

# KITSAP COUNTY TIMELINE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Compiled by the Kitsap County Council for Human Rights

## INTRODUCTION TO THE KITSAP PENINSULA AND ITS INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

For more than 10,000 years the Salish tribes of the Northwest have stretched from British Columbia to Northern Oregon.

The Suquamish (dxwseq'web) is one Salish tribe that inhabited the Kitsap Peninsula, including Bainbridge and Blake islands. The Suquamish name translates into the “people of the clear salt water.” The Suquamish had winter villages at Suquamish (Old-Man House), Point Bolin, Poulsbo, Silverdale, Chico, Colby, Olalla, Point White, Lynwood Center, Eagle Harbor, Port Madison and Battle Point.

Another local Salish tribe is the Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe who were called the Nux Sklai Yem, which translates to “Strong People.” From at least the 1400s, the S’Klallam were gathered in at least 15 villages stretching along the south shore of the Strait of Juan de Fuca. They enjoyed friendly relations with their Salish-speaking neighbors the Twana and shared fishing sites with them in the Hood Canal.

The Twana tribes included the Skokomish, translated as “big river people,” of southern Kitsap County whose territory was the Hood Canal drainage basin. There were nine Twana communities, the largest of which was Skokomish.

## THE TIMELINE

- 1786 — Chief Sealth (Seattle) was born at Old Man House Village in Suquamish. Chief Seattle witnessed the transition of his people from their ancient aboriginal life ways to a new one brought by the arrival of non-natives and imposed on them by the United States Government. The Suquamish had to adapt their culture (which had been based on fishing, hunting, berry and root gathering and traveling by canoe) to accept a new economy and lifestyle forced upon them by religious, social and political institutions.
- 1792 — Captain George Vancouver’s ship anchored in Suquamish. First Indigenous contact with Europeans in what is now Kitsap County. The Suquamish, S’Klallam and Skokomish tribes’ first contact with European culture came in 1792. Contact with Europeans resulted in devastating smallpox epidemics and other diseases that killed many members of the tribes. For some tribes as many as 75% of their tribal members died between first contact and 1853.
- 1853 — Organization of the Washington Territory. Isaac Stevens, the first governor oversaw the development and signing of treaties with native tribes to make way for a trans-continental railway and pave the way to statehood.

- 1855 — Treaty of Port Elliot – Chief Sealth (Seattle) was a signatory of this treaty, which ceded much of the tribe's land to the United States government who opened it up to white settlement. The Suquamish agreed to live on the 7,811-acre Port Madison Indian Reservation and give up title to the remainder of Suquamish lands, which encompassed most of Kitsap County.
  - ◆ The Skokomish and the S'Klallam were assigned to live on a reservation at the south end of Hood Canal. Few S'Klallam chose to settle there, preferring north Kitsap.
  - ◆ The U.S., led by Washington Territory Governor Isaac Stevens, agreed to provide health care, education and recognize fishing and hunting rights.
- 1856 — Five of the world's largest sawmills operated in the area of Kitsap County, drawing laborers from around the world.
- 1866 — Chief Seattle died on June 7, 1866. The leadership of the Suquamish Tribe was somewhat unstable in the years following Sealth's death. Seattle died before the federal government enacted "Americanization" policies intended to assimilate the Suquamish into the larger society and eliminate tribal governance thereby relieving the U.S. of their treaty commitments. These policies included:
  - ◆ allotment of Indian reservation lands to individual families to scatter the Tribe away from their concentrated winter villages (1886)
  - ◆ forced attendance of Suquamish children at off-reservation boarding schools where use of tribal language and culture was prohibited and punished. It was not until 1978 with the passing of the Indian Child Welfare Act that Native American parents gained the legal right to deny their children's placement in off-reservation schools.
  - ◆ the federally sponsored sale of reservation lands to colonizers that has resulted in the loss of 14 miles of reservation waterfront and over 5,000 acres of Suquamish landholdings.
    - The assimilation policy failed and Chief Seattle's people, the Suquamish Tribe, continue to persevere by honoring their ancestral ways and preserving their culture.
- 1870 — The US Government burned the Suquamish longhouse, the largest structure of its kind ever known, to the ground. The destruction of the longhouse was intended to encourage the Suquamish to spread out across their reservation and take up farming. After it was burned, the Suquamish rebuilt their village at the site and continued to live there.
  - ◆ Additionally, a Chinese businessman, Mr. Wa Chong of Seattle, brought many Chinese workers to Port Blakely. Isolated by a language barrier and by the anti-

