



Figure 7 Picture taken from Date Creek in the Spring Photo taken by Crystal Tom April 2012

Spring- (March, April, May)

Within the Gitksan territory it is spring when the first robin arrives and starts to hop around looking for insects. The robin is also a sign that the steelhead are in the rivers again. In marshy areas the first sign of skunk cabbage leaves sprouting from the ground start to show and this is also a sign the bears are awakening from their long winter slumber. In March and April parents must be careful to dress their children warm and not to be fooled by the warm looking sun, the winds are still cold. Elders watch the mountains for signs of fresh snow and which way the wind is blowing to predict the weather. The following chapter will cover the making of Traditional Medicine, when plants are at their most potent for healing powers and Traditional Storytelling.

Trees/Plants**Traditional Medicine** (Oct-April)**Prayer:**

Creator, Thank you for all the animals on the land, the birds that fly.

Thank you for the trees that keep us warm and the rivers that flow.

Thank you for the food that strengthens our bodies.

Amen

Sim mogit luu taa't tsim lax hagi. Niin ant amgwiitxw sa tun. Toyasa'y niin ahl tsuuts dipagw't ganhl yatsaxw.

Toyasa'y niin ahl gangan lit'wit ganhl ax baahat.

Toyasa'y niin ahl gwineex ant si dax gyathl tkamu'um.

Nit dim gan wilt

Purpose of the prayer:

When the Gitxsan are using traditional medicine we respect our spiritual connection with the land. By saying a brief prayer with an offering of tobacco or sage we honour this connection.

Introduction:

For descriptions and botanical purposes please refer to websites

Devil's club



Figures 8.1 and 8.2 Devil's Club Photos taken by Crystal Tom April 2012

Gitxsan name: haa'uums or 'waa'uumst

Botanical Description:

Please refer to websites.

Ethnobotanical Use

Please refer to websites.

Significance to the Gitxsan:

Many of the medicines that are made are passed down from generation to generation and are sacred to each individual family, as supported by Buhner (2006). This medicine is of that nature and it is asked not to be made without the aid of the Knowledge holder Doris Weget. The medicine that will be explained has a number of trees and plants that will be combined to make a drink. This medicine also has many different ailments that it can cure if taken in the correct dose and length of time. This medicine will clean out your stomach, thin your blood, strengthen your bones and rid of any colds that you may have. A person that has cancer, lupus, tuberculosis, or any other sickness can take this medicine to lower their risk of

their case worsening or may even cure the disease. The plants and trees that are used are; balsam tree, spruce tree, hemlock and devils club. The inner bark of all of these trees and plants are collected in early spring before leaves and buds come out on the plants. If picked after the buds come out the plants become very dangerous and unsafe to consume. When first starting the medicine you are to take about 1 teaspoon per day. Some of the side effects that you may experience are diarrhea and hunger. These will pass and soon you will feel lighter and have more energy. Once winter is over the Gitksan people take this medicine for 2-4 months to cleanse for the upcoming months of trapping and preparing for the winter.

You will need an axe, knives, bags, leather gloves and a hatchet. It is preferred that the bark come from younger trees because they are more potent, but not too young because the bark will be too thin and will not have enough bark to boil medicine from. If the tree is too young you will also kill the tree. When collecting the bark from the trees rub the outer bark off a little to make it a bit smoother. Also collect from the side away from the sun, this side will be less sappy and will not harm the tree.

Use a knife to scrap away the outer bark to get to the fleshy inside, leave the outer bark below the tree to thank the tree for its sacrifice. Do not take more than you need. Scrap away about 2 feet by one foot of the outer bark, now begin to take the inner bark off- it will be like peeling a potato. You should have about two hand fulls of inner bark when you are finished of each tree. When collecting Devils club only collect in early spring before the flowers and leaves start to come out on the plant. You will be able to find devils club near water- stream or swamp. If collected when in bloom the medicine you make will be poisonous. For your safety wear leather gloves when collecting devils club because of the thorns on the side of the plant. When selecting a plant try to pick one that is thick, this will allow you to collect only a few plants. If you collect thick long plants pick about 4-5 plants. When cutting the plant try to cut as close to the bottom as you can. Try to clean as many thorns as you can while out collecting plants to leave the thorns in the forest/swamp. Break the devils club along the natural breaks along the plant. Only peel the bark off the devils club as needed for the medicine otherwise it will dry out.

