

**Gitxaala Use and Occupancy in the area of the proposed  
Northern Gateway Pipeline Tanker Routes**

**Prepared on behalf of Gitxaala Nation**

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## **1. Qualifications**

1. I, Dr. Charles R. Menzies, am an Associate Professor of Anthropology in the Department of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia. I have been engaged in anthropological research with the Gitxaala since 1998. I am a tenured Associate Professor in Anthropology at the University of British Columbia since 2004 and have been a faculty member since 1996. I was hired at UBC to fill a position focused on the Ethnography of Western Canada. I am an enrolled member of the Tlingit and Haida Tribes of Alaska (NR# 14868E) and a Status Indian under the Canadian Indian Act (Registration no 6720224501; Registry Group: Gitxaala Nation). I have been previously qualified to testify as an expert on the subject of First Nations and Native American Anthropology. A copy of my curriculum vitae is attached.
2. I have conducted anthropological research on the north coast of British Columbia since 1988 and with Gitxaala Nation since 1998. My research has been focussed upon the political economic organization of indigenous societies and the subsequent transition to an industrial capitalist economy based upon natural resources extraction. As part of this research I have engaged in projects such as (but not limited to) the following which have examined relations between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people in the fishing industry, traditional ecological and local ecological knowledge held by both aboriginal and non-aboriginal people on the north coast (related to fisheries, forestry, and the marine and terrestrial spaces of the north coast), labour conflict and collaboration in the context of the fishing and forestry industries, historical anthropology of north coast aboriginal societies (which includes the study of oral histories and documentary historical sources), and archaeological research into regional resource harvesting and use. This research has been funded by arms-length peer-reviewed granting agencies such as the Wenner Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Natural Resources Canada, Forest Renewal BC, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Research with Gitxaala has involved extended periods of time residing in Lach Klan (Kitkatla) and Prince Rupert, interviews of community members, participation in community meetings and community research workshops, site visits to culturally and historically important Gitxaala places, and archival/library research at various libraries and museums in North America and Western Europe.
3. Throughout this document I refer to the people now living in Lax Kw'alaams and Metlaktala as Coast Tsimshian (a reference to their genesis as a separate people following contact as they regrouped around the Hudson Bay Company trading port and the Christian missionary, William Duncan). Ts'msyen is a term used to refer to those people who identify themselves as living in connection to the Skeena River. The people who are part of the Gitxaala Nation are referred to, unless otherwise noted, as Gitxaala. I will also make occasional reference to Tsimshianic peoples, which is an anthropological designation that includes

Nisga'a, Gitksan, Tsimshian and Gitxaala peoples. This anthropological designation has its roots in a linguistic and socio-cultural system of categorization that early 20<sup>th</sup> century anthropologists used to analyze the various indigenous peoples they encountered. It should also be noted that academic and public writing has often grouped all of the people living from the headwaters of the Skeena and Nass and out along the coast as Tsimshian using linguistic categories as a gloss for social groupings. However, the people themselves use different names to self-identify.

## **2. Major sources of knowledge with respect to Gitxaala**

4. There is a dearth of academic research that specifically addresses Gitxaala as a subject of study separate from other Tsimshianic communities. There are, for example, published academic and archival academic materials that make reference to Gitxaala in the context of the wider Tsimshianic world. There are historical records, such as ships' logs, government documents and records that make specific reference to Gitxaala. There is a living oral historical tradition in Gitxaala that maintains an active account of the past. While suffering the depredations of colonialism, like other indigenous peoples in the America's, Gitxaala has maintained continuous habitation and use within their core territories. It should be noted that the anthropological literature is replete with descriptions of Gitxaala as the most conservative of the Tsimshianic groups. William Beynon himself, in 1916, notes that the Gitxaala people: "have not advanced as much as the other people, of other tribes in matters of education and still adhere to ancient ceremonies."<sup>1</sup> While Beynon was not being complimentary –he was in fact complaining about how this adherence to ancient ceremonies was restricting his ethnographic research- his point highlights the ways in which Gitxaala have endeavoured to retain the old ways in the face of their neighbours' adaptation to and taking on of Euro-Canadian ways. Gitxaala's cultural conservatism can also be seen in the census of 1891 in which the names of the people in Metlaktala are nearly 100% English, mostly English in Fort Simpson, while in Gitxaala the names are nearly 100% smalygyax (the indigenous language of Gitxaala). The continued conservatism can be noted in the relatively small number of researches who have successfully been able to work in and with Gitxaala over the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
5. Most, if not all, of the early and mid 20<sup>th</sup> century ethnographers of the Tsimshian world either worked directly with William Beynon or from his massive production of field notes, manuscripts, and commentaries. William Beynon worked from 1915 to his death in 1956 as an ethnographer of the Tsimshianic peoples. He first worked as a field assistant for Maurice Barbeau in 1915. His first independent research took place in Lach Klan in the winter of 1916. Beynon continued to work with and for other anthropologists up until his death in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. Maurice Barbeau, Franz Boas, Phillip Drucker, Homer Barnett, Viola Garfield, Amelia Sussman all worked directly with Beynon and based much

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<sup>1</sup> William Beynon. 1916. Museum of Civilization. Vol.1. B-F-419 Box B29, page 1.

- (if not all) of their subsequent published Tsimshian work on Beynon's own research. Beynon acted as key informant (for example, with both Garfield and Sussman) and lead researcher (for example, with Barbeau and Boas). . Thus, the early ethnographic literature is based upon a very contemporary set of observations made by an ethnographer, William Beynon, who was both a member of Tsimshian society and an observer of it.
6. Beynon recorded details of contemporary hunting territories, the oral history that explains ownership of these territories, records of feast and meetings that he directly observed (as well as those that he recorded oral histories of), comments on changes in ownership patterns and the history of indigenous fishers. This is only a partial list of what Beynon collected information on. It is also of note that Beynon was particularly interested in succession and inheritance of names. He himself used this knowledge to advance and secure his own hereditary rank and made many comments on the range of practices and debates related to the taking on of hereditary names in his fieldnotes.
  7. Ethnographers, such as Viola Garfield, relied heavily upon William Beynon's research collaboration. Beynon provided critical intellectual and interpretive direction to them. Subsequent ethnographers, such as Margaret Anderson (Sequin), John Cove, Marjorie Halpin, Jay Miller, James McDonald, and Christopher Roth have draw extensively upon Beynon's unpublished notes. Of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century ethnographers, James McDonald stands out as being one of the first to engage in research with contemporary Tsimshian people whereas most of the others relied almost exclusively upon Beynon's work to study the Tsimshian.
  8. Archaeologists who have ventured into reviews and comments upon oral history have also restricted themselves to consideration of previously published materials that are derivative from Beynon or have drawn from Beynon's unpublished notes directly. For example, while archaeologists such as Kenneth Ames, Gary Coupland, Richard Inglis, Andrew Martindale, George MacDonald, and Paul Prince have written about or drawn inspiration from oral history they have done so by direct reference to secondary literature or the unpublished notes of Beynon and have not engaged in systematic research on oral history with Tsimshianic peoples. Thus, these archaeologists reproduce what is essentially a vision of the Tsimshianic world inspired and structured by William Beynon's intellectual work, in particular his 1950's multi-volume work, *Ethnical and Geographical Study of the Tsimshian Nation*.
  9. In one of the few published works to attempt an evaluation of the extent of Beynon's corpus, Barbara Winters (a museum curator who completed a master's thesis on myth and ceremony basing much of her analysis on a limited set of narratives collected by William Beynon) highlighted the ceremonial and mythic aspects of Beynon's work over the more contemporary or economic. However, Winters' analysis of Beynon's fieldnotes was restricted to those:

“texts recorded between 1937 and 1959, for Boas. These texts were selected for statistical testing because they represent a total sample of Beynon's work from a known period of time. A complete sample from a known period is not possible for the books sent to Barbeau as Barbeau removed the pages from the books and cut them into sections, each filed by subject. In the Boas collection are 256 narratives collected from 72 informants, as well as eyewitness accounts written from Beynon's personal experience. Beynon used three primary informants from whom he collected more than ten narratives, and a larger number from whom he elicited only one or two narratives. He relied on three informants to provide him with nearly twenty-five per cent of his data. These were Mark Luther (age 77, status not given), Joseph Bradley (age 90, chief), and Ethel Musgrave (elderly, chief). Of the twenty-four informants who provided him with nearly ninety per cent of his data, seven were chiefs, and between seven and eleven were councilors. Eighty-three per cent of his informants were men, and all of his female informants were of high status and/or elderly” (Winters 1984:284).

Winter's analysis thus excludes all of the material that Beynon collected between 1915 and 1939 as well as the hundreds of pages of materials that were collected in collaboration with Viola Garfield, Amelia Sussman, Maurice Barbeau, Phillip Drucker, and Homer Barnett (to name only the most prominent scholars with whom Beynon worked during the period of Winter's analysis). Winter's makes very clear the limitations of her analysis of Beynon's collected materials.

10. While it is correct that a limited number of anthropologists have worked in this region, it would be reasonable to suggest that Garfield's mentor and doctoral supervisor, Franz Boas, is also a significant authority (See Boas' early book, *Tsimshian Mythology*). Garfield's research collaborator and primary informant, William Beynon, was a critical intellectual influence on Garfield. While little of Beynon's work has been published, most anthropologists working in this region, as noted above, have relied extensively upon his work. In particular, Beynon's 1950s multi-volume manuscript, *Ethnical and Geographical Study of the Tsimshian Nation*, lays out the foundation to what has become an academic orthodoxy amongst Tsimsahin scholars that prioritizes the stories of migration of the people now known as the Coast Tsimshian (though Beynon did not himself use that label prefer instead to use the fifteen separate village or tribal names).
11. In later days, the work of James A. McDonald extends and elaborates upon Garfield and Beynon's work in a decisive fashion. McDonald, working primarily with Kitsumkalum, has focused upon their involvement in wage labour and the economic relations and basis to traditional Kitsumkalum society and the ways in which these underlying forms have persisted and changed in the contemporary world. Given the critical role that names play in ownership and property, Chris Roth's book is also of critical mention here as an authority on the subject of ownership and use of resources.

12. In collaboration with Caroline F. Butler, Ph.D., I have written the majority of academic work that considers Gitxaala specifically. There are mentions of Gitxaala amongst the Tsimshianic scholars that I have mentioned. But prior to Butler's and my research only a handful of people have conducted research with Gitxaala. John Dunn, linguist, worked with Gitxaala people starting in the late 1960s. George and Joanne MacDonald (archaeologist and ethnographic curator respectively) visited Lach Klan several times over the course of 1980s and 1990s. Joanne MacDonald conducted a brief project on the Gitxaala stone masks (one of which is held by the Museum of Civilization, Canada and the other in the Louvre, France). Dianne Newell spent five days onboard the Gitxaala fishing vessel the Western Spirit in the early 1990s studying the roe-on-kelp fishery. James McDonald has visited with and interviewed Gitxaala community members over the course of his three decades of northern BC research, though his primary focus has been Kitsumkalum, on the mid-reaches of the Skeena River. More recently students working with Caroline Butler and myself have conducted community research projects in Gitxaala (Menzies and Butler 2011; Menzies 2011)<sup>2</sup>.

### ***3. The transmission of Gitxaala oral history, culture, language and knowledge***

13. In this section of the report I outline the process by which Gitxaala knowledge is transmitted generation to generation and the basis of the evidence that I use to explain the process of knowledge transmission within the Gitxaala Nation.

#### **3.1 Basis of evidence**

14. In arriving at my opinion in relation to the transmission of Gitxaala oral history, culture, language, and knowledge, I draw upon two primary sources of evidence:

- a. My observations in my professional capacity of research anthropologist since 1998 at feasts and meetings, and my observations of community member telling histories and teaching youth and other learners about Gitxaala past and practices and beliefs.
- b. Documentary sources including: Published peer reviewed sources concerned with Gitxaala and related Tsimshianic groups, fieldnotes of ethnographers such as William Beynon, Maurice Barbeau, Viola Garfield, and Homer Barnet.

15. (a) Since 1998 I have had the opportunity of observing and participating in a wide array of feasts, community meetings, inter-community meetings, and public meetings. During these events Gitxaala people would, in the normal course of their interventions and contributions, make statements about the importance of their history and the ways in which it ought to be relayed. Public statements would reference historical processes and events, would acknowledge those present who held connections to the history, and would either then recount the

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<sup>2</sup> Charles R. Menzies and Caroline F. Butler, with Solen Roth, Natalie J.K. Baloy, Robin Anderson, Jennifer Wolowic, and Oralia Gómez-Ramírez. "Collaborative Service Learning and Anthropology with Gitxaala Nation." Collaborative Anthropologies. Vol. 4, 2011. Charles R. Menzies. "Butterflies, Anthropologies, and Ethnographic Field Schools: A Reply to Wallace and Hyatt." Collaborative Anthropologies. Vol. 4, 2011.

particular history or acknowledge that the history heard was consistent with what they had been taught by their own elders.

