

# Overview of Ts'msyen Society

## Ts'msyen Nation

The Ts'msyen Nation is made up of all those who can trace their origins to one of these communities.

Hartley Bay (Gitga'at)

Kitasoo

Gitxaala (Kitkatla)

Kitselas

Kitsumkalum

Lax Kw'alaams : composed of nine tribes

Metlakatla, B.C.

Metlakatla, Alaska

## Tribe or Village

Made up of several house groups belonging to different lineages and clans but living together in one winter village.

## Waap or House

The central unit of Ts'msyen society. All members of a house are of the same clan, share territories, songs, names and crests. These are unique to the house and may only be used by members of the house. All house rights are administered by the house chief and his or her advisors.

## Individual

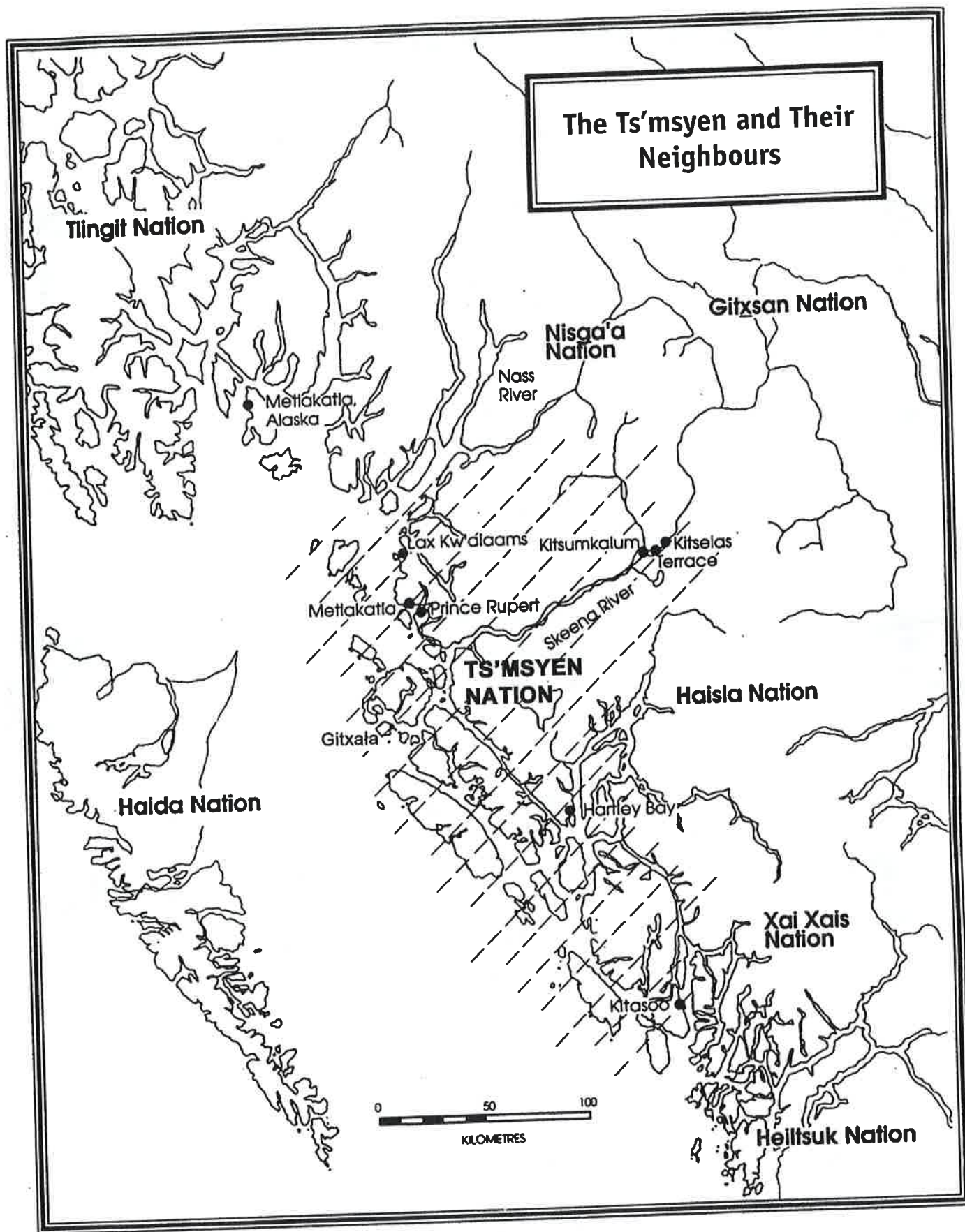
Pdeex (Clan) is inherited from mother:

