

Che' Semiahmah-Sen

Che' Shesh Whe

Weleq-sen Si'am

I am Semiahmoo,

I am Survivor of the Flood



Che' Semiahmah-Sen, Che' Shesh Whe Weleq-sen Si'am (I am Semiahmoo, I am Survivor of the Flood) was Curated by Semiahmoo First Nation in collaboration with Museum of Surrey.

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SEMAHMOO FIRST NATION

1 Title Panel

Che' Semiahmah-Sen, Che' Shesh Whe Weleq-sen Si'am
I am Semiahmoo, I am Survivor of the Flood

We are Lhaq'temish, the survivors of the great flood.

We have flourished, struggled and survived along the shores of what is now known as the Salish sea.

We will continue to flourish and persevere in our homelands for the health and wellbeing of our future generations.

We are survivors of the great flood.

We are Semiahmoo.

Many thanks to those who worked on creating and installing this exhibit.

Chief Harley Chappell, Semiahmoo First Nation

Joanne Charles, Semiahmoo First Nation Councillor

Jennine Cook, Semiahmoo First Nation Councillor

Roxanne Charles, Semiahmoo First Nation

Don Welsh, Semiahmoo First Nation Archaeologist

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Hugh Ellenwood, White Rock Museum

Chelsea Bailey, Surrey Archives

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Ashlee Milby, Surrey Heritage Services

Lynn Saffery, Museum of Surrey

Colleen Sharpe, Museum of Surrey

John Bessette, Museum of Surrey

Jessie McLean, Museum of Surrey

Chris Jorgenson, Museum of Surrey

Sandra Borger, Museum of
Surrey

2 Flood Story— Video

o si'am a nes chalecha siam. xwopokton-sen ne sna (Dear respected friends and relatives, my name is xwopokton.)

My traditional name is xwopokton. My English name is Harley Chappell.

I am gonna share a legend to the story of how we came to be as being Lhaq'temish people. I was told by one of our elders

From – late elders – from Lummi, that we were descendants of the Lhaq'temish people.

Lhaq'temish meaning “survivors of the flood,” and the legend I am gonna share with you – our ancient history – will explain how we became who we are in Semiahmoo territory.

We were told a long, long time ago: one of the elders of the village had a premonition – a vision – and he saw a flood coming; a great flood.

And through that vision, he shared that with his community and with his people.

And they started to build two giant, massive dugout cedar canoes.

His vision told him that they were to put all the children into one canoe and they were to fill the other with supplies. And they filled those canoes.

They say the water started to rise, and rise, and rise, and they filled those canoes with supplies

They put all the children in the other one, and they bound those two together; they tied them together and they tied them to the ground; they bound them to the ground.

They covered those canoes with mats so that water wouldn't get in, but the flood water started to rise, and rise.

Everybody else in the community, in the villages, they perished. They say the waters rose so high and the canoes almost didn't make it. Then the water started to recede and those canoes came down and they landed just south of where we are as Semiahmoo people now, in what's known as Washington State.

From there the children started to re-live life again; started to find life and make it again.

So when they did that, some would go over: “There's lots of Spring Salmon over this way, and I love Spring Salmon so we're gonna go that way.” ...
“I like skimeq, I like the octopus so we're gonna go this way.”

... “I like our horseclams, I’m gonna go this way.” And they started to branch off and move in different directions.

Some of the older ones started to pair up and start to re-populate life again.

And one of the older ones was smart. She had good teachings, and she understood the importance of understanding who we are and where we come from. So she sent out the runners and they went out and they gathered all those people again and held a big, huge gathering. And at the gathering they said: we need to do something to signify who we are – where we come from.

And in that meeting they decided that they were gonna put a suffix on their name and that suffix was “-mish”, M-I-S-H. So, as they went back home the children started to leave and go – young people now – started to go back home and go back to the territories they were occupying and move to.

They added that “-mish” to their name. So for us as Semiahmoo people, we always understand that...

When we cross that border; when we go across that line, and we head South, one of the first communities that we hit is Samish.

And then just a little further down we hit Swinamish, Skakomish, Snohomish, Stelaguamish.

All these “-mish” communities that are, in today’s context, along the I-5 and south of the border.

That, to us, allows us to understand that those are our relatives. Those are ones that have moved off from where those canoes originally landed. And I asked the question: why we never changed our name

Why we, as Semiahmoo, why our relatives just to the south of us, in Lummi, why we never added the “-mish”?

And the answer to that was: because we never left home. We still stayed in very close proximity of where those canoes landed. So that was my understanding of how we survived the flood, how we became what we know today as Lhaq’temish, the survivors of the flood.

Our relatives in Lummi have made their anthem “the song of the flood” and then Semiahmoo begins to incorporate that so we also understand who we are and where we come from, and our ancient, ancient history as xwelmexw people in the area. Hay cxw qe (Thank you).