16. In the course of conducting field research with Gitxaala people in relation to traditional territories and their use I was regularly advised that the appropriate approach involved requesting permission of the named titleholder to the territory in question and that any conversation should include groups of people who held the rights to tell the history. The emphasis was that even in direct communications, such as interviews or conversations, the transmission of history and related information needed to take place in a collective setting with appropriate individuals in place to acknowledge and witness what was being said.
17. In conversations with my community-based mentors I have had the opportunity to discuss and learn about the ways in which knowledge is transmitted. In these settings, which parallel traditional approaches to the transmission of knowledge, I have learned about the processes of learning. This involves the learner listening, not questioning, observing and then doing. Knowledge about history is transmitted in these settings through direct instruction, demonstration, and practice. I have commented upon the various forms of permission and approval involved in conducting respectful research in Gitxaala in my 2004 paper, "Putting words into action: negotiating collaborative research in Gitxaala" (Canadian Journal of Native Education. Vol. 28:1/2, see pages:19-25).
18. (b) Documentary sources also provide evidence from which I have derived my opinion on oral history and its transmission. The early 20<sup>th</sup> century ethnographer, William Beynon, recorded a great many historical narratives. Throughout his work can be found comments and asides related to the nature of Tsimshianic oral history and the ways it can or should be related. In his 1916 notebooks collected in the village of Lach Klan (the village of Kitkatla), for example, Beynon records how his entire research project was placed on hold until the leading hereditary leader, Joshua Tsibassa, granted approval. Then, mid way through his research, a number of Beynon's respondents withdrew their participation; they were waiting for further permission to be granted by hereditary leaders to answer Beynon's additional questions.

### **3.2 Oral history and the transmission of narratives**

19. Oral history, in a Gitxaala sense, is usually referred to as *adaawx* - lineage histories or 'true tellings.' These narratives relate the origin and central events of a lineage. *Adaawx* revolve around key figures that are named hereditary leaders whose names are passed down through time. *Adaawx* reference places, events, people, privileges (crests, songs, stories, etc), and things (tangible and intangible) that form property and rights within Gitxaala society. *Adaawx* also contain references to traditions and laws that govern social behaviour and the relations between humans and between humans and all other social beings (animal, spirit, etc).



20. The authority to relate these narratives rests in the idea of *malsk* – literally, telling. The emphasis here is on the act of relating, the act of telling. The authority to tell arises from an encounter with *naxnox* (loosely translated as supernatural being or supernatural) whereby certain rights, privileges, and/or property are granted to the named hereditary leader who is the protagonist of the history. *Malsk* signifies ownership and thus the right to tell certain stories. It provides the authority to named hereditary leaders and, in so doing mirrors the structure of authority and hierarchy that resides amongst the *naxnox* – which is the ultimate source of authority and power.
21. History and tradition are linked through the idea and concept of *lagyigyet*. *Lagyigyet* literally means old people or people of the long ago AND tradition. This is important as it highlights the manner by which tradition is integral to a Gitxaala notion of history. Thus embedded in the telling of history are ideas (values, principles, practices) that instruct people on how to behave in one's contemporary world. Thus ideas related to resource management and sharing (among other things) are directly embedded in the telling and learning of Gitxaala history.
22. The transmission of oral narratives occurs in a range of settings, including, but not limited to: **(a)** Formal settings such as feasts, **(b)** Training or instruction of heirs and youth.
23. **(a)** Transmission of history in formal settings. The feast system is the primary formal setting within which oral narratives are recounted. Marjorie Halpin and Margaret Anderson edited a series of notebooks recorded by William Beynon in 1945 that detail the proceedings of a multi-day traditional Tsimshianic feast (in Gitsegukla, contemporary Gitksan territory along the upper Skeena River). The Spanish skipper, J. Caamano,<sup>3</sup> provides one of the earliest European recordings of a feast during his visit to Gitxaala territory in 1792. Both accounts describe similar processes whereby leading hereditary leaders and hosts relate their lineage histories through song and dance and the manner by which these tellings are witnessed by the observing hereditary leaders.
24. The importance of public witnessing of events in this formal setting is high. To stand up and acknowledge a history is to agree with it. This is critical to highlight, as the form of public disagreement is one of silence; a form of disagreement that differs from Euro-American traditions of dissent. Drawing upon work by Margaret Sequin (1984)<sup>4</sup>, Anderson and Halpin have this to say about silence as an expression of disagreement:
- “silence indicates that you are in disagreement with what has been said, and on a situation of any importance the speaker will rephrase in order to

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<sup>3</sup> Henry R. Wagner and W. A. Newcombe (Eds) Captain Haroald Grenfell, R.N. (trans). **The Journal of Don Jacinto Caamano**. *Journal of the British Columbia Historical Society*. July and October 1938:189-301).

<sup>4</sup> Margaret Sequin (Anderson). 1984. “Lest There Be No Salmon.” In **The Tsimshian: Images of the Past, View for the Present**, 110-33. Vancouver: UBC Press.

elicit an overt expression of agreement. This is precisely the strategy that was followed by ‘older thought’ at Gitsegukla when they disagreed with the plans of the ‘younger thought’ with regard to a modernized style for the pole-raising and concomitant ceremonies. They not only showed their disagreement by their silence, but two of them moved out of the community, which was correctly read by the ‘younger thought’ as a strong and compelling message”(2000:34).<sup>5</sup>

Non-Indigenous observers often overlook the role of silence as an act of dissent and disagreement. Within the Euro-American cultural tradition silence is seen as passive acceptance or lack of knowledge related to a subject of discussion. However, within Gitxaala and related Tsimshianic groups, silence is an active form of disagreement and is understood as such. This has several serious implications in the context of contemporary research.

25. Research that is not supported by hereditary leaders or community members may not be overtly opposed. Rather, community members who are knowledgeable may simply exempt themselves from the process by their absence (not being home when the researcher knocks, missing prearranged appointments, leaving the community to go fishing, etc). Or, if these same members are approached directly by an individual researcher the community member may politely demur and say they don’t really know much about the subject. This has the unfortunate consequence of the inexperienced (or inept) researcher concluding that there is no objection to their work and that few people know much about the subject of their research.
26. Gitxaala oral accounts of 20<sup>th</sup> century researchers visiting Gitxaala are replete with stories of visiting researchers who came, visited matriarchs and house leaders, sipped tea and ate cookies and then left with none of the real history. The stories recount instances of people having been asked questions by visiting researchers and either speaking about other subjects, ignoring the questions, or deflecting questions by sayings something like “I don’t really know much about that.” Yet, these same researchers often go home and then write and publish accounts in which they profess expertise even when the knowledge that they sought was in truth withheld from them. From within the Gitxaala frame of reference the researcher reveals their ineptitude (even when external agencies, such as governments or university publishing houses, accept at face value the inept researcher’s findings).
27. **(b)** Transmission of narratives in the context of training and education. In order for formal transmission of narratives to occur there needs be an opportunity for community members to learn their history. Those who are in line to inherit hereditary names are expected to learn their history as part of the process of taken on their name; but in addition, all members of a house are also expected to learn the general history of their lineage. As this is a ranked society there are aspects of

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<sup>5</sup> Margaret Anderson and Marjorie Halpin. (Eds.) 2000. Potlatch at Gitsegukla: William Beynon’s 1945 Field Notebooks. Vancouver: UBC Press.

history and tradition that is restricted, not only according to house group but also according to one's rank and position within a house group. The training of those in line to inherit takes place in all manner of contexts including, but not limited to, at home, at work, at play, in the enactment of harvesting and processing of foods and materials, in the learning of dances and songs within the family and (in current times) in local dance and drum groups

#### **4. An overview of the early history of contact between Europeans and the Gitxaala.**

28. Europeans first started to arrive in Laxyuup Gitxaala (Kitkatla Territory) in the late 1700's. The first recorded meetings are with James Colnett in 1787, Jacinto Caamano in 1792, and Charles Bishop in 1795. Gitxaala people greeted these early visitors with hospitality. European ships logs describe the ceremony and festivities that they were met with as they entered Indigenous territories. However, these European visitors did not fully appreciate – or perhaps they consciously rejected- Gitxaala laws and protocols.
29. Near the ancient village of Ks'waan (located at the south eastern tip of Banks Island) for example, James Colnett and his crew were first greeted by Seaxs in what appears to be a traditional greeting during which Colnett was welcomed to Laxyuup Gitxaala and advised as to who where the rightful owners of the anchorage Colnett had secured his vessels in and who owned the fish, timber, wildgame, berries, and other foods and materials that Colnett's crew was gathering as if it were there to freely take. When Colnett's crew's continued to harvest without paying compensation Gitxaala people began to extract compensation as was their right according to Gitxaala protocols. However, Colnett's response was to further aggravate the situation.
30. Colnett continued to instruct his crew to harvest food, timber and supplies, and to take offensive action when they felt under attack. In one particularly egregious act, a long boat was dispatched to ambush a group of Gitxaala people who were in the act of preparing a meal. Colnett's crew killed three people (two men and one women) and then kidnapped and sexually assaulted the surviving women of the ambushed group (Galois xxx:nn). Despite (or perhaps, because of) Colnett's continued aggressions Gitxaala continued to, in Colnett's words, harass and hinder the visiting European traders as Gitxaala continued to enact their authority and jurisdiction with Laxyuup Gitxaala.
31. Prior to European arrival there is some evidence of European trade goods working their way into Gitxaala possession travelling through traditional regional exchange and trade networks. However, there is no evidence to suggest that this indirect contact resulted in any changes to Gitxaala ways of life. No changes of significance occurred in Gitxaala ways of life until well into the post contact era.

## 5. An Ethnographic Description of Gitxaala.

32. In my opinion Gitxaala was an aboriginal community and people prior to, and at the time of, European contact in 1787. Further, Gitxaala (variant Kitkatla) has continued as a community and a people up to the present day.

### 5.1 Gitxaala Language

33. Gitxaala people speak Sm'algyax or Coast Tsimshian – one of three extant languages within the larger Tsimshianic language family. The other two Tsimshianic languages are Nisga'a, spoken by the indigenous peoples living along the Nass River, and Gitksanimx, spoken by the indigenous peoples who live along the upper Skeena River and tributaries.

### 5.2 Social organization and governance of the Gitxaala<sup>6</sup>

34. Gitxaala society (which anthropologically has been considered part of the wider grouping of Tsimshianic peoples) is organized in a number of ways: clan affiliation, social class, housegroup membership, and village residence. For the Gitxaala each individual (with the exception, in the past, for slaves) belongs to one of four clans: ganhada (raven), gispuwada (blackfish), lasgeek (eagle), or laxgibu (wolf). Clans do not, however, exercise any specific political authority. That rested with the *sm'ooygit* and their housegroups (see below). Clan affiliation, reckoned matrilineally, does inform who can marry whom and, consequently, alliances between members of specific house groups.
35. Historically three or four classes can be identified: high-ranking titleholders and other titleholders; freeborn commoners without rights to hereditary names, and; slaves, those born to slaves or captured in war. Members of the title holding classes formed the hereditary leadership of Gitxaala. They are the *sm'gyigyet* (singular, *sm'ooygit*, meaning 'real people') or chiefs who held specific rights and responsibility with respect to other community members. The origins of a *sm'ooygit*'s right to governance can be found in the *adawx* and is often linked to an event in which an ancestor received a gift or privilege from the spirit world, through political conquest, or through an alliance with another community.
36. Titles, or hereditary names, were and are an important aspect of Gitxaala social organization. Hereditary names were and are passed along from one generation to the next through the feast system. Hereditary names are linked to, among other things, histories, crest images, territory, rights, and responsibilities. Not every Gitxaala person has a hereditary name, nor are all Gitxaala people

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<sup>6</sup> This section on Gitxaala social organization draws upon Menzies (2006) "The Case of the Pine Mushroom Harvest in Northwestern British Columbia," in Menzies (ed), **Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Natural Resource Management** Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press; 87-104 (see, pages 89-90), Menzies and Butler (2007) "Returning to Selective Fishing Through Indigenous Knowledge: The Example of K'moda Gitxaala Territory." *American Indian Quarterly* Vol 31(3):441-462(see, pages 443-445), and; Marjorie M. Halpin and Margaret Seguin (1990) "Tsimshian Peoples: Southern Tsimshian, Coast Tsimshian, Nishga, and Gitksan," in Wayne Shuttles (ed) *Handbook of North American Indians. Volume 7 Northwest Coast.* Washington: Smithsonian Institution; 267-284.

- eligible to take on a hereditary name. Hereditary names exist through time with different individuals holding or taking on the name. For example, from the time several millennia ago that *Sm 'ooygit* Ts'ibassa (a high ranking Gitxaala hereditary leader) left Temlax'am,<sup>7</sup> through to the Ts'ibassa of the early twentieth century, this name has been inherited and has existed as a social role that has been taken up by a line of successors.
37. Ownership of, access to, and rights of use of resource gathering locations were and largely are governed by multi-generational matrilineages called *walp* or houses. Notwithstanding the prominence of a paramount *sm 'ooygit* or leader at the village level, the effective source of political power and authority with respect to the territory rests with the house leaders. Membership in a particular house-group is determined matrilineally, by one's mothers' position. This social unit is the effective political building block of the Gitxaala and Ts'msyeen villages. Each house owns and has responsibility for its own resource gathering and social use areas. Taken in combination, the house territories, situated around natural ecosystem units such as watersheds, form the backbone of each village's collective territory.
38. Villages consist of groups of related and allied housegroups who traditionally wintered together in a common site. While there has been some changes following the arrival of Europeans (for example, Lax Kw'alaams consists of the members that were formerly nine separate social groups with resource harvesting territories along the Skeena River) the Gitxaala village of Lach Klan has been continuously inhabited before and after Europeans first arrived in their territories. Within the village there is a paramount *sm 'ooygit* who is the house leader of the most powerful house group, in the dominant clan. While this person has traditionally wielded much power and economic wealth within the village it is important, nonetheless, to point out that his authority resided in the power and prestige of his house group.
39. In Gitxaala society the leading *sm 'ooygit*, like elsewhere amongst the Ts'msyeen world, "can expect constant and liberal economic support from his tribesmen" (Garfield 1939:182. As Halpin and Seguin note in their article in the *Handbook of Native American Indians*, "The village chief was the chief of the highest-ranking house in the village, and the other houses, in all clans, were ranked under him in descending order" (1990:276). Halpin and Seguin go on to comment that "traditional narratives report that the Southern Tsimshian [which would include Gitxaala] chiefs received tribute in the form of the first sea otter and seal caught by each canoe of sea hunters and other fur animals captured by land animals" (1990: 276).