Ganhada (Raven)

Laxgyiik (Eagle)

Gisbutwada (Killer Whale)

Laxgyibuu (Wolf)



# Clans of the Ts'msyen and their Neighbours

People respect their relations among the nations. They acknowledge the connections between the clans of each nation.

<b>Ts'msyen</b>	<b>Gisbudwada</b> Killerwhale	<b>Laxgyibuu</b> Wolf	<b>Laxsgyiik</b> Eagle	<b>Ganhada</b> Raven
<b>Nisga'a</b>	<b>Gisk'aast</b> Killerwhale/Owl	<b>Laxgibuu</b> Wolf/Bear	<b>Laxsgiik</b> Eagle/Beaver	<b>Ganada</b> Raven/Frog
<b>Gitxsan</b>	<b>Giskaast</b> Fireweed	<b>Laxkibu</b> Wolf	<b>Laxsgiik</b> Eagle	<b>Laxsel/Ganhada</b> Raven/Frog
<b>Haida</b>	<b>Yaahl</b> Raven		<b>Guut</b> Eagle	
<b>Tlingit</b>	<b>Guch</b> Wolf		<b>Yet</b> Raven	

# Pdeex : Clan

## *What is a Pdeex or Clan?*

Pdeex plays an important role in the lives of the Ts'msyen people. Each person belongs to one of four pdeex:

Ganhada (Raven)

Laxsgyiik (Eagle)

Gisbutwada Blackfish or Killerwhale

Laxgyibuu (Wolf)

In English the *pdeex* is usually called **clan**. (Sometimes you will hear people call it **crest** or **crest group**. Others might call it a tribe.)

A clan is a large group of people who all share the same ancestors. Only the ancestors and relatives of the mother's side of the family are included in Ts'msyen clans. In other words a clan is like a very large **extended family**. The father's side of the family, called *ksiwaatk*, is in one of the other three clans. Membership in a clan gives a person rights and responsibilities. In the living memory of the Ts'msyen people, there have always been clans.

