Wyckoff Wood Treatment Plant (Stop #5) and Pritchard Park

As you release your paddle into Blakely Harbor's still embrace, invite the echoes of its past to journey with you. Let each stroke become a meditative pulse, a thread connecting then and now.

Conjure the spectral grandeur of the Port Blakely Mill, a titan of industry. Imagine timber-laden schooners, bound for distant horizons, bearing the region's promise. Hear the phantom clang of labor, the scent of fresh cedar, the rhythm of a bygone era.

Remember the Suquamish, the land's first guardians, their ancient kinship with the Salish Sea. Let the water beneath your craft whisper their timeless wisdom.

Reflect upon the Japanese American community's resilience, their fruitful fields, their cruel displacement. Recall the sweetness of their strawberries, the weight of their absence. Let the waves speak of community's delicate strength.

As you glide towards Eagle Harbor, envision the Hall Bros. shipyard, a testament to human craft. Feel the spirit of the vessels born here, shaped by knowing hands.

Let this voyage be a sanctuary of quiet reflection. The kayak's gentle sway, the paddle's rhythm, the Salish Sea's vast expanse—a canvas painted with time.

Allow the air to purify, the water to soothe. Let Blakely Harbor's stories—of industry, endurance, heritage, and the sea's enduring power—settle deep within.

Carry these reflections as you move forward, shaping your perception of this place, your life's journey. Let the stillness of the water reveal the quiet strength within, the beauty that surrounds.

May we all travel with a profound understanding of the land and water that sustains us.

Your Journey to Stop #5 – Another Superfund site: The Wyckoff Creosote Plant & Continued Conflict

Paddling route to from Blakely Harbor (Stop #4) to Wyckoff Wood Treatment Plant (Stop #5) and Pritchard Park

As you dip your paddle into the still waters of Blakely Harbor, leaving its sheltered embrace, allow the echoes of its history to accompany you. Let the gentle rhythm of your stroke become a meditative pulse, a connection to the past and the present.

Reflect on the towering ghosts of the Port Blakely Mill, a once-mighty engine of industry. Imagine the schooners, laden with timber, departing for distant shores, their hulls filled with the promise of a burgeoning region. Consider the lives of the workers, the rhythm of their labor, the clang of machinery, and the scent of freshly cut cedar.

Remember the stories of the Suquamish people, the original stewards of this land. Acknowledge their deep connection to the Salish Sea, their understanding of its rhythms, and their enduring presence in this place. Let the water beneath your kayak carry the whispers of their ancient wisdom.

Contemplate the resilience of the Japanese American community, their agricultural triumphs, and the devastating injustice they endured. Remember their strawberries, their

hard work, and the painful absence that followed. Let the gentle waves remind you of the fragility of community and the enduring strength of the human spirit.

As you glide across the water, visualize the Hall Bros. shipyard in Eagle Harbor, a testament to human ingenuity and the enduring spirit of shipbuilding. Feel the strength of the vessels that once graced these waters, and the hands that shaped them.

Let the journey be a moment of quiet contemplation. The gentle sway of the kayak, the rhythmic dip of your paddle, and the vast expanse of the Salish Sea, a canvas upon which the stories of the past are painted.

Allow the air to cleanse your mind, the water to soothe your soul. Let the lessons of Blakely Harbor – of industry, resilience, cultural heritage, and the enduring power of the land and sea – settle within you.

As you move forward, carry these reflections with you, allowing them to shape your understanding of this place and your journey through life. Let the stillness of the water remind you of the quiet strength that resides within, and the enduring beauty that surrounds you.

May we all journey forward with a deeper understanding of the land beneath our feet and the waters that sustain us all.