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<sup>7</sup> Temlax'am (variant Temlaham; also Prairie Town) is an ancient village in what is today Gitksan territory. In the old times, long before European contact, the people found themselves dispersed from Temlax'am as a result of a series of disasters. Key Gispwada houses and lineages, which are now Gitxaala, had their origins in Temlax'am.

40. According to Gitxaala *adawx*<sup>8</sup> (oral record) the village of Lach Klan<sup>9</sup> has been continuously inhabited by the Gitxaala long before the arrival of Europeans on what is now known as the coast of British Columbia.<sup>10</sup> Throughout *adawx* recorded by William Beynon (Canadian Museum of Civilization; Columbia University; American Museum of Natural History)<sup>11</sup> and in contemporary oral accounts<sup>12</sup> clear reference is made to the antiquity of the Gitxaala as an aboriginal community prior to the arrival of Europeans.
41. The *adawx* of the Sky brothers (see note 6) documents a series of atrocities and subsequent movements of one of the lineages of Gitxaala. In this *adawx* we learn of the trials and travels of Wudinux, a house leader of the Gitxaala Ganhada clan. This account took place before a significant flood event:<sup>13</sup>
- “ . . . they went down along the coast farther south, until they reached Bank’s Island. Here they lived together as one household. Later they went to another place, until they came to the Kitkatla village at the end of Pitt Island known as Wilhahlgamilra-medik (where the grizzly plays along the shore), and they lived there. While there, the waters began to rise and come into the houses. The people anchored on a rock which the water had not covered. There they stayed for a long time; until the water went away suddenly, and they way they were on a mountain on Bank’s Island, Laxgyiyaks. The people went down to the water’s edge and they again move, and they found some other people at Laxklan, and here they remained until the present day” (Sam Lewis, 1916).

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<sup>8</sup> *Adawx* is an oral record of “historical events of collective political, social, and economic significance, such as migration, territorial acquisition, natural disaster, epidemic, war, and significant shifts in political and economic power. . . . *adawx* are formally acknowledge by the society as a whole and collectively represent the authorized history of the nation” (Marsden 2002:102-103).

<sup>9</sup> Lach Klan is the contemporary village of Kitkatla, located on Dolphin Island

<sup>10</sup> See, for example: The Origin of the Name He:l, recorded by William Beynon, 1916: “Then these men departed, and Tsibasa returned to his central village at Laxlan[Lach Klan];” The Tlingit Attack the Kitkatla, Nathan Shaw (Gitxaala), recorded by William Beynon, 1952: “. . . the Kitkatla had established a village at Laxklan for their feasts and winter ceremonials;” The Sky Brothers, Sam Lewis (Gitxaala), recorded by William Beynon, 1916: “The people went down to the water’s edge and they again moved, and they found some other people at Laxklan, and here they remained until the present day.”

<sup>11</sup> In William Beynon’s unpublished *Tsimshian Geographical and Ethnical Material* (notebook 6)[New York: American Museum of Natural History] he contextually dates the existence of Lach Klan to the time before Ts’ibasa came down the Skeena River: “When T’sibaesae and his Gispowudada group came down the Skeena from T’amlax’aem they went to where there were already some of the laxsk’ik (Eagle) group in Lax K’laen. . . . This was a gathering place where these people had their elevation feasts and where they held their [?] feasts” (Beynon notebook 6, page 7).

<sup>12</sup> Throughout my field research with Gitxaala in various settings ranging from public meetings to general conversations the antiquity of Lach Klan has been clearly and consistently mentioned and discussed.

<sup>13</sup> The ‘Flood’ or ‘deluge,’ as so named by many of Beynon’s early respondents, can likely be identified as a major earthquake event that occurred several millennia ago. New archeological evidence indicates a large flood or Tsunami event at some point prior to 2000 years before present. Andrew Martindale’s research team has found silt layers that can be understood as a flood event which –in the absence of direct dating are estimated to be between 3500 and 5000 years before present (Andrew Martindale personal communication November 5, 2007). A similar silt layer has been found in a core sample from Shawatlan Cove, Prince Rupert Harbour, by Morley Eldridge and Alyssa Parker (Fairview Container Terminal Phase II Archaeological Overview Assessment, March 8, 2007). These archeological data corroborate accounts of a significant flood event with the *adawx* and allow for the conclusion that *adawx* which reference the flood significantly predates European arrival.

42. Evidence for the antiquity of Gitxaala can also be found in the accounts of non-aboriginal merchants and traders who visited Gitxaala territory in the late 1700s. James Colnett, skipper of the British Merchant Ship *Prince of Wales*<sup>14</sup>, is acknowledged to be the first European to enter the Gitxaala territory. Colnett and his crew met Seax, a leading member of a Gispuwada house, and Sabaan, a house leader of a Gitxaala Ganhada house, in 1787, at the south end of Banks Island, a portion of the Gitxaala southern territory. Some time after this initial meeting Colnett was invited to a *yaawk* (feast)<sup>15</sup> in the company of the leading Gitxaala chief of the day in accordance with Gitxaala *ayaawx* (customary law). (Galois 2004; see also, the *adawx* of Sabaan<sup>16</sup>).
43. In 1792 the Spanish skipper, Jacinto Caamano, participated in a Gitxaala *yaawk* (feast). As described by Susan Marsden:  
 “Jacinto Caamano’s vessel, anchored near the south end of Pitt Island, was approached by Homts’iit, a Raven clan chief of the Kitkatla tribe who danced the peace dance for him. He and his people were invited on board. Homts’iit gave Caamano the gift of an otter skin and Caamano served refreshments, after which Homts’iit exchanged names with Caamano, making them allies. Three weeks later Caamano attended a feast at Tuwartz Inlet. Caamano described a series of feasting events in considerable detail, the first of which took place on August 28, when Homts’iit visited the ship to invite Caamano to a feast. Since the main elements in these ceremonial invitations are a peace dance and a *naxnox* demonstration, the feathers to which Caamano refers were probably eagle down, the symbol of peace, and his various masks probably represented his various *naxnox* powers” (Marsden 2007:179-180; for a translation of the original journal of Don Jacinto Caamano, see Wagner and Newcombe 1938).
44. In 1795 the American skipper of the ship Ruby, Charles Bishop, describes his meetings with Gitxaala people. Most notable in his descriptions is the repeated references to “Shakes” (*Sm’ooygit Seax*) the Gitxaala “Huen Smokett (Great Chief)”<sup>17</sup>. Bishop notes the importance of locating himself within Sm’ooygit Seax’s domains:  
 “As Shake’s dominions are very Extensive and Contain many good Harbours and inlets, the Principle business is to look out for one near the residence of the Chief as in the Situation you are shure of Procuring the Furs of the whole

<sup>14</sup> See Galois (2004:2-4) for a brief description of James Colnett’s biography. Colnett was born in Devon, England in 1753. Colnett “spent three and a half years under the tutelage of [James] Cook” (Galois 2004:2). In 1786 Colnett left the British Navy and “signed on with Richard Cadman Etches & Co as captain of the *Prince of Wales* and commander of a two-vessel commercial venture” (Galois 2004:3).

<sup>15</sup> The *yaawx* or feast (variant potlatch) is a central social institution amongst the Gitxaala. A *yaawx* is a public event that is linked to, among other things, the passing of hereditary names, recognition of people, declarations of ownership, and formalization of alliances and agreements.

<sup>16</sup> Dorothy Brown of the Kitkatla. “Saaban” in Susan Marsden, ed., *Suwilaay’msga Na Ga’niiyatgm, Teachings of Our Grandfathers* (Prince Rupert: School District 52, 1992).

<sup>17</sup> The Journal and Letters of Captain Charles Bishop on the North-West Coast of America, in the Pacific and in New South Wales 1794-1799. Edited by Michael Roe. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967; see, especially, pages 65 – 72, 90-93.

Tribe, and in this respect the Season must be consulted, for they shift their Habitations often, we having fell in with several evacuated villages. In the Spring and Early in the Summer the natives are found near the outside coast for taking halibut and other Ground fish, but when the Salmon go up the Freshes to Spawn they shift to the narrows and falls for Procuring their winters Stock of this delicious food.”<sup>18</sup>

45. These early visits by Europeans to Gitxaala territory occurred in the context of a preexisting social order. The Gitxaala people were in place and had clear ideas of laws, protocols, ownership, and rights of use. In both Colnett’s and Caamano’s logbooks and the *adawx* of the Gitxaala can be found descriptions of the Europeans attempting to take things from Gitxaala territory and being rebuffed by the Gitxaala.<sup>19</sup>
46. Archeological data in the region is sparse –not for lack of sites, but rather for lack of work in the region. To date most archeological work in the Ts’msyeen and Gitxaala world has been conducted in the Prince Rupert Harbour area in the Kitselas Canyon area of the Skeena River, and more recently, on the Dundas Islands. David Archer conducted a field survey of Kitkatla Inlet and area in the early 1990s. Additional episodic work has been done as part of development and logging plans. Most such surveys are cursory in nature and tend to focus on surface features and Culturally Modified Trees (CMTs) as mandated by provincial legislation and regulations. CMT data indicates human presence and resource use dating back several hundred years prior to European arrival. Radiocarbon dates from archeological sites in the region extend back to nearly 10,000 years before present (Martindale 2007<sup>20</sup>).
47. My own recent work (since 2009 – see section 6.4 below for details related to my archaeological research) is the only detailed and systematic archaeological research in Gitxaala territory in over 40 years. It is the first work in 40 years that has involved more than superficial archaeological assessment surveys conducted in advance of logging or other economic development projects in the region.

### 5.3 Cultural Beliefs

48. The key cultural beliefs of Gitxaala are internally expressed as spiritual or religious beliefs. Anthropologically, these are cultural values that form a conceptual basis of a Gitxaala cultural model of society. This model has its roots

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<sup>18</sup> Journal and Letter of Captain Bishop, page 72.

<sup>19</sup> For Colnett’s journal, see: **A Voyage to the North West Side of America: The Journals of James Colnett, 1786-1789**. Edited by Robert Galois. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004; see, especially, pages 138-166. For Caamano’s journal see: *The Journal of Don Jacinto Caamano*. Translated by Captain Harold Grenfell, R.N., edited with an introduction and notes by Hen R. Wagner and W.A. Newcombe. British Columbia Historical Quarterly. July and October 1938; see, especially, pages 269-293.

<sup>20</sup> Martindale is the lead research of a multi-year team project examining the archeological record of Dundas Islands. This area figures prominently in Gitxaala and Ts’msyeen *adawx*. The project web page can be found at: [http://www.anth.ubc.ca/Dundas\\_Island\\_Project.10687.0.html](http://www.anth.ubc.ca/Dundas_Island_Project.10687.0.html). The radio carbon dates are listed in Martindale’s 2007 presentation and have also been communicated orally to Menzies.



in the *Ayaawk* and *Adaawk*, loosely translated as law and history, of the Gitxaala. From this I have identified three central ideas or concepts.

49. This is a schematic treatment of the Gitxaala approach. What I am presenting is drawn from a rich and complex social and cosmological understanding of our world and renders any summary, such as follows, as partial and ultimately incomplete. The following summary draws heavily from my ongoing work in Gitxaala, the fieldnotes of William Beynon (Tsimshian ethnographer who collaborated with Mariaus Barbeau and Franz Boas), and the rather limited secondary sources on the subject (Cove 1987, Halpin 1973, Miller 1997, Sequin 1984).
50. The three key themes or concepts presented below move from the central idea of social relationships, of 'relative/not relative (*WulE'isk*) through the principle of interconnections (*syt güülm goot* –being of one heart) to the idea of continuity (*nabelgot* -reincarnation).
  1. *WulE'isk*: relatives -- underscores and exemplifies the basis of becoming a true social person and the nature of 'belonging' from the perspective of Gitxaala.
  2. *syt güülm goot* (of one heart) the idea of connectivity of all things through being of one heart in the same sense that all members of a house shared a common hearth or fire. By extension social relations exist between all beings –human, animal and spirit (also revealed through the *adaawk*). The idea of 'being of one heart' lays out the principles of social interaction while *wulE'isk* best describes the notion of 'belonging.'
  3. *nabelgot*: reincarnation, hence continuity: by virtue of the sacred histories [*adaawk*], people, events, and places [are] interlinked through successive reincarnations" (Miller 1997:129).