3 Semiahmoo Place Names and Reef Net Sites

Semiahmoo people occupied Semiahmoo, Boundary and Birch Bay.

We welcomed our relations from neighbouring communities to share in our bountiful harvesting seasons.

4 Bust

This bust is a replication of an elderly First Nation man from the Boundary Bay Area. This area was highly used by multiple First Nation communities to harvest and process shellfish.

Semiahmoo people have occupied and flourished on these lands since time immemorial.

Museum of Vancouver Collection (H2014.1.7)

5 Canoe Journeys / *Pulling Together*

Indigenous peoples have a longstanding history of negative experiences with police. Violence, enforcement of discriminatory laws, and systemic racism within police organizations has led to mistrust, anger, and fear.

In 2001, First Nation communities and police organizations planned the first *Pulling Together* canoe journey. Close to 100 Indigenous and non-Indigenous paddlers worked together along traditional waterways from Yale and Gibsons. There were many stops at First Nation communities along the way, with each Nation sharing their traditional foods and culture.

Semiahmoo First Nation hosted *Pulling Together* in 2015. The 100-mile journey started at Harrison Lake in Sts'ailes First Nation territory. Battling record-breaking summer heat and smoke from forest fires, paddlers travelled from lake, to rivers, and, finally, to the Salish Sea. After eight days on the water, canoes pulled into Semiahmoo First Nation territory. This was one of the largest journeys to date, with over 500 paddlers.

In a separate text box off to the side:

Pulling Together Mission: "Recognizing the past by *Pulling Together* to enhance understanding between Public Service Agencies and Aboriginal Peoples by Canoeing the traditional highway, strengthening our future relations"

6 United Together

United Together

Paddles in synch. Working together. Pushing forward.

Hundreds of people. One journey. Unforgettable memories.

2015 Pulling Together shirt on loan from Don Welsh

7 Reciprocal Relationship

Long ago, when people were still buried in the trees, there lived a man named xepey'. His whole life, xepey' was a very giving man. When he was old and ready to die, the Creator came to him. The Creator said: We have something special planned for you. When he died, xepey' was buried in the ground. From this, the xepey' ilhch (cedar tree) was created. Even in death, xepey' continues to give.

The xepey' ilhch has many uses. Branches are used for blessings and spiritual cleansing. The trunk is made into canoes, homes, and utensils. Ihqwem (bark) is transformed into baskets, rope, and clothing. Extremely absorbent, xepey' ilhch was even pounded into mulch for the world's first diapers.

Given its origins and cultural importance, the xepey' ilhch is held in high regard. The relationship is reciprocal: people honor it, nurture it, respect it. In return, it provides all things needed to survive.

8 Cedar Basket Weaving

First, separate the inner and outer Ihqwem (bark).

Next, cure the smooth inner Ihqwem.

After drying for a season, its ready.

Mothers weave watertight specho' (cooking baskets). They weave mehoy' (common baskets) and Ihepat (clam baskets). Skilled fingers add bear grass and bitter cherry to make beautiful patterns.

Baskets on loan from Joanne Charles



9 Growing Connections

Reef net sites were vital to connecting with nearby communities and growing families. During the summer fishing season, thousands of people would come together from Semiahmoo, Lummi, and Saanich to participate in the activities of the seasonal village.

This was a time of relationship building and interconnectedness between villages. Before the qwenalien “skipper” of the fish canoes would begin the work, there were several important ceremonies that they would perform to ensure an abundant catch.

The gathering of so many people also provided a chance to scout out potential arranged marriages. Marriages between families from different village sites were an opportunity to provide both sides access to resources. If one family owned a reef net site and another family had access to a large trapping or hunting area, and the children got married, both families had access to the resources.

10 Basecamp

Basecamp

The temporary summer village is busy.

Men work on canoes, unload fish, and fill the drying racks. Women clean fish and prepare them for drying and smoking. Boys race. Paddles, a bentwood box and blanket are prizes in a slahal game.

Nearby, fish are caught. Clam beds harvested. Berries gathered.

Diorama by Don Welsh, Archaeologist



11 Abundance

It's late summer. Men suspend a net between two canoes.

The grass rope ripples with the tide, mimicking the bottom of the reef. Migrating sockeye are fooled. They funnel towards the waiting fishermen.

Quickly, the net is full; it's lifted towards one canoe and the other fills with fish.

Diorama by Don Welsh, Archaeologist

12 Reef Net Fishing: Sophisticated and Successful

Using a unique technology called reef nets, Semiahmoo members were able to take full advantage of the large sockeye runs late each summer. The technology, which is demonstrated in the nearby diorama, allowed crews to catch 1000-3000 fish on a good day.

Fishing happened in the bay, so the sockeye had not yet migrated to the river and used up their fat stores. The sockeye was fat and nutritious. This made them a highly sought-after food source and trade item.

Reef net sites were strategically placed, with locations owned and inherited. Owners would hire extended family from other communities to work the nets during the sockeye run. The hired crew would consist of physically fit men and a captain, who was typically the owner of the site.