## *How does a person become a member of a clan?*

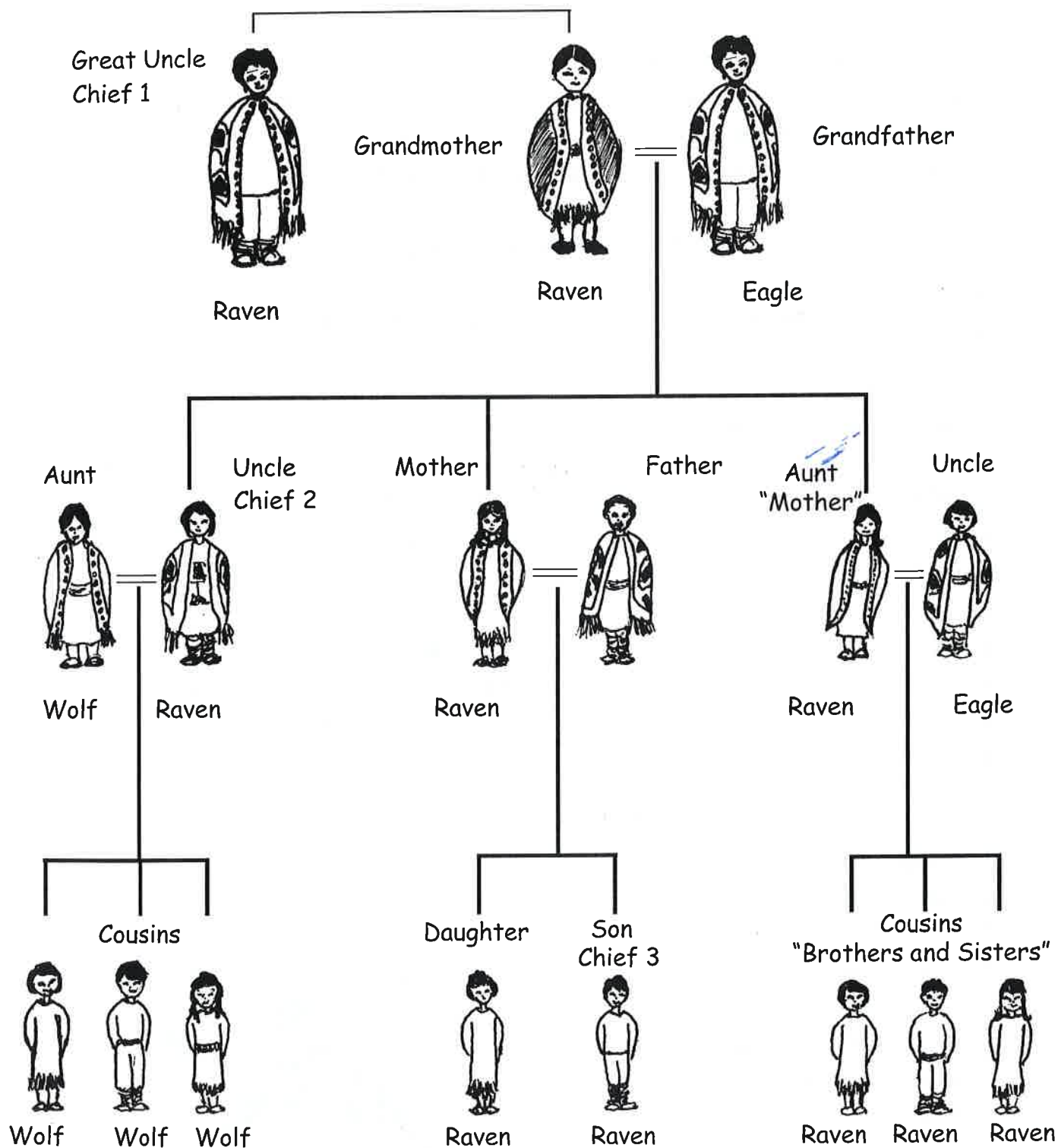
Usually people are born into a clan. A person inherits the clan of his or her mother. Ts'msyen society is based on the matrilineal system of inheritance. This means a child is automatically a member of his or her mother's clan and is related to all other members of the clan through the mother's **lineage** (line of descent from a common ancestor). As a result, inherited rights such as chieftainships, names, crests or hunting territories are inherited, by males, from their **maternal** uncles.

For example, in the Clan Family Tree on the opposite page, family relationships are shown in terms of the son and daughter who are third generation Ravens. The first generation chief was their great uncle. He was their maternal grandmother's brother. The position of chief then was passed on to their uncle, who was their mother's brother. The son would be next in line for the chieftainship because he is the oldest son of Chief 2's oldest sister.

## *Why are some people adopted into clans?*

Sometimes people can be adopted into a clan. A clan can choose to adopt a new member for one of several reasons. A small clan may wish to increase its size by adopting women, especially if the clan faces extinction in a village. Since marriage between members of the same clan is traditionally not acceptable, a clan often will adopt a person, then permit him or her to marry someone of their

# Clan Family Tree





original clan. When a woman is adopted into a clan she usually retains membership in the adopted clan unless otherwise stated at the time of adoption. All her children present or future still belong to their mother's original clan.

### What do family members call each other?

Clan plays a big part in Ts'msyen families. They are special because words like mother, father, aunt and uncle are different depending on what side of the family they belong to. In the Ts'msyen way, aunts on your mother's side are called *Noo* or mother. All of your mother's sisters are also called *Noo*. They are considered to be your mothers as well, as they are in the same clan. In the same way, cousins who are in the same clan are considered to be brothers and sisters.

