

# Remains of beached whale could hold clues to the past

By GENEVIEVE LONG  
Epoch Times Staff

When reported sightings of an unusual lone whale in Puget Sound started coming in last month, it caught the attention of a non-profit that protects threatened marine mammals. But when the whale—a breed typically found only in the waters off California and Mexico—died, a local Native American tribe was captivated.

The Bryde's whale (pronounced brew-dees), was found within Squaxin Island tribal land, and after some internal debate, tribal leaders decided it was their responsibility to take care of the remains.

The mammal was first reported dead on Jan. 16, and three days later it was in the hands of the regional office of the Marine Mammal Stranding Network, the non-profit organization Cascadia Research Collective, and the Squaxin Island tribe.

Typically, beached whales are dragged out to deeper waters to decay by federal fisheries authorities. But this time was different.

"We had to ask ourselves, 'Is this whale important to us?'" said Rhonda Foster, director of the Squaxin Island Tribe's Cultural Resources Department. "It died in traditional territory, and didn't go to any other tribes' territories, [so] we decided it was a gift."

With just over 1,000 members, the Squaxin tribe is still closely tied to their land, customs, and traditional food—including oysters, clams, geoduck, and salmon.

According to Foster, whales are part of their past, too, as they recently discovered the remains of a false killer whale on their land, and have also found remains of whalebone tools. She thinks they are all clues to the tribe's



The first Bryde's whale ever found north of California after it was found dead in the Puget Sound in Washington State. The whale was just under 39 feet long and appeared to be an immature male. JOHN CALAMBOKIDIS/CASCADIA RESEARCH

longstanding connection to the mammal, which played a role in dictating the unusual way they handled the discovery of the Bryde's whale.

"We had to look back at what we would have done three or four hundred years ago," said Foster. "Several hundred years ago my people were eating whales."

In the end, the tribe decided it was important for their "children, and children's children" to document and preserve the remains of the whale.

A detailed animal autopsy of the nearly 39-foot animal was conducted, and while the results about possible disease won't be known for months, it is clear that the whale wasn't pushed into the inlet by a boat, as often is the case with beached whales.

"We have no idea what it was doing up here," said Jessie Huggins, stranding coordinator for Cascadia Research Collective, who helped inspect the whale after it was brought in with the

help of a local shellfish company. It is the first recorded Bryde's whale seen north of California.

Cascadia Research Collective monitors whales from south Puget Sound using long-term photo IDs of humpback, gray, and blue whales, but didn't get any photos of this whale while it was still alive. Until the final results of the autopsy come in, the organization's "best guess" is that it starved to death, since its stomach was empty and its blubber layer was extremely thin.

Had they found the stray whale while it was still alive, however, its chances of survival might not have been much better. Huggins says not much can be done to help struggling whales other than monitoring them. But the chain of events in this case remains mysterious.

"The strangest thing is that we've just never seen them here before," says Ms. Huggins. "You leave with a lot of extra questions, like 'why was it here?'"

Since the autopsy, the Squaxin tribe has been painstakingly cleaning the bones of the whale, preparing it for display in its tribal museum on the western side of Puget Sound.

The preservation is part tribal heritage and part anthropological contribution. The tribe regularly works with Canadian and Alaskan anthropologists who sometimes find whale bones at archaeological sites, but have nothing to compare them with.

Foster hopes the Bryde's whale will contribute to scientific research about the migration paths of these and other whales in the Pacific Ocean—both now and in the past—and how their natural circle of life might have been knocked off-balance by man.

"My message is that whales are important to everybody in Western Washington," says Ms. Foster. "We felt we needed to respect the whale ... [and] culturally needed to do something with this whale."

## GLOBAL Q&A

**'Do you feel your country would be prepared to cope with a major natural disaster like an earthquake?'**

Large-scale natural disasters, demonstrating nature's massive power, can stretch preparation and resources possibly beyond most nations' capacity to cope. This is what Epoch Times staff from Pakistan to Spain discovered when they asked locals, "Do you feel your country would be prepared to cope with a major natural disaster like an earthquake?"

