Abstract

Post-glacial sea-level histories along the Pacific Northwest Coast are complex and heterogenous, varying significantly temporally and spatially. Even well-refined regional sea-level curves may not allow us to understand and appreciate the effect this dynamism had on lived lives, particularly in cases where sea-level changed up to several meters in an instant. This thesis details how human settlement histories, intimately connected to sea-level, may be used to provide well-refined RSL curves on a local scale. Archaeological reconstructions of settlement histories in Kanish and Waiatt Bays, Quadra Island reveal extremely localized sea-level variations, including at least one tectonic event affecting deposits in Waiatt Bay. Overall agreement of our sea-level estimates with that of broader regional models indicates that intensive coring of settlement sites is an accurate and efficient means of accumulating powerful datasets, which can provide important insights into past environmental and cultural histories.

Keywords: Relative sea-level change; Quadra Island; settlement histories; tectonics; Pacific Northwest Coast; archaeology.