Chinese sentiment that was pervasive during the 1870s and 80s, the Chinese were merely tolerated by white settlers, and were often mistreated by other workmen.

- 1880s — The first Japanese individuals arrived on Bainbridge Island, finding work alongside immigrants from around the world — Finland, Austria, Hawaii, Italy, China, and other locales — at the Port Blakely Mill Co. Most were laborers, although some, like Torazo Nakao, were given positions supervising others. As the men became secure in their jobs, they brought wives to join them. Soon a thriving village of Yama grew on the hillside above the mill, housing more than fifty families. It was nestled between the so-called "Dagotown," a Hawaiian village, and a settlement of Native Americans from nearby Suquamish.
  - ◆ 1883 — The first known Filipino in the Puget Sound area worked at the Port Blakely Lumber Mill on Bainbridge Island around 1883. His name was Manilla. There is a vibrant Filipino American community on Bainbridge Island today that hosts several events each year.
  - ◆ 1889 — Washington becomes a state.
- 1894 — Nathaniel Sargent, becomes first African American Justice of Peace in Seabeck, WA. He was born into slavery on July 4, 1863, and after emancipation was adopted by a white family. They moved to Oregon but because laws in Oregon forbade "Negroes", he went alone to Kitsap County where he earned a living in the logging trade." In 1894, Sargent, who had been well-educated in Illinois, was named justice of the peace at Seabeck. He died in 1954.
- 1897 — Jane A. Ruley, first African American teacher in Washington is hired by the Sheridan School District (later annexed to the Bremerton School District). She was one of the founders of the district, teaching for some time, and later serving on the school board. Mrs. Ruley, the daughter of a slave, was a classmate of the eminent black educator Booker T. Washington (1856-1915) at Hampton Institute, Virginia. She was married to Paul E. Ruley, a pioneer of Kitsap County who was born in Stuttgart, Germany, in 1859. He also served on the Sheridan School Board.
- 1912 — Founding of the Ebenezer African Episcopal Church in Bremerton. This church provided a center and gathering place for Kitsap's African American community. The church has been active in the community throughout its 100-year history.
- 1924 — The Asian Exclusion Act of 1924 severely curtailed immigration of Chinese and Japanese to the United States, and therefore to Kitsap County. However, the act did not affect Filipinos. Because the Philippines was a territory of the United States since 1898, Filipinos had the unique status of "nationals," rather than "aliens." They were not required to carry a passport and could enter the country without restrictions. Attracted by employment and educational opportunities, they became the fastest growing Asian

population in Washington state, taking the place of the barred Chinese and Japanese workers on railroads, in canneries, and on farms.

