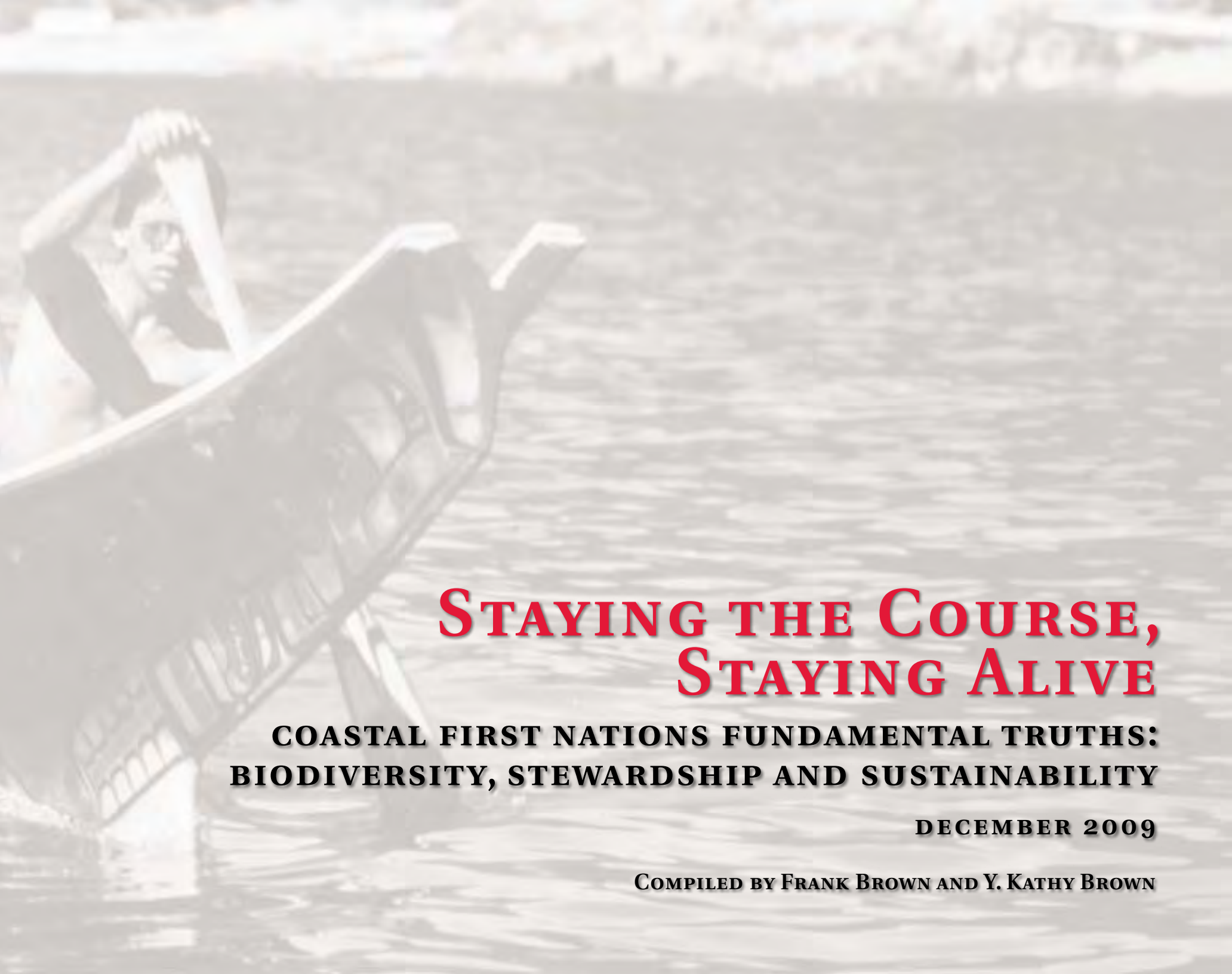
Staying the Course, Staying Alive

Coastal First Nations Fundamental Truths: Biodiversity, Stewardship and Sustainability

December 2009

Compiled by Frank Brown and Y. Kathy Brown



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The stories and cultural practices among the Coastal First Nations are proprietary, as they belong to distinct families and tribes; therefore what is shared is done through direct family and tribal connections.

Table of Contents

Foreword

Biodiversity and stewardship are important subjects to understand in helping us meet our responsibility to achieve long-term sustainability of not only first nations but also the planet as a whole. “Staying the Course, Staying Alive – Coastal First Nations Fundamental Truths: Biodiversity, Stewardship and Sustainability” is an excellent example of the combined efforts of western science and traditional ecological knowledge. As 2010 is the International Year of Biodiversity, the Coastal First Nations fundamental truth statement that this book presents is a unique and timely insight into the proven effective sustainability practices of some of the most complex maritime Indigenous societies on the planet. The core values of Coastal First Nations can also inform the current thinking and policy development for the mitigation of the impacts of climate change.

The truths articulated in this book echo the teaching of the Nuu-chah-nulth people where I originate, ‘Hishookishtsawalk’, or ‘everything is connected’. I encourage serious reflection on the seven truths and trust they will stimulate constructive dialogue that supports both greater inter-cultural understanding and actions promoting conservation of biodiversity and other natural values.

The marine metaphor "staying the course, staying alive" is a powerful symbol that acknowledges our long-term connection to the land and sea. It affirms the wisdom of our elders for holding on to our truths that have sustained us as first nations people while moving forward into the next millennium. I would like to acknowledge and thank the Haida, Heiltsuk and Namgis First Nations for sharing their insights and practices and contributing to enhanced relationships with one another and with the living environment around us.

—A-in-chut (Shawn Atleo)

Shawn A-in-chut Atleo *is the current national chief of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN). Shawn is formerly the AFN’s regional chief in British Columbia. He is a hereditary chief of the Ahousaht First Nation, part of the Nuu-chah-nulth nation, and holds a master’s degree in education from the University of Technology in Sydney, Australia.*

PHOTO:
HEYDEMANN ART OF PHOTOGRAPHY
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Preface

All the other life-forms who share their existence with us – and all those to come – depend upon us not to squander them or use them carelessly, to be mindful of their fragility and to assist them, in every way we can, to live and thrive as vibrant populations along with ourselves.

"Our health as a people and our society is intricately tied to the health of the land and waters." What better statement to summarize how important the environment is for the well-being and very survival of all humanity? It recognizes simultaneously a deep reliance and a responsibility that should be engrained in everything we do. We depend on the natural world for our very existence. The abundance that nature presents is available to us, to provide us with the energy we need, with food, materials, medicines, and all the richness, beauty, joy and wonder that fills our days. In turn, all the other lifeforms who share their existence with us – and all those to come – depend upon us not to squander them or use them carelessly, to be mindful of their fragility and to assist them, in every way we can, to live and thrive as vibrant populations along with ourselves. This central lesson and the other fundamental truths identified here by five thoughtful and experienced Indigenous environmental experts, and based on the teachings that have been passed down to them from their own elders, exemplify important knowledge that relates directly to the value and importance of biodiversity conservation.

Furthermore, these truths reflect a common perspective or worldview among members of many First Nations across British Columbia and beyond. In fact, they characterize the worldviews of many peoples the world over who have depended for multiple generations, in some cases for millennia, directly upon the resources of their own regions to provide them with sustenance. These are people who have direct and long-lasting relationships with their lands and waters, whose grandparents, great grandparents, and through them, multiple grandparent generations back in time, have observed the dynamics and sometimes fragile nature of plant and animal populations, have seen them fluctuate in numbers, in robustness and productivity, have marked cycles of production across seasons and years, and have identified variation within species and populations in terms of their life stages, the habitats and places where they occur, the influences of weather and climate, and the effects of disturbance, including human harvesting and various management activities.

All of these traditional practices, and many, many more, developed through careful observation, experimentation, monitoring, and sampling, perhaps at times driven by shortage or necessity, are as important for all of us to know about as knowledge generated through academic learning.

PHOTO: IAN MCALLISTER

These ancestors have learned from careful monitoring and knowledge exchange that salmon stocks can be strengthened by selectively and judiciously harvesting the weaker fish and leaving the most robust to continue up the rivers to reproduce. By looking after the salmon streams, and keeping them clear of too much debris, they found, long ago, that the salmon runs would be maintained and the salmon healthier and more numerous. They learned also in ancient times that by harvesting the spawn of the herring from kelp fronds or from hemlock branches anchored out in the quiet ocean bays instead of by killing the herring and removing their eggs, the runs of herring will keep coming back year after year without being depleted. They learned to enhance the quantity and quality of butter clams and other kinds of clams on parts of the coast by constructing "clam gardens," rolling the large, round rocks from the intertidal zone on some beaches down to the lowest edge of the shoreline to create a wider expanse of clear beach. They learned to "transplant" populations of salmon, herring and oulachen, and to prune their blueberry, huckleberry, currant and salmonberry bushes to make them more productive. They discovered that by harvesting cedarbark from only part of the circumference of the tree it would continue to grow and live for many generations – well beyond the life of the human harvesters. All of these practices, and many many more, that were developed through careful observation, experimentation, monitoring, and sampling, perhaps at times driven by shortage or necessity, are as important for all of us to know about as knowledge generated through academic learning.

Not only is the information about maintaining these species important; so too are the ways in which the teachings are conveyed. These are time-honoured modes of knowledge transmission: stories and parables that echo lessons learned in the deep past and bring them to life again and again for countless generations of young and old alike; ceremonies, like the First Salmon ceremony, that help implant these lessons of care and respect at a fundamental level; enactment of songs and dances, and creation of sculptures and symbolic images, that depict particular events will deeply engrain and reinforce teachings for an entire community or group. Even the names of individuals, passed down from time immemorial, can symbolize actions or occupations of stewardship and responsibility for particular places or specific resources, and can reinforce those inextricable connections that we humans can have with our home places.

Yet, it often seems that, in our modern, increasingly urbanized industrialized society, our infatuation with technology and our seemingly insatiable demand for more and more consumer goods has created a disconnect – a rift – between humans and nature. It seems that many people today are not even aware of our fundamental reliance on healthy lands and waters and on the other species of the planet who are, symbolically and in real terms, our kin. We blithely assume, at our own peril, that somehow humans and human activities are separate from those other animals and from the green forests, prairies, wetlands and other habitats around us. Not only do we see ourselves as independent from these elements of nature, we seem to believe that we are above them,

as supreme and superior lifeforms. Many people today do not know where the food they eat comes from, where the wood for their houses or the cloth for their clothes originates. Very few people can distinguish between species that have been in a bioregion for thousands of years and those that have been brought in by humans or their animals in the last few decades. Many people, even those who live on the coast or along the major rivers of British Columbia, do not know that there are five species of Pacific salmon that spawn in our waters, or that most farmed fish from our coast are an introduced type, Atlantic salmon. Few people from major urban centres could name our major forest trees, let alone known the nature of their bark or wood, and not many people know what kinds of wild berries are good to eat, beyond perhaps the introduced Himalayan blackberry.

As pointed out in the paper that follows, even so-called experts in natural resource management do not necessarily appreciate either the level of Indigenous knowledge or the history of Indigenous peoples' management practices that relate to the maintenance of enhancement of biological diversity. The example given later of a fisheries officer, concerned recently about dwindling salmon stocks and suggesting that perhaps Indigenous people should try terminal fishing, is a case in point. Terminal fishing – catching fish with weirs and traps at or near the point where they enter their spawning streams – was the major method of fishing Northwest Coast First Nations have practiced for millennia. The use of fish traps and weirs was banned by the European newcomers when they were establishing commercial canneries because they were worried about endangering the economically valuable salmon stocks. The cannery operators evidently had no idea of the careful selection and monitoring that occurred during this type of Indigenous fishing. As practiced, along with other means of caring for salmon stocks, fishing with weirs and traps was entirely sustainable. If it hadn't been, Indigenous people would have completely eliminated the salmon stocks from hundreds of coastal rivers where they fished; they certainly had the technology and capacity to do so. But they were more knowledgeable and experienced than that, and, rather than causing extinctions of salmon, the evidence indicates that they actually enhanced the salmon runs.

The following chapters present a rich fabric of knowledge and wisdom that relates directly to environmental stewardship and preservation and enhancement of biological diversity, as known and practiced by First Peoples of the Northwest Coast of North America, in the province of British Columbia. This is a region of immense geographical diversity, along an island-dotted and deeply indented coastline, with steep-sided snow-capped mountains descending to fertile and productive river valleys, tidal estuaries, and rocky coastlines, carved out by the glaciers of the Pleistocene era some 12,000 to 20,000 years ago or more. Probably, right around the same time as the ice sheets were starting to melt, or even before, people were already residing in some of the places along the coast. Some of these early sites of habitation are now under the ocean, flooded out as sea levels rose following the massive ice melts at the end of the Pleistocene. There are places on Haida Gwaii and elsewhere on the coast, called "glacial refugia" that were never actually covered by ice, and these were probably the Indigenous

PHOTO: IAN MCALLISTER

Hopefully, now, future generations of all British Columbians will be inspired by these fundamental teachings that will help to guide our relationship with our environment towards one of respect and appreciation.

Peoples' first homelands: places where the Creator located them as recounted in the ancient stories. Over the intervening time, there have been many changes: floods, earthquakes, tidal waves, times of alternate warming and cooling. The iconic cedar trees that are such an important part of First Peoples' lifeways along the coast today have been a predominant element of the region's only within the last 5,000 years or so. Before that time, people relied more heavily on the other trees: Sitka spruce, western hemlock, silver fir and red alder for the wood they needed for fuel and construction. Thus, the people have always adapted to the changing environment, learning to use whatever resources have become available with respect and appreciation. Archaeological sites all along the coast – from Haida Gwaii to the site of over 10,000 years of continuous settlement at Namu in Heiltsuk territory, to the clam gardens of the Broughton Archipelago in Kwakwaka'wakw territory, and the estuarine root gardens at the mouths of the major rivers of Nuu-chah-nulth and Kwakwaka'wakw homelands and elsewhere along the coast – are a testament to the effectiveness of people's caretaking and enhancement of their lands and waters.

We also know that this same region is linguistically and culturally diverse, with hundreds of settlements and many groups of people, speaking some 20 distinct languages, living between southern Alaska and the Puget Sound area at the time the first Europeans arrived here. These peoples exchanged knowledge and ideas in many different ways, through intermarriage or formal trading relationships, and learned from each other about different foods and food processing methods, different fishing and basketry techniques, and different ideas about sustainable living and ways of promoting and enhancing their resources. They also witnessed each other's dances and ceremonies, and learned about each other's stories, just as these are being shared today through this relatively new venue of printed words.

Embedded within the stories, and the information about seasonal rounds, ecological indicators, fishing and berry picking, is a reflection of values and ethics that have been imparted by generations of ancestors to these skilled Indigenous teachers of today's parent and grandparent generations. Hopefully, now, future generations of all British Columbians will be inspired by these fundamental teachings that will help to guide our relationship with our environment towards one of respect and appreciation. May these words, values and ideas help us to stop our careless behavior and to focus our actions on ways to strengthen the health of the lands and waters and their biological heritage, in so doing, build up our own well-being and that of the generations to come. Thank you, Barb, Frank, Gloria, Kathy and Pauline, and thanks to all of your teachers, for this profound contribution to the people and all the special species and habitats of our province.

With deep appreciation,

Nancy Turner

Nancy Turner *is distinguished professor in the School of Environmental Studies at the University of Victoria. She is an ethnobotanist and ethnoecologist who, for over 30 years, has collaborated with Indigenous elders and environmental specialists in many parts of British Columbia. She has written many books papers and articles about Indigenous plant knowledge and use. Recent awards include the Canadian Botanical Association's Lawson Medal for lifetime contributions to Canadian Botany, the Richard Evans Schultes Award in Ethnobotany from the Healing Forest Conservancy in Washington, DC; the Order of British Columbia, Elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, and a Slow Food Award in Bologna, Italy.*

Acknowledgements

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- Gloria Cranmer Webster Wikalalisame'ga, Namgis First Nation
- Pauline Waterfall Hilistis, Heiltsuk First Nation
- Barbara Wilson Kii'iljus, Haida First Nation

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Your guidance, support and dedication to sharing and preserving Coastal First Nations' cultural values and bio-region is much appreciated. This document is written with good hearts, is without prejudice and is a non-abrogation of the Haida, Heiltsuk or Namgis title and rights.

This work is for future generations in the hope that they may learn from the wisdom of those who have lived on these lands for many millennia before us.

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This document is dedicated in memory of Elsie Robinson, who recently started her journey to join our ancestors … "a keeper of the knowledge".
PHOTO: SHIRL ʻYVXMI HALL

Executive Summary

The heart of this book is a set of seven fundamental truths that for thousands of years have guided Coastal First Nations. Frank Brown and Y. Kathy Brown assembled these truths through interviews with and advice from elders from three different Coastal First Nations: Pauline Waterfall (Hilistis), from Heiltsuk, Gloria Cranmer-Webster (Wikalalisame'ga), from Namgis of the Kwakwaka'wakw, and Barb Wilson (Kii'iljuus), from Haida Nation. Each is regarded by her community as a "keeper of the knowledge".

We initially asked these keepers of the knowledge: "Are there fundamental truths or core values related to biodiversity, sustainability and stewardship?" The unanimous answer was yes. The discussion then shifted to an exploration of the past, including stories and practices reflecting a connection to nature.

The result was a description of seven fundamental truths that evolved through a series of discussions and correspondence among the keepers of the knowledge. Each truth is supported by language, maps, practices and stories from the three Coastal First Nations, and each reflects a different connection to the elements of nature. Collectively the truths convey knowledge, care and sustenance derived from thousands of years of living in direct contact with the land and sea. These truths are communicated from one generation to another through the types of stories included in this book. The seven truths, which also affirm current concepts of biodiversity, stewardship and sustainability and provide an important balance for scientific knowledge, are as follows:

Fundamental Truth 1: Creation

We the coastal first peoples have been in our respective territories (homelands) since the beginning of time.

Fundamental Truth 2: Connection to Nature

We are all one and our lives are interconnected.

If we don't say it, who will? As keepers of the knowledge, it is our responsibility to share what has been passed on to us. Lessons learned are gifts and we have the responsibility to share these in order to teach about living in harmony, balance and respect with each other and with nature and its biodiversity.

HILISTIS, PAULINE WATERFALL

Fundamental Truth 3: Respect

All life has equal value. We acknowledge and respect that all plants and animals have a life force.

Fundamental Truth 4: Knowledge

Our traditional knowledge of sustainable resource use and management is reflected in our intimate relationship with nature and its predictable seasonal cycles and indicators of renewal of life and subsistence.

Fundamental Truth 5: Stewardship

We are stewards of the land and sea from which we live, knowing that our health as a people and our society is intricately tied to the health of the land and waters.

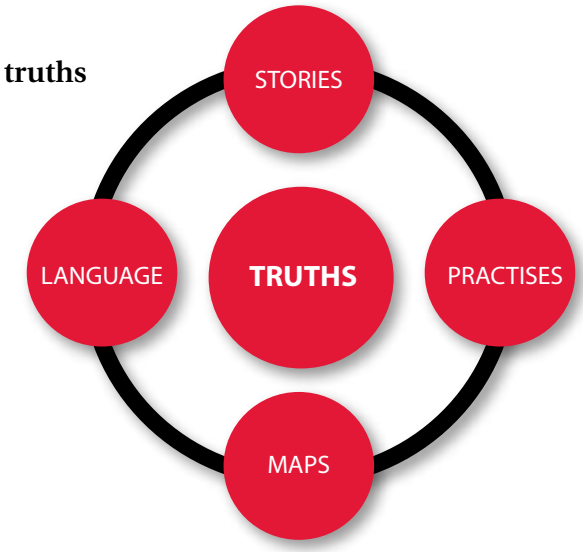
Fundamental Truth 6: Sharing

We have a responsibility to share and support to provide strength and make others stronger in order for our world to survive.

Fundamental Truth 7: Adapting to Change

Environmental, demographic, socio-political and cultural changes have occurred since the creator placed us in our homelands and we have continuously adapted to and survived these changes.

Validating our truths



These seven truths flow naturally from one to another and together form an integrated set of beliefs about the relationships of first peoples with nature and about the practices our ancestors evolved since Creation to sustain life in all its forms. Living in the same place where our ancestors have always lived, we naturally came to understand the interconnectedness and equality of all life. That understanding in turn fostered an intimate relationship with and knowledge of nature and its cycles, and an appreciation that the survival of the natural world required careful and constant stewardship. But we also recognize that stewardship by itself is not enough. For our own strength and survival, we must accept our responsibility to share with and support all other beings to keep them strong too and to be prepared to continually adapt to change.

Stories About Herring

Heiltsuk stories about the relationship of Coastal First Nations with herring provide a good illustration of how our ancestors put into practice all seven fundamental truths and passed on their knowledge of those truths to their descendants right to the present day and into the future.

We have always taken our sustenance from the sea and its resources. The herring season is extra special to the Heiltsuk because it represents the beginning of a New Year and time of plenty; it is the end of the winter's darkness. This is a transition period that is mirrored by our custom of moving from our winter or red cedar bark ceremony to our peace dance ceremonies. This is also the time of year we move from our winter villages to our food gathering camps located within our traditional territories. Classic ancestral Heiltsuk stories speak of physical separation, transitional experiences and incorporation back into society. Raven transplanting herring within Heiltsuk traditional territory is one of the first examples of stewardship of a natural resource.

The herring stories are a tribute and in honour of William (Bill) Gladstone and the late Donald (Don) Gladstone, in particular. The "Gift of the Herring" story below reflects an integral part of Heiltsuk physical and economic well-being that goes back to the beginning of time. This story reflects the natural cycles that the Heiltsuk depend on for sustenance, beginning with the arrival of the herring in the spring time.

The following stories offer both traditional and current perspectives from the Heiltsuk about the herring fishery.

Staying the course to me means remaining rooted to my truth, to know my traditional truth. We need to chart our path and be aware of where we are going, know our destination, destination may be a spot on the horizon, persist until the spot comes clear, like on a canoe journey, (in) this analogy, there will be obstacles, go around them, stay the course, never take your eye off the horizon, stay the course. . . .

