



SAY IT:
"Kwuh-kwal-uhl-wut"

This is not a "totem pole". Totem poles were made by Native peoples of the North Pacific Coast, such as the Tsimshian, Haida, and Tlingit of British Columbia and Alaska. A totem pole is a record of lineage (family history). It uses a relatively standardized vocabulary of animals and people.

Here in the Salish Sea (Puget Sound and Georgia Strait), Coast Salish peoples carved or painted the doorways and large cedar posts of their houses. Carved and painted posts were also sometimes used to mark graves. The designs often tell how the builder of the house became wealthy.

This pole was made by Fidalgo Island artist, Tracy Powell, for the Samish people. It was raised here in 1983 by Samish families to celebrate their survival and honor their traditions.

Kwəkʷáləlwət

"the Maiden of Deception Pass"



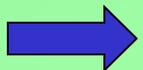
A very long time ago, there was a house of Samish people living here just above the beach where there are good springs. The people made their living by fishing from their cedar canoes, by digging up the kwó'ol (camas) bulbs on the hillsides, and by gathering shellfish on the rocks and the beach.

One day, Kwəkʷáləlwət and her sister were gathering chitons from the rocks, right here on Rosario Beach, and filling up their woven baskets. Kwəkʷáləlwət was way out on the rocks when the tide began to come in. She was startled, and a chiton slipped from her hands into the water. She reached down under the water to get it back. But it kept rolling down deeper and deeper, out of her grasp. Finally, what her hand touched in the dark water was not a chiton but another hand. It held her tight. Kwəkʷáləlwət tried to pull her hand free, but she could not budge. Then she heard a gentle voice in the water: it said, "Don't be afraid. You are beautiful, and I only wanted to look at you a little longer."



A chiton is like an oval snail with a jointed shell. You may see chitons on some of the rocks in this park!

Kwəkʷáləlwət listened. The voice was very gentle, and although she did not know who it could be, she was no longer afraid. "Who are you?" she asked. "Where are your people?" "I have a big house under the water," the voice explained. "My house is always filled with food and with guests. I have a lot of friends." Kwəkʷáləlwət held the hand a little longer, and then it let her go. She looked as hard as she could into the water, but she could see nothing.





The lives of Samish and other Coast Salish peoples have always revolved around the moods of the sea. The sea rises and falls twice every day, sometimes much higher and lower. Everything important comes and goes with the tides, the seasons, and the weather.

Coast Salish people studied the sea carefully so they could travel safely, eat well, and avoid disasters. They learned how to eat nearly everything that is in the sea, and how to gather each kind of fish and shellfish when it was most abundant.

They dried and stored fish, clams, and camas and traded food, baskets, and blankets with villages far up the rivers and even across the Cascade Mountains, to Eastern Washington.

Coast Salish people appreciated the power and gifts of the sea, and knew that their survival depended on knowledge and respect of it.

K^wək^wáləlwət

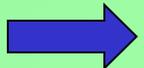
"the Maiden of Deception Pass"



Some days passed. The next time K^wək^wáləlwət went to the beach to gather chitons, the same thing happened to her as before. The voice in the water told her stories about the sea world and held her a little longer. Some days later, when K^wək^wáləlwət went back to the beach, it happened a third time. And then a fourth time.

The fourth time, K^wək^wáləlwət held on tightly to the hand of the stranger in the water and she said, "Let me look at you!" To her great surprise, a handsome young man stood up in the water and, still holding her hand, walked with her to her family's house. As a guest the young man was welcomed. He shared food with K^wək^wáləlwət's family and was given a dog-wool cape to stay warm. He was very handsome and gentle, but K^wək^wáləlwət's sisters thought he seemed chilly and damp. After the meal he rose and said to K^wək^wáləlwət's parents, "O'siám! Thank you for your hospitality. I have watched your daughter for a very long time. She is very beautiful and skillful, and I would like to take her home to live with my family in the sea."

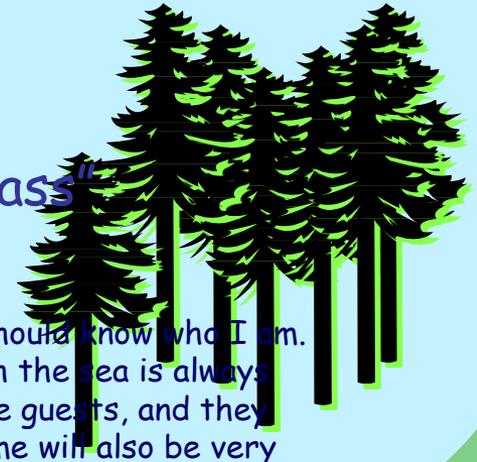
K^wək^wáləlwət's father thought carefully. He did not know this stranger and did not want to offend him. But he was unsure whether it was a good idea to get involved with these sea people. So he said, "We don't even know your name or your family; besides, my daughter could not possibly live in the sea!"





