



PNWAS NEWS BULLETIN 173

CELEBRATING OUR 41ST ANNIVERSARY!!!! WELCOME TO PNWAS 2026 WINTER talk!!!!

AND if you missed any of the PNWAS ZOOM talks see all 25 of them on our PNWAS YouTube Channel:
<https://www.youtube.com/user/SeattlePNWAS>

The recent and amazing UPDATE discussion by Dr. Rick Knecht about his Nunelleq site following Typhoon Halong in Western Alaska:

Aftermath of Typhoon Halong—Community Rescuing Eroded Wood and Fiber Artifacts from an Ancient Yup'ik Village, AK: An UPDATE

By Dr. Rick Knecht, University of Aberdeen, UK

is now available on our YouTube channel (above).



“Beyond rescuing artifacts, the other main community goal from the beginning was to engage young people with their traditional culture” Rick Knecht

Please renew now for **2026!**:
<https://pnwas-society.weebly.com/membership.html>), so you will get an invitation to join the ZOOM meetings and activities. Talks are on Thursday evenings and start at 6:30 pm.

THANKS for Renewing for 2026 to help us with these programs. I am attaching a membership schedule and form here if you have not renewed yet.

Best wishes and look forward to programs into the 4th and New Year of PNWAS 2026!!!! Dale

Dr. Rick Knecht gave the October PNWAS talk on the day he arrived at the site after the typhoon damaged 60 perpendicular feet of site (see below). He gave us a thorough update of what’s been done by the Nunelleq community to rescue what they can, now over 1,000 wood/fiber artifacts! Also PNWAS continues to operate a GoFundMe site for donations to help them with the progress: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/support-rescuing-wood-and-fiber-artifact-in-western-alaska> .

PNWAS has raised over \$13,500.00 for the project, and Rick indicated in his recent update that they now can support a volunteer crew to return after the thaw and he expects they will recover over 5,000 more wood/fiber perishables artifacts at that time. He also indicated that he will update us with a PNWAS ZOOM talk on the results in the Fall of 2026. DO DONATE—ANY AMOUNT HELPS OUR COMMUNITY EFFORT!!!



The Nunalleq Archaeological Site in 2024



Same location after the Typhoon of October 2025

GATEWAY TO SQUAXIN—OUR CHEHALIS RIVER HYPOTHESIS TESTING & SURVEY, AND HELPING THE SQUAXIN MUSEUM MAMMOTH EXHIBIT

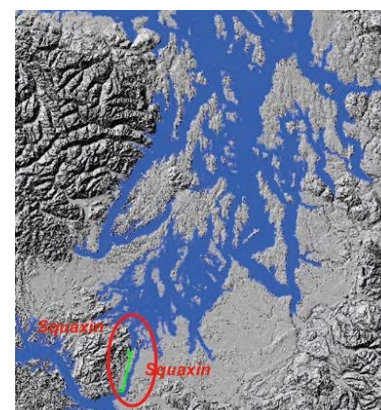


Time for some PNWAS fieldwork and volunteer help offered to support the upcoming Squaxin Museum *Mammoth Exhibit*.

Since our *Qwu?gwe*s wet site excavations with the Squaxin Island Tribe (1999-2009—some of you volunteered (esp. member Dale Fishel))—I have been a member of the Squaxin Museum Board. Over the last several years we have arranged a loan of four mammoth bones from the Cowlitz County Museum (you might remember our *Date a Mammoth* drive where we dated two bones, a leg bone at 18,300 years old (upper left image) and a tooth at 15,000 years old; right image).



We are working on a story line for this planned early 2026 exhibit and it centers on the concept of our *Chehalis River Hypothesis* with the belief that First Peoples came down the glaciated coast and the first place they could pass into the American Continent would be up the Chehalis Drainage, leading to entrance into the Black Lake Spillway, draining freshwater Lake Russell (now Puget Sound), and traditional Squaxin Island Tribe Territory (see maps, below).



(Left) entrance into the entire continent up Chehalis drainage and (right) the Black Lake Spillway to fresh-water lake Russell in Squaxin traditional territory

Undoubtedly these First Peoples would have encountered a new rich environment filled with megafauna, such as extinct huge bison, mammoths, mastodons, sloths, and other game.

The Black Lake Spillway would also have a unique large geological feature, The Mima Mounds in the SW corner. Thousands of mounds, as yet not explained, line the edge of the Capital State Forest Park, rising into the Black Hills, these mounds commonly are over 6 feet tall. At this late Pleistocene times these mounds represented a tundra grassland, of particular interest to these huge herbivores.



(Left) mima mounds in today's Black Lake valley with paths for visitors; Mammoth and Bison move in lines and could be ambushed from behind these ~6' high mounds; (Right) reconstructed tundra grassland mima mound ice age environment.

We envision that First Peoples/Early Squaxins could use the pathways through the vast mima mounds to ambush mammoth, bison and other late Pleistocene megafauna using atlatl/spear throwers, as commonly thought used with Clovis-like points at this early time.



Mock up of how the Squaxin Museum Mammoth Exhibit will appear in the museum. The mammoth bones will be in the covered cases and the weaponry (atlatl, clovis point replicas, touch screens for story of Chehalis River Hypothesis, etc. will be on shelf to right.