HILISTIS, PAULINE WATERFALL

Moon (nusi) tipping over. Herring spawning season.
ILLUSTRATION: SHIRL ʻYVXMI HALL

TRADITIONAL HEILTSUK STORY

Raven (Chief/Himaskas'u) Obtains Wá'nái (herring)

Raven (chief/himaskas'u) lived at Nulu with his wife and his son.
Himaskas'u's friends, Racoon, Loon and his wife Red Cod Woman, lived at Gildith.
Herring do not run at Nulu but there are a lot at Gildith.
Himaskas'u wanted herring to run at Nulu so he and his son went to visit with Xáwinuxva and his wife, in their territory at Gildith, when the herring were running.
Himaskas'u ate lots of herring and they gave him more to take home.
He killed Red Cod Woman, "You will be a red cod now and live in the ocean".
He swung Loon over his head as he said, "You will be a bird and tell the people that spring has come".
Then he and his son went home.
Himaskas'u told his son, when you hear me sing tip over the canoe.
Himaskas'u sang a Shaman Song and his son tipped over the canoe.
All the herring came alive. There became lots of herring at Nulu.
All the people were happy. They fished for herring and had lots of food.
This traditional Heiltsuk story speaks to Raven transplanting herring and is one of the first examples of stewardship.

SOURCE: Recorded in Bella Bella Tales by Franz Boas 1932.

February ('Thixsm) is the windy month.
ILLUSTRATION: SHIRL 'YVXMI HALL

CONTEMPORARY HEILTSUK STORY

Nuyum: "Gift of the Herring"

By Athalis, Frank Brown

"The Heiltsuk people had been suffering for a long time and were hungry because of the extremely long and dark winter. One grey day two Qvuqvayaitxv brothers were walking along the beach at Qvuqva, when they heard calls for help coming from a tidal pool. Trapped inside the pool was a small school of supernatural young herring that had become stuck as the tide had gone out. The water continued draining out and soon it would be empty, then the herring would die. This is when the two boys heard the calls for help and began packing the herring down to the ocean, inside abalone shells, to set them free. Afterwards, the boys lay exhausted on the beach and soon fell asleep.

While they were sleeping, the young herring visited them in their dreams and told them to gather hemlock boughs and go bathe in the ocean and wash the boughs on a rock near by the kelp bed. When they woke up the ocean had turned a milky white, millions of herring were flashing up the beach, they began to lay golden eggs and this caused the sky to brighten. The halibut, ling, red and rock cod came in from the deep, many birds such as the ravens, eagles, kingfishers, seagulls, saw bill and black ducks all flew in and began to feed, also the seals, sea lions, whales and the spring salmon came in from the ocean and thus began the first seasonal cycle and the beginning of the New Year.

The children were told by the herring to quickly gather small hemlock trees, gigalis, and yaggi (kelp) and anchor them to logs in the ocean near the shore where they were spawning. As if by magic great schools of herring converged on the hemlock trees and kelp began to lay their eggs.

The people saw the radiating light and heard all the activity down on the beach and went to see what was going on. The boys showed them the trees and the kelp filled with golden roe of the herring. They brought it into their uncles' house and told the people the story of the stranded herring and they had a great feast."

Heiltsuk ancestors named February 'Thixsm. *'Thix* meaning milky/ murky and *sm* meaning big round thing; because the color of the moon is milky and indicates that the herring are getting ready to spawn.
ILLUSTRATION: SHIRL ʻYVXMI HALL

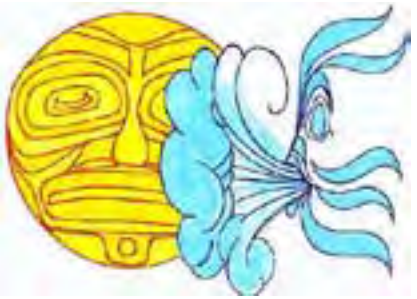


ILLUSTRATION: SHIRL ʻYVXMI HALL

CONTEMPORARY HEILTSUK STORY

Threats to the Herring Spawn on Kelp (SOK) Fishery

By Heiltsuk Spawn on Kelp Committee

The Heiltsuk people have inhabited the Central Coast of British Columbia since time immemorial. Historically, their strong culture and vital trading economy made the Heiltsuk among the most prosperous maritime Indigenous nations on the West Coast of North America. The Heiltsuk have been progressive entrepreneurs; industrious, hard working, self-sufficient, and able to maintain access to a broad resource base both commercially and for subsistence. The Heiltsuk historically built kelp gardens for the herring to spawn on.

As the 20th century advanced, however, government laws and policies progressively stifled and thwarted Heiltsuk self-sufficiency and self-determination at home in the community and increasingly restricted access to the very land and resource base that had sustained them prior to colonization. Despite this terrible toll, the Heiltsuk have remained determined to be industrious and self-sufficient. The ascendancy of the Heiltsuk spirit prevails. The Heiltsuk are seeking a fundamental change. They wish to reconcile their relations with the Crown and wish to begin by resolving their long-outstanding litigation involving their Aboriginal right to harvest and sell herring spawn on kelp ("SOK").

The Heiltsuk culture and economy is deeply rooted in harvesting and trading the products of the land and sea, including all species of fish in the region as well as shellfish and SOK. In 1996, the Supreme Court of Canada affirmed the Heiltsuk right to harvest and sell SOK for trade and commercial purposes, after William and Donald Gladstone successfully defended Fisheries Act charges for harvesting and selling SOK without a commercial licence. The Court held that the Heiltsuk SOK commercial right is second only to conservation and takes priority over all other user groups including commercial fishers. Prior to this affirmation, Canada had fought and denied the existence of this commercial right through five levels of court. As an impoverished community, the Heiltsuk could ill afford to suffer the loss of many millions of dollars in revenues caused by the denial of their commercial Aboriginal right.

The SOK fishery is a sustainable fishery; female herring spawn and then return to spawn in subsequent years. This is very different from the sac-roe fishery, which is a "kill fishery"; female herring are caught before they spawn and the fish roe is then removed. The mortality rate is 100% for the herring

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sac-roe fishery but only 5 to 12% in the SOK fishery. To make matters worse, for many years the Heiltsuk expressed their concerns about overfishing on the Central Coast by the sac-roe fishery. They repeatedly warned that if the commercial sac-roe fishery in the Central Coast was not reduced, the collapse of that entire fishery would be imminent. Their voices were not heard and now history has proven them right.

Heiltsuk representatives have repeatedly attended Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) and Herring Industry Advisory Board (HIAB) meetings to make recommendations about DFO Herring Management Plans and suggest greater conservation initiatives relating to the sac-roe fishery. DFO paid little heed and made no fundamental changes to its management or conservation planning in relation to the herring fishery.

In 2001, Heiltsuk representatives travelled to Ottawa to meet with the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans in an attempt to engage in good faith consultations. At this time, the Heiltsuk also voiced their concerns regarding over-fishing in their traditional territory by the herring sac-roe fishery. They noted that the size of the fish was getting smaller and suggested, among other conservation measures, that the allocation to the non-destructive SOK fishery be increased while the allocation to the sac-roe fishery be decreased so there would be far fewer herring mortalities. Their concerns and suggestions were ignored.

The Heiltsuk continued to pro-actively participate in numerous DFO-imposed management processes, with no results to address Heiltsuk recommended changes in management, conservation and allocation practices.

There is a very sad irony in the fact that the Heiltsuk worked very hard to achieve Supreme Court of Canada recognition of their right to harvest and sell herring spawn on kelp, only to see the decision effectively made meaningless by DFO actions that are slowly killing the fishery. In advising DFO to set up and enforce practical conservation measures, the Heiltsuk were simply following the teachings reflected in the fundamental truths described in this book respect the life of the herring; use or knowledge of their seasonal cycles to feed their people while conserving the lives of the herring; and exercise responsible stewardship, understanding that the health of Coastal First Nations depends on maintaining the health of the herring.

SOURCE: Heiltsuk Herring Spawn on Kelp Committee August 29, 2009

1 Introduction: Why and How We Prepared This Book

The idea for this book was inspired by Frank Brown's experience as an advisor to the Biodiversity BC Steering Committee during its preparation of the report *Taking Nature's Pulse: The Status of Biodiversity in British Columbia*, published in 2008. After listening to scientists discuss the significance of and various threats to biodiversity in British Columbia, Frank wanted to establish a connection between the scientific assessment of biodiversity and the traditional knowledge and practices handed down through multiple generations among his own Heiltsuk people on the central coast. He felt that much of this traditional knowledge could be conveyed as core principles or fundamental truths that would complement current scientific knowledge.

To begin the process of determining a set of truths or principles based on traditional knowledge, Frank sought advice from three elders from three different coastal nations. Pauline Waterfall (Hilistis) is an elder from Heiltsuk, Gloria Cranmer-Webster (Wikalalisame'ga) is an elder from Namgis of the Kwakwaka'wakw, and Barb Wilson (Kii'iljuus) is an elder from Haida Nation. Each is regarded by her community as a "keeper of the knowledge".

Frank first asked each of the three keepers of the knowledge whether in their first nations there are fundamental truths about biodiversity, sustainability and stewardship. As all agreed the answer is yes, Frank asked the question that became the subject of this book: what are those truths?

About the Heiltsuk, Haida and Namgis

The traditional territories of the Heiltsuk, Haida and Namgis are situated along the Coast of what is now British Columbia, including Haida Gwaii, Central Coast and northern Vancouver Island.

THE HEILTSUK

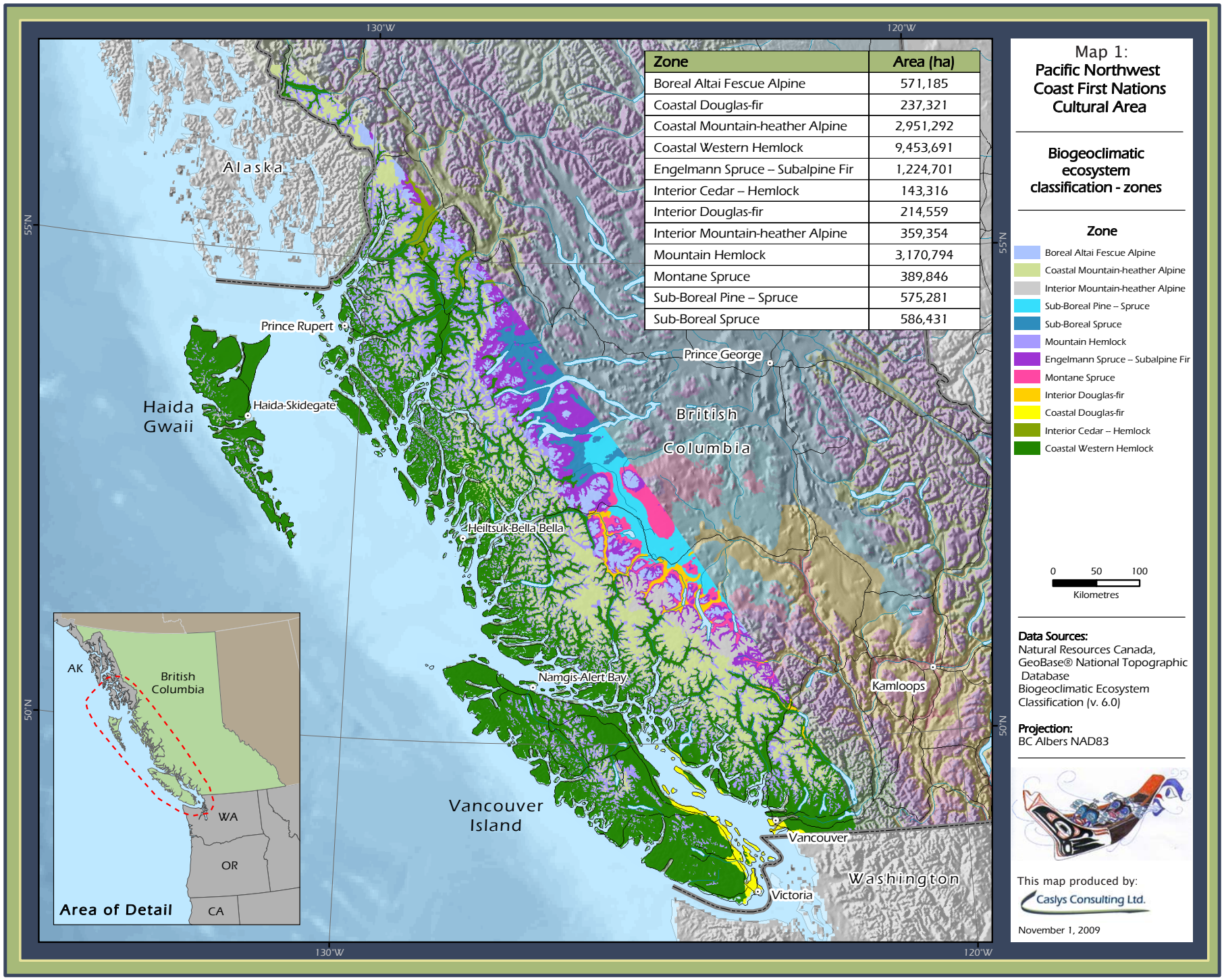
The Heiltsuk people are the descendants of the original Heiltsuk-speaking people, who inhabited approximately 6,000 square miles of the Central Coast. Archaeological sites dating as far back as 7190 B.C. show that the Heiltsuk have inhabited the area for at least 11,000 years. Like many other Coastal First Nations, the Heiltsuk largely depend on resources found in or along the shores of the ocean, and their ancestors had well-developed methods of hunting, fishing, gathering, and trading. Bella Bella, the largest midcoast community, is located on an island between the northern tip of Vancouver Island and Prince Rupert and is only accessible via ferry or airplane. For more information see "Further Reading" in this document.

THE NAMGIS

The territory of the Namgis First Nation spans the islands of the southern Queen Charlotte Strait (Malcolm Island and Cormorant Island), which include the town of Alert Bay and the Finnish, formerly-utopian community Sointula. Both communities are offshore across Broughton Strait from the town of Port McNeill, on Vancouver Island. The majority of Namgis First Nation territory spans the basin of the Nimpkish River and Nimpkish Lake and adjoining parts of the interior of northern Vancouver Island.

The main village of the Namgis is Yalis, on Cormorant Island adjacent to Alert Bay, although the original village site was at a place called Xwalkw on the north side of the mouth the Nimpkish River, which in the Kwak'wala language is called Gwani. The Namgis are on an island at the northern end of Vancouver island, accessible via ferry or airplane. For more information see "Further Reading" in this document.

Map 1 shows the coastal area of British Columbia occupied by these and other First Nations over the past thousands of years. The majority of the coastal landscape is Coastal Western Hemlock with small areas of Coastal Douglas-fir on southern Vancouver Island and the south coast.



Zone	Area (ha)
Boreal Altai Fescue Alpine	571,185
Coastal Douglas-fir	237,321
Coastal Mountain-heather Alpine	2,951,292
Coastal Western Hemlock	9,453,691
Engelmann Spruce – Subalpine Fir	1,224,701
Interior Cedar – Hemlock	143,316
Interior Douglas-fir	214,559
Interior Mountain-heather Alpine	359,354
Mountain Hemlock	3,170,794
Montane Spruce	389,846
Sub-Boreal Pine – Spruce	575,281
Sub-Boreal Spruce	586,431

Map 1: Pacific Northwest Coast First Nations Cultural Area

Biogeoclimatic ecosystem classification - zones

Zone

- Boreal Altai Fescue Alpine
- Coastal Mountain-heather Alpine
- Interior Mountain-heather Alpine
- Sub-Boreal Pine – Spruce
- Sub-Boreal Spruce
- Mountain Hemlock
- Engelmann Spruce – Subalpine Fir
- Montane Spruce
- Interior Douglas-fir
- Coastal Douglas-fir
- Interior Cedar – Hemlock
- Coastal Western Hemlock

0 50 100
Kilometres

Data Sources:
Natural Resources Canada, GeoBase® National Topographic Database
Biogeoclimatic Ecosystem Classification (v. 6.0)

Projection:
BC Albers NAD83

This map produced by:
Caslys Consulting Ltd.

November 1, 2009

THE HAIDA

Haida Gwaii is is an isolated group of over 200 islands, totaling approximately 3750 square miles located 100 kilometers west of the northern coast of British Columbia. Haida people have occupied Haida Gwaii since time immemorial. Our traditional territory encompasses parts of southern Alaska, the archipelago of Haida Gwaii and its surrounding waters.

Haida people belong to either the Raven Clan or the Eagle Clan. Each clan is divided into a number of groups or families, Each family had certain rights that were carefully guarded such as the right to use certain personal, house and canoe names and the right to wear certain objects or representations of objects and to carve them on their houses (i.e. as family crests). In Haida culture, the land and the sea and sky are very important as are the animals and plants that occupy these places in the universe.

Haida pre-contact population was in the tens of thousands in several dozen towns dispersed throughout the islands. In the late 1830s, smallpox came to the islands. All the villages at both the north and south of Haida Gwaii were devastated and the population declined to about 500. The people of Rose Spit and Cape Ball villages on the east coast were the first to relocate to Skidegate in 1850. In 1889, the villagers from Cumshewa arrived. By 1893, the families from all the southern villages moved to Skidegate. By the end of the 19th century Skidegate and Old Masset were the main centres of Haida culture.

For more information see “Further Reading” in this document.

2 The Origins of Coastal First Nations Truths

Our Connection to the Land and Sea

As Coastal First Nations we believe there is an eternal and inseparable relationship between our people and the land and forests and sea. This unique relationship is fundamental to our cultural and spiritual beliefs.

A diverse and abundant supply of natural resources is an essential ingredient of our culture and our survival. Since time immemorial we have relied on nature for basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing and medicine. Natural forces such as the changing seasons, floods and storms, plant and animal cycles and shifting ocean currents have influenced our hunting and gathering practices. These natural elements have also influenced the location and layout of our village sites, the naming of places and people in our languages, our commerce and trade activities and our ceremonial practices. Many of our spiritual beliefs, including creation stories and seasonal hunting, gathering and fishing rituals, also pay homage to the forces of nature.

Care and respect for nature are values deeply rooted in our culture. These values have always guided us in our stewardship practices. Many of our traditional stories speak about the importance of caring for nature. We are taught to take only what we need and to always acknowledge and show respect for everything we take, be it plant, animal or fish; our ancestors taught us that all things are alive.

As coastal First Nations we have always engaged in trade and commerce within a nature-based economy. The harvesting and exchange of resources for food, medicine, building materials and art provided the elements of a trade economy that existed prior to European contact and continues to this day. What has changed since

British Columbia's Central Coast.
PHOTO: IAN MCALLISTER

Qatuwas, "People gathering together".
PHOTO: SHIRL ʻYVXMI HALL

Petroglyph, British Columbia's Central Coast. PHOTO: IAN MCALLISTER

contact is the large-scale, unsustainable exploitation of the resources within our traditional territories by the non-First Nation communities.

On the coast this exploitation has resulted in a series of natural resource boom and bust economic cycles. Beginning with the annihilation of sea otters in the 1700s and the depletion of several other species since then – including fur seals, abalone, whales and ancient cedar – there has been a significant decline in the abundance and diversity of the resources we have traditionally depended on. This has been further compounded by more recent declines in other species such as herring, salmon, eulachon, sea urchin, halibut and cod.

The fundamental truths in this report are what we know to be true about the forces and cycles of nature. These truths have guided and sustained us as Heiltsuk, Kwakwa̲ka̲'wakw and Haida people in our coastal homelands since time immemorial. And now more than ever – given the current state of our marine and terrestrial ecosystems – we must heed the wisdom of these truths – wisdom acquired through more than 10,000 years of living on, caring for and respecting the land and water.

One of our truths is to share. We have chosen to share our stories our teachings, our practices, our linguistic references and maps in order that the knowledge and the wisdom that has sustained us as coastal peoples can be understood and used by others, as we have adapted to change so must mainstream society.

The seven fundamental truths in this report capture the essence of the relationship between our people and the natural world and give voice to the knowledge of our ancestors. They have been passed down through successive generations in the form of traditional teachings, practices, stories, songs and language. These truths have allowed us to adapt to the changes to our homelands over the past 13,000 years, and most recent and extreme changes in the past 150 years.

Over the millennia, nature has shaped and molded our lives, providing us with the means to exist and flourish in harmony with her abundance. From early times our way of life was strongly connected to nature; today our relationship with the environment has diminished dramatically due to forces beyond our control, ecological stewardship has always been at the core of our beliefs and values.

The inherent responsibility to co-exist with our homelands remains strong and necessary as we witness the continuing demise of what was once holistic and renewable.

Our traditional knowledge and stewardship practices have also provided much to share with the newcomers to our territories.

Stewardship practices are meant to sustain the whole. These practices provide the "life source" for future generations. This traditional knowledge – passed down from our forebears – has taught us to live in harmony with nature, taking only what is needed and ensuring the same opportunity for future generations.

What We Know To Be True, and How We Transfer that Knowledge to Our Children

We asked each of the three First Nations keepers of the knowledge what they know to be true and how knowledge was transferred to them. Their answers show that the truths of different First Nations have very much in common.

BARB WILSON (KII'ILJUUS)

What I know to be true: Without Yahgudang (respect) and Tll Yahda (making it right) a system which is thousands of years old cannot work. Yahgudang is respect for all things and Tll Yahda is the ability to make things right if something has been done contrary to the way it should be. This Tll Yahda is the underlying law of everything. Yahgudang works hand in hand with Tll Yahda. If everything is right you don't have to worry about your actions. If things have been done without Yahgudang, then Tll Yahda must be enacted. It is done by the party who has done a wrong to someone or something, standing up publicly with witnesses and making it right by talking about what was done, making retribution to that person or thing, either in monetary payment or with something which will make the thing whole again. My ancestors passed on knowledge by each night gathering the children of the clan together around the fire and telling them stories which had consequences included in the story for the children to learn and pass on to the coming generations. These stories talked about Tll Yahda and Yahgudang and how, when these were not observed, we as humans paid the price.

PAULINE WATERFALL (HILISTIS)

The Heiltsuk people have lived upon and been in relationship with their homelands since Oogami placed us there. This is supported in part by archeological evidence that indicates at least 11,500 years of continuous occupancy and use of our lands and sea resources. With this has come an intimate knowledge of and respect for the interdependent relationships that continue to exist to meet our needs in a sustainable way. The truth is we have lived in our traditional lands since time began and we will continue to do so until time ends. While our resource and land bases have been diminished over the generations, we are committed to maintaining the legacy of our ancestors by taking measures to protect and sustain what is left of our inheritance. This is not only for this generation but for the benefit of those yet to come. It is incumbent on us to take the necessary steps to create a sound foundation upon which to build relationships with all who have a responsibility to sustain and preserve the most beautiful place on earth upon which we live and thrive.

