

Matrilines

Matrilines are a female dominated group of whales, where the oldest female is in control. The Southern and Northern Residents are the only Distinct Population Segment of killer whales that are matrilineal. Within the Southern Residents there are three matrilines (J,K,L). All of them contain an average of 18 whales. Members of matrilines may spend days or weeks apart searching for food, but they always come back to their matrilines, where they spend their entire lives, this is unique to resident killer whales.

When I first started my painting I was mostly motivated to get a good grade. What really changed my motivation was a book that we were assigned to read. This book, *The Blackfish Prophecy* by Rachel Clark, is about two kids, one in Florida and one in the San Juan Islands. In one of the chapters they were trying to connect an orca in captivity to its family in the wild through the internet. What really stood out to me was the orca's reaction to the others' calls. The orca in captivity bashed the gate to get out of its pen. This made me think that even though the story is fiction, the orcas in the book were mirroring wild orcas' social behavior, and the very social behavior the orcas showed us that day. On our day on the water, the whales came up and under the boat, twice. This rarely happens, but it happened twice in our one boat ride. And to think this happened to a group of 7th graders hoping to see just an orca 50 feet away, but seeing one up close is pretty life-changing. After all, orcas are very social and maybe somehow they knew that we were trying to raise awareness for them, and maybe that's why they came up to our boat that day.

Indigo