K'wək'wáləlwət

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Amongst well-off Coast Salish people, marriages were usually arranged to gain useful connections with other villages. Strategic marriages were still being made by Samish families in the 1920s.

The young man in this story is trying to convince K'wək'wáləlwət's family that he would make a very useful in-law, but they are afraid to approve because this young man is obviously not human!

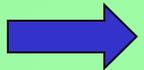
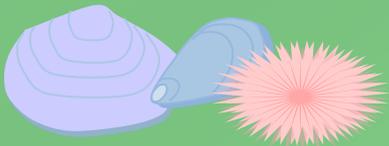
He explains that he has already been kind and generous to the Samish people. So why are they unwilling to reciprocate? He accuses them, not only of taking advantage of the bounty of the sea, but giving the sea no respect.

A Coast Salish audience listening to this story would understand right away that the young man is Yáxəmət, a wealthy and powerful undersea "chief" who fills the nets of his favorites with fish. (In the Central-South Sound he is known as Tiyútbaxad.)

The young man listened. He said: "You should know who I am. My name is very, very great. My house beneath the sea is always filled with seafood of every kind. I always have guests, and they never go hungry. As my father-in-law, your name will also be very great."

K'wək'wáləlwət's father considered this carefully. "What you say may be true," he said, "but we have never seen your people, and I do not want my daughter to go away from here forever." They spoke like this for a long time. Finally, the young man saw that K'wək'wáləlwət's father was not going to give in, so he rose to leave. "You say that you do not know us, but we have always been kind to your family and your people. Now you turn us away. Well, if that is your wish, I will go home alone, and you will have to live without our gifts. The tides will not go out. You will find nothing on the beach. Even the springs will go dry." Saying this, he left.

Just as he said, things got very bad for K'wək'wáləlwət and her family. The tide no longer went out, and there was nothing to eat. The springs dried up, and women had no milk in their breasts for the babies. No one came to visit them. Everyone in K'wək'wáləlwət's family was terrified and ashamed because they were so poor. At long last, K'wək'wáləlwət's mother said to her: "You'd better find that young man again." K'wək'wáləlwət bathed, then her father wrapped her in her best clothes. She went down to the beach. She called the young man's name. She cried, and then walked into the water.





This story is about the kinship between the Samish people and the sea. Like a rich and generous uncle or aunt, the sea feeds the people, and the people try to treat the creatures of the sea like they treat their human relatives: with kindness, respect and generosity.

K^wək^wáləlwət is both a real ancestor and protecting spirit for the Samish people, like a patron saint. Her descendants continue to feed her each year at this very spot. Look for her green hair floating in the water - it is a sign that she is still watching over this bay and her people.

There are many versions of this story, not only from the Samish, but from other Coast Salish peoples who traveled through these waters to fish and trade with their Samish relatives. These panels are based on a version told in the 1930s and 1940s by **Charley Edwards** - Samish fisherman, canoe carver, and spiritual leader of the early 20th Century.

The Coast Salish Institute with the Samish Tribe want to thank **Mary Hansen, Wayne Suttles, and Victor Underwood Jr.**, for their advice in telling this story to you.



K^wək^wáləlwət

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The young man appeared in the water and came to her with an armful of gifts from the sea. They walked hand-in-hand to her house. This time K^wək^wáləlwət's father said: "I am sorry we have shown you disrespect. Please accept my daughter as part of your family, and be our in-laws. But there is one thing I must ask from you. We love our daughter and will worry about her. Let her come back each year for a visit, so that we can see that she is happy." The young man left with K^wək^wáləlwət. They walked out into the sea and disappeared under the waves. The tide went out, and the springs began to flow. There were more fish and shellfish than even before. K^wək^wáləlwət's family grew very rich. They held great feasts, and canoes came from everywhere to visit them. K^wək^wáləlwət's people were famous.

Four times K^wək^wáləlwət came home again to see her family. Each time she came, there was even more seafood than before. But each time K^wək^wáləlwət returned, she seemed sadder to be away from the sea and her handsome husband. Each time she came home, her family noticed that she was becoming more like a sea creature. Her skin seemed colder, and in places it was covered with scales or barnacles. Her hair looked more and more like seaweed. The fourth time she came to visit, K^wək^wáləlwət seemed so sad that her family said, "If you are so happy in the sea, you don't have to come to us like this any longer." K^wək^wáləlwət walked back into the sea, her long hair floating on the water like the seaweed you see today around Rosario Head. When you see that seaweed floating on the tide, you know that K^wək^wáləlwət is still here, looking after her family.