### 5.3.1. *WulE'isk*: All my relations.

51. To follow the conventions of Euro-American anthropology, Gitxaala are a kin-ordered society, one in which all meaningful relations are defined through the idiom of kinship. This posed –and continues to pose- a problem when dealing with Europeans and other *K'mksiwah* (literally ghost people, more typically a term to refer to outsiders). For the *K'mksiwah* lack, by definition, a connection to the world of Gitxaala people. Over the millennia social networks developed between Gitxaala and the adjoining Indigenous nations (Haida, Tlingit, Nisga'a, Gitksan, Haisla, Kitasoo, Kitlope, Heiltsuk) in which clan affiliations and equivalents were established. While there was a brief period during which *K'mksiwah* attempted to integrate into this system –from about 1830-1900- by and large the colonial and jingoistic ideas of Euro-American racial superiority ultimately undermined these early attempts (see, for example Perry 2001).
52. From a Gitxaala perspective the *K'mksiwah*, ghost people, were effectively 'outside of society.' They were not part of the body of related beings. Neither were they *Thlithongit* people captured and enslaved. At first Gitxaala people

attempted to bring them into the circle of real people –witness the halait, the feast, given by Ts’ibasaa upon meeting the first ghost people. Ts’ibasaa was giving a friendship making halait.<sup>21</sup> However, the mercantile capitalist notions of exchange held by the ghost people clashed with Gitxaala people’s behavioural expectations. The European saw the gifts given to them by Gitxaala only as a measure of the ‘natives’ openness to trade and the profit margins that the merchants hoped would follow. Once Gitxaala people had determined that these beings were actual humans the only indigenous category for them was *wa’ayn* – unhealed people, freemen who, by their own actions and behaviour, are put outside of society, people who had lost their link with the past and their knowledge of good conduct: “a deviant category of people who did not fit elsewhere in Tsimshian society” (Halpin 1973).

53. Initially the European’s disconnections were overcome by locating the few Europeans in Gitxaala through their connections to their own homelands. For the early few who stayed new social networks were created by marriage in which Europeans became part of the Gitxaala social world. However, the gradual increase in the number of K’mksiwah who came to stay (and in the process, forgot who they were and cared even less for the *adaawk* of Gitxaala and their relatives) turned back the clock in terms of finding a meaningful place for the newcomers. As John Brown, a Tsimshian Elder, said to ethnographer William Beynon in the early half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century:  
 “a group that could not tell their traditions would be ridiculed with the remark, ‘What is your *adaawk*?’ And if you could not give it, you were laughed at. ‘What is your grandfather’s name? And where is your crest? How do you know of your past, where have you lived? You have no grandfather. You cannot speak to me, because I have one. You have no ancestral home. You are like a wild animal, you have no abode.’ *Nyae* and *adaawk*, grandfather and tradition, are practically the same thing.”
54. K’mksiwah behaviour toward Gitxaala and other Indigenous peoples further complicated the internal process of categorizing them. To be a real person, that is to be a person with authority and respect, one must also act in a particular way. Yet, for most of the history of Euro-American/Gitxaala relations the K’mksiwah have not acted in accord with their declared status (even if, from the K’mksiwah point of view, they have acted in accord with their perceived rights, authority and power).
55. Nonetheless, from the indigenous perspective this paradox –people with proclaimed status and the deportment of a *wa’yan* creates –or at least underwrites– a cultural boundary or distinction between Gitxaala and K’mksiwah; between civilized and savage. This distinction is inscribed in latter day histories, stories

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<sup>21</sup> “These particular halaits were characterized by mistrust. At the ritual, a stranger was invited in, seated on a woven cedarbark mat, and entertained by a display of the host’s halait, by feasting, and by bestowing of gifts. Of course, in addition to forging new alliances, the rite was also a warning about the consequences of theft of local resources” (Miller 1997:19; see also, Roth 2008).

- that readers might recognize if they are familiar with the writings of Vine Deloria Jr. Here is one such Gitxaala example<sup>22</sup>.
56. Some years ago a group of government biologists came to Gitxaala and asked the people if they could conduct a research project into an important local seafood, the abalone. At first the hereditary leaders said “no.”
  57. “This is not right. We can not trust you to do this with respect,” they told the government researchers.
  58. But the researchers persisted: “we are different. We understand that in the past people have come here and have not acted appropriately. This time it is different. We have learned how to behave.”
  59. The hereditary leaders reconsidered the researchers’ request. But still they said no.
  60. The researchers beseeched them: “We will respect your knowledge. We will protect your interests.” They were insistent in the way of the K’mksiwah. They would not be silent.
  61. The hereditary leaders again considered the request. This time they decided that they would open their houses to the researchers, they would –out of the kindness of their hearts- share their knowledge of the local abalone beds. But, yet again this trust was misplaced. No sooner had the researchers left then the collected information was made public and a fleet of K’mksiwah fishing boats arrived in Gitxaala territory and proceeded to fish out the local abalone beds.
  62. Non-Gitxaala researchers are very likely to recognize this genre of storytelling and may well take issue with it. Just the same, there is in fact an historical and enduring truth to this story (especially if one listens from the perspective of an indigenous person) that transcends the particular details and goes to the heart of the problem. That is, the K’mksiwah consistently violate appropriate behaviours; they act like the unhealed, the *wa’yan*.
  63. Attempts to locate and classify Europeans and their arrival into the world of Gitxaala grapple with this issue. “Who are these beings? Are they Naxnox – spirit beings? Are they human? If they are human how do they fit into our world?” Very much in the way that anthropology emerged as the science of the colonial encounter, there is a parallel Indigenous debate (still as yet unresolved) as to the nature of these newcomers who have come and stayed.
  64. In the *adaawk* (the oral history, sometimes glossed as official history, other times as sacred history) of Gitxaala there is also mention of other wayward groups of

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<sup>22</sup> This story is told for different effect in Menzies 2004 –in relation to research methods- and in Menzies 2010 – with respect to the depletion of abalone stocks by non-Indigenous fishers.

people who traveled from afar. Some stayed and became integrated into Gitxaala society. Others like the Tlingit of 1500 years ago, attempted to conquer Gitxaala (Marsden 2001). As recorded in the *adaawk* a resolution was eventually found that created a social space within which the ancient travelers were accommodated. The K'mksiwah, despite their numerical superiority, are still coming to terms with their place in the Gitxaala world.

### 5.3.2 *Syt güülm goot*: of one heart

65. *Syt güülm goot* builds upon the idea of relations and belonging. This concept extends the idea of interconnectedness of all things as mediated through social relationships. Drawing from the social relations, *wulE'isk*, between all social beings (humans, animals, spirits<sup>23</sup>) the idea of being of one heart creates a basis for modeling and evaluating behaviour. In the course of my research involving natural resource management the concept of 'being of one heart' is of particular importance in critiquing the models used by the K'mksiwah and for advancing a specifically Gitxaala approach to natural resource management. Even in the context of the wealth accumulation strategies of the chiefly classes the idea of obligations and responsibilities, not just to other people, but to all social beings, is a key underlying principle.
66. In terms of natural resource management the integrated and community-based nature of Gitxaala resource use structures a balance between community needs and ecosystem health. At the core of this approach is the idea of *sty güülm goot* and a social view that locates human beings in real relations with all other social beings (for an expanded discussion, see Butler 2004, Menzies and Butler 2007, Menzies 2010). Gitxaala people have been taught by their *Smgyigyeyt* to take only what they need, not to overexploit the natural resources.
67. Need-based resource use, harvesting the minimum required for food, trade, and exchange for benefit has allowed Gitxaala people to sustain themselves in their territory for millennia. Community members approach a harvesting activity by first estimating their required amount of that particular resource. Their objective is not to maximize harvest. The idea of this kind of goal-oriented harvesting, rather than 'stockpiling,' results in small-scale harvesting, spread over the course of the year. Combined with the seasonal harvesting of specific resources, this results in a comprehensive system of controlled, conservative resource use. Integrated, community-based resource use ensures widespread provisioning without excessive pressure on any particular species.

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<sup>23</sup> I should point out that I am not comfortable using the English word 'spirit' here to refer to this important group of social beings. Other writers in English have used such terms as 'monsters' (Halpin), spirits (Miller), wonders (Halpin, Miller, Cove). Each of these are reasonable translations of the word *naxnox*, but unfortunately the connotations carried with the various English translations distracts from the internal Gitxaala meaning or label. Both Halpin and Miller go to great length to outline and discuss the various and multiple meanings and how this term is best translated into English. Ultimately, there is not really an adequate English label that can be applied on a one to one basis. Fortunately for our analysis precision with the embedded meaning of the label is not as critical as appreciating that there is a special group of social beings who are able to transform by putting on or taking off their 'mask' from animal to human to 'spirit/monster' form and that they exist in clearly defined social relationships with animals and humans.

68. As one moves from the notion of direct relatives to that of social connections amongst all social beings, the actors of history become those social entities identified as houses, clans, villages, or peoples. Thus, even while it is an individual who takes responsibility for making resource harvesting decisions, (s)he does so in the context of very clear guidelines regarding social responsibilities –not just to humans, but to other social beings, including the fish, as well. Syt güülm goot lays out the basis of social connections, the principles upon which action is based, within and beyond house-groups to include all social beings as relevant actors in the Gitxaala social world.

### **5.3.3 Nabelgot: continuity through reincarnation**

69. The Gitxaala view of the world incorporates a notion of movement and change that is linked to a cyclical understanding of time. This sense of history and time is one that embodies change at the self same moment as it is underscored by a deep sense of continuity. This is best exemplified by the use of hereditary names.

70. Within Gitxaala there is a fairly static set of hereditary names that are tied to social status and rank within the society: “Human descendents circulated through a series of fixed identities, based in a household, whose pedigrees and characteristics were described in hereditary chronicles where these names engaged in specific tasks at specific locations” (Miller 1997:129). Inheritance of a name, however, is not simply determined by birth order, though that does play a role in the process. An individual must be seen as worthy, as capable of carrying a name. Names are often spoken of as being ‘heavy,’ as of having a sense of mass, of weight. They are like masks –though, we should be careful here, a mask within Gitxaala society refers to more than a wooden carving held in front of a face. It is in essence a complete skin, a covering that when placed upon a person turns them into the person or being that is the mask. It is in this sense that a name is like a mask.

71. The character and behaviour of the person taking on a name is important because a hereditary name can be elevated, diminished, or sit unchanged in status even as the name itself persists through time. This conflict or tension between the historical presence and legacy of a name and the present behaviour and actions of the individual name holder lies at the root of a Gitxaala notion of social change and transformation. That is the names, as they are tied to historical actions in the adaawk, provide a context within which a contemporary name holder can act. Even though there is a strong sense that the name holder is in some way the reincarnated previous name holder, it is recognized that they are ‘different’ with each birth. This thus creates the social space for change and transformation. So it is that the Ts’ibasaa who leaves Temloxhan with his brothers after their village is destroyed and goes down the Skeena River into what is now Gitxaala territory many millennia ago is the same Ts’ibasaa who feasted the first Europeans to arrive in his territories in the 1780s. Each Ts’ibasaa makes their imprint upon society –the first founded a series of important Blackfish housegroups in Gitxaala, the later took on and created a new name He:l in the context of feasting the first

Europeans. Through the conceptual framework of reincarnation, the persistence of hereditary names embeds within it a possibility of transformational change. The persistence of hereditary names also underscores a direct sense of continuity with, and connectedness to, the past. In so doing Gitxaala maintains relations with living humans and other social beings and the old people or ancient people who came before.

#### **5.4 Gitxaala seasonal round and overview of resources used.**

72. Gitxaala people have for millennia derived their livelihood from harvesting terrestrial and marine resources from within their traditional territory. While there is a general pattern of dispersal to camps (resource harvesting and temporary habitation sites) during the spring, summer, and fall and then a return to a central permanent village during the winter, there is no one universal pattern for all of Gitxaala. The variations between house groups derive from the differences within and between house territories, which form the building block of the greater Gitxaala territory. Thus a house group with territories located to the seaward may well focus upon marine mammals while a house group with territories along the mainland shore might adapt its seasonal round to the rhythm of terrestrial game and wildfowl. Some activities would involve all Gitxaala people – fishing for halibut, salmon, picking a range of berries, bark, and harvesting of seaweeds. Other resources were more restricted in terms of who might have rights to harvest. Systems of community exchange and inter regional trade for benefit ensured that all Gitxaala had the resources required for their social reproduction.
73. Anthropologist James McDonald suggests that the Tsimshian (here including the Gitxaala), distributed themselves throughout their territory to harvest resources most of the year, and consolidated into winter villages/towns/tribes (McDonald 1991: 200). He cites Boas' description of the seasonal cycle of territorial movement based on harvesting key resources, reconstructed from interviews in the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>24</sup>
74. Viola Garfield's work in the 1930s suggests a more constricted pattern of movement (see McDonald 1991: 202). McDonald describes the increasing restriction of Tsimshian (using Kitsumkalum as a case study) harvesting due to foreign appropriation and regulation of resources during the twentieth century. He suggests that post-contact, there was a decreasing ability for title holders and their lineages to enforce rights to territories and resources (ibid.: 201). The colonial state and non-Indigenous enterprises thus infringed upon Ts'msyen and Gitxaala capacity to use and occupy their territories and thereby contributing to a constriction of indigenous movement.
75. The impact of European trading, settlement, and industrial development in the region considerably altered Gitxaala and Tsimshian settlement and harvesting patterns. In the areas surrounding what is now known as Prince Rupert, changes

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<sup>24</sup> Franz Boas, *Tsimshian Mythology*, Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, 1909-1910 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1916), 399.

to settlement patterns were immense. The contemporary village of Lax Kw'Alaams is located at a Hudson Bay Company fort site established in 1834. Members of nine tribes whose traditional territories were closer to the Skeena River settled this site subsequent to the establishment of Fort Simpson. The village of Metlakatla, while an older Gitxaala settlement site<sup>25</sup>, was re-populated in 1862 by Christian converts following the missionary William Duncan. Winter village sites such as Lach Klan, and post-contact villages such as Lax Kw'Alaams have become the focus of contemporary discussions of tribal territories, but traditional, pre-contact territories included sites of occupation and use much further dispersed.