- 1940s — Wartime workforce needs bring 10,000 African Americans to Kitsap County and many of them are housed at Sinclair Park, one of the new housing communities meeting demands for housing for wartime workers at the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard. Most of the other housing projects (West Park, View Ridge, Sheridan Park and Anderson Cove) housed predominantly white families. A letter dated February 25, 1944, cited this grouping as contributing to the “unrest and unfairness to a group of people who are participating in the War effort.” Despite the inequities, Sinclair Park emerged as a familiar and stable foundation for the African American community. Many families living today in Bremerton trace their families, friends, and social organizations back to Sinclair Park.
  - ◆ 1942 — On the morning of March 30, 1942, 227 Bainbridge Island men, women, and children, most of them United States Citizens, were escorted by armed soldiers to the Eagledale ferry landing and boarded the ferry Kkehloken. They were exiled by Presidential Executive Order 9066 and Civilian Exclusion Order No. 1 because they were Nikkei - persons of Japanese ancestry. With only six days' notice they were forced to hastily sell, store, or make arrangements for all of their possessions, businesses and property. They were allowed to take only what they could carry or wear. They were the first of more than 120,000 Japanese Americans to be forcibly removed from their homes and forced into 3 years of unconstitutional internment. Not all were interned. Some were drafted into the military, some were unjustly imprisoned, and some moved away — but all were forbidden to remain.
  - ◆ 1943 — In August 1943, the Bremerton Housing Authority signed a lease with the Negro Baptist Church for a building site within Sinclair Park. The community church provided an important, accessible social and spiritual center for neighborhood residents of all denominations. Later the Hill Top Baptist Church became the Mount Zion Baptist Church and still exists in Bremerton today.
  - ◆ 1943 — Founding of the NAACP in Kitsap County. The NAACP advocates for social justice for all citizens in Kitsap County. The organization is now 66 years old. At the time it was founded, African Americans in Bremerton were being discriminated against, which prompted the founding of the Bremerton Chapter 1134.
  - ◆ 1944 — The Bremerton Housing Authority reports that they are housing 342 African American families, 249 of which live in Sinclair Heights. Residents there are not provided with bus or school bus service and must instead walk out of the community to access buses.
  - ◆ 1942 - 1945 — Millie and Walt Woodward, who had purchased the Bainbridge Island Review in 1940 spoke out against the constitutional violations inherent in

E.O. 9066. The tiny Bainbridge Review is the only newspaper in the US to take such a stand.

- ◆ 1948 — Founding of the Kitsap YWCA which provides programs and services aimed towards enriching lives, providing hope, supporting empowerment, and helping families to overcome obstacles. The YWCA of Kitsap County is dedicated to ensuring the personal safety, rights, welfare, and dignity of those who experience domestic abuse through their ALIVE program, while building partnerships and increasing community awareness to create positive social change.
- 1952 — Bainbridge Island Japanese American Community organized itself into an official "club" with a main purpose of sponsoring social activities and providing community support. As time went by, they realized the importance of preserving the history of the community to ensure that events like the unconstitutional internment of a group of American citizens never happens again. They have created exhibits, educational materials, and the Japanese American Exclusion Memorial on Bainbridge Island.
- 1978 — Bishop Lawrence Robinson founded the Emmanuel Apostolic Church in Bremerton. This church has also been very involved in the community over the years, championing social justice for all people.
- 1983 — Beginning in 1983, the Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights (IREHR) is founded, which has presented across the United States, including Kitsap County<sup>1</sup>. Later, they would go on to publish a report surrounding Kitsap County, noted further in the Timeline.
- 1988 — Cross burning incident in north Kitsap County at the home of a multi-racial couple. In December, an all-white jury acquitted a 19-year-old white youth in the cross-burning incident.
- 1989 — Bishop Lawrence Robinson, pastor of Bremerton Emmanuel Apostolic Church, and other local black leaders form Citizens Against Racial Violence (CARV). They organize a Feb. 11 demonstration march in Port Orchard to the courthouse for a mock funeral. "All of us had things on our minds that we thought we should do in response to that verdict [in the cross-burning case]," Robertson said. "This march is just an expression that hopefully the people of Kitsap County can become sensitive to the racial problems."
- 1989 — In response to the cross-burning incident in North Kitsap, the Kitsap County Commissioners founded the Kitsap County Council for Human Rights. The Council's vision was that Kitsap County shall be a caring, supportive, and safe community which values each individual, celebrates individual differences, and recognizes the importance

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.irehr.org/2009/09/18/a-new-statement-by-a-renewed-organization-for-new-times/>

of each person's contribution to the community. The council sponsors a human rights conference each year and also a youth conference in conjunction with the Safe Schools Initiative.