**DETROIT, USA**  
**HENRY HUGGINS, 63, HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER**



No I don't. Within recorded or living memory, the metro Detroit area has never had a natural disaster like a hurricane or an earthquake happen. So even though there are trained personnel that are very capable of handling small-scale events, I feel a major catastrophe like an earthquake would be beyond their capabilities. After several decades, we are still recovering from the negative impact the 1967 Detroit riots.

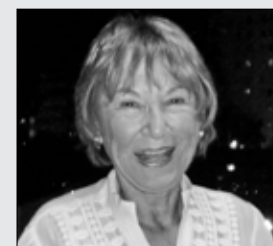
**PAKISTAN**  
**FAISAL RAZA KHAN, 32, JOURNALIST**



Definitely, Pakistan can manage. We have the experience of the 2005 [Kashmir] earthquake; its magnitude was 7.6 on the Richter scale. The government and relief agencies provided shelter and food to all affected; over 10,000 earthquake victims were rehabilitated. However, we cannot forget the support that the international community provided

us, their technical and financial assistance. Yet we need financial assistance to build even better infrastructure.

**CANARY ISLANDS, SPAIN**  
**MARIA VERONICA NEUMANN, 71, JEWELRY STORE OWNER**



I think so. Though I live in Spain, I was born Chilean and I lived through what is known as the biggest earthquake on earth [9.6 on the Richter scale] that happened in Valdivia, Chile, in May 1960. As you may imagine, in 1960, the resources to overcome a catastrophe like this had no comparison at all with what we have today, and we survived.

**SAN GIOVANNI VALDARNO, ITALY**  
**MAURIZIO ZAMPONI, 47, BRICKLAYER**



Italy is an older country, and to talk about our construction, I think we are not prepared. Only the newly constructed buildings are prepared for an earthquake. We had a big earthquake last year, the earthquake in L'Aquila, in an older region in the mountains of Italy. Many people died and many people lost their houses because they were older homes.

**POLAND, WARSAW**  
**MARIUSZ CHALAJ, 22, EXTRA IN FILMS**



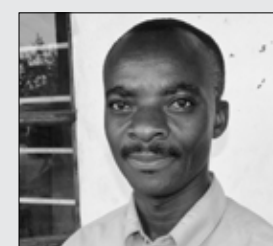
The government could not handle a catastrophe like an earthquake. It is unable to cope with simple problems, such as unemployment or the salary issue; the problem is not in the government itself, but with those who are ruling. A reasonable and wise man who directs himself for the good of the country, without thoughts of monetary gain, would cope with problems of any kind.

**GOLD COAST, AUSTRALIA**  
**DEWAKAR PRASAD, 38, RENTAL SALES AGENT**



I feel Australia or Gold Coast we are not well prepared for any large-scale natural disasters like tsunami or earthquake. I think we did pretty well with floods in the north and the fires that happened in Victoria and the disaster there. The biggest worry about the Gold Coast is a tsunami or something coming, because the ocean is just next-door.

**MSWISI, TANZANIA**  
**JUHUDI NYAMOGA, 35, TEACHER**



I'm not sure, but I think the country is still poor and is not capable of handling the problem itself without the help of another country.

Look for the Global Q&A column every week, when Epoch Times correspondents interview people around the world to learn about their lives and perspective on local and global realities.

Next week's global question: Have you heard or experienced any environment anomalies where you live recently?

ALL PHOTOS BY THE EPOCH TIMES

# Missing Chinese rights lawyer alive, says group

GAO CONTINUED FROM P1

Last month, when police told the lawyer's brother, Gao Zhiyi, that Mr. Gao "went missing," the international community reacted with alarm. Family and international supporters worried that this was an indication he was no longer alive.

