

Timber company returns waterfront property to tribe

By **LYNDA V. MAPES**
Seattle Times

SEATTLE — Port Blakely Companies, a family-owned company with timber operations in the U.S. and New Zealand, has returned 2 miles of waterfront and 125 acres of tidelands on Little Skookum Inlet in Mason County to the Squaxin Island Tribe, at no cost.

The return of the tideland property is part of a growing “Land Back” movement, in which landowners are returning property lost by tribes when white settlers arrived and began colonizing the landscapes where Indigenous people had lived and thrived for thousands of years.

The return of the shoreline restores the tribe’s direct access to Puget Sound, and some of the most productive shellfish beds in the region — the very reasons the tribe had made the land and water home.

In a separate transaction, the tribe also reached agreement with Port Blakely to acquire about 875 acres of upland forest in its ancestral lands for an undisclosed sum.

The so-called Kamilche property was acquired by Port Blakely following the signing of the 1854 Medicine Creek Treaty 167 years ago, almost to the day of the announcement of the land



Port Blakely Companies returned this 2-mile beachfront property in Washington state on the Little Skookum Inlet in Mason County to the Squaxin Island Tribe at no cost.

transactions.

In the social justice reckoning after the murder of George Floyd, a Black man killed by police in Minneapolis, it was obvious giving the shoreline back was the right thing to do, Mike Warjone, president of Port Blakely, U.S. Forestry, told

the Seattle Times.

A mere spoken “land acknowledgment,” recognizing tribal presence and stewardship, is not enough, Warjone said.

“Just an acknowledgment about the place would ring hollow if the only owner of record was still around, and

the people it was stolen from were alive and well, and right up the street. The obvious thing to do was simply give it back.

“Frankly I feel a little like, why didn’t we think of this earlier? ... It’s about time.”

Kris Peters, chairman of the Squaxin Island Tribe,

said the tribe has no plans for development of the property, which will be cherished for ceremonial use.

Peters said the tribe has long had a good relationship with Port Blakely, and the Warjone family that runs the five-generation family business. “They carry them-

selves with compassion and dignity.”

It is hard to put into words what it feels like to have back land that the tribe never regarded as theirs, or anyone’s, but rather a gift to steward on behalf of future generations, Peters said.

Families lived on these lands collectively, and never overtaxed the resources, he noted, sustained for thousands of years off abundant lands and waters. “For our ancestors, truly these lands, these waters, these animals, these trees, everything was sacred to them, those aren’t just words,” Peters said.

Today’s Squaxin Island tribal members are the descendants of those same maritime families, who lived and prospered along the shores of the southernmost inlets of the Salish Sea for centuries uncounted.

“It is a difficult thing to put into words, when we talk about our connection to the land. People look at it as a cliché, it is not,” Peters said.

Peters said he, and other tribal members, are eager to practice ceremony once more on the sea-swept beach their ancestors knew.

“I can’t wait to drum, and sing, and dance out on those beaches, just like our people did hundreds, and thousands of years ago,” Peters said. “To me it is a very spiritual thing; it fills my heart.”

‘I hoped and prayed every day something would change’

Longview abuse victim speaks out

By **HAYLEY DAY**
The Daily News

When Haylee Norred was about 8 years old, she said she lived alone in a locked Longview room without furniture, heat or light. She was punished when she escaped to find food in the dumpster, and called names like “pig” when she ate table crumbs amongst locked kitchen cabinets.

Nearly 13 years later, her abuser and aunt, Jennifer Norred, 42, was sentenced to 90 days of incarceration, after pleading guilty in October, bringing independence to her niece.

“I’m finally free,” Haylee Norred said.

For almost a decade, Haylee Norred said she lived isolated and starved under her aunt’s care. Today, the girl who wasn’t able to play with friends, attend school or even eat until full, has been given a second chance.

“I hoped and prayed every day something would change, but I didn’t know when,” she said. “I never knew the darkness would end.”