During a poor year, the fish were split equally between the crew and owner. If there was abundance, the crew were given a set amount and the owner would retain the surplus.

Set off to the side in a text box:

In the 1890s, logging companies were established in Surrey. To take advantage of new trade opportunities, reef nets were used to catch dogfish. Oil produced from dogfish was applied to logs to make them easier to pull out of the forest.



13 Semiahmoo Exposition – Timeline

Date	Event
15,000 years ago	The Great Flood and end of the last ice age.
Long before European settlers and explorers visited the Salish Sea	<p>The Legend of P’Quals (the White Rock)</p> <p>People lived here during a time when things were very different. People were attuned with nature and carried strong spiritual powers. The Salish Sea was protected by a sea-being and his son. The sea provided an abundance of food to the tribes who lived along its shores. The Cowichan people and their chief were one of those tribes. One day, the chief’s daughter was bathing in the sea. The son of the sea-being rose to the surface and fell in love with her at first sight. The pair hoped to receive the support of their parents, but the new couple was denied. The young man was determined to keep his love at all cost. He raised a huge stone in his hands and said to his T’ále (love), “I will hurl this stone over the water! Wherever it falls, there we will make our home.” He cast the stone over the water, and watched as it grew. The young man took his new wife into his arms, and swam after the great boulder. This huge stone landed sixty miles away, on the shores of Semiahmoo Bay. The couple chose to make their home here, and today this stone is known as P’Quals. This story, along with knowledge of the rock as a glacial deposit, correlate to the oral histories of the Se mi ah ma people as survivors of the great flood.</p> <p>Combined oral history and adaptations from the Grand Chief Bernard Charles, and Bernard Charles Senior 2</p>
1400s	Doctrine of Discovery. Pope issues numerous statements that give Christian Europeans the right to own land that they “discover” in the New World.
1740s-1770s	Europeans begin to explore and trade on the coast of British Columbia.
1763	King George III recognizes Indigenous title to land through a Royal Proclamation.
1780	Epidemics appear on the Pacific Northwest Coast. Thousands of Semiahmoo First Nations people die.

1790s	Europeans explore and chart the Strait of Georgia, Boundary Bay and Semiahmoo Bay.
1824-1827	The McMillan Expedition chooses Fort Langley as the new Hudson's Bay Company fort.
1846-1859	Oregon Treaty establishes 49th parallel as US-British boundary. The boundary artificially splits the land, separating Semiahmoo First Nation in half. Semiahmoo First Nation members south of the boundary relocate to Lummi Nation.
1855	Lummi Nation signs the Point Elliot Treaty. US Indian Agents expect Semiahmoo First Nation members to live on Lummi Nation's reserve. A few do, though most move north. Semiahmoo does not sign the treaty.
1858	Fraser River gold rush results in a trail built from Semiahmoo Bay to Fort Langley.
1860	St. Anne's Church is built on Beach Road.
1861	Royal Engineers make Semiahmoo trail into a pack road.
1862	Smallpox epidemic breaks out on Vancouver Island and the West Coast, largely impacting Semiahmoo First Nation.
1863	St. Mary's Residential School is built in Mission. Children from Semiahmoo First Nation attend this Residential School.
1875-1879	Land is available to settlers for free while Indigenous peoples are barred from pre-empting land until 1953.
1876	Federal Indian Act is passed. The act is made to disempower Indigenous peoples in Canada.
1879	Surrey is incorporated as a municipality.
1881	The first settler salmon canning factory is built at Semiahmoo Bay.
1883	Official Federal Residential School System begins.
1887	Semiahmoo First Nation Reserve established. The federal government outlined that at least 80 acres per family of five but the province of British Columbia claimed that "coast tribes would not use that much land" and only set out 20 acres per family. In the end, only 392 acres were provided for the reserve.
1907-1910	Construction of the Great Northern Railway (GNR) begins along Semiahmoo Bay shoreline.

1913-1927	Campbell River Mill operates on Semiahmoo First Nation Reserve land.
1914	Semiahmoo First Nation sends formal objection to Minister of the Interior regarding the removal of shoreland from the reserve.
1936	St. Anne's Church is relocated to Semiahmoo First Nation Reserve and renovated.
1957	White Rock separates from Surrey and becomes a city.
1960s to 1980s	Thousands of children are placed into foster care and primarily adopted by non-Indigenous families during the Sixties Scoop.
1973	Named for Nisga'a chief Frank Calder, the Calder Case supreme court ruling confirms that Indigenous peoples had title to the land before European colonization, unless a treaty was in place.
1996	Last Residential School closes. Over 150,000 children attend Residential Schools.
1996	Boil water advisory on and off at Semiahmoo First Nation Reserve until 2005. Then, the advisory becomes permanent until the present.
2019	Ground-breaking for the infrastructure work for water at Semiahmoo First Nation Reserve.



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