Staying the Course, Staying Alive means remembering all the things I have been taught about respect and being open to learn from the elders and ancestors, no matter where they come from, for I know we shared up and down the coast, being mindful of that no matter where we are, for they are all our children.

BARBARA WILSON KII'ILJUS

YAHGUDANG:
respect for all things

TLL YAHDA:
the ability to make things right

Ocean going canoes.
PHOTOS: SHIRL 'YXVMI HALL

There is not a word for "conservation" in Kwakwala, but it was practiced in the way that people harvested resources.

The Heiltsuk tradition of transmitting values, knowledge and responsibility to each generation took place throughout eons, until it was disrupted for a century by having our young people removed from our culture and community. The time has come to reclaim and renew that responsibility and relationship through teaching our young people about their unique and privileged heritage. By doing so, their pride, place and responsibility will be instilled, as it was with our ancestors. Through this, they will reconnect with the sacredness of their homelands and all of the natural gifts that our Creator has blessed us with in order to sustain us now and in the future. We will then have come full circle and practice sustainable relationships with the land and sea, of which we are an inherent part. This will be our contribution to healing the imbalance that currently exists within our community, as well as with the earth and its environmental damages.

GLORIA CRANMER-WEBSTER (WIKALALISAME'GA)

What I know to be true is what I learned from my parents, grandparents and other old people who influenced the direction of my life. Each of them taught me the importance of proper behaviour, for if one behaved badly, the whole family was shamed. This required the family to host a feast in order to digita, that is, to wipe away the shame. A similar feast would be given when a family member had been ill and recovered, or was injured in an accident. One was taught to be generous and share whatever bounty had been harvested from our lands and ocean. Doing so was one way of expressing gratitude for what was given us. It also strengthened kinship ties, which were severely impacted during the years that the white people attempted to acculturate us, so that we would become more like them, that is, "every man for himself".

The transfer of knowledge was primarily by example. One listened as one's father gave thanks for the salmon appearing, or one's mother giving thanks to the cedar tree for giving its bark. There is not a word for "conservation" in Kwakwala, but it was practised in the way that people harvested resources. Contrary to popular belief, there was clear ownership of streams and hunting areas, so that only a limited number of people had the right to fish in certain rivers or to hunt in specific areas. A song that my father sang to us was about our river, which made it clear that we belonged there and no one else. Another way of teaching was in the dances and songs performed at potlatches. Although most songs and dances are owned by individual families, the Salmon dance may be performed at any potlatch. It honours twins who are said to come from the salmon people, with the first-born twin being the head and the second being the tail.

1.1 "We Are All One": The Universal Truth of Cause and Effect

Coastal First Nations believe that all forms of life are intimately connected, just as the universal truths are connected and flow from one to another. The diagram on the next page shows how First Nations beliefs about Values, Growth, Change and Balance are interconnected through a universal truth of cause and effect.

Practising our traditions and culture is a way of life for our people. Our ancestors started each day acknowledging and thanking the creator for another day, for the food, the resources, shelter and their families – they acknowledged everything. This was due to their understanding that all was interconnected and that all was cyclical. (Hishuk-ish tsawalk…"Everything is One" – Nuu-chah-nulth.)

The diagram illustrates how as one's understanding of traditional knowledge grows, so too does one's respect for nature. As we develop a stronger understanding and connection to the values that have sustained and will continue to sustain us, we will find ourselves increasingly sharing and teaching this knowledge to others. And ultimately we will begin to live and practise these values in the decisions and actions we take in our daily lives. Or, in the words of an elder, "it is our responsibility to teach and share what we know to be true to stay the course."

Values are the foundation that gives direction and purpose to our actions and thoughts. We are taught to respect all life forms knowing that each is connected in an interdependent way to all other life forms. Through our knowledge and practice of these values, we have been able to grow and adapt to change over many thousands of years.

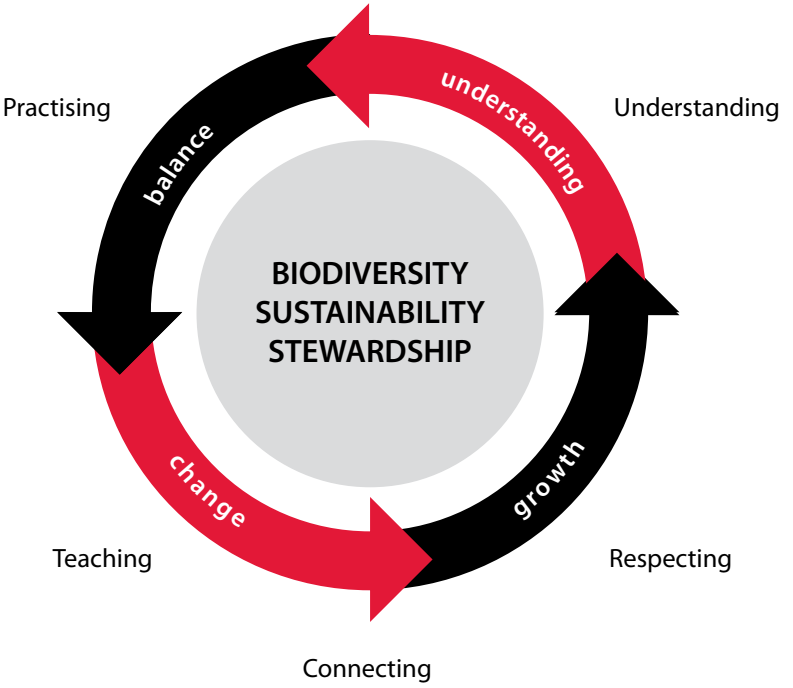
Through the passing of knowledge from one generation to the next, we have been able to develop a sense of belonging – of being one – and with that, a growing sense of responsibility and stewardship. This transfer of knowledge affirmed that each of us is a part of the cycle of nature – connected to each other and all living things.

It is through living and respecting our **values** that we have been able to sustain our culture. The further we move away from our values, the more disconnected we become from our origins and from our natural surroundings, leading to an increasing disregard for nature and stewardship and ultimately to a depletion of our resources.

The stronger our sense of belonging, and having a contributing role, the greater our connection to family and dedication to the **growth** of self and community. Belonging provides a sense of place, a platform from which to grow and contribute (to family and community) eventually becoming a teacher who passes knowledge to others and thus continues the cycle of **balance**.

"Every single atom in our bodies, whether carbon, oxygen, hydrogen or nitrogen, dates from at least the time of the solar system's formation 5 billion years ago, and most of them may well have being drifting through space, as part of the debris from long-dead earlier generations of stars, before being gathered up by our Sun and its planets. We decay and die, but our atoms move on. So long as an atom is not radioactive…it is indestructible."
Piers Bizony. 2004.

First Nations peoples have always shown respect for nature and the interconnection of all living beings. This respect applied to other coastal First Nations and helped to forge a connection among tribes up and down the coast. Out of this connection came a common understanding of the **change** that occurred on the coast – change that affected our resources and our trade – and this shared knowledge helped to strengthen and sustain our relationships and keep us all in **balance**. Increased stability and **balance** strengthens our **values** – and so the cycle continues.



Social ecological model

3 Fundamental Truths

When Frank asked our keepers of the knowledge – the elders from three Coastal First Nations – to describe the fundamental truths or core values held by their nations about biodiversity, sustainability and stewardship, they described stories and beliefs that had different forms of expression but ultimately overlapped so closely that we were able to identify seven fundamental truths common to each of their First Nations.

The examples of language, maps, practices and stories described here that support the seven truths are not an exhaustive list but rather just samples. The Pacific Northwest Coast has the largest concentration of first nations in North America, Tsimshian, Nisgaa, Tlinget, Haisla, Kwakwala speaking tribes, Nuu-chah-nulth, Makah and Coast Salish; the stories and cultural practices among the Coastal First Nations are proprietary, as they belong to distinct families and tribes; therefore what is shared is done through direct family and tribal connections.

PHOTO: CANDACE CURR

Fundamental Truth 1: Creation

Heiltsuk origin story: The Heiltsuk people believe that we were set down here by the Creator. Gifts from the Creator: stone, trees, house, food, transportation, fire and companion.
ILLUSTRATION: SHIRL ʻYVXMI HALL

We are taught that we have been in our respective territories (our homelands) since the beginning of time.

This truth is affirmed through our origin stories, many of which refer to specific geographical places where our villages are located, and in our ceremonial practices and language including singing, dancing and our ancestral names.

Even though the creation stories from the Heiltsuk, Namgis and Haida are quite different, they share many common themes. Each story describes a mythological being or animal figure responsible for creation of humankind. In the Heiltsuk story, after the world is created, the ancestor is "laid down on the beach" and, on awakening, is bestowed gifts from the maker including food, technology, shelter and finally companionship and community. In the Namgis, story, a sea monster is transformed into a person and is offered assistance from a thunderbird in building a shelter before it too becomes a man. In the Haida story, Raven places boy and girl creatures together in the shelter of a clamshell, bringing them the Sun and the Moon and Stars along with Fire, Salmon and Cedar, and teaching them the way of the world and how to survive.

Heiltsuk Creation Story

This is Heema'sbat's story, I am going to tell you. In the first creation, when he started creating the people, the first guy found himself on the beach. And there was nothing around, just the stone.

He was laid down on the beach and he found himself there. It's just like when we've been sleeping hard, you know, we rub our eyes. And then he laid down again and went to sleep.

And pretty soon he heard somebody calling, "Wake up."

And he wakes up and he sees lots of trees around him.

He (the Maker) was starting to make trees and everything.

So he never got up now. He stayed in the same place and he went to sleep again, laid down and went to sleep again.

So he heard somebody holler just the same way as the first one he heard and he wakes up.

And the maker tells him, "That's going to be your house." The house was already finished, just behind where he was, you know, where he laid down. >>

So he goes in there, you know. He gets up and goes in there and looks around. And he went out. And he sits down outside. He goes to sleep again.

He goes to sleep every once in a while, you know.

So he wakes up, up by the head of the lagoon where the salmon creek is. And he walks around.

He goes up to the little stream and a little fish, salmon, was steadying itself in the creek.

And the maker told him, 'That's going to be your food', he said to him. He didn't see it, it's in the air you know.

So he picks up a stone and hits him in the head. He takes it home with him. He goes to sleep again, and finds himself in his house. He has his salmon and takes it home with him, you know.

Well, he gets the salmon, his first food, and he goes to sleep again.

And he's lonesome when he wakes up, you know, awful lonesome.

Nobody to talk to, nobody else around with him. And he's was just sitting down outside his house, just looking around at what's going on.

Finally he sees something moving a little ways outside, before they get into the bay.

Well, he goes to see what it is, and that's a young girl. That's Peacemaker, Aia'siluks.

That's the name of it in our language, Aia'siluks, Peacemaker.

And she asks him, 'how long have you been here?' the girl asks that fellow.

"Oh, I have been here quite a while," he says, "and I'm getting lonesome," he says. "And we're going to live together now," he says to that girl.

So they do.

They go together to the house. And they think about salmon, how he's going to make it. Well, they're going to try get something sharp to cut it.

So he goes down to the beach and he finds a mussel shell, big shell, mussels, you know. And he sharpens it. And he goes back to the house and then he cuts the fish.

And he goes back again as he finds a stone, nice stone, to put that salmon on when he starts to cook it.

And finally he gets it in his head. Anything he gets, he's got it in his head, he's got it.

The Maker makes him do that, you know. >>

And they start this wood drill. The girl lies down, she waits for the sparks.

So they got fire, and they got it going - lots of sticks drift in outside the place, you know.

There's lots of sticks that time there.

And he starts to cook that salmon. Well, that's the first food they got, the salmon.

Well, it comes to his mind, he's got it. Anything he thinks of, he's got it. The Maker makes it for him.

He wishes for something to use when they go out to look around. And the next morning there's a little canoe down the beach. The Maker makes that, you know.

Well, they get it on his beach. He cuts it with mussel shell there, you know, and he strips it and hangs them up to dry them, you know. H e knows what to do now.

One day, the young people from the other side, they're playing outside with the canoe. There's another created people there, you know. And they go ashore and they tell the chief now, here are quite a few of them. They're from Goose Island, Goose island people.

And the chief tells them, "You'd better go and see what it is," he says.

So the boys go over. It's not very far, you know. And they get there, and they tell them, "We saw the smoke and we told our chief and he told us to come over and see what it was."

Well, Wanee'gila asks them, "You've got many of your people over there?"

"Yes there's quite a few people over there," he says.

"Well, you go and call them to come over."

So they go over and call all the people to go over there. And they have a big feast, you know, out of this whale he'd got. He cuts it into strips and gives those people a share.

And Wai'kus, that's Weeqwitbawai'kas, that's the chief of Goose Island Indians.

He has a wife and he's got a baby already. She's in a family way, you know.

And so is Manee'gila's wife, she's in a family way.

Well, they have a big time for those babies. They make them marry while they are in the womb yet. When they're born, when they're old enough, they're going to marry. So there's a big time.

When Manee'gila died, you know, this is way back now, either his nephew or his cousins was to take his place. And his nephew took that place. That's the way they're doing it in the early days. >>

Well, they started moving inside, moving in to place called Kokway, kokway, that's the place their village, Sound Point village.

There were lots of people there from different places. There's O'yli'txw from here, you know, and the Owee'tlitxw from inland, you know.

They all went there in the winter time. They had a good time. They invited each other and danced.

I think that is the end of the story.

REFERENCE: Willie Gladstone story 1 Reference from the Bella Bella Tales.
SOURCE: Recorded by Franz Boas, Bella Bella Tales as told by Heiltsuk elder, Willie Gladstone.

EPILOGUE TO THE HEILTSUK CREATION STORY

The following gifts from the maker have been bestowed upon the ancestor, Manee'gila, in this story, He, the ancestor, goes to sleep, each time he sleeps and when wakes he has been bestowed another gift from the Maker.

Sleep is a transition phase within this story, no reference to time passing.

Stone is matter or the earth, much like in Genesis in the Bible.

After stone came trees, which are resources manufactured into houses and canoes and providing shelter and transportation, one built at Sound Point and Cape Mark.

Then came food, the whale and salmon, than came tools and technology such as the mussel shell used to cut and preserve food.

Then came a companion and her name was Aia'siluks, meaning Peace Maker, as it is woman and children that gives peace and purpose and also brings together intertribal alliances.

Then came an intermarriage between another tribe. Married in the womb is a pre-commitment, even before birth, with Weeqwitbawai'kas, Ya-la-Kli, Goose Island tribe.

Intermarriage and succession, nephew takes name and place of Manee'gila when he dies. This is how the social fabric of community is maintained and passed down from one generation to the next.

Established main winter village of Goqwait, meaning calm water people or possibly place of peace. Willie has taken us through time in his story. The people gathered at this winter village to dance, potlatch. You had to have peace in order for all the tribes to come together, the wife Peace Maker, Aia'siluks.

Namgis Creation Story: Story of Their River

Told by Wikalalisame'ga, Gloria Cranmer Webster

After the great flood subsided, a sea monster named 'Namxxelagiu came out of the water at Xwalkw and became a man, Gwanalalis. He began to build a house but was having difficulty raising the beams. A thunderbird had flown down and was perched on a rock nearby. Gwanalalis thought, "I wish that bird were a man, so he could help me." Because the bird was supernatural, he could read the thoughts of Gwanalalis. He lifted his thunderbird face and said, "I am a man and I will help you." With his powerful talons he lifted the beams into place and when the house was completed, he removed his thunderbird self, threw it into the air. As it flew away, he said, "You will only cause thunder and lightning when one of the people in this place dies." He and the sea monster were the first of Namgis people.

There is another story to explain the presence of our river.

Kanikwi'lakw, the transformer, moved through the world, changing things. He came to our territory and said to the man, Gwanalalis, "Would you like to become a mountain?" Gwanalalis replied, "No, for mountains have slides and disappear." The transformer asked, "Would you like to become a cedar tree?" Gwanalalis answered, "No, for cedar trees rot and disappear." The transformer then asked, "Would you like to become a large boulder?" Gwanalalis said, "No, for boulders slowly fall apart and disappear." Finally, Kaniki'lakw asked, "Would you like to become a river?" "Yes", Gwananlalis replied, "Let me become a river that I may flow forever." With that, Kanikilalakw put his hand on Gwananlalis's forehead, pushed him down and he became the river, Gwan'ni (called the "Nimpkish River" by the outsiders).

The transformer said, "Only salmon will live in this river to feed those who will live here." Note: we pride ourselves on the quality of our Gwa'ni salmon. Those of my father's generation said they could tell the difference between dog salmon that swam up in the middle of the river and those that swam close to shore. The latter were said not to taste as good. In his day, people travelled by canoe to U'dzo'las, to smoke dog salmon. There were ten houses there, each accommodating up to four families. Each family smoked 1,000 dog salmon. I'm not good at math, but that sounds like a lot of fish to me. After my father's generation, no one went up-river to U'dzo'las, as people became more dependent on store-bought food.

EPILOGUE TO THE NAMGIS CREATION STORY

Although the Great Depression happened in the 1930s, it doesn't seem to have had an impact on our people, because they were still very much in the traditional food-gathering mode. I look at kids today, who have no knowledge of drying and smoking and/or preserving fish or any of our other traditional foods. If a depression were to happen here, we would be in real trouble, because we are now so dependent on store-bought food.

Recently a so-called fisheries expert was talking about the diminished salmon stocks and, recommended a terminal fishery, i.e., catching salmon on their way up-river. He didn't acknowledge that historically for generations, we had a terminal fishery that worked very well. At some point, these were outlawed by the federal government which, of course, didn't recognize the efficiency of this approach. Almost a hundred years later, here's this fisheries expert saying, "Why don't we do this?", as if it were a brand new concept.

Sea monster, 'Namxxelagiu, mask dancer in front of the Umista Cultural Centre, Alert Bay, BC.
PHOTO: UMISTA CULTURAL SOCIETY, ALERT BAY BC

Haida Creation Story

Told by Barbara Wilson Kii'iljuus

They say there was a time when there was no land to rest on. Nangkilslas bothered the old man until he created a place for the "super-natural beings" to rest. By putting two pieces into the ocean in the wrong order, Nangkilslas caused a flood or tidal wave. He then put the two stones into the water in the proper order and created Xaayda Gwaay.yaay and the seaward land out there or the mainland. Nangkilslas knew what we would need on the land, so he sought out salmon, rivers, lakes and the various plants. When the land was settled, the old man called out the people from the four corners of a dwelling place. These people are the ancestors of the nations – the Haida, the Heiltsuk, the Tsimshian and the Tlingit.

We have lived on our land at least 13,000 years or longer. Our stories from our ancestors tell us about when at least two floods came to our world, and there are stories which tell us about volcanoes, earthquakes, ice coming and our leaving the islands and eventually returning from the south. Our stories talk about a time when the saltwater was 140 meters lower and the area between here and the mainland was grasslands, with small pines and sedges.

The old stories tell us about travelling across the steppes to visit old villages across these grasslands. The research work by anthropologists and archaeologists has truthed these stories our ancestors told us. In the last 20 years research has uncovered micro-blades showing a time when the water was at least 14 to 18.4 metres higher and a double edged stone tool from a time when the ocean level was much lower.

Stories tell us of a time when our ancestors came out of the ocean and lived on the land prior to the big cedars starting to grow on our lands. This time, when our ancestors as "Supernatural beings" came out of the water, was a time of pure acceptance and a time when our ancestors could change from an ocean person to a land person as easy as taking off a coat. When it was time to eat, on would go the outer coat, or sea-creature dress, and into the sea they would go, returning with full tummies. The homes we occupied at that time were holes dug into the sand with twigs as a covering. >>

Bill Reid's *The Raven and the First Men* sculpture photographed at the University of British Columbia's Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver, BC.

PHOTO: NATHAN BAUMAN, CURATOR AND COLLECTOR BLOG

As ocean-people we have learned lessons contained in the old stories. Respect and responsibility are the main lessons we have learned through the thousands of years. Respect for all the fellow passengers on this ship called the Earth is necessary if we are to have the things we need to survive. In one of our stories we are told we have lost the right to have eulachons because we were disrespectful eons ago. Yahgudang dll = to do it respectfully.

We have gone from a nation of more than 30,000 to fewer than 600 in the early 1900s. We are here because our ancestors knew that to survive it is important to know all about the land, the ocean, the things that fly, the plants, the mammals whether land or sea, and to treat them all with respect. Overuse and neglect cannot be part of our world if we hope to leave a "whole" world for our descendants. If we have lost sight of these lessons, can we learn from our lands again? What made our ancestors strong and smart? A wonderful teacher, James Gosnell, told me a long time ago to come home and listen everything that made my ancestors what they were is still here on these islands.

EPILOGUE TO THE HAIDA CREATION STORIES

Our stories have anchored us in this place called X̲aayda Gwaay.yaay. Our land has provided for each generation. My father 'Laana AwGa Niis Wes (Chief Skedans) Ernest I. Wilson (1913–2009) told me stories of how in his time, children still learned how to survive on this land. Our grandparents and parents taught the children what was edible, what was medicine. Before the introduction of the various mammals, one would never have gone hungry. Our plants have suffered over the past one hundred years as has our traditional knowledge. As with other coastal nations, we did not feel the hunger or homelessness of the outside world. The land provided for our ancestors. A land that has been so good to us deserves to be cared for and coddled. From the clam on the beach or the trip from across the waters in a "X̲uya Tluu" [Raven's canoe] we have made our home here with other beings, here we plan to live.

BIRDS DO IT, BEES DO IT . . .

birds, bees, beetles, moths and mosquitoes all play a crucial role in pollinating the world's plants – trees, flowers, even food crops. In fact, one of every three bites of food we take has resulted from successful animal-plant pollination. Declines in biodiversity lead to declines in insect species – our most valuable pollinators. European honeybees (a non-native species) like the one in this picture play a small role in pollination compared to other insects. The blue camas that the bee is pollinating is common in Garry oak ecological communities, and its roots were an important food source for early First Peoples.