‘I didn’t know it was wrong’

Court records show Jennifer Norred was arrested in February 2019 for two counts of criminal mistreatment and was released from jail that March on a \$2,000 bond. She was sentenced last week and was scheduled to be taken into custody on Monday.

Haylee Norred’s great-aunt, Cindy Stauffer, said charges came after the children in Jennifer Norred’s care were able to tell their grandmother about living conditions. Stauffer said a family member called the police during a fight between Jennifer Norred and her boyfriend and the children were taken away. A police report states six children were taken from Jennifer Norred’s care in 2018.

Under her grandma’s care, Haylee Norred said she started to question whether her aunt’s treatment of her was abuse. “Grandma treated me differently,” she said, by providing three meals a day. Eventually, she told her family and a social worker about her living situation.

“I didn’t know it was

wrong until I told them,” she said.

A probable cause statement for Jennifer Norred’s arrest states she told people an eating disorder and a mental disability attributed to Haylee Norred’s social isolation and small demeanor. When officials took the child in 2018, police reported the 17-year-old weighed 84 pounds. The report states her weight and IQ score increased after she was taken from her aunt’s custody.

At last week’s sentencing, Jennifer Norred said she was in an abusive relationship which she depended on for housing during the time she cared for her niece and other children. She said she has done a lot of self-work, is “different now” and loves her niece.

“I’ll never forgive myself for what my kids went through,” Jennifer Norred said.

‘Wasn’t allowed to be normal’

Haylee Norred said life with her aunt didn’t start off badly. Her aunt asked to take her when Haylee Norred’s biological mother couldn’t care for her. At first, Haylee Norred said she had a bed and desk. She spent time listening to music and cleaning with her aunt.

That changed, she said, when her aunt gave birth to her first girl, and slowly, more chores were delegated to her, then furniture, food and socialization were stripped away.

Inside what she called the “back room” of a 17th Avenue home, Haylee Norred said she used pieces of cable wiring and her bare hands to claw through a closet in hopes of reaching a food pantry. When she broke through the wooden bedroom door to find food, a steel door took its place, she said. When she escaped through the window to grab stale bread from a dumpster, plywood was nailed over the opening and light was shut out.

Stauffer said she’d see the shy youth with thick glasses about four times a year at holiday gatherings, but Haylee Norred never talked, and never played

with other kids. Stauffer said Jennifer Norred told the family her niece was autistic and had a disorder that made her eat food uncontrollably, prompting her to lock the kitchen cabinets and refrigerator.

“We believed she was autistic and had an eating disorder,” Stauffer said. “She fooled everybody.”

Haylee Norred said her aunt also told her she was autistic and physically threatened her before family functions to not talk to others and disclose information about her living situation.

When the state agency that investigates reports of child abuse paid visits, Haylee Norred said the barren back room she lived in was given a bed and TV. When Child Protective Services left, the items would disappear and the child “didn’t know why.”

“I wasn’t allowed to be normal,” Haylee Norred said. “It was like she had control of my mind.”

‘There is always a way out’

Today, Haylee Norred is living on her own near Warrenton. She has a boyfriend, two cats and a best friend she said she can call anytime and will always get an answer.

She learned to drive a car, graduated from high school at the age of 20 and took her first plane ride to California last summer.

She said she’s close with her extended family, but fears running into her aunt when visiting Longview. She said journaling and counseling has helped her cope with the trauma, as nightmares persist, but still hopes Jennifer Norred “gets the help she really does need.”

“Because that’s my aunt,” Haylee Norred said.

She said she is studying criminology at Clatsop Community College to be a lawyer or police officer to help people trapped in similar situations as her experience from about 8 to 17 years old.

“I know many people are out there in the same place I was in,” she said. “But, there is always a way out. You just need to find it.”



Haylee Norred smiles at her high school graduation last summer in Warrenton.

Haylee Norred

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