We hope PNWAS members can not only help with tours and exhibits as finalized by the Squaxin Island Tribe Museum designers and staff, but also we hope to have camping trips to the well developed campgrounds off the mima mound park and walk some of the drainages going into the Black Lake Spillway surveying for any signs of very early sites. I'm working with Matt Barclay our President and Kathleen Hawes our Secretary, to develop these fieldtrips and walking surveys (the more eyes the better) in the Spring of 2026. The campgrounds have picnic tables, metal cooking grills and ample space for tents or to park your RV/campers. As a State Park you need a Discover Pass, but the camping is free with metal firepits and picnic tables and nice outhouses (see pictures here).



We envision these fieldtrips happening over scheduled weekends starting with campgrounds open May 1. Members would bring their own foods, tents, camping gear, and we could share meal preparation (probably bag lunches for the walks/hikes) and possible sharing for dinners over the campfires.

Also we will have stone tool making and atlatl making, and using, workshops at the Squaxin Museum. More to come as we develop the plans and we hope you are interested in testing our hypothesis!!!!

Late WINTER PNWAS,
Thursday, February 19th, 2026 (Note new date)

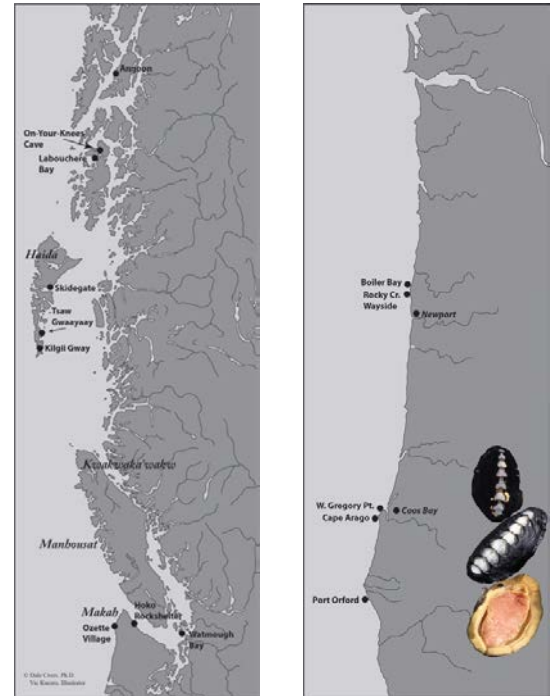
The Undervalued Chiton as a Shellfish Resource on the Northwest Coast of North America

By Dr. Dale R. Croes, W.S.U./PNWAS



Black Katy Chitons, from top and underside; an amazing food source and important animal in stories of Northwest Coast Peoples

For the past 10 years I have been studying and publishing on the importance of chitons as a food source and in the oral history of Northwest Coast Peoples. As a food the western world rarely eats, we tend to ignore their considerable importance in the archaeological shell middens from the earliest periods on the entire Pacific NW Coast (see endowed chiton maps of sites of importance to this presentation).



Archaeological and Cultural Area sites revealing importance of Black Katy Chitons to the foods and oral histories of the entire northern and southern Northwest Coast (Map by long-time member Vic Kucera).

In earlier writings I explored their sometimes-substantial **infra-structural** contribution to the shellfish diet as found in archaeological shell middens on the Northern and Central Pacific Northwest Coast (see left map, above). Some recent research reflects high chiton-use data from the Southern Northwest Coast, along the Oregon coast, with similar patterns emerging (see right map, above).

I begin this presentation summarizing the northern importance and then explore the preliminary research on the Southern Northwest Coast. Also, I elaborate further on ethnographic research on the critical importance of chiton in a book, *Entering Time*, covering the Haida Creation of Humans story. This small book explores Haida Master Artist Charles Edenshaw's argillite platters depicting culture hero/trickster Raven hunting supernatural chitons

(Chiton/Vulvas) in order to establish and perpetuate humans through the capturing of female *Tsaw*, the Haida word for female reproductive organs (Browne 2016).

Therefore, on a very **super-structural** level, we continue to see chitons playing a key role in the actual existence of people *and* their ability to continue themselves and their cultural developments in this world (see one of his argillite platters, below).



Charles Edenshaw (attr.) Seattle Art Museum argillite platter (one of three, and c. 1885; 32.9 x 5.7 cm) depicting Raven with spear hunting *Twas*, a combination of chiton and female genitalia. As steersman, bracken fungus man, galaga snaanga, is freaked out and/or stimulated as they confront the power of *Twas*, depicted as a spirit-like power under the canoe, on the

small rocky island of twas gwaayaay (literally “Vagina Island”), Haida Gwaii (see left map, above). With fungus man, Raven succeeds in spearing two Tsaw and brings them back for Eagle woman and Raven woman on shore. (Image obtained courtesy of the Seattle Art Museum, Seattle 91.1.127).

I believe this is ample archaeological and ethnographic evidence to show that chitons were particularly valued by people on the north, central, and now southern Northwest Coast of North America; chitons are certainly not acknowledged in the outside Western scientific perspectives. Through these studies, I believe this work may be key to recognizing chitons in the Northwest Coast archaeological studies. Time to scientifically “lift the blinders” and “chew” the chitons!

*Please **renew** memberships in PNWAS for 2026 to participate in the exciting Gateway to Squaxin: The Mammoth Exhibit, our planned campout surveys for First Peoples sites in the Mimma Mounds area of SW Washington and our upcoming ZOOM meetings/programs (see Membership - PACIFIC NORTHWEST ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY (weebly.com) to **renew with PayPal or print out our form and mail** (attached in this email)).*



Pacific Northwest Archaeological Society

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Renew/Join for 2026 at <https://pnwas-society.weebly.com/membership.html> and PayPal

Renew/Join us on ZOOM LATE WINTER PNWAS AS 2026 MEMBERS

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