SOURCE: TAKING NATURE'S PULSE: THE STATUS OF BIODIVERSITY IN B.C. 2008.
PHOTO: DAVID GREER

Fundamental Truth 2: Connection to Nature

Respectful harvesting of cedar bark from the tree of life.
ILLUSTRATION: SHIRL ʻYVXMI HALL

We are all one and our lives are interconnected. Our relationship with our territory is fundamental and we regard it as an extension of ourselves. That is why our ancestors gave names to important sites and geographical features, just as names were and continue to be bestowed upon family members.

Heiltsuk Bighouse Story

Language in our cultures, especially the naming of people and places, is strongly connected to nature. Each person was given a name that reflects our relationship to nature and its purpose and value. In Heiltsuk the name of a person carries a transfer of privilege from one generation to the next, providing for intergenerational succession. For example, the hereditary name of Frank Brown, Athalis – which means "far up in the woods" – was given to him by his grandmother, Maggie Hall, to commemorate the eight months he spent alone on an island at the age of 14.

Art depicting Frank Brown's name and story.
ARTIST: SHIRL ʻYVXMI HALL
PHOTO: SHIRL ʻYVXMI HALL

Bighouse Nuyum

After ritual purification the banished boy, Isdiat ancestor received a supernatural house with many natural and super natural treasures and dance privileges.

The ancestor named the house Athalis possibly in honor of the Athalism (interior) man that gifted him with a supernatural bow and arrow that enabled him to capture anything he desired. Currently within the Heiltsuk dance ceremonies we use the Archer or Athlism in both the peace dance and children's dance series. It is said Athalis was a ten-tiered house that was occupied by a grizzly bear who served as the house guardian. This was demonstrated in a feast within Athalis when due to the house being very deep the tide came in and the grizzly bear hit the ground four times with its paws and the water stopped.

SOURCE: Recorded in Bella Bella Tales by Franz Boas 1932.
Interview with Andrew Wallace. Frank Brown's great, great, grandfather.

Athalis Frank Brown's Human Transformation Mask. Mask carved by Heiltsuk artist Larry Campbell.
PHOTO: ATHALIS FRANK BROWN

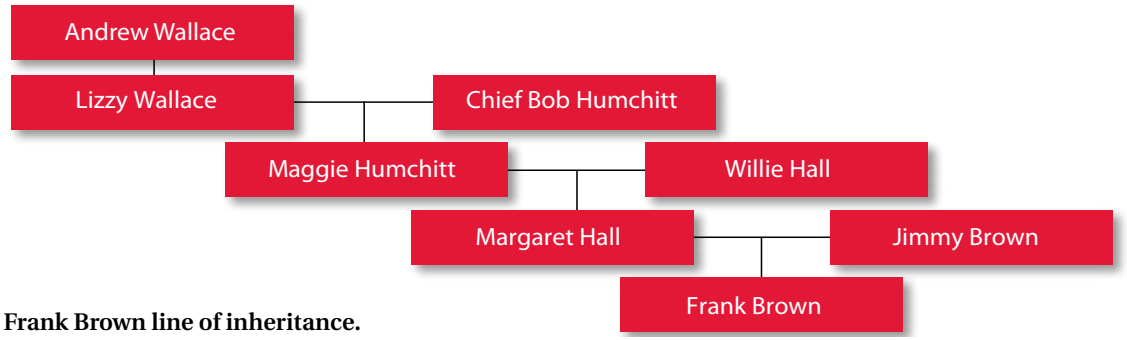
House of Athalis – Face of the Ancestor

The house posts represent the clan crests and carved connecting beams honor and tell this story Nuyum. **Raven** represents Brown, Halls, Vickers; **Eagle** represents Humchitts and Grizzly **Bear** is the guardian of house, Mitla. The sea wolf dance privileges are carved into connecting beams along with a box design with a woman wearing labret. This woman represents gum'da'ma, which was Maggie Hall's name that was bestowed onto Frank's oldest sister, Tessa Brown. The structural features of the house represent the body of an ancestor. The house posts are the legs, the beams are the arms, the house front is the face (often with the mouth serving as the front entrance) and the plank siding is the skin.

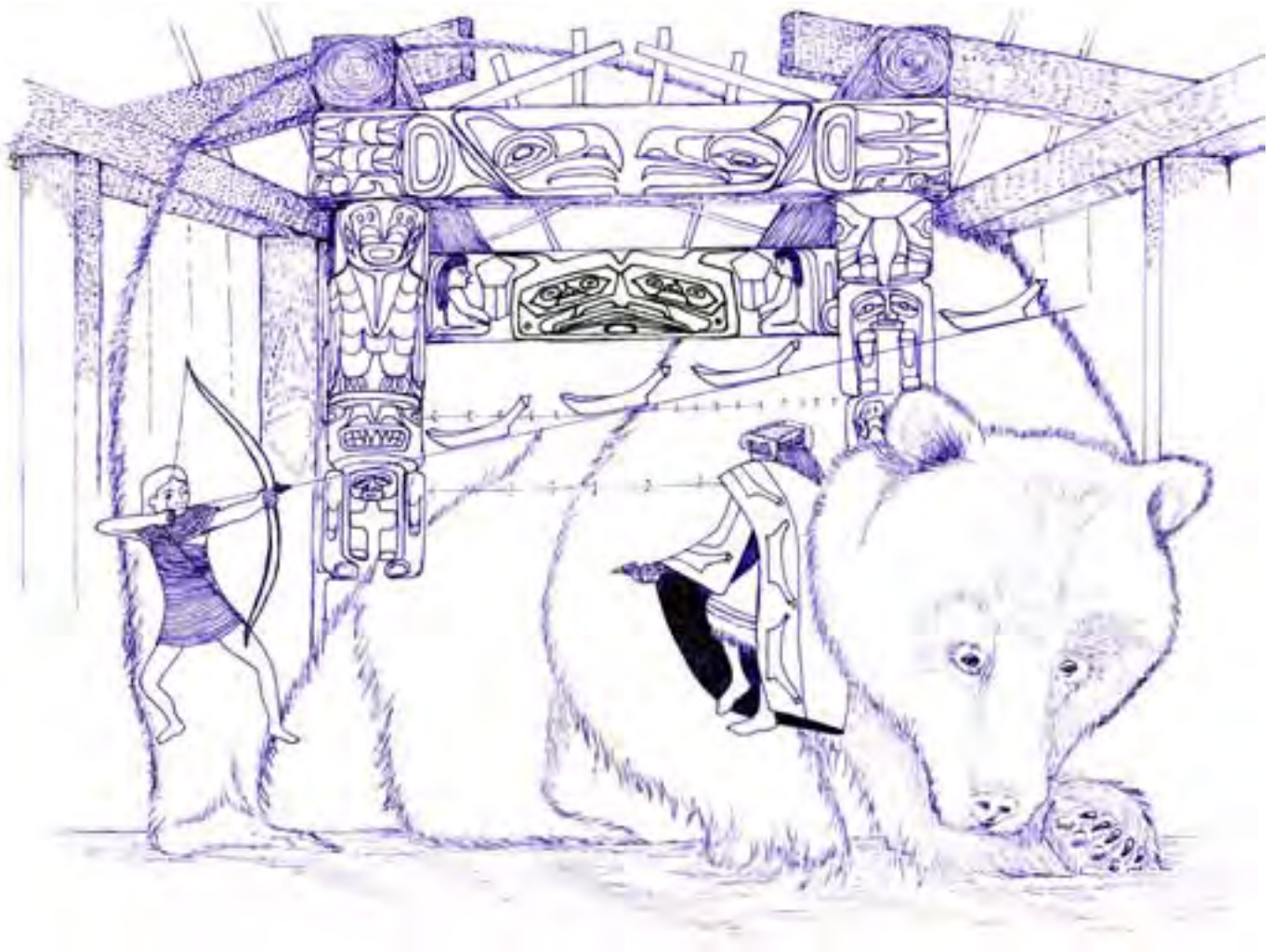
Houses were the physical, social, ceremonial and spiritual centre of our universe. During the winter ceremonies the house is a sacred box of treasures that radiates the songs, dances and history of the family. During non-ceremonial times the Heiltsuk house provided warmth and shelter from the elements. The house requires everyone to work together, to be strong and well organized to deal with a variety of internal and external challenges confronting the members. This is a collective where the honour of one is the honour of all.

The first generation (Bighouse) story validates nuyum, name Athalis "far up in the woods". It connects us to our territories, as with Weesgumk. History validates nuyum, and it is earned and passed on through the generations.

Through first generation stories our houses remind us of where we come from and of our responsibilities. The house becomes a physical manifestation of our family's collective history. It is receptacle of the gifts from the creator. It holds our stories/nuyum from the past to the present and for future generations.



Frank Brown line of inheritance.



House of Athalis: Concept, ancestral Heiltsuk, name and story of Frank Brown (Athalis).
ARTIST: SHIRL ʻYVXMI HALL

Households comprised large, rectangular plank houses – called Bighouses, or Gvukas, a term that captures these impressive house dimensions. Gvukas translates as the 'great house'. Therefore the houses are big more than long. A village site consisted of a number of Bighouses. Each house has a nuyum, which translates as 'story', and resident families identify with a particular oral narrative. Therefore, members of each household recite their specific nuyum to acknowledge hereditary chiefs, lesser chiefs and noble family members and their influence on social, political and economical factors. Each nuyum cited ancestral origins to specific creations, hereditary names, ceremonial privileges and rights to resource sites (Harkin, 1997).

Mt. Keyes.
PHOTO: SHIRL ʻYVXMI HALL

Mount Huyat wears a hat of clouds in this photo.
PHOTO: SHIRL ʻYVXMI HALL

Heiltsuk Flood Story

TOLD BY HILISTIS, PAULINE WATERFALL

There are two mountains nearby: one is what we now call Mt. Keyes – the other is on Hunter Island and is called Wees-gumk. One day the sea level rose and the villages were flooded. The people climbed both of these mountains which were the highest in the area. The waters continued to come up and soon the lives of the people were threatened. They were near the peak and Wees-gumk was being submerged. She yelled to her brother mountain for help – Mt. Keyes. She yelled "Help me, I'm drowning." Her brother heard her cries and said "Brace yourself, I'm going to throw a big rock over to you." He did this, and the people were able to climb up on it and were saved from the flood. It is said that there is a lake at Mt. Keyes which has crystals growing at the bottom and represents the concave area where the rock was removed, taken from the mountain and thrown to Wees-gumk. Mt. Keyes has a top which is made of solid boulder.

SOURCE: Louisa Humchitt

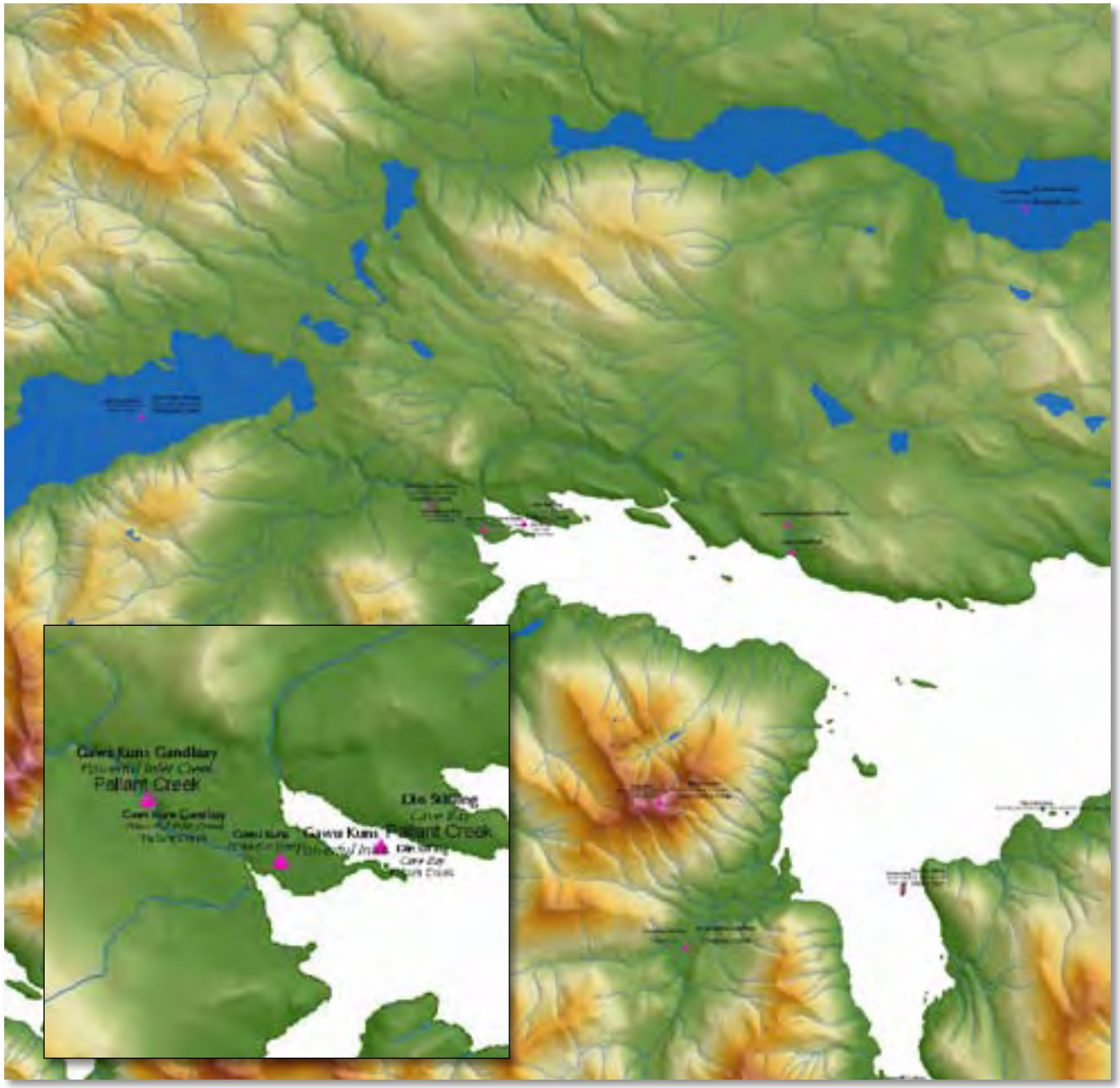
EPILOGUE

Wees-gumk was the young woman's Indian name which belonged to Louisa Humchitt, who inherited it from her mother. She gave it to her oldest daughter, Beatrice Brown. Beatrice then passed it on to her oldest granddaughter, Pauline Waterfall. *Wees-gumk* name was then given to Pauline's oldest daughter, Monika, who still owns the name today. Monika will pass it along to her daughter Kyle, thus ensuring transition of this knowledge and kinship to the land and geographical sites. Louisa died when she was 96. Her mother lived to be about the same age – so if we date this story just for the known memory span – it dates back 200 plus years.

Mt. Keyes also has an Indian name, Qagamee. It belonged to Bill Windsor, who was married to Ruth and lived in Bella Coola, where he recently died. He was the son of Louisa Humchitt and was adopted by Agnes and Paul Windsor, who were childless. It is assumed that this name will be passed to his oldest son, Winsten.

Wees-gumk is also known as our weather mountain. It is said that if she is wearing a hat of clouds near her top, the weather will change to the opposite of whatever it is doing at the present time. For instance, if it is raining, the weather will change to drying trends.

If you are in a plane flying near the mountain, you will find it is very rough in that area. This is because it is so exposed to winds from the inlet areas to the east, to southern exposures as well as to winds that come off the Pacific Ocean to the west.



Map 2. Map showing Haida place names.
SOURCE: THIS MAP IS THE WORK OF THE ELDERS FROM THE SKIDEGATE HAIDA IMMERSION PROGRAM AND GWAII HAANAS NATIONAL PARK RESERVE AND HAIDA HERITAGE SITE. GWAII HAANAS NATIONAL PARK RESERVE AND HAIDA HERITAGE SITE.

Namgis Connection to Nature Stories

For the Kwakwa̲ka̲'wakw, Dzawadi means "place having eulachons", from the word for eulachon, "dzaxwan". As well, the people of Kingcome Inlet are the Dzawada'enuxw, "people having eulachon". Other examples from Namgis where traditional names depict important features of the natural world include the name for sea monster in the creation story, Kwakwa̲ka̲'wakw, and the name of a river out which the sea monster came and turned into a human being, Kwa kwa la, Gwa'ni (commonly referred to as the Nimpkish River).

Other raven clans speak about traveling down the Skeena River during a time when winter was constant in the area they left, Dimlahamid (located just west of the Hazeltons). This story also talks about the relationship that this family had with the Southern Tsimshian. These stories are still honoured and the people who are part of this family communicate and gather together periodically.

As told by Wikalalisame'ga, Gloria Cranmer Webster

Our connection to nature is evident in the names given to sites of significance to our people. These may be resource sites or sites related to creation stories. Other evidence is contained in the prayers said daily or before first harvest. Some examples are:
Hanwadi: *place of hanu'n (pink salmon)*
Tlaxsiwe': *place of tlaxsam (cinquefoil)*
Ma'amx'inuxw: *from max'inuxw (killer whale). These are killer whales stranded after the great flood. These are weather indicators. If they are clearly visible in the morning, the day will be fine. If they are covered by clouds or mist, it means a rainy day.*
Kwanwa'as: *from kwankwanxwalige (thunderbird); the rock on which Thunderbird landed and took human for to help Namukusto'lis build his house after the great flood.*
Prayer to the Sun:
"Look at me, Chief that nothing evil may happen to me this day, made by you as you please, Great-Walking-to and fro-all over the world, Chief."
Prayer to Migratory Birds:
"Welcome, Supernatural Ones, we have come to meet alive, friends, you Long-life-makers. You have come and I pray you again that you have mercy and take out again this my sickness when you go back to that place, where you always disappear, friends. Now protect me again during the time you are here in summer in this good country where I treat you well, Long-life-makers, Supernatural Ones."

Haida Connection to Nature Stories

In Haida Gwaii, as with naming our family members we named our land and sea features. This reveals the level of knowledge and depth of relation that existed between nature and us, as coastal first nations. These geographical features and names were associated with food sources, village sites or stories that give meaning to origins or purposes to such place.

On the Haida map of the southern portion of X̲aayda Gwaay.yaay (Map 2), in the Gangx̲id Gwaay.yaay area, there are place names showing where eulachon used to be on the island and taken away because we didn't respect them. Lessons about respect and the results of not being mindful linger in these place names along the north-eastern coast of "Kunghit Island".

The names and stories tell of a time when S'aaw (eulachon) graced our rivers in the southern parts of X̲aayda Gwaay.yaay, the story tells us if we are not respectful of the other creatures, they will leave us. The S'aaw have never returned to our rivers.

Suu kaathlii is a lake inlet and comes from a time (13,000 ybp) when the waters were 140 metres lower, revealing the long occupation and length of knowledge of the grasslands between Haida Gwaii and the mainland.

Today, several of the eagle clans on X̲aayda Gwaay and the eagle clans of the Southern Tsimshian recognize this family tie. The St'aastaas eagle clan stories talk about coming from the Stikine and Nass area.

The place names come from times when the waters were much lower. These names still exist even when the land it previously was attached to is now submerged beneath our inlet of Sk'in Kaathlii. That name which we still know is Suu Kaathlii and means "Lake Inlet". It relates to a time approximately 13,000 years ago when the waters were 140 meters lower than today. It shows along with other names the long occupation and length of passing on knowledge of the lands, waters and plants and people.

Totem at the Village of Skedans.
PHOTO: DAVID GREER

Haida Gwaii / Queen Charlotte Islands, encompassing 250 separate islands in total, has been called the Galapagos of the North because of the high levels of biodiversity, including numerous species that are endemic (existing nowhere else). Haida Gwaii owes its unique biodiversity in large part to the fact that it escaped some of the glaciations that once spread across British Columbia.
SOURCE: TAKING NATURE'S PULSE: THE STATUS OF BIODIVERSITY IN B.C. 2008.

Fundamental Truth 3: Respect

Chief's Peace Dance, Shaman blessing of women and child with sacred eagle down.
ILLUSTRATION: SHIRL ʻYVXMI HALL

All life has equal value. We acknowledge and respect that all plants and animals have a life force. This is demonstrated by our pre-harvest rituals. We are taught to only take the life of what you will eat or use, acknowledging its value and giving thanks for its sacrifice while ensuring that enough is left to seed the cycle of life's renewal.

We cannot look at nature in isolation; all is connected, as ratified through our stories, our languages, and our maps. All is interdependent – we depend on it and it depends on us to maintain it. Harvesting practices recognized this interdependence and often included ceremonial rituals in advance of a hunting and/or fishing expedition or before harvesting trees and gathering plants.

Among the Haida it is a common practice to say a prayer of thanks to a plant before it is harvested for traditional use. Similarly for the Heiltsuk it is common to sing a prayer song before cutting down a tree.

According to Aboriginal religious traditions, plants, like animals, were believed to have "souls" and to be capable of thought and feeling, just like people today. Aboriginal people recognized the need to use and exploit natural objects, but they generally approached them with reverence and respect and rarely used them wastefully or without due appreciation. This belief is evident in the following prayer by a Kwakwa̲ka̲'wakw woman to a young cedar tree from which she was about to harvest the bark.

The Kwakwa̲ka̲'wakw bark harvester was careful not to completely girdle a cedar tree, because this would kill the tree, and the nearby cedar trees would curse the person who did it (Turner, 1998).

Important plants growing in the territory of a village group were considered to be the property of that group, and other people wishing to harvest them were obligated to ask permission from the villagers. It is likely that families and individuals could own patches or stands of plants that they used for materials, as they could patches of edible plants in some areas.

In Haida Gwaii, today as in the days long ago, thanks was given and requests were made to the "ocean people" or supernatural beings who lived under the heads of land, under mountains, islands, rocky outcroppings and at the heads of rivers. Each time a request or prayer was offered, feathers, rare t'aaw (eulachon oil) and tobacco were also given to the "Ocean people". When at sea, the offerings were presented on the end of a paddle and quietly slipped into the ocean. When on shore, the offerings went to the Supernatural beings through the fire. Today, we use prayers and explanations to describe our needs and ask for understanding.

Respect for all things is an important lesson for our children. The story of Jiila K̲uns is one of the stories that is told to help our children develop this respect. It is about saying Haaw'a (thank-you) for the things received from the plants, ocean-people, sky-people and woods-people.