76. Colonial intrusions and restrictions have had impacts on the geographic range of movement and harvesting, and the amount and variety of resources gathered. For instance, the Hudson Bay Company records reveal that for the first time in 1857, some Native peoples living near Fort Simpson remained at the fort to log rather than travel to the Nass for the Oolichan fishery (see Menzies and Butler 2001), suggesting a significant change in the indigenous economy. Contemporary research with Gitxaala community members outlines a similar seasonal round to that documented by Boas, the core of which persisted until the 1960s. Gitxaala people traditionally moved throughout a large expanse of territory, including both the particular walp (house) territories over which they held exclusive ownership, and other areas for which they held various customary rights and forms of ownership.
77. Richard Spencer describes the way in which Gitxaala movement has changed over time:  
“*Hakhoksgm wila daawla wineeyam*. [We follow where all our food runs to, our movement is determined by the availability of food, we accompany our foods].<sup>26</sup> Not like the way we are now. We follow wherever there is food. We know exactly when the food starts here, we move in from out there to here” [Lach Klan to Prince Rupert area].<sup>27</sup>
78. Gitxaala Elders remember that during the middle part of the twentieth century, only one old man was left in Lach Klan during the summer months to care-take the houses and gardens; the entire village was empty as people were at their fish camps and the canneries.
79. Camps are distinguished from villages as seasonal specific purpose sites, whereas villages are permanent general-purpose sites with stable structures. There are several types of camps that the Gitxaala used, where they stayed for varying

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<sup>25</sup> Joshua Tsibese, a leading s'moogyit at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, identified Metlakatla as a Gitxaala site in a narrative collected by William Beynon in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century entitled, *The Myth of the Adventures of Gom'asnext*. He states: “Years ago many people elived at Metlakatla and it was Nagapt of Gitxala, lived. And this is why the Gitxala lived here.” MSS no. 100.

<sup>26</sup> Translation by Doug Brown (Gitxaala member and smalgayax teacher in Prince Rupert) and Ernie Bolton (Gitxaala community member). August 9, 2008.

<sup>27</sup> Community meeting at the Highliner Inn, Prince Rupert, June 16, 2008.

periods of times. Some examples are: simple camps for an overnight stay; camps used to gather important items on the way to the Nass River oolichan fishing grounds; camps where people would harvest foods and materials in season. Many of these camping spots were used annually for periods from one night to several months.

80. Using the English word ‘camp’ to denote these various types of places used by the Gitxaala runs the risk of diminishing the importance of these places for the Gitxaala. Like village sites, these camp sites were owned by Gitxaala people and contribute to how Gitxaala people understand their ownership of their traditional territory. The more nuanced Smalgyx<sup>28</sup> words for different forms of camping reveal the importance of ‘camps’ in the Gitxaala seasonal round, as regularly-used and often long-term sites of residence.<sup>29</sup>
81. *Galdoo* – where you camp
82. *Wox* – stay overnight (not necessarily camping, used in reference to towns, villages)
83. *Wil dzox* – where we live, reside permanently (plural)
84. *Wil dzax dzox* – people live there, more than one people, more than one group
85. *Nigyoo* – where I anchor my boat (singular)
86. *Wil ksidzox* – looking out the opening of the bay, into the sea
87. *N'dzox* – place of residence – refers to places people lived while harvesting
88. The range of resources harvested, cultivated, and used is phenomenal. Gitxaala harvests includes, but is not limited to:
- Fowl: including, but not limited to geese, ducks, and various seabirds such as scooters, auklets, merlots, etc.
  - Game: including, but not limited to most terrestrial mammals, such as deer, mountain goats, bear, etc.
  - Marine Mammals: including, but not limited to: seal, sea lion, whales, sea otters.
  - Fish: including, but not limited to herring, oolichan, smelt, anchovies, salmon, halibut, and groundfish such as snapper, cod, lingcod, etc.
  - Marine invertebrates: including, but not limited to bivalves (clams, cockles, mussels), abalone, snails, chitons, urchins, etc.
  - Plants: a wide range of fruits, such as wild crabapple, salal berries, salmon

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<sup>28</sup> Smalgyax is the language spoken by Gitxaala. The language is shared with Ts'msyen peoples, but there are important dialect and usage differences between the two First Nations.

<sup>29</sup> This list of words was compiled June 16, 2008 in Prince Rupert at a community meeting. Subsequently Dr. Caroline Butler, Mr. Ernie Bolton and Mr. Doug Brown translated and clarified the orthography.



berries, frog berries, huckle berries, cranberries, etc; leafy greens such as plantain, salmonberry and fern shoots; the inner bark of various trees for food, etc.

- Marine plants/ algae, including but not limited to purple seaweed, sea lettuce, and kelp.
- Architectural materials: including, but not limited to large cedar trees were cultivated for house building materials, bark and various plant fibres were used to manufacture rope, twine, and a range of containers; rocks for fish traps and building foundations; marine shells and gravel for raised building platforms, etc.

## 5.5 Gitxaala – a distinct aboriginal people.

89. Gitxaala is a distinct aboriginal people. Though ethnographically similar to the peoples of the wider Tsimshianic world (i.e. Ts'msyen, Nisga'a, Gitksan), Gitxaala people have always understood themselves as separate and having lived on the coast long before the arrival of other indigenous peoples. Gitxaala oral histories are clear in their assertion of being the original inhabitants of the coast and, as such other travelers have come later, some stayed and became part of Gitxaala society, while other remained on the margins and outside of the Gitxaala world.
90. Gitxaala oral history emphasizes the primacy of the Gitxaala people on the coast. They differentiate themselves from the peoples that have been known as Ts'msyen, who they understand to have come to the coast at a later time. While linguists, anthropologists, and colonial governments have put the Gitxaala under the general rubric of Tsimshian, the Gitxaala themselves have emphasized their distinct identity and origins. Their territorial claim throughout the north coast is linked to the nation's antiquity.
91. We were already occupying these areas and I think that is where we have to be very specific, because all the others just came and Gitxaala was always generous and accommodating people, no matter where within our territory (Matthew Hill).<sup>30</sup>
92. Gitxaala hereditary leaders and elders often reference their residence on the coast as predating "the Flood", and indicate particular locations where Gitxaala people anchored their vessels atop mountains. Beynon also documented these *adawx* during his work with Gitxaala informants in the early twentieth century. Archaeological evidence indicates a flood or Tsunami event prior to 2000 years before present. This archaeological evidence corroborates the *adawx* of a flood which significantly predated both European arrival and the common understanding of Tsimshian movements to the coast.

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<sup>30</sup> Community research workshop, North West Community College, January 2008.

## 5.6 Territory - Laxyuup Gitxaala – the land and waters of the Gitxaala including major villages and reserves

93. The terrestrial and marine areas that comprise Laxyuup Gitxaala, the territory of Gitxaala Nation, extends from Ts'bassa's oolichan fishing territory on the Nass River south to the coastal islands just north of Kitasu Bay. This territory stretches seaward where it adjoins the marine territories of the Haida Nation. To the east, Gitxaala territory extends to the mainland shore of Grenville Channel and abuts against the areas within which the Haisla and Hartley Bay communities now use.
94. Gitxaala use of their traditional territory must be understood as having undergone a significant centralization subsequent to the allocation of reserves by Peter O'Reily in the late 1800s. As Thelma Hill states: "There were so many little villages where the Gitxaala lived before they chose Lach Klan to live."<sup>31</sup>
95. The centralization of territories arose in the context of the socio-economic transitions then underway along BC's north coast. The core territory of Gitxaala, located around Porcher, Banks, Pitt, Campania Islands and the Estevan Group, contained economically important sockeye streams. In the face of the expanding commercial salmon fishery, which was targeting sockeye salmon, Gitxaala leaders (especially Paul Sebassa) recognized that protecting Gitxaala economic interests meant controlling the traditional territories that contained sockeye streams. The same leaders appear to have believed that they would be able to continue harvesting other resources that were not of as important within the new industrial fisheries. This was also a period of time that followed a century of devastating waves of European introduced epidemics that killed as much as 80% or more of the precontact population along the coast of British Columbia. Those who survived and were active in the workings of Gitxaala society recognized that their capacity to survive as a people meant making informed and reasoned choices that balanced their history with the changes they were witnessing in their own lives. Centralizing their focus upon Gitxaala core territories was a key aspect of their social and economic survival strategy.
96. The core Gitxaala village today, Lach Klan, is believed to have been inhabited continuously (seasonally) for over nine millennia as a winter village in Gitxaala territory (see further discussion on key villages below). Even so it has not always the centre of the Gitxaala world in the way that it has become in the post-contact period. Furthermore, Hereditary Leaders and Elders emphasize the difference between Lach Klan as referencing a particular place and Gitxaala having a much broader geographic meaning.
97. Gitxaala territory is not a contiguous geographic area. Gitxaala people had customary rights to, and spent significant periods of time, in places that were outside of the contemporary core territory associated with the village of Lach Klan. Gitxaala oral history and the Northwest Coast ethnographic record include

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<sup>31</sup> Community meeting at the Highliner Inn, Prince Rupert, June 16, 2008.

- references to both close and distant sites to which Gitxaala lineages held rights through various forms of social relations and alliances. Mitchell and Donald (2001), discussing oolichan fishing sites on the BC coast, cite McIlwraith (1922-24: 47, 1948: 359, 360) who documented that Gitxaala people traveled to the Kitlope to produce grease, and the high-ranking Gitxaala leader Tsibasa sometimes remained there for the entire season. The descendants of Ts'ibasa and He:l continue to move from Lach Klan to Haisla territory to participate in the oolichan harvest. The yearly movement of Gitxaala and Ts'msyeen peoples to specific sites on the Nass river for oolichan harvesting and grease-making is also documented (see Mitchell and Donald 2001: 25).
98. Gitxaala traditional territory is broad and non-contiguous, reflecting the pre-contact movements of people for harvesting, trading, and feasting, and later, the post-contact integration of new economic opportunities.
99. It is critical to recognize that territorial boundaries used more recently by twentieth-century colonial governing structures (e.g. Department of Fisheries and Oceans) reflect significant changes in seasonal movements and a process of residential centralization forced upon the Gitxaala by colonial economic and political pressures. Some analysts, for example, have confused the designation of reserves, as a marker of the geographical extent of traditional, precontact aboriginal territories. However, it is probable that a different process is in effect.
100. For example, in the late 1880s and early 1890s Paul Sebassa (Smoygyet Ts'ibassa) was pivotal in establishing reserves for Gitxaala, Hartley Bay (Gitga'ata) and Metlakatla. Sebassa was, in the late 1880s a prominent leader of William Duncan's Christian community at Metlakatla. Duncan was concerned that settlers were usurping aboriginal fishing rights and convinced Indian Reserve Commissioner O'Reilly to visit the north coast. According to Duncan "Indian fisheries were being taken possession of by whites for cannery purposes, and that if steps were not taken to secure to the Indians their fisheries, they would suffer great injustice" (Inglis 2011:5) O'Reilly agreed to come in person and visited in 1881 and then returned again to "the North Coast in 1882, 1888, 1891, and 1893 to continue the allotment of Indian Reserves" (Inglis 2011:5). In order to understand Sebassa's role one needs appreciate that as Smoygyet Ts'ibassa he was not only the ranking hereditary leader amongst Gitxaala, but was at that time an unrivalled hereditary leader of the coastal Tsimshianic peoples. Thus, his role in negotiating reserves was not only for Gitxaala, but also for Metlakatla and Gitga'ata.
101. Until O'Reilly was able to meet with Sebassa in person – that meeting occurred at K'moda, Sebassa's traditional fishing site in 1882, only three Gitxaala reserves were established: Lach Klan (IR# 1, Grassy Island, a graveyard IR#2, and Sebassa's own house territory, K'moda IR #3).

“I held a long conference with “She-aks” [Seax] the 2<sup>nd</sup> Chief, and some of the tribe, the principal Chief “Sebassa” and many of his people being absent, engaged in sea otter hunting. “She-aks” stated that the tribe had held several meetings to consider what land would be necessary for them, and gave me the names of the numerous places they wished for, many of which were on Islands far out at sea, and which could not be visited at that time of year, without the aid of a Steamer, and as it was impracticable for me to engage one for this service, I was reluctantly compelled to abandon the idea of completing the Reserves for this tribe until some future opportunity. The following plots were however, subsequently allotted after the usual conversation with the Indians present.

Dolphin Island, on which the winter village of Kitlathla stands contains about two thousand seven hundred (2700) acres, and is situated in an exposed position on Hecate Channel, between Queen Charlotte Islands, and the mainland. This is a bleak barren tract of country, stocked with scrub timber which is only fit for fuel ... The village is very conveniently situated to some of the best halibut and herring fisheries and is within easy reach of the waters most frequented by the fur seal and sea otter. Nowhere on the Coast is game more abundant, deer, bear, and wildfowl being especially numerous. ...

No. 2. Grassy Islet lying one mile North of the Village, contains one (1) acres, and is used only as a burial ground.