- 2004 — The Kitsap Immigrant Assistance Center was founded. KIAC is committed to the well-being of immigrants and the development of a rich multicultural community. KIAC works to empower, educate, and integrate immigrants through advocacy and social justice. KIAC provides both family services and legal services to immigrants.
- 2007 — Kitsap Safe Schools Network was founded. It is a growing partnership of community groups, agencies, churches, youth groups, parents and individuals working together to protect every child from the torment of bullying, including bullying based on perceived sexual orientation and gender identity.
  - ◆ The Kitsap Pride Foundation was also founded this year to further organize Pride events and collaborate with community partners in Kitsap County for the advocacy for and benefit of LGBTQ+ folks.
- 2010 — On October 26, Bainbridge Island police shot and killed Doug Ostling, a Bainbridge Island man who had been struggling with mental health concerns, after being summoned by the man's parents for assistance. Later, in 2012, as a result of a lawsuit brought by Doug Ostling's parents, a federal jury fines the city of Bainbridge Island \$1M for not properly training police to interact with people struggling with mental illness.
- 2011 — On August 6, the Japanese American Exclusion Memorial was dedicated on Bainbridge Island. Nidoto Nai Yoni, translated as "Let It Not Happen Again" is the motto and mission of the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Exclusion Memorial. The Memorial is located on the site of the former Eagledale ferry dock where 227 men, women, and children — two-thirds of them American citizens — were forcibly removed from their homes, rounded up by US Army soldiers armed with rifles fixed with bayonets and herded onto a ferry to Seattle on March 30, 1942. Most of them were bound for internment camps where they would spend three years of their lives.
- 2014 — In November, four people in Kitsap County were charged with human trafficking, using their victims for prostitution profits. The trafficking ring was found to be related to drug traffickers who migrated to Kitsap County when Seattle and Tacoma intensified anti-trafficking measures. Multiple law enforcement agencies were involved in the operation.
- 2016 — Kitsap SURJ (Standing Up for Racial Justice) was founded<sup>2</sup>. It identifies its purpose as "to get out into our local communities to move more white people off the sidelines and into the work of undermining white supremacy culture, norms, rhetoric, etc., as one part of the broad multi-racial movement for racial justice."

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/groups/KitsapSURJ/about>

- 2017 — June: The Kitsap County Health Disparity report was published, exploring the ways in which systemic discrimination across gender, race, socioeconomic status, age, and other factors impact the provision and quality of healthcare services in the county<sup>3</sup>. Findings include stratifications of medical care, specialized medical care, and behavioral health services.
- 2018 — February: A 64-year-old Black man was verbally and physically assaulted by a 50-year-old man who was yelling racial slurs, including the n-word, and threw a rock during this verbal assault<sup>4</sup>. The assailant was charged with second-degree assault with a deadly weapon due to the size of the rock and malicious harassment. Malicious harassment, when motivated by prejudice, is within the scope of “hate crime” as defined by Washington State law.
- 2019 — April: The Suquamish Tribe, beginning April 10th of 2019, implemented new processes for prosecuting domestic violence offenses perpetrated on tribal land, regardless of if the perpetrator was Native American or not<sup>5</sup>. This resolution and subsequent law documented the Suquamish Tribe asserting its rights under the Violence Against Women Act. Prior to the establishment of the Violence Against Women Act in 2013, tribal courts were severely limited in their ability to prosecute non-Native individuals who perpetrated violence against an intimate partner on tribal land.
  - ◆ July: Stonechild Chiefstick, member of the Chippewa Cree Tribe, with close ties to the local Suquamish Tribe, and a father of six was shot and killed by Poulsbo police during the July 4th fireworks celebration on the 3rd at the Poulsbo waterfront<sup>6</sup>. Stonechild’s death and the subsequent response from the police, as well as from the City of Poulsbo, resulted in significant demonstrations from the Suquamish people and allies, which continued into the following years. At the time of this timeline’s writing, criminal charges have not been officially filed against the police officer.
  - ◆ August: Bremerton unveiled the Safe Place Program for victims of hate crimes<sup>7</sup>. This program began as a resource for those who had survived LGBTQ+ hate crimes, and in Bremerton expanded to include survivors of all types of hate crimes, allowing individuals to easily identify locations that would be a refuge for survivors.
  - ◆ Late 2019 - Kitsap ERACE (Equity, Race, And Community Engagement Coalition) was founded<sup>8</sup>. It is self-identified as “part of a local legacy of people-powered change, of years of Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), and