PHOTO: IAN MCALLISTER

RESPECT DURING THE HARVESTING CYCLE

There are many examples of how the Heiltsuk show respect during harvesting cycles, including:

- ***During herring spawn the old people teach us to be quiet and not to disturb the fish, as the reproduction of life is viewed as sacred. Also we do not want to offend the herring for fear they may stop spawning***
- ***When harvesting seagull eggs, we place the egg in a container of water. If the egg floats, it means there is a developing chick and it is left in the nest; if the egg sinks we take it for food.***

When we teach cedar bark harvesting we explain that the size of the tree is important, only 2 hands width can be taken from a tree of a size no smaller than your fingers touch when you hug it.
ILLUSTRATION: SHIRL ʻYVXMI HALL

Words of Praise – Prayer to a Young Cedar

This woman goes into the woods to look for young cedar trees. As soon as she finds them, she picks out one that has no twists in the bark, and whose bark is not thick. She takes her adze and stands under the young tree, and looking up to it, she prays, saying:

Look at me friend,
I, come to ask for your dress,
For you have come to take pity on us;
For there is nothing for which you cannot be used,

For you are really willing to give us your dress,
I come to beg you for this,
Long-life maker,
For I am going to make a basket for lily roots out of you.

I pray, friend, do not feel angry
On account of what I am going to do to you;
And I beg you friend, to tell our friends about what I ask you!

Take care friend!
Keep sickness away from me,
So that I may not be killed by sickness and in war,
O friend!

SOURCE: Boas, Franz. 1909. *The Kwakiutl of Vancouver Island.*

NAMGIS RESPECT STORY

The Salmon People of Alert Bay

BY WIKALALISAME'GA, GLORIA CRANMER WEBSTER

Salmon has always been the most important resource to the tribes of the Northwest Coast. Legends tell how tribes received the gift of salmon. An example comes from the 'Nakwaxda'xw tribe of Blunden Harbour, our neighbours to the north.

The first of the 'Nakwaxda'xw people lived at Dals, now known as Seymour Inlet. The chief, U'met, was sad that their village had no river and instructed his people to dig a channel from the other end of the village. U'met then walked to the river nearest to Dals, took a mouthful of water, held it until he reached the inland end of the channel. There, he spat out the water, which became a lake, running into the channel, where it turned into a river. Then, he went home and asked his Aunt Tutuga, "What must I do to make salmon come to my river?" She replied, "Go and find a twin woman for your wife. That way, the salmon will come." It is said that twins come from the salmon. The first-born twin is called "Salmon head" and the second-born twin is called "Salmon tail." U'met could not find a living twin woman, so he went to the burial grounds and called, "Are there twins among you, graves on the ground?" There was no answer the first three times he called. The fourth time, a voice answered, "I am a twin." U'met gathered up the bones on the ground and sprinkled them with his magic life-giving water. The twin woman came to life immediately and asked, "Why have you given me life?" He answered, "I have given you life so that you may become my wife." The twin-woman told him, "I am Me'isila (Salmon Maker). You must take care of me and treat me well." When they returned to U'met's house, begged her to make salmon appear. She said she could not. He then directed his people to build salmon traps, thinking that this would bring the salmon, but they did not come. Me'isila then asked for a bucket of water. She struck her little finger into her mouth and dipped it into the bucket. Right away, a spring salmon appeared. She instructed the people that when they cleaned the salmon, they must gather up what would not be cooked and return that to the river. U'met thanked her for making the salmon appear and begged her to go into the river and make more salmon appear. She said, "If I do that, the river would dry up, because it would be so full of salmon." He said, "Then only put your foot in the water." She did so and right away, many salmon were jumping n the river. Soon all the salmon traps were full. Now the 'Nakwaxda'xw began to prosper. It was not long before U'met became arrogant and proud. >>

He began to treat his wife in a disrespectful manner. One day, as he got up to leave his house, the backbone of a salmon drying on a rack caught in his hair. Angrily, he threw I on the floor, saying, "You catch me, you who come from ghosts". Me'isila was very unhappy and wept, while U'met just laughed. She stood up and said, "Come tribe, let us go home". All the salmon which had been drying on racks came to life and followed her out of the house. U'met pleaded with her to stay, but as he tried to embrace her, her body turned to smoke. She and her tribe went into the river and disappeared. Once more, U'met and his tribe were poor. It was a long time before they were able to obtain much food.

Haida Respect Story: Jiila K̲uns

AS TOLD BY BARB WILSON K̲II'ILJUUS

A group of Raven clan young men went fishing for trout at Gaawu K̲uns and caught these trout with snares. One of the young men was wearing his father's hat with a cormorant on it. This wasn't his crest, and he should not have taken liberties with his father's hat. As a result the hat would fall over his eyes every time he went to bring his catch aboard the canoe they were in. He lost his temper and threw the hat into the water and cursed Jiila K̲uns. She is the ancestress of his father.

The young men decided to camp at Gaawu K̲uns Gandlaay, so they made a fire, put the trout on sticks to roast and got comfortable. They were hungry and the anticipation of fresh trout was huge. While they were waiting for the trout to cook, a large copper frog came hopping by, and jumped, knocking the sticks and trout into the fire. This made the young men angry. They grabbed the copper frog and threw it into the fire and piled more wood on top of it. The frog sat there for a while and then there was thunder and the frog exploded, spreading the ashes around. The frog was unharmed; this made the young men even angrier, as now their fire was out. They started the fire again, and put their trout again on the sticks, making sure they were anchored steadfast in the soil. >>

The frog again knocked the sticks down as it jumped past, and the young men threw the frog again into the fire. This time, the frog exploded again and yet still jumped out of the fire fully intact. The next day as they were preparing to return to their village, a woman with a big belly came out and was wailing "where are my babies?" over and over. They laughed at her and struck her belly. She said to them, "As you pass the heads of land one of you will die at each point. Only one of you will get to the village and when you tell your people what has happened, you will die also. A fire will consume your village and your people." As was prophesized, the young men died one at a time, as they passed the points of land. When the last one got to the village, he told the story and he died. Over the next while things went wrong for the villagers. No one could catch fish, and the water began burning as did the entire village. One young girl was in seclusion because she had just become a "woman", and according to the traditions was away with her S<u>k</u>aan<u>G</u>a (father's sister). When the fire was over, she alone survived. Her name was Y l'ukx' na'ng.

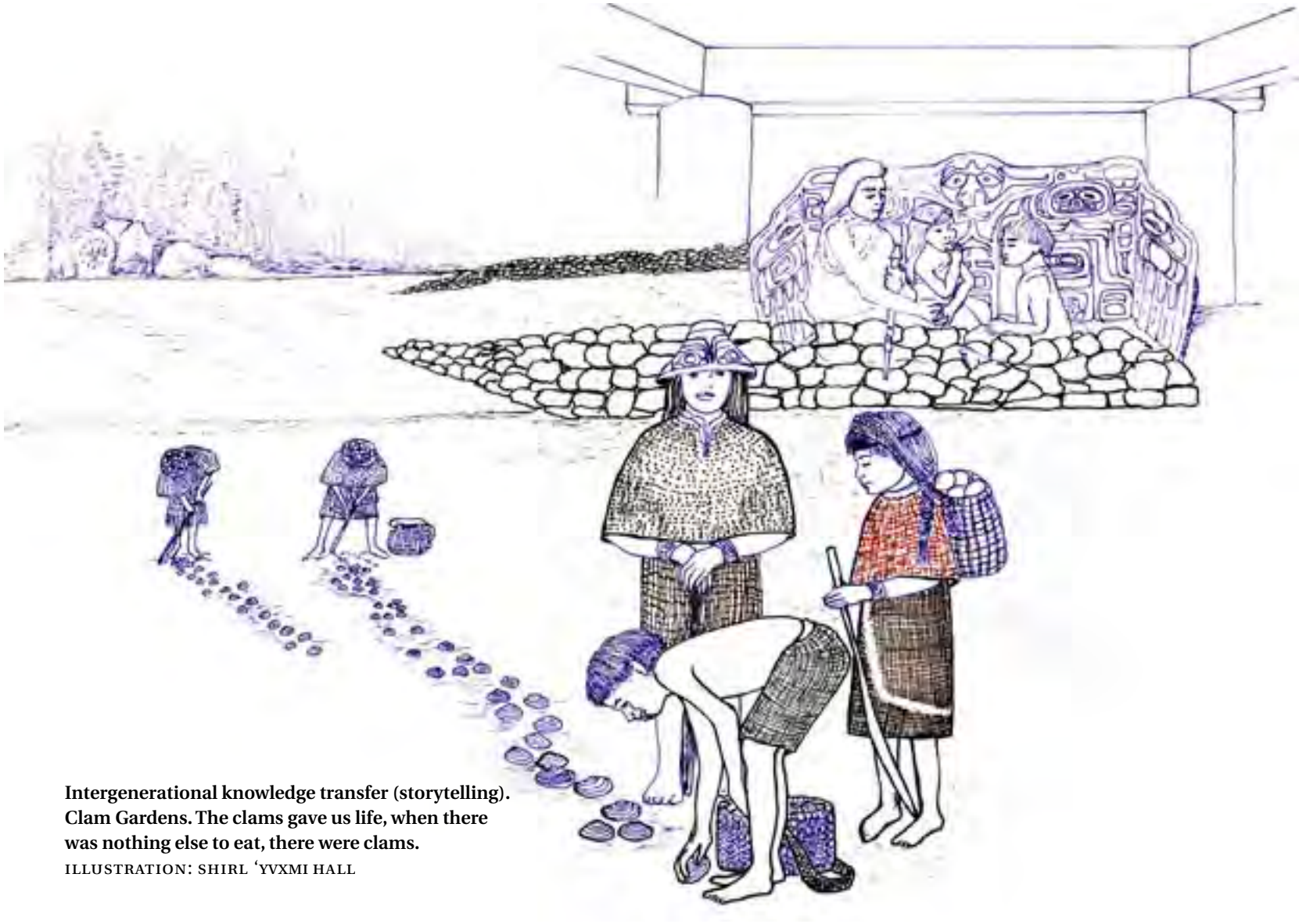
As she walked along looking for someone she knew, a man came along in a canoe and got her first to Kil Kun (Sandspit) and then to the mainland. There she married a Chief from one of the mainland nations. Many years later, her younger children were being teased by the children of their father's village. His villagers kept saying to the children: "you say you are big people, yet you have no land." This went on for some time, until their mother finally decided to take a canoe and slip away during the night. Eventually, she reached <u>X</u>aayda Gwaay.yaay with some of her children. She is recognized as the ancestress of the Ruling Eagle clans of T'aanuu; Hl<u>k</u>inul; Jii<u>G</u>uhl; and <u>K</u>'aays'un.

IN DIVERSITY LIES STRENGTH FOR PACIFIC SALMON

There are more than 400 genetically distinct populations among five species of Pacific salmon in B.C. This variability has allowed salmon to use all available stream systems in the province, adding to their ability to adapt to changing conditions. It also increases the odds that at least some populations may be able to adapt to stream and ocean warming and thus ensure continuity of the species.

SOURCE: TAKING NATURE'S PULSE: THE STATUS OF BIODIVERSITY IN B.C. 2008. PHOTO: IAN MCALLISTER

Fundamental Truth 4: Knowledge



Intergenerational knowledge transfer (storytelling). Clam Gardens. The clams gave us life, when there was nothing else to eat, there were clams.
ILLUSTRATION: SHIRL ʻYVXMI HALL

Traditional knowledge of sustainable resource use and management is reflected in our intimate relationship with nature and its predictable seasonal cycles and indicators of renewal of life and subsistence.

The harvesting of natural resources depended upon predictable weather patterns, guiding insights into the application of traditional biodiversity knowledge. The changing of these patterns today is reflected in the diminished or changing sources of some seasonal resources.

Heiltsuk Weather Knowledge in Song and Dance

Along the Pacific Northwest Coast the dominant weather patterns flow from the northwest and southeast and weather conditions are influenced by many variables, including ocean currents, terrain and air flow. The Heiltsuk word for weather is *Nala.* Harvesting success within the four seasons depends partly on an understanding of the weather and predicting its influence on access and availability of various resources from the ocean, land and sky.

Frank Brown travelled along the Pacific Northwest Coast visiting Rediscovery camps. He talked with elders within the communities and they verified that travel plans and harvesting of resources were all influenced by the weather. Within the *Nala* dance there are two dancers that represent the northwest and southeast wind; these two dominant weather fronts are struggling to determine who will own the sky for this day and location.

Following are the words for the *Nala* song and dance. Frank composed this song and dance which he bestowed upon his daughter, Ayla Brown, as a part of her coming of age dowry. The reason is that Ayla from an early age has taken an active interest in her Heiltsuk history and culture through many years of participating as a camper and then as a guide at a youth camp located at the mouth of Koeye River.

HEILTSUK WORDS FOR WEATHER AND WIND

yuála – wind
lháxvla – blows hard
lháxvlá yuála – wind blows hard
yáwániala – wind shifting in different directions.
zlxa – a cold wind that blows through all the cracks in the house.
thiqlá – strong wind that will cause the herring to spawn.
záqvala – south west wind
mlháyala – south east wind
yuista – sudden wind
xa'áiulh – north west wind
yuyala – north wind
yugvaláisla – westerly wind

Nala "weather" masks dance given to Ayla Brown at her coming of age ceremony. Mask carved by Heiltsuk artist Larry Campbell.
PHOTO: ATHALIS, FRANK BROWN

Ayla Brown coming of age ceremony.
PHOTO: SHIRL 'YXVMI HALL

NALA

(Weather song in Heiltsuk) composed by Athalis, Frank Brown

Within the dance the two weather fronts are competing to determine who will own the sky for this day and location.

Oh sky oh sky	*Ya hou,lua way, ya hou,lua way*
Dance dance	*uqwa uqwa*
South east wind dance	*mlháyalá uqwa*
Dance dance	*uqwa uqwa*
North west wind dance	*xa'aiúlh uqwa*
Represents lightning flashing across the sky	*Ya hee ya hee*

Weather, 'nala' masks riding mythological canoe.
ILLUSTRATION: SHIRL 'YVXMI HALL

Heiltsuk Kelp Gardens

ATHALIS, FRANK BROWN

In the spring, when the herring come in from the open ocean, the Heiltsuk build under water kelp gardens from giant kelp [qaqalis = roe on broad kelp] along the foreshore for the spawn on kelp fishery.

We also put into the ocean stringy kelp [yaka = roe on stringy boa kelp] and small hemlock trees [hant = roe on hemlock branch]. The kelp is harvested out on the capes where strong tides provide excellent habitat for kelp growth. The kelp is transported into locations with shallow water where the herring are gathered in preparation for spawning.

To build kelp gardens, we string lines of kelp across bays where the herring will arrive to spawn. These lines are anchored on each end. We attach floats or buoys to the line to keep the kelp floating as the weight of the herring roe deposited on the kelp becomes heavy after days of herring spawning.

After six days the roe is harvested. If the spawn deposition is not at least 4 or 5 layers thick it is left in the water to hatch and to enhance herring stocks for future spawn on kelp harvests.

Namgis

As in other pre-literate societies, knowledge in Namgis society was passed on through legend, dance and song, all connected to each other. An example is the belief that twins come from salmon, so there is a special salmon dance for twins, with its own song. It is a reminder of the importance of salmon in our lives. There was a certain humility in the way that legends were told, in that they often began with "It is said that ….", indicating that the story-teller was repeating something previously known and that this was not his/her invention.

Collecting broad kelp.
PHOTO: PHIL CARSON

Inspecting quality of kelp.
PHOTO: PHIL CARSON

Haida Words and Phrases Reflecting Weather Knowledge

Haida words and phrases refer to the many ocean actions, winds and cloud formations. They are indicative of the time spent watching the skies and waters, knowing what is safe and what is not. Just as the people of the north know the various types of snow, we know about the surrounding waters, our lands and the skies. Some examples of these natural phenomena are:

Taajaaw, taajuu, taajuus or taajuuwaay – Wind:

Daa'uxuusda[1]	Southwest wind (when on east coast)
Gud k'aat'a	Wind shifts quickly (switching winds i.e. S.E. to S.W.)
Guulas	Calm no wind
HlGaahlGu	Wind (gale force)
Jiiyaaxuusda	From the north
Naw Kaajii	Means Octopus Head (the direction the octopus head is pointing, is where the wind is coming from)

Siing.aay or sin or sing.aay[2] – Weather

Dlaay.yii	Calm weather
HlGaahlGuu	Stormy
JiiGawaay xihlging or[3] JiiGawaay xihlgings	Full ring around the sun means bad weather
Naw gud t'aajaagiida	Sign of good weather – octopus legs intertwined across the sky
Taanuud	Fall
Tl'llxiiyaaw	Like a hanging curtain in reference to a storm
Xaay.ya	Sunshine

Gaay.yuwaay or Gaay.yawaay – Ocean:

Chaasda	Ocean floor (drop off in water)
GaayGaagii	Water is flat calm
GaaysiiGas or GaaysiiGad	The calm between the rough waves
Luu 'yuu dala	Big waves
SgidGaadxyang	Bucking into a big sea
Siigaay or Siigii	Hecate Strait – any large inside body of water
Tang.Gwan or Tang.Gwan.naay	Pacific Ocean – open water
Tayda.la	Tidal wave

Kwiiaauu – Clouds:

Kunt'axiid	Cloud travelling in/cloud coming down
Kwiiawah	Big white puffy
KwiiGa	Clouds moving
Yaana.nga or Yaana.ngaay	Cloudy or fog
Yaanaay naahlGalang or Yaanaay Ng.aaGalang	Clouds flying by

1 Apostophe (') denotes the need for a slight pause
2 Words change when used in a sentence, a song or name
3 **or** to signify dialect differences

Compiled from SHIP Xaayda Kil Glossary – September 2009 by Kii'iljus.

Predicting Harvest Cycles through Clues in Nature

The seasonal cycle and timing of plant growth was also used as an indicator of other activities occurring in nature.

In Haida Gwaii, the salmon berry blossoming at HlGaagilda, Xaayda Gwaay.yaay (Skidegate, Haida Gwaii) tells us halibut have returned to the north shore of Haida Gwaii. They are still skinny; their flesh has a bluish tinge. When the berries are still green but have formed around Skidegate, the halibut will be in our southern waters and will be fat enough to harvest.

Sk'aawgan gaalang skaasda - When the berries twinkle like effervescence, when they are getting ripe one at a time, these berries serve as our calendar, it is time to travel to the fishing camps to start harvesting fish for the coming winter.

In Namgis, the salmon berry blossoming tells us the eulachon have returned to Knight Inlet.

For Heiltsuk the color of salmon berries tells us the percentage of return of salmon on species specific to the color of the berry. (e.g., orange berries indicate an abundance of chum).

When the salmon berries first start ripening in ones and twos, it is time to move to the west coast to harvest passing stocks.

The moon's position and cycle are predictors of appropriate times to harvest food sources.

For Heiltsuk an understanding of how and where to obtain food – especially knowledge of fishing sites – is a priority, and this information is passed down through generations from one to the next.

The clam beds nearest the village belonged to the dominant family, while families of lesser rank had to venture to remoter beds to ensure clam supply.

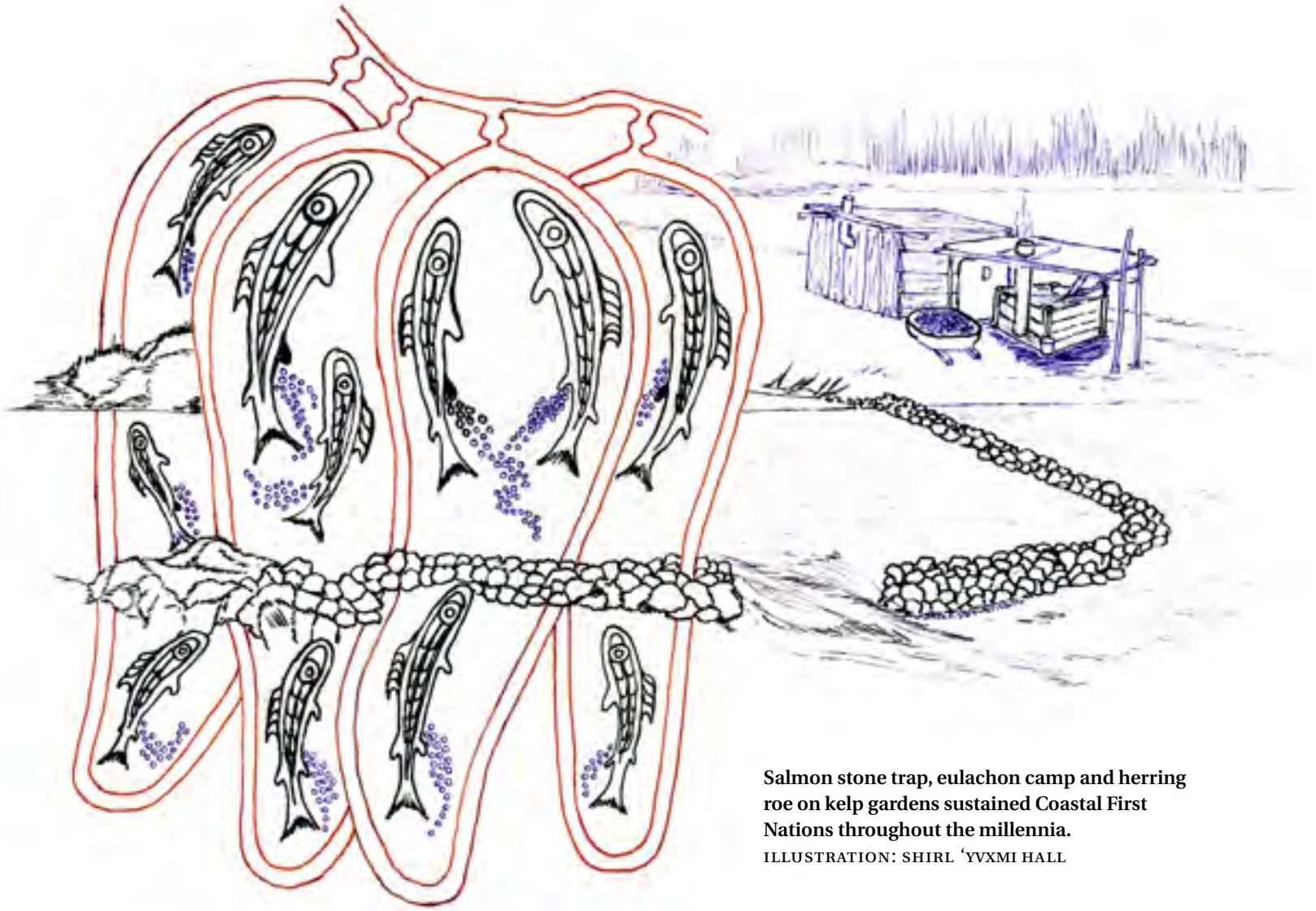
Salmonberry.
PHOTO: JOANN ONSTOTT, NATIVE PLANTS OF THE NORTHWEST NURSERY. WWW.NWPLANTS.COM

KNOWLEDGE: WINGED MIGRATIONS ALONG THE PACIFIC FLYWAY

Almost the entire world population of western sandpipers (which breed in Alaska and Siberia) migrates along the B.C. coast. Up to 1.2 million sandpipers (roughly twice the human population of Vancouver) passes each year through the Fraser delta, a key area of species concentration for many birds migrating along the Pacific Flyway, which extends from Alaska to Mexico.