No. 3. “Kum-o-wa-dah” situated at the No. 3 waterfall at the head of Lowe Inlet, contains one hundred and ninety (190) acres; this is perhaps one of the most valuable Salmon fisheries that I have met with on the Coast.”<sup>32</sup>

102. When O’Reilly eventually met with Sebassa July 10, 1891 the final reserves (described by O’Reilly as fishing stations were set up. O’Reilly met with Sebassa, Seax, and “over 30 Inds.” at the Lowe Inlet Cannery (Inglis 2011:8). Though O’Reilly does not name the “over 30 Inds.” It is very likely that they were the ranking hereditary leaders and titleholders responsible for the fishing stations that O’Reilly assigned as reserves. The establishment of these reserves is clearly tied to ensuring ongoing and legally guaranteed access to the salmon fishery. This is not a process of establishing the customary boundaries or the fullest extent of the traditional territory of Gitxaala. Furthermore, each of these fishing stations are also sockeye salmon creeks. At this stage of the commercial cannery fishery sockeye was the prime species of harvest. The fishing stations were selected by Gitxaala in order to secure commercially valuable sockeye fishing sites. This was necessary given the commercial and regulatory interest in this species, which led to limitations on access. The other species were important to Gitxaala’s traditional pursuits but at the time there was no need to secure special protection

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<sup>32</sup> Federal Collection, Minutes of Decision, Correspondence and Sketches, P. O’Reilly, June 1882 to February 1885, File No. 29858 Vol. No. 4 [Reg No. B-64645].

given the lack of commercial and regulatory interest in the other species. This further suggests that the establishment of these reserves was focused upon access to the expanding commercial salmon fishery within which Gitxaala people were playing a critical role as labour and as fishermen and not about defining the extent of Gitxaala traditional territories.

### 5.6.1 The land and waters of the Gitxaala as recorded by William Beynon in 1916

103. In his 1916 notebooks William Beynon describes the hunting territories of Gitxaala as reported to him during his first visit to the village of Lach Klan. He describes the four Gitxaala clans (which he identifies as phratries):

A village situated on the extreme north west end of Dolphin Island, having at present [1916] two hundred and fifty inhabitants. The main industry of these people is fishing and trapping. They have no divisions as to tribes ... they differ from the Port Simpson who are divided into tribes ... the Gitxaala people are only divided into phratrys Ganhada, Gispawudwada, Laxskiok, Laxkibo each one having its royal chiefs and houses. But hEl of Gispawudwada royal house is the recognized chief of the Gitxaala people who in former years held a position next to the Port Simpson... Tsimyen and were very powerful in war. ... [Gitxaala] still adhere to ancient ceremonies ...

104. In his 1916 Notebooks Beynon also discussed Gitxaala houses:

The Gitxaala village was composed of the following houses in order of rank.<sup>33</sup> ... Royal Gispawudwada ... house of hEl which is the head of the following subdivisions who all had independent houses. The chief before hEl came to Gitxaala was wis'aj gisp who hEl on his arrival from Temlar'am became amalgamated to this house and afterwards became chief and remained so up to the present day but is divided into the following subdivisions

1. Tsiybese 2. Niesno'4 3. Nieswe'xs 4. Gunaxno'tk 5. Txagexs 6 Nieslkuxso'

II Royal house Gisp. of Gitxaala seks who is subdivided into the following who each were independent house (The former chief name of this house was dxe'enk) 1. niesgamdxowe 2. 'awe'sdi 3. waxait

The royal Ganhada 1. exlewels 2. wi'nemo'lk 3. wak .es (watsta) 4. dopxxen

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<sup>33</sup> Beynon notes that his "informant" was Joshua Tsibese.

These four were of one group of Ganhada chiefs another group 1. ladox 2. hamdxi 3. ados 4. nios'ayaim

The Laxskiok and Laxkibo have no royal houses. [B-F-419.1]

105. In his "Notebook" Beynon then proceeded to record the Lekkogiget class in order of rank. He also provides the names of the house of the "Gitxaala".

106. In the process of his research amongst the Gitxaala, Beynon proceeded to document "all their (Gitxaala) hunting territories before ... most ... informants go away" (1916, B-F-422.10). Beynon identified the individuals who he spoke with as: Joshua Tsiybese; Samuel Lewis; Albert Argyle; and Job Spencer. Beynon includes both a description of the territories (land and water), identification of whom the various locations belonged to. Within the historical record a map accompanies the written description of territories.

107. What follows is Beynon's record of Albert Argyle', Samuel Lewis', Job Spencer's, and Joshua Tsiybese's identification of the significant territories of the Gitxaala:

The territory of the royal house of hel Gispawudwada was on **Pitt Island** and I have marked 1. This was known as **ktsim'alagam** ... and here was gathered the salmon and berries and was also a hunting grounds. It also extended onto the mainland and this was the property of this royal house and all its subdivisions. Hel also had another territory but this was used by all the Gitxala and here in olden times was the **village of wisa'ag** at the **north end of Pitt Island** marked 2 and was called wilhatga'amilga medi'k "where the grizzly plays along the shore". And next to this was the territory of nias'ois gispawadwada marked 3. This place was known as **kta'ol** ... and here was the hunting grounds of this house and next to this was the territory of the house of 'nagap't ganhada marked 4. This place was known as **k'tai** and here was gathered berries and salmon and on the mainland across from **Pitt Island** was the property of the royal house of seks known as kmodo (Lowe Inlet) marked 5 and the seks also had another place on **Pitt Island** known as **kne'mujamba'alx**. This was a berry picking ground ... marked 6 and next the territory of the seks was the territory belonging to the ganhada house of dxagamfishaitks known as gan'a'ol (Bear pit hap.) marked 7... This was on the end of Kennedy Island marked 8 ... [Beynon Notebook, Gitxala, CMC, B-F-422.10] [Emphasis added]

108. They informed Beynon that:

... And the property of nagwitogem laxe ganhada had as his territory upon which this house gathered berries and fish in the river and was also the hunting grounds known as sqaskin'is ... This was marked 9. And this was the property of the Laxgibo house of łebeksk and this was known as gaipoł ... Marked 10. At the **South End of Pitt island** was the village of 'extewels royal ganhada and was known as **dxowenxtom galdzep (The village in the Point)** marked 11. And adjoining this was the territory known as dxim wilu nek "... Inlet" This is marked 12. And then on **Pitt Island** nias'ois had two places territories and the second one was known as **gal'atgao (wetsta** word. Meaning?) marked 13. the Gitxała village of Laxklen (present village) where all the people lived during the winter marked 14. And then the territory of ayaigansk ... marked 15 ...[Beynon Notebook, Gitxala, CMC, B-F-423.1] [Emphasis added]

109. Beynon continues to document the territories of the Gitxaala as recounted in 1916 by Albert Argyle, Samuel Lewis, Job Spencer, and Joshua Tsiybes:

... And on **MacCauley Island** there is the territory gushawel Gispawudwada and was known as 'nisek'wat'se "Place where sling shots were made, marked as 16. And on this island was another territory belonging to the Gispawudwada house of watali known as tkulaxlax "around falling" named on account of the steep sides of the island and was the trap set for animals. ... marked, 17. And ... part of Porcher Island was the territory of wa'omxk Gispawudwada known as witunaxno'x. This place of supernatural beings marked No. 18. and there the property of nioshalopas Laxskiok ... known as kspinałe marked 19 ...[Beynon Notebook, Gitxala, CMC, B-F-423.1] [Emphasis added]

110. Albert Argyle, Samuel Lewis, Job Spencer, and Joshua Tsiybes continued, noting:

On **Banks Island** was the property of la'ol ganhada known as gitgiyek "The people way out to sea", marked 20. Adjoining this was the property of gaiyemtkwe Gispawudwada known as nego'a'ks ("water splashing against") on account of the rough water splashing against the steep cliffs and on this account was given this name, marked 21. And then adjoining this was the territory of lutkudzemti laxski'k known as laxsto'item dodzep "on Beaver Cliff". This cliff was a Fort and was made on a high cliff. 22. And on the south end of **Banks Island** was the territory of the ganhada royal house of 'wakés and it was known as k'manxata, so called because at the extreme point was a sheltered bay and was always calm. Xata means calm inlet. ... Marked No. 23[Beynon Notebook, Gitxala, CMC, B-F-423.1] [Emphasis added]

111. They explained that:

... **Campania Island** was the territory of nias'oio and niaslo's and on the S.E. end of the Island was nugun'aks the island itself was known as laxgitgiyek "on the people of island at sea" 24. [Beynon Notebook, Gitxala, CMC, B-F-423.1] [Emphasis added]

112. Albert Argyle, Samuel Lewis, Job Spencer, and Joshua Tsiybes identified Long Point as one of the territories of the Gitxaala First Nation:

Territories of the Gitxala ... Another territory which was used by all the Gitxala people and was a place that they camped at when on their way to the Nass River where in early part of the year they would go and get the oolichan fish and they had camps all they way up. This was one of them and was known as kso'naoks – **Long Point** (Just south of the cannery known as **Claxton**), marked 25. [Beynon Notebook, Gitxala, CMC, B-F-423.1] [Emphasis added]

113. The discussion including territories continued (Beynon Notebook, Gitxala, CMC, B-F-423.1):

And at Porcher Island the Ganhada and Gispawudwada people had all to themselves where they would always hunt. The gisp. territory was known as k'pexl marked 26. And the Ganhada peoples territory was known as gaswe'not tibon ... marked 27. And on the Nass River the people also had another place which all used (Gitxala) and here they gathered grease and oolichan. It was known as samq'le'ala (Real old seal) ... Marked 28.

114. Gitxaala narratives (e.g., Myth of Crest of gaiyemtkwe), as recorded by Beynon in 1916 during his research amongst the Gitxaala, refer to Banks Island:

Myth of Crest of gaiyemtkwe: the crest hagwiejem giyek (The monster a way out to sea). Told by A. Argyle. Feb. 14/16. This house was a house of hunters and they hunted chiefly the sea otter (p'ton) ... they went all the time to one place known as laxgiyek (in sea away out) (a long way out from Bank's Island) ... [Beynon Notebook, Gitxala, CMC, B-F-421.8]



I asked informant [A. Argyle, Feb. 14/16] if he could give me any information on the house of ‘extewels royal ganhada. Informant states that they have been extinct a long time but he heard his grandmother state they were of the same group as having at one time lived at gadu’ and were of gidaganitz origin and from these they came on to the Gitxala after the flood. For in the songs of this house they sing of how they were at gadu’ and how they drifted out to sea and found a rock here they anchored and when the waters receded they found they were on **Banks Island**. ... [Beynon Notebook, Gitxala, CMC, B-F-421.9] [Emphasis added]

### 5.6.2 Gitxaala village sites, reserves, and the establishment of Gitxaala reserves

115. The contemporary village of Lach Klan, on Dolphin Island (IR Reserve #1. Assigned by Commissioner Peter O’Rielly September 21, 1882) is considered by Gitxaala to the longest continually inhabited community on the BC coast. Given the depth and extent of extent shell midden within the current village site this is clearly an ancient site. During a visit in June 2011 our field archaeology research crew<sup>34</sup> conducted an auger test and percussion-coring test adjoining the Church Army building in the center of what was the original village site. A recent construction project had provided a fortuitous opportunity to map and collect a detailed column sample from the surface to bedrock, nearly 4m in depth. The reveled soil profile clearly showed uninterrupted human use and occupancy. Information from these samples is currently being processed for analysis. Today Lach Klan is the primary village site of Gitxaala with between 425 and 475 people living there. However, Lach Klan is not the only Gitxaala village site.
116. The oral history recounts far more villages throughout Gitxaala territory that the one primary village that exists today. The ravages of smallpox and other new diseases carried by European visitors left a wake of death and disruption. Whereas other Tsimshianic peoples on the coast found themselves deserting their traditional territories and gathering around the Hudson Bay Company fort in the early 1830s and the new Christian missionary community of Metlakatla in 1862, Gitxaala people focused on maintaining access, use, and control over their core territory from the basis of their longstanding central winter village of Lach Klan.<sup>35</sup>
117. The villages described in the oral history remain places of importance in social, cultural, and materials sense today. The following describes specific locations that I have visited and/or have been directly told of by community members through the course of my life. This is not an exhaustive list of Gitxaala village sites – it does, however, provide a picture of the extent and number of

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<sup>34</sup> Joining our crew on this trip were Professor Andrew Martindale, Ph.D. (UBC Associate Professor of Archaeology) and Professor Kishan Supernant, Ph.D. (U.Alberta Assistant Professor of Archaeology).

<sup>35</sup> See Jay Miller 19xx, for example, where he discusses the ways in which Klemtu –comprised of at least two very different peoples- came into being around an industrial salmon cannery in the late 1800s.

villages that once existed in Gitxaala territory and that remain places of social, cultural, and economic importance today.