Once you are home fill a large 15 litre enamel pot half full with water. Enamel pots are used because they do not have any added chemicals on the pot that will interfere or contaminate

the medicine. Add two handfuls of each type of bark to the pot and the bark of 4 pieces of devils club bark- peel off the outer bark with a knife like a carrot. Let this boil for 1 ½ hours, the liquid in the pot will be reddish in color. Take out all the bark and fill the rest of the pot with water and boil again for another 1 ½ hours. While you are waiting get 1 litre jars ready. Once the time is up use a wire filter to filter the liquid into the jars, cover with a lid and ring and turn upside down, the heat will seal the jar. The medicine will stay fresh if kept in the jars, once opened keep in the fridge. With the amount collected there will be enough to make 2 dozen 1 litre jars.



Gitxsan Traditional Medicine - movie.wlmp

Translation in Gitxsan:

Tun wila di diltsim ahl Gitxsan:

Neem ji wilax't dim hogyas sun neem di bakto't. Lix si gyat gan t'a hlwx't dim hogyas ahl hal'dakxw'm gan. Amhl haldakxw t'un wilt saksinhl iihlee'e'n, tseew'n ganhl si daxgyat hli siib'n.

Dim taa'hlwx's hoyis, am giixw, seek_s ganhl wa'umst. Needi amhl wa'umst hla hi'leehl yanst. Nda mil akxwst tis bax'n wilp xwseek_ganhl xw'taayn. Am kiiyhl hobix dim aks'n mahle kii'y sa.

Ligi gibil ganuutxw ii amhl hehl gam'on. Hla hlisxw maadam nithl akshl Gitxsan xsi sak_sinhl dit gamudit.

Luu gwantxw dim sa yin dim tahlxw'n Gwildimgoot niin ahl tsii'lt, gwe'ehl, tuutxw ganhl ha'gyootxw.

Si'mas dinhl hli daxhl maas, gina tok'nhl hli tseewit. Dim win ahl walga nit. Wats hawi jim tahlxw wa'umst hla hlisxw ji majagalee dit.

Dim ho yinhl tsiilt dim 'tkaa gan neemdi hli giuhl gyahlxw niin. Gas guustin sim wiis'thl waumst, gan dim daxgyat't.

Dim hoyanhl enamel anjam dim jamhl haldaxwk. Luuga silxw aks ahl anjam'n. Di mi gilba 'on dihl mahli kii'yhl maas. Wiihl iihlee'etxw wila jabbihl aks hla kii'y di sto'ohl ganeekxw ha'hluudax't. Hlisxhl kii'y di sto'o, si'taahl dinhl maas. Dim luumi't dinhl anjam ahl aks. Ii hotsimoo ha'hluudax han kii'y di sto'o.

Hlisxwhl hahluudax't dim luugas gat's din tsim twa 1 quart, hap di ii'm tsinhl la dox't.

Tsim kakhl hli kyik't luu mak't din tsim gal si ko'osxw.

How to use in the classroom:

Prescribed Learning Outcomes:

- Grade 4

Social Studies – Human and Physical Environment: describe Aboriginal peoples' relationship with the land and natural resources

- Grade 4/5

Science – Earth and Space Science: analyze how the Aboriginal concept of interconnectedness of the environment is reflected in responsibility for and caretaking of resources

Activity: A comparison can be done between the European explanations of the plants and how the Gitxsan use them. Talk to your local knowledge holder on the traditional medicines used in your area. Use the Movie called "Gitxsan Traditional Medicine" as an opener to your class to peak their interest or to finalize your unit, this can be found on YouTube.

Assessment: Was the student able to explain how the Gitxsan and Europeans use the above plants? Was the student able to explain the importance of each plant? Was the student able to understand that the medicine that was being collected in the movie was not to be reproduced without supervision from a traditional knowledge holder, Doris Weget?

Websites:

<http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/hfd/library/documents/treebook/yellowcedar.htm>

<http://bcheritage.ca/hazeltons/hellbore.htm>

Additional Resource that can be used: Traditional Herbalist Sophie Thomas