SOURCE: TAKING NATURE'S PULSE: THE STATUS OF BIODIVERSITY IN B.C. 2008.
PHOTO: TOM MUNSON

Fundamental Truth 5: Stewardship



Salmon stone trap, eulachon camp and herring roe on kelp gardens sustained Coastal First Nations throughout the millennia.
ILLUSTRATION: SHIRL ʻYVXMI HALL

We are stewards of the land and sea from which we live, knowing that our health as a people and our society is intricately tied to the health of the land and waters. It is with this in mind that we must continue to exercise stewardship that will sustain biodiversity within our homelands.

We have a respectful interdependence with the environment in a unique cultural co-existence with land and marine resources. These diverse species are gathered in different habitats following seasonal cycles of traditional food harvesting.

Heiltsuk Stewardship of Fisheries, Cedar and Berry Crops

Maintaining the natural world is essential for our continued survival and is regarded as a reciprocal relationship. Natural resources are harvested for sustenance as well as being conserved for use of future generations.

Heiltsuk clam gardens are a good example of stewardship being carried out with future generations in mind. Digging clams is hard physical work, as is moving rocks and boulders to build retaining walls in order to create more productive harvesting areas. This effort to create more productive clam beds supports current needs as well as those of future generations. This shellfish aquaculture practice over many generations exemplifies Heiltsuk stewardship practices.

Another example of a stewardship practice was the design of halibut fish hooks, which were made to catch only specific sizes – not the small ones that still needed to grow or the large ones that were needed to reproduce.

Food sources were not normally harvested during reproductive cycles. The exception is marine foods, which are harvested sustainably. Stone fish traps allowed for good conservation practices. Fish returning to river systems were monitored to determine required enhancement practices.

"During our visit to Clatse Bay in Roscoe Inlet, we tried to link an integral part of this nuyem to this particular stone fish trap to find the exact stone where the 'eagle-man' ancestor landed. First Evelyn Windsor told the Nuyem, William and I elaborated upon family history to this place, then we visited the site, then came the songs. According to our elders' knowledge based upon time-honoured oral history transmission and knowledge of their environment and its inhabitants, Clatse River is one of the last places for some families to selectively harvest their salmon for smoke drying." (White, 2006).

Heiltsuk use of timber resources provides another example of stewardship. According to the laws of our ancestors 'Gwilas', we are the stewards of this resource. Our ancestors built houses, canoes, clothing, artwork and other utilitarian objects out of cedar.

Archaeologist/cultural historian Xanius sharing ancestral songs with Heiltsuk youth at a village site associated with a selective beach stone fish trap.
PHOTO: XANIUS, ELROY WHITE

"A huge difference between previous archaeological assessments of traps and my assessment is that they are products of my ancestors' labor and formed part of an ancient selective sustainable fishery technique." (White, 2006).

The stone fish traps represent expansive holding areas or pens for live salmon, which became trapped inside the walls at lowering tides. Since the traps never dried up, the enclosed area became a virtual pool of live salmon in all stages of spawning maturation. (White, 2006).

Location of three openings on FaTa2 on the curvature part of the stone wall observed at a rising tide. Inside these walls, salmon were trapped alive and lean ones were selected for smoke drying.
SOURCE: XANIUS, ELROY WHITE THESIS, 2006.
PHOTO: SHIRL ʻYVXMI HALL

Operating a beach stone fish trap (White, 2006): Typically a wall should have at least one or two openings along its length at specific intervals that were intentionally placed there at the end of the previous summer. The openings consist of one-meter length gaps from which all stones were pushed away to the outside. They lay where they landed. This intentional act was part of a time honoured Heiltsuk conservation process to provide an escape route for any salmon when the traps were not in use. When the season ended in the first week of November, this was one of the last tasks for the men to perform to open the wall. The traps did not discriminate against any salmon; the families chose or selected only the lean chum salmon for smoke drying.

Mauwash Story

As told by Angus Campbell

There used to be fish in Mauwash, Namu as it is called today, all year round in the olden days. The most important food for the First Generation was smoked and dried salmon. These could be used later on when other fish started running.

*When people from other villages ran out of smoked and dried salmon, they would come to Mauwash and ask my great-great-great grandfather to fish there. There were three salmon traps in the creek at Mauwash. When they had enough salmon, they would give their thanks and head back home. Even those people with big rivers like Bella Coola, Rivers Inlet, Kitimaat and the Nass River would come and ask to smoke salmon there.**

When they were tired of smoked or dried salmon, they would go out digging for clams, cockles, mussels, abalone and other sea foods. They would soak them overnight in salt water and then heat them. The old people used to use hemlock bark. They would peel off sections 8" by 12" by 1" with a knife and cook it and eat it. When the old people got deer or goat, they would smoke and dry it if they had too much. Ordinarily, they would cook it when it was fresh. They also used hair seal the same way.

The First Generation always had plenty to eat. They used to make stink eggs with dog salmon (chums) eggs just before spawning. Granny used to dry the eggs before she put them into a wooden keg and then leave it for three weeks. After three weeks it was ready to eat. The eggs would really stink but it was good eating, and it kept a person full for as long as ten hours. Only once in a while when they had sea lion would they dice it and cook it over an open fire for five days, then put it into an "Indian" box. When they wanted a change of diet, they would bring it out and soak it overnight.

The First Generation always had a change of food in certain months, so they never hungered for anything. In May, in the olden days, they would go out to Goose Island and pick and dry seaweed. When they had enough seaweed, they would go out for halibut. They would dry the halibut too and smoke it. We call this dried halibut, duluce. Then came herring eggs. They would smoke and dry herring eggs when they started spawning. The old people would fell small hemlock trees and then they would put them into the spawning grounds and leave them for a couple of days. After two days they would go back and pick them up and hang them on the trees to dry. They liked to put them in the trees when it was really stormy with a strong wind but no rain. >>

When we had everything we needed – seaweed, fish, eggs etc. – we would send some to our relatives at Bella Coola, Rivers Inlet, Kitimaat, and the Nass River. When it was their time, when the eulachons and herrings started running, they would send up smoked fish and grease.

This trading back and forth was the way of our people, and the First Generation. This is the reason we never knew hunger.

* *This story is adapted from an edited transcript (of an earlier tape) lent by Angus Campbell to be included in this series.*

** *And also the Skeena. All those inland places if they ran out of dried salmon, they could go to Namu and ask permission from the first generation to smoke and dry salmon. And that's what Mauwash means: 'You just have to go and ask me.' You just have to ask me if you can stay until you get enough.'*

SOURCE: Recorded in Bella Bella Tales by Franz Boas 1932.

Triangulation of Geographical Marks for Navigational or Fishing Purposes

AS TOLD BY HILISTIS, PAULINE WATERFALL

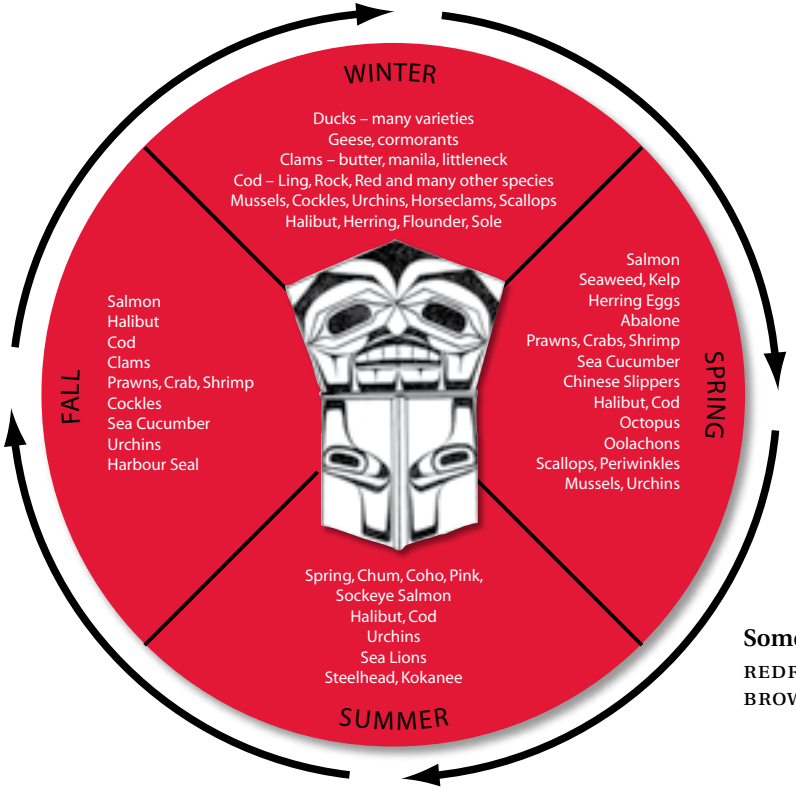
My father and brothers taught my husband how to use three reference points, which were either mountains, outcroppings or other geographical features, to find navigational or fishing spots. This knowledge was the traditional right of a member of the chief's family in areas within specific homelands. By referencing the three markers in a triangle, it was then possible to locate a specific place where there was an abundance of groundfish like halibut or cod. This information wasn't shared with the public in general and was traditional knowledge guarded and used by designated keeper of the knowledge.

It is an established fact that at the time of European contact Heiltsuk people lived in village groups distributed throughout our territory. People moved from place to place (winter villages to food gathering camps) throughout the year in order to harvest a variety of resources from the land and sea during different times of the year.

Fish Traps

As told by Hilistis, Pauline Waterfall

Each fish-bearing river or creek system had a stone fish weir (trap) that was placed strategically near the mouth of the water body. During high tides when salmon were migrating up these water systems, they were caught inside these traps. Knowledgeable fishers then inspected the catch and made decisions on which to take and which to release in order to ensure sustainability. It is said that those chosen were the ones that did not seem the strongest or fittest, thus ensuring that future stocks would retain these qualities.



Oral traditions and archaeological and ethnographic evidence established that, by the time of contact with Europeans, Heiltsuk peoples lived in village groups distributed throughout their territory. The pattern of living that had developed over the millennia was characterized by people moving from place to place (winter villages to food gathering camps) throughout the year and harvesting a variety of sea and land resources that were seasonal in different places at different times of the year.

Some of the Seasonal Food Gathering of the Heiltsuk Nation.
REDRAWN FROM ORIGINAL DIAGRAM DEVELOPED BY CAMERON BROWN, BEVERLY E. BROWN, AND CYRIL CARPENTER

Rotational Berry Picking

By Hilistis, Pauline Waterfall

Our people traditionally practised rotating berry crops, much like agricultural practices. Again, this meant that knowledgeable women, who were the traditional berry pickers, carefully monitored the state of health of crops in specific areas. If environmental and other conditions resulted in a low berry crop, then it was left to be replenished for as long as needed. There was also a practice of transplanting berry plant cuttings from one area to another. Ocean Falls was the most productive berry picking area, and our grannies used to row there each summer to pick and preserve berries in the traditional way—by sun drying berry cakes, much like the fruit leather that is now sold in grocery stores.

By Cyril Carpenter as told to Nancy Turner

Cyril also told me, as we sat together [in wheelhouse, en route to Koeye], about traditional Heiltsuk "berry gardens." When he was about 10 years old, his grandmother, Bessie Brown, pointed out to him a wide, bushy ledge beside a waterfall, at Roscoe Inlet in Heiltsuk territory. This was above the village [camp?] site. She told Cyril that this was the site of a productive berry garden. She said that people often located such berry gardens beside waterfalls, above a village or campsite, because mists around the waterfall kept the berry bushes moist, even in the summertime. The gardens were also situated where they were protected against the extreme prevailing winds. Up on the ledges, they were exposed to periods of warm sunshine, and this was important for ripening the berries.

Long ago, Bessie Brown said, the hunters and fishers would keep all the remains from cleaning and dressing their salmon, as well as from deer, mink, otter, wolf, and mountain-goat. They would dig holes in the ground around the berry bushes and bury these remains there. People also scattered the ashes from their fireplaces around the berry bushes, as well as clamshells, which helped to neutralize the acidic soils. This is what made the berries grow so well. They also used to transplant whole berry bushes to these special sites.

Cyril confirmed that the blueberries and huckleberries from these sites were healthier, bigger and tastier than any other berries; he said you could harvest them from the branches in handfuls. Later, Cyril noted, the people also used to fertilize their vegetable gardens, orchards and domesticated berry bushes around their houses using the same methods and nurturing materials, as well as adding seaweed, usually in the fall, just before winter set it and after people had processed the fall runs of salmon. >>

Cyril demonstrated the success of these practices himself, with two cherry trees growing beside their house in Bella Bella. One, he fertilized with ashes and fish remains, and it has grown rapidly. The other, left alone, has grown far less and produces less fruit. We have a sense of place, of belonging, of connection, of value. With this we developed the responsibility to maintain the balance of which we are a part.

Namgis Stewardship

As Told by Wikalalisame'ga, Gloria Cranmer Webster

Each tribe owned specific resource sites, which could be shared if, for example, salmon were abundant in one area, but not in another. As inter-marriage meant extended kinship groups among several villages, those from the village experiencing a poor fishing year, would ask for permission to share in the bounty of another, with which they had some family connection. A story told by my late uncle tells of a time that another tribe was having a bad year and came to our river during dog-salmon smoking time. Because these people were not familiar with travelling up our river in their canoes, they had great difficulty poling up-river. Mountain goat hunting territories in Dzawadi(Knight Inlet) are an example of stewardship. These were clearly defined and there is a record of a hunter being killed for trespassing on someone else's hunting grounds. Such boundaries were a way of ensuring that no single area was over-harvested. A recent example of stewardship pertains to our river. More than 20 years ago, our band council ruled that there would be no food-fishing there, as the sockeye stocks were dangerously low. What is important to remember is that this was our decision, not one imposed by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. This past summer, the sockeye returned, not in huge numbers, but enough that young people were taken to the river to learn how drag-seining was done in better times. The young people listened as legends related to salmon were told and watched as a traditional first salmon ceremony was conducted.

Haida Stewardship of Fisheries and Berry Crops

As we look at the rivers throughout X̲aayda Gwaay.yaay, it is obvious that our ancestors used rock fish traps as well as the stake fish-traps. These date back at least eleven hundred years; others are older. The stone weirs are difficult to date, but they would have to be thousands of years old. The fish bones have been found in caves which were used as living accommodations thousands of years ago. These fish traps would have belonged to the clans who lived in these areas prior to the various diseases that swept our lands. This enabled them to select the fish very methodically, which would not threaten the stocks returning to the rivers. The biggest fish were left to bring their eggs to the tributaries to spawn and be fertilized. Our rivers are not long, so care is a necessity. We have only a few rivers where the taxit (sockeye) return to each year.

Seasonal Harvesting on Haida Gwaii

As told by Barbara Wilson K̲ii'iljus

Salmonberries are the first berries to ripen each spring. As with all resources around X̲aayda Gwaay.yaay, berry patches were owned by Ruling Hereditary Leaders. People who did not own their own patches would have to get permission to pick in these leaders' patches. The rotation of use enabled the berry bushes to be broken back on a regular basis. This would give the bushes time to grow and the Ts'iitll would once more be plentiful in those areas.

The leaves from the bushes, trees and small plants are necessary to the fish in the stream, as well as providing for the needs of the large trees. The fish in the stream, when they are removed by the bear, birds and other animals, fertilize the trees. It is a cyclical life, all help each other in their growing. This would provide for the necessary vitamins and rest for the plants.

Along with the berries, the herring was the first from the ocean to be harvested. Our women would gather in their boats to harvest the K'aaw and celebrate another cycle of life. Not all the fronds were taken, and there was a time between when the herring spawn was laid and when it was harvested. Once this time had passed, the spawn was left to mature and evolve into another generation of herring. The natural thinner kelp is the preferable plant for getting our K'aaw on. If that is not possible we have other forms of sea-grass (T'aanuu) or kelp which is used. If all else fails we use the hemlock. Prior to all the sea-otter being extiripated, kelp was never an issue. Now with warmer water, an overabundance of Sea-urchins, preferable kelp isn't always available.

ESTUARIES: BIOLOGICALLY RICH RIVER OUTLETS ON THE B.C. COAST

Estuaries are partly enclosed bodies of coastal water where salt water is diluted by river and stream runoff. The ceaseless mixing of ocean, land and river nutrients in constantly flowing water makes estuaries a very rich biological environment. Even though estuaries make up only 2.3% of the length of B.C.'s coastline, they are used by an estimated 80% of all coastal wildlife. B.C.'s 440 plus estuaries are rare ecosystems, threatened by conversion to human uses and by potential impacts of climate change such as erosion, sedimentation and flooding.

SOURCE: TAKING NATURE'S PULSE:
THE STATUS OF BIODIVERSITY IN B.C. 2008.
PHOTO: TRUDI CHATWIN

Fundamental Truth 6: Sharing

Inter-tribal trade.
Uplifting new born children, "Kakila".
ILLUSTRATION: SHIRL ʻYVXMI HALL

We have a responsibility to share and support to provide strength and make others stronger in order for our world to survive.

We have maintained ourselves as prosperous people along the coast through the practice of sharing and giving – reciprocity. This is at the heart of the long-term sustainability of Coastal First Nations. It speaks to the need for stewardship to sustain the resources, knowing that there would be times of need and scarcity.

It is widely accepted that all First Nations at one time or another needed to have the ability to trade, fish and gather plants for food, medicine and fibre in the territory of other nations. Over the past thousands of years hereditary leaders negotiated trading arrangements, treaties and arranged marriages with various other coastal nations. These arrangements provided for places of safety, access to resources and safe passage through other nations' territories.

The following story describing a peace treaty between the Heiltsuk and Haida is an example one such sharing arrangement including the legacy of the two songs that are still performed today.

Heiltsuk/ X̲aaydagaay (Haida) Peace Treaty

Told by Barbara Wilson K̲ii'iljus

In the days of canoes, the 'Laana AwG̲alang (Haida Hereditary Leaders) regularly travelled up and down the coast for trade, raids, gathering of resources and visiting. During one of the trips down south towards the central coast, they came across a canoe with young boys fishing and not paying attention. When the boys opened their eyes they were surrounded by the 'Laana AwG̲aa and his canoes.

The 'Laana AwG̲a was holding a spear over his head pointing at the boys. He threw the spear into the water past the boys, saying "I could have had you killed. Go home and tell your family what has happened". The young boys paddled from Goose Island fishing grounds to "Old Town" with the Haidas following.

The boys' hereditary leader invited the X̲aaydaga to come and celebrate with their family. They had a potlatch and the leaders exchanged two songs and two dances. >>

Haida Dancers.
PHOTO: BARBARA WILSON K̲II´ILJUS

When Gaa'laa Oliver Adams took his place as 'Laana AwGa in Gaauu' Llnagaay (Old Masset) in 1976, Chief Humchitt (Leslie Humchitt) brought these two songs and two dances back to our lands. These songs and dances are still performed by the Heiltsuk and the story told. Many years ago, I was in Bella Bella, and was honoured to watch and listen to David Gladstone and his group sing and dance for me. As I got ready to leave that last day, David and his mother, Lillian, again honoured me by singing the "Haida Love Song" as I left their community.

Not only did these songs and dances prove the long ago treaty, but today, it helps us to put our music part of our world back together again.

SHARING AMONG AND WITHIN COASTAL FIRST NATIONS

The Heiltsuk are located in the geographic centre of the Pacific Northwest coast of North America. The current Heiltsuk village of Bella Bella is situated on British Columbia's Inside Passage, an ancient marine highway that runs north-south along the Pacific coast.

Throughout the millennia the Heiltsuk become adept traders, moving goods between the northern and southern tribes of the Pacific coast and also into the interior mainland tribes. Not only were physical goods transported, traded and sold but also ideas, ceremonial and cultural prerogatives were transferred through marriage or warfare. The most notable and highest ranking dance among the Heiltsuk is the Tanis or Ha'maat;sa. This was transferred inter-tribally as far north as the Tlingit's in southeast Alaska and south to the Makahs on the Olympic Peninsula on the Washington coast. This ceremonial dance prerogative has being compared to the ghost dance among the plains Indians. The coastwide embrace of this potent dance was a response to the unprecedented death experienced by all Coastal First Nations people with the introduction of diseases from the newcomers. The sharing of this ceremonial dance was spread among the Coastal First Nations people as a way to provide spiritual, emotional and physical relief from this unfamiliar pandemic that in some cases killed more than 75% of the Coastal First Nations people.

Another contemporary example of Heiltsuk sharing is their role as lead proponents in the resurgence of the ocean-going canoe culture along the Pacific Northwest coast. They carved a Glwa, an ocean-going canoe and initiated the following projects:

- In 1986 the Glwa "Ocean-going Canoe Expedition" from Bella Bella to Vancouver, for Expo 86;
- Paddle to Seattle 1989 challenged tribes to paddle to Bella Bella in 1993
- Hosted Qatuwas "People gathering together" festival during 1993 United Nations Year of Indigenous peoples.

These canoe-carving projects, journeys and gatherings have evolved into a canoe and cultural resurgence of a traditional mode of travel and, in addition, these are healing journeys for individual and community empowerment. This is a new era of decolonization for Coastal First Nations.