118. On the south end of Banks Island, Ks'waan is a large village central in the stories of the encounters with some of the first European visitors (James Colnett and his crew). During the course of my archaeological research we have determined that this large village site consists of three distinct terraces of houses. In addition, preliminary analysis of our faunal samples show extensive harvesting of abalone and seal urchin at this site.
119. Across Principe Channel we find another cluster of villages tucked in behind Wolf Point on the south end of Pitt Island. This place, which has at least five distinct habitation sites, is called Will u sgket. During our archaeological research we identified an intertidal lithic scatter – that is flaked stones used in the construction of tools- that included three bifacial points. The lithics recovered were reviewed at UBC and identified as dating to about 6000 years before present. The lithics were found in association with one of the five village sites in this cluster.<sup>36</sup>
120. A bit to the east on Pitt Island, in behind the Cherry Islets is Citeyats (IR #9 established July 10, 1891 by Commissioner Peter O'Reilly) another large village site. Our archaeological research here has identified the surface features of up to 26 house depression including at least five large plank houses along the water front described by Jacinto Caamon in during his 1792 visit.<sup>37</sup> Recent C14 (carbon 14) dates provide decisive evidence that Citeyats has been continuously inhabited for at least 4,000 years before present.<sup>38</sup> Our percussion core tests and auger test samples, conducted in a systematic grid pattern, clearly show evidence of continuous human occupation from the surface of the village site to the sterile soil and bedrock an average of 3-4 meters below the surface. The historical evidence of this village can be found in Caamano's detailed account of his month long stay stormbound off the village and his visit ashore as a guest of honour of Smogyat Homstits in 1792.
121. I have been told of old villages to the south on Campania Island and within the Estevan Group. These are the sites of 20<sup>th</sup> century Gitxaala traplines and traditional house territories. Further to the south Gitxaala people have used habitation sites on Moore Islands during their customary harvesting of fish, seals, and other marine resources.

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<sup>36</sup> See attached draft report by MacKenzie Jessome in appendix.

<sup>37</sup> It is interesting to note that of the reserves established by O'Reilly only two were primary village sites – Lach Klan and Citeyats. A third, Klapthon (IR #5 & #5A) was proposed as a new primary village closer to the steamship travel. The other reserves are all fisheries stations, though at least three have midden or remains of middens within the reserve boundaries. The selection of these fishing stations as reserves reflects the active decisions of Gitxaala chiefs to maintain access to critical fisheries as they ensured a future for their community in the face of increased industrial and colonial encroachment.

<sup>38</sup> As of December 16, 2011 we have received 8 C14 dates from the University of Arizona NSF Arizona AMS Laboratory.

122. Charles Bishop, in the log of his 1795 visit to Gitxaala territory, records meeting with Gitxaala people in Whaler Bay on the west coast of Banks Island: “The first place we came to was the butchery, where lay about 40 dead Seals, newly killed. Ten or 12 more, was on the Fire, Singing the Hair off the Skins. A Women and a man where Stripping the blubber and Skin together, off an other Quantity. Another women was cutting up and Quartering the Flesh. Many Poles spread from tree to tree about 6 feet over the Fire where Covered with Strips of Blubber, and on bushes all round was hung the Flesh. Blood Gutts and filth formed the comfortable foot Path to the Habitation which lay about 10 yards from the butchery. This was no other than some Poles stretched from tree to tree about 7 feet from the Ground and covered with the Rind of the Birch Tree. A large fire right in the middle served as well to warm the inhabitants as to dry their Fish, vast quantities of which where hung to the Poles and spread around the Rocks near the Hutt: This Family consisted of an old man, 3 of middle age and two young ones, and they had Each a Wife seemingly Proportioned to their own ages, which with 4 small Children composed the group.”<sup>39</sup>
123. Further to the north up this coast our archaeological research has recorded information on three habitation sites in Kxenk’aa’wen (Bonilla Arm). All are sites that have been used from the ancient past through to the contemporary period.
124. To the east of Banks Island in Kts’mI’aa’agn (Curtis Inlet) is the village established by Ts’ibassa when he first established his domains within Gitxaala territory. Our archaeological research has described a small village site and a remnant midden patch of some antiquity. This place remains a significant cultural location up through the contemporary.
125. K’moda (Lowe Inlet, on the mainland shore of Grenville Chanel) is also a significant village and cultural site (more on this location below in the discussion on salmon fishing). Here is located a key fishing site for the royal Gispuwada house of Ts’ibaasa-He:l and an ancient village that figures prominently in Gitxaala adawx.
126. As was mentioned above the reserves that were established were, for the most part, described as fishing stations. Additionally, save for the first three, Gitxaala’s reserves were set in a meeting between Ts’ibassa and Peter O’Reilly at K’moda in 1891.
127. In 1882 Indian Land Commissioner Peter O’Reilly assigned the first three Gitxaala reserves:

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<sup>39</sup> Roe, Micahel (ed) 1966. The Journal and Letters of Captain Charles Bishop on the North-West Coast of America, in the Pacific and in New South Wales, 1794-1799. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Page 65.

“Dolphin Island, on which the winter village of Kitlathla stands contains about two thousand seven hundred (2700) acres, and is situated in an exposed position on Hecate Channel, between Queen Charlotte Islands, and the mainland. This is a bleak barren tract of country, stocked with scrub timber which is only fit for fuel ... The village is very conveniently situated to some of the best halibut and herring fisheries and is within easy reach of the waters most frequented by the fur seal and sea otter. Nowhere on the Coast is game more abundant, deer, bear, and wildfowl being especially numerous. ...

No. 2. Grassy Islet lying one mile North of the Village, contains one (1) acres, and is used only as a burial ground.

No. 3. “Kum-o-wa-dah” situated at the No. 3 waterfall at the head of Lowe Inlet, contains one hundred and ninety (190) acres; this is perhaps one of the most valuable Salmon fisheries that I have met with on the Coast.”

128. On July 10, 1891, Indian Reserve Commissioner Peter O'Reilly formulated a decision to establish fifteen reserves for the “Kit lath la Indians:”:

N<sup>o</sup> 4 Sand Island ... situated one mile North of Kitlathla village ...

N<sup>o</sup> 5 Klap thlon ... situated one mile northwest of Calvert Point, Grenville Channel ...

N<sup>o</sup> 6 Pa aat ... situated on the eastern shore of Pitt Island ...

N<sup>o</sup> 7 Tsim tack ... situated on Pitt Island, and on the western shore of Union Passage, about two miles South of Grenville Channel. ...

N<sup>o</sup> 8 Too wartz ... on the southern shore of Pitt Island

N<sup>o</sup> 9 Cit e yats ... situated near the southern extremity of Pitt Island, and about two miles North of Steep Point. ...

N<sup>o</sup> 10 Kit la wa oo ... situated on the eastern shore of Banks Island, about 2 1/2 miles south of Gale Point ...

N<sup>o</sup> 11 Kee cha ... situated on the eastern shore of Banks Island, about one mile north of Gale Point.

N<sup>o</sup> 12 Ko or yet ... situate on the eastern shore of Banks Island, about four miles north of Gale Point. ...

N° 13 Clow el ... situated on the western shore of Pitt Island and the southern shore of Mink-trap Cove.

N° 14 She gan ny ... situated on the West coast of Pitt Island at the head of Mink-trap Cove. ...

N° 15 Tsim lair en ... situated on the West coast of Pitt Island, and east of Anger Island. ...

N° 16 Ke swar ...situated on the western shore of McCauleys Island, about three miles south of Hankin Point. ...

N° 17 Key ar ka ... situated on the northeastern shore of Banks Island, about two miles East of end Hill. ...

N° 18 Kul... on the southern shore of Bonilla Island, Hecate Strait.<sup>40</sup>

## **5.7 Laws and customs in relations to land and resource use, tenure, distribution**

129. At the core of the Gitxaala system of law and customs with respect to land use and land tenure is the relationship between walp and laxyuup as documented in adwax and malsk (two critical aspects of Gitxaala oral history). The adawx documents the history of ownership over specific territories within Gitxaala's greater territory. The rights to speak to these matters rests in malsk (see section 3.2 for further details).

130. The authority and jurisdiction over rights of use and exclusivity of use is held by the ranking hereditary leader of a particular walp (house group). At the most basic level only members of the owning walp may use resources from that walp's territory and only as allowed by the ranking hereditary leader of the walp. Access by other walps and other non-Gitxaala aboriginal groups to a particular walp territory was only permitted by direct request to proprietary walp.

131. Certain categories of people, such as man's wife and children, may have access during his life to his walp's territory and resources. However, upon his death his wife and children typically relinquish rights to use and access the husband/father's territory and must return to their own walp's laxyuup.

## **5.8 The importance of resource harvesting and territory in the modern Gitxaala identity and way of life**

132. Without territory a smoygyet is nothing. Without the capacity to harvest one does not have the capacity to feast. Without the feast names can not be

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<sup>40</sup> Federal Collection, Minutes of Decision, Correspondence and Sketches, P. O'Reilly, April 1889 to January 1892, File 29858, Vol. No. 6 [Reg. No. B-64647]

passed on. While much has changed since James Colnett first arrived in Gitxaala territory one thing has remained strong – the place of harvesting and territory in the modern Gitxaala identity and way of life.

133. There is an active network of people who harvest a wide range of resources from throughout Gitxaala's territory. These foods and materials are then circulated and distributed along family networks – food reaches out far beyond the immediate confines of the village of Lach Klan and works its way into Prince Rupert and south to places like the suburbs of the lowermainland.

## **6. Gitxaala fisheries and the use of marine resources**

134. Gitxaala people engaged in a wide range of fisheries practices that pre-date European contact. This section provides detail of Gitxaala fisheries. The information in this section of the report draws upon my research with Gitxaala community elders and community members and from a review of published and unpublished documents.

135. In what follows case studies are used to highlight the importance of fisheries, in the past and present, to Gitxaala people in terms of sustenance, economy, and identity. The section opens with a discussion of the economic importance of these fisheries, a general overview of Gitxaala fisheries, and then an overview of Gitxaala relations with non-human social beings and the importance that this plays in structuring Gitxaala social behaviours around harvest, consumption, and respect. Next follows an archaeological overview based upon my current and ongoing research (funded by the federal granting agency, Social Sciences and Humanities research Council of Canada through a competitive peer reviewed application process). Case studies of specific fisheries are then presented.

### **6.1 Overview of Gitxaala Fisheries**

136. Salmon and herring are two of the most important fish harvested in Gitxaala territory. Salmon have been, and continue to be, harvested in traditional house territories that are owned and managed by ranking hereditary leaders. Salmon harvesting techniques range from gaff and spearing through stone traps and wooden weirs to a range of net and hook and line gear types. More detailed discussions are included below.
137. Herring have been fished for their flesh and for their roe by Gitxaala people prior to, at the time of, and well after contact with Europeans. Our archaeological investigations in Gitxaala territory since 2009 have revealed the presence of herring bones in the majority of sites for which we have collected faunal samples. Our data collection methods are designed to provide a detailed analysis of Gitxaala's regional harvesting practices within their core territory.
138. My ethnographic research in Gitxaala, since 2001, concerning resource-harvesting practices has documented the importance of herring roe harvesting. As

discussed in more detail below, herring roe has been harvested by using various seaweeds and kelp and hemlock branches. Elders and community members also describe the deliberate planting of herring in certain areas by purposefully towing trees covered in spawn from one area to another in order to seed if for future fishing.

139. Halibut have been harvested from before the arrival of Europeans. Early descriptions by Europeans (Sabaan was fishing halibut, for example, when James Colnett came upon him) clearly indicate the harvesting of Halibut as a practice that had existed for some time prior to the arrival of Europeans. Archeological evidence indicates that Halibut and other ground fish such as, but not restricted to, various species of rock cod, grey cod, black cod, lingcod were a persistent component of pre-contact diets.<sup>41</sup>
140. Museum collections, such as New York's American Museum of Natural History, Chicago's Field Museum, and Vancouver's Museum of Anthropology contain many fine examples of halibut and other ground fish hooks dating from prior to, at, or just after European contact with Gitxaala.
141. Halibut was and is dried in thin pieces starting in and around the month of May. This thin dried fish, woks, is stored for household consumption and also traded with people who either do not fish or do not have access to halibut fishing grounds.
142. Invertebrates including, but not restricted to, abalone, clams, cockles, mussels, snails, chitons, and urchins are harvested throughout the year. Clams and cockles are typically harvested in the winter months at low tide. Some evidence exists of maricultue in the form of extending the intertidal zone through use of rock terraces and thus creating 'clam gardens.'<sup>42</sup> Site surveys of favoured clam and cockle beds within Gitxaala territory indicate the possibility of direct human activity in shaping the beach zone prior to and immediately after European contact.<sup>43</sup>
143. Seaweed is an important food harvested in the month of May and sun dried at seaweed camps or in Lach Klan. Nancy Turner and Helen Clifton describe the process of harvesting and drying seaweed as practiced by the southern neighbours of the Gitxaala, the Gitgaa't (2006). My research with

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<sup>41</sup> See, Ames (2005:365-82) for a list fish and other faunal remains found in the Prince Rupert Harbour area. Mattson and Coupland (1995) and Shuttles ("Environment," in Wayne Shuttles (ed) Handbook of North American Indians, Volume 7 Northwest Coast. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution. 1990:16-29) lists a wide compendium of fish and other fauna that they suggest would have and may continue to be used by indigenous peoples along the northwest coast.

<sup>42</sup> See Eldridge (2007:15-16) for a description of what may be a clam garden in the Prince Rupert Harbour.

<sup>43</sup> A series of rock walls in Kitkatla Inlet may be more accurately understood as clam gardens or terraces as opposed to stone fish traps. I have had the opportunity to visit other locations within Gitxaala territory that also suggest themselves as better understood as clam terracing rather than stone fish traps.

Gitxaala documents a similar process to that described by Turner and Clifton.<sup>44</sup> More will be said about seaweed below.