In a brief statement, the Dui Hua Foundation said the Chinese embassy in Washington told them on Feb. 12 that Gao is "working in Urumqi." Executive Director John Kamm said the news was a "tentative step in the right direction toward accountability," but, if it is true, many questions still need to be answered.

As of Feb. 14, Gao Zhiyi said he still did not know his brother's whereabouts. According to an Associated Press report, Gao Zhiyi has been calling the Beijing police repeatedly, but his phone calls are not answered.

### TORTURES EXPOSED

Gao, named one of China's top 10 lawyers in 2001, began to run afoul of the regime by taking on human rights cases and campaigning on



A group of protestors including a lawyers concern group call for the release of human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng (seen on poster) as they protest in Hong Kong on June 17, 2009. MIKE CLARKE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

behalf of victims of government abuses. In 2005, he wrote three open letters to Communist Party leaders calling for an end to the persecution of Falun Gong.

He was first arrested in Aug. 2006 and was placed under house arrest following a one-day trial. State media said he was accused

of subversion on the basis of nine articles posted on foreign Web sites.

Just prior to his disappearance, Mr. Gao published a statement that described the tortures he was subjected to by Chinese security forces during a period of detention in 2007. These included

severe beatings, electric shocks to his genitals, and cigarettes held to his eyes.

### BEIJING REMAINED MUM

Even though the United States and the European Union have urged the Chinese authorities to reveal Mr. Gao's condition and whereabouts, Beijing has kept that information a secret until now.

A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said last month that Mr. Gao is "where he is supposed to be."

Mr. Gao's family could not bear the constant surveillance they were subjected to in China. His wife and two children fled a month prior to his disappearance and have since become refugees in the U.S.

Dr. Jerome Cohen from the New York University School of Law, an expert on China's legal system, told the Associated Press that Mr. Gao's case is an important one, and that Chinese officials must answer for his disappearance.

"Why the Chinese government chooses to play it this way is baffling," Cohen said.

# U.K. Tory party trips on misplaced decimal point

By SIMON VEAZEY  
Epoch Times Staff

Britain's pregnant teenagers now share something in common with Popeye, thanks to a statistical fumble by the Conservative Party. The Tory pre-election campaign has been hit by a wandering decimal point.

In a report published last Sunday ahead of a new election advertising campaign, the Tory Party said more than half of girls under 18 in the country's most deprived areas fell pregnant.

In the 20-page report, intended to spur the Labour Party on its own election pledge of social mobility, the Tory Party attacked the incumbent Labour Party for the creation of "two nations"—the wealthy and the impoverished.

But the assertion of a 54 percent level of conception in the 10 most disadvantaged areas of England was erroneous—the real figure was 5.4 percent.

With political stakes mounting under the shadow of the approaching election, opposition politicians were quick to jump on the mistake.

But the Conservative Party played down the gaffe. "It makes no difference at all to the conclusions of a wide-ranging report, which shows that Labour have consistently let down the poorest in Britain," said a Tory Party statement.

Rob Eastaway, former president of the U.K. Mathematical Association, said that the error wasn't the first of its kind. "There's quite a long history of politicians and decimal points," he told the BBC.

But Mr. Eastaway said that although it is easy to make a statistical error, the key is knowing how to interpret the data critically—and to thus spot mistakes.

"Sometimes people publish a statistic and if it looks like the kind of thing they want to see, then they aren't going to be critical of the number."

One of the most infamous misplaced decimals was responsible for the creation and popularization of Popeye, he said.

"This seems to have been based on some findings in 1870 that spinach has 10 times as much iron in it as other vegetables," said Mr. Eastaway. "It was only later discovered, post-Popeye, that this figure was spurious—the decimal point was in the wrong place."

The Tory statistical stumble was seized on by the two other political parties as an example of the Conservatives being out of touch with the nation, and of their tactics of deception.

Calling on the Tories to withdraw the document, Children's Secretary Ed Balls said the "dodgy" figures were an insult to communities.

"They are totally out of touch and have nothing to say on the important issue of reducing teenage pregnancies except smears and distortions," he said.