At critical times during the recent history of the Pacific Northwest coast first peoples the Heiltsuk provided leadership and shared important methods of preservation and perpetuation of culture and knowledge. This sharing is reciprocal among all of us along the Pacific coast. In 1985, when the Heiltsuk prepared and carved the Glwa, ocean-going canoe, carvers from Haida, Kwakwaka'wakw and Salish travelled to Bella Bella to share their skill, talent and traditional knowledge about canoe-making.

The Namgis of Alert Bay are also stronghold of culture and ceremonial practices. This is where many Heiltsuk songs, ceremonials and stories were retained and eventually brought back to Bella Bella. This can also be said for the Haida, as the Heiltsuk preserved two songs and dances that were also repatriated back to Haida Gwaii.

Cultural diversity is as critical as biodiversity. The ability to share has allowed us to preserve elements of our history and culture.

Another example of sharing is the story of a reciprocal agreement between Kitkatla and Haida.

The trading of resources was widely practised by Coastal First Nations, especially between local villages. Also, the major river valleys provided commercial links between coastal and interior peoples. Trading increased both frequency and quantity after the arrival of Europeans, who introduced new technology and new items for exchange (Turner, 1998).

There are many examples of trading relationships between First Nations on the coast. The Heiltsuk established trading relationships with the Nuxalk, Haisla, Nisgaa, Tsimshian, and Tlingit, trading eulachon grease and soap berries in exchange for sea weed and herring eggs. Another example is an agreement between the Tshimshian and the Alaska Haida. In this agreement, only certain clans were allowed to trade with certain Haida within the areas of Xaayda Gwaay yaay. These trading agreements were "potlatched" and respected.

Every Aboriginal group in the province had access to a great variety of plant materials, but of course, they valued some more than others. In areas where they prized plants did not occur naturally, people often obtained

Kwakwaka-wakw and Kwaguilth canoers, arriving at the old Bella Bella village site of 'Qøc.
PHOTO: SHIRL 'YXVMI HALL

Reciprocal Agreement between Haida and Kitkatla

TOLD BY
BARBARA WILSON KII'ILJUS

A long time ago, the Xaayda and the Southern Tsimshian stood out on the rocks in the Kitkatla territory and agreed that in times of need we could go to their territory and fish. This is a reciprocal agreement. In times of need, the people of Kitkatla can come to our territory.

them by trade from neighbouring groups, either in the form of raw materials or as finished products. Often too, people of one group would be particularly skilled in constructing a certain type of product and would be able to trade it to neighbouring groups even when the raw materials were just as readily available to the neighbours.

The exchange of plant materials and other economic products took place at all levels – in family and village groups, between villages in the same language group, among the different language divisions on the coast and in the interior, and even between coastal and interior groups. Some groups, especially those in the transitional zone between the coast and the interior, acted as middlemen, buying the products of one neighbouring group and reselling them to another. With the coming of the Europeans and the accompanying influx of new trade goods and improved transportation routes, the exchange of plant products became even more widespread (Turner, 1998).

Trading was a key feature of Haida culture. Southern villages traded roe on kelp to northern villages in exchange for razor clams and seaweed. This practice still goes on today. The northern area of X̲aayda Gwaay.yaay does not have the areas where "herring spawn on kelp" can grow. As a result, trade happened not only with nations on the "seaward land" but also between the various villages for things that were needed. The foods traded back and forth ensured a diverse and healthy diet.

First Nations on the coast cooperated but they were also competitive. It was important for a chief to show that he and his people were strong and powerful. The chief and his people worked hard to make the harvest of their land the best it could be and to form trade partnerships with other powerful and wealthy chiefs.

The leading chief in each village was the link to other villages and other nations. If a village formed successful trade alliances with villages in other nations, everyone in the village benefited. These trade alliances were exclusive. This meant that no one else in one's own nation could trade with that village in the other nation.

Before contact there was a trade route from Alaska to Northern California.

"Each of these exclusive trading relationships was based on clan or marriage ties. These foreign trading partnerships were not easy to establish. They had to be made public and acknowledged at a feast before everyone accepted them as exclusive. This meant that one first had to be wealthy enough to give out gifts to everyone in the nation" (Marsden, 1992).

Tsimshian Trade Alliances

told by Niiyuks, Joseph Bradley, of the Gisbutwaada Clan of the Gitlaan (Marsden, 1992).

Txa'nii lu tgu K'igooba	All around Big Bay
'ni' nii 'nii wil gap heeldm t'aata ptoon	that is where there are so many sea otters
asda wagayt gik'ot	long years ago
ada gwai 'ni' niisgat wil 'yetsda txa'nii Ts'msiyeen ptoon	and that is where all the Tsimshian got their sea otters
Ada gap txa'nii Ts'msiyeen waaldit	And this is what all the Tsimshian did
ada gawdi waaldit	when they had finished
dawila tguwaayt	they went trading
a labalt 'a'adit a Ts'itgaat	they traded with the Chilkat
Ada asda gik'ot	Years ago
gap sgüü dii lip gooy mita k'üülda galts'ap	each tribe went to its own place
Gispaxlo'ots t'in dii goosga txa'nii	the Gispaxlo'ots were the ones who went to all those
k'ala Ksiyeen na gigyaani a Gits'ilaasü	on the Skeena River above the Gits'ilaasü
ada Giax'angiikdiit t'in goosga	and the Ginax'angiik were the ones who went
Stik'iin dit Ts'itgaat	to the Stikine and the Chilkat
Gitwilgyoots t'in goosga	The Gitwilgyoots were the ones who went
Gitgaaw Haida	to the Masset Haida
Gitsiis t'in goosga	the Gitsiis were the ones who went
Gitskoon dit T'agwoon	to the Ketchikan Tlingit and to New Metlakatla
Gitando t'in goosga	the Gitando were the ones who went
Haida a Lnk'woon dit Hawk'aan	to the Haida at Lnk'woon and Hawk'aan
Ada Haidm Kasaan na galts'aps Sunaaxat	And to the Kasaan Haida village of Sunaaxat
dii goosga Giluts'aaw	it was the Giluts'aaw who went
Laxdoox dii labalt 'wa'atsga Gitzataat	the Tongas traded with the Gitzaxtaat
ada'al Wütsdaa dii gooys dip Nislaganoos dit Gitlaan	and the Wüsdaa went to the Nislaganoos and the Gitlaan

Haida Trading Stories

As told by Barbara Wilson K̲ii'iljus

Haida were known on the coast for trading halibut, black cod, canoes, sea foods, spruce root and baskets. There was trade and treaties with most of the coastal nations. The items being traded depended upon where our ancestors were travelling. Each nation would be interested in trading for certain things.

Not all life was about "Raping and Pillaging". Families including grandparents, children, wives and extended family would all travel together. Safe lodging and passage was as necessary as the places from where food could be gathered.

Our stories talk about travelling south as far as California to trade for the beautiful "Gul̲xa" and other dressings such as the feathers, breast plates, dentilum and wools. Other stories talk about reaching Japan, "the land where the people ate "K̲aa'nuu" and wore "red clothes". The story talks about their kindness and how when our people wanted to come home again, they were provisioned and told "to paddle towards the sun".

In the time when the traders came to our shores, our men were taken on the sailing ships. They helped with the navigating, and our "X̲aayda Kil" became the "ship's language".

■ **Trade Alliances**

SOURCE: NA AMWAALTGA TS' MSIYEEN THE TSIMSHIAN, TRADE AND THE NORTHWEST COAST ECONOMY. COMPILED BY SUSAN MARSDEN. 1992 THE TSIMSHIAN CHIEFS FOR TSIMSHIAN CHILDREN PRESENT AND FUTURE.

The Supreme Court of Canada Gladstone decision affirmed an unbroken line of Heiltsuk commerce and trade, long before BC joined confederation.

Heiltsuk Trading

Sharing and cooperation occurred not only between nations but also occurred within. At Heiltsuk feasts, for example, feast bowls would be brought, the host would fill the bowls and chiefs would take bowls back to their village to feed people In contemporary potlatches, feast bowls are presented to the hemas, chiefs.

Heiltsuk laws were powerful, and if certain laws were broken, the result was banishment. Separation, transition and incorporation are key elements within ancestral stories. The main character is banished, goes through struggle, then ritual purification, and through his quest is provided with a gift and learns. He brings the gift back and shares it with the people.

Grease Trail Trading Route

Told by Wikalalisame'ga, Gloria Cranmer Webster

Using the grease trail, our people developed a long-standing relationship with the northern villages of the Nuu-chah-nulth. Their language and ours have some similarities. Some of our people have family connections on the west coast, going back to the time when the grease trail was in use. This is evident in the performance of Nuu-chah-nulth dances at our contemporary potlatches, which came to us through inter-tribal marriage in earlier times.

Traditional Trading Systems

Told by Hilistis, Pauline Waterfall

In order to access traditional foods not Indigenous to our areas, we established a complex food trading system throughout the generations. This included traditional herring eggs and seaweed, which are abundant in Heiltsuk territory, with eulachons, eulachon oil and soap berries, which were in abundance in Nuxalk or Haisla territories. The geographical distances between these villages are great, and in the old days the practice of trading was conducted annually when weather conditions were good and made travel by water safe. These trading systems also created a form of tribal alliances, which remain today. There are still some people who conduct traditional trading practices with these relations. This was an effective way of extending access to traditional foods and diversifying diets.

Stories of Learning and Paying Respect

Told by Wikalalisame'ga, Gloria Cranmer Webster

I was fortunate in that I grew up in a time when many of our knowledgeable old people were still alive. Being able to speak our language with the elders, some of whom spoke no English at all, made it possible for me to learn from them in a direct way. They taught more by example than by sitting young people down and lecturing to them. I remember picking salmon berries with my grandmother who, as she ate the first berries, said, "Thank you that you have come again to feed us and thank you that I am alive this year to greet you."

Some of the legends they told us concerned the greed of a person who wanted to accumulate more and more possessions in order to raise his status. Inevitably, he came to a bad end. The moral of the story was never stated explicitly, but was there for us to figure out, and that we could do by observing the behaviour of the old people, who valued giving, sharing and respecting the rich resources that surrounded us. Many important names are still used today that reflect that sense of generosity and sharing, such as Manl'ida'as (where one becomes satiated), Kakaso'las(where many people come to feast).

Bighouse, Alert Bay.
PHOTO: JOHN MORRIS

THE POTLATCH SYSTEM

The potlatch and the feast are the two most important events that occur in Namgis society. Both events revolve around the act of giving gifts, which was central to almost all aspects of social, political and economic life. By giving, the members of a 'na'mima, meaning "one kind" - an extended family unit, demonstrated their obligations and gratitude to the plants, animals, birds and fish in return for giving themselves up for human use. Potlatches and feasts are also where marriages and births are announced and celebrated and where deaths are mourned. By giving at these ceremonies the members of the 'na'mima also demonstrate their rights to certain ranks and accompanying privileges and property. Among the Namgis and other Kwakwa̲ka̲'wakw (Kwak'wala speaking) Nations there are two categories of property: territorial property owned by the 'na'mima and ceremonial property. At the head of a 'na'mima is the Chief who holds 'na'mima property and who organizes his 'na'mima to host potlatches and feasts.

Under the authority and direction of their Chief, the members of a 'na'mima have rights to hunting and trapping grounds, fishing stations and plant gathering sites the traditional territory. This territory was given to the 'na'mimas' founding ancestor at the beginning of time. Rights to this property cannot be given in potlatches or feasts, although individuals outside the 'na'mima were sometimes granted the privilege of harvesting resources within 'na'mima territory. Ceremonial property includes such things as masks, dances, names, feast dishes, canoes, coppers and privileges to perform certain ritual acts as well as a great variety of other things. This property can be given, and by giving a person shows he is a moral person.

At potlatches and feasts, which were hosted in a Chief's Big House, guests witnessed the inheritance of, and validated claims to, certain ranks and their accompanying privileges and property. In Namgis society, and among other Kwakwa̲ka̲'wakw peoples, rank, privileges and property are all represented in the eternal names of the ancestors. These names provide the social identity for a Namgis individual in that the individual who holds a particular name has the same rank, rights and responsibilities that "every holder of that name has had since the beginning of time, when the name was first created by the spirits." It also defined this person in relation to others in and outside the 'na'mima.

Chiefly names identified their holders not only with certain rights and responsibilities but also with the ownership of particular geographic locations. These names were always given to the Chief's oldest heir, who gave it to his or her oldest offspring and so on down the line. In addition, it was at these events that legal and political disputes between different 'na'mima as well as between different tribes were settled. These events have been described as "Rivalry Potlatches".

Historically, therefore, potlatches and feasts were central to the Kwakwa̲ka̲'wakw system of governance. With colonization, the ensuing settlement of the province and the paternalistic ideology of early government policy makers, it was decided that the potlatch and other Aboriginal ceremonies stood in the way of civilizing the "Indian" and this resulted in the "Potlatch Prohibition." In spite of the efforts of government agents to end these ceremonies, potlatching continues today.

SOURCE: Namgis website http://www.namgis.bc.ca/culture/Pages/Potlatch.aspx

Arranged Marriages

Told by Wikalalisame'ga, Gloria Cranmer Webster

The main purpose of an arranged marriage was for the groom's family to acquire songs, dances, names and, in a few cases, the ownership of portions of land, which would then be passed on to the children produced by the couple. The arranged marriage of very young children was called xwisa, as happened with my aunt who was betrothed to a boy from Cape Mudge. Both of them were about eight years old. The boy's father coveted the Chilkat blanket that our family had a right to and was given that in the marriage ceremony. The children grew up to marry other people, but the boy's family got what they wanted. (Little note: when the missionaries arrived, they were horrified to find all these couples with children "living in sin", because they had not been married in a Christian ceremony. So groups of couples, up to 20 at a time, were gathered together for a "blanket wedding" in the church. The joke in our family is that four of us are illegitimate, as we were born before our parents were married Christian style.) Just an observation – most of the people I knew whose marriages were arranged, stayed with their partner until one of them died.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DANCE IN OUR LIVES

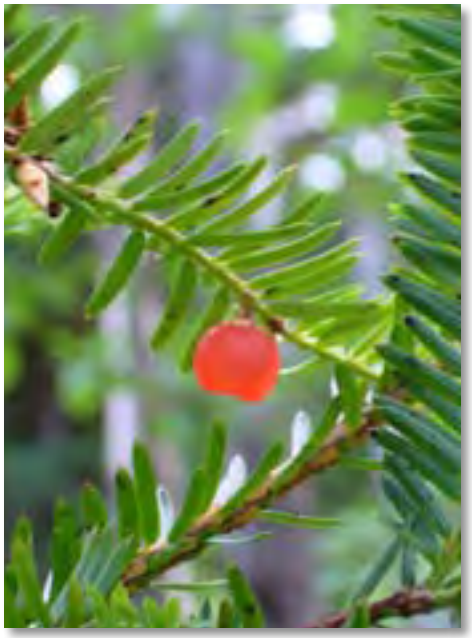
We dance to celebrate life, to show appreciation for all the gifts bestowed upon us by Gigame' Kana'l, the Creator God, in our lives today, and all the generations past since the beginning of time. The dances reflected our daily lives but were represented as bigger, greater and more wonderful. Dance was, and continues to be, a very important aspect of who we are as Kwakwa̱ka̱'wakw. It encompasses all four areas which make up our living beings.

Dance is spiritual, intellectual, emotional and physical and dances should be appreciated and accepted as they are presented. In many ways, dance reflected our everyday lives – whether it was hunting, travelling from village to village in canoes, or giving thanks to the salmon, the mighty grizzly or giant sasquatch.

Dancing allowed us to re-enact segments of our daily lives but with greatness and solemnity – the Rites of Passage, which is the Hamat'sa Initiation Ceremony, or a young girl's first menses, a baby's first haircut, a marriage or standing up a new Chief.

Ritual or ceremonial dancing was, perhaps, the most important manner by which we were sustained as a people. For everything that happened in the Bighouse, there was a dance (or, dancing) to go with it. Everything we do in the Bighouse we do to acknowledge and reaffirm who we are as a people – knowing our true beginning.

SOURCE: Namgis website http://www.namgis.bc.ca/culture/Pages/Bighouse.aspx

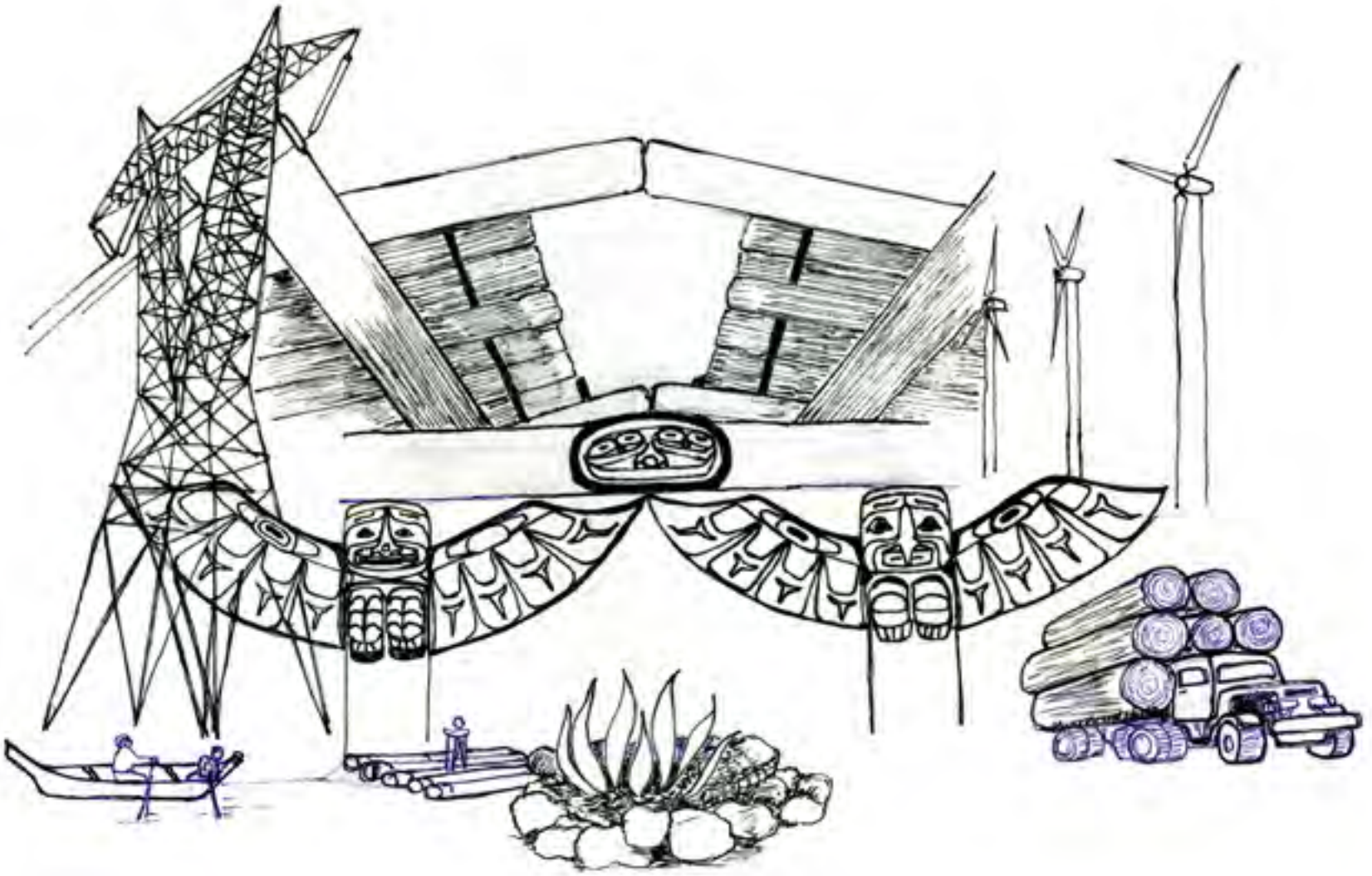


BIODIVERSITY AND PHARMACEUTICALS: LESSONS FROM THE PACIFIC YEW

The Pacific yew tree was long considered an undesirable "weed species" in commercial forests in B.C. – until its bark was discovered to be a valuable source of taxol, one of the most potent anticancer drugs yet to be found. Then there was such a rush for the yew in B.C. that local First Nations, who have valued yew for centuries for its tough wood and medicinal qualities, expressed concern that it might be wiped out. Most pharmaceutical drugs are originally derived from plants or animals. While advances in genetics play a role, many drugs owe their invention to traditional uses for hundreds or thousands of years by First Peoples, who developed a very detailed understanding of medicinal properties of plants and animals in their communities and carefully conserved them for future generations. The knowledge that yet-to-be-identified species may yield important cures is a powerful incentive to conserve biodiversity as diligently as possible and should also provide an incentive to respect, conserve and learn from the teachings of B.C.'s First Peoples.

SOURCE: TAKING NATURE'S PULSE: THE STATUS OF BIODIVERSITY IN B.C. 2008. PHOTO: NANCY TURNER

Fundamental Truth 7: Adapting to Change



Energy lights the house, technology advances, as we continue to adapt and sustain into the next millennium.
ILLUSTRATION: SHIRL ʻYVXMI HALL

Environmental, demographic, socio-political and cultural changes have occurred since the creator placed us in our homelands; however, we adapted to and survived these changes. We will continue to adapt and change.

We will share our core values with the intent to support long-term sustainability and stewardship of natural resources and ourselves.

Natural change was and continues to be inevitable. And with natural change comes the need to adapt and survive. As we face new and even greater changes, it is more important than ever to pass on the knowledge that helped to guide earlier generations.

Human-made changes are causing increasing impacts to our natural landscapes and to the very source of life itself. Examples of impacts that are affecting our homelands include:

- the collapse of food and commercial fisheries for herring, eulachon and salmon;
- the introduction of foreign species such as the deer on Haida Gwaii;
- negative impacts on wild salmon from fin fish aquaculture including disease, escapement and habitat destruction;
- an increased intrusion of bears in the village of Bella Bella; and
- the loss of forestry values as a result of high-grading for species such as red cedar.

Adapting to Change

The Heiltsuk have adapted to rapid changes during the last couple of hundred years. Like the rest of humanity, they are grappling with exponential technological change and growth. Within two hundred years we have adapted from the stone age to the modern technological age. This has not been without its casualties and cost in human and environmental degradation.