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<sup>3</sup> [https://kitsappublichealth.org/information/files/2017\\_June\\_Health\\_Disparity\\_Report.pdf](https://kitsappublichealth.org/information/files/2017_June_Health_Disparity_Report.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://komonews.com/news/local/bremerton-man-gets-2-years-for-hate-crime-assault-of-black-man>

<sup>5</sup> <https://suquamish.nsn.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Press-Release-4-9-19.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.npr.org/2021/05/19/994818478/american-cops-under-pressure-to-rely-less-on-guns-take-more-personal-risk>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.king5.com/article/news/bremerton-unveils-safe-place-program-for-victims-of-hate-crimes/281-73965f23-4b04-4d67-abf2-1c4c601da58a>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/KitsapERACEcoalition/>

allies engaging neighbors in the hard work, the heart work, the collective work of building beloved community. Kitsap ERACE Coalition is a collaboration of many groups and individuals, boosting interconnected race equity work. Rooted in relationships, collaboration, and commitment to racial justice, Kitsap ERACE Coalition organizes for a thriving community and for profound, accountable, and liberatory institutional change.”

- ◆ December — On December 5th, 2019, the *Threats to a Welcoming Kitsap* report is published by the IREHR (Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights)<sup>9</sup>. The Executive Summary of this report indicated that “... this report demonstrates... two dangerous white nationalist groups have been active in the county – the Patriot Front and the Northwest Front. This report also documents that the promotion of bigotry extends beyond white nationalists to other more reactionary groups that peddle bigotry and division, such as the Kitsap Patriots Tea Party. This report also describes that such bigoted organizing takes place in a context shaped by the legacy of racism and inequality in our country’s history. This history has left rich terrain for bigoted organizing, including the persistence of institutional inequality, public opinions that run counter to civil rights, and both implicit and explicit forms of bias and exclusion.” In addition to the discouraging news about white nationalism in Kitsap County, there is hopeful data that indicated that “there is another side to our history – one that from colonial times through the 19th century abolition movement, from the post-Civil War Reconstruction to the 1960s Civil Rights movement, has stood up against inequality and called on our country to live up to the high ideals expressed in its founding documents. This report is a call to embrace this part of our history.”
- ◆ 2020 — June: The murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis Police prompted nationwide protests, including in Kitsap County. Protests occurred in Poulsbo<sup>10</sup>, Bremerton<sup>11</sup>, and Silverdale<sup>12</sup>. In Silverdale, a local restaurant owner threatened protesters with a taser, for which an apology was later issued. However, protests continued throughout the County, advocating for justice for those who had been killed by police. The Suquamish Tribe presented in solidarity with local protestors, both for Goerge Floyd specifically, and for Stonechild Chiefstick. The Kitsap County Public Health District issued a letter to the community regarding the loss of George Floyd<sup>13</sup>.
- ◆ July: The Suquamish Tribe filed a notice of intent to sue King County for ongoing sewage spills<sup>14</sup>. The County allegedly had ongoing violations of the Clean Water Act, impacting the environment of the wider Puget Sound, including tribal waters.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.irehr.org/2019/12/05/threats-to-a-welcoming-kitsap/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.kitsapdailynews.com/news/demonstrators-call-for-racial-justice-at-poulsbo-protest/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.kitsapsun.com/story/news/local/2020/06/08/black-lives-matter-bremerton-protest-kitsap-death-george-floyd-blm/5322644002/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.kitsapdailynews.com/news/silverdale-restaurant-owner-apologizes-for-confrontation-during-peaceful-protest/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://kitsappublichealth.org/news/Letters/KPHDLettertoCommunity.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> <https://suquamish.nsn.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Suquamish-Tribe-v-King-County-Final-PRESS-RELEASE072220.pdf>

