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The 1980 eruptions of Mount St. Helens; forty years and counting!

Canada's most western province, British Columbia, has been the site for ongoing volcanism over hundreds of millions of years. The volcanic activity continues to the present day with fumarole and earthquakes triggered by hot magma deep below the earth's surface. For those living in Kamloops, this volcanism is most obvious in the nearby Wells Gray Provincial Park. The park hosts a myriad of volcanic landforms within easy reach of visitors. Although nothing is active there today, at our doorstep are the large Strato volcanoes of the Cascade volcanic arc in the USA extending into Canada as the Garibaldi volcanic belt. The May 18th, 1980 Plinian eruption of Mount St. Helens in the Cascade volcanic arc, marked the beginning of a series of eruptions that rocked the Pacific Northwest and remind us that volcanism has been part of the landscape for millions of years. The eruption that began at 8:32am Sunday morning was catastrophic in terms of its impact on the volcano and the surrounding areas. Ash from the eruption shot skyward to over 25 km and spread out downwind across the continent. It impacted southern BC, Alberta and Saskatchewan in addition to being heard from the border to Bowron Lakes. Catherine Hickson was an undergraduate student at UBC when Mt. St. Helens started to wake up and had a ringside seat to the eruption that morning more than 40 years ago. Listen, while Catherine recounts those terrifying hours and then as she chronicles the impact that eruption had on the science of volcanology in the years ahead.