<i><b>Your Mother's Clan</b></i>	<i><b>Your Father's Clan</b></i>
<p><b>Noo (or Ma'a):</b> mother, mother's sisters</p> <p><b>Nabiip (or Biip)</b> uncle the men of your mother's clan</p> <p><b>Wek</b> brother talking to brother</p> <p><b>Łgaawk</b> sister talking to sister</p> <p><b>Łmktii</b> brother to sister, sister to brother</p>	<p><b>Nagwaat (or Ba'a)</b> father, father's brothers</p> <p><b>Nikdaa (or Da'as)</b> aunts, women of father's clan</p> <p><b>Łgutxa'oo</b> cousins in your father's clan</p>

Family names of other generations are not affected by clans.

**Ntsi'its (Dzi'i or Dzi'is) :** grandmother

**Niyaa (Ya'a or Ya'as) :** grandfather

**ŁguuŁgm hana'a :** daughter

**ŁguuŁgm 'yuu :** son

**Łukdaa'yn :** grandchildren



### ***What are some Benefits and Rights of belonging to a Clan?***

Being a member of a clan gives a person benefits, rights and responsibilities. While some of the rights have lost their importance in recent years, others still play an important role in village life. Traditionally, clan membership gave access to certain fishing creeks, hunting, trapping and berry-picking areas. As with membership in a clan, succession to these rights is matrilineal, passing to the mother's brother's oldest son.

Today, an important benefit of belonging to a clan is sense of belonging and security. In times of need, the extended family provides both practical and financial assistance; it is like an insurance policy against disaster. If a death or serious accident occurs, clan members will help to meet family expenses. At a feast, the clan can be relied upon for assistance.

### ***What are some responsibilities of belonging to a Clan?***

While clan membership carries rights, it also places responsibilities upon the members. They are expected to provide labour for feasts and money to assist the clan or its members. Clan members donate food, money and gift items which will be passed out at the feast. Food items might be jams, preserves, pickles, bread and biscuits. Gift items would include blankets, towels and cooking pots. Clan members also donate physical help. They may help carry items to the Community Hall, prepare the meal, set up the Community Hall, serve tables, and help pass out the gifts at the feast.

There is also an obligation to return assistance given by your clan. Elders are expected to become teachers and advisors to the younger members and it is expected that the younger members will respect the advice and requests of the elders.

Clan members may help each other preparing food resources. For example, a chief may call on members of his house to help dry or smoke a quantity of salmon. After the work is done, the chief gives his helpers some of the dried or smoked fish, or he might give them fish to prepare themselves.

The chief and elders in the clan would watch to see how people worked for the clan. Hard-working people would be rewarded by the clan. A person might be elevated within the clan's structure, by receiving a name if they don't already have a name or by being given a voice within the clan meetings.

### **Vocabulary**

**benefit:** something that is helpful or useful.

**right:** something that a person claims or owns because of a law or tradition; they do not have to work to have it.

**responsibility:** an obligation or duty, something which you must do to be a member of a society.

If a person does not help the clan when they are called, they are inviting disgrace for the clan. There may come a time when this individual requires help. Clan members are expected to help and support other clan members.

***How does a person show respect for the Father's Clan?***

Responsibility to your father's clan can be displayed in several ways. If a member of your father's clan sees you have an accident and helps you, you have an obligation to pay this person. Say, for example, you trip and fall. If someone from your father's clan sees you and helps you up, you would pay them. If a member of your own clan assisted you when you fell, this would bring a warning about the cost of accidents. Assistance from any other clan carries no obligations.

Seeing your father's symbol displayed involves another clan-related custom. If you see your father's clan symbol displayed, you are obligated to pay the person displaying it. This tradition is generally not taken too seriously today and payment might take the form of a cup of coffee or a small amount of money.

If you are travelling, you can ask assistance from a person showing your own or your father's clan symbol. Some time in the future you would repay the debt by helping another person who was travelling.