It is important to note that environmental disasters, including manmade spills and waste disposal, disproportionately impact individuals of color, particularly Black and Indigenous peoples. Additionally, the Kitsap Race Equity Advisory Committee is founded<sup>15</sup>. Its purpose is two-fold: 1) to advise the City Council, by applying a race equity analysis to all aspects of governance; and to maintain engagement with and accountability to other work being done throughout the Bremerton Community in service of Race Equity.

- ◆ Late 2020 — The Bainbridge Island REAC (Race Equity Advisory Committee) was established<sup>16</sup>. The Committee's charge is as follows: "In order to dismantle systemic and structural racism within our government and community, local leaders must commit to a long-term action plan that recognizes the differences between individual, institutional, and structural racism, as well as the history and current reality of inequities for all marginalized groups. Failure to make and follow through with the commitment will jeopardize the development and success of racial equity on Bainbridge Island."
- 2021 — May: The Kitsap Public Health District declares Racism a Public Health Crisis, impacting health outcomes among populations that suffer under discrimination based on race, specifically Black and Indigenous people of color<sup>17</sup>. Socioeconomic impacts on health and racial justice are incorporated into this declaration, as well as prompted conversation around and the establishment of a County Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee<sup>18</sup>.
  - ◆ June: A Bremerton man was charged with a felony hate crime for approaching a Black family while threatening them verbally, as well as using racial slurs, including the n-word<sup>19</sup>. This was filed with the Kitsap Superior Court.
  - ◆ July: The family of Stonechild Chiefstick files a civil rights lawsuit related to the shooting death of Stonechild, perpetrated by police<sup>20</sup>. This event is noted above, documented in 2019. This lawsuit was filed in the U.S. District Court in Tacoma. The allegations include excessive force and brutality by police, wrongful death, negligence, assault, and battery. It asserts a breach of duty of care by the police, as well as associate supervisors. A jury trial was demanded in the filing.
  - ◆ August: Kitsap County Sheriff's Office released an official policy (policy 337) regarding hate crimes in Kitsap County<sup>21</sup>. This policy incorporates updated RCW information including gender identity and expression. This policy also incorporates training for the Sheriff's Office. In addition, the Gateway Church in

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.bremertonwa.gov/1232/Race-Equity-Advisory-Committee-REAC>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.bainbridgewa.gov/1124/Race-Equity-Advisory-Committee>

<sup>17</sup> [https://kitsappublichealth.org/about/files/board/res2021\\_01\\_Racism\\_is\\_a\\_public\\_health\\_crisis.pdf](https://kitsappublichealth.org/about/files/board/res2021_01_Racism_is_a_public_health_crisis.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> <https://kitsappublichealth.org/about/equity.php>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.kitsapsun.com/story/news/2021/06/29/bremerton-man-charged-hate-crime-after-yelling-slurs-family/7800104002/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.kuow.org/stories/family-of-stonechild-chiefstick-files-civil-rights-lawsuit-in-police-shooting>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.kitsapgov.com/sheriff/kcsoResources/Documents/Hate%20crimes.pdf>

Poulsbo hosted Joseph Backholm, known purveyor of hate speech, to speak as an expert on Critical Race Theory<sup>22</sup>. In response, the Kitsap County Council for Human Rights made a statement to address concerns related to hate speech being disseminated in Kitsap County, as this hosting existed in direct contradiction of the Council's Mission<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/WAKITSAP/bulletins/2ed75fb>

<sup>23</sup> [https://www.kitsapgov.com/BOC\\_p/Pages/Council-for-Human-Rights.aspx](https://www.kitsapgov.com/BOC_p/Pages/Council-for-Human-Rights.aspx)