144. Seal is an important food for Gitxaala. For those lineages without access to either the Nass or Kemano runs of oolichan, seal oil was their grease. A favoured old food, hadda oola, is much talked about by contemporary Gitxaala people. Only a few people still make this delicacy of seal intestines stuffed with seal fat and slow boiled. Seal and Sea Lion meat is preserved by drying, smoking, jarring, and freezing. Prior to and at the time of European arrival whales were also harvested for food and oil.

## 6.2 Economic Importance and the Trade for Benefit of Fish Products

145. The practice of exchange for benefit was, prior to and at the time of European contact, an integral aspect of Gitxaala culture and society. Trade and exchange of a range of key items, such as abalone, were critical to the function of Gitxaala practices such as the yaawk (feast). The exchange of food and other items such as shells amongst Gitxaala either in a yaawk (feast) or through more explicit trading contexts, is trade for economic benefit. It is in these practices that the critical social values of the accumulation of wealth, prestige, and social rank occur and are maintained.

146. Three types of evidence can be drawn upon. They are:

- Ethnographic data (including adawx and published reports)
- Linguistic data (concerning words and phrases used to identify trade items)
- Archeological data (regarding distribution of food products).

147. Amongst the Gitxaala adawx describe the development of trading relations between their neighbouring Ts'msyeen and non-Ts'msyeen neighbours. In the adawx of "The Purchase of the Nahuhulk, for example, James Lewis of Kitkatla describes the trading privileges of Ts'msyeen ad Gitxaala people:

*"The Gilodza were privileged to trade with the Haida of what is now Prince of Wales Island. The Gitlan traded with the Nass tribes; the Gitwilgoats, with the Haida of what is now the Queen Charlotte Islands; the Gidzaxlahl and Gitsis with the Tlingit, with whom their royal houses were related; the Gixpaxloats, with the Upper Skeena; the Gitando with the Kitselas; and the Kitkatla with the Kitimat and the Bella Bella. Thus all had exclusive trading areas."*

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<sup>44</sup> In a series of interviews conducted in 2001 through 2004 seaweed was consistently mentioned, along with abalone as culturally important intertidal foods that were being disrupted. Seaweed is felt to be experiencing the adverse impacts of climate changes. The disruption of abalone was seen to be caused by an expansive non-aboriginal commercial harvest and then the subsequent illegal harvest by non-aboriginal dive fishermen. Interviews with Agnes Shaw, Charlotte Brown, and Violet Skog –for example- document the importance of seaweed and also the problems caused by non-aboriginal dive fishermen.



148. William Beynon notes of the close relations between Gitxaala and the Haida:  
*“When the Gitxaala went fur seal hunting (fur sealing) they frequently went very close to the Haida coast. And at times the relationship between some of the Gitxaala groups and the Haidas was very friendly and often so, to this day there are some of the Gitxaala names are still being used by the Skidigate Haidas such as niswexs, a chiefly name of the T’sibaasa, Gispawudada group” (notebook 6, page 25)*<sup>45</sup>.
149. These adawx, as have been discussed elsewhere in this report, include the history of alliances and conflicts.<sup>46</sup> These accounts also document the various types of goods traded between different First Nations and describe who had rights to trade with whom and under what conditions.
150. Linguistic data (collected by John Dunn, Margaret Anderson, and Bruce Rigsby, among others) can be used to identify the types of vocabulary in the Tsimshianic languages that identify two features: terms for trade and exchange, and terms for varieties of food products. The first set of terms is important in defining the linguistic possibility that trade for economic benefit existed. If terms for trade and exchange exist in a language, then it can be inferred that a people were familiar with and very likely engaged in trade. In Sm’algyax at least four words can be identified that imply some sort of exchange: *diik* – buy; *wa’at* – sell; *gilam* – give; and *sagyook* – trade. There are also numerous words for specific types of presents, some obligatory and some repayable.<sup>47</sup> The Sm’algyax Dictionary lists more than 30 words for various types of exchanges ranging from gift giving to trade and sale.<sup>48</sup>
151. The second set of terms (describing a variety of food items) is equally important for demonstrating the existence, or at least, the possibility of trade for economic benefit. For example, in Sm’algyax there are a variety of terms that describe types of preserved fish (i.e half smoked, smoked, split and dried, etc), the run of a fish (early, late, etc), as well as distinguishing variations in aesthetic qualities such as colour, texture, and taste. The existence of these terms and concepts clearly indicates the existence of a finely tuned aesthetic appreciation of differences between fish products. Thus, there is not simply one type of salmon available to everyone everywhere. Rather, there are ranges of salmon products, some of which are recognized as being more desirable than others. This distinction in taste and quality extends to all manner of fish products, including

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<sup>45</sup> William Beynon unpublished *Tsimshian Geographical and Ethnical Material*. New York: American Museum of Natural History.

<sup>46</sup> For example, there are a series of adawx that document the alliances and conflicts involving Ts’bassa and other Ts’msyeen Sm’gyigyet. See, for example: “A Challenge Feast of Tsibasa.” Henry Watt (Nisnawhl, Kitkatla), recorded by William Beynon, 1948-49; “Legaix Cremates Himself,” Matthew Johnson (Laraxnits, Gispaxloats), recorded by William Beynon, 1926; “The Rise of Kitkatla Over the Tsimshian,” (James Lewis (Kaimtkwa, Kitkatla), recorded by William Beynon, 1947.

<sup>47</sup> Personal communication, Margaret Anderson October 11, 1997. See also entries under buy, gift, sell, and trade in the Sm’algyax Dictionary, Ts’msyeen Sm’algyax Authority, January 2001.

<sup>48</sup> Sm’algyax Dictionary, Ts’msyeen Sm’algyax Authority, January 2001.

abalone as food and as ceremonial decoration. This form of ‘product differentiation’ would be important in the establishment of networks of trade in fish products between different communities and households.

152. Data from archeological studies also substantiate the prior contact significance of fishing<sup>49</sup>. It is important to reiterate that very little work has been done within Gitxaala territory with the exception of work focused on site identification for consultative processes connected to logging and/or other development plans. Some work is currently ongoing in the Prince Rupert Harbour area by consultants and university-based researchers. An earlier project, led by George MacDonald was instrumental in excavating sites along the Skeena River<sup>50</sup> and Prince Rupert Harbour.<sup>51</sup> The works of R.G. Matson and Gary Coupland<sup>52</sup> and Kenneth Ames and Herbert Maschner<sup>53</sup> provide detailed overviews of the state of archeological knowledge of the Pacific Northwest. Both books describe trade and exchange (primarily as related to prestige items such as obsidian, but other trade goods such as food products are also discussed).

153. In addition, the reports from the extant archeological excavations and surveys reveals, through faunal analysis the significance of a wide range of marine resources, including abalone prior to contact (Bolton 2007; personal communication February 15, 2007)

### 6.3 Fisheries –relations with non-human social beings

154. In interviews with community harvesters fishing, as a cultural practice, is framed in terms of relations with non-human social beings and humans. That is, one’s behaviour is regulated through social relations, which are understood as kin-like (see, for example Langdon 2006). This implies and requires a structure of obligation and reciprocity. One learns this first hand through experience on the water and land. But these lessons are also heard and reinforced in the oral histories of Gitxaala people; some of which has been recorded over the course of the last century and a half.

155. John Tait (Gispaxloats, Tsimshian) recounted a sequence of stories of Txemsum (Raven) to William Beyon in 1954. In his narrative, Tait talks about

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<sup>49</sup> Martindale et al’s ongoing Dundas Island project has demonstrated abalone shell in their core samples (personal communication February 15, 2007; Bolton 2007; Natalie Brewster personal communication November 2, 2007). It is important to note that this archaeological data is not from sites located within the core Gitxaala Territories. However, given the strong parallel in systems of resource harvesting and social organization and the clear social, economic, and cultural interconnections of peoples in the north coast this evidence is a strong indicator that abalone were harvested in this region prior to European contact. These archeological data corroborates the ethnographic data collected by Menzies and Butler through the Forests and Oceans for the Future Project regarding the general patterns of resource harvesting by Gitxaala peoples (see, for example: Menzies and Butler 2007; Butler 2004).

<sup>50</sup> See, for example: Coupland (1985) *Prehistoric Culture Change at Kitselas Canyon*. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation. Department of Anthropology and Sociology, University of British Columbia.

<sup>51</sup> See, for example: Kenneth M. Ames (2005) *The North Coast Prehistory Project Excavations in the Prince Rupert Harbour, British Columbia: the Artifacts*. Oxford: British Archaeological Reports.

<sup>52</sup> R.G. Matson and Gary Coupland (1995) *The Prehistory of the Northwest Coast*. San Diego: Academic Press.

<sup>53</sup> Kenneth Ames and Herbert Maschner (1999) *Peoples of the Northwest Coast: Their Archeology and Prehistory*. New York: Thames and Hudson Ltd..

the time when Txemsum marries the Princess of the Salmon People. Txemsum “had plenty of food. Whenever they were hungry they would roast a salmon and the women [Txemsum’s wife] would carefully gather all the bones and the remnants and burn these and as she done this they heard a happy cry in the waters of the stream. This was the salmon they had just ate now restored again.” As long as Txemsum respected his wife and her relatives he had plenty of food.

156. Unfortunately for Txemsum he grew jealous of his wife and lost his trust in her. His wife “became very angry. ‘I’ll go away back to my own people as I am afraid you will do me injury.’ So she went out of the house and called out as she went out ‘Come my children, come with me.’ She went down into the stream, into the water and disappeared and all of the dried salmon now became alive and all jumped into the water and became live salmon and swam away after the woman, who was the Princess of the Salmon. Txemsum’s supply of salmon was all gone. . . . He was now very hungry with nothing to eat.”

157. Jay Miller (1997) describes the results of people not respecting the gifts of their non-human relations. In his account of the story of Temloxham, an ancient Tsimshain community of origin, we learn of how the people are punished for forgetting themselves, for disrespecting our own animal relatives:

“Everyone did as he or she pleased. Great chiefs would give feasts and kill many slaves. They wasted food. The people had become wicked. One day some children went across the Skeena to play by themselves. One of them went for a drink at a small stream. There he saw many trout. He called to the others, and they began to fish for trout even though they already had plenty of food. They abused the trout. When they caught a fish, they would put urine in its mouth and return it to the water to watch if writhe and die. They laughed and mocked the fish in its agony. The trout had come to spawn that fine spring day, but they died instead. Soon a black fog began and a strong wind blew. Then it began to rain torrents. The trout stream began to rise. The children drowned” (Miler 1997:63-64).

158. Marc Spencer (Ganhada, Gitxaala), in an interview with William Beynon in 1953 described a similar Gitxaala account of a flood brought about by children disrespecting salmon at a village on Banks Island known as K’na’woow (place of the snares):

“The salmon were very plentiful in all these creeks and the people had plenty. It was then that some of the young people, now having all of the salmon they required, began to abuse the salmon by catching them in looped snares which they made from fine roots. When the salmon’s head swan into the loop they would pull it tight and then leave the salmon hanging by the neck half out of water, then the eagles and other preying animals would come and devour the salmon. The older people begged the young people to stop their abuses to the salmon but these would not heed the warnings of the older people and soon other children in the nearby

villages began doing the same. Their elders kept warning them ‘you will cause the anger of the chief of the Skies, because you are abusing the valuable salmon, but they would pay no attention to their warnings. Soon the weather began to change and the rain began to come down heavy and soon the rivers began to rise and gradually the waters rose and soon the villages at the creeks became submerged and still the waters rose and soon the small islands became submerged and then the people who up till then had kept moving up into the hills now got everything into their large canoes and the high hills and mountains were now all submerged only here and there were small portions of the hills to which the people were gathering to anchor their canoes and soon these disappeared and the people that were saved began to drift apart. The people knew that this was the revenge of the salmon that caused the flood retaliating after the many abuses.”

Thus we see that if the salmon or the trout are treated inappropriately they will leave or exact retribution. If respected they will reward the harvester. History has taught us that catching too much salmon from a particular location will result in either a marked decline or total extirpation of the stock. The same history has also shown that not taking enough seems to have a similar effect. Thus, the oral histories provide guidelines for behaviour that are reinforced through our direct observations of the behaviour of fish.

## **6.4 Overview of archaeological fisheries data**<sup>54</sup>

159. Since 2009 I have been engaged in a Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada funded research project involving archaeological research with a team of UBC archaeologists and Gitxaala community members in southern Gitxaala Territory. Our funding was provided through a competitive peer-review process administered by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. This federal government agency is Canada’s premier research granting agency.

160. This section of the report describes the preliminary results of our work on fourteen habitation sites (see figure 1: map of archaeological research sites, Laxyuup Gitxaala Research Project, 2009-2011). The majority of these sites have not previously been recorded in the provincial archaeology registry. Our research objective was to gather various types of data to examine the resource use represented by cultural deposits at the sites. At each habitation site, bucket auger tests were conducted to extract cultural deposits for the purpose of analyzing the fauna represented at each site. This section of the report describes the results of the shellfish analysis conducted from the auger tests.

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<sup>54</sup> This section of the report is based, in part, upon archaeological materials reviewed and prepared by Naomi Smethurst, UBC graduate student researcher working under my direction. All materials prepared by Ms. Smethurst has been reviewed and verified by me, Charles Menzies, Ph.D. Fish and animal bone identifications were conducted by Rebecca Wigen, Ph.D.



Figure 1: Map of archaeological research sites, Laxyuup Gitxaala Research Project, 2009-2011. Prepared by Naomi Smethurst, 2011.