We are attempting to bring together both the hereditary and elected leadership models to plan for the interests of future generations. This governance model incorporates both old and new approaches to management. The elected governing body is the Heiltsuk Tribal Council (HTC), with many programs and services for its members. The HTC is in turn linked to the Coastal First Nations-Turning Points initiative that is supporting the member first nations in land and marine use planning that will inform an ecosystem based management approach to development that includes considering economic, ecological and social needs of the communities.

We are committed to Gwilas "upholding the laws of our ancestors". This is a stewardship model based on a social responsibility to our members. Change is accelerating and, as we cannot stop it, we must continue to adapt while staying true to our core values. We must use the best of western science with due consideration for those resources that we are charged with watching over.

Looking Back to See Forward

Told by Wikalalisame'ga, Gloria Cranmer Webster

Today we live in a completely different world from our old people. In their time, extended families lived together in big houses, so that at least three generations – grandparents, parents and children – were in daily contact. For three generations or more, in some cases, we have adopted the concept of single-family dwellings where we no longer have the intimacy of multi-generational interaction. Many of us live far from the villages in which we grew up and have become accustomed to off-reserve life.

How can we transfer knowledge in the traditional manner, given these and other changes such as loss of language, loss of knowledge, loss of food gathering and preserving, loss of moral standards and so much more, including changes to our natural systems from climate change? It is a huge challenge, but those of us who have a direct connection to our old people have a responsibility to try.

We, as Aboriginal people, didn't cause these disasters, but might have something to teach those who are responsible, if only they would listen, not only for their sake, but for ours as well. We were doing a pretty good job taking care of our world before it was damaged and destroyed by those who thought they were invincible.

The reality we face is that we can no longer transfer knowledge in the traditional way, but must develop new ways of teaching that include not only our own people but also those who came later.

ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Key recommendations to Indigenous nations leadership on possible strategies to confront, mitigate or adapt to the impacts of climate change:

1. ***Educate tribal membership on the present and future effects of climate change on their own homelands.***
2. ***Secure sources of fresh water now to meet future needs of tribal communities located in drought-impacted areas.***
3. ***Secure a future source of food stocks, long-term storage capacity and production capabilities for crops that can adapt to climate change.***
4. ***Prepare for impacts on culturally significant food and animal species.***
5. ***Develop relationships with neighbouring governments and communities regarding land use planning, and emergency plans for the more disastrous impacts of climate change.***
6. ***Consider alliances with local governments to build renewable energy capacity.***
7. ***Consider strategies to unite tribes around habitat protection.***
8. ***Get actively involved as sovereign governments in U.N. climate change negotiations, and pressuring national governments to reduce emissions.***
9. ***Get youth involved in cultural education, and defending the future of their nation from harmful climate change.***
10. ***Work with other Indigenous nations in a treaty relationship transcending colonial boundaries.***

SOURCE: CLIMATE CHANGE AND PACIFIC RIM INDIGENOUS NATIONS: A REPORT TO THE LEADERSHIP OF INDIGENOUS NATIONS. 2006.

Fort McLoughlin / Bella Bella Story

In 1793, Captain George Vancouver explored Heiltsuk waters for the first time. American fur traders were already in the area and were quickly joined by British fur traders. In 1833, the Hudson's Bay Company built a fur trading post, Fort McLoughlin, on Campbell Island, in order to intercept American fur trade competition on the coast. The fort was located at McLoughlin Bay, or Old Town as the site is now known, about a mile and one-half south of the present village of Bella Bella. In 1843, the fort was abandoned. Sometime around 1850, the Hudson's Bay Company re-established a trading post on the site of the former fort. In 1862 the great smallpox epidemic that originated in Victoria spread up the coast and decimated whole villages of Heiltsuk peoples.

In 1867, although the impact was not to be felt locally for a couple of decades, the British North America Act created the federal Government of Canada and gave it responsibility for "Indians, and lands reserved for Indians" (Sec. 91, subsection 24). The first Indian Act was written in 1870.

SOURCE: Heiltsuk Cultural Education website http://www.hcec.ca/heiltsuk.html

Adaptive by Nature

As told by Barbara Wilson Kii'iljus

Over thousands of years we have survived glaciers, floods, tsunamis, volcanoes, famines, fires and death. We have also survived the various diseases we have been subjected to over the past 300 years including smallpox, tuberculosis, measles, mumps, scarlet-fever, influenza, dysentery and other unmentioned diseases.

The need to ensure the survival of the very strongest members of each family ensured that, for the most part, people did survive all of it. The fact that children were bathed in the ocean from the time they were very young ensured "survival of the fittest". Even the process of grieving for those who passed on was influenced by the need to survive. One could not afford to be out of commission for more than a few days given that the inability to move on, both physically and emotionally could make the difference between life and death.

With the fury of the ocean, the centre of the world was right here. Medicine and food were found in our oceans, skies, plants and trees. Knowledge was learned over the thousands of years of living in this wonderful place. Over the past 100 years, the intrusion of introduced mammals, plants and "those from away" have made survival just as tough as the times before the coming of the new technology. The plants are in danger of disappearing, and the traditional knowledge will go with them. Today's generations have never seen our lands with the abundance our ancestors knew. In spite of all this, it was the deftness of our cunning ancestors – adapting to the many challenges they faced – that made it possible for me to be here today.

THE KERMODE BEAR EXPLAINED IN BLACK-AND-WHITE

Biodiversity is made up of ecosystem, species and genetic diversity. Genetic diversity within a species is part of nature's toolkit for adapting to variable and changing conditions. In black bears,one example of genetic variability is different colour morphs, including the white coastal morph known as the Kermode or spirit bear (there are also bluish, cinnamon and black morphs).

SOURCE: TAKING NATURE'S PULSE: THE STATUS OF BIODIVERSITY IN B.C. 2008. PHOTO: IAN MCALLISTER

Coming of Age

Heiltsuk coming of age ceremony for young woman.
ILLUSTRATION: SHIRL ʻYVXMI HALL

4 Coming of Age and Making It Right: Our Moral and Ethical Responsibility

Our stories affirm our values and truths and validate who we are and where we come from. It is a custom among Coastal First Nations to have a coming of age ceremony when a child becomes a young adult. The young person is provided with gifts and teachings in preparation for their life's journey. In 2008 British Columbia celebrated its first 150 years as a province, which may, in some respects, be considered its "coming of age". The teachings that we are sharing may then be regarded as gifts from Coastal First Nations to mark this coming of age. They reflect the core values that have enabled us to live sustainably within our homelands for the past several thousand years.

We are stewards of the land on which we live, knowing that our health as a people is intricately tied to the health of the land and waters. It is with this in mind that we must continue to exercise stewardship to maintain biodiversity and enrich our homelands so as to sustain them as the most beautiful place on the planet.

We need to stay the course in order to stay alive. We need to revitalize the teachings our ancestors left us, affirm our identity and reconnect to the land and sea, and share our traditional knowledge within our nations and with those around us.

Natural change was and continues to be inevitable. With natural change comes the need to adapt and survive. However, human-made changes are now impacting the natural environment and its very life source in ways never experienced before.

We have witnessed tremendous change since the first contact by Europeans some 230 years ago. The magnitude of this change has affected our traditional balance and relationship with the natural world, as evidenced by the loss of our traditional foods and lands as well as the effects of climate change.

While we have historically proven to be resilient and able to adapt to our changing physical environment, we now face a future where the traditional stewardship we have always practised will not be sufficient to allow nature to rebalance. One example is the acidification of the oceans, which is predicted to result in a permanent loss of crustaceans.

What do the seven fundamental truths we have presented have to offer as we move forward in the face of uncertainties such as climate change? It is our view that the lessons embedded in these truths will assist all of us – First Nations and all other British Columbians – in adapting to these global changes.

Richard Atleo, Umeek, "Hishuk-ish tsawalk" Everything is One, in the Nuu-chah-nulth language.

One small step for sustaining biodiversity will be a major leap for humankind--it begins with me!

HILISTIS, PAULINE WATERFALL

Appendices

Biographies of the First Nations Keepers of the Knowledge for This Project

GLORIA CRANMER WEBSTER

ANCESTRAL NAME: **WIKALALISAME'GA**

In 1949 Gloria Cranmer was identified in the Native Voice newspaper as the "First Indian Girl to Study at UBC." She graduated in anthropology in 1956 and has since become an important linguist, filmmaker and author within the Namgis (formerly Nimpkish) First Nation of the Kwakwaka'wakw.

Born in Alert Bay on July 4, 1931, Gloria Cranmer Webster is a member of the influential Cranmer family that includes her late brother Doug Cranmer, an artist. Their father Dan Cranmer and great-grandfather George Hunt both worked with Franz Boas, who first came to Kwakwaka'wakw territory in 1886.

After the potlatch ceremonies were banned by the Canadian government in 1884, her father Dan Cranmer became famous for hosting one of the greatest potlatches in coastal history, on Village Island, in December of 1921. After 17 years of preparation, the enormous gathering attracted white authorities under the direction of Indian Agent William Halliday. After 44 arrests, 22 participants were sentenced to Oakalla Prison Farm. The rest were given suspended sentences on the condition that they surrender their potlatch regalia.

Materials from Dan Cranmer's potlatch were sent to Ottawa from Village Island, Alert Bay and Cape Mudge, and some were retained by Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs Duncan Campbell Scott for his private collection. Approximately half of the materials sent to Ottawa were passed along to the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto. Chief Mungo Martin eventually hosted the first legal 20th century potlatch in British Columbia in 1953, after the ban was lifted in 1951.

After graduating from UBC in anthropology, Gloria Cranmer worked for two years as a counsellor for female prisoners who were first-time offenders at Oakalla Prison Farm. During her work for the John Howard Society she met and married John Webster, the executive director for the society in Saskatchewan, and their daughter was born in Regina. After 18 months in Saskatchewan, the family moved to the West Coast, where Gloria Cranmer Webster worked as a counsellor at the YWCA in Vancouver, raised her daughter and two sons, and became program director for the Vancouver Indian Centre.

Wikalalisame'ga, Gloria Cranmer Webster.
PHOTO BY: CHRISTINA COOK

In 1971, when Ottawa provided two-and-a-half million dollars to build the UBC Anthropology Museum, she was hired at age forty to become an assi tant curator at the new facility. While collating Northwest Coast artifacts for the museum, she became deeply involved in the successful repatriation of potlatch artifacts confiscated from her father's 1921 potlatch.

In 1975, the National Museum of Man in Ottawa agreed to return potlatch materials with the caveat that a museum had to be constructed to properly display and maintain the collection. Two museums were built, one at Cape Mudge, the other at Alert Bay where Webster served as Curator of the U'mista Cultural Centre (1980–1991). Potlatch artifacts have also been retrieved from the National Museum of the American Indian. Able to speak and write Kwak'wala, Webster played a key role in the creation of the U'mista Culture Centre, a facility modelled on a traditional Kwakwa̲ka̲'wakw Big House. The Centre has since produced at least 12 Kwak'wala-language books for schools, and several award-winning documentary films including *Potlatch ... A Strict Law Bids Us Dance* and *Box of Treasures*. Webster has also worked with Jay Powell to develop a spelling system to transcribe the sounds of the Kwak'wala language. To document the Kwakwa̲ka̲'wakw show that was presented by General Motors at Expo '86 in Vancouver, Webster supplied the text for The Kwakwa̲ka̲'wakw and the Spirit Lodge (1986). The Spirit Lodge installation was so popular that it was recreated identically and installed at Knott's Berry Farm in Los Angeles.

In 1991, Webster co-curated the Chiefly Feasts exhibit at the American Museum of Natural History with Aldona Jonaitis. She has received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from the University of British Columbia in 1995, as well as awards from the Native American Art Studies Association, the British Columbia Museums Association, the Canadian Museums Association, B.C. Heritage and the UBC Alumni Association. For nine years she was a member of the Board of Trustees of the Canadian Museum of Civilization where she also served on the First Peoples' Hall Advisory Committee for eleven years. She also contributed significantly to Kwakwa̲ka̲'wakw *Settlement Sites, 1775–1920: A Geographical Analysis and Gazetteer* (1994) by Robert Galois.

Hilistis, Pauline Waterfall.
PHOTO: SHIRL ʻYXVMI HALL

PAULINE WATERFALL
ANCESTRAL NAME: **HILISTIS**

Pauline's ancestral name is Hilistis, which comes from a genesis story of the origin of her family roots. It is a story that explains the origins of animal crest hierarchy applicable to a specific village. The name means "starting on a journey and staying the course to its completion to come full circle".

She was born at Bella Bella, BC to Chief George Housty, whose family ties stem from both the Kwakwaka'wakw and Heiltsuk Nation. He is of the eagle clan, whose traditional territory includes Roscoe Inlet and Ocean Falls. Her mother is Peggy, who is the head of the wolf clan through a great ancestral story with traditional territory at Hauyet, south of Bella Bella. Pauline was fortunate to be born at a time when her family had access to and used traditional foods and resources to sustain their livelihood.

Pauline's educational life began at the day school in Bella Bella. She attended the Port Alberni Residential School and graduated from the public school in 1961. She achieved her lifelong goal of becoming a teacher after a prolonged educational journey, graduating from UBC in 1991.

She taught and incorporated the North Island College into Bella Bella to deliver business and adult education courses. She is the founder and current administrator of the Heiltsuk College. Upon returning home from the city in the early 1970s, she bonded with her grandmother, Hilistis, and other Heiltsuk elders who shaped and guided her growth and knowledge of the Heiltsuk language, culture, values and traditional ways.

She has authored several papers that include her involvement in research including:

- *Traditional Roles & Responsibilities* (co-authored with Gloria C. Webster) for Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Report;
- *Heiltsuk Wellness Study:* in collaboration with UBC Dept. of Psychiatry, Heiltsuk Tribal Council and Native Brotherhood of B.C.;
- *The Geography of Belonging: The Experiences of Birthing at Home for Aboriginal Women,* in collaboration with Dr. Jude Kornelsen, Centre for Rural Health Research; *North of Caution:* a chapter on traditional lands and resources co-authored with Ian Gill, Ecotrust Canada UBC/Vancouver Coastal Health Authority *Maternal Study: Bella Bella Birthing Practices.*

Pauline's teacher training as a scientist blended with her traditional ecological knowledge to contribute to a vision that she upholds in honouring her homelands and being in a respectful relationship that promotes sustainable use and development. With the long-standing ecological and cultural knowledge that has been imparted to her, she works with the keepers of the knowledge team to inform and guide this First Nations Biodiversity project.

She is a natural leader and a true practitioner of her culture and traditional ways. She has a vision for her people and community and contributes to this vision in many ways. She tries to ensure her footprint on this earth is light. Like her co-keepers of the knowledge, she is a keeper of the knowledge.

Barbara Wilson Kii'iljus.
PHOTO: BARBARA WILSON KII'ILJUS

BARBARA WILSON

ANCESTRAL NAME: **KII'ILJUUS**

Born and raised in Haida Gwaii, Barbara Wilson comes from a family of chiefs and is well versed in her Haida culture and traditional ways. A practitioner of her culture, she enjoys working with the elders of her community and has taken time to learn and apply her teachings in her work and in her life. She has a relationship with the land and sea and is very sensitive to her surroundings. Through her work and teachings she is hoping, by practising and applying what she has learned, to help others to lighten their footprint on the earth.

She hopes that future generations of Haida will enjoy what she has been blessed to enjoy in her lifetime. She wants to ensure that the natural world and her people will be sustained by practising the fundamental truths that have sustained her and her ancestors.

Barb has a diploma in Cultural Resource Management and graduated from University of Victoria in 1999. She currently works for Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve and Haida Heritage Site. Her other experience includes:

- Liaison with various First Nations in BC and on island.
- Presentations:
    - Haida culture and history: 1700s to present;
    - History Gwaii Haanas NPR and HHS;
    - Writing information for the Haida Gwaii Watchmen, staff and visitors;
    - Conservation work each summer in old villages; work with archaeologists;
    - Training Watchmen, staff and volunteers for conservation in the old village sites, including the World Heritage Site of SGang Gwaay (Anthony Island).

Prior to working with Parks Canada, she was employed in many varied areas. She apprenticed with the National Film Board as a Cinematographer; worked as a Hostess for the Indians of Canada Pavilion at Expo 67; and at other times was a receptionist, accounts payable and receivable clerk, loans administrator; special needs counsellor, court worker, short-term owner/operator of a boat yard, and owner/operator of a gift-shop and commercial fishing gear store.

Her universal education has been diverse and interesting. She is committed to being a lifelong learner and teacher.

FRANK BROWN

ANCESTRAL NAME: **ATHALIS**

Frank Brown is a member of the Heiltsuk First Nation, located on the Central Coast of British Columbia. He is the co founder of the BC First Nations Forestry Value Added Program, being administered through the First Nations Forestry Council. He is also First Nations Advisor to the FNFC's Wood Products Technical Support Program.

Frank is currently the proprietor of SeeQuest Development Co., which facilitates community engagement workshops related to policy and program development, strategic planning, consultation internal systems alignment, implementation/project management and research.

For six years Frank served as the Chair for the Heiltsuk herring Roe on Kelp committee, reconciling the Heiltsuk commercial Aboriginal right to harvest and sell herring Roe on Kelp, under the Supreme Court of Canada Gladstone decision. This was advanced through negotiations with Canada and its agents, Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Justice Department, which included meeting with Canada's Pacific fishing fleet. The Heiltsuk ROK had annual sales of $3 million per year; the product was sold directly to the Japanese buyers.

Frank established, owned and operated a successful Aboriginal Heritage and Eco Tourism venture, 'SeeQuest Adventures', which was chosen by SFU's Tourism Policy and Research Centre as Best Case example for Sustainable Tourism and was presented at the United Nations NYNY tourism sustainability conference in 2000. This venture successfully operated for six years in the central coast and SeeQuest had a partnership with BC Ferries and was voted the number one tourism attraction on the Discovery coast route for six consecutive years.

In 2003, Frank successfully completed the 'Indigenous Corporate Relations' graduate program at Royal Roads University. His other formal training is in Outdoor Recreation Management, Tourism and Small Business & Project Management. Frank currently is a First Nations advisor to Biodiversity BC. He participated on the Pacific Fisheries Conservation Council for four consecutive years.

He was previously a director for Aboriginal Tourism BC and a director for Heiltsuk Economic Development Corporation.

Athalis, Frank Brown.
PHOTO: SHIRL ʻYXVMI HALL

Kaxkina, Kathy Brown.
PHOTO: ATHALIS, FRANK BROWN

KATHY BROWN

ANCESTRAL NAME: **KAXKINA**

Kathy is Nuu-chah-nulth married into and a member of the Heiltsuk First Nation; she is a mother of four beautiful children. She was born and raised in Ahousaht BC. She was fortunate to have been raised by a father who was able to feed his large family from the resources of the land and sea. She is a sibling of 17. She enjoys family gatherings and hopes this project will serve as a guide to the younger generations. She is the co owner of the See Quest Development Company. Kathy founded and created the Bella Bella Business Service Centre and Bella Bella Call Centre.

The call centre operated for 7 years in the community of Bella Bella and was self contained and provided employment and trained 200 plus community members. It was a national call centre and successfully bid on three federal government contracts. The service centre was a win/win venture that increased the capacity of the local community. Participants' skills, awareness and confidence increased through on the job training, job shadowing, coaching and mentoring within the service centre and businesses in Bella Bella.

Kathy is an educator, coach, mentor, and certified life skills instructor, and is committed to being a lifelong learner. She enjoys teaching and sharing with others. She completed the Indigenous Corporate Relations Program, RRU, 2003, Knowledge Management, RRU, NITEP, UBC, plus has attained certificates in tourism programs through Malaspina College, (VIU) and other managerial and computer courses through PBS in Vancouver.

Kathy taught at the Heiltsuk College in Bella Bella for several years and has supported and been a participant on the tribal journeys for the past seven years. She enjoys canoeing and being out on the water.

SHIRL 'YXVMI HALL

ANCESTRAL NAME: **'YXVMI**

Shirley Hall is Métis from Duck Lake Saskatchewan. She was raised by her Cree and French grandparents in Duck Lake. During World War II her family, the Arcands moved to Vancouver BC.

Shirl married Robert Hall "Hemas" from the Bella Bella Heiltsuk. She was adopted into the Eagle Clan of the Heiltsuk. 'Yxvmi, her Heiltsuk name was given to Shirl by Chief Moses Humchitt.

Shirl has resided and worked in the community of Bella Bella for over 40 years. During this time she spent many years as a resource person researching and developing local Heiltsuk content for the Bella Bella Community School Kindergarten to Grade 12 curricula. She attended the school of Northwest Indian Art in Hazelton BC with her husband Robert.

She worked for the Bella Bella Community School as an illustrator. During this time she photo documented the cultural events within the community and school and added illustrations and photographs to Heiltsuk curriculum. For example, she recorded Heiltsuk food preparations, medicines, potlatches and ceremonies. She left a library of curriculum, research and photos in the school for future generations to use. She believes in preservation of history and culture for future generations.

Though retired in June 2005, Shirl continues to work from her home. To support language retention through Heiltsuk immersion, Shirl has been illustrating and writing curriculum in the Heiltsuk font for the Heiltsuk daycare and health centre.

Shirl also teaches Sunday school and is a great resource to her family and community.

The illustrations in this report are drawn by Yxvmi; we thank her for her thoughtful drawings and many photos that are throughout this document.

Shirl 'Yxvmi Hall.
PHOTO ARLENE MASON

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Further Reading:

Coastal First Nations Turning Point Initiative Website: http://www.coastalfirstnations.ca

First Nations Forestry Council: http://www.fnforestrycouncil.ca/initiatives_res/BirthOfANewOpportunity.pdf

First Nations Forestry Council's Wood Products Technical Support Program: http://www.fnforestrycouncil.ca/initiatives_woodproducts.php

First Peoples' Language Map of B.C.: http://maps.fphlcc.ca/

Heiltsuk Cultural Eductation Centre Website: http://www.hcec.ca/main.html)

Heiltsuk Economic Development Corporation: http://www.bellabella.net/

Namgis Website: http://www.namgis.bc.ca/culture/Pages/Gwa%27ni.aspx

Skidegate Band Council Website: http://www.skidegate.ca/Pages/VisitingSkg.html

Wealth from Forests Website: http://www.